

British Travelers and British Travel Writing

An Overview to British Travelers Visiting Albania in the First Half of 19th Century

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Abstract

The Grand Tour played an important role in the education of the aristocratic British youth. Several requirements served for its classical qualification. The Tour lasted from some months to some years. Travelers' individual choices, spread of diseases, priority to special places, as well as historical events shaped the travel plan. The Tour changed its classical denotation in the 19th century, reflecting a radical social transformation in the British society. The middle class would be engaged in travelling beyond the borders of the British territory. The Romantic traveler of the 19th century differs from the classic traveler of the Grand Tour, stressing heroism and bravery, avoiding scenic descriptions. These travelers resembled the explorer. A term introduced by the Romantics. The dense narrative produced in this period would permit the British public to become familiar with unlike people, experiences, and lands. There are five travellers that visited the Albanian land in the first half of 19th century, during British Romanticism. Dodwell, Hughes, Martin Leake, Urquhart and Best published works mentioning the Albania theme, people, culture, nature, geography. Dodwell's work is significant because of classical archeology. T.S. Hughes gives information about Ali Pasha and his mystical figure. Topographical data on the Albanian population, customs, and traditions are introduced in Leake's book. Urquhart looks at the Orient from a philosophical viewpoint. A work about hunting, natural beauty, customs, traditions is written by Best. Therefore, their books give essential information about the country in the first half of this century.

Keywords: Grand Tour; Romanticism; British travel writing; Albania.

Introduction

The Grand Tour

Richard Lassels in the book *Travels in Italy* first mentions the term Grand Tour in 1670 (p.6). A century later, Paul Kirby (1952) informs the audience that the Grand Tour has become part of the young Europeans' education, any member coming from the nobility of the time (p. 2). The journey could last from several months to several years in a row. There were a number of prerequisites for it, while Italy was considered

prime location because of its ancient cultural as well as architectural heritage. Different scholars consider this travel practice as an identifying experience for the English aristocracy. The primary purpose was to develop the masculine identity of the participants, helping them acquire the skills and virtues valued by the society elite (Redford, 1996, p. 7-9, 14-5). In this regard, Sweet (2012) is of the opinion that it continued without interruption in the main European cities (p. 2). It was structured around opportunities for social interaction. This journey can be called truncated if it does not meet these characteristics: the traveler is a young Englishman (member of the aristocracy), has an assistant accompanying him throughout the journey, follows a precise plan of it, with Rome the first destination, along with an extended duration varying from two to three years (Redford, 1996, p.7-9, 14-5).

The Grand Tour is an English concept, but it did not remain only within the borders of this country. The Grand Tour extended to other foreign countries in Europe, causing travelers of different nationalities to embark on tours to discover foreign countries outside their borders. However, it remains the view that most travelers of the 18th century were of English nationality, as if to show the origin of the term and new practice. The increase of the travelers' number was a general European development that we can find in other countries such as France, Germany etc. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the Grand Tour is dominated by travelers of English nationality (Black, 2011, p. 1). Meanwhile, no other country questioned the role and merits the English had in relation to the development of this type of tourism.

Over the years, a spread of the idea of being a traveler can be seen in other layers of the society, considered not so privileged. Therefore, even the classic settings of the Grand Tour changed adapting to this unfamiliar stratum of travelers. Paris and European north-western countries became novel defaults to welcome the new tourists. The up-to-date travel plan would be preferred for the short time and lower costs (Black, 2011, 1). The 19th century Grand Tour reflected a profound social revolution. The French Revolution is considered the event that put an end to the traditional perception of the Tour (Sweet, Gerrit, Goldsmith, p. 78).

Travel Plan

The Grand Tour Travel plan included the visit to places for instance: Italy and France (Paris). The most important cities to visit in Italy were Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples. Journeys to other places were not excluded. The travel plan was influenced by the travelers' individual choices, priority places, the spread of dangerous diseases, special historical events associated with outbreaks of conflicts between states, political disagreements, etc.

If most of the travelers followed the classic routes of the Tour, some others, fewer in number, chose to start the journey on less favored routes. These places included southern Italy, Eastern Europe, the Baltic, and the Balkans. Over the years, especially in the 19th century, such places would be coveted by the travelers. The Balkans were mostly visited by those returning from India. It was not the main destination. The road to Vienna and Constantinople passed through Belgrade, Budapest, Niš. Tourists avoided crossing the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean. Albania, Macedonia, and most of Greece were little visited. Meanwhile, Greece became most popular after 1780 (Sweet, Gerrit, Goldsmith, p. 78).

