

Textualising the Experience –  
Digitalising the Text:  
Cyprus through Travel Literature  
(15th-18th Centuries)





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***Textualising the Experience – Digitalising the Text:  
Cyprus through Travel Literature  
(15th-18th Centuries)***

Edited by  
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2023



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## Foreword

Founded in 2009, the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation (based in Vaduz, Liechtenstein) is known in the world of humanities as the holder of one of the richest private libraries on Cypriot history and culture. The Foundation's Collection contains more than 3000 rare books and manuscripts, as well as more than 1000 maps: items that are scarce, difficult to find or even unique for Cyprus and the wider Eastern Mediterranean region, as well as Greece.

Recognising the wealth of information contained in the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation Book Collection, its overseers were concerned with finding a suitable way of disseminating the material that would allow it to be utilised and made accessible to a wider audience (not exclusively scientific) through the use of digital technology. The gathering of information and its presentation in an international language would allow for a series of obstacles posed by the sources themselves to be overcome – to name a few, the difficulty of reading European languages of the 15th or the 17th century, given the specialised knowledge required to understand them, and the typographic appearance of the texts with the use of abbreviations and/or ligatures, as occurs in incunabula – thus allowing further study of the history and culture of Cyprus.

The starting point and precondition for implementing this plan was to provide access to the contents of the books, in the original form of the texts, through the adoption of a model incorporating specific rules. In 2015 such a model began to be designed at the Foundation, taking into account the relevant literature and related applications that had already been tested. In this context, the Foundation turned to the University of Cyprus and specifically to Julia Chatzipanagioti-Sangmeister, Professor of Modern Greek Literature at the University, who had studied travel writing extensively and had previously created an indexing model for this purpose, which she proposed could be used to implement the reasoning of our Foundation.

The proposal concerned the 'Zefyros: Travel Texts on Cyprus (15th-18th c.)' research programme. This year-long programme was funded by the Sylvia Ioannou Foundation and was developed in collaboration with the University of Cyprus. The objective of the programme was to index the information about Cyprus found in 125 editions of travel writings of the 15th-18th centuries from the Foundation's Collection and the incorporation of that data in an open access platform to make them available through the internet. Texts written in 11 languages (English, French, German, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Dutch, Portuguese, Swedish and Czech) were selected for study, analysed and indexed by 25 scientists in 7 countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the Czech Republic).

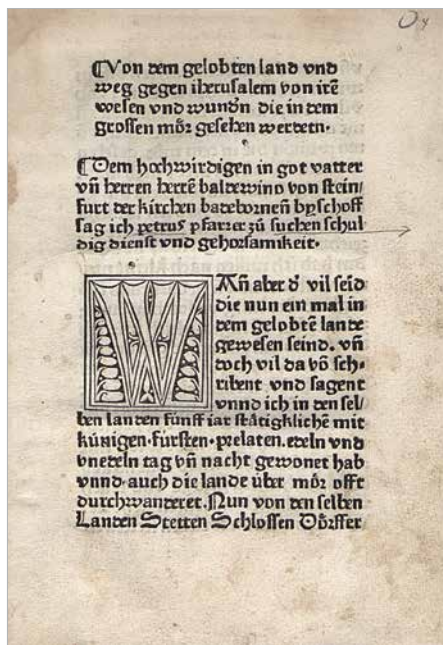


Fig. 1.

Ludolphus von Suchem, *Buch von dem Weg zu dem Heiligen Grab ...*, Augsburg: Günther Zainer, 2nd ed., 1477. Sylvia Ioannou Foundation, B.1711.



Fig. 2.

Title-page of Melchior von Seydlitz, *Gründtliche Beschreibung ...*, Görlitz: Fritsch, 1580.  
Sylvia Ioannou Foundation, B.2062.

reaching Persia, before returning via Arabia, Egypt and North Africa. The specific purpose of Benjamin's journey has still not been determined by scholars. Pilgrimage may have been one reason, but Benjamin also discusses commerce extensively, and many scholars have determined that he was a merchant. He records all the Jewish communities he came across during the course of his travels and also describes everyday life in the countries he visited; but what prompted him to undertake this 12-year journey is still unknown.

