

RESEARCH ARTICLE

À La Recherche De L'Espace Perdu: Architecture, Urban Fabric, and French Travelers to Antioch (1784-1914)

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Ottoman Antioch, a marginalized outpost by the late 18th century, attracted French travelers thanks to its illustrious Roman, Early Christian, and crusader histories. To make sense of the city, these travelers relied either on previous travelogues or on their own observations of the built environment. This article sheds light on the inter-textual relationship among travelogues, and on how both the built environment of Ottoman Antioch and representations of the pre-Islamic city and its monuments shaped the travelers' narratives. The dramatic contrast between the insignificance of Ottoman Antioch and the grandeur of the pre-Islamic city prompted the travelers to reflect on the glories of Greco-Roman antiquity and the 'decadence of the Oriental civilizations'. I focus on four French travelers who visited Antioch between 1780 and 1914, and argue that they turned the state of the city's architecture and urban fabric into a critical tool to imagine their historical connections to the region, reproduce the Orientalist stereotypes in circulation in Europe at the time, and, thereby setting the tone for the colonization of the region.

Introduction

Nineteenth-century Antioch was an underpopulated and sparsely built town, a far cry from its reputation as a leading city of the Roman Empire, inferior only to Rome and Alexandria (Fig. 1).¹ Antioch was also a major early Christian center, the city where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.² Moreover, Antioch was the seat of a crusader state between 1098 and 1268.³ Most of the French travelers to late Ottoman Antioch were obsessed with these three historical periods, and sought traces of the Romans, the early Christians, and the crusaders. They were disillusioned to find only a few vestiges, such as a cross on the city walls or a spoliated Roman column in a contemporary house, for the old monuments and urban fabric of Antioch had disappeared long ago due mostly to devastating earthquakes.⁴ The French travelers accounted for contemporary Antioch, and the civilization (Ottoman, Muslim, Turkish, Arab, or 'Oriental'⁵) it represented, only in comparison to the ancient and medieval city. With its reduced scale, dilapidated urban fabric, and lack of major monuments, Ottoman Antioch helped French travelers to undergird the recurring motif of their travelogues: ancient glory of the region juxtaposed with its contemporary, oriental decadence.

In the past few decades, literary critics, cultural historians, and architectural and urban historians have explored travel writing from a variety of perspectives. Under the influence of the postcolonial turn, and especially of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, most studies focused on the role of European travel writing 'in producing and circulating knowledge

about the rest of the world and fuelling aspirations for expansion and conquest' (Smethurst 2008: 1; Said 1979; Behdad 1994). According to these studies, European travelers paved the way for western intervention in the Middle East by generating and reproducing stereotypes about the region, and emphasizing its backwardness. Some recent studies have called for nuancing this critical perspective, pointing out the potential of travel writing to question the validity of unitary identities (Edwards and Graulund 2010: 1). Others have emphasized the longer trajectory of European encounters with the Middle East, focusing on pre-18th century travelers, demonstrating their various agendas, and, consequently, questioning the notion of deep-rooted antagonism between the 'East' and the 'West' (MacLean 2004).⁶

Although they all had their own personal agendas, French travelers to Antioch from the late 18th century onwards operated within a remarkably similar discursive framework. They consistently underscored historical links between France and the city through references to the Roman Empire, Christianity, and the crusades, accompanied with remarks about the 'contemporary plight' of Antioch, which they saw as an outcome of the Ottoman/Islamic civilization. Two historical phenomena distinguish French travelers from the rest of the European travelers to Antioch. The first involves the discourse of *mission civilisatrice*, the trademark of French colonialism and imperialism.⁷ As a celebration of French progress in the 19th century, and as an assertion of the self-proclaimed French duty to civilize the uncivilized, the discourse of *mission civilisatrice* took on a specific meaning in Ottoman Syria, or the Levant. Unlike their relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, the French claimed to have historical ties with the Levant. They sought to justify their



Figure 1: A 19th-century representation of Ottoman Antioch (Carne 1838: Plate 12).

political intervention by emphasizing the inefficiency and backwardness of the Ottoman Empire. French travelers aspired to 'reintroduce civilization' that had sunk into oblivion after the fall of the Roman Empire. The second phenomenon is the French takeover of Syria in general and Antioch in particular in the aftermath of the World War I, which fulfilled the travelers' desires. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, France established a mandate administration in Syria and Lebanon between 1920 and 1946 (Antioch, part of the semi-autonomous Sanjak of Alexandretta, joined Turkey in 1939) (Fig. 2). A major failure on the part of the proponents of *mission civilisatrice*, the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon was characterized by political crises and mass uprisings.⁸ What interests me more is the large degree to which the mandate administration made use of French travel writing on Ottoman Syria, and adopted its approaches to Syrian society as well as architecture and urban environment.

In his discussion of British guidebooks and cultural imperialism, John Mackenzie argues that colonial empires of the 19th century were 'not only empires of war, of economic exploitation', but also 'empires of travel' (Mackenzie 2005). He shows how the British travel guides for India consistently emphasized the growth of modern towns and their westernized architecture, and juxtaposed these with the insalubrious and decaying native Indian towns, hence confirming imperialist tropes of oriental degeneration and western superiority.⁹ This representational strategy of contrast took on a different form in French travelers' descriptions of Antioch.

As a not-yet-colonized city, Antioch did not have modern, westernized neighborhoods to compare, for dramatic visual effect, with its old, dilapidated urban fabric. Instead, French travelers juxtaposed the built environment of Ottoman Antioch with the ancient grandeur of the city. Because of a scarcity of visual testimonies about pre-Islamic Antioch, they relied on textual representations in such sources as previous travelers' accounts.

This article examines the representations of Antioch in the travelogues of four Frenchmen: Constantin François de Chassebœuf, alias Volney, a champion of French enlightenment; Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat, a royalist historian of the crusades; Emile Le Camus, a Catholic priest; and Maurice Barrès, a romantic nationalist intellectual. These travelers visited Antioch in the early 1780s, early 1830s, 1888, and 1914, respectively. The period between the 1780s and 1914 corresponds both to a time in which the existence of the Ottoman Empire was at stake, and to the increasing European domination of the world in political and economic terms.¹⁰ This larger historical context informs these four travelogues, and connects them together despite the diverse personal agendas of their authors. In other words, the fact that they were visiting an empire in decline as representatives of a European civilization in its political, cultural, and economic apogee shaped the travelers' approaches to Antioch and its built environment.

With the exception of Volney, these travelers devoted more substantial sections to Antioch in their travelogues than most of their contemporaries.¹¹ Despite the decades

