

**Levantine & Arabian Travels:  
European and American Experiences: Part 2\***

Marwan Obeidat & Ibrahim Mumayiz  
*The Hashemite University*

**Abstract:** *By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Levantine and Arabian travel had developed into a science in which experts — Egyptologists, and other archaeologists, Arabists, sociologists, and Biblical scholars — practiced their respective fields of specialization. In that century European interest in the Levant had crossed the Atlantic with a vengeance. Some 150 American travelers published accounts of their travels in the Levant. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of a new type of travel-writer; that of the archaeologist/ political officer, whose were part and parcel of British imperial interests..*

*European and American travel experiences in the Levant and Arabia, as surveyed in this article, being a prototype of a treatise on quest psychology, serve, hopefully, to invite yet further research on the psychology of quest.*

**Nineteenth -Century European Travellers**

**John Lewis Burckhardt:** Burckhardt born in Switzerland, educated and naturalized in England could be considered as the first of 19<sup>th</sup> century explorer and traveller. After spending two years at Cambridge studying Arabic, he was commissioned by the African Association to explore the Sahara Desert and, in 1809; he went to Aleppo to spend two years learning Arabic, adopting the name of Sheikh Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah. He died in Cairo in 1817 at the age of thirty-three.

Burckhardt began 19<sup>th</sup> century English travel in the Levant and Arabia. His record in this field was impressive “no name of an Arab explorer”, wrote D.G Hogarth, “has been held in higher esteem than Burckhardt” (qtd. in Nasir, 1982:58). Burckhardt is esteemed, first, for the value of his discoveries when measured by the range and extent of his travels. He was one of the very first Europeans to visit Petra. The first was most probably Ulrich Seetzen, a German orientalist who, travelling as an Arab, had heard a Bedouin speak of the ruins of Petra, and excited by its prospects, attempted to enter it, and was murdered, though it is not known whether Seetzen died in or outside Petra. Burckhardt had studied Seetzen’s case with Teutonic thoroughness. He perfected his Arabic, learned the Koran by rote, and even had himself circumcised. Then assuming his adopted

name of Ibrahim bin Abdulla, Burckhardt entered Petra in 1812 (Lloyd, 1970: xxxi). Burckhardt, secondly, was practically speaking, the first "anthropological" traveller; one who meticulously studied the traditions and customs of Arabs and Nubians. His meticulous and perceptive observations of the Bedouin of Arabia and the Nubians of Upper Egypt were built upon by other, specifically 19th century travellers, like Richard Burton. Burckhardt accelerated British interest in Levantine and Arabian travel since the Levant, and Egypt in particular, were the object of English political interest (Ahmad, 1978:20).

**E. W. Lane:** Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* produced more than an impressive addition to English travel writing on Egypt. Having devoured the writings of previous travellers to Egypt with gusto, he developed a consuming passion for the country. He describes his feelings when disembarking at Alexandria's harbour in the summer of 1825.

Lane had intensively prepared himself for his sojourn for three years before he left for Egypt, pursuing the study of "Eastern things" so intensively that he endangered his health. He studied Arabic in 1822, subscribed to the publications of the *Egyptian Society* and mastered the use of the camera lucida so as to precisely record Egyptian monuments. There was a craze for everything Egyptian at that time. Egypt and the Levant were on every traveller's itinerary, so much so that a contemporary of Lane wrote in 1828 that it was "scarcely possible to turn the corner of a street without meeting an Englishman recently arrived either from the borders of the Red Sea, the cataracts of the Nile or the ruins of Palmyra (MacMichael, 1827, cited in Ahmad, 1978:2).

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, records of direct experience of Egypt, had been fragmentary, superficial and transient; mere observations made by travellers passing through the country. Yet, cumulatively, travellers, accounts gave rise to that urge for that direct knowledge of Egypt which prompted Lane to take up permanent residence there; "Gathering, clarifying shaping into coherence the impressions and intimations of its actuality that had already begun to undermine old ideas" (ibid). Leila Ahmad points out that "Lane, more vitally than any, contributed to the shaping of a new image of the Near East, as exemplified by Egypt" (ibid: 3). Due to the Napoleonic wars, which greatly obstructed, even closed, Continental Europe to Grand Tour travellers, Egypt more than supplied an appealing alternative.

Lane represents a transition of traveller interest from the ancient to the contemporary Levant. He was more of a resident scholar than a traveller

per se, a scholar whose manifold interests in the people he resided amongst were sociological, linguistic, antiquarian, historical, folklorist, anthropological and Egyptological. He had an urge to discover a living reality based on all these manifold fields of knowledge, flourishing among the stark and lifeless ruins of antiquity. The Egyptian, the Levantine world, was seen as a living representation of scenes depicted in the Bible, and the Arabian Nights. As his biographer, Ahmad, points out:

Lane conducted an assault upon his compatriots' ideas of the Near East... through *Modern Egyptians*, through translation and annotation of the *Arabian Nights*.. through the translation of the Koran, Lane attacked inherited ideas about the Near East and re-defined it..., and defined it as the Arabic world.. disclosing a reality that for his contemporaries was entirely novel(ibid: 17).

The East, Leila Ahmad explains "in the early nineteenth century referred to a vast and vague area whose peoples and cultures were scarcely differentiated" (ibid: 19).

**Edward Henry Palmer:** One of the more direct posthumous influences E. W. Lane left on others was his influence on Edward Henry Palmer. Born in Cambridge in 1840, Palmer studied Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, and at an early age was translating English poetry into Arabic. He travelled to the Levant on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Society (PES) to collect place names for the *Palestine Survey*, and was used by the British Government for intelligence work. The PES commissioned Palmer to explore the relatively unknown desert between Judea and Sinai. Thus Palmer's role was twofold: a government agent (as a desert traveller), and a scholarly Orientalist. In his first capacity, Palmer was the forerunner of such figures as Burton, T. E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell and in the second, one of the pioneers of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Orientalists. Palmer was noted for his adoration of the classical Arab and his literature, producing a grammar of the Arabic language in English, a full critical text of the poetry of Baha-ad-Din Zuhair and a biography of Harun al-Rashid. Oddly enough, he loathed and detested the modern Bedouins whom he considered to be primitive and evil. The Bedouin, to Palmer, was a renegade and an uncivilized robber (Nasir, 1982: 68).

**A. W. Kinglake:** Kinglake was born in 1809, a man of mild-mannered charm and delicate taste which, surprisingly, were neatly reflected in his eight-volume history of the Crimean war, as it was in his *Eothen* (1844); a most readable account of a tour in the Levant a decade earlier. He decided

that factual travel accounts were now dated and overdone and that a personal, impressionistic and anecdotal style that concentrates exclusively on personally enjoyed scenes and events is the one readers want and should have. He avoided antiquarian comment. Visiting the Levant at the age of 26, his youthful generosity and directness are reflected in his work which has a contagious effect on the reader. “*Eothen* becomes part and parcel of one’s own life and experience, something the mind turns back to over the years” (Kinglake, 1926:v). Kinglake confines his remarks to the impressions the objects of his curiosity made on him. Kinglake is soon accepted as a delightful companion, humorous and observant” (Fedden, 1958: viii). “Kinglake”, says Fedden: “is always generous and direct. That is the secret of his likeability, his graciousness, his mental ease. He enjoyed the people with whom he came into contact. Clearly they also enjoyed him” (ibid: 17).

And yet, for all his charming, appealing style, Kinglake carried pre-conceived, pejorative views of the Muslim Levant. He was unscholarly, quick to base ideas on fleeting impressions. He treasured the *Iliad* since childhood, and read the *Arabian Nights* while travelling in Egypt. While crossing from Smyrna to Cyprus on a Greek ship, and hearing a folktale narrated to the mariners in Greek, he was reminded of the *Arabian Nights*, and instantaneously formed the conclusion that the *Arabian Nights* had a Greek origin: “I became strongly impressed with the notion that they (the *Arabian Nights*) must have sprung from the brain of a Greek” (ibid: 64). The stories of the *Nights*, Kinglake deduces, “cannot have owed their conception to a mere Oriental, who for creative purposes is a thing dead—a mental mummy” (ibid). Kinglake was writing for his countrymen in a language, a style, they both shared. His fresh appealing style was at the expense of scholarly objectivity.

**Robert Curzon:** Curzon visited the Levant to acquire rare MSS, Coptic and Syriac, known to survive in remote monasteries. Though his work *Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant* (1849) is written in a fresh, charming style, one would have hoped to read yet more about the MSS he acquired, their interest, their themes, the circumstances in which they were written, rather than about the environs of the monasteries in which such MSS were kept.

**Richard Burton:** Burton stands out as the most flamboyant of 19<sup>th</sup> century English travellers. His willful, defiant, ambitious, and unruly personality was evident since his childhood:

When Richard Burton was eight, leading a mobile life on the Continent with his family, his mother stood him and his younger brother Edward outside a pastry-shop window, and, pointing to some apple-puffs in the display, proceeded to lecture her sons on the virtues of self denial. This proved to be too much for her wild first-born, who smashed the glass before them, clawed out the cakes, and left his mother in the embarrassing position of paying for the damages as he bolted down the street to enjoy himself (Kabbani, 1974:45).

