



*The Role of Journeying in Shaping History: A Study in Edward Wilmot Blyden's
Journey to the Middle East*

دور الرحلة في تشكيل التاريخ: دراسة في رحلة إدوارد ويلموت بلايدن إلى الشرق الأوسط

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Abstract

Much has been said about the history of the Middle East and its physical and intellectual character in the nineteenth century. Yet, few studies could consider the role of journeying in providing accurate description of the land and people at the time. Edward Wilmot Blyden was among the notable Afro-Americans who showed nascent interest to know about the Middle East. The importance of Blyden's journey did not only evince through mere description of the physical landscape of the region, but also revealed through giving an account of the religious, social and political life of the people. This article tries to expose life in the Middle East through Blyden's journey as to provide a much newer reading of the history of the land and people.

Keywords: Middle East- journey- Blyden- nineteenth century

الملخص:

قيل الكثير عن تاريخ الشرق الأوسط وطابعه المادي والفكري في القرن التاسع عشر. ومع ذلك، هناك القليل من الدراسات التي يمكن أن تأخذ في الاعتبار دور الرحلة في تقديم وصف دقيق للأرض والناس في ذلك الوقت. كان إدوارد ويلموت بلايدن من بين الأمريكيين الأفارقة البارزين الذين أبدوا اهتماماً ناشئاً بمعرفة الشرق الأوسط. لم تظهر أهمية رحلة بلايدن من خلال مجرد وصف المشهد المادي للمنطقة فحسب، بل تم الكشف عنها أيضاً من خلال تقديم وصف للحياة الدينية والاجتماعية والسياسية للناس. يحاول هذا المقال الكشف عن الحياة في الشرق الأوسط من خلال رحلة بلايدن لتوفير قراءة أحدث كثيراً لتاريخ الأرض والشعب.

الكلمات الدالة: الشرق الأوسط، رحلة، بلايدن، القرن التاسع عشر.

Introduction

Throughout history, people of the Western hemisphere traveled to the East as part of a journey to bring commodities from Muslim merchants of the interior, or to fulfill a religious prophecy. Wanderers to the East believed there existed a sacred connection between them and the holy land of Palestine. Whether because of a religious motive or commercial need, these travelers used their pen to describe the nature of land and people and provide accurate accounts of different aspects of life of the inhabitants. Yet, Edward Wilmot Blyden's journey was an exception. Due to the high plight of racism blacks encountered worldwide, Blyden believed his sojourn to the Middle East would be a means to search for the intellectual salvation of the black race. He constantly stated that the Egyptian civilization had many monuments that recorded black personalities and their contribution to world history. Also, Blyden, through contacts with a number of Muslims in the Sierra Leonean interior, hoped a visit to the Middle East would provide more understanding of Muslims and their religion as he advocated that what blacks needed was a Christianity with an Islamic taste.

Edward Wilmot Blyden was born on 03 August 1832 in the Island of St. Thomas, the Dutch West Indies. Born of slave parents who were believed to get their freedom before he was born, Blyden, had his early education in the Island and was notable for his talent in all subjects. The Journey to the Middle East was shaped out of three incidents in his life. The first was Blyden's neighboring of the Jewish community. Through accompanying them in their religious festivals and ceremonies, Blyden was amazed by their dignity and self-esteem. This developed in Blyden a desire to learn Hebrew and plan a visit to Jerusalem, the holy land, early in his life. The second major impetus was racism he encountered in the United States. At the age of twenty, Blyden, with the help of his parents and teacher, moved to the U.S. as to continue higher education. Unfortunately, he was rejected admission to two colleges because of his color (Lynch, 1967). The rejection made Blyden aware of the need to search for the history of blacks as to correct misconceptions about them. For Blyden, a visit to the Middle East would no doubt offer an opportunity to know about black history and their evolution.

As an escape from racism and a search for the real story of blacks, Blyden repatriated to Liberia in 1851. In Liberia, he took many positions as a teacher, editor and politician. A notable position was the time he was invited to be a commissioner to the interior of Sierra Leone. As a commissioner, Blyden got the chance to meet Muslim "Ulama" of the Sierra Leonean interior. This became a third driving force for Blyden to journey to the Middle East. Blyden was enthusiastic to know more about Islam and to learn Arabic especially from outstanding sources like the University of Cairo and Beirut. Indeed, all these forces led Blyden to plan a visit to the Middle East in 1866. The writing of this article emerged as a need to show the importance of the journey in telling

The Role of Journeying in Shaping History: A Study in Edward Wilmot Blyden's Journey to the Middle history. The article will try to describe Blyden's journey as to reveal the nature of life of people of the Middle East during the second part of the nineteenth century and scrutinize different socio-economic and religious institutions of the time.

