Leading Nineteenth Century Publishers of Travel Guidebooks to Egypt*

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Abstract

Part of the Travelers in the Middle East Archive (TIMEA), this module describes the history of three of the leading publishers of travel guidebooks in the nineteenth century: John Murray and Sons, Thomas Cook Ltd., and Karl Baedeker. It focuses on guidebooks to Egypt and provides links to the full text of these books in TIMEA.

1 Introduction

During the nineteenth century, leisure tourism became a significant industry, driven by improvements in transportation, the rise of the middle-class, and the development of an infrastructure to support travel. Travel guidebooks both contributed to and documented the rise of tourism, helping tourists to navigate foreign places without a human guide and mediating their experience of sites. These guidebooks not only provided advice about what to see, how to behave, and where to find important goods and services, but also reflected the cultural attitudes of their authors and intended audience. By studying travel guidebooks, historians, anthropologists, geographers, literary scholars, and others can understand the theatricality of travel (see, for instance, Gregory) and the evolving relationship among colonizers and colonized.

Between 1847 and 1929, dozens of guidebooks were published about Egypt, which drew an increasing number of European and American travelers. Tourists came to view ancient monuments, float up the Nile on a riverboat, look for bargains in bazaars in Alexandria and Cairo, and embark on packaged tours that made travel to Egypt "more convenient and increasingly affordable" (Hazbun, 2007, 3-4). Authors of travel books on Egypt typically began by acknowledging that many books had preceded their own, as did Charles Warner when he noted in 1876 "that if the lines written about Egypt were laid over the country, every part of it would be covered by as many as three hundred and sixty five lines to the inch" (quoted by Gregory, 114).

Three companies, John Murray and Sons, Thomas Cook Ltd, and Karl Baedeker, dominated the guidebook industry in the nineteenth century, and all three produced important Egypt guides. Some editions of these guidebooks are collected in the Travelers in the Middle East Archive[1] , an online archive that collects texts, images, maps and contextual materials related to travel in Egypt and other areas of the Middle East.

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[1]http://timea.rice.edu

In this module, we provide a brief overview of the leading publishing houses and their guides to Egypt. By comparing travel guides from different periods, one can trace changes in modes of transportation, the politics of travel, travelers' perceptions, urban development, the role of the dragoman (interpreter and guide), and more. For instance, Wilkinson's 1847 travel guide gives lengthy instructions for hiring a dhabeah—a Nile sailboat—whereas Baedeker's 1929 guide describes the Imperial Airways service to Egypt (Cumming 1974).

2 John Murray and Sons

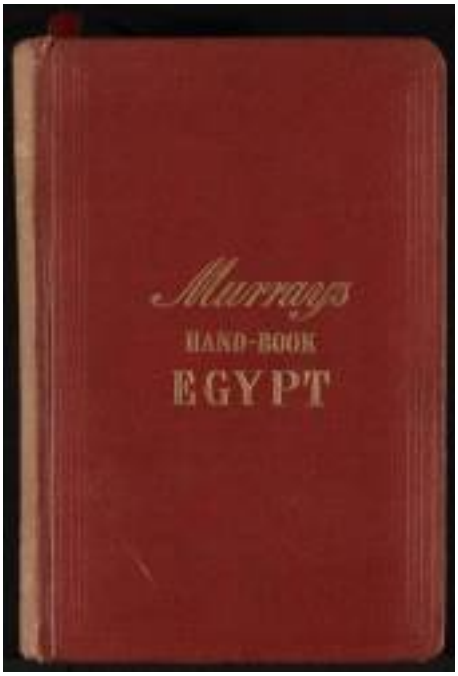

Figure 1: Cover of A Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt (London: John Murray, 1888)

John Murray and Sons was a leading British publishing house that produced the first modern travel guides (Thompson 167). In 1836, John Murray, son of the publisher of Byron, brought out his first travel book, *A Hand Book for Travellers in Holland, Belgium, and along the Rhine, and throughout Northern Germany*. Murray's travel handbooks were aimed at middle-class travelers and were often authored by experts such as members of the Royal Geographical Society. Murray's first handbook that included Egypt was Handbook to the East (1840). In 1847, Murray published a fuller guide to Egypt, *Handbook for Travellers in Egypt* by Sir John Gardner Wilkinson (1797–1875), a distinguished British Egyptologist and author of Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians (1837). Murray created the handbook by condensing Wilkinson's *Modern Egypt and Thebes*: including the information required for travellers in that country (1843) and reorganizing it around a series of routes. Wilkinson's *Handbook* went through many editions, reaching its seventh edition by 1888 (Mitchell 230). According to Wilkinson's biographer Jason Thompson, "Many English travelers in Egypt subsequently floated up and down the Nile with *Handbook for Travellers in Egypt* in one hand and *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* in the other" (168). Murray's handbook was the most

popular guidebook to Egypt in English until the 1890s, when Baedeker's began to lead the market (Gregory 118).