Such a personality trait would never leave Burton a willfulness to defy every authority, a consistent urge to break any imposed rule. Sent to Oxford against his wishes, his rebelliousness vented itself against his tutors. Out of the urge to be contrary, he insisted on learning Arabic rather than Greek. The confines of Oxford left him suffocating. Sent down, he "exited noisily on a tandem, crushing, along with some prized flower-beds, all hopes of an academic career" (ibid). A second trait was his identifying himself less with England than with Great Britain, the Empire. "Burton's patriotism had to express itself imperially, because only in the imperial enterprise was there a place for misfits like him" (ibid:46) Burton "all his life a passionate patriot...wanted above all the respects and rewards that he felt he deserved from those who ruled his country" (Brent, 1977:102). His adventurous thrust into Arabia, recounted in his book *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1855-6) was aimed, in the last analysis, to successfully convince the world that he was the first European into Mecca. Notwithstanding the evidence that others, notably Varthema and Pitts had been there centuries before him. Burton had planned the adventure to Mecca while an employee of the East India Company in India. With reluctance, Burton's employers granted him only a one-year leave instead of the three he asked for to pursue his Arabian adventure. It was the Royal Geographical Society, which enabled him to proceed. Burton sailed from Suez early on July 6th 1853. Twelve days later he was at Yanbo, northerly Red Sea port. By September, he was with the pilgrims heading from Medina to Mecca, and on the morning of Sept 9<sup>th</sup> the Pilgrims had put on the simple robes of al-Ihram (Brent, 108-15). Burton wrote of this occasion: "theirs was the high feeling of religious enthusiasm; mine was the ecstasy of gratified pride" (ibid: 116). The Pilgrimage over, he was set to make his way to Jiddah, and to India.

In the second half of the 19th century, "there arose millions eager for information and entertainment and eager too to offer homage to their heroes" (ibid: 119). Burton successfully gauged the pulse of his times. He gave himself to his countrymen as the hero they all wanted. His

entertaining narrative, full of incidents, dangers, and hardships “was the basis of a legend that quickly gathered round his name” (Fedden, 1958: 10). More significant than the jingoism he successfully aroused, Burton augmented his narrative with scholarly notes. His narrative has just as much notes as it has text (Van Thal, 1951:97). As Fedden (1958:25) points out, “His translation of the Arabian Nights is now valued for its introduction and notes rather than for its text.”

Burton’s attitude to Islam was favourable. He waxed soulfully on the pristine originality of Islamic belief which he found to be capable of arousing ecstatic religious fervour. Describing his first view of the Caa’ba, he writes: “One object, unique in appearance, stood in view, the Temple of Allah, God of Abraham, of Ishmael, and their posterity (Deladelle-Rhodes, 1986:266). Burton admires the puritanism of Islamic ritual, simple yet serene, repudiating the “theatricality” of the Christian church; “At Meccah there is nothing theatrical... all is simple and impressive (*ibid*). Thus, perhaps, Burton introduced Mecca into the lexicon of English idiom as the term signifying universal convergence. Burton believed that “Islam is a great reformation of Christianity.”

Richard Burton, as obstinate in his opinions as he was painstaking in his researches, was an “anthropological spy” (Bratlinger, 1988:158). As Bratlinger observes, “Burton the anthropological espionage agent merits inclusion in histories of anthropology, not because of any theories he developed but rather because of the thoroughness and objectivity with which he went about his explorations of other cultures” (*ibid*: 165). His accounts include descriptions of “physical and racial qualities, the languages, the economics, the religious beliefs, and the marital of peoples amongst whom he travels (*ibid*). Bratlinger refers to Burton as one of the greatest British anthropologists before 1900 in terms of fieldwork among living societies (*ibid*: 166). Burton served as both vice-president, and president of the *Anthropological Society of London* of which he was a founding member in 1863. His anthropological theories lead to the development of racial supremacist theories. Burton, along with Dr. James Hunt, the Anthropological Society’s first president “believed in a relatively rigid hierarchy of races, with the English and other Germanic peoples at the top, and the Australian aborigines at the base” (*ibid*: 166). Burton’s anthropological activities made significant contribution to the aggrandizement of the British Empire. In a presidential address for 1864 Hunt asked “do I exaggerate when I say that the fate of nations depends on a true appreciation of the Science of Anthropology” (*ibid*:167). Burton was a warlike imperialist who believed that war, conquest and imperial expansion were the age-old quests of man. He wrote: “Peace observes a

modern sage, is the dream of the wise, war is the history of man" (ibid:168). He believed that the British, a superior race, a truly fighting people, must prove its worth by making constant progress in the military acquisition and government of other lands. He foresees that political necessity:

will compel us to occupy in force the fountain-head of Al-Islam (ibid: 169)...  
I would have bought the (Suez) Canal... put a fortress at each end... I would annex Egypt and protect Syria, occupy the Dardanelles, and, after that, let the world wrangle as much as it pleased...! (ibid: 197)

**William Gifford Palgrave:** Palgrave was born in 1826. After quitting the Army in 1849, he joined the Jesuit Order, enrolling in the Roman College in 1853 to study theology. In 1857, he was at Bikfaya, a town in the hills of Lebanon, where the Jesuits had a residence, and became involved in Jesuit politics. Disguised as an Arab, he made journeys throughout the Levant in search of sites for new missionary schools, but sectarian strife in the Lebanon drove Palgrave home to England (Brent, 1977: 121–5). At a Jesuit College in France he laid plans to convert the inhabitants of Northern Arabia, where he told his director “were new hearts as yet ignorant of God’s mercies, which otherwise would be lost” (ibid: 123). But Palgrave’s scheme would founder without French Government cooperation. Paris was enthusiastic, and Napoleon III summoned Palgrave for a personal interview. Palgrave pointed out that a French, Christian, presence in northern Arabia would open the way for French presence in the Gulf (ibid: 123). Accompanied by a Greek-born teacher from a Syrian Jesuit college, the two men, disguised as Syrian doctors, set out early in 1862 from Gaza, heading for the city of Ma’an (in modern Jordan) and then to al-Jauf; and by September 8<sup>th</sup>, were heading for Riyadh. However, Palgrave’s crossing the Arabian Peninsula from West to East was closely questioned by later 20<sup>th</sup> century travellers, especially Philby. His account of the journey, *Personal Narrative of a Year’s Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, aroused more doubt, discussion acrimony and argument than any other book written on Arabia travel (Brent, 1977:130). Philby, who lived and travelled in the areas Palgrave described, insisted that the Jesuit invented more than he experienced. Palgrave’s Jewish ancestry, his being a Jesuit missionary working with the French government, all contributed to the hostility aroused against him by travellers with strong involvements with Islam. Palgrave’s vehement missionary zeal against Islam was unequivocal. He condemns “the stifling influence of Islam” which he describes as “the

Mahometan drug which paralyzes whatever it does not kill" (Deladelle-Rhodes, 1986: 267–8). To him, Christianity is "a religion of vitality, of progress of advancement." The difference between the two religions, he concludes "is that between movement and fixedness, participation and sterility, development and barrenness, life and petrification." The Koran is "a dead man's hand, stiff and motionless." By its doctrine of predestination Islam is for Palgrave "a religion not of life, but of death" (ibid). His outright condemnation of Islam and his blatant missionary ardour had placed Palgrave as a black sheep among European travellers who held a far less doctrinaire stance against Islam, and a more objectively examining outlook; that of religious comparatists. Some European travellers were more pro-Islamic than others. One, Philby, embraced Islam, and taking up the name of Abdulla, resided in Mecca for the rest of his life (see below).

**Charles Doughty** (1843–1926): An intense, promethean figure, Doughty was one of his country's monuments to human endurance and defiant fortitude. Bedevilled since his early years suffered from ill health and a speech impediment, and the failure to pass a Naval medical examination generated a grinding motivation to endure and excel in expression, and unmasked a self-assertion that bordered on the fatal. Whereas Burton wrote about Arabia as a self-appointed emissary compiling anthropological intelligence reports to be made use of in future plans for imperialist expansion, Doughty wrote to vent a tortured intensity. His style is grand, lofty, esoteric. In writing the volumes of *Arabia Deserta*, Doughty wrote later:

My main intention was not so much the setting forth of personal wanderings... as the ideal endeavour to continue the older tradition of Chaucer and Spenser, resisting to my power the decadence of the English language: so that while my work should be the mere verity for orientalists, it should also be my life's contribution to literature (Fedden, 1958: 29).

Doughty treasured his style which he called his "Ars poetica". Doughty's style reflects the man himself, beleaguered by his own soulful intensity which gives his desert descriptions a shimmering cry:

The Summer's night at end, the sun stands up as a crown of hostile flames.. the desert day dawns, not a little by little, but it is noontide in an hour. The sun, entering as a tyrant upon the waste landscape, darts upon us a torment of fiery beams, not to be remitted till the far-off evening.. (ibid: 33).



As Peter Brent (1977:144) points out, Doughty lived on for forty years after *Arabia Deserta* came out:

concentrating on vast poems and poetic dramas... a Blakeian mixture of patriotism and religion. Nothing he wrote captured the attention of the world; it is the one great book of his desert journey that keeps his memory vivid.

Though Doughty was the last, and greatest of 19<sup>th</sup> European travellers, *Arabia Deserta* remained largely unread for half a century after it was written. It was only with the publication in 1908 of his *Wanderings in Arabia* that Doughty's work became generally known, establishing itself as a classic. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, reading *Arabia Deserta*, wrote in his diary on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1897 that Doughty's work was "Certainly the best prose written in the last two centuries" (Nasir, 1982:84).

Doughty was one who seems to have come to the Arab world "with a Bible tucked under his arm." He was looking for revelations to validate his belief in the Holy Book. He was a visionary in the Blakeian sense, with a fervent yet "unconscious need to probe into the meaning of life and the place of man on earth." He saw in the Arabs "a people who seemed to have retained some of the basic values which gave man a purpose in life; namely their humanity and hospitality" (ibid: 89). Thomas Assad in his book *Three Victorian Travellers* describes Burton's view of the Arabs as too grotesque; Blunt's too ornate, too sentimental, and Doughty's too pure, too simple, too harsh (quoted in Nasir, 1982:89). Thus, Doughty was more of a visionary than a traveller in the conventional sense of the word. He saw subjectively with his soul rather than objectively with his eyes. As Barker Fairley in his *Charles M. Doughty: A Critical Study* states, for Doughty "Arabia... could never have the faintest tincture of the picturesque, because he did not approach it with that part of his nature in which the picturesque could exist" (ibid: 84). "Hunger" and "weariness" robbed him from enjoying scenic, picturesque splendour. Doughty, well aware of his melancholic grandeur, wrote:

I pray that nothing be looked for in this book but the seeing of an hungry man and the telling of a most weary man (ibid: 84, 85).