I. The Beginning of the Journey: West Africa, England and the East

In the preface of Blyden's book "From West Africa to Palestine" (1873), Blyden affirmed that he tried to reproduce all what he witnessed in his journey to the East as he thought it a wonderful experience that should be recorded. For Blyden, the journey was a source of enjoyment and relief as it offered him new realities about the African race and the limitless contributions of that race to humankind. Yet, the decision to travel to the East needed much thinking. The question of route was the first to be considered. For someone who lived in West Africa, there were two options. The first was to make his way via Soudan, Abyssinia and Nubia, or try to reach the seaport of any country where he could from that point reach the Mediterranean. The route through the sea seemed to attract Blyden as it was less dangerous and tiresome. Blyden's choice of the sea route was not sudden. Blyden narrated the story of a West African pilgrim from Liberia who attempted travelling by land. The man, along with his family, came from the United States and decided to reach the Mediterranean through Africa. However, he face many difficulties because of his physical strength and the opposition of the inhabitants of certain regions. The government arrested his wife, but he could escape and continue travelling with his son. Alas for the poor man, he died few days later in the Ashanti territory of the Gold Coast, now Ghana, while his son could survive and returned to his mother (Blyden, 1873).

On 11th May, 1866, Blyden departed from the port of Monrovia, Liberia. The plan of the voyage was as follows: Sierra Leone, Teneriffe or Madeira, Lisbon, Gibraltar, Alexandria, Jaffa, Beirut and then Jerusalem. Captain Thomas Milbome was in charge of the voyage of the Pioneer, a steamer belonged to the "Company of African Merchants". Cape Mount was the first town that Blyden caught sight of. For Blyden, the region was very attractive as the whole town was built on the northern slope of the mountain. The city also resembles that of Funchal, Madeira because of the same reason. Indeed, Cape Mount presented the utmost place of salubrity:

"The thermometer in the shade never rises higher than 85° Fahrenheit, and the atmosphere is so tempered by refreshing land and sea breezes, as to render the climate always enjoyable and often invigorating. The water is pure, cool, and delicious. The river and sea in the neighbourhood abound with excellent fish, while the forests teem with a marvellous variety of game, easily and constantly accessible." (Blyden, 1873)

Following Cape Mount, Blyden arrived at Bendo, a station belonged to the Company of African Merchants. Before they could reach the station, Blyden narrated that the steamer passed through narrow channels where they moved along small islands and a set of European factories. At Bendo, Blyden was hospitably received by M. P. Horton, a native resident of the station. Horton's living conditions seemed to amaze Blyden as he showed a cultivated lifestyle and mannerism. Blyden was also able to see the Basel Mission station at Accra, Akfopong, Christiansborg (now Ghana). He mentioned that the mission was making

notable progress. For Blyden, the mission could develop among the people new crafts like shoemaking, bookbinding and carpentering. Other notable advancements was evident in the field of agriculture and buildings. People were introduced to the cultivation of cocoa, coffee, tobacco and many fruit trees. As regards housing, people started using sun-dried bricks and of stone for building houses and chapels as an imitation to Christian residents (Blyden, 1888).

While at Bendo, Blyden met two brothers from the ruling family of Tucker, known as the most dominant ruling family of the region. For Blyden, the two showed an advanced level in English with meagre interference of the vernacular. The talk centered on a new law issued by the English government that curtailed natives and European traders of free trade. The law, according to one of them, set commercial points for traders as marks of their legal trade. In an angry voice, one of the Tucker brothers blamed the English government of interfering in their affairs as he believed that the decision on trade was the matter of native and would remain the same forever. In a much patriotic tone, the man, greatly admired by Blyden, stated that “the will of the people” must be “the law of the land” (Blyden, 1873).

Blyden's next destination was Sierra Leone. At seven o'clock, the steamer took route down the river taking another path different from the way they entered Bendo. They reached Sierra Leone in the morning of the 16th September. It seemed that Blyden was very eager to know about missionary work in the region. At Freetown, he had the opportunity to meet representatives of the Church Missionary Society. For Blyden, the mission was a sight of great criticism. Yet, he confirmed that out of it emerged pioneers who created purely African Christianity. Blyden mentioned Bishop Crowther, Rev. J. Quaker, of Freetown and J. C. Taylor, of the Niger. This delighteneing moments did not last for long as Blyden took the English steamer named Lagos on 20th May 1866 (Blyden, 1875).