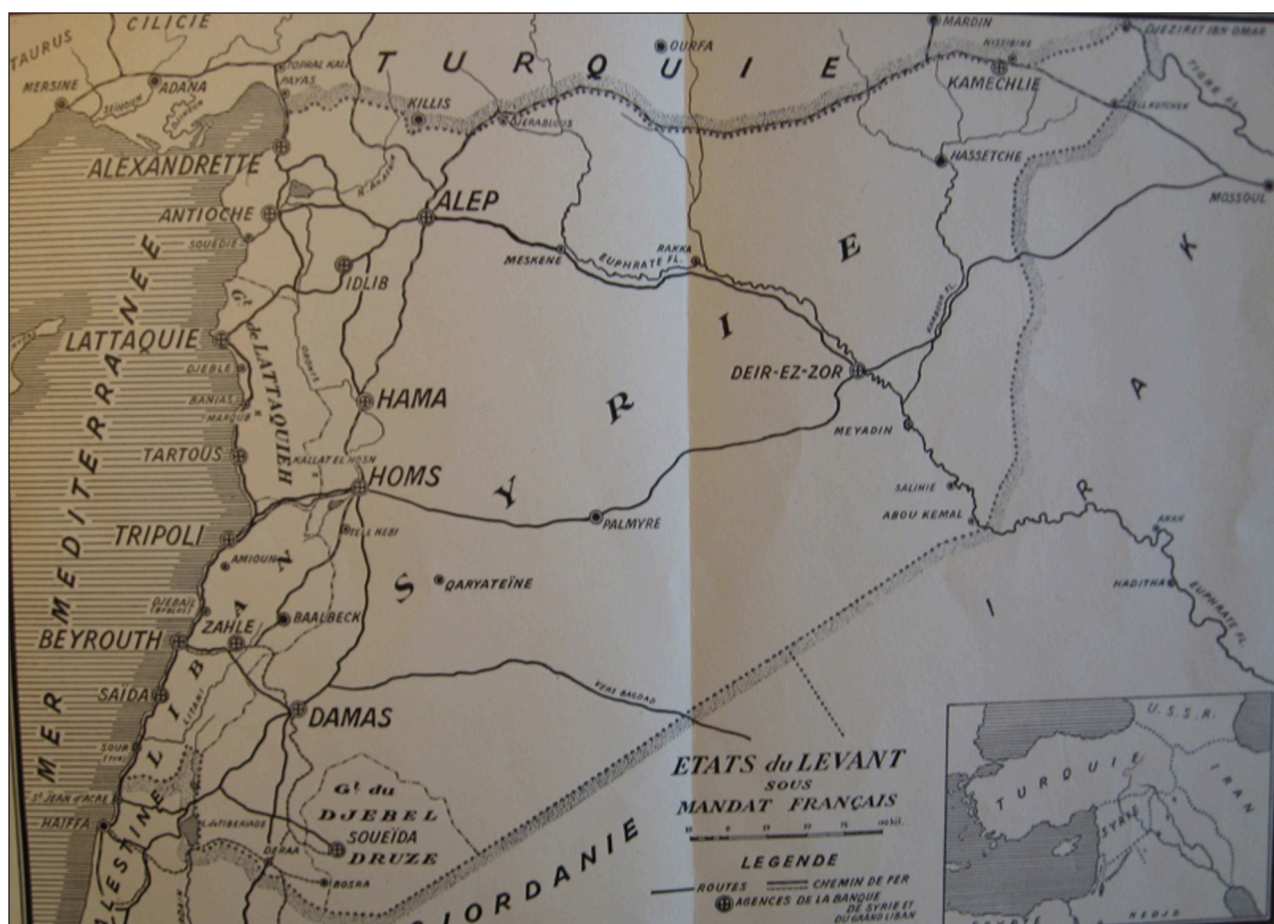


Figure 2: A contemporary map of Syria under the French Mandate. Antioch is in the northwest, immediately to the south of Alexandretta (*Quinze Ans de Mandat* 1936).

that passed between journeys, and despite their different professions and interests, the travelogues of Poujoulat, Le Camus, and Barrès reveal a common orientalist gaze with similar sensibilities, references, and discursive strategies. Nonetheless, following Peter Burke's advice against writing about orientalism without orientalists (Burke 1999), I pay particular attention to the individual agendas of these travelers. I begin my analysis with Volney's travelogue, which, despite the shortness of his account on Antioch, and despite his peculiar approach to the region at large, focusing more on the present than the past, elevated the status of travelogues to an allegedly scientific level and set the scene for future travelers. I chronologically explore the other three travelogues under the same rubric, focusing on the travelers' imaginations of Antioch's past filtered through the lens of the contemporary built environment.

In Search of a 'Scientific' Travelogue: *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*

I love Antioch. I loved her in advance. She did not disappoint me.¹² (Barrès 1923: 42)

Visiting Antioch in 1914 as a representative of the French Parliament, Maurice Barrès was delighted to have found the correspondence between his desired image of Antioch and the corporeal city through which he wandered throughout

the day. After years of immersion in the Bible, travelogues, the works of Renan, and histories of Hellenism, the Roman Empire, and the crusades, the view of Antioch had thrilled him even right before he entered the city:

Old Antioch! It is from here that the crusaders saw her. How beautiful, moving she is, and how we desire her! I knew well that I would see her, yet her appearance astonishes me, grabs me, surprises me. How she resembles her portraits! A narrow oasis against the mountain, and her fortifications climbing the slope and running along the peaks. I am impatient to penetrate her yet I am delighted to have an hour journey still to prepare myself well to be happy there.¹³ (Barrès 1923: 29)

As an object of desire enthralling Barrès through its silhouette, Antioch is rooted in the author's imagination via its portraits produced by earlier travelers. Approaching Antioch from the point where the crusaders first viewed it, Barrès is absorbed by an ambivalent feeling, with his zeal to penetrate it immediately restrained by his exultancy for having another hour to prepare himself for the encounter. Barrès is not the only traveler to Antioch who had been cultivated and conditioned by texts that described the city and prescribed ways to perceive it, feel about it, and approach it. Only rarely could a 19th-century traveler

refrain from ruminating over Antioch without direct or indirect references to the historical, religious, and literary texts on this ex-imperial, early Christian center.

One of the pioneers who laid the ground for this textual authority was Constantin-François Chassebœuf, better known as Volney, whose travel to Egypt and Syria became a source of inspiration and reference from the late 18th century onwards. Unlike the other three travelers that this article examines, Volney was more interested in the contemporary Middle East than pre-Islamic sites and monuments, and devoted little attention to Antioch in his travelogue. Nonetheless, Volney's travelogue is fundamentally pertinent to the major issues of this article. Firstly, his method of analyzing the physical characteristics of cities as an index of civilization tremendously influenced subsequent travelers to the Middle East. Secondly, his awareness of the decline of the Ottoman Empire led Volney to imply the merits of European administration in the region, a quest that would find a more straightforward expression in Barrès more than a century later.¹⁴

Volney traveled to Egypt and Syria between 1783 and 1785. His voyage was part of a greater project of rendering travel writing scientifically respectable and politically useful. Volney was an ardent supporter of the principles of the Enlightenment, and a member of the Encyclopedist circles in Paris (Raver 2003).¹⁵ He sought to found *la science de l'homme* by analyzing the ways in which climate, soil, mores, political systems, and religion shaped the physical and social characteristics of a city or a country. At the age of twenty-six, Volney decided to spend part of his hefty wealth for his education, and among the ways to educate himself, he thought, the most effective one was travelling (Volney 1959: 22). Initially, he planned to visit America, yet, considering that the Middle East would better enable him to check the effects of the past on the contemporary physical and political situation in his search for the *science de l'homme*, he ended up embarking for Egypt and Syria in 1783.

Volney criticized earlier travelers to the Orient for their obsession with the ruins of the past and their neglect of current realities. He claimed that they had employed a pompous style in their narratives and had emphasized monumental objects or outlandish events. According to Volney, these travelogues lacked a comprehensive picture of the places they visited. He also mentioned two crucial requirements that the earlier travelers had not fulfilled: competency in local languages, most importantly Arabic, the lack of which had prevented them from coming into an intimate contact with the local culture; and a long sojourn, the lack of which had produced merely touristic impressions. Volney sought a new method based on an objective evaluation of the physical and political phenomena, a method informed by 'an impartial love of truth' (Volney 1959: 23). He firmly believed that the genre of travel writing belonged more to history than to literature, and he therefore embraced an empirical approach devoid of fanciful speculations ('je me suis interdit tout tableau d'imagination') (Volney 1959: 23). In his introduction to the 1959 edition of *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*, Jean Gaulmier points out that Volney stresses his direct

testimony throughout the text by means of expressions such as 'the thing seen' ('la chose vue'), 'I saw the places' ('j'ai vu les lieux') or 'I heard the witnesses' ('j'ai entendu les témoins') (Gaulmier 1959).¹⁶ Gaulmier also argues that Volney's Orient is different from that of poets, missionaries, or colonial financiers since it is 'the real Orient' ('l'Orient réel') seen by a 'ruthless observer' (Gaulmier 1959: 13). In fact, Volney's *Voyage* promotes a typically Orientalist conception of the Middle East as the polar opposite of European civilization. Even though he does not lament the loss of Greek reason, Roman glory, and Christian dominance, nor the Muslim takeover of this heritage, his analysis is based on his reflections on the miserable physical and political state of Egypt and Syria, which, he claims, is the direct consequence of the inner characteristics of Islam and its tyrannical rule. Accordingly, Volney describes Egypt and Syria as countries where 'everything is still in the tenth century' (Volney 1959: 133). What Gaulmier presents as Volney's perfect grasp of the Orient is actually a stereotypical representation of the Middle East, which the critique of Orientalism from the late 1970s onwards has unveiled:

Volney perfectly understood the pace of this world [...] [a] society for which, the Revelation having definitively ended, any novelty constitutes a blasphemy, and any progress an inconceivable illusion, a society in which profound anxiety conceals itself behind an air of resigned serenity. (Gaulmier 1959: 12)

In addition to learning Arabic, Volney examined travelogues on the Middle East before undertaking his journey. Only Carsten Niebuhr, the German member of the Danish expedition to the Orient (1761–67), seemed to Volney to be an inspiring Enlightened traveler (Niebuhr 1774–78; 1837). Despite the originality of Volney's methodology and his quest for an impartial account of Egypt and Syria, Volney reproduced the standard premises on the Middle East, not through references to antiquities but to the contemporary physical environment; not by recounting bizarre events but by invoking the Qur'an and the political system. In other words, his *Voyage* is bound by intertextuality in terms of its overarching discursive framework. As Ali Behdad argues, 'there is no "outside" to the discourse of Orientalism: to write about the Orient inevitably involves an intertextual relation in which the "new" text necessarily depends for its representational economy on an earlier text' (Behdad 1994: 23).

Architectural and urban characteristics, of the past and present alike, play a major role in Volney's assessment of the Middle East and its civilization. The remnants of the Greco-Roman past in Egypt, such as the baths of Cleopatra and the column of Pompeii, disenchant Volney, and lead him to criticize earlier travelers for their exaggeration: 'These names have the majesty, but [when] seen for real, the objects lose the illusion they convey in engravings' (Volney 1959: 27). However, according to Volney, the dilapidated state of ancient monuments is a result of the inherent characteristics of the Turks and their barbaric despotism: 'The Turkish

mind rests on destroying the works of the past and the hope of the future, because there is no tomorrow in the barbarism of an ignorant despotism' (Volney 1959: 28). Volney also finds evidence of tyranny and barbarism in the houses and streets of contemporary Cairo. The overall atmosphere of ruin and misery in Cairo unsettles foreign travelers, he remarks (Volney 1959: 26). Hills of garbage mark the vicinity of the city, and enlarge day by day. As far as the city proper is concerned, Cairo is full of narrow, crooked, and labyrinthine streets. It does not have the public or private edifices, regular squares, or aligned streets through which 'architecture unfolds its beauties' (Volney 1959: 133). With their high and blind walls, dwellings look like prison houses (Volney 1959: 134). Combined with the other characteristics of Cairo, such as the poverty of its inhabitants, 'Everything that we see or we hear proclaims we are in the country of slavery and tyranny' (Volney 1959: 111–12).¹⁷

The streets and houses of Cairo serve as visual testimony to the abuses of tyrannical rule and barbarism. Volney evaluates the urban environment of Cairo from a western European conception of architecture and urbanism. The huge discrepancy between the two enhances the greater portrait of Oriental despotism and decadence. Volney applies the same methodology in his analysis of the other cities in Egypt and Syria. Antioch is no exception. Due to the relative insignificance of the city around the 1780s, and consistent with his aim of concentrating on *l'état moderne*, Volney devotes only one page to Antioch. Unlike most of the travelers before and after him, he does not even mention any of the Roman, early Christian, and medieval tales of grandeur. Volney only indicates that Antioch, in contrast to its contemporary misery, was once famous for the wealth of its inhabitants: 'This city, in past times famed for the luxury of its inhabitants, is no more than a ruined town' (Volney 1959: 276). He takes the state of the urban fabric in Antioch as a product of centuries-long ignorance and despotism, proof of the degeneration of the glorious city of yore. With its houses of mud and thatch, and streets crooked, narrow, and miry, Volney's Antioch 'offers the spectacle of misery and disorder' (Volney 1959: 276). After stating that the city is placed between the Orontes River and the Mount Silpius, he mentions a ruined bridge on the river and city walls that climb up to the mountain. Volney adds that only a limited portion of the intramural area is inhabited, while the rest is full of gardens and rubble with 'nothing interesting'. In this respect, Antioch is little more than a potential *entrepôt* for European traders, better suited for this purpose than Aleppo, 'despite the rudeness of its inhabitants' (Volney 1959: 276). In essence, Volney's description of Antioch's built environment as a 'spectacle of misery and disorder' fits perfectly with his broader conception of the Middle East, a civilization, for him, at the zenith of its decadence.

Volney's *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* deeply influenced later travelers to the Middle East. Some took Volney's search for turning travel into a scientific enterprise to its extreme by means of systematic questionnaires and statistical methods.¹⁸ Many other travelers of romantic or

religious motivation developed more personalized narratives. Volney's vision of the Orient left a substantial imprint upon these travelers almost without exception (Gaulmier 1959: 15). Even for such romantic writers as Nerval, Volney's 'will to truth' remained a major legacy throughout the 19th century (Behdad 1994: 59). Said's remarks best capture the pioneering role of Volney for French travelers:

French pilgrims from Volney on planned and projected for, imagined, ruminated about places that were principally *in their minds* [italics original]; they constructed schemes for a typically French, perhaps even a European, concert in the Orient, which of course they supposed would be orchestrated by them. Theirs was the Orient of memories, suggestive ruins, forgotten secrets, hidden correspondences, and an almost virtuosic style of being. (Said 1978: 170)

À la recherche de l'espace perdu: Imagining History Through the Streets of Antioch

There are in the Orient three cities that make my heart beat when I approach them: Athens, whose name resumes the glories of Greece; Jerusalem, the holiest and most poetic of cities; Antioch, where French bravery performed miracles.¹⁹ (Poujoulat, in Michaud and Poujoulat 1841: 242)

Traveling around the Middle East in 1830 and 1831 to study the traces of the crusaders, Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat, a junior historian at the time and a royalist politician later in his career, makes explicit three major sources of his own identity through which he experiences the cities of the region: ancient Greece, Christianity, and French nationality. Poujoulat's remarks perfectly illustrate the prevalent mood of the 19th-century French travelers to the Orient. These travelers searched for archaeological and architectural testimonies to the legacies of the Romans and early Christians. The medieval history of Antioch also mattered to French travelers on account of the Principality of Antioch, founded during the first crusade in 1098 and fallen to the Mamluks in 1268, the year considered, in conventional western historiography, as the beginning of the decline of the city under Muslim rule.²⁰

French travelers searched for tangible links between Ottoman Antioch and an idealized, pre-Islamic past through architectural and archeological evidence. The contemporary city was relevant only to provide contrast with the pre-Islamic grandeur of Antioch. It was rather the baths of Trajan, the forum of Valens, the colonnaded street of Tiberius, the first Christians' grotto, or the crusaders' imprints on city walls that dominated the narratives of the travelers. An emotional engagement often accompanied these narratives. Coming across those sites or places he had learnt about, the traveler was thrilled on the one hand and woeful on the other, for most of the monuments had disappeared without a trace. The whole

endeavor was characterized by the aspiration, implicitly or explicitly expressed, for the resurrection of 'reason' in the Orient, which was to be led by the west, principally the French, and which, at the moment, was represented by Christian missionaries and European trade consuls in the Ottoman Empire.²¹

In search of the crusaders: Correspondance d'Orient, 1830-31

Correspondance d'Orient, written by Joseph François Michaud, a celebrated historian of the crusades and a royalist politician, and his pupil Poujoulat, is based on their travel to the Middle East during 1830 and 1831 (Brehier 1911; Mulholland 1994). The enormous eight-volume travelogue is structured as correspondence between the two. As the writer of a seminal book on the history of the crusades, Michaud hoped to elaborate his studies with the help of Poujoulat, who was in charge of traveling to places Michaud could not visit due to his older age, sixty-three, and health issues (Michaud 1817–1822).²² His aim was to visit the lands through which the crusaders had passed, and, at the same time, share observations on 'various spectacles of the Orient' with readers and friends. Because he was not an expert on the Orient, and did not stay long enough (a standard Volney had set), Michaud did not want to produce a 'scientific study of the Orient'; rather, his goal was to write 'the particular story of a traveler', emphasizing his admirations, surprises, and curiosities (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 1: 1 and vol. 2: 7). In his preface to the first volume of the *Correspondance*, Michaud points out that he had to 'prepare himself' before undertaking his journey in order to know what he would seek ('tout ce que j'allais chercher') (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 1: 9). Michaud declares travel to be an essential element of learning about the Orient and testing the validity of textual information. However, he distances himself from 'the most distinguished travelers' who, prior to witnessing countries and peoples firsthand, seemed to know as much about them as when they returned (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 2: 1).