Most of our 16th-century authors again travelled as pilgrims. The accounts of Ludwig Tschudi and Hans Stockar, who made the pilgrimage together in 1519, are of importance for the early part of the century. However, their accounts were not published at the time: Tschudi's description was published a century after his travels,<sup>8</sup> while that of Stockar did not appear until the mid-19th century.<sup>9</sup> The works of Wolfgang Müntzer (1555-1559),<sup>10</sup> Melchior von Seydlitz (1556; fig. 2),<sup>11</sup> Johann

8. Ludwig Tschudi, *Reyss und Bilgerfahrt zum Heyligen Grab*, Rorschach: Schnell, 1606.

9. Hans Stockar, *Heimfahrt von Jerusalem*, Schaffhausen: Hurter, 1839.

10. Wolfgang Müntzer, *Reyszbeschreibung*, Nuremberg: Lochner, 1624.

11. Melchior von Seydlitz, *Gründtliche Beschreibung der Wallfahrt nach dem heiligen Lande*, Görlitz:





Fig. 3.  
Title-page of Nicolas Radziwill, *Hierosolymitana peregrinatio* ..., Braunsberg: Schönfels, 1601.  
Sylvia Ioannou Foundation, B.1360.



Fig. 4.  
Portrait of William Lithgow from his *The Totall Discourse* ..., London: I. Okes, 1640.  
Sylvia Ioannou Foundation, B.0204.

Helffrich (1565)<sup>12</sup> and Christoph Fürer von Haimendorf (1565)<sup>13</sup> provide valuable information on the island during the latter half of the 16th century. The accounts of Nicolas Radziwill (1583; fig. 3),<sup>14</sup> Kryštof Harant (1598),<sup>15</sup> Aquilante Rocchetta (1598)<sup>16</sup> and Jan Cootwijk (c. 1600)<sup>17</sup> are especially valuable, because these men were among the few travellers who visited Cyprus shortly after the Ottoman conquest.

Fritsch, 1580.

12. Johann Helffrich, *Kurtzer und warhafftiger Bericht von der Reis aus Venedig nach Hierusalem*, Leipzig: Berwald Heirs, 1578.

13. Christoph Fürer von Haimendorf, *Itinerarium Ægypti, Arabiæ, Palæstinæ, Syriæ, aliarumque regionum Orientalium*, Nuremberg: Wagenmann, 1621.

14. Nicolas Radziwill, *Hierosolymitana peregrinatio*, Braunsberg: Schönfels, 1601.

15. Kryštof Harant, *Putowánj, aneb Cesta z Královstvj Čzeského do Města Benátek*, Prague: Heirs of D. Adam of Veleslavin, 1608.

16. Aquilante Rocchetta, *Peregrinatione di Terra Santa e d'altre provincie*, Palermo: Alfonso dell'Isola, 1630.

17. Jan Cootwijk, *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum*, Antwerp: Verdussen, 1619.

16th century, a priest from Vicenza, Francesco Grassetto da Lonigo, candidly noted in his journal that the island was 'rife with three species: horses, dust and whores'.<sup>25</sup> In the final analysis, for these travellers, as Marco Rustici aptly wrote, Cyprus was a place dedicated more to Aphrodite than to the Virgin Mary.<sup>26</sup>

The image of the ruined Cypriot towns, a figment of travellers' imagination, appears in several pieces of travel writing of the late 15th century and the 16th. In 1458, to the eyes of Gabriele Capodilista and Roberto Sanseverino, Paphos seemed to be 'in ruins and almost uninhabited'; Santo Brasca saw Nicosia in 1480 as 'ruined in many parts' and Limassol as 'destroyed and almost deserted'.<sup>27</sup> The same view of the island's cities was shared in 1486 by the Mantuan judge Antonio da Crema, who deemed that, except for Nicosia and Famagusta, the other regions could not be considered towns but merely ruins.<sup>28</sup> Similar testimonials regarding Cypriot urban centres are put forth by travellers of the following century, such as the clergyman Noè, who refers to the ruined towns of Paphos and Episkopi,<sup>29</sup> and the young Venetian merchant Alessandro Magno, who wrote that he had seen in Paphos in 1557 ruins made up of underground buildings and that he had heard that under the church of St Francis there were 101 rooms, with a treasure stowed away in one of them.<sup>30</sup>

The warm climate of Cyprus appears to have tormented foreigners who hailed from countries where cold weather was the rule. Not only did Santo Brasca note that the air of Cyprus was the worst in all of the Levant ('el più male aere che sia in tuto Levante'), but also advised pilgrims, when the heat became unbearable, to wear slippers, short-sleeved jackets and long overcoats.<sup>31</sup> According to the French traveller Barthélemy de Salignac (1522), on hot nights the islanders used to sleep in the gardens, pitching tents among the trees (fig. 2).<sup>32</sup> Travellers rarely mentioned the everyday reality they experienced on the island, and their descriptions often contained exaggerations, which were probably due to the fact that news reports were reproduced through copying. Certain examples are indicative of their style of writing: the aforementioned clergyman Noè, for instance, deemed it worth entering in his book the fact that when he stopped in Cyprus he ate the meat of a castrated animal, which was sold at a good price, but was not of very good quality.<sup>33</sup> Another traveller, Roberto da Sanseverino, seems to have been impressed by the gardens

25. Calvelli, *Cipro e la memoria dell'antico*, op. cit., p. 91.

26. Balard, *Les marchands italiens à Chypre*, op. cit., p. 218.

27. Ugo Tucci, 'Antichità greche e viaggiatori nel Medioevo', in Ennio Concina, Giordana Trovabene and Michela Agazzi (eds), *Hadriatica. Attorno a Venezia e al Medioevo tra arti, storia e storiografia. Scritti in onore di Wladimiro Dorigo*, Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2002, pp. 189-192, at p. 190.

