

EPIONER SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION IN THE HOLY LAND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY *

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Preface

As the object of world interest, the Holy Land preceded other oriental countries. Since the Diaspora, Jews had not ceased praying and yearning to return to the area. In the eyes of Christians the area always was regarded as the "Holy Land." Moslems, from the birth of their religion, ranked Jerusalem as their third Holy City and a major object for pilgrimages.

Nevertheless, from a scientific point of view the Holy Land remained completely "terrae incognitae" until the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹ From the end of the Crusades (1200 A.D.) till Napoleon's invasion of the area (1799 A.D.) only a few European travellers succeeded in visiting the Holy Land. For centuries western man had not ventured to most of its regions and many famous places literally were covered by the dust of time. Maps were merely general sketches with neither precision nor accuracy. The natural world, the flora and the fauna of the land, were completely unknown, and the physical characteristics of the area were, on the whole, unclear to scholars.²

During the nineteenth century the Holy Land unveiled some of its secrets. Wayfarers, travellers, research expeditions, and scientific groups dedicated themselves to revealing the country's panorama, both natural and human. For the Holy Land the nineteenth century can be thought of as the era of its geographical exploration, the period of its rediscovery.³

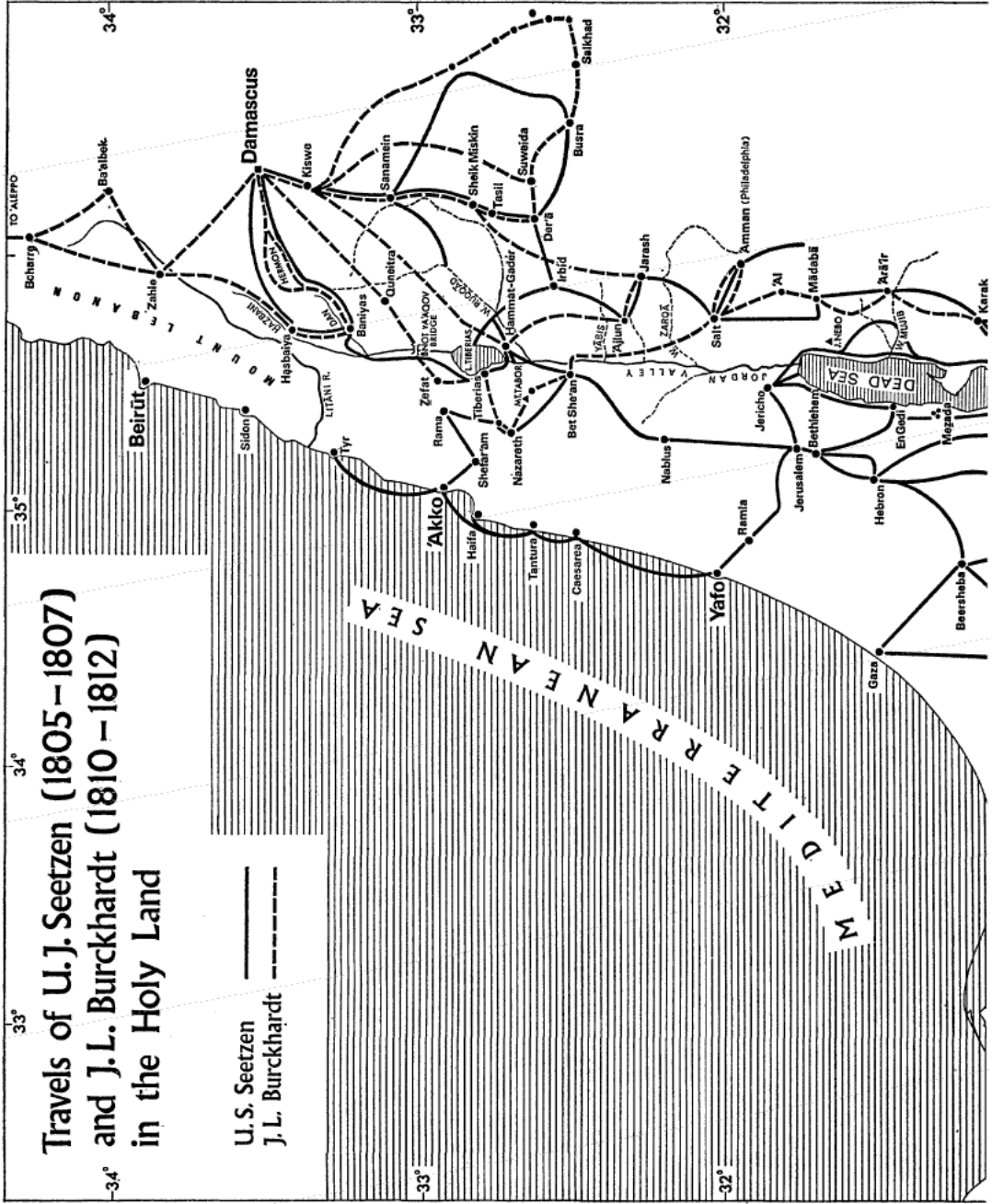
At the beginning of the nineteenth century conditions in the country still were very unsafe. Many of the travellers coming to the area at that time had to disguise themselves in Arab dress and hide the aim of their visit. Even so, two important explorers, U. J. Seetzen and J. L. Burckhardt, succeeded in laying the first foundations of the country's scientific exploration at this time. The specific intention

* Acknowledgment is given to Dr. R. D. Mitchell, Department of Geography, University of Maryland, and to Mr. E. Van Swol, graduate student in the same department, for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ Benzinger, J., "Researches in Palestine." In Hilprecht, H. V., *Explorations in Bible Lands during the Nineteenth Century*, Philadelphia, A. J. Holman and Co., 1903, pp. 581-622, "Palestine Research is But a Child of the Nineteenth Century," p. 581.