In the seventh volume of the *Correspondance d'Orient*, we read Poujoulat's letters to Michaud from Antioch and its vicinity. Poujoulat goes to Antioch via Latakia, which slightly delays his arrival. He bewails this delay, because he wanted to talk immediately about Antioch, where 'every stone tells the glory of France, the glory of the champions of the cross' (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 7: 237). According to Poujoulat, the Orontes region as a whole, with Antioch being its chief city, is where the glorious legacy of the French is inscribed more profoundly than anywhere else in the Orient: 'I would say that nowhere in the Orient has France's name, *Frenji*, left a more profound trace than it has on the banks of the Orontes' (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 8: 15). Indeed, the Orontes River functions as an animated testimony to and a powerful metaphor for the pre-Islamic past in many travel narratives (Fig. 3). In its effect upon the travelers, it is, to a certain extent, comparable to the architectural and archeological ruins in and around Antioch. For Poujoulat, the river is a poetical embodiment of the pre-Islamic past and its

glories: 'What a pleasure for me to write you [...] looking on to this river, whose waves whisper like a hymn to the heroism of our first crusaders' (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 7: 237).

Poujoulat devotes most of his account to the siege of the city by the crusaders. He remarks on the current state of the places where the crusaders camped or launched their attacks.²³ The city walls attract Poujoulat's attention the most, for they are the only solid remnants of the pre-Islamic city. Examining the city walls step by step, Poujoulat counts eight surviving towers, and finds the overall condition of the walls very good despite the major earthquakes of the past centuries. He represents the persistence of the walls as a source of pride, an eternal proof of the success of his ancestors. What exhilarates Poujoulat the most are the crosses the crusaders inscribed on the exterior of the towers:

I saw outside the towers crosses in *bas-relief*, the crosses of our sacred wars, placed there by the hand of our knights as signs of victory [...] I felt [patriotic joy] at the sight of these holy relics of our ancestors [...] My eyes remained fixed for a long time on these old crosses that were once held by heroic hands, on these real trophies of a war full of wonders and you will not be surprised if I told you that nothing in Antioch gave me more pleasure than the sight of these glorious images. (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 7: 245)

His remarks on the city walls with crosses perfectly symbolize the predominant mood of Poujoulat's letters. These signs of national and religious pride stand at the center of his narrative. The inhabitants of contemporary Antioch, on the other hand, damage the heritage of the crusaders by taking away the stones of the city walls to use for new buildings.²⁴ Poujoulat becomes emotional when he perceives the walls as desolate and melancholic due to the destructive effects of people and time: 'these walls, old witnesses of so much glory, cry over their ancient masters in silence and regret a greatness that no longer is' (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 7: 246).

A complex constellation of feelings engulfs Poujoulat's account about Antioch: pride for pre-Islamic Antioch and sorrow for the contemporary degradation; delight in finding signs of past glory and contempt for the ignorance of current inhabitants. In this account, we hear about the contemporary city only in contrast to its ancient grandeur. As a result, the ancient city appears more glorious and the contemporary city more decadent. With its small houses surrounded by trees, Ottoman Antioch seems to Poujoulat both as a city and a forest. He takes this view as a striking metaphorical testimony to the dying civilization of the east: 'at first sight, we would take her for a big cemetery of the Orient where every tomb has its own cypress or acacia tree, just like here each house has its own mulberry, fig or plane tree' (Michaud and Poujoulat 1841, vol. 7: 248).²⁵ The only palpable information on contemporary Antioch in Poujoulat's narrative is that its houses are very light constructions due to the possibility of a major earthquake,

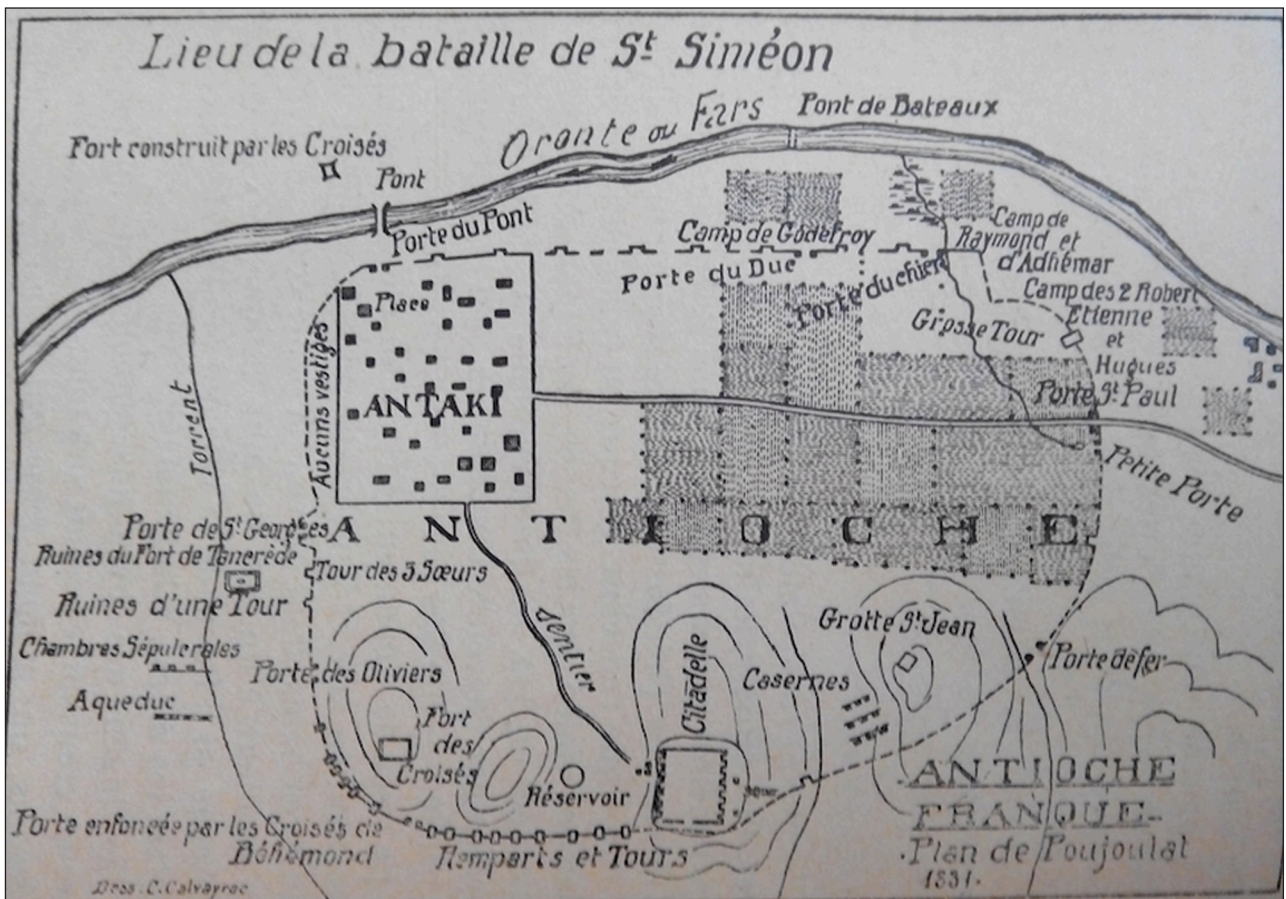


Figure 3: Poujoulat's map of crusaders' Antioch (reproduced in Jacquot, vol 2., 1931: 362).

supplemented with a brief mention of the major earthquakes that have devastated the city throughout centuries. The Ottoman city, 'a great Oriental cemetery', which barely covers one-sixth of the intramural area, is thus left silent.