On board, Blyden's seemed disappointed by one of the passengers. He described his encounter with an English passenger as a malign where everything for Blyden became depressing as the passenger "take a senseless delight in casting slurs and insinuations on the African passengers"(Blyden, 1873). As a professed missionary whom Blyden did not give a name, the man described natives as incorrigible human beings which forced him to retire his mission as a result of disgust. For Blyden, the man attacked natives especially those of Sierra Leone based on, as Blyden stated, “hopeless inferiority”. Blyden condemned the missionary of having failed to deliver the right message of God. For Blyden, the missionary was self-conceit whose work was of marvellous unsuitableness for the sacred work cast upon him. In a sad tone, Blyden described the deep-seated prejudice against the African race:

"All this talk, however, about African inferiority and about the sense of repulsion and radical antagonism experienced by Europeans, growing out of diversity in race, is the most stupendous nonsense and flimsy pretence, especially considering the character and habits of the men who generally indulge in such talk...From such men, whose work on the coast is the demoralization of the people, it is natural that abuse of them should come; but

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it is melancholy and mortifying in the extreme when such abuse proceeds from
the lips of a professed missionary" (Blyden,1873)

After this disappointing incidence, Blyden could visit a number of places for shorter hours. The steamer reached Bathurst, on the Gambia River, after two days of sailing. Blyden could have twenty-four hours rest and had the opportunity to meet a native of Sierra Leone. Later, the steamer reached Tenerifie after five days of sailing. Byden hoped he could take a steamer from Tenerifie or Madeira to Lisbon or Gibraltar. Unfortunately, there were no direct steamers and hence Blyden proceeded to England as to continue his journey.

Along the way to England, Blyden could develop a good acquaintance with a passenger from Madeira. What was notable about the passenger was his great mastery of the Arabic language which was considered by Blyden as a good opportunity. Having had a long talk of about two hours, Blyden learned that the man visited Italy and had long stays in Algeria from where he could learn and master Arabic. Blyden showed the man a manuscript written in Arabic. Though the man could explain some of its content, he asked Blyden to give him the papers as to have further reading. Blyden mentioned that he never saw the man later. But received a postal after his return from the voyage containing his manuscript with a very important description and explanation with Arabic grammar. Later, on June the 8th, the steamer reached Liverpool early in the morning. At an invitation from Lord Brougham, Blyden visited the House of Lords. Mr. Baker had a very frustrating talk about the Negro. For Blyden, Mr. Baker's remarks were very disparaging as he along with the anthropological race theories of nineteenth century continued the old tradition of making the Negro an inferior being. For Blyden, feelings of detest to everything African became innate in these man, and their attacks were exaggerated, morbid and inaccurate. Immediately, Blyden left England on 26th June, 1866 in a steamer named "Nyanza"(Blyden, 1876).

Gibraltar was the next destination of Blyden. The steamer took seven days before arrival at the charming and most attractive island of Malta. Blyden stated that the Bible mentioned the region several times. According to the Bible, Malta was much known for a beautiful race called St. Paul's Bay. The bay was three miles length and two in width. It had a tower and set of fortifications for protection. There was a notable chapel were the barbarians were believed to do religious practices. What attracted Blyden the most was the Church of St. John. For Blyden, the Church was erected in 1576 under the reign of king the grand-master La Cassiere, and later the church had many donations from subsequent kings and European sovereigns. The Church was perfectly decorated with special furniture. There were also large paintings of notable artists like Guido, Raphael, Rubens and Michael Angelo. Along the notable paintings, there existed a set of chapels. For example, there was a chapel related to the Spanish knights. In the chapel, Blyden continued, there existed mausoleums of four grand figures: Nicholas Cottoner, Martin de Redin, Raphael Cottoner and Perillose Roccafeuil (Blyden,1873).

Another important sight was the famous Capuchin convent. For Blyden, it was erected by the king Yerdala in 1584. A large area was occupied by the Church and a court in the lower part while there were narrow corridors containing the cells of the monks. Notable for the convent was special decorations placed at the walls representing miracles performed

by the saint of the convent. For each cell, there was a special inscription of the Holy Scriptures and some Italian prayers. Indeed, Blyden's stays at Malta was very rewarding and refreshing (Blyden, 1905). Yet, he had to continue the journey as he was one step closer to reach the harbor of Alexandria by 10th of July 1866.