Doughty carries this repudiation of the picturesque to incomprehensible, unacceptable extremes. Who can fail to be moved to ecstasy by the magnificent facade of the treasury at Petra? Yet Doughty can astound everyone by his impression of "the rose-red city". Passing through it in November 1876, on his way to Arabia, he found Petra loathsome:

Strange and horrible as a pit in an inhuman deadness of nature is this site of the Nabateans' metropolis; the eye recoils from the mountainous close of iron-cliffs, in which the ghastly monument of a sumptuous barbaric art are from the first glance an eyesore. (Stephens, 1970: xxxiv).

**Wilfrid Blunt:** Two years after Doughty had joined the pilgrim caravan from Syria to Arabia, Wilfrid Blunt and his wife Ann set out, on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1878 on a journey into Arabia, drawn to it "by nothing more than their own interest and for no other purpose than their own enjoyment, both spiced with the fables which surrounded the place and its people" (Brent, 1977: 147). The Blunts were some of the last, self-conscious Romantics. Ann Blunt was Byron's grand-daughter, described as "the handsomest face in England", and Blunt a man of gushing passions; a romantic supporter of the Arabs as he was of Indian independence, who wrote emotional articles and letters attacking British domination of peoples whom most of his compatriots considered to be their inferiors (ibid).

Blunt and his wife first journeyed to the Levant in 1873 as tourists and "to escape the late spring in England." Crossing into Algeria, in early 1874, Blunt had his first contact with the Arabs of the Sahara, and was impressed with their sense of independence, their noble pastoralism, and their "life of high tradition filled with the memory of heroic deeds" (qtd in Nasir, 1982: 81). In 1875, the Blunts arrived in Egypt and developed a deep sympathy for the fellaheen, and Blunt spent the rest of his life championing their cause as Byron did with Greek independence. In 1876, they made their first trip to Arabia, the second in 1878, to Nejd. Blunt developed a "political first love" towards the Arabs making him determined to do what he could "to help them preserve their precious gift of independence." In 1881 Blunt bought a forty-acre estate near Cairo to spend his winters, dressed as an Arab, spoke Arabic and acted as guardian to the shrine of "Sheikh Obeyd" which stood in his property (ibid: 147). The Blunts' main contribution to European Arabian travel was their popularization of the Arabian horse in Europe. In the mid 1870's, the Blunts had spent some time in the desert with the Shammar tribe and were delighted with the speed, stamina and beauty of the Arabian horse. They owned a stud where Arabian horses were bred and which they held as Arabia's contribution to the world.

Blunt's views of Islam were a century ahead of their time. In his book, *The Future of Islam* (cf. references below), he appealed to the West to view Islam as a positive force which had contributed to human civilization (ibid:81):

Christendom has pretty well abandoned her hopeless task of converting Islam as Islam has abandoned hers of conquering Europe. . moral sympathy should unite the two great bodies who believe in and worship the same God.

Blunt's writings emanate from their romantic admiration of the desert Arabs and their "Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood, names only even in France... here practically enjoyed by every free man" (ibid: 82). Blunt admired Arabic poetry of Pre-Islamic times, seeing it as "naïve in its display of emotion, uninhibited, and hedonistic" (Assad, 1964: 93; Nasir, 1982:81). Blunt, a recognized poet turned into English verse his wife's translation of the Mu'allaqat.

**Theodore Bent (1852–1897):** Bent was the last of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeologist-explorers of southern Arabia, leading five expeditions to Yemen, Muscat and Hadhramaut. In his 1893–94 expedition, he mapped part of the unexplored Hadhramaut, and in 1895 he visited Muscat and explored the Dhofar coast, map-making and describing ancient cities in the area. Bent's claim to fame lies in his successfully identifying the location of Abyssapolis, the ancient myrrh and frankincense port of southern Arabia described by Ptolemy. Exploring the Dhofar coast he came across extensive ruins at Baad, with its ancient harbour and a central acropolis some hundred feet high with its original most still well-preserved and full of water. Moving up from the central coastal plain up into the mountains he came across the "Qara", "a wild tribe of troglodytes who knew no home except their ancestral caves..." (Brent, 1977: 155). Three days later he came across an area where the scented gum of frankincense was still collected. Down again into the plain of Dhufar and east along the coast, Bent came across his greatest discovery. Eight miles inland from the large lake, Khor Rouri, at Taka, Bent and his party came across a perpendicular cliff over which mountain streams water fell down into a cavernous abyss 550 feet in depth at its middle, and about a mile long. The chasm, and the ancient ruins laying around what must once have been a splendid natural harbour, persuaded Bent that he had found the site of the port named by Ptolemy as Abyssapolis– The city of the Abyss. The frankincense still growing wild and collected in the adjacent districts gave further credence to his claim.

Bent brought back with him careful charts, and his botanical work proved that Hadhramaut flora was an extension of that of Somalia and Ethiopia; and added precision to Sabaean history (ibid: 159). "His contribution to the exploration of Arabia always far exceeded the fame it gained him" (ibid). While still in southern Arabia Bent contracted Malaria

and died in London on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1897. Mrs. Bent, his companion and photographer, published the account of their last travels in *Southern Arabia, Soudan and Sakatora* (1900).

### Nineteenth-Century American Travellers

The 19<sup>th</sup> century American Levantine travelers, fresh from their distant continent, unencumbered by archetypal preconceptions, came to the Levant with a clean slate of mind. Their impressions were spontaneous, graphic, and often brutally frank, offending the sensibilities of Levantine native readers, but making valuable, factual documentation of the social history of the Levant. There were 151 Americans who wrote about their travels in the Levant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Each one provides his own specific, distinctively graphic, candid and often striking impressions of Levantine life, manners, customs and behavioral patterns.

**John Lloyd Stephen:** Stephen's account of his travels in the Levant is fresh and informative mainly because his Levantine travels were unplanned, but decided upon on the spur of the moment, and he became a leading American travel writer by accident. Suffering from a weak constitution, "a mild European tour" in search of health took Stephens to Rome, Naples and Sicily and then on to Greece. In April 1835, he suddenly decided to take ship to Smyrna (modern Izmir) (Stephens, 1970: xix). His instantaneous decision to veer towards the Levant accentuated his freshness of impression: He liked the free and easy way of the Levant, painting graphic verbal pictures of the inhabitants. Following the Roman road to Ephesus, he wandered among the ruins, then headed towards Constantinople, which like all Levantine cities was new ground for an American. After a trip to Russia and Poland, he headed for Paris on his way back to America. In Paris, he read Leon de Laborde and Manrice-Adolph Linant's book *Voyage de l'Arabie Petree*. This prompted an immediate trip to Egypt.

Americans appeared early within the British business community in Egypt at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Stephens mixed freely with both communities. One of the earliest Americans to visit Egypt was **John Ledman** of Conneticut, who arrived in Cairo in 1788, and died there. By 1820, Americans in Egypt were numerous enough to necessitate the appointment of an American Consul, **George Gliddon** (1809-1852). A long time resident in Egypt, fluent in Arabic, knowledgeable in archaeology; an author whose books include *The American in Egypt* (1840); and *The Races of Mankind* (1851) and was the first to lecture on

Egyptology in America. Gliddon provided Stephens with invaluable advice and information. In Egypt, Stephens was carried abreast a tidal wave of Anglo-American archaeological research. The leading American archaeologist of Stephen's time in Egypt was **Frederick Catherwood**, an architect who left his signature at the colossus of Memnon at Luxor: "F. Catherwood Archt. 1832" for Stephens to read. Born in London in 1799, Catherwood came to Egypt in 1832.

Stephens' association with Gliddon, and his being aware of the intensive archaeological activity under way in Egypt, had whetted his appetite for exploration, specifically exploring Petra. Having come across Leon de Laborde and Maurice-Adolphe Linant's book *Voyage de L'Arabie Petree* (Paris, 1830; London 1838), Stephens met Linant, the book's co-author, in Egypt, who had taken the route Stephen's proposed to take. Linant was one of the first Europeans to enter Petra and leave a written account. The first was a German Orientalist, Ulrich Seetzen (see above) The second, was Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (see above), who entered Petra in 1812. Linant reached Petra in 1827, and Stephens on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1836. The façade of the Treasury of Petra astounded Stephens (1970:256):

The first view of that superb façade", he wrote "could never pass away... neither the colosseum... the Acropolis, nor the pyramids... nor the temples of the Nile, are so often present to my memory.

Inside the façade, Stephens found a large central hall, its undecorated walls blackened by the fires of herdsman who sheltered there with their flocks. Stephens waxed enthusiastic in his descriptions of Petra. Its rock temples in the morning "were like great rainbows, flashing out vermilion and saffron streaked with white and crimson". At dusk, "it was rose-red, shot blue with porphyry" (ibid: xxxiv) which inspired the Newgate prize poem written in 1845: "Match me such marvel in Eastern clime a rose-red city half as old as time"; a poem itself inspired by Stephens best-selling *Arabia Petraea* (xi.). From Petra, Stephens made his way to Palestine. His route was a direct one, not the usual well-trodden one to the Dead Sea. Stephens used a map of Palestine described as "one of the most accurate maps since Roman times... made by an Irishman, a Mr. Costigan." In Jerusalem, he found another map of Palestine, made by no other than "F. Catherwood, Archt. 21 Charles Square, Hoxton, London", and extolled its accuracy in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of *Arabia Petraea*. (xxxv)<sup>2</sup>.

