

Carl Stangen and the Package Tour in Wilhelminian Germany, c. 1895



HAT ZSF-039 Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung

The second half of the nineteenth-century witnessed a concurrence of technological, infrastructural and organizational innovations which transformed the leisure industry and infrastructure profoundly. One of these innovations was the package tour. Travelling for pleasure or education in the *ancien regime* and post-Napoleonic era was still predominantly an elitist affair, as a large sum of free time, money, contacts and *savoir vivre* were ought to indispensable. Although there are some antecedents which experimented with new types of leisure travel, the package tour effectuated a breakthrough in the European travel scene: it comprised a means of transport, accommodation with fixed departure and arrival dates; as well as a sightseeing itinerary—all included for a set price. Travel agents sold the package tours to individual consumers and aggregated them to form tourist groups that followed the same itinerary. Travel became available for a much broader social spectrum: this format cut costs considerably and facilitated planning for tourists. Furthermore, travelling in a group allowed overcoming a mental barrier for insecure would-be travelers and single women. Given Cook's success, it is no surprise that aspiring tour operators across the Continent quickly emulated his business model. In this process, these tour operators were not passively copying this format but appropriated it and adapted it to their local cultural practices. An interesting example of this process is the travel agency of the German tour operator Carl Stangen, who started his travel agency in 1864, and allowed countless of German to

transverse globe during the nineteenth-century. Although his agency is, as opposed to Thomas Cook, largely absent from collectively memory, his importance for the development of the German Tourist industry cannot be overestimated, as attested in a contemporary eulogy: 'In a few years the word Stangen became a parole and with restless industriousness the founder of this splendid company, with the help of his sons, has lead thousands of Germans across the world .. From humble means Stangen's travelling firm had developed into a Weltmacht!'¹

Travelling in Good Company

Although Cook's endeavors were originally aimed at the British working class, his travels were gradually tailored to the preferences and needs of a broad middle-class public, effectually broadening the social spectrum of travelers.² These new, predominantly British, tourists attracted some ill feelings from the social and cultural elites. A variety of mocking caricatures of cook tourists, as being vulgar and shallowly regurgitating the sites, circulated in the popular press and other media, contributing to the negative connotation of this nascent form of mass tourism.³ This image, of the British tourist in particular rushing through the sites and posing as a parvenu was disseminated through a variety of media throughout the whole of Europe, and is strikingly evocated in the German novel *The Malady of the Century* written in 1896 by the German novelist and social critical thinker Max Nordau, in which two Germans discuss British tourists in their hotel in the Schwarzwald: 'Most of the visitors at the hotel are English. I dare say you have noticed it already. But they are not the best sort. They are common city people, who even drop their h's, but who play at being lords on the Continent.'⁴

Tour operators like Stangen were challenged in overcoming this negative discourse on the package tours and its connotations of vulgarity. German society in the nineteenth century was organized according to social ranks with strongly demarcated social boundaries, which ought not be transgressed during travel.⁵ Although he offered train package tours to Italy and Austria, which were affordable for the middle class, his main product were expensive and exotic journeys to the Orient. Stangens tours however combined the comfort and efficiency of modern travel with the promise of social exclusivity. The rather high prices of his tours formed a formidable financial barrier, ensuring that his clientele was of a certain

¹ HAT HIST/908/REU Alexander Reuther, *Carl Stangen. Lebensgeschichte eines treuen, deutschen Mannes* (Charlottenburg, 1908), 30.

² Jörn W. Mundt, *Thomas Cook. Pionier des Tourismus* (Konstanz and München, 2014), 27-36 and 143-150.

³ Jill Steward, 'On the Continent': Britons Abroad and the 'Business of Travel', 1820-1914', in: Martin Farr and Xavier Guégan (ed.), *The British Abroad Since the Eighteenth-Century: Travellers and Tourists* (Basingstoke, 2013), 77-100, 83-84.

⁴ Cited from: Richard Mullen and James Munson, *The Smell of the Continent: The British Discover Europe* (London, 2013), 35.