II. A Charming Vision: Blyden, Egypt and the Pyramids

As the first gate to the Middle East, Egypt presented an interesting place of historic as well as socio-cultural distinctiveness. The first impression of Blyden's vision of Egypt was remarkable as he provided a very vivid much historic description of the land. Speechless and unable to convey the real feelings that he was going through, Blyden caught sight of the ancient Pharos which represented one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Along the view of the city came the famous city built by Alexander the Great. For Blyden, the city had a rich history encompassing political, social and religious changes. The city was also known throughout history as "an emporium of commerce" that was created by Alexander the Great. Meanwhile, Blyden's guide in Egypt was a man named Hamad or the "dragoman" as called by Blyden. He helped Blyden pass through the custom house, hiring a carriage and then moving to the United States Consulate-General to meet Mr. Adams, the American minister in London (Blyden,1873).

In the carriage, Blyden moved along the famous Pompey's pillar, Cleopatra's Needle and the city of Alexandria. He also noticed small villages built of mud. For Blyden, the land of Egypt was fertile and gave different produce. He noted, "in the vegetation which presents itself there is a pleasing and curious variety. There are palms, oranges, lemons, mulberry, pomegranate, olive, lime, grape, cactus, sycamores, gorgeous roses, and gigantic oleanders" (Blyden,1873). Yet, Blyden was very annoyed by the excessive habit of smoking among people of Egypt. He wrote:

"In Egypt everybody smokes. If you are travelling in company, or visiting a friend, or a friend comes to visit you, you must either smoke or be smoked. Woe to the man who cannot endure the scent of tobacco. There are never any complimentary inquiries made, as in other countries, as to whether the smoke offends: everybody takes it for granted that everybody else smokes" (Blyden, 1873)

Blyden narrated that he was told that for the Wahabites, a religious group in Arabia, smoking was a big sin and any person who committed the practice of smoking tobacco was sentenced of severe beatings though he occupied an important position. For example, the king's brother was beaten publicly as he committed the sin of smoking tobacco. A similar case happened to the Minister of Finance who was beaten to death. Meanwhile, Blyden reached Cairo. Blyden had the chance of seeing the progress of the mission work led by the American United Presbyterians. The work of the body covered lower and upper Egypt with an establishment of different Churches and schools for boys and women and book departments at Alexandria and Cairo. The mission was also working to establish stations at Osiut and El-Medineh as the most important cities in upper and lower Egypt and the valley of the Nile. A good work of mission appeared in the attempt to establish a printing press for the increasing demands of books especially written in Arabic (Blyden,1888).

Early in the morning of 11th July 1866, Blyden visited the Pyramids. Having had a guide named Ibrahim and a delay of nearly seven hours, Blyden could catch the view of the pyramids. For Blyden, the pyramids were of magnificent view, owing to their special structure and "gigantic flights of stairs" where travelers could ascend to the very top. Meanwhile, Blyden could ascend the pyramid "Cheops" and see the central hall. Though Blyden hesitated to enter because of exhaustion and fear, he finally entered and provided this description:

"The entrance is first by a very steep and narrow passage, paved with immense stones, which have become dangerously slippery by centuries of use. There are small notches for the toes of those who would achieve the enterprise of entering, distant from each other about four or five feet, showing that they were intended for very tall men who wore no shoes" (Blyden, 1873)

For the people who were unaccustomed to the interior, things were a bit easy as compared to a new visitor. The Arabs used candles as to light the path. For Blyden, the way they used candles was strange and brought a feeling, as stated by Blyden, of "sepulchral gloom and ghastliness". In the way to the interior, two men got hold of his hands, while candles were the first carried in advance. Finally, Blyden got to the center of the Pyramid after much difficulty. Blyden had this to say about the view from inside:

"The floor of the hall was one huge stone. On the sides were engraved the names of visitors who had been there centuries ago. But there were very few names : comparatively few travellers, it would seem, go into the pyramids. In the centre of the hall stands the large porphyry coffer in which the embalmed bodies of the kings were deposited—evidently too large to pass through the narrow passages by which we entered" (Blyden, 1873)

Blyden was surrounded by different huge stones of different shapes that increased Blyden's amazement about the place. Blyden questioned how people could bring these stones to the sight and how people could arrange them in a way of magnificent construction without the presence of machinery of present time unless there were giants. Within this charming view of the interior, Blyden recalled instances from history as to trace the origins of the pyramids. For the Arabs, the establishment of the pyramids dated back to the days of Noah and Abraham. Blyden further backed up his arguments with investigation led by Sir J. S. Wilkinson, the most important of all historians of the region at the time. For Wilkinson, the pyramids dated back to at least B.S. 2400 (Blyden, 1902).