² Hopkins, J. W. J., "Nineteenth-Century Maps of Palestine; dual purpose historical evidence." *Imago Mundi*, XXII, 1968, pp. 30-36; The first accurate map of part of Palestine is known today as Jacotin's Map, see: Kallner (Amiran) D. H. "Jacotin's Map of Palestine," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, London, 1944, pp. 157-163. Atlas of Israel, Survey of Israel, Second Edition, 1970, Sheet I/5.

³ Ben-Arieh, Y., *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*. Carta and Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem, 1970 (Hebrew), Ben-Arieh, Y., "The Geographical Exploration of the Holy Land," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, London, (In Press).





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of Seetzen and Burckhardt was not to explore the Holy Land even though travels in the area were part of their general explorations in the Middle East. However their contribution to knowledge about the Holy Land was enormous.

The aim of this paper is to deal with the pioneer scientific exploration in the Holy Land; to analyze the change which occurred in the way of traveling to the country at the beginning of the nineteenth century; to examine the role that the two important explorers mentioned above played in this change; and to show in what way they helped to bring this change.

Changes in Attitudes toward Travel during the Nineteenth Century

From the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century the number of European travellers who visited the Holy Land and succeeded in recording their journeys was quite small. Only a few ventured on such a long, arduous and dangerous journey.⁴ The main interests of these explorers were in the holy sites and they limited themselves to describing these places. Some of them spent a considerable amount of time giving advice in their writings to future visitors.

The monumental content of the "Holy Land" and the spirit of history that permeated it, since the birth of the three major religions, contributed to the forging of the common concept that the country was a special phenomenon – a "living" museum-piece.

A sizable portion of the written material about the Holy Land sprang from the urge to document Biblical facts and to determine whether they refer to the past or to prophecy. Some travellers put forward religious ideas in order to prove their theories. Others were dragged into Biblical dispute in an attempt to justify their findings.⁵

Before the nineteenth century the travellers' books show typical shortcomings which can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Most of the travellers came chiefly to visit the holy places. Therefore they kept to good and safe roads, and only saw selected sites. Since they did not visit all parts of the country their accounts were severely limited in scope and contents.
- (2) Catholic and Protestant pilgrims gathered their information from the clergy of the monasteries who acted as both hosts and guides. Traditions based on legend and folklore preserved within the churches and Christian Orders often had been transmitted from generation to generation without any scientific examination. Thus, the pilgrims' reports were stereotyped. Without bothering to check the origins of these stories, most visitors simply embodied them in their writings.⁶

⁴ The most detailed bibliography on travellers to the Holy Land who later recorded their impressions is that of Röhrich, R. *Bibliothica Geographica Palaestinae von 333 bis 1878*, Berlin, 1890. This bibliography covers some 3,515 authors. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the total number of such authors was approximately 1,500, roughly one per year. See below footnote 10.

⁵ Schattner, J., *Mappat Eretz-Yisrael vi toledotheha* (Hebrew), Bialik Institute Press, Jerusalem, 1951, pp. 159-160.

Gage, W. L. (editor), *The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula by Carl Ritter: Translated and Adapted to the Use of Biblical Students*. New York, 1866, II, 78-9.

⁶ Robinson, E. and E. Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea during the Year 1838*, London, 1841, pp. 370-379; Bliss, F. G., *The Development of Palestine Exploration*, New York, 1906, pp. 209-210; Benziger, pp. 585-6.

- (3) Many details in the traveller's reports also were copied from earlier written sources, and old maps. These maps lacked any geographical value and were extremely small scaled.⁷
- (4) There are difficulties in selecting material from travelogues. Frequently the narratives entered into long debates on unimportant subjects or were full of adventure tales. Consequently they have a paucity of useful information. For modern researches sometimes the authenticity of one important detail is the only compensation in thousands of lines of verbiage. As Carl Ritter commented, "In order to obtain even single grains of gold it has often been necessary . . . to pull to pieces great heaps of rubbish."⁸
- (5) The reports of many travellers also relied on information supplied by Arab escorts and Arab villagers. These observations were mingled with tradition, exaggeration and fancy too.
- (6) The travellers' ignorance of the Arabic language forced them to communicate with the local people through interpreters. As their information did not come directly, knowledge was handicapped. Moreover, without skill in the native language the travellers felt insecure, and kept to the important towns. Because of all these elements the visitors never saw what lay off the main roads and in the small towns.⁹

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, interest in the Holy Land underwent a marked change and the stream of travellers to the country swelled.¹⁰ The compulsion to explore and become acquainted with the geographical conditions of the country was awakened and travellers were not satisfied with only seeing the religious places. The stress on the spiritual content of the "Holy Land" gradually began to disappear from the world of ideas. Scientific interests deepened. Increasingly it was recognized that the natural characteristics of the country were completely unknown to scientists. Explorers gripped by a desire to discover and learn, set out to locate settlements, sites, historical places, or other geographical sites according to accurate surveys and precise astronomical measurements.

The explorers were fascinated by the secrets of the country. Their excursions progressed from the main and central roads to the secondary ones, and later ventured into hidden and unknown paths. Finally they plunged into geographical and historical researches. With great care they chose their routes, listed and described details along their way, measured distances and sketched all they saw.¹¹

At first these travellers also did not reach acceptable scientific standards. But during the nineteenth century the information which they provided became increasingly richer and more accurate than that of pilgrims in earlier centuries.¹² During the nineteenth century different explorers contributed to the scientific

⁷ Hopkins; Ben-Arieh, Y., "Lynch's Expedition to the Dead Sea (1847/8); One Hundred Twenty Years Later." *Prologue, The Journal of the National Archives*, Washington, D.C., United States (In Press).

⁸ Ritter, II, 66.

⁹ Robinson, for instance, also stresses the importance of the knowledge of the Arabic language and points to the Arab custom of always trying to satisfy the visitors by giving them the answers they wished to hear. On this see Bliss, p. 197; Benzinger, pp. 586-7.