28. Tucci, 'Antichità greche e viaggiatori nel Medioevo', op. cit., p. 191, n. 27.

29. *Viaggio da Venezia al S. Sepolcro*, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

30. Tucci, 'Antichità greche e viaggiatori nel Medioevo', op. cit., p. 190, n. 27.

31. *Excerpta Cypria Nova*, op. cit., p. 103; see also Balard, *Les marchands italiens à Chypre*, op. cit., p. 223.

32. Barthélemy de Salignac, *Itinerarii Terre Sancte ...*, Lyon: de Villiers, 1525.

33. *Viaggio da Venezia al S. Sepolcro*, op. cit., p. 42.



Fig. 3.

*Fredric Hasselquist. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, PORT\_00083367\_01.*

The church of St Sophia that Hasselquist visits was destroyed by an earthquake, and the repairs that were made are not worth mentioning; other churches he sees were also destroyed. On the floor of the church he finds Latin inscriptions in old Gothic characters and also in Modern Greek. Opposite the church, the ruins of the palace of the Venetian commander, as he describes them, consist of purple granite columns and the Venetian depictions of lions on the walls. He believes that all the Venetian houses were destroyed and that the city is more damaged than the fortress. He estimates the population as 300 Muslims, who, as he writes, '[...] have in their possession the wretched remnants of a city that was once so beautiful and glorious'.<sup>13</sup>

From Cyprus Hasselquist travelled to Smyrna, gathering information about Rhodes and Chios. He had a large collection of plants with him that he intended to take back to Sweden. In 1752, however, he died in Smyrna of tuberculosis at the age of 30. His letters and notes were published by Linnaeus in Stockholm in 1757 (and in an English edition in 1766; fig. 4). His book consists of two parts: the first describes his journey and his impressions; the second the plants, insects and rocks he collected.

We have examined the two travel texts from the perspective that they aim to create a positive image of their author and also to provide a scientific weight to the writings. The roles of a traveller and an author in these texts coincide and have as their ultimate goal to contribute to the author's career, based on his scientific interests. Even in texts written in diaries, we can observe traces of the writer's interest in publishing them in the future.

13. Fredric Hasselquist, *Iter Palaestinum eller Resa till Heliga Landet, förrättad ifrån 1747 til 1752*, Stockholm: Lars Salvius, 1757, p. 180.

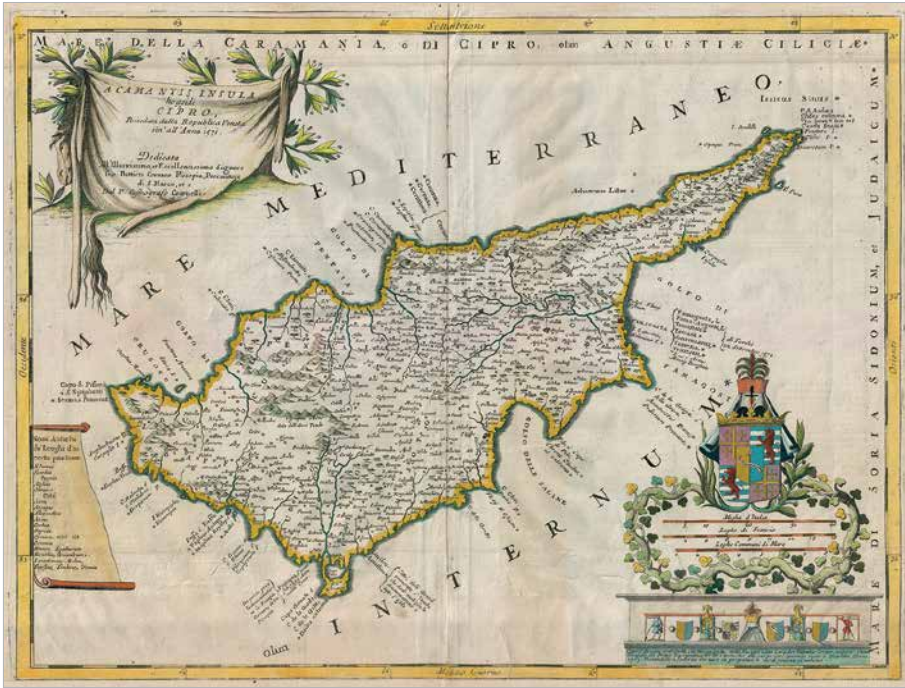


Fig. 4.  
*Acamantis insula hoggidi Cipro ...*, engraving by Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, Venice, 1696.  
 Sylvia Ioannou Foundation, M.0011.