For Blyden, the pyramids were the work of African progenitors. In a similar historic account, Blyden reminded fellow Africans to be proud to be part of the magnificent civilization. He believed that African descendants should despise admiration of European genius and look back to history of the pyramids as to see their contribution to human civilization. Blyden averred that the pyramids were "built by that branch of the descendants of Noah, the enterprising sons of Ham, from whom I am descended. The blood seemed to flow faster through my veins"(Blyden, 1873). To this point Blyden concluded there was still an intention to hide history and especially facts pertaining to the good deeds of the Negro. For example, in the statements made by the Genesis there was no mention of these good

deeds. As civilizers, the verse 2nd and 5th mentioned descendants of Japheth. Yet, nothing was said about their contributions. The same applies to the verse 21 which mentioned the descendants of Shem while nothing was said about Negroes as civilizers.

The Sphinx were a sight of attraction for Blyden. Eager to know more about the sight, Blyden used the donkey so as to approach the Pyramid of Chephren where the Sphinx were located. For Blyden, the sphinx were an impressive spectacle. In a lengthy description, Blyden had this to say about the sphinx:

"This colossal and fanciful figure, half human, half animal, the body being that of a lion, was an emblematic representation of the king-the union of intellect and physical power. It was cut out of the solid rock, with the exception of the paws and a portion of the backbone, which are of hewn stone. Its height to the top of the head was sixty-three feet, its length a hundred and forty-three feet, and it measured a hundred and two feet round the forehead. The head-dress is destroyed, and the face is much mutilated, so that the features, which were Egyptian in their character, are scarcely distinguishable. Below its breast and between its paws, which extend fifty feet from the chest, though now covered with sand, are the remains of a small temple and altar, the incense smoke from which ascended to its expanded nostrils" (Blyden,1873)

Along this accurate description of the sphinx, Byden added that he had the chance to see the two pyramids Cheops and Ohephren. The pyramid that Blyden entered in was four hundred and eighty feet high than St. Paul's Cathedral. The whole pyramid covered more than thirteen acres. It also had more than six million tons of stone. It took nearly twenty years to build the whole edifice with more than one hundred thousand men. For Blyden, theories varied as to the purpose of building these pyramids. Blyden mentioned that the pyramids were used as tombs for kings and as fortifications. Other theories spoke about astronomical purposes and religious needs. These amazing moments of historical narrations and experimental investigations ended after about three hours where Blyden returned to Cairo.

Byden then had the finest walk in the streets of Cairo. With Mr.Strang as a guide, Blyden visited the lions of Cairo. The streets were very crowded with people of different races and classes and with different carriages and costumes. Some streets were too narrow that two horses cannot pass altogether. Because roads were not paved and mostly occupied by sandy soil, pedestrians were warned about the coming of carriages using a special shout. Special importance was given to wealthy persons as their servants cleared roads before their carriages approached. Immediately, people took the extreme sides of the road as to leave it for the coming carriages. Along these crowded streets, Blyden marched to the famous mosque of Mohammed Ali, one of the kings of Egypt. The mosque was established upon a low hill east of the city. Blyden saw first the house of prayer but could not enter until he left his shoes (Blyde,1876). Under a splendid dome, Blyden found some Muslims doing their religious practices. He noted that "everyone we found in the mosque was kneeling, and going through the numerous prayers and prostrations with his face turned to the east" (Blyden,1873). Blyden also could have a look at the tomb of Mohammed Ali. Later, Blyden

moved to the citadel as he heard among people that the view was amazing. High upon the citadel, Blyden could let readers imagine the charming view of Egypt in these words:

"From this elevation, through the dry, clear atmosphere of Egypt, the greater portion of the city is distinctly seen. The numerous large and striking buildings, patches of beautiful green, with clusters of palm trees and sycamore, white domes of mosques and shining minarets" in every direction, present an appearance not to be described. The view to the west is very extensive and grand, giving, beyond the limits of the present city, the site and remains of old Cairo, or Fostat; then the broad, placid Nile, flowing through a wide verdant plain, fertilised by its waters. Further off, at a distance of six miles, are seen the great pyramids of Gizeh, and the smaller pyramids of Abusir and Sakarah, all lying in the Libyan desert, and bounded by the range of the Libyan hills, sloping gradually down to the Delta of the Nile. Thus the greatest structure of ancient Egypt, and one of the finest and most costly of modern Egypt, face each other" (Blyden,1873)

Another important place that attracted Blyden was Joseph's Well. Believed to be dug in