¹⁰ Röhrich shows that from 1800 until 1878 more than 2,000 travellers came to the country and recorded their impressions.

¹¹ Schattner, pp. 155-156; Ben-Arieh, *op. cit.* 3.

¹² *Atlas of Israel*, Margalit. Hanna, The Cultural Landscape at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. First Edition, 1956, Sheet VIII/1 (Hebrew).

change in the way of travelling and exploring of the Holy Land. Among them two eminent figures: Ulrich Jasper Seetzen and John Lewis Burckhardt, well deserve the title, pioneers of scientific research.¹³

The Travels of Ulrich Jasper Seetzen

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, born in northern Germany, displayed an early interest in the Natural Sciences – and a love for travel. He studied medicine, and in his free time, toured the European continent. On June 13, 1802, having decided to extend his travels to include the lands of the East and Africa, Seetzen set out for Istanbul.

Before his departure he studied and read about the places he was to visit, equipping himself with maps and directives from scientists of his acquaintance. Furthermore, he undertook the task of sending antiquities and archaeological finds back to the Gotha Museum in Germany, and to note and copy inscriptions in Latin, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew. Fully aware of the dangers inherent in such an expedition, he studied Arabic, and Near Eastern customs, dressed in Arab garb and even adopted the religion of Islam. His experiences on the journey were recorded in a carefully kept diary.¹⁴

At the beginning of his travels Seetzen had little or no money. Through his success as an antique collector, he soon became famous. Not only the Duke of Saxe-Gotha and the local museum, but later the Czar of Russia and other wealthy princes contributed to finance his trips.¹⁵

Seetzen spent some time in Turkey, further familiarizing himself with the Oriental way of life. On 23 November, he arrived in Aleppo in Syria remaining for over a year to complete his studies in Arabic. There he acquired a number of antiquities and manuscripts which he dispatched to the museum, together with information and observations concerning the geography of Arab lands and a report on the Wahabis tribes in the Persian Gulf area.¹⁶

In May, 1805, Seetzen reached Damascus, from whence he set out on his tours of the Hauran, Lebanon, Western Palestine, Transjordan and Sinai. In Upper Galilee he visited Banias (Caesarea Philippi), which had not been described by a European traveller since the Crusader times. After exploring the Gaulan, he travelled through the district of Belkah-Gilead (May, 1806), and succeeded in discovering the magnificent remains of Gerasa (Jerash) and Philadelphia (Amman).¹⁷

Seetzen then crossed the Jordan River and went to Jerusalem. In April and November, 1806, he carried out two tours in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Mount of Olives and the Tombs of the Kings), Bethlehem and Hebron. It was during these

¹³ Different sources wrote in different ways the names of these two explorers. Ritter (II, 61-2) used the following: Ulr-Jacob Seetzen and Johann Ludwig Burckhardt; For the latter Bliss (p. 174) used the name Johannes Ludwig; Katherine Sim contended that the right name of Burckhardt was Jean Louis, see below footnote 15; the names in the article are according to the script in their books.

¹⁴ Kruse, Fr., "Vorrede und Einleitung zu Seetzens Reisetagebüchern in dem Orient," pp. iii-LXXXV. Seetzen, U. J., *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten*. 4 Bänder, Berlin, Verlegt bei G. Reiner, 1854-9.

¹⁵ Hallet, Robin, *The Penetration to Africa to 1815*, 1965, p. 379; Sim, Katherine, *Desert Traveller, the Life of Jean Louis Burckhardt*, London, Victor Gollanz, 1964, p. 59.

¹⁶ On Seetzen's travels from Aleppo see Seetzen, I, 1-30.

¹⁷ On Seetzen's travels in Southern Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan see Seetzen, I, 31-432; IV, 1-248.

tours that he heard, for the first time, of a number of interesting sites en route to the Sinai peninsula. Before setting out to inspect these, however, Seetzen managed to visit much of the western, northern and eastern parts of the Holy Land. From Jerusalem he went to Ramle, thence to the ancient port of Jaffa, where he boarded a vessel which carried him northward to Acre and Tyre, with stops at Caesarea, Tantura and Haifa. In his travels, Seetzen also visited Shefaram, Rama, Nazareth, Kafr Kana, Beisan and Nablus. In December, 1806, he went from Jerusalem to Jericho, touring the region west of the Dead Sea. During the months of January, February and March, 1807, he became the first explorer to journey around the Dead Sea. This expedition included a visit to the town of Kerak, east of the lake. However, his crowning discovery was the location of the site of Masada – the famed mountain fortress, the last place of Jewish resistance to the Romans.¹⁸

In March-April, 1807, he departed from Jerusalem and by way of Hebron, the Negev and the Sinai peninsula he reached the famous St. Catherine Monastery, at the foot of the so-called Mount Sinai.

U. J. Seetzen, nommé Mousa, voyageur Allemand . . . est venu visiter le Couvent de la Sainte Cathérine, les Monts d'Horeb, de Moïse . . . et après avoir parcouru toutes les provinces orientales anciennes de la Palestine . . . et après avoir fait deux fois l'entour de la mer morte, et traversé le désert de l'Arabie Pétrée, entre la ville d'Hebron et entre le Mont Sinai . . . Après un séjour de dix jours, il continuait son voyage pour la ville de Suez.

This is part of an inscription inscribed by Seetzen into one of the walls of St. Catherine's Monastery on April 9, 1807.¹⁹

On his way south through Arabia Petraea, Seetzen tried to discover the lost city of Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabatean kingdom with its wonderful rock temples, but without success.²⁰

In May, 1807, Seetzen reached the port of Suez, and on the 18th of that month, he turned up in Cairo. Here he remained for nearly two years (till March 1809). In the guise of an Arab merchant named Musa el-Hakim ("the Physician"), he undertook trips to the Fayum and the pyramids. While in Cairo, Seetzen added several African tongues to his knowledge, receiving lessons from a slave-trader, so as to prepare himself for the continuation of his expedition.