Stephens returned to New York in 1836 to write *Arabia Petraea* after a two year absence. He was encouraged by Mayor Harper, senior partner of

the Harper firm of publishers, to write a book about his travels. Stephens did dish up three volumes of very amusing travels and, in due time, three more. *Arabia Petraea* fell in two volumes, with illustrations Stephens had pirated from Leon de Laborde's book on Petra (see above). It was written in less than a year and was published in 1837. The book merits lie, first, in its erudition. Stephens had read widely to enhance and extend his own observations<sup>3</sup>. Influenced by what Mayor Harper, his publisher, informed him, of what readers expect to read in travel books about Arabia, Stephens gave his readers what they wanted. The two volumes describe Arab manners, customs and habits, and intended; one would suspect, to thrill his readers genteel sensitivities with graphic descriptions of the uncouth, the wild, and the barbarous; all heavily laced with hyperbole:

One who has never met an Arab in the desert can have no conception of the terrible appearance.... The worst pictures of the Italian bandits or Greek mountain robbers *I ever saw* are tame by comparison (Stephens: 1970: 82).

...wild and unsettled, robbers and plunderers as they are, they have laws which are as sacred as our own. (ibid: 204)

He pays tribute to their "primitive simplicity and purity"; "their temperance and abstinence"; "their contented poverty and contempt for luxuries". Yet, he

never saw among the wanderers of the desert any traits of character or any habits of life which did not make me prize and value more the privileges of civilization (ibid: 124).

**Nathaniel Parker Willis:** In 1833, another American traveller in the Levant, Nathaniel Parker Willis, Poet and journalist, joined a Mediterranean Cruise aboard the U.S. frigate 'Constellation'. In Constantinople, for five weeks, he took notes and made sketches, all compiled in a two-volume work *Pencilings by the Way*, containing a series of letters descriptive of Turkish life about which he waxed enthusiastic:

The world contains nothing like Constantinople. If we could compel all our senses into one, and live by the pleasures of the eye, it were a paradise transcended. The Bosphorous, the superb peculiar incomparable Bosphorous! The dream-like fairy-built Seraglio! The voluptuous softness of the dark eyes<sup>4</sup>.

In his descriptions of Turkish life he tends to make extreme and inaccurate generalizations. While enraptured by what is seen as breathtaking beauty, he is superior and condescending when it comes down to describing the inhabitants' life-style:

The Turks live differently from every other people... Their houses are square boxes... They are scarce larger than boxes in the theatre...[They] have the appearance of cabins thrown up hastily after a fire. You would not suppose they were intended to last more than a month at the farthest (*Pencilings by the Way*, Vol. II: 42-43).

Diminution of local housing shoots up to rapture when describing local female beauty: "It is strange how universal is the beauty of the Eastern eye. Meeting the gaze of such large liquid orbs is quite startling" (ibid: 55).

**George William Curtis** : The journey of George William Curtis through the Levant in 1849-1850 produced *Nile Notes of a Howadji* in 1851 (cf. Curtis, 1856) , and *The Howadji in Syria* (1857). A poet, Curtis highlights the necessity that a successful traveler must also be a poet. In *Nile Notes* he points out that "if you would enjoy the land, you must be a poet and not a philosopher... Be a pilgrim of beauty, and not of morals of politics" (ibid: 86). Curtis displays the enraptured descriptiveness of his American fellow travellers when moved by natural scenery. At a town in Upper Egypt he was awakened by "a voluptuous morning... cloudless the sky... warmly rosy the azure that domed the world... the day itself was flower and feast and triumphal song" (ibid: 265). He strains at eloquence:

The Orient is that primeval and perpetual noon. That very heat explains... the voluptuous elaboration of its architecture the brilliance of its costume, the picturesqueness of its life. In the (Muslim) East, you feel and see, music, but hear it never (ibid: 32).

As an American, Curtis was struck by the chasmic contrast between the Levantine, and American ways of life. By focusing on the contrast, layers of ethnic Levantine realities are brought to light which would have probably passed unnoticed by a European traveller who would have taken them more or less for granted. Like other American travellers, Curtis' views of the natives tend to be judgmental and censorious, through extenuated by climatic causality. The national character of the Egyptians seemed to be influenced by the desert:

This fateful repose.. this strange stillness, this universal melancholy in men's aspects... all this is of the desert (Curtis, 1857:86).

He disapproves of Jerusalem's Holy places, its clerics and its Christian population: "The Christians in Jerusalem are the worst of all Christians" (ibid: 192). He was disgusted with Jerusalem's clerics, described as:

... ignorant and repulsive monks, quarreling and dozing... stumbling in dirty gowns about a bare and desolate building which looks like a dilapidated old curiosity shop, carrying disgusting idols through a crowd abjectly superstitions (ibid: 214).

**John Ross Browne:** A thirty-year-old contemporary of Curtis, Browne arrived in Beirut in 1851 from Constantinople on his way to the Holy land. Hiring a Syrian dragoman, Yusef, Browne and two companions made their way across Lebanon to Damascus, then to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and Jerusalem. From there they trekked to the desert convent of Mar Saba, the Dead Sea, the River Jordan, Jericho. After attending the Christmas Eve celebrations in Bethlehem, Curtis and his party headed for Jaffa, then north along the Mediterranean Coast, passing through the ancient ports of Sidon and Tyre and ended his journey in Beirut where it began. He then sailed to Egypt, having completed his tour of the Holy Land in only forty days.

Two years later in 1853 he published *Yusef, or the Journey of the Frangi: A Crusade in the East* (1853) based on his travels in the Levant. Browne's book has the form of a novel whose principal character is his dragoman. Browne certainly had the makings of a novelist. Yusef, from the very start to the end of the book plays the role of the major character. His behaviour is dashing and his remarks impetuous. His features are distinctively Arabic. Yusef is brave, having killed six Bedouin robbers single handed. Yusef is a misogynist who "never could refer to the subject (of the female sex) without strong expressions of contempt and disdain" (ibid: 180). Browne censoriously rebukes Yusef on the Arab treatment of women:

It seems to me, Yusef, said I, that you Arabs are the most barbarous people on the face of the earth. Why even the Hottentots give their women some liberty. You, however, not only cover their faces, but keep them in a state of abject slavery. How can you ever expect to be a virtuous people when your wives are nothing but slaves? Tell me, Yusef, in the name of common sense, what do Arab women cover their faces for? (ibid: 227-8)



After Yusef replied that that was the custom of the country, Browne retorted with authoritative indignity "But the Custom is absurd and ought to be abandoned at once" (ibid). Browne finally decides that:

it was useless to argue with Yusef... that the Arabs were a very wicked and ignorant race (ibid: 231).

Browne loathed what he saw as Arab sloth and indolence this way:

How is it, Yusef that your countrymen never think of bettering their condition? See that lazy wretch basking in the sun there? Why doesn't he go to work and do something useful... he smokes all day and sleeps all night... Fough! What a barbarous life! A fine-looking fellow like that fooling his time basking in the sun like a giant mud-turtle. Why, in our country he might earn his dollar a day (ibid: 285-286).

**Bayard Taylor:** In the same year, 1851, that Browne arrived in Beirut, Bayard Taylor was aboard the *Manchester City* bound for Liverpool, and from there to the Levant. His visit lasted ten months, two of which were spent in Nubia and the Sudan, regions never visited before by an American writer. His ten-month sojourn resulted in two travel narratives (cf. Taylor, 1970; 1875) as well as a volume of poetry, *Poems of the Orient* published in 1854. Another one month visit to Egypt in 1874 yielded *Egypt and Iceland*. Taylor went to the Levant to recover his health, "exhausted by severe mental labor". In Egypt, he would "penetrate as far into the interior of Africa as time would allow", attracted by a "desire to participate in these regions free, vigorous semibarbaric life" (Taylor, 1875:2).

Taylor travelled to learn, not just to see. He believed that "the first end of travel is instructions" (ibid: 132). With this in mind Taylor went to the Levant to acquaint himself with unknown lands and peoples and to tell the public of what he saw and learned. Soon after his arrival in Egypt he wrote:

The best definition of an Arab which I can give is ... a philosophical sinner. His fatalism gives him a calm and equable temperament under all circumstances, and 'God wills it' or 'God is Merciful' is the solace, of every misfortune.. (ibid: 396).

The Arabs are also fraudulent, charged with "petty acts of fraud". Yet Taylor found the Egyptians:

fully as honest and well disposed as the greater part of the Italian peasantry. A single friendly word wins them, and even a little severity awakens no lasting feeling of revenge. I should much rather trust myself alone among Egyptian Fellahs than among the peasants of the campagna" (ibid: 102).

Taylor's second visit to Egypt in 1874 reinforced this favourable impression, "that there is no more cheerful and patient race in the world than the Egyptian Moslem" (ibid: 40). In line with fellow American writers, Taylor enraptured by Levantine natural scenery, waxed poetical on the splendours of the Nile:

Art thou the keeper of that eldest lore,  
Written ere yet thy hieroglyphs began  
When dawned upon thy fresh, untrampled shore  
The earliest life of Man?

Taylor's impressions of the Holy Land and Syria are to be found in his second Near Eastern travel book *The Lands of the Saracen*. He was not impressed with Jerusalem's Holy places. The church of the Holy Sepulcher seemed to him to be "a confused labyrinth of chapels, choirs, shrines, staircases, and vaults... without any definite plan or architectural beauty" (ibid: 82). Highly skeptical of the authenticity of Jerusalem's holy relics, doubting whether the Cross was genuine dismayed by the practices of the city's Christian communities, he concluded that:

Jerusalem is the last place in the world where an intelligent heathen would be converted to Christianity"... If he was such a heathen..., [he] should at once turn Mussulman (ibid: 79).