⁵ Phillip Prein, *Bürgerliches Reisen im 19. Jahrhundert: Freizeit, Kommunikation und soziale Grenzen* (Münster, 2005), 191-194.

social standing: the tours of the Orient ranged for example from 2500 to 4100 Marks.⁶ In addition, the groups which joined his tours were substantially smaller in size: whereas the participants of a Cook tour could run into hundreds, Stangens tours contained averagely twelve people, offering a more intimate experience and circumventing the connotations of 'mass travel'.⁷ As Stangen advertised in his brochures and other publications only the 'better circles' of society were wont to participate in the tours: 'military officers, higher ranking civil servants, academics, artists, engineers, architects, industrial magnates, bankers, merchants, rentiers and so on.'⁸ Social exclusivity as an essential precondition to even consider travelling in a group tour is corroborated in a published travel report written by the court preacher of Potsdam Bernard Rogge. According to Rogge the group of thirty consisted, except from two gentlemen who represented the agricultural sector, exclusively of genteel travelers. This varied company of higher social standing contributed according to Rogge greatly to the enjoyment of the trip, allowing to travelers to meet new people of similar social standing: '[E]specially the composition of the most varied circles of society made the communal life of several weeks into such a pleasurable journey, and served to stimulate conversations ... and establish mutual friendships.'⁹

For Pleasure and Education

Travel literature has played a crucial role in the formation of the cultural horizons of knowledge and expectations individuals are oriented to and which influences the way they behave and interact with new people and environments.¹⁰ The nineteenth century was a particular influential period in this process: new media played a pivotal role in disseminating images and furthering 'armchair' acquaintance with exotic travel destinations and inciting travel. All of these were factors in the mediated consumption of place that supported the increasing prominence of tourism as a feature of everyday life. The role of the commercial press was particularly important since articles on foreign places, whether focused on news or travel expanded the horizons of readers. Stangen, as a prolific writer, contributed actively to this process, and numerous feuilletons in the main German newspapers added to the circulation of narratives.¹¹ What characterized Stangens literary production was its ethnographical angle with its focus on the description of indigenous people, their history and socio-cultural practices.¹²

Apart from brochures and travelogues, Stangens firm published its own periodical.

⁶ See for the prices of the various tours: *Programm für die Reise-Unternehmungen von Carl Stangen's Reise-Bureau* (Berlin, 1899), 5-6.

⁷ Karin Hlavin-Schulze, *"Man reist ja nich, um anzukommen": Reisen als kulturelle Praxis* (Frankfurt and New York, 1998), 142.

⁸ *Programm für die Reise-Unternehmungen von Carl Stangen's Reise-Bureau*, F7.

⁹ Bernhard Rogge, *Eine Osterreise nach Jerusalem: über Aegypten nach Griechenland* (Hannover and Berlin, 1898), 5-6.

¹⁰ Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (London, 2000), 9.

¹¹ See: Alina Dittman, *Carl Stangen - Tourismuspionier und Schriftsteller. Der Deutsche Thomas Cook* (Frankfurt a.M., 2017).

¹² Dittman, *Carl Stangen*, 312-314.

Given the increasingly competitive climate of the travel industry in the later nineteenth-century, advertising was crucial to travel agencies. In addition to brochures and posters, this agency magazine was an important vehicle for the promotion of tourism. This source offers a fascinating insight in the constructing of tourist infrastructure, imagination and practices of a particular reading community, the upper strata of German society. The texts in this periodical comprise a spectrum of different genres, whose shifts in contents, styles can be seen as indices of cultural and social changes. Advertisements of for travel and travel goods positioned readers as potential tourists. The writers of this source constantly pivot between enticement and an instigation of the exotic and reassuring potential visitors and guarantying their safety. A body of literature, on diverse subjects, ranging from local customs to the spatial lay-out of a specific tourist site, offered potential visitors reassuring information and instructed them on what ought to be seen. On a further level, feuilletons provided tourists with scripts, in which appropriate behavior and codes of conduct were delineated.

Depicting tourist destinations

The main body of texts consists of travelogues, which have a similar format: an extensive discussion on the historical, political, socio-economic and cultural context and dimensions of a certain tourist destination or site, the kind of public these sites attracted and their principal attractions, which is accompanied by visual reproductions of the peoples and places of these places. As in the example of Jerusalem, the text is accompanied by a visual representation of the city, in the form of a panorama view and an image of 'ideal-types' of its inhabitants. The particular genre of the panorama allowed the viewer to grasp in one glance the city and produces an accurate simulation of all the traveler will see when he gets at his destination. The co-existence of various religious groups is reproduced in another image. This adhered to a prevalent ethnographic discourse in German travel literature, in which various peoples were categorized and depicted in their indigenous garb. This juxtaposition of particular visual genres and in-depth textual digressions allowed potential tourists to have a firm grasp on the subject and convinced them of the picturesque or sublime qualities of the sites. Similarly to the guidebook but much more evocative and elaborate, the writer offered travelers a virtual itinerary of the city, in which the city is traversed, offering a mode of viewing the city and its sites most fruitfully and efficiently.¹³