In search of the early Christians: Notre Voyage aux pays Bibliques

The built environment of Ottoman Antioch became a tool to elevate the prestige of pre-Islamic Antioch in 19th-century French travelogues. Another example is Émile Le Camus and his travelogue, *Notre voyage aux pays bibliques* (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3). The similarity between Poujoulat's Oriental cemetery, which stands for the decline of Islamic civilization, and Le Camus' metaphor of a tomb is striking: 'We sit under a bunch of gigantic laurels and contemplate in silence this vast field, where once a great capital stood and where modern and miserable Antakieh [sic] takes shelter under some cypress, like at the door of a tomb' (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3: 35).²⁶

Le Camus was a Catholic priest and scholar. He studied Christian theology extensively before traveling to the biblical lands.²⁷ Contrary to Poujoulat's infatuation with the crusades, Le Camus' focus was Roman antiquity and early Christianity. His prose is more restrained than that of Poujoulat. Nevertheless, Le Camus waxes nostalgic as he talks about the period in which Antioch was a major Roman city where the apostles preached Christianity. In fact, most of Le Camus' account of Antioch is a history

of this period, written in the format of travel writing, which includes personal observations he makes 'sur les lieux'. In other words, Le Camus seeks to confirm biblical stories and histories of the Roman Empire. He pays little attention to contemporary Antioch, except when contrasting it with the Roman city strengthens his arguments. His contact with local people is limited to the staff of the Catholic missions in Antioch. Le Camus rarely mentions Muslim and non-Muslim residents of Antioch, a multi-confessional city at the time. Local people appear only twice, once as the fanatical guardian of relics at the Habib-i Neccar Mosque, and once as someone searching for antiquities in the midst of ancient ruins (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3: 34 and 74). Le Camus pays even less attention to the built environment, which is defined by 'winding streets and a very insignificant bazaar'. He only remarks on small channels in the middle of streets that transmit the torrents from the mountain to the Orontes in times of heavy rain, thus saving the houses from flooding and enabling people to go around without getting drenched (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3: 43).

Le Camus' 'lost space' is Roman and principally early Christian. He is disappointed when his hosts in Antioch tell him not to expect to see anything from the pre-Islamic city:

To all our questions, they [the hosts] have the same answer: "*E niente da vedere!* Our poor Gentlemen, you have nothing to see here! – How! nothing? Not a ruin? a stone? – *Niente, niente!* [...]" And upon this

of St. Peter, allegedly the first Christian church ('le premier asile des serviteurs de Jésus Christ'): 'Perhaps it is that the echoes of this cave reverberated from the pious field of apostles and martyrs. Perhaps it is here that Peter preached' (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3: 40). The memory of early Christians informs Le Camus' thoughts until the final hours of his stay in Antioch: 'At six o'clock, after having celebrated one last time the holy sacrifice on this land where once the Spirit of God made wonders for the development of his Church, we took leave from our hosts' (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3: 79).

In search of a French Orient: Une enquête aux pays du Levant

Returning to Maurice Barrès, whom we left at the gates of Antioch, we see a romantic nationalist's representation of the city. Barrès was a brilliant literary figure, a leading intellectual, and an active politician at the turn of the century. Having flirted with socialism in his youth, he later cherished a proto-fascist position, and inspired not only the French extreme right, but also the Nazi ideology in Germany (Sternhell 1973).³² Barrès visited Ottoman Syria in 1914 as both a member of the Académie française and a deputy of the Seine. Firstly, Barrès aimed to inspect French establishments such as missionary schools in the region. Secondly, he had an extensive personal agenda, a set of expectations to be fulfilled by Asia: 'I have always desired that land of Asia with such passionate enthusiasm. I turned toward her in all my times of weariness' (Barrès 1923, vol. 1: 1).³³ He traces his fascination with the Orient back to his childhood: 'I was born to love Asia, so much so that I smelled her in the flowers of a garden of Lorraine' (Barrès 1923, vol. 1: ii). Barrès is a representative of the Romantic approach to the Orient, the land of origins and authenticity that has fascinated travelers, literary figures, and painters disenchanted by the industrial age in Europe.³⁴ The Orient is where travelers aspired to renew themselves, seeking for 'an enrichment of the soul'.

Barrès positions himself vis-à-vis the Orient in an ambivalent manner; while he has a strong yearning for and appreciation of the Orient, the notions of contemporary western superiority and Oriental decadence are always at his disposal. Once a region where reason triumphed and Christianity flourished, the Orient is now at the zenith of its degeneration under Islam. In this sense, whether the Orient emerges again as a hope for the world by building on its great traditions is a major concern for Barrès: 'Is Asia still the guardian of a valuable tradition and one of the hopes of the world?' (Barrès 1923, vol. 1: 4). The regeneration of the Orient depends on the triumph of the French civilizing mission and, ultimately, political domination.³⁵ Barrès therefore visits the region not only to examine the efficiency of the French institutions, but also to contribute to the agenda of reviving the Orient with the help of French civilization: 'I am going to that East to confirm the state of our spiritual power [...]. A French writer has obligations and duties towards the upholders of our language and of our highest civilization' (Barrès 1923, vol. 1: 6).³⁶

French consuls, missionaries, teachers, and merchants often appear in Barrès' book as representatives of reason,

civilization, and Christianity in a region where superstition, backwardness, and Islam reign.³⁷ Barrès eulogizes these people for their idealism to civilize the Orient. One example concerns his remarks about a French couple who lived in an old and insalubrious khan near Kırıkhan, north of Antioch. Despite the dire conditions of the region, such as the lack of comfortable houses, this young couple cherishes their ideals, which fills Barrès with optimism for the future of the Orient: 'These two young people represented the Occident, which does not believe in fatality [but] that we can dry out the swamps, construct roads, prevent fevers, or at least heal them' (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 27). With an imperialist vision embedded in his conception of the Orient, Barrès tends to disdain the contemporary built environment of Antioch, which he contrasts to the pre-Islamic city and its glorified memory. Contemporary Antioch is a visual testimony to the degeneration and gradual destruction of the celebrated Christian city in Muslim hands.³⁸ Barrès distances himself from travelers who admire the picturesque qualities of the streets and houses in Oriental cities.³⁹ He says the modern town, which consists of a small area *intra muros*, has asymmetrical and empty streets defined by houses with very few windows. Access to the houses is through courtyards surrounded by high and blind walls. Strolling through the streets of Antioch, Barrès laments the lost monuments of the Christian city:

[You,] Basilica of Peter the Apostle, where this holy spear, which first saved the first crusade and later was disqualified, was found; [you,] Byzantine rotunda that contained a miraculous image of Our Lady; and you, Churches of Saint Jean-Chrysostom, of Saints Cosmas and Damian, of Saint Mesme, of Saint Simeon, what have you become? Have the conquerors Islamized you or has the rain-slashed mountain [...] buried you?⁴⁰ (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 35)

Barrès searches for the traces of the ancient city and for a stimulation of his imagination in both the contemporary city and the vacant parts of the intramural area. He realizes that the pre-Islamic city is actually not lost for good. It rather survived in fragments: Antioch had been devastated several times by earthquakes and wars; yet the same materials were repeatedly used to rebuild the city. It is unlikely, he regrets, that archeological excavations might recover ancient Antioch from the impact of the centuries, which 'erased from the earth this splendid city, which was the third of the [Roman] Empire' (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 35). Barrès' feelings fluctuate from moments of extreme regret and pessimism to those of lyrical praise of the land, from scornful remarks on what Islam had done to the city to respect and reverence to the first Christians of Antioch. As a symbol of the replacement of Christianity by Islam, reason by fatalism, and progress by degeneration, the built environment of Antioch, despite its miserable situation, cannot prevent Barrès from imagining the French domination of the city:

Its streets are narrow, its houses poor, pressed in small stones and rubble; its vast enclosure, ter-

rifying; its tall mountain casts a gloomy shadow: there is no security there: yet its grace is stronger. Little winding streets, the dim light of its bazaars, its mosques and their minarets do not prevent me from thinking of Tasso's poem, of our *Chanson d'Antioche*,⁴¹ and under the orchards of Orontes, the smile of Clorinda and of the ladies of our lands who accompanied the Crusaders shines. The Arabian color has peeled off, and allowed us to see a substance kindred to ours.⁴² (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 42)

It is under the veil of the current city of the Muslims that the source of inspiration, imagination, and national as well as religious pride lays for Barrès. The poorer the image of Muslim Antioch is, the more magnificent the ancient city becomes in his narrative. It is difficult to miss how Barrès' approach to the contemporary city echoes that of the previous French travelers to Antioch. His immense knowledge on the Orient in general and Antioch in particular, which he seeks to verify *sur les lieux*, also reminds one of Poujoulat and Le Camus. More directly, Barrès mentions his debt to the great masters of Orientalism such as Renan,⁴³ literary figures who wrote about the Orient such as Victor Hugo and Goethe, and painters such as Delacroix. It is telling to consider Barrès' fondness for Delacroix, whose *Women of Algiers* is best-known for its harem fantasy, at the same time as his own perception of Antioch and other Oriental cities as feminine entities. The attribution of femininity to Antioch reinforces the idea of Oriental passiveness, which tempts the western male author. Barrès' final remarks on Antioch clearly manifest an Orientalist design in which he turns out to be the western man in a 'harem' of oriental cities:

I see all these cities of the Orient like a circle of young women among whom I was invited to choose. Damascus is their queen, so be it! She lacks solitude and intimacy. My heart does not put anything above Antioch. This is my indefinable feeling for Antioch, along its river, under great, motionless trees that have the curve of the wind. Women veiled in black, sitting on stones against the mountains ravaged by torrents; a congested, sleepy city, half-buried under the youngest greenery, and up above, the solemn great wall of Byzantium and the Crusades: what an image that I feed myself with! I am in love with Antioch.⁴⁴ (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 53)

Conclusion and the Aftermath

This article explored the travel accounts of four Frenchmen who visited Antioch during roughly the so-called long 19th century, between the early 1780s and 1914, by focusing on their shared sensibilities and discursive strategies. Operating within the larger context of an ambitious western colonialism seeking to dominate the rest of the world, and an Ottoman Empire struggling against diverse internal and external challenges to preserve its integrity, these travelers often turned their narratives of Antioch into commentaries on the contrast between the oriental

and occidental civilizations. They condemned the former, represented by the Ottoman city, and celebrated the latter, represented by the pre-Islamic city. Even Volney, despite his firm intention to focus exclusively on the current state of the Orient, succumbed to the temptation to remark on the contrast between the grandeur of Roman Antioch and the dreariness of Ottoman Antioch. The other three travelers, Poujoulat, Le Camus, and Barrès, who sought desperately for the lost Greco-Roman and medieval spaces, devoted large sections of their travelogues to this contrast. The built environment is at the central stage in all these narratives: that of the Ottoman city, conveyed through the personal observations of the authors, and that of the pre-Islamic city, through its various textual and visual representations. The streets and buildings of Antioch become a fundamental index of civilization, providing ample room for travelers to announce the decadence of the Orient, and leading them, ultimately, to desire the return of the Roman Empire in the form, of course, of modern French colonialism.

What was only a fantasy (of choosing Oriental cities as if they were a group of young women) for Barrès turned out to be a fateful reality played out by the two major enemies of the Ottoman Empire during the World War I. In November 1915, only one year after Barrès' travel to Antioch, France and Britain sat around a table to negotiate the terms of partitioning the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the post-war period, coming up with what is known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Fulfilling Barrès' desire for Damascus and Antioch, France obtained British support for its claims toward Syria and Lebanon. The French, in turn, assented to the British claims over Palestine and Iraq.⁴⁵ The Ottomans retreated from the region in 1918, and in 1920, French armies took over Syria by crushing the newly established, independent Arab Kingdom.⁴⁶ The French mandate administration for Syria and Lebanon lasted until 1946. Contrary to the high hopes of the travelers – that the French would turn Syria into the 'civilized' country it had been in the Roman period – the mandate administration largely failed to fulfill its promises. Moreover, the people of Syria were not as interested in the French tutelage as the French alleged them to be. From the very beginning, protests, revolts, and boycotts against the French shook the foundations of the mandate administration (Khoury 1987; Provence 2005; Neep 2012).

Nevertheless, the mandate administration left a substantial legacy in Syria and Lebanon. Mistaking Ottoman pluralism for an immutable sectarianism in the Middle East, the French fostered ethnic and religious divisions, paving the way for the bloodiest chapters in the modern history of the region such as the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90) and the ongoing cataclysm in Syria that broke out in 2011.⁴⁷ In the realm of architecture and urbanism, the French initiated ambitious projects but failed to transform Syrian cities substantially.⁴⁸ The French claim of introducing modern architecture and urbanism to Syria has been refuted by recent historians who have demonstrated the Ottoman origins of modernization

from the mid-19th century onwards (Ghorayeb 2014; Fries 2000).

From the very beginning, French travelers' accounts of Syria remained a source of reference and inspiration for the mandate administration. Not only is there a striking parallel between how travelers conceptualized the historical role of the French in Syria and the official discourse of the mandate administration regarding its mission,⁴⁹ but also many French bureaucrats, historians, archaeologists, and architects directly referred to travelers as a source of authority in their administrative and scholarly pursuits. For instance, Jean Sauvaget, a member of the Institut français d'études arabes in Damascus and the author of a monumental book on the architectural history of Aleppo, used travelogues extensively as major sources (Sauvaget 1941). In the introduction to his book, *Alep*, Sauvaget acknowledges his debt to travelers, specifically to Volney, whose travelogue he takes to be 'a masterpiece in every respect' (Sauvaget 1941: xxvi). One of his colleagues, Jacques Weulersse, published an article in 1934 on the urban geography of Antioch in which he presents Antioch as a typically Oriental city of hostile communities that inhabit neighborhoods segregated along religious lines.⁵⁰ Perfectly in harmony with the French policy of sectarianizing Syria and Lebanon, such conceptualizations of Muslim cities have undergone much scholarly criticism in

the past few decades (Abu-Lughod 1987; Raymond 1994). Weulersse's article also demonstrates the traces of the Roman grid plan and how Muslims deformed it over the centuries, elevating the leitmotiv of the French travelers' narratives on Antioch – the contrast of the grandeur of the Roman metropolis with the degenerate Muslim town – to a scholarly level (Weulersse 1934: 28, 40) (Fig. 5). In addition to scholars such as Weulersse, the entire French mandate administration inherited travelers' fascination with the Roman city. It was not a coincidence that one of the earliest interventions in Antioch's urban fabric had to do with the re-opening of the Roman Via Triumphalis as a modern avenue.⁵¹ It is also unsurprising that, in his 1931 book written to promote tourism in Antioch, the French lieutenant-colonel Paul Jacquot invokes Poujoulat to argue for the Oriental charm of the supposedly never-changing city, which, in fact, most travelers despised:

It is always the same little city, compact, dense, fissured by little streets, alleys, dead ends, with its eroded, bumpy squares and its cemeteries packed with white steles. The little cafes of Poujoulat are still here. Nothing matches the little narrow streets of Antioch in terms of Oriental picturesque. (Jacquot 1931: 344)



Figure 5: Aerial view of Antioch taken during the French Mandate (Weulersse 1934: Plate V).