Analysis

English Romanticism and the Age of Exploration

The transformation in the English society from 1760 onwards would also affect new travelers' layering. Revolutions within this society, for example transport, agriculture, industry, etc. would make it possible for the middle class to engage in travelling beyond the borders of the domestic territory. Changes in society divisions would accompany the Grand Tour's modification in goals and travel plan. Carl Thompson states that by 1760, the classic Grand Tour traveler, a young aristocratic male, was finding himself travelling in the company of different social groups, ages, genders (Sweet, Gerrit, Goldsmith, p.78). These new travelers were different from the Classic Grand Tour. Published narratives of these tours became the dominant genre of the middle class, while the letters and notes kept by the high society were scorned to see the light of publication (Turner, 2001, p. 13).

What characterized the travelers of the Romantic Period is the desire to be like an explorer. This is the role Byron¹ (1812-1818), exposes in his literary work *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1832). In the notes kept for this work, Byron, recalls the journey to Albania in 1809, spent in places not previously went to by the English (Wordsworth, 1997, 64). Paul Fussell (1980) gives us a clearer image of the explorer. As noted by him, this term started to be used during Romanticism. The meaning of the term that exists today, dates to this period and refers to someone traveling to make scientific discoveries in geography and related fields (p.39-40). The experiences of these explorations would produce a dense narrative, enabling the English public to become familiar with lands, people, and experiences from the most diverse. Romantic writers and travelers were fascinated by the explorer's character and often collected manuscripts on travel narratives, important to the traveler's experience (Fulford, Kitson, Lee, 2004, 67). To the Romantics, the motive of the journey was vital, even though we were dealing with e real or imaginary one, the goal was to go down deep into the hideaways of the human mind. The Romantic writer and traveler differ from that of the Grand Tour. The

¹ A poet and English politician. Considered one the leading figures of Romanticism, Byron is one of the key English poets. He travelled in unusual places of Europe, including Albania. Canto no.2 is dedicated to Albania and Greece.

Romantics focused more on bravery and heroism than the scenic views of the Tour. Traveling, during the Romantic period had a different purpose, therefore the figure of the traveler takes on a different attitude.

Carl Thompson (2007) is of the opinion,

The traditional Grand Tour similarly provides both context and contrast to Byron's first period of travelling, the tour of 1809 to 1811 which took the poet to the Iberian Peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean—a journey as hugely formative for Byron's poetic career as the 1790 tour was for Wordsworth. At the same time, Byron—unlike Wordsworth, an aristocratic rather than a middleclass traveller—plays against the Grand Tour in a very different way (...) Motivating these travelers was a desire both to stay true to the empirical, exploratory dimension of the traditional Grand Tour—France and Italy by this date having been exhaustively described—and also to escape an activity that to the eyes of aristocrats and gentry was becoming increasingly *déclassé* (p.51).

Byron's adventures in the Albanian land, Mediterranean, Iberian Peninsula are literary described in Canto 1 and 2. These literary notes emphasize Byron's image as a romantic traveler of the 19th century, like other Romantics such as Shelley, Woodsworth etc. We cannot imagine the traveler without the writer, and the writer without the traveler. For this purpose, Cantos 1 and 2 were considered as travel poems, advertised as a travel book (Stabler, 2000, p. 223-39). The cantos were accompanied by notes with a political approach to give more in-depth explanations about the places visited.

The traveler in the role of explorer was undoubtedly a fascinating figure, making discoveries aside from unveiling new worlds to the metropolitan reading public. A role that many romantic writers sought to fulfill in a more metaphorical way as they pursued to awaken their readers to new perspectives about the self, nature, and society (Thompson, 2007, p. 233). Romantic writers like Byron (1788-1824), Shelly (1792-1822), Mary Shelly (1797-1851) etc. revealed to the audience another approach to the journeyings, more related to the disappointment with the world. It was the traveler who suffered. Such a perspective gave a diverse tone to the travelers' explorations in the 19th century.

Results

An Overview to the British Travelers Visiting Albania in the First Half of 19th Century

There were many British travelers visiting Albania in the 19th century, first half. The intention of their travel is different. These travelers visited Albania while on their journey to Greece and the lands under Ali Pasha's rule. They were inspired by Byron and followed his steps in the territory. The chronological aspect is notable in this overview to present the travelers and their works published from 1819 to 1842. Edward Dodwell

is the first to issue his book *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece*² in 1819. The work, consisting of two volumes, is significant because of classical archeology. The part dedicated to Albania is exceedingly small. While traveling from Venice to Greece, he is attracted by several places in Albania, which he describes in this work.