Taylor showed an admiration for Muslims and interest in their religion, seeing an affinity between Islam and Quakerism. When he enters a mosque "the signs of race and climate and the symbolism of faith fade away" and he only remembers "that we are fellow-believers in one God" (ibid: 42). In the Levant, he took hasheesh and he describes the nervous thrill that shot through him. "... The sense of limitation.. of confinement of our senses within the bounds of our own flesh and blood.. instantly fell away" (ibid:136). "The Islamic Paradise", "the gorgeous fancies of Arabian Nights", the "glow and luxury of Oriental poetry", are all attributed, he concludes, to the "agency of hasheesh".

**John William De Forest:** In 1846 John William De Forest, a young man of twenty-four sailed to Beirut to visit his brother, who was sent to the Levant in 1842 as a medical missionary. In his *Oriental Acquaintance*, De Forest (1856) did not offer readers such excitement or adventure, though he later wrote a romance, *Irene* in 1879 that takes place near Mount Lebanon and involves a conflict between Irene's choice of suitors, and her duty as a missionary. De Forest's contribution is that he wrote about neglected forgotten or unknown ruins. "I shall continue silent concerning such widely famous places as Baalbec and Palmyra", he writes:

But I recollect scores of lonely, forgotten old tombs, and temples, and cities which absolutely seem to reproach me for not reminding the world of their hoary existence. (De Frost, 1856: 267)

He has scant respect for the local inhabitants who dwell amongst such forgotten ruins:

for the half-savages, who wander and abide under their shadow, understand not their broken teachings of history and have no sympathy for their solemn passion of desolateness (ibid).

Among the numerous vices he found in Syrian society, lying "seems to be the most contemptible of all, because it is the most cowardly" (ibid: 230). Though his writing is in the mainstream of American 19<sup>th</sup> century Levantine travel literature, his style reminds one of a young Romantic poet: evocative, wistful, tender, imaginative, and youthful.

**Mark Twain:** In the summer of 1867 Mark Twain made his trip to the Levant as a correspondent of the American West's most prominent daily the *San Francisco Alta California*. After visiting Morocco and Turkey, Twain arrived in Beirut and set out for Jerusalem by way of Damascus, covering in three weeks the route that Browne had followed on his forty-day journey, and boarding the *Quaker City* at Jaffa he then headed for Egypt.

Mark Twain was a newspaper reporter covering a "story" rather than a traveller as such. His "columns", letters written for the *Alta California* and the *New York Tribune* were included in his two-volume *The Innocents Abroad* (1911). Mark Twain's writings as a reporter were abrupt, frank and startling. In Morocco, he was struck by the 'foreignness' of Tangier. "we wanted something thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign" he wrote "And lo! In Tangier we found it" (Twain, 1911: 64). He dwells on the "foreignness of the city:

There are stalwart Bedouins..., and stately Moors.. and Jews... and swarthy ruffians... and original, genuine Negroes... and howling dervishes and a hundred breeds of Arabs... all sorts and descriptions of people that are foreign and curious to look upon (ibid: 65).

This emphasis on “foreignness” distinguishes American from European travel writing: The first is struck numb by it, the second takes it, due to geographical and historical proximity, far more for granted. Again in Twain, we have American contempt for the sheer smallness of local shops and houses;

The general size of a store in Tangier is about that of an ordinary shower-bath in a civilized land...You can rent a hole block of these pigeon holes for fifty dollars a month (Twain,1911: I, 69).

In Turkey, and with outspoken brutality, he found people “filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, superstitious” (ibid: 120). The Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Aziz is “weak, stupid, ignorant.. almost as his meanest slave”. Turkey, to Twain, was a nation of oppressed beggars:

If you would see the very heart and home of cripples and human monsters both, go straight to Constantinople (ibid: II, 69).

The dirt and wretchedness of everything Turkish—baths, food, coffee, tobacco—all became sources for sick humor.

On the coastal regions of Lebanon, Syria and Palestine he had some good words with the Arab natives, which he found to be “naturally good-hearted... and intelligent (ibid: II, 65). But as he moved deeper into Syria, he became increasingly distressed over the condition of the natives. He pronounced the Damascenes to be the “ugliest, wickedest-looking villains we have seen” (ibid: II, 183). Much emphasis is placed on the filthiness and misery both of the land and its people. The more he examines the natives, the more hopeless his verdicts seem to be.

Mark Twain’s views of Near Eastern peoples are overwhelmingly pejorative and vilifying. He focused throughout *The Innocents Abroad*, on the foreignness, filthiness and misery both of the Levant and its people. And yet, Twain’s book does serve as a counter weight to other American writings that over-romanticize the exotic Levant and its people in enraptured enthusiasm. But, in the last analysis, few American 19<sup>th</sup> century Levantine travel writing immersed themselves intimately and thereby objectively explored the real, inner society of the Muslim Levant,

as would lead to a more tolerant understanding. As mere travellers, their short-time sojourns in the Levant made it easier for them to form superficial stereotypes and largely preconceived images of the extrinsic nature of the Levant and its people.

**Herman Melville:** Unlike the impressionistic descriptive surveys of the Levant one finds in most 19<sup>th</sup> century American travel writing, Melville's *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in The Holy Land* (1876) evinces a weighty philosophical seriousness emanating from Melville's trip to Palestine in 1857. In this long narrative poem in which travel and philosophical disquisition are interfused, young Clarel, an American divinity student visiting Palestine, falls in love with Ruth, a converted Jewess. Clarel sets off on a pilgrimage to shrines in the Holy Land, and falls in with other pilgrims, all seeking religious truth; his pilgrimage taking him to the River Jordan, the Dead Sea, the Greek monastery of Mar Saba, and Bethlehem. The pilgrims are a motley group representing various social intellectual and religious affiliations. On his return to Jerusalem Clarel finds that Ruth had died of grief in his absence, leaving him to an uncertain future.

Clarel comes to the Holy Land motivated by religious enthusiasm; the desire to see for himself the land of prophetic revelation. We are first introduced to Clarel in his chamber on his first night in Jerusalem. He realizes that reading books of earlier travellers could be misleading, and that to see, to experience for oneself, is far more important than to read what others have written. "Unlearning" what others have written "opens the expanse of Time's vast sea". He is to be a "seer" not a compiler of bibliographies:

Needs by my soul,  
Purged by the desert's subtle air  
From bookish vapours, now is heir  
To nature's influx of control...,  
But here, unlearning, how to me  
Opens the expanse of Time's vast sea!  
Yes, I am young, but Asia old.  
The books, the books, not all have told.<sup>5</sup>

The Levant we see in *Clarel* has none of the individualistic impressionism evoked by exotic scenery and alien ethnicity we find in his compatriots' Levantine writing. It is void of preconceptions, formed by the writings of others. Melville states that dispensing with 'bookishness' is indispensable to anyone about to embark on a spiritual odyssey to the Holy Land.

Melville went deeper down the Levantine surface than his compatriots had done.

### **The Early Twentieth Century: The Archaeologist/Political Officer**

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional species of traveller of the previous two centuries gave way to a new form --that of the archaeologist/political officer. Near Eastern archaeology was the training ground for the political officer, commissioned to administer the territories of the former Ottoman Empire which came under the influence, or jurisdiction, of Britain. Archaeology was the field in which the future political officer became acquainted, first, with the history of the Near East, an in-depth knowledge of which endowed the officers with accumulations of information on the linguistic, ethnic, sectarian, social, tribal and religious characteristics of the peoples of the region. Such vast archaeologically-based masses of information enabled these political officers to wield enormous power within the political, military, and administrative echelons of the British Government, and also to carve their names into the history of the Near East. The most prominent of these archaeologist/ political officers were **D.G. Hogarth**, **T.E. Lawrence**, and **Gertrude Bell**. Some, like **St. John Philby**, though starting their careers as political officers, were best known as the last of the Arabian explorers, including, apart from **Philby**, **Bertram Thomas** and **Wilfrid Thesiger** (see below.).

**David George Hogarth (1862–1927):** Hogarth was the pioneer amongst the archaeologists/political officers. The wide range of his archaeological and historical scholarship burgeoned naturally into effective knowledge of the Muslim Near East, leading to the development of diplomatic political and administrative abilities which gave him a leading role in Arab Affairs during the First World War. The British Government, aware of his abilities, sent him to Cairo in 1915 to organize an Arab revolt against Turkish rule. Hogarth stands out as the model for the archaeologist/political officer, showing how being a learned and proficient archaeologist is a necessary pre-requisite for a capable and successful political officer. As Director of the British School of Archaeology in Athens, Hogarth specialized in the Hittite civilization and excavated the Hittite capital at Charchemish. He wrote books on this subject of his specialization as an archaeologist: *Hittite Seals* and *Kings of the Hittites* and in line with this earlier tradition of travel, Hogarth wrote

*A Wandering Scholar in the Levant* (1890) and *The Penetration of Arabia* (1904) (in Nasir, 1982:104-5). Hogarth as the trend-setter of the archaeologist/political officer syndrome marks a major transformation in the Levantine/Arabian travel ethos. Formerly, the traveller was an empiricist who described the Levant from personal observation and experience. Hogarth realized, as did the British Government, that studying the deepest historical roots of Levantine society, through archaeology, provided a far more viable groundwork upon which the study of the modern Levant and its peoples could be based. The contemporary Levant is only marginally different from the ancient or historical one, it was realized. The modern Levant is "modern" only chronologically speaking; its cultural, social, and behavioural patterns are closely related to its historical roots. Study the archaeological roots and you arrive at the clearest possible understanding of what flourishes on the surface. Such an understanding vastly facilitates such control, administration, and domination that forms the task of the political officer.