Notes

- ¹ The same contrast still grips contemporary visitors to Antioch. At the beginning of a *New York Times* article on Antioch, Stephen Kinzer remarks: 'Residents of New York and other great metropolises who assume that the glories of their cities will last forever might take a cautionary lesson from this remote provincial outpost' (Kinzer 1997).
- ² 'And it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.' Acts 11:26 (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*).
- ³ On the foundation of the Principality of Antioch, see Asbridge (2000).
- ⁴ For example, a major earthquake in 526 AD devastated Antioch, killing around 250,000 people and destroying most of the built environment. For a list of earthquakes that hit Antioch, see Sbeinati, Darawcheh, and Mouty (2005).
- ⁵ From here on, the terms *Orient* and *Oriental* will not be in quotation marks. I will use these terms to refer to the travelers' usage of them. *Levant* is another term that will appear, though much less frequently. It refers broadly to the eastern Mediterranean, but specifically to Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. For the lack of a better term, *Middle East* will appear more frequently, and at times anachronistically. Popularized in the aftermath of the First World War, *Middle East* is an unsettling term due to its colonialist and imperialist origins as well as its abuse by contemporary political actors.
- ⁶ For a recent study on French travelers to the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century, see Longine (2015). Traveling and various forms of mobility were also an essential component of Ottoman society throughout centuries, and left different forms of records behind, ranging from travelogues to court documents (Faroqhi 2014). The best-known Ottoman traveler is Evliya Çelebi, whose monumental travelogue of the 17th century remains an invaluable text. For a selection in English, see Dankoff and Kim (2011). For a late 19th-century Ottoman traveler to Europe, see Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1890).
- ⁷ On the French civilizing mission in the Middle East, see Burrows (1986).
- ⁸ For a comprehensive study on the French Mandate, see Khoury (1987).
- ⁹ The contrast between the old town and the new/modern districts was also a major theme in French colonialist discourse. See Çelik (1997).
- ¹⁰ On the history of the late Ottoman Empire, see Quataert (2005, specifically Chapter 4, "The Nineteenth Century"); Zürcher (2004, specifically Part 1: "Western Influences and Early Attempts at Modernization").
- ¹¹ For a selection of European travelers who wrote about Antioch from the mid-18th century to the early twentieth century, see Pococke (1745); Ali Bey (1814); Carne (1838); Ainsworth (1842); Belgiojoso (1858); Lycklama a Nijeholt (1875); Bell (1907).
- ¹² 'J'aime Antioche, je l'aimais par avance. Elle ne m'a pas déçu.' Translations from French to English belong to the author throughout the article. I am grateful to Shirine Hamadeh and Gül Çatır for their suggestions. Any error remains mine. Because the editorial policy of *Architectural Histories* requires the inclusion of original passages in the endnotes only when there are issues of interpretation, the reader will find only some of the original quotations in French below.
- ¹³ 'La vieille Antioche! C'est d'ici que les Croisés l'aperçurent. Comme elle est belle, émouvante, et que nous la désirons! Je savais bien que je l'allais voir, et pourtant sa vue m'étonne, me saisit, me surprend. Comme elle ressemble à ses portraits! Une étroite oasis contre la montagne, et ses fortifications grimant la côte, courant sur les cimes. Je suis impatient d'y pénétrer, et pourtant je me réjouis d'avoir une heure encore de route pour bien me préparer à y être heureux'.
- ¹⁴ Barrès was not the first French traveler who expressed the quest for European intervention in the Levant. Another was Baron Taylor, who visited Antioch in 1830. The contrast between the great economic potential of Antioch and the contemporary insignificance of the city prompted the Baron to long for the European takeover of the city: 'No matter how degraded it is, Antioch could have recovered its importance and activity in different hands. The civilization of Europeans would soon have repopulated this desert. Its situation, despite that of Aleppo, could have made it the entrepôt of the commerce with the ports of the Mediterranean' (Taylor 1839, vol. 1: 79).
- ¹⁵ His penname is another symbol of Volney's devotion to the Enlightenment. Volney is a contraction of Voltaire and Ferney, a commune where Voltaire had an estate.
- ¹⁶ On Volney and his *Voyage*, also see Stagl (2004, chapter 7: "From the Private to the Sponsored Traveler: Volney's Reform of Travel Instruction and the French Revolution": 269–296).
- ¹⁷ On the influence of Volney and his travelogue during the French invasion of Egypt (1798–1803), and the relationship between Volney and Napoleon Bonaparte, see Stagl (2004, chapter 7).
- ¹⁸ One example is Vital Cuinet, who traveled around Anatolia and the Arab provinces in the early 1890s to determine the extent to which the Ottoman Empire was able to pay back its debts to European creditors (Cuinet 1890–1895).
- ¹⁹ 'Il y a dans l'Orient trois villes dont l'approche m'a fait battre le cœur: Athènes, dont le nom résume les gloires de la Grèce; Jérusalem, la plus sainte et la plus poétique des cités; Antioche, où la bravoure française fit des miracles'.
- ²⁰ Many histories of Antioch end with the year 1268, as the titles of some of these studies suggest, such as Bouchier (1921) and Downey (1961). Little has been written about the period between 1268 and 1920, from the beginning of the Mamluk rule up to the end of the Ottoman period.
- ²¹ For French missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, see Verdeil (2011) and Bocquet (2005). For French-Ottoman commercial relations, see Eldem (1999).
- ²² Also see Brehier (1911); Mulholland (1994); Nora (2001: 443–444).