From Cairo, Seetzen journeyed to Heliopolis. On the way he was grievously afflicted by the elements of nature. He mentioned that he was nearly blinded by a series of violent sandstorms and the merciless sun. Undaunted, he boarded a ship bound for Jedda, in Arabia, and on October 8, 1809, arrived in Mecca as a pilgrim. Though it was forbidden, on pain of death, to sketch the Holy Kaaba, the sacred place in the town, Seetzen did so and, thanks to this daring deed, he later discovered that the drawings of his predecessor the famous Danish traveller, Niebuhr, were inaccurate. Passing on to Medina, he sketched the city plan, taking careful note of its various mosques. Traveling southward to follow Niebuhr's footsteps across the Arabia Felix, he reached Yemen, visiting Hudeida, Sana, Taiz and

¹⁸ On Seetzen's travels in Jerusalem, Western Palestine and the Dead Sea area see Seetzen, II, and IV, 249-400.

¹⁹ Burckhardt, J. L., *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*. Edited by the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, London, John Murray, 1822, p. 553; Bliss, p. 173.

²⁰ Leake, see below footnote 27, p. v-vi; Sim, p. 141.

other cities. In his last letters, dated 14 and 17 November 1810, he described Arabian horses, Hadramaut and the South Arabian inscriptions he discovered there.²¹

His next intention was to travel down the coast of the Red Sea and eventually enter Africa south of the equator, but his sudden death brought an end to his brave adventures.

The final fate of this courageous explorer is shrouded in mystery. In Mocha he loaded on camels the objects he had collected for Gotha, including his notes and sketches, and set out for Sana. Two days after he left he was found dead. It has been assumed that he was poisoned on the orders of the Imam of Sana and Taiz.²² Despite his Arab garb, he may have raised doubts in the minds of the local people as to his true identity. The fact that he carried specimens of snakes preserved in alcohol may have given him, in their eyes, the appearance of a shaman or witchdoctor. His ceaseless inspections and investigations, and his studies in astronomy also may have contributed to the native's mistrust and fear of him.

Unfortunately Seetzen did not bequeath all his knowledge to the world. Much of it was never written down, although material gathered on his journeys initially was published in contemporary German and English scientific journals.²³ It was only in the 1850s that his writings were collected in book form and published in Berlin.²⁴ The book contains four volumes. The first three include Seetzen's diary and an introduction by Prof. Kruse, the editor. These volumes appeared in 1854-5, while the fourth one, a commentary to Seetzen's travels appeared later in 1859.²⁵

The spheres of Seetzen's interest were varied and far-reaching. He devoted much time and attention to archaeology and antiquities, to mineralogy, botany and zoology. Thus, for example, he copied hundreds of Greek inscriptions, collected rock and plant specimens, drew up a detailed table of different creeks and wadis in several regions, prepared reports on thoroughbred Arabian horses, and so forth.

Carl Ritter pointed out that Seetzen was less fortunate than his followers, for his writings are little known to scholars.²⁶ This fact is still true today. However it should be stressed that Seetzen's diary represents a major contribution to the

²¹ On Seetzen's travels in Egypt and Arabia see Seetzen, III; IV, 401-500.

²² Otter, W. (Editor) *The Life and Remains of the Rev. Edward Daniel Clarke, Prof. of Mineralogy*. Cambridge, 1824, p. 617; Sim, p. 59; Bliss, p. 174.

²³ Ritter, II, 61-2 cited the following:

Von Zack, Monatliche, 1806, May p. 508; *Ibid.*, 1807, Feb., p. 132 and July, p. 79. He stressed that Seetzen's papers were widely scattered. For detailed list of Seetzen's reports see Robinson, Appendix p. 22-3; also Bliss, p. 174.

Part of his notes were translated into English and published by the "Palestine Association." *A Brief Account of the Countries Adjoining the Lake of Tiberias, the Jordan and the Dead Sea*. London, 1813.

This report was accompanied by a map of the area from Damascus to the Ghor (the Jordan Rift) compiled in 1810. See below footnote 51.

²⁴ Seetzen, Herausgegeben und commentirt von Professor Dr. Pr. Kruse in Verbindung mit Prof. Dr. Heinrich, Dr. G. Fr. Hermann Muller und mehreren andern Gelehrten.

The publication of Seetzen's reports were largely the result of Ritter's personal influence. In his study on Palestine, Ritter complained that until the end of the 1840's, "no collection of this eminent German traveller's documents, journals and the like had been published to serve as the worthy monument of a zealous and eminent martyr to the cause of science." pp. 61-2.

²⁵ Seetzen, "Commentare zu Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's Reisen ... etc.," Ausgearbeitet von Staatzr, Prof. Dr. Fr. Kruse and Prof. Dr. H. L. Fleischer, vol. IV, 1859.

²⁶ Ritter, II, 61-2. Ritter also stressed the fact that Seetzen was "less fortunate than his follower Burckhardt" for Burckhardt had the sponsorship of a British Society.

knowledge of the Holy Land. A more detailed evaluation of this contribution will follow.

The Travels of John Lewis Burckhardt

It was not the intention of the Swiss explorer John Lewis Burckhardt to follow the footsteps of his predecessor, Seetzen, nor to explore Palestine and the Levant. He yearned to discover and explore the unknown interior of Africa.²⁷

J. L. Burckhardt was born in Basel, but abandoned it for London because of dissatisfaction with the political situation in his country.²⁸ There he became acquainted with the activities of the British Association for Promoting the Discovery of Interior Africa, and offered his services to the leaders of the Association, Sir Joseph Banks and Rev. Dr. Hamilton.²⁹ In May 1808 a general meeting of the Association willingly accepted his offer.