considered to continue the Dutchman Johannes Blaeu (I)'s *Atlas maior* (*Atlas novus*), wherein the appearance of the term 'atlas' in the title is thought to have marked the passage from one literary genre to another.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the term 'Atlante Veneto' points unmistakably towards a Venetian political design,<sup>39</sup> as Coronelli was the 'Cosmographer of the Venetian Republic and Professor of Geography in the University of Venice', his title figuring on the title-page of the *Isolario*. That is probably why in his 17th-century map of Cyprus (fig. 4) the Ottoman presence is limited just outside Famagusta, the engraving of the lion of Venice still prevailing.

38. Tolia, 'The Politics of the *Isolario*', *op. cit.*, p. 52; Marian Coman, though, argues that it continued the *isolario* tradition, in order to serve a Venetian political utopia generated by the Lepanto victory: 'The Ottoman Mediterranean and the Renaissance Venetian *Isolari*', *Studi și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 33 (2015), pp. 127-148.

39. Anastasia Stouraiti, 'Propaganda figurate. Geometrie di dominio e ideologie veneziane nelle carte di Vincenzo Coronelli', *Studi veneziani* 44 (2002), pp. 129-155.



by this way a correspondence is carried on between all the places in the Levant and Christendom: so that furnishing ships with provisions is one of the principal branches of the trade of this island [...] In a word, it is a surprising thing to see Cyprus maintain its own people in such great plenty, and export so many things abroad, when one considers the extent of the island and that half of it at least is mountainous, and much of it near the sea lies uncultivated by reason of the Corsairs [...].<sup>17</sup>

'The East is a career', not just a region to be read about and written about. This was the famous dictum of Benjamin Disraeli, prime minister of Britain and architect of her imperialist policies in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>18</sup> If the island's first visitors were the pilgrims, the class that followed them – and paved the way for the consuls, ambassadors, military personnel, clerics and literary men – were the merchants. The book *Travels through Different Cities* by Alexander Drummond, British consul in Aleppo, was published in 1754.<sup>19</sup> It introduces us to the world of the merchants and consuls of the well-known Levant Company in the mid-18th century.<sup>20</sup>

Drummond arrived in Larnaca in March 1745 and left Cyprus in May of the same year. That time was a particularly bitter one for the antagonisms among European countries. Britain was involved in the War of the Austrian Succession, which had started in 1740. A naval clash with the French had taken place off the shores of Spain in 1742. It is worth pointing out here that until the mid-17th century the English had dominated the commerce of the Eastern Mediterranean, but from then onwards the French had widened and strengthened their commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire and so had taken from England its former pre-eminent trading position in the region.<sup>21</sup>

Drummond chose the epistolary mode of narration. His account consists of 13 letters, each taking the form of a travel diary, addressed to his brother George Drummond. In the letters which concern Cyprus, he includes pictorial material, for example a map of the island, which he dedicated to George Wakeman, 'Consul of his Majesty the King of Great Britain in the island of Cyprus'. Drummond's description

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17. Pococke, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-233.

18. The phrase can be found in Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred, or The New Crusade*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1880, p. 141. For a discussion of British imperial ideologies in 19th-century Cyprus, see Mary Roussou-Sinclair, *Victorian Travellers in Cyprus: A Garden of Their Own*, Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 2002, pp. 55-71.

19. Alexander Drummond, *Travels through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece and Several Parts of Asia, as Far as the Banks of the Euphrates: In a series of Letters. Containing an Account of What is Most Remarkable in Their Present State, as well as Their Monuments of Antiquity*, London: W. Strahan, 1754.

20. For a thorough investigation of Alexander Drummond's travels and career in the East, see Maurits H. van den Boogert, 'Freemasonry in Eighteenth-century Izmir? A Critical Analysis of Alexander Drummond's Travels (1754)', in Maurits H. van den Boogert (ed.), *Ottoman Izmir: Studies in Honour of Alexander H. de Groot*, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2007, pp. 103-121; see also Cornel Zwiwerlein, 'European Travel Literature, the European Merchants on Cyprus, Households and Libraries: Comparing Archival and Printed Sources' herein, pp. 67-99.

21. James Mather, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 210-215, 219.