**T. E. Lawrence:** The career of T. E. Lawrence (1888–1935) largely follows the trend set by Hogarth. Interested in history from an early age, he read Layard's books on the excavations at Nineveh and "knew them almost by heart" (Nasir, 1982: 124). At the age of eighteen he went to Syria to visit Crusader castles to decide whether their architecture was influenced by western European, or Byzantine models (ibid). Lawrence's early career as an archaeologist was closely associated with that of Hogarth. In Syria, in 1910, to study Arabic, Lawrence joined Hogarth on a tour of Palestine and Syria and, as an amateur archaeologist; Lawrence took part in Hogarth's excavations at Charachemish on the banks of the Euphrates and stayed on with Hogarth's successors, Campbell Thomas and Leonard Woolley. Hogarth, an acute observer, noticed how well Lawrence liked, and got on well, with Arab workmen, and how he had "quickly made great friends with the Arabs employed on the dig" (ibid: 125). Lawrence's geniality and friendliness is widely verified by those who meet him. Philby, who first met Lawrence in Crete in 1919, writes that "most people meeting him for the first time would have been impressed by his easy manners and friendly approach" (Philby, 1967:88). "I had no earthly reason", Philby adds, "to like Lawrence except that he was likeable, charming and very understanding" (ibid: 90). Hogarth quickly realized that Lawrence's charm was a very valuable asset that should be made use of. Another asset of Lawrence was a quick eye to spot what is of value. Hogarth sent Lawrence first to Egypt to do intelligence work, and then to Sherif Hussein at Mecca as a liaison officer between the

Arabs and the British Government, where his flair for the Arabs romanticized him as the "Uncrowned king of Arabia." Indeed Lawrence himself was at pains to cut down on this flamboyant image he was cast into, insisting that the Arab Revolt "was an Arab war waged and led by Arabs for an Arab aim in Arabia (Lawrence, 1973:21). His mission to Arabia was that of an intelligence officer with a natural aptitude for intelligence work. When at work at archaeological digs in Mesopotamia, he kept his sharp eye, on behalf of British military intelligence, on the Germans digging alongside (Winstone, 1978:111).

One of Lawrence's secret missions during the war was the attempt to relieve the besieged British troops in Kut, southern Mesopotamia. So secret was Lawrence's mission that even the Viceroy in India, the home base of the besieged troops, was uninformed of its nature<sup>6</sup>. Following up a rapid advance from southern Mesopotamia in 1915, British forces occupied Kut and pursued Ottoman forces retreating north. A Turkish victory east of Baghdad, halted this advance and British troops under Major-General Charles Townsend retreated back to Kut where they were attacked by the Turks on December 8<sup>th</sup>. After a harrowing siege of nearly five months, British forces were forced to surrender on April 29<sup>th</sup> 1916, with about 100,000 British and Indian troops going into captivity in eastern Turkey<sup>7</sup>. The siege of Kut had been firmly secured by the German General Von der Goltz, who had taken overall charge of the Turkish forces in southern Mesopotamia, described by his besieged British adversary General Townsend as "one of the finest military strategists in Europe" (Winstone, 1978:175). The Turkish commander asked the besieged British troops to surrender.

It was at this point that captain T.E. Lawrence and Aubrey Herbert appeared on the scene... they came to Kut, on whose authority was never clear, to bribe the Turkish Commander and Von der Goltz into letting the prisoners go (ibid: 176).

The sum offered was one million pounds sterling in gold. The German and Turkish commanders replied that they were gentlemen and could not be bribed. They were then offered two million. The answer was the same. Khalil Pasha met Townshend aboard a Turkish patrol boat and demanded unconditional surrender. On April 25<sup>th</sup> Townshend asked the British Government permission to seek surrender terms (ibid: 17).

Lawrence's failure to bribe the enemy commanders at Kut marked the lowest ebb of his career, and he was seriously out of favour. The generals finally succeeded in getting rid of Lawrence in Mesopotamia, after the



new Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, told London that Gertrude Bell, not Lawrence, should be put in charge of political affairs in Mesopotamia (ibid).

The main aspect of Lawrence's significance is his extraordinary character, unconventional personality, and his unique individuality. Philby (1967:88) asserts the simple fact "that Lawrence was a genius":

He was every where, and wherever he was he stood out conspicuous in the crowd. In any company and in all circumstances he seemed to take the lead easily and naturally: he never had any need to assert himself... he could never escape from the fact that he was, and could not but be, the moving spirit in any enterprise in which he took part.... There was always something which set him apart from his fellows.

Philby then goes on to expound on Lawrence's astounding flouting of convention this way:

He was something of an imp and a will o' the wisp, who deliberately refused to accept any standards of conduct or judgment which he had not tested for himself and found valid.... He delighted to scorn and by-pass the pedestrian official routine of civil and military administration... by asserting his right to act on unorthodox lines, he did achieve the necessary independence to advance the cause to which he had devoted himself in the manner which he himself thought best (ibid: 85).

His flouting of convention was coupled with a sharp and ready wit. On a visit to London as a member of the Emir Faisal's suite, Lawrence, who was in Arab dress, was disapprovingly asked by a person of importance why he, an Englishman and an officer too, was so attired. He was said to have replied firmly, but with respect:

when a person serves too masters, it is better for him to offend the more powerful. I am here as the official interpreter of Emir Faisal whose uniform this is (Sinderson, 1973:151).

The real Lawrence was not merely a capable though flamboyant functionary who was made good use of in several theatres of operation. He had an ingenious flair for global military strategy and had he been so very much less aggravatingly unconventional, less infuriatingly independent and more respectful of rules and regulations, he would well have risen to be Colonial Secretary or War Minister. His writings on grand strategy make fascinating reading. Writing to Hogarth from Cairo

on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1915 he underlines the strategic importance of the Syrian port of Alexandretta: cf.

... the key to the whole place. It's to be the railhead of the proposed Baghdad railway... It has a wonderful harbour .... If Russia has Alexandretta, it's all up with us in the Near East therefore I think it absolutely necessary that we hold Alexandretta (Garnett, 1951:73, 74).

He (ibid: 75) elaborates further as a military strategist:

By occupying Alexandretta with 10,000 men we are impregnable and we cut (I) communication between Asia Minor and Syria, (II) communication between Asia Minor and Baghdad, (III) we also relieve the Caucasus.

**Gertrude Bell:** Born at Washington Hall, County Durham on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1868, the daughter of Sir Hugh Bell, baronet, she was the highest born of political officers operating in Mesopotamia and Arabia during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her personal abilities were successfully coupled to her social standing. Alert, perceptive and decisive, as a girl she had –by her presence of mind– saved the lives of her Swiss guides during an Alpine climb on the Finsteraarhorn. A brilliant career at Oxford won her a first in history in 1887. Her high-powered connections smoothly channeled her undeniable abilities towards a resoundingly successful career. The first of these connections to be of use was her uncle, Sir Frank Lascelles, British Minister in Teheran whom she visited with her cousin, Florence (Sir Frank's daughter), on her first visit to the Near East, in 1892. Almost everyone she knew, as Winstone (1978:34, 153) points out, was in a position of some power and influence, and ambassadors and consuls across the world were known to her personally. In the two pre-war decades she built up a remarkable reputation for herself as an explorer, linguist, archaeologist, a translator of Persian poetry, Alpine climber, and writer. Her literary output, up to the outbreak of war, included *Safar Nameh* (1894), *The Desert and the Sown* (1907), *The Thousand and one Churches; Amurath to Amurath* (1911), *The Palace and Mosque at Ukhaider* (1914).

Like Lawrence, who began his career by visiting crusader Castles in Syria, Gertrude Bell began her experience of Levantine travel with her first desert journey, from Jerusalem, on March 19<sup>th</sup> 1900 at the age of thirty-two (Winston, 1978: 59). An intensely practical, pragmatic person, this journey showed her the need to acquire further technical skills. She attended courses on map-reading and exploration techniques at the Royal Geographical Society. Also like Lawrence, Hogarthian archaeology was

closely associated with her early career. She sailed in 1909 for the Levant to make copies and rubbings of Hittite inscriptions at Charchemish excavated by Hogarth, though her archaeological interest were mainly Mesopotamian rather than Syrian: she closely studied the Palace of Ukhaidar, and Abbasid complex of the late 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D, some 120 miles south-west of Baghdad, about which she was later to write a book (see above—publications).

As with Lawrence and D.G Hogarth, Gertrude Bell's archaeological interests were initially associated with, and eventually progressed and developed into, intelligence work. Prior to, and during the war, the British, like their German contemporaries "combined the roles of travel and archaeology with that of intelligence" (*ibid*: 110). Gertrude Bell worked closely with Lawrence under Hogarth's supervision on archaeological digs, and having been favourably assessed by Hogarth, all three moved on to policy planning, and collecting intelligence data. All three were billeted at the Grand Continental Hotel, Cairo, on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1915 to plan and establish the "Arab Bureau" whose purpose was to organize and plan Arab military resistance against the Turks in Arabia<sup>8</sup>. She wrote to her mother on that date:

I am helping Mr. Hogarth to fill in the intelligence files as to the tribes and Sheikhs (*ibid*: 161).