The Association decided to send Burckhardt to explore the Niger region, a task in which several previous explorers had not succeeded.³⁰ In preparation for this dangerous mission it was decided that Burckhardt should be sent to Syria for two years to study Moslem languages and customs so that he could use an Arab disguise to facilitate his movements. As part of these preparations, he was asked to tour portions of Syria which had not yet been sufficiently explored by Europeans.³¹

From an extract of a letter he sent to Sir Joseph Banks, dated Malta, April 22, 1809, we know that Burckhardt learned for the first time about his predecessor, Seetzen, when he was on the way to Syria.

You will be much interested in hearing that at this moment an attempt is making to explore the Interior of Africa; and that I have unknowingly entered upon my expedition as rival to a gentleman who is probably by this time in the scene of action. I was allowed the perusal of a letter from Dr. Seetzen to Mr. Barker, who is a merchant of Malta, and brother to the British Consul at Aleppo. Dr. Seetzen is a German Physician, who was sent five or six years ago by the Duke of Saxe-Gotha into the Levant, to collect manuscripts and Eastern curiosities. He has resided for a considerable length of time at Constantinople, at Smyrna, at Aleppo, at Damascus, and for the last eighteen months at Cairo, from whence his letter to Mr. Barker is dated on the 9th of February last. After remarking that he had sent off from Cairo to Gotha a collection of fifteen hundred manuscripts and three thousand

²⁷ Leake, W. M., "Memoir on the Life and Travels of John Lewis Burckhardt," pp. iii-xcii, in J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*. Edited by the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, London, John Murray, 1819, pp. i-ii.

²⁸ On the family of J. L. Burckhardt and his studies see Sim.

²⁹ Leake, p. v; It was through Sir Joseph Banks influence that Burckhardt eventually undertook the incredibly difficult and dangerous assignment which was to be his lifelong aim and career.

Sir Joseph Banks, who sailed with Captain Cook and did much to help Cook, was known as the "Father of Research". Banks helped to found the African Association in 1788; it was later incorporated into the Royal Geographical Society in 1831; Hamilton was at that time treasurer and acting secretary of the Association. See Sim, p. 20.

³⁰ On the aim of his mission and the preceding explorers to this region see: Hallet, Robin; and Hallet, R. (editor) *Records of the African Association, 1788-1831*. The Royal Geographical Society. Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., London, 1964. "Introduction." pp. 1-69; Chapter 13, "Burckhardt", 1808-1817, pp. 218-223.

³¹ On the aim of the trips of Burckhardt to Syria see Leake, pp. iv-vi; Burckhardt, Preface, p. a.

different objects of antiquity, he informs Mr. Barker that he is waiting for the next caravan to set out for Suez; that he means to go down the eastern coast of the Red Sea, and then entering Africa to the southward of the line, to explore its interior parts. Such are his expressions.³²

From Malta Burckhardt sailed to Syria and reached Aleppo. There he spent more than a year studying the Arab language and customs.³³

In the autumn of 1810, September 22 to October 17, he made his first trip from Damascus to Lebanon, passing through Baniyas (Caesarea Philippi) which Seetzen also had visited. Burckhardt described the view from the ruins of Baniyas and dealt with the names of the various headwaters of the Jordan River. In November of the same year he made his first expedition to the unexplored region of the Hauran.

In the winter of 1812 he journeyed from Aleppo to Damascus via the Orontes valley, Tripoli and Mount Lebanon, and in the spring he set out on a second journey to the Hauran, this time reaching the springs of Hammat-Gader and the Gaulan region. In the Hauran, Burckhardt was the first European to find inscriptions of the Hittic culture.³⁴

In June 1812, Burckhardt undertook yet another of his preparatory trips. His route took him from Damascus to Tiberias and Galilee. In Tiberias he unexpectedly met another European traveller, Michael Bruce, who suggested that he come with him to Nazareth to meet the famous Lady of the East, Hester Stanhope.³⁵

From Nazareth he continued with an Arab merchant's caravan through Endor, the brook at Tabor and down the eastern bank of the Jordan Valley as far as Kerak, east of the Dead Sea. In Kerak he started to search for the lost town of Petra. This ancient and long-forsaken city had, for many generations, lain hidden from the eyes of European travellers. Its rediscovery is, perhaps, the best known of Burckhardt's achievements.

To explain and justify his roamings in the Mount Hor region near Wadi Musa, Burckhardt told the local Bedouin that he had made a solemn vow to sacrifice a lamb in honour of Aaron, brother of Moses, who was buried – according to tradition – on Mount Hor.³⁶

From Petra, Burckhardt continued on to the Arava and across the Sinai

³² Leake, p. v-vi. The knowledge of Seetzen's death in Yemen reached the outside world two years later: Burckhardt did not have the opportunity to read Seetzen's papers before coming to the Near East, but it seems that he obtained some of them during his stay in this area. See Bliss, p. 553.

³³ On Burckhardt's stay in Aleppo see Leake, pp. xxv-xxx; Sim, pp. 77-104.

³⁴ On his trips from Damascus to Lebanon, the Hauran and Galilee, see Leake, pp. xliv-xlvii; Burckhardt (Syria), pp. 1-310; Sim, pp. 105-121.

³⁵ On his meeting with Bruce and Lady Stanhope see: Sim, p. 124; Also Halsip, J., *Life and Letters of Lady Hester Stanhope, the Duchess of Cleveland, A Biography*, New York, 1945; Bruce, Ian, *The Nun of Lebanon, the Love Affair of Hester Stanhope and Michael Bruce, Their Newly Discovered Letters*, 1951, p. 159; Myron, C. L., *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*; forming the completion of her memoirs. Narrated by her Physician. London, H. Colburn, 1846; and Hughes, T. Gordon, *Queen of the Desert; the Story of Lady Hester Stanhope*, London, Macmillan, 1967. Burckhardt met, also in the East, other European travellers; one who also visited the Holy Land, and mentioned Burckhardt in his book was W. Turner: *Journal of a Tour in the Levant*, London, 1820, 3 vols.: II, 484; III, 472; also Sim, pp. 356-361; 403.