Apart from offering in-depth examinations of well-travelled destinations, the writers of the exposes appealed to the general desire for novelties and niche markets. Tourism was about travelling off the beaten track. A striking example is an expose on Tunis. Tunis offered travelers sights more 'original, characteristic and really Oriental' and an opportunity to observe and gain insight in everyday life and practices of the East, as opposed to more popular destinations as Constantinople and Cairo. The principal attraction of Tunis was its 'ethnographical' diversity and the picturesque quality of the street. The 'kaleidoscope of nations and peoples' according to the writer more than compensated the lack of an

¹³ 'Jerusalem', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, 2 (1895), N. 8., 1-5.

impressive and monumental built environment.¹⁴ In a way, the writers 'domesticate' more backward and alien areas by incorporating them in the circuit of tourist destination and employing a vocabulary, which appealed to and built on the tourist imagination, making them less remote and more intimate and rebranding them as a tourist destination. Tourists were reassured that it could be easily visited by boat and railway, and that in the French quarter, a modern tourist infrastructure guaranteed a comfortable stay.

Interestingly, the travel descriptions do not just focus on respectable itineraries but traverse in 'no-go' areas during their travels, which could be interpreted as an antecedent to dark tourism. In a sketch on San Francisco, the writer Franz Jaffe frames a visit to the Chinese quarter with its gambling dens and opium houses in the language of exploration, transforming and reducing the illicit into sightseeing.¹⁵ In a similar vein, an excursion to White-Chapel in London is undertaken, in which the writer is anxious to explore the 'dark character of this district' and gain insight in London's nightlife. What follows is an itinerary through the district, under the protections of an policemen, in which vivid descriptions of its inhabitants were alternated with practical advice, ranging from which precautionary measures to pickpockets one must make to the appropriate body language one must practice on the streets.¹⁶

Scripting Tourist Behaviour

Tourism increasingly became to serve as a form of expression of distinctive personal and social identity in the nineteenth-century. Various text are concerned with presenting socially correct models of tourist behavior, offering potential travelers insight into the tourist script while abroad. In various humorous and satiric feuilletons, writers expose, mainly middle-class, inexperienced tourist behavior in the context of travel. A focus is how to behave appropriately when encountering strangers during travel: in a feuilleton titled 'Reiseflamme', a shopkeeper, induced by the new surroundings of his tour, proclaims his love to a married women, who is travelling without her husband.¹⁷ In a feuilleton with a similar message, a merchant's quick and detrimental judgment of a bohemian co-passenger, who appears to a baron, during a train journey is mocked.¹⁸

Apart from fictional stories, which offer rather implicit advice, a number of articles offer practical models of appropriate behavior in a specific context. Several issues contain for example articles with advice on how to transcend amateur photography and practice it as an artistic form. In an expose on a visit to a Bedouin tribe, Carl Stangen himself offers a detailed account of his interaction with these people. He stresses the need to respect their customs and offers a detailed account of the ritualized exchange of gifts and courtesies and

¹⁴ 'Tunis', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, 2 (1895), N. 6., 49-53.

¹⁵ Franz Jaffe, 'San Francisco', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, 2 (1895), N. 1, 32-34, 34.

¹⁶ 'White-Chapel', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, 2 (1895), N. 1, 49.

¹⁷ 'Reiseflamme', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, N. 3, 76-78.

¹⁸ A. Oscar Klausmann, 'Im Hut', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, N. 8, 154-155.

the prevalent customs.¹⁹ In a similar vein, the feuilleton 'Fremdenbesuch im Osten' explicitly instruct travelers. It treats the recent change in the literary preparation travelers undertook prior to their trip to Egypt. According to the writer, a thorough preparation in the form of reading serious scientific works was indispensable to appreciate the sites and benefit from its educational potential. Evocative novels written in a historical setting predominantly mold the cultural horizon of current tourists, which results in disappointment when they are confronted with the actual sites. A third, and culturally most inferior, class of tourists dispenses with any form of preparation: they just follow fashion, and are content to have seen the pyramids and to be able to have say that they have been there.²⁰



'Jerusalem', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, 2 (1895), N. 8., 1-5.

¹⁹ Carl Stangen, 'Zwei Hochzeiten in Galiläa', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, N. 1, 70-72.

²⁰ 'Fremdenbesuch im Orient', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, N. 2, 234-235.



'Jerusalem', *Stangen's illustrierte Reise- und Verkehrs-Zeitung*, 2 (1895), N. 8., 1-5.

(c) Per Backhuis & HAT 2018