



From Khartoum to Jerusalem: The Dragoman Solomon Negima and his Clients (1885–1933)

By Rachel Mairs

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In 2014, a collection of papers was found on eBay: a scrapbook, inside which was written 'Testimonial Book of Dragoman Solomon N. Negima'. The letters pasted into the testimonial book bear recommendations of Negima's services as dragoman – a combination of tourist guide and interpreter – in the Holy Land, from travellers of different nationalities, social classes, religions, genders and races.

Using these reference letters, and the first-hand published and unpublished accounts of the travellers themselves, this book tells the stories of several such tourists, including the intrepid Victorian female traveller, Ellen E. Miller, and an African–American minister, Rev. Charles T. Walker, who had been born into slavery. Between the lines of others' letters, Solomon Negima's remarkable life story also emerges: from a German mission school in Jerusalem, to the British army in the Sudan, to a successful career as a dragoman in Palestine and Syria, and finally to comfortable retirement with his son, Aziz, and daughter, Olinda, at a Mormon mission in Jerusalem.

The discovery of this unique scrapbook allows us an insight into the lives of individuals whose histories would otherwise be lost to us, and a new perspective on the history of travel in the Middle East.

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Editorial Review

Review

[A] fresh perspective on travels to the Holy Land. (*The Tablet* 2016-05-07)

The book is the outcome of interdisciplinary research on the popularization of tourism at the turn to the twentieth century. What makes it unique is the fact that it is not based on publications by foreign travellers but in contrast reflects the perspective of a native guide working in the Middle East. Documenting his personal impressions and strategies, it reveals a role-model of a marginalized group of people, which significantly contributed to this process. The book is a must for everyone interested in the development of intercultural relations. (*Michael Zach, Professor of African History, University of Vienna, Austria*)

This book offers a fascinating insight into the life of a dragoman and it will be of great value to historians of travel and anyone with an interest in this fascinating region. (*James Moore, Professor of History, University of Leicester, UK*)

About the Author

Rachel Mairs is Lecturer in Classics, University of Reading, UK. She has published widely on the archaeology and culture of the near east and Egypt, including *The Hellenistic Far East: Archaeology, Language and Identity in Greek Central Asia* (2014) and, with Maya Muratov, *Archaeologists, Tourists, Interpreters: Exploring Egypt and the Near East in the late 19th-early 20th Centuries* (Bloomsbury, 2015).

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