³⁶ On the Discovery of Petra see: Leake, p. xlvi; Burckhardt (Syria), pp. 311-456; Sim, pp. 122-150.

desert through Nachl, to the cities of Suez and Cairo. Four years later in 1816, he returned to Sinai and visited St. Catherine's Monastery, in the southern part of the peninsula and the Gulf of Elat and Akaba.³⁷ From Cairo Burckhardt made many other trips to different parts of Egypt, went down the Nile to Sudan, crossed the mountains to the Coast of the Red Sea, and also visited several regions of Arabia. In the course of his investigations, he joined a convoy of pilgrims going to Mecca and recorded a detailed description of the pilgrimage and of the religious ceremonies at Mecca itself.³⁸

Burckhardt was destined never to complete his main mission, for he died of dysentery in Cairo in 1817, while he was preparing for his journey to Fezzan, in Africa.³⁹

From Burckhardt's writings, five books have been published posthumously. They include valuable information on Egypt and Nubia,⁴⁰ Syria, Palestine and Sinai,⁴¹ Arabia,⁴² Arabic Proverbs,⁴³ and notes on the Bedouins.⁴⁴ As an oriental traveller Burckhardt has the very highest rank. He is considered as one of the most brilliant and perceptive explorers of the Near East. Edward Robinson, the Biblical scholar who laid the foundations to the historical geographical research of the Holy Land evaluated him as:

Accurate, judicious, circumspect, persevering. He accomplished very much; yet all this only was preparatory to the great object he had in view, viz., to penetrate into the interior of Africa.⁴⁵

The achievement of Burckhardt in his explorations of Syria and the Holy Land have been summed up by the editor of his book as follows:

The principal geographical discoveries of our traveller are the nature of the country between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aelana, now Akaba; the extent, conformation and detailed topography of the Hauran; the site of Apameia on the Orontes, one of the most important cities of Syria under the Macedonian Greeks; the site of Petra, which under the Romans gave the

³⁷ On the travels of Burckhardt in Sinai see Burckhardt (Syria), pp. 457-632; Ritter, I, 44-5; 51-5; Sim, pp. 370-390.

³⁸ On the travels of Burckhardt in Egypt, Nubia and Arabia, see: Burckhardt, (Nubia); and Burckhardt, J. L., *Travels in Arabia comprehending of accounts of those territories in Hedjaz which the Mohammedans regard as sacred*. Edited by authority of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa. Two volumes, London, Henry Colburn, 1829. The editor was William Ouseley while the two former books on Nubia and Syria were edited by Colonel W. M. Leake.

³⁹ On the death of Burckhardt see Leake, pp. xciii-xcvi; Sim, p. 416; Dr. R. Richardson who accompanied Lord Belmore on his travels in the Mediterranean and who saw Burckhardt before his death also published a data filled book on his travels in the Mediterranean. Richardson, R., *Travels Along the Mediterranean and Parts of Adjacent in Company with the Earl of Belmore during the years 1816-17-18*, 2 vols., 1820.

⁴⁰ Burckhardt (Nubia); First edition 1819; Second edition 1822; Fascimile reprint 1968.

⁴¹ Burckhardt (Syria); German translation with remarks by Dr. Gezenius, Weimar, 1823.

⁴² Burckhardt (Arabia), First edition 1829; Reprinted in two volumes, 1829; Reprint of the 1829 edition, London, 1968 by the Islam and he Muslim World Institution, No. 2, General Editor, John Ralph Willis, Center of the West African Studies, University of Birmingham.

⁴³ Burckhardt, J. L. *Arabic Proverbs; or the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Illustrated from their Proverbial Saying, Current at Cairo. Translated and Explained*. Published by authority of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa, London, John Murray, 1830. It contained a preface by Burckhardt dated March 25, 1817. The Editor was William Ouseley, Second Edition, 1875.

⁴⁴ Burckhardt, J. L. *Notes of the Bedouins and Wahabys, collected during his travels in the East*. London, H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831.

⁴⁵ Robinson, III, "First Appendix, Books, Maps and Itinerary," 23.

name of Arabia Petraea to the surrounding territory; and the general structure of the peninsula of Mount Sinai; together with many new facts in its geography, one of the most important of which is the extent and form of the Aelanitic Gulf, hitherto so imperfectly known as either to be omitted in the maps or marked with a bifurcation at the extremity, which is now found not to exist.⁴⁶

It would be unfair to sum up Burckhardt's achievements in his explorations in the Holy Land without noting his efforts to reveal to Europe the mysteries of the strange and unknown world of the Bedouin, who also roamed parts of Syria and southern Palestine.⁴⁷

In the pages of his notes and writings, Burckhardt revealed himself as a man of sterling character. When, for example, he arrived at a place that had already been explored or described by a predecessor, he would never hesitate to give the man credit in his description; he was particularly careful in this regard concerning Seetzen. On the other hand, when the credit for a discovery was rightly his, Burckhardt's inherent modesty prevented him from drawing undue attention to the fact. Thus, he did not publicize his discovery of Petra – although Seetzen had searched for this ancient desert city in vain.⁴⁸

Notwithstanding his sufferings, he never willingly faltered or deviated from his plans. He did give up a visit to Deraa and Basra in the Hauran, for example, but only because he could not find guides to accompany him on this dangerous journey. He tended to leave Greek inscriptions to the decision of the experts, apologized for not having completed his notes on a particular place or object because of the need to curtail his visits, and so on.⁴⁹

The personal achievement of Burckhardt and Seetzen regarding their travels even in the limited territory of the Holy Land, could be summed up today as very substantial. Nevertheless, it is not only in these achievements that their importance rests. It appears that the way of exploration they showed and the interest in the country they raised played a decisive role in the future exploration of the Holy Land.