2.1 Murray Guidebooks in TIMEA:

- Wilkinson, John Gardner, Sir. *Hand-book for travellers in Egypt; including descriptions of the course of the Nile to the second cataract, Alexandria, Cairo, the pyramids, and Thebes, the overland transit to India, the peninsula of Mount Sinai, the oases, &c. Being a new edition, corrected and condensed, of 'Modern Egypt and Thebes.'* (London: John Murray, 1847). http://rudr.rice.edu/handle/1911/9190[2]

- *A Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt* (London: John Murray, 1888). http://rudr.rice.edu/handle/1911/

3 Thomas Cook Ltd.

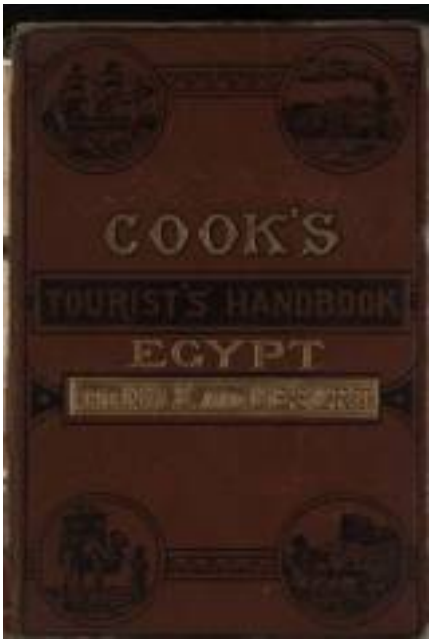

Figure 2: Cover of Cook's tourists' handbook for Egypt, the Nile, and the Desert (London: T. Cook & Son, 1897)

Credited with being "the founder of modern tourism," Thomas Cook established his tour company in England in 1841 by organizing trips for the middle- and lower-class in the English Midlands (Hunter 30). Thomas Cook Ltd. helped to develop the infrastructure for a vibrant tourism industry in Egypt, first by investing in improving the Egyptian government's fleet of steamships, then by building its own fleet of fast, luxurious steamers. In 1870, Egypt's Viceroy Ismail granted Thomas Cook Ltd a concession to run the Egyptian government's steamer fleet from Cairo to Aswan (the First Cataract); in 1874, he extended the service to the

[2] http://rudr.rice.edu/handle/1911/9190
[3] http://rudr.rice.edu/handle/1911/13077

Sudanese border (the Second Cataract) and granted the company an exclusive concession to carry government mail along the Nile (Hunter 31). Not only did Cook help to develop the transportation infrastructure, but it also actively marketed travel. In 1886, Cook's hired E. A. Wallis Budge, Keeper of the Antiquities in the British Museum, to author *Notes for Travellers*, a detailed volume that the company gave to all passengers on its Nile steamers (Gregory 118). Through its travel guides, its magazine Cook's Excursionist, and advertisements, the company promoted Egypt "as a winter resort par excellence" that offered a mild climate and exotic ancient sites (Hunter 36). During the winter of 1889-1890, almost 11,000 tourists visited Cairo, "of whom 1300 went up the Nile" (Hunter 42); ten years later, as many as 50,000 visited Egypt (Hazbun 20).

By the turn of the century, Thomas Cook Ltd. had developed a network of "tourist stations" along the Nile offering a range of accommodations and conveniences, from post offices to doctors' offices. After first arriving at Alexandria, tourists could receive assistance from Cook's agents in planning the rest of their travel in Egypt. According to Douglas Sladen, a veteran of Cook's Nile cruise, "Cook is the uncrowned King of Egypt, and this is the navy with which he won his battle of the Nile" (388). Sladen and his fellow travelers could cruise the Nile in luxury, staring out the window at historic sites while reclining in bed or relaxing in the lounge, servants attending to their every need. So successful was Cook in providing commercialized travel services in Egypt that, as F. Robert Hunter argues, "By the turn of the century, there were two empires on the Nile – Britain's military occupation, and Cook's Egyptian travel. The Nile had become the favourite winter resort of westerners. A traveller could leave his native shores and find the comforts of home aboard a steamship and in luxury hotels bathed in desert sunshine" (44).

3.1 Cook's Guides in TIMEA:

Budge, E.A. Wallis *Cook's tourists' handbook for Egypt, the Nile, and the Desert* (London: T. Cook & Son, 1897). http://hdl.handle.net/1911/9284[4]

[4] http://hdl.handle.net/1911/9284

4 Karl Baedeker

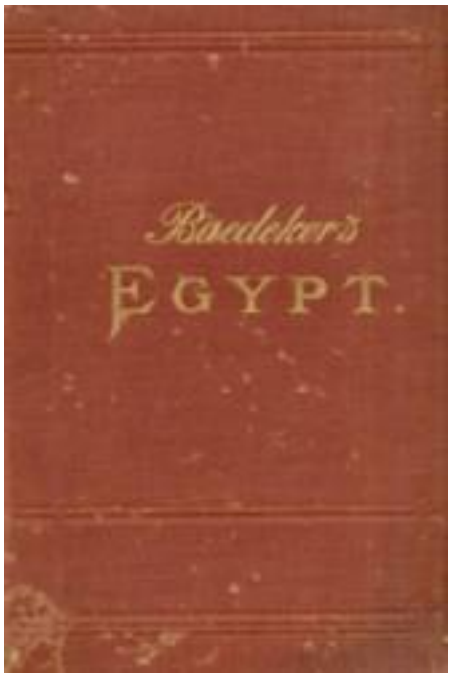

Figure 3: Cover of Baedeker's Egypt: handbook for travellers. (Leipsic:K. Baedeker, 1898)