Her knowledge of Arab tribes was crucial for the Arab Bureau. The Turks were threatening Egypt and by 1915, having unsuccessfully sought to cross the Suez Canal, they were reinforcing their troops outside Ismailia, as well as on the Tigris. On February 14<sup>th</sup> 1915 Britain's Ambassador at Petrograd wired that a strong Turkish force was on its way to Baghdad (*ibid*: 154), which, if arriving without being diverted elsewhere, would threaten the progress northward of the British Expeditionary Force. Thus, throughout 1915, the Arab Bureau was hectically engaged in collating intelligence material gathered by Gertrude Bell, on Arab tribes, so as to activate, as soon as possible, rear-guard Arab thrusts against the Turks, mainly to relieve Turkish pressure on British troops in Egypt and Mesopotamia (*ibid*).

As a political officer, Gertrude Bell was propelled by a supremacist drive to do for the Arabs what they could not do for themselves. She adhered to the hardline British imperialistic opinion that the Arabs were "incorrigible children." She saw them as "Orientals" who, though shrewd, were "backward, simple and impractical" (Nasir, 1982: 120). The Oriental to her was "a very old child" unacquainted with many branches of

knowledge which her people regard as elementary, and his mind is little preoccupied with the need of acquiring them (ibid). Yet she approached the Arabs as an English woman "to hear them tell their own tale", keeping a masterly distance that was not only required by her being a woman. The Arabs enjoyed her aristocratic quirks and mannerisms, taking them as courtly matriarchal benefaction. In Iraq they respectfully called her "Khatoun" – Lady of the Court.

The culmination of Gertrude Bell's career flourished in Mesopotamia in the last decade of her life. As Philby points out, her greatest work was a masterly official report on the administration of Mesopotamia during the difficult period between the armistice of 1918 and the Iraq rebellion of 1920 against British rule. The report was based on her extensive knowledge of the country's geography and tribal affairs.

Her interests in Mesopotamian archaeology culminated during the last three years of her life to her establishment of a museum in Baghdad. Exercising great influence on Sir Percy Cox, who greatly admired her merits and character, she played a principal part in the establishment of a Hashemite Dynasty in Iraq. She died in Baghdad on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1926 .

**Henry St. John Bridger Philby:** He was born on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1885 in Ceylon, the son of a tea planter. Educated at Westminster school, he was a Queen's scholar, with high marks all the way through. Trinity College, Cambridge . He arrived in Cambridge in October 1904, at fellowship level, where he was the center of "an extraordinary outburst of philosophical brilliance" (Monroe, 1973: 17, 21). The Punjab Civil Service was traditionally reserved for candidates with influential connections. Due to string-pulling by Philby's mother, the Governor of the Punjab was "pleased to attach him to his establishment" (ibid: 28). After only five months in India he passed the "Urdu Proficiency Examination" with credit in March 1910 (ibid: 31). Between 1911 and 1915 he earned over 10,000 rupees for brilliant results in language examinations (ibid: 37). Proficient in Arabic and Persian, he was selected as secretary to the Board of Examiners in Oriental Languages in Calcutta. In October 1915, he learned that Sir Percy Cox, the Political Officer in charge of British-occupied Mesopotamia cabled for Arabic speakers. On November 15<sup>th</sup> Philby sailed for Basra (ibid: 45).

From the start of his career as a political officer in Mesopotamia Philby's resolute independence became apparent. Gertrude Bell lectured him "like a sister" for being domineering and difficult, and for being ready to clash with the military (ibid: 53). In November 1920, Reader Bullard (1933:48), a senior political officer in Baghdad wrote:

Philby is back as cantankerous as ever. I never met such a fellow. Any scheme that anyone else puts up he disagrees with. His great phrase is "I join issue with you, and he spends his life joining issue with someone."

Philby's religion, to Bullard, "is a simple dualism in which the spirit of darkness is represented by her Majesty's Government, especially towards the Arabs" (ibid: 219), though he admits that Philby is a man of great abilities and enormous energy which should be confined to physical things, and that the work he has done during his travels would have defeated most men (ibid: 219). In Baghdad, Sir Percy Cox delegated to Philby the preparation of a memorandum on conditions in central Arabia. A mission to Ibn Saud was being planned to encourage him to attack Ibn Rashid of Ha'il, the ally of the Turks (Monroe, 1973: 58). Ibn Rashid had been blockaded, and news of sauction-breaking caravans from Kuwait prompted the speedy dispatch of Philby as Cox's political representative, along with two army officers to discuss improvements in the blockade against Ibn Rashid, and the Turks, in Arabia (ibid: 60). This journey across central Arabia from east to west was Philby's first feat as an Arabian explorer, which won him a Founder's Medal from the Royal Geographical society. He made the desert crossing from Uqair to Jedda in forty-four days (cf. Philby, 1922).

The main significance of Philby's role as political officer is his total support for Ibn Saud as the potential monarch of Arabia, whilst the other major political officers, Sir Percy Cox, A.T. Wilson, Gertrude Bell and T.E. Lawrence supported the Hashemite Sherif Hussein of Mecca as the candidate for that position. They were impressed by the Hashemite Hussein's regal bearing and solemn gravity the qualities – in British tradition – of kings. The Hashemites, they noted, had an illustrious bloodline that is traced to the Prophet himself, a far more distinguished genealogy than that of their own King George V. Philby opposed the Hashemites as candidates for the thrones of Arabia, and of Iraq and strongly supported Ibn Saud. Philby's close friendship, and total support for Ibn Saud was to prove far more lasting in its posthumous consequences than any contribution made by other British political officers of the period. Whereas others' achievements passed away with them, Philby's friendship with Ibn Saud paved the way for an ongoing friendship between Saudi Arabia and Britain.

Sir Percy Cox found Philby's over-enthusiastic support for Ibn Saud disturbing, and his opposition to Faisal obstructing official British policy in Iraq (Monroe, 1973: 116). Philby thus must leave. Resigning from his post as advisor to Iraq's interior Ministry in 1921, he was appointed chief

British Representative in Transjordan to succeed Lawrence. The Government of India never abandoned the war time project of a railway through British-controlled territory from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, and in February 1922 Cox sent out a survey party from Baghdad under a railway engineer, Major Alec Holt to prospect for the best alignment. Holt was put up by the Philbys when he reached Amman, (ibid: 121) and in April, May and June 1922, the two men were in the desert on a "railway reconnaissance." The 800 mile camel journey intended to lay the route for a railway between Transjordan and Iraq.

Having left British Government service in 1925, Philby settled permanently in Saudi Arabia and in 1930 he was formally converted to Islam (Philby, 1967:143):

It is in Arabia and Islam that I have found in actual being an easy social system well adjusted to all the reasonable needs of humanity. (ibid: 155)

Henceforth he was known in Arabia as Abdullah Philby. Elizabeth Monroe mentions that, apart from material reasons, Philby's conversion would greatly help to realize his dream of being the first European to cross the Empty Quarter (ibid: 163: see below).

### **The Empty Quarter:**

Philby's initial career as a political officer, and then his life-long friendship with Ibn Saud, culminated in the realization of Philby's dream—to be the first Westerner to cross the Rub'-al-khali, the Empty Quarter. His crossing of the "Quarter" was no isolated, inconsequential individual endeavour, which ended with the completion of the attempt. Philby's crossing enabled him to play a leading role as an intermediary in negotiations for oil in Saudi Arabia.

The Empty Quarter in the 1930s', stood out as the last tract of territory on earth unexplored by Westerners. Crossing it on camel-back was a daunting, if not deadly challenge. It is a veritable sea of sand covering almost the entire area of south-eastern Arabia. Its southern and eastern parts are level steppe lands, its remaining two thirds are classic desert, (Brent, 1977: 201). Its breadth from north-east to south-west covers 800 miles, and at its widest from north-west to south-east covers about 400 miles. Though Philby nursed an urge to be the first European to cross the Empty Quarter, he needed Ibn Saud's permission and support, which he eventually secured (Philby, 1952: 144). Tribal warfare, however, made it extremely dangerous for Philby to embark on his mission at first, and thus

his departure was delayed. The delay gave another Englishman **Bertram Thomas** a head start over Philby, but Thomas started out "without the permission or knowledge of the king" (ibid), and thus posed a substantial threat to Saudi sovereignty over the Empty Quarter (see below).

Philby finally set out for the Empty Quarter in January 1932, deciding to make a longer more dangerous crossing than Thomas, who had made the easiest, quickest possible dash across. Philby, thereby, hoped to regain "some sense of himself as the first, the pioneer" (Brent, 1977: 210). His crossing had both positive and negative aspects. Of the positive ones, first, he helped Ibn Saud to claim the Empty Quarter as part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and second, he established himself as the foremost cartographer and Arabian explorer thereby making himself known to western oil companies who avidly sought his services as the foremost Arabian expert, and as the closest of western confidants to Ibn Saud. Negatively, his crossing showed what he hoped to find, but didn't. He hoped to find the site of the ancient city of Ophir (Ubar, or Aubar) where legendary kings once ruled. Sadly, what he thought to be the site of Ophir turned out to be nothing more than a volcanic stump. Also, during his crossing he came across the fossilized remains of an ostrich egg, identified as that of the species *Psammornis rothschildi*, a bird not seen in that area for several hundred thousand years (ibid: 210).

Philby's crossing of the Empty Quarter was certainly a monument to human endurance. "The work he has done during his travels would have defeated most men" (Bullard, 1993: 219). At one point, he traversed 375 miles on camel back between one watering place and another (Fedden, 1952:38). Philby's crossing won him a resounding reputation as the greatest of Arabian travellers:

Perhaps no Englishman has acquired so intimate an understanding of the deserts, so profound and deeply felt a knowledge of the Bedouin and their society, as Philby. (ibid).

Perhaps the most fitting tribute to Philby as an Arabian explorer was that given by Elizabeth Monroe. None of the previous travellers and explorers of Arabia, she maintains had covered half so much as he of the huge surface of Arabia. None had drawn attention to so many of its antiquities; none had equaled his spread of maps" (Monroe, 1973: 295-6).