Seetzen and Burckhardt – Pioneers of Scientific Research

Seetzen and Burckhardt did not know one another but many similarities could be found in their way of research. Both of them did not traverse the path of Christ's Via Dolorosa, or seek for themselves the cradle of Christianity. They did not use secure, well-travelled roads, but moved along side ones. Their travels were mainly in the south and eastern portions of the country; the very areas their predecessors had not visited and about which information was scanty.

Christian clergy did not serve as their guides and monasteries did not function as their hostels. Burckhardt, for instance, did not visit Jerusalem and its holy

⁴⁶ Burckhardt (Syria), p. 553; Bliss, p. 179.

⁴⁷ In all the books of Burckhardt great interest in the Bedouin was revealed. His fifth book was devoted especially to this subject.

⁴⁸ Burckhardt identified other places in Palestine and Syria and drew up lists of places he was not able to visit, so as to enable those who would follow him to carry out what he was not able to do. He also made some mistakes in his identification of places. For instance Gamalah, one of the last places of Jewish resistance to the Romans which he identified with Um-Keis. Um-Keis is accepted today as one of the Decapolis Hellenistic towns known as Gedarah.

⁴⁹ The book by Sim is full of admiration for Burckhardt's personal characteristics.

places. Thus, the ancient traditions were not hindrances to their studies. This does not mean that they were not interested in the history of the country. On the contrary, before their visits Seetzen and Burckhardt studied and learned most of the literature written on the regions to which they travelled.⁵⁰ They had their own criticism of these writings especially the accounts of earlier travellers, but they tried to get every accurate fact which could be found in them. Today it seems their criticism was one of the major reasons for their discovery of such ancient sites as Massada and Petra.

The contribution of Seetzen and Burckhardt as pioneers in the scientific research into the past history of the country was very important, but they also contributed to the cartographical and geographical knowledge of the land at the time. The map of the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, published by the "Palestine Association" in London in 1813 together with Seetzen's report from the East, show the meagre cartographical knowledge of the country at those days.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Carl Ritter evaluates Seetzen's achievement as an important improvement in the cartographical knowledge of the country. He believed that Seetzen began the modern cartography of the Holy Land.⁵²

Burckhardt also contributed to this area. He took many field measurements and tried to delineate different physical characteristics of the country. The results of his measurements were not always accurate. The publishers of his book *Syria and the Holy Land* found it necessary to base the map accompanying his book mainly on other sources. They also felt the need to mention the defects and shortcomings of the tools and instruments at Burckhardt's disposal, the haste in which his expedition was carried out, the necessity of concealing his activities from his guides and fellow-travellers, and even his lack of experience in this kind of work.⁵³ Despite all these, however, the fruits of his travels also were notable for their great importance in the field of geography and cartography. Worthy of special mention are his detailed and profound descriptions of the Araba, from which scholars began to develop the theory of the tectonic link between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea.⁵⁴ A third contribution of Seetzen's and Burckhardt's was the knowledge of the country as it was in the time of their visit.

Perhaps the most peculiar thing about their way of travelling was their need to dress in Arab disguise and adopt the Islam religion.⁵⁵ Seetzen was known in the east as Sheikh Mussa or Mussa el-Hakim ("The Doctor"). Burckhardt was known as Sheikh Ibrahim.⁵⁶ A drawing of Burckhardt in his Arab Bernouse is to be found in the book on Syria.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ For instance, in the preface to the book *Travels in Arabia*. Burckhardt writes that he had Arabic sources from which he learned of the regions of Hejaz, Meca, and other parts of Arabia.

⁵¹ Seetzen. The map first was published in 1810 as a supplement to the *Gotha Monatliche Correspondenz*, XXII, 1810, 542-552.

⁵² Ritter, pp. 78-9.

⁵³ Burckhardt (Syria), preface, p. iii.

⁵⁴ Schattner, p. 156.

⁵⁵ Burckhardt often changed his Arab guise. At various times he was a gunpowder merchant, an emissary-priest of the Greek Patriarch in Damascus, and a doctor gathering medicinal herbs, similar to Seetzen's guise. See Bliss, p. 179.

⁵⁶ Burckhardt even was buried as a Moslem Sheikh. His conversion to Islam was so serious that Sim finds the need to deal with it specifically, see Sim, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Burckhardt (Syria), frontispiece.

This phenomena of dressing in Arab disguise while travelling in the East was not typical of Seetzen and Burckhardt, for there were other travellers visiting this region at approximately the same time who dressed in the same manner and may have also converted to Islam. Two of them who should be mentioned here are Ali-Bey-el-Abbasi⁵⁸ and James Silk Buckingham.⁵⁹ However the achievements of these travellers in the Holy Land certainly cannot compare with those of Seetzen and Burckhardt.⁶⁰

From the first Seetzen and Burckhardt understood the significance of Arabic place names. Both compiled lists of names, chiefly from areas east of the Jordan. While examining these places names they concluded that the later tradition among the foreign inhabitants in the Holy Land, arising after the Emperor Constantine, had to be distinguished from the primitive ones preserved by the local population. They postulated that Greek names had disappeared from use while the ancient Hebrew names were imbedded in the roots of Arabic names.⁶¹

The Arab disguise of Seetzen and Burckhardt, their perfect knowledge of the Arabic language, customs and religion, helped both of them in their researches into the past history and the present cartographical and geographical knowledge of the land. But it also brought them close to the cultural landscape and the people of the country at the time of their visit.⁶²

In Seetzen's diary we can find enormous material on the towns, villages, roads, agricultural cultivations, people and other components of the cultural landscape as it had been during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Seetzen gave figures on the population of the town of Jerusalem, which are accepted today as most accurate.⁶³ These figures included data on the different religions and their sects.⁶⁴ Other very important facts on this town and the entire country could be found in his diary.