While on a boat trip, he finds himself in front of Himara/Kimarra. The captain he was travelling with assures them that the inhabitants rob and plunder ships, therefore it is better to pray to Saint Nicholas. The first place he visited in Albania is Parga, which had not yet fallen into the hands of Ali Pasha. From the traveler's viewpoint, Preveza appears to be a miserable town, but before October 20, 1798 war had been a prosperous city. Dodwell is shocked when he sees the ruins of Nikopol burned by the Pasha of Ioannina's war. Here he ends his visit to Albania, although still finding moments to talk about the Albanians in Ithaca.

In 1820 and 1830, T.S. Hughes publishes his travel impressions in the book *Travels in Sicily, Greece and Albania*³. The author leaves England at the end of 1820 together with his friend Robert Townley Parker to travel to Sicily, Greece, and Albania. At the center of his books, as well as many other travelers, is the the Pasha of Ioannina's mystical figure. The second volume of the book deals with life and death of Ali Pasha and his contribution to Greece independence.

Both travelers visit Southern Albania and stop in Zice/ Zitza, Delvinë/Delvino, and Dropull/Deropuli valley admired for the beautiful nature and considerable number of populations. Criticism is made of the feudal system and the negative consequences on the simple inhabitants. The travel plan continues towards Gjirokastra/Argyro-Castro, again under the rule of Pasha of Ioannina (the governor was the youngest son of Ali Pasha). The city had been an important commercial center for Albania. The visit to the ruins of Kardhiq/Gardiki is followed by that to Tepelena/Tepeleni and Berat. The beauty of the city is immense. Tomori is so impressive as the Old Bazaar. Kelcyra/Klissura is described as extremely poor, the people are at the last level of misery, while Permet/Premeti is praised for the splendor of Salih Bey's serai (palace). In the two volumes, written by T.S. Hughes, we find more a travel story in the form of events narrated than a study of the places mentioned. The book reveals various information about the places visited. What is more, a lot of material is collected about Ali Pashe Tepelena through Hughes' stay, more than five months, into his palace (serai).

² Dodwell was an Irish painter, traveler, and archeologist. He finished Trinity College and Cambridge. Italy is where he passed most of his life. The author died in Rome due to an illness contracted during a research visit.

³ He was an English clergyman, theologian, and historian. In 1812, Hughes became a guide. During a two-year journey, he visited many countries including Albania. He spent the last years of his life in Cambridge, dealing with writings and some ecclesiastical duties.

Another influential British personality in the 19th century is William Martin Leake. The author of the book *Travels in Northern Greece*⁴ in 1835, served as a lieutenant colonel of artillery in England. He was assigned on a mission in Albania, near Ali Pasha's court. Leake visited many places of southern Albania such as Vlora, Kanina, Saranda, Delvina, Gjirokastra, Tepelena, Kardhiq, Finiq, Himara Ksamil and Devoll, Korça, Voskopoja, Berat, Apollonia, Këlcyra and Përmet. He initiates his travel in Vlora/Avlona from where he continues the description of spots by the sea, heading to Ioannina. The visit to Tepelena/Tepeleni leads him to talk about the Pasha of Ioannina and his people's history. Leake investigated based on topographical data on the population, customs, and traditions. Travelling and meeting diverse people made it possible for him to get information about the Albanian geography. He criticizes the Turkish rule of Albania, blaming it for the social and economic backwardness. Leake's skills as an archeologist are shown when he studies Finiq's/Finiki history, an important city, while Hadrianopolis may have been where the ruins of Drinopolis/Drynopolis are. Notes on Himara/ Khimara are followed by those on Preveza, Narten where the details are not left unexplained. In Korça/ Korytzá, Leake is impressed by the narrow streets' difficult conditions, a feature for all Albanian cities. The author mentions that Voskopoja's/ Vakópoli splendor had begun to fade even before his visit. The traveler's attention is drawn to Apollonia and Ardenica. Upon arrival in Kilcyre, a story of Philip of Macedonia's war with the Roman General Flamin is described.

The third volume of the book focuses on Greece, while the third describes trips to Ithaca, Macedonia, Thessaly, Akarnine. The author stays for a long time in Çameria/ Tzamuriá, drawing its walls, castle, and the churches. After this careful description of the place, he returns to Ioannina providing information on the political impression, population, and Ali Pasha's rule.

Leake's work is of major importance because it differs from that of other 19th century travelers. His research has a geographical, topographical, and archeological approach. It is one of the first efforts that are not mere impressions but aims to go beyond simple observations. It is a source of accurate report for the Albanian southern part. Objectivity is a distinctive feature of composition.