Founded by Karl Baedeker (1801-1859) in Germany, the Baedeker publishing house was a preeminent publisher of guidebooks. The first Baedeker guide was published in 1839, modeled in part after Murray's guidebooks. Whereas Murray's guides were covered in brown cloth, Baedeker chose a more vibrant red cloth cover for his guides. Baedeker's guidebooks typically provided enough detail to allow a traveler to navigate unfamiliar places, but not so much that the entire visit was completely scripted and predigested. As Medelson writes, "In his descriptions of a place worth visiting, he gave his readers precisely the information they needed to find their way cheaply and conveniently, and precisely the information they needed in order to appreciate what they saw. He trusted them to provide their aesthetic and emotional responses for themselves." To help travelers determine the most important sites, Baedeker created a star system, marking the key places with an asterisk. After Karl Baedeker's death in 1859, his sons took over the company and began publishing guides in French and English in addition to German. By the late nineteenth century, Baedeker dominated the market, so much so that the company's name became synonymous with guidebook. Baedeker's guides reflected the sense of cultural superiority among northern Europeans during the nineteenth century. As Mendelson explains, "Although, like any ethnographer of the time, Baedeker recognized a degree of cultural relativism... the Baedeker handbooks never seriously doubted that in lower latitudes morals grew slack and manners coarse."

As noted above, Baedeker's volume on Egypt became the leading guidebook by the end of the century. In 1877, Baedeker's guide to Lower Egypt first appeared, while its Upper Egypt guide was published in 1891. Between 1877 and 1929, Baedeker published 8 editions of the Guide to Egypt. Karl Baedeker credited the Murray's Red Book on Egypt with being a source of information used in his own guide to Egypt; indeed, John Murray noted telltale signs of plagiarism in the Baedeker guide, as a line in the Red Book about "slate

rocks full of garnets" became "rocks overgrown with pomegranates" in Baedeker (Cumming 1974). Baedeker recruited leading scholars to write for the Egypt guide, including Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell on Islamic architecture, Georg Steindorff on Egyptology and history, Georg Schweinfurth on ethnology, and Carl Heinrich Becker on Islam. Baedeker's guide to Egypt also included over 50 woodcuts from Edward Lane's Manners and customs of the modern Egyptians and over twenty maps. Baedeker's guides not only shaped travelers' experiences of Egypt, but also influenced literary representations. For instance, Thomas Pynchon drew from Baedeker's 1899 guide to Egypt, "right down the names of the diplomatic corps," in writing his short story "Under the Rose," which became the basis for chapter 3 of his novel V (Russell 2000).

In 1898, the Literary World published a glowing review of the new Baedeker Egypt guide, which was imported to the US by Charles Scribner's and sold for $4.50. Previously Baedeker had published two volumes of its Egypt guide, one volume on Lower Egypt and the Fauym, the other on Upper Egypt. The 1898 edition condensed the two volumes into a single book of about 600 pages, including twenty-two maps, fifty-five plans, and sixty-six views and vignettes. The Literary World wrote, "Baedeker's new Egypt stands easily at the head of that long list of guide books whose red coats have established a world wide recognition, smoothed the paths of hundreds, and thousands of travelers and earned for the name of their accomplished editor eternal gratitude.... It is not too much to say that all Egypt—geographical, topographical, archaeological, historical, political, social, industrial and pictorial, barbaric and civilized, African and European, ancient and modern, the Egypt of ruins and superstitions the Egypt of Pharaohs, Ptolomies, and Khedives, the Egypt of the sphinx, the pyramid, and the Nile boat, of the mummy and the electric light—is compressed into this one book... To turn its pages is almost like wandering through the museum at Ghizeh" (Literary World, 1898).

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[5] http://rudr.rice.edu/handle/1911/9163
[6] http://hdl.handle.net/1911/19580
[7] http://hdl.handle.net/1911/13069
[8] http://hdl.handle.net/1911/13070
[9] http://hdl.handle.net/1911/13071
[10] http://books.google.com/books?id=yTM-AAAAMAAJ&lpg=PA103&ots=mIP9oMK-eh&dq=author+of+baedeker+guide+to+egypt&pg=P

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[11] http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0026320042000265666
[12] http://timea.rice.edu/Queer%20things%20about%20Egypt
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[16] http://timea.rice.edu/
[17] http://dspace.rice.edu/handle/1911/9190
[18] http://timea.rice.edu/