⁵⁸ Ali Bey el-Abbasi, *The Travels of Ali Bey el Abbasi in Morocco, Tripoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Syria and Turkey between the years 1803 and 1807*, London, 1816. Ali Bey el-Abbasi was a Christian Spaniard, Badia Y. Leblach, who in order to search for a European colony in Morocco adopted Islam and concealed himself in an Arab garb. For details on him, see Bliss, pp. 175-6. However, his descriptions of the Holy Land and its conditions are largely superficial.

⁵⁹ Buckingham's writings on the Holy Land were published in two books: Buckingham, J. S., *Travels in Palestine*, London, 1821, 2 vols.; *Travels among the Arab Tribes, including a Journey from Nazareth to the Mountains beyond the Dead Sea, etc.*, London, 1825.

⁶⁰ Buckingham did not possess the faculty for scientific observation that Seetzen or Burckhardt did. His knowledge was small. However some valuable material, mainly on the life of Palestine's population could be found in his books. On the unpleasant character of Buckingham; his meetings with Burckhardt, the many criticisms of him including the fact that he was accused of plagiarizing Burckhardt, see Bliss, p. 180-1; Sim, pp. 213-215; 327-9; 367; 403-4.

⁶¹ The importance of studying the Arabic placenames later was stressed by Edward Robinson. But Robinson gives the credit to Seetzen and Burckhardt for preceding him in his subject, stressing that they concentrated on the eastern part of the country while he was trying to do the same on the western side.

⁶² On the importance of the use of travellers' reports as primary sources for studying the cultural landscape of the country in the Nineteenth century, see also Ben-Arieh, "Lynch's Expedition..."

⁶³ Ben-Arieh, Y. *The population of the Large Towns in Palestine during the First Eighty Years of the Nineteenth Century According to Western Sources*. International Seminar on the History of Palestine during the Ottoman Period, Institute of Asian and African Studies. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 1970, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Seetzen recorded the inquiries he made to the Turkish Governor in Jerusalem about the number of citizens in the town. He reported the following figures: Moslem 4,000; Jews 2,000; Christians Greeks 1,400; Catholics 800; Armenians 500; Copts 50; Abyssinians 13; Syrians 11; Total 8,774.

Burckhardt also made a major contribution to the knowledge of the country at the time of his visit. Certainly it is to be regretted that this "most admirable observer of the east"⁶⁵ restricted the scope of his travels in the Holy Land. His plans prevented him from visiting the western part of the land. In his determination to avoid the regular routes of his predecessors, Burckhardt purposely stayed away from Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria, the coastal plain and considerable parts of Galilee. However the work he accomplished was very meticulous. His detailed picture of the town of Tiberias, as it looked during his visit, including a small sketch of the walls and other detailed features serve as an example of his thorough work.⁶⁶

The importance of Seetzen and Burckhardt's explorations in the Holy Land, however, is not limited to the three fields of study mentioned above. Today it seems one of the most important achievements of their travels was simply that their discoveries raised a great interest in the Holy Land. Their scientific way of exploration inspired many other travellers to follow their lead.⁶⁷

The great interest they raised could be exemplified by Petra. The rediscovery of this lost town by Burckhardt aroused great enthusiasm and brought a wave of followers who attempted to reach the place and explore it.⁶⁸ Other subjects such as the way of living of the Bedouins, the rediscovery of Massada and other ancient towns, and many additional topics enormously increased the interest in the exploration of the Holy Land.

Without being dragged into indirect disputes about controversial subjects and without lengthy dealings with unimportant details of their adventures, they set aside the former rather imaginative and inexact description of the country and began to lay foundations for its scientific study.

Interestingly, the education of Seetzen and Burckhardt was very similar. Both studied in Göttingen under the great scholar Professor Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. It seems that the inspiration for their travels came from him, but more important is that their scientific approach probably also originated with Blumenbach.⁶⁹

Seetzen's and Burckhardt's publications served as cornerstones of the scientific exploration of the Holy Land. To understand the country and its exploration in the nineteenth century one must travel together with these explorers over the highways and byways of the Holy Land. Certainly they did not finish their work

⁶⁵ Ritter, p. 63; "Burckhardt is recognised as one of the most admirable observers and one of the most instructive travelers who have visited the East."

⁶⁶ Burckhardt (Syria), pp. 320-330.

⁶⁷ Hallet Robin, p. 33, gives Burckhardt the credit "as one of the most scholarly of travellers in the history of exploration, the peer of Heinrich Barth and Richard Burton."

⁶⁸ One such expedition was led by Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles, officers in the British Royal Navy, who joined William Bankes - Byron's friend and Buckingham's companion on part of his journey in following Burckhardt's footsteps to Petra. See Irby, C. L. and Mangles, J., *Travels in Palestine through the Countries . . . east of the River Jordan in 1817-18*, London, Longman, 1821; Ritter, pp. 63-4; Bliss, pp. 181-2; In 1828 another important expedition reached Petra and produced splendid plates by Labord and Linant. Labord and Linant, M. A., *Voyage de l'Arabie Pétrée*, Paris 1830 (London, 1838); Bliss, p. 180.

⁶⁹ Sim, p. 46 and p. 54, Burckhardt even brought a recommendation from Professor Blumenbach to Sir Joseph Bankes. Burckhardt continued his scientific studies at Cambridge under Professor E. D. Clarke who became one of his close friends. Clarke also visited the Holy Land in 1801. Otter, pp. 582-625; 465-479; Clarke, E. D., *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa*, Cambridge, 1810-1823, 6 vols. See "Holy Land" - Ch. III - IX.

and others had to come and follow them. Nevertheless their role was a very decisive one.

The fate of both of them was sad. They did not finish their missions, but died midway. Neither made a full survey of the countries they visited, they showed only the way. They were pioneers.