A more philosophical look at the whole Orient, focusing on politics and people's mentality tries to introduce David Urquhart in his book *The Spirit of the East Illustrated in a Journal of Travels through Roumeli during an Eventful Period*⁵ in 1838. After ten years of stay on the land, he begins to understand people's psychology, their nature

⁴ The author was a soldier, surveyor, diplomat, and writer. In 1799, he was sent to Constantinople to train the Ottoman Empire forces in artillery use. Furthermore, in 1807, he was sent on a diplomatic mission to Ali Pasha Tepelena. At the same time, Leake served as a representative for more than nine years.

⁵ The author was a Scottish diplomat, writer, and politician. He served as a MP in the English Parliament from 1847-1852. In 1827, he joined the cause for the independence of Greece. Urquhart spent the rest of his life defending the Greek cause. He was very fond of Turkish civilization and culture.

accompanied by a study of the history, administration, and life organization. The observation is wider and more complete than the other travelers, who concentrate on nature and life docks.

In 1830, D. Urquhart is in Argos. The news about an uprising of the Pasha of Shkodra to rule Macedonia, Thrace, made him leave for Ioannina. The author analyzes the political situation in Albania, where the beylers are in revolt with Turkey. The beylers of Vlora, Gjirokastra/ Argyro Castro, Tepelena/Tepedelene, Korca and Kolonje are in competition among themselves, therefore unification and empowerment are not achieved. The author makes a parallelism between the situation in Albania, when he arrived in Ioannina, and Ali Pasha's rule. He reminds the readers that Korça, Kosturi, and Ohri were in Ali Pasha's hands, while Manastir was under the Vali of Rumelis' control. Mustafa Pashë Shkodra put Tirana, Elbasan, Kavaja/ Cavalha under his rule and reached Berat when he learned that the Montenegrins were preparing to administrate Shkodra/ Scodra, pushed by Russia, hence was forced to abandon his aim towards Ioannina.

Traveling through the Orient and analyzing its spirit, the author observes that every attempt at an uprising by the Albanians is obscured by betrayals making failure possible. Inspired by Ali Pasha, the Albanians have always been in rebellion with the Greeks. Istanbul sent Albanians to quell the Greek uprising movement hoping to weaken them too. The emphasize is on the progress of the Albanian moral and political ideas. During his second journey, Urquhart learns about the siege of Shkodra and the fate of Mustafa Pasha. His stay in Shkoder makes the traveler tell the events between the Pasha of Shkoder and his opponent, Sadrazam. The Pasha, according to Urquhart, was not distinguished for military skills and personal activity, contrary to his opponent. Consequently, this caused the Albanians to leave without a fight.

He is of the view that the cause of Mustafa Pasha' uprising is the Russian war. The Russian general Diebic promised the independence to the Pasha if Russia won the war, making possible his smooth passage to the Balkans. At the end of the war, Russia showed no interest. With Shkodra he ends his book on this long journey, but with momentous events in the history of 19th century Albania, arousing interest in West about this place in the not-so-distant Orient.

In 1842, the work of the English captain J.J. Best⁶, *Excursions in Albania* was published. This is one of the first books ever written about hunting in Albania. The material is not only for hunting amateurs but also provides evidence about the natural beauty, customs and traditions of the places visited. Captain Best had been in Corfu for six years and during this period he made two trips to Albania for hunting purposes. The

⁶ During his six-year stay in Corfu, Best had the opportunity to travel to Albania. First, he visits Ioannina, then he goes deep into the territory to return to Corfu again. After coming back to England, he tried to write down all his impressions of the places visited.

first trip was in November 1838, from Ioannina to Narte and Preveza. In Ioannina he was impressed by the economic difficulty the province was going through, compared to Ali Pasha's bright ruling. Attractive to the eye of the traveler are the Albanian traditional clothes, especially the Albanian women. The journey continues towards Narta and Preveza, sparsely populated and therefore little is told about them.

His second trip to Albania is in May 1839. The travel plan on the Albanian coast lasts five years, during which he passes many experiences with his fellow traveler. In Delvina, they are amazed by the beauty of the nature. From the Zice monastery, made famous by Byron's writing, they continue their journey to Ioannina. Here Best gives his thoughts on the country that was once economically and socially important under Ali Pasha than Turkish administration.

Conclusion

The first half of 19th century Albania became the center of research and exploration for many travelers, particularly British. They left their mark on literature in the form of travel impressions, ethnographic, anthropological, and socio-historical notes. From a chronological approach, in this period, there are five travelers who recount their experience while visiting the Albanian territory. They do not belong to the classic version of the Grand Tour, because their travel plan, and purpose have nothing in common with this tour. Orientalism was widespread during this time and in the multitude of books on the Turkish Empire and the East, in general, report was given even about Albania. The travelers' approach constitutes a significant information to reveal Albania in the national arena, turning it into a country that was attracting more attention.


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