During the summer of 1932, having recently returned from his exploration of the Empty Quarter, Philby was approached by Standard Oil Company of California on the subject of an oil contract with the Saudi Government, and in October he was formally authorized to inquire from

the Government about the facilities it would be prepared to grant (Philby, 1952:177-8). Thus due to his fame as an Arabian explorer, the kings closest confidant, both crowned by the glory of his crossing the Empty Quarter, Philby played a crucial role in Saudi Arabia's oil history.

Philby's crossing of the Empty Quarter had far reaching territorial consequences as to what country had the right to claim that vast stretch of desert. Higher national Saudi interests necessitated a speedy crossing. Philby writes that one of Ibn Saud's advisors "had expressed the opinion that the area should be explored at once "if only to obviate the possibility of claims to sovereignty by foreign powers on the strength of prior penetration" (ibid: 180). Evidence was mounting that foreign parties were planning attempts on the Quarter. Carl Rathjens, a reputable German scholar, had recently visited Jedda with the Austrian Herman Von Wissmann and had gone on to the Yemen to arrange an attempt on the Rub' al Khali from there. The Imam of Yemen had far-reaching ambitions which may well have included the Empty Quarter. The Empty Quarter, Ibn Saud decided, was to be explored by Philby. In Philby's (1952:156) words, the Saudi King, "was peeved to think that Thomas had traversed a wide tract of his territory without his permission or assistance". The King was afraid that Thomas's crossing would lay British claims to the Quarter, Muscat where Thomas worked, being a British Protectorate (see below).

**Bertram Thomas's** role as an explorer of the Empty Quarter lies in his being Philby's competitor in the race to be the first Westerner to cross what D.G. Hogarth described as "the largest tract of completely unknown country in the world outside the polar regions" (Philby, 1952: 144). Philby and Thomas knew one another well more than a decade before they became competitors for the race across "The Quarter". Bertram Thomas, who was a good Arabist, had worked for Philby in Iraq. When Philby became chief British Representative in Transjordan in 1922 he wanted Thomas to be his "second in command" (Monroe, 1973: 124). While in Jordan, Thomas accompanied Philby, Philby's wife Dora, and the desert traveller Rosita Forbes, on a trip south to investigate Philby's plan for developing Petra as a tourist attraction (ibid: 127).

Bertram Thomas was very well placed to carry out his mission to cross The Empty Quarter. He was a British political officer actively involved in Arabian affairs since 1918, a Minister in Oman's Council of State, and a friend of the Sultan. He learned to travel like a Bedouin, reconnoitered routes he might use later, purchased supplies and camels, and hired guides. He marched out of Dhufar with fifteen loaded camels on December 10<sup>th</sup> 1930 (Brent, 1977: 203). By January 10<sup>th</sup> 1931 Thomas



was making the final northward drive of 400 miles through "Ar-Raml" – The Great Sands. From January 22<sup>nd</sup> sandstorms slashed at them, with sand cutting through exposed skin. Finally, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> Thomas, and two guides, climbed the soft incline of a hill. At the top, they beheld, to the east, the distant grey surface of the Persian Gulf. The Rub' al-Khali had been crossed (ibid: 208).

Philby's attitude to Thomas beating him in the race to be the first across "The Quarter" was ambivalent. On the one hand, he was sympathetic, helpful and sportsmanlike or so he would have us believe when reading his books. "Bertram Thomas was at Masqat", wrote Philby, "which, as I myself told him in "Amman many years before, was the best possible point for an attack on the uncrossable sands" (Philby, 1967: 180). When learning that Thomas had landed at Dhufar for the crossing, he sent him a telegram of congratulation. On the other hand, privately, Philby was piqued by Thomas beating him in the race. Elizabeth Monroe writes that Philby was so irked by the news of Thomas's crossing that he shut himself indoors for a whole week. He was angry and defiant. "Damn and blast Thomas", he wrote to his wife Dora, "I have sworn a great oath not to go home until I have crossed the R.K twice and left nothing in it for future travellers" (Monroe, 1973: 176). "I am going now", he told Dan van de Meulen, explorer and Netherlands consul at Jedda, "and you will not see me again for a year, perhaps two years, or you will never see me again. If I come back I shall have *explored* the Empty Quarter". Philby belittled the worth of Thomas's crossing. "what value was a journey" he asked derisively "performed in a straight line and so fast that it amounted to a race with death"? (ibid: 176). Philby was largely right in belittling Thomas's crossing. Thomas was more of a traveler who made a quick dash through hitherto unexplored territory. Philby, though chronologically coming second across, was more of an explorer than a mere traveler. Notwithstanding Thomas's long and quietly worthy career as a political officer it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, in his journey through the quarter, Thomas smacks of the interloper who is out to clinch a deal as quickly as possible.

**Wilfrid Thesiger** was the third and very last of the Empty Quarter explorers. Unlike Philby and Thomas, whose crossings were mainly motivated by urges for personal achievement, and had led to far-reaching and weighty political ramifications, Thesiger crossed the Empty Quarter for a purely practical reason; which Brent (1977: 219) describes as "applied exploration": He was commissioned to look for locusts breeding grounds. Thesiger's father was British minister in Addis Ababa. At twenty, in between terms at Oxford, Thesiger had travelled amongst the

fearsome Danakhil tribesmen of Abyssinia noted for their ferocious practice of collecting, not the heads of their enemies, but their testicles (ibid). He joined the Sudan Political Service and was posted to the south-eastern edges of the Sahara where he first learned to make camel journeys, once covering 450 miles in nine days. (ibid). During the last months of the Second World War, as a political officer in Abyssinia, Thesiger met O.B. Lean, the desert locust specialist of the FAO. Knowledge of locust movements and breeding grounds in Southern Arabia was lacking. Lean badly needed someone to examine locust habitats in the Empty Quarter. Thesiger at once nominated himself for the job, and Lean immediately accepted him.

In late October 1946, Thesiger set out from Salala, in Oman to cross the Rub'—al—Khali in search of locusts' breeding grounds. Thesiger's qualities as a traveller are reflected in his total identification with the life-style of his two companions, Bin Kabina and Bin Ghabaisha, to whom he dedicated his account of the journey *Arabian Sands* (1959). He wore exactly the same clothes they wore and all three ate the same food and drank the same coffee; whereas Philby, still bearing traces of "the gentleman traveller" had shared a tin of canned fruit only with his personal servant, away from other members of his party (Brent, 1977: 218). Thesiger developed a soulful proximity to his two guides who called him "Umbarak" — The Blessed One. Thesiger, with touching sentiment, mentions how he gave each of his companion-guides a Martini rifle when he finally bid them farewell in 1950 (cf. Thesiger, 1950). Philby had high praise for Thesiger as a traveller in Arabia, describing him as "one of the most outstanding desert travellers during the few years he devoted to Arabia (Philby, 1967: 78), and "as one of the greatest of our old-fashioned travellers, comparable with Burton and Doughty and for that matter, Scott" (Monroe, 1973: 250).

### Conclusion

In conclusion Western travel to the Levant and Arabia could be considered, in its own right, as a treatise on human quest. Every age prompted its own idiosyncratic urge for travel to the Near East: the medieval quest to probe the forbidden lands of the infidel; the Renaissance's relentless quest for exploration; Eighteenth-century encyclopedism prompting the quest for arcane, esoteric knowledge in the mysterious East; the nineteenth-century grandiose quest for "Grand-Tourism". In the twentieth-century, with its burgeoning mass media publicity, the quest for travel became one for both national and personal

aggrandizement. Western travel to the Near East, as a treatise on human quest, provides rich research potential on the psychology of exploration.

**\* Part 1 of this paper appeared in *IJAES*, Vol. 4, 2003, pp. 65-84.**

**References:** Readers are kindly requested to see the list of references at the end of Part (1) of this study in *IJAES*, Vol. 4, 2003, pp. 82-84)

### Notes

1. For a full bibliography of their names and the publication of their Levantine travels, see Marwan M. Obeidat, "Observations in the East: A Bibliography of American Travel Accounts of the Muslim Near Orient before 1900", *Der Islam*, Band 68, 1991 : 115-125.
2. Stephens turned over this map with other documents to an official U.S. expedition surveying the River Jordan and the Dead Sea, whose activities are recorded in William F. Lynch, U.S.N. *Narrative of the United States Expedition to the River Jordan* (Washington, 1843).
3. Stephens had read, studied and absorbed, yet so judiciously that their presence is hardly noticeable: Volney's Ruins; Keith's Prophecies; the "Travels of Lamartine"; the researches of Pococke; Keniker's The Letters from Palestine of Jolliffe; the Narratives of Legh; and the published explorations of Burchhardt Laborde, Linaut, Belzoni, Bankes, and Ulrich Seetzen.
4. *Pencilings by the Way*, 2 Vols, (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1836) II, 120 - 121.
5. *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*, ed. Walter E. Bezanson (New York: Heudricks House, 1960), vol I, p. 5.
6. The viceroy sent a cable on April 26th 1917 to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Director of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office stating that "...there are apparently other officers, e.g Lawrence, who have been sent to Mesopotamia with special instructions of which we are unaware"( Winstone , 1978: 174).
7. For further details see F.J. Moberley (ed.) *The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918* (London: 1923-27).
8. Mark Sykes drafted the proposed functions of an "Arabian Bureau" as, first, "to harmonize British political activity in the north-east of Arabia, and to keep the Foreign and India offices, the Admiralty, War Office and Government of India simultaneously informed of the general tendency of German and Turkish policies. Second, to coordinate propaganda in favour of Great Britain among non-Indian Muslims (Winstone, 1978: 163, 164).