- ²³ Nineteenth-century Europe witnessed a surge of interest in the medieval period in general, and the crusades in particular. French expansion in North Africa from the 1830s onwards has been associated with the crusades by none other than Poujoulat himself (Riley-Smith 2008: 59). During the July Monarchy, Louis-Philippe created Salles des Croisades in Versailles, a museum celebrating the French role in the crusades (Riley-Smith 2008: 54; Constant and Lamarque 2002). For British interest in the crusades during the 19th century, see Siberry (2003). For a turn-of-the-century scholarly endeavor, see *Revue de l'Orient Latin*.
- ²⁴ In 1923, the French mandate administration prohibited the use of ancient stones for modern constructions in Syria. See Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Fonds: Mandat de Syrie et du Liban; Inventaire 14: Renseignement et Presse, 1842; Rapport pour le 1er Trimestre de l'année 1923, no. 6386.
- ²⁵ 'On la prendrai, à la première vue, pour un grand cimetière d'Orient, où chaque tombe a son cyprès ou son acacia, comme ici chaque maison a son murier, son figuier ou son platane.'
- ²⁶ 'Nous nous asseyons sous un bouquet de gigantesques lauriers, et nous contemplons en silence ce vaste champ où fut une grande capitale et où la moderne et misérable *Antakieh* s'abrite sous quelques cyprès, comme à la porte d'un tombeau.'
- ²⁷ For the biography and major works of Le Camus, see Blomme (2002).
- ²⁸ 'A toutes nos questions, ils font la même réponse: "*E niente da vederel!*" Nos pauvres Messieurs, vous n'avez rien à voir ici! -Comment! rien? Pas une ruine? Une pierre? -Niente, niente! [...] Et sur ce glacial encouragement nous demandons quand même à sortir et, sinon à voir, du moins à chercher.'
- ²⁹ 'Eh bien, "*E niente!*" C'est vrai et c'est faux. De visible, il n'y a rien. Sous terre, à un ou deux mètres de profondeur, il y a tout. A peine sortie de la ville, vers le levant, aux premiers jardins que nous rencontrons, des ouvriers cherchent des pierres pour construire, et ils trouvent des chapiteaux sculptés, des colonnes, des frises, et, les malheureux! ils les brisent pour édifier des mauvaises maisons.'
- ³⁰ 'The old city, so many times surprised by earthquakes, has been so well buried alive with her luxury and wealth, that the slightest bit of rain on these furrowed terrains brings back to mankind her centuries-long hidden treasures' (Le Camus 1890, vol. 3: 44).
- ³¹ 'En rejoignant d'ici [from the ancient theatre], par la rue de Tibère, la Porte du Milien, on descendait vers ce Forum qui avait vu, à coté des capricieuses agitations du peuple acclamant ou bravant par de malignes invectives les maîtres qui passaient, un spectacle douloureusement sublime et dont le souvenir m'est resté en mémoire car ce qu'on a lu dans la langue inimitable de Tacite ne s'efface plus.'
- ³² Dadaists held a mock trial of Barrès in 1921, accusing him of betraying the revolutionary merits of his earlier literary works. They sentenced Barrès to twenty years hard labor *in absentia* (Harding 2013: 34–40).
- ³³ 'Je l'ai toujours désirée avec une si folle ardeur, cette terre d'Asie. Je me tournais vers elle à toutes mes heures de sécheresse.' On the importance of the Orient in Barrès' thinking, see Frandon (1952) and Huré (1991).
- ³⁴ 'With Delacroix, the master of the choir, the painters put on the picture rail the fierce reverie of the Muslim, his fatalism, and the nostalgia of the races he oppresses. It is by way of their Romanticism that I moved from [the realm of] imagination to the eternal reality of Asia' (Barrès 1923, vol 1: 3).
- ³⁵ In a train station in Lebanon, a young man asks Barrès to stay longer, and wonders why he came to the town at all if he was to leave so soon: '—To admire your country, your history, and your friendship. —Only this, to admire?' The following is Barrès' interpretation of the young man's reaction: 'What they expect from France is an efficient aid. After our priests, they want our soldiers; after their education, they want their liberation' (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 2).
- ³⁶ 'Je vais dans ce Levant pour y vérifier l'état de notre puissance spirituelle [...] Un écrivain français a des dettes et des devoirs envers les propagateurs de notre langue et de notre plus haute civilisation.'
- ³⁷ Taking French language as a crucial means to propagate the *mission civilisatrice*, France gave particular importance to its schools in the Ottoman Empire from the 1860s onwards. Over 100,000 students had been enrolled in more than 500 schools throughout the empire by 1914. See Burrows (1986: 110).
- ³⁸ Barrès ignores the considerable impact of Ottoman modernization on Middle Eastern cities from the mid-19th century onwards. See a selection of studies on the urban history of the late Ottoman Empire: Hudson (2008); Hansen (2005); Arnaud (2006); Zandi-Sayek (2011); Çelik (1986); Çelik (2009).
- ³⁹ As his remarks on a khan near Kırıkhan perfectly illustrate: 'Dire qu'il y a des voyageurs qui trouvent ce genre d'auberge intéressant, pittoresque! Ah! Lecteurs, que le ciel vous épargne ces piteuses délices!' (To say that there are travelers who find this kind of inn interesting, picturesque! Oh, readers, may the sky spare you these pitiful delights!) (Barrès 1923, vol. 2: 26).
- ⁴⁰ 'Basilique de l'apôtre Pierre, où fut trouvée cette sainte lance qui d'abord sauva la première croisade et qui, par la suite, fut disqualifiée; rotonde byzantine, qui renfermiez une image miraculeuse de Notre-Dame; et vous, églises de saint Jean-Chrysostome, des saints Côme et Damien, de sainte Mesme, de saint Siméon, qu'êtes-vous devenues? Les vainqueurs vous ont-ils islamisées, ou bien la montagne, ravinée par les pluies [...] vous a-t-elle ensevelies?'
- ⁴¹ The *Chanson d'Antioche* is a twelfth century epic poem on the first crusade; see Edgington and Sweetenham (2011).
- ⁴² 'Ses rues sont étroites, ses maisons pauvres, pressées de pierrailles, de décombres; sa vaste enceinte, terrifiante; sa haute montagne jette une ombre lugubre; on

y manque de sécurité: pourtant sa grâce est plus forte. Des ruelles tortueuses, la pénombre de ses bazars, ses mosquées et leurs minarets ne m'empêchent pas de songer au poème du Tasse, à notre *Chanson d'Antioche*, et, sous les vergers de l'Oronte, brille le sourire de Clorinde et des dames de chez nous qui accompagnaient les Croisés. La couleur arabe s'est écaillée, et nous laisse voir une substance parente de la nôtre.'

⁴³ Renan's travels to the Orient in the 1860s informed some of his major works, which deeply influenced later travelers. For Renan's visit to Syria, see Gaulmier (1972); Nash (2011); Simon-Nahum (2008). For Renan's own remarks on Antioch, see Renan (1866: 602–608); Renan (1869: 948–949). Also see Chiron (1991).

⁴⁴ 'Toutes ces villes de l'Orient, je les vois comme un cercle de jeunes femmes, entre lesquelles je fus invité à choisir. Damas est leur reine; soit! [...] Elle manque trop de solitude et d'intimité. Mon cœur ne met rien au-dessus d'Antioche [...] Voilà le sentiment indéfinissable que j'ai d'Antioche, au bord de sa rivière, sous de grands arbres immobiles qui ont la courbe de vent. Des femmes voilées de noir, assises sur des pierres, contre les montagnes ravineées de torrents; une ville tassée, assoupie, demi-submergée dans la plus jeune verdure, et par-dessus, là-haut, le grand mur sérieux de Byzance et des Croisades: quelle image, dont je me nourris! Je suis amoureux d'Antioche.'

⁴⁵ For a classic study on the Franco-British partition of the Middle East, see Fromkin (2001). On French presence in the Middle East between 1916 and 1946, see Fournie and Riccioli (1996).

⁴⁶ On mass politics during the Arab Kingdom, see Gelvin (1998).

⁴⁷ On the role of the French mandate in sectarianizing religious communities, see Weiss (2010) and White (2011). For the administrative divisions along sectarian lines in Syria under the French Mandate (the Druze and Alawite provinces, Lebanon envisaged to be a Christian-dominated state, Aleppo and Damascus provinces with Sunni majority, and the Sanjak of Alexandretta with Turkish Muslim majority) see Khoury (1987). The administrative divisions of the mandate period have recently come to the fore as different scenarios for the dismemberment of Syria are being circulated in press. See Chatty (2012) and Jawad (2013). For the Lebanese Civil War, see Fisk (2001).

⁴⁸ In 1941, Michel Ecochard, the *directeur du service de l'Urbanisme* of the mandate administration, who made his debut with the design of the Archaeological Museum of Antioch in 1931 and became an internationally renowned architect in the 1950s, penned a report on the problems of urbanism in Syria and Lebanon. In this report, Ecochard recognizes the French failure to transform Syrian and Lebanese cities comprehensively, and proposes a number of reasons for this failure. See the archives, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes; Fonds: Mandat Syrie Liban, Services Juridiques, 1er versement, Carton. 2927: 'Les Problèmes d'Urbanisme dans les Etats du Levant', par Michel Ecochard.

⁴⁹ The French representation of Syria and the role of the mandate administration can best be observed in the visual and discursive character of the Syrian-Lebanese pavilion in the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition. See Olivier (1934: 371–397).

⁵⁰ 'Mais nous sommes ici en Orient [...] où division ethniques et techniques, comme par une étrange logique interne, tendent toujours à coïncider plus ou moins étroitement: la répartition des métiers se fait suivant les races. Nous verrons donc apparaître, à côté de la cité turque et musulmane, des agglomérations qui lui sont étrangères, des quartiers non musulmans à la population plus ou moins spécialisée dans le commerce ou l'artisanat. En même temps apparaît un principe de division entièrement inconnu dans notre Occident actuel, car chacun de ces groupes ethniques ou religieux se cantonne en quartiers autonome fermés, souvent même hostiles les uns aux autres.' ('But we are here in the Orient [...] where ethnic and technical divisions, as in a strange internal logic, always tend to coincide: occupational distribution is done along racial lines. Thus we will see appear, next to the Turkish and Muslim city, urban agglomerations foreign to it, non-Muslim quarters with a population more or less specialized in trades or crafts. At the same time, [we see] a principle of division entirely unknown to our present Occident, because each of these ethnic or religious groups confine themselves in closed, autonomous quarters that are often hostile to one another.') Weulersse (1934: 37–38).

⁵¹ Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Fonds: Mandat Syrie Liban, 1er versement, Renseignement et Presse, Inv.14, Carton 1846: 'Rapport pour le 1er trimestre de l'année 1928.' Also see Tekin (1993); Temiz (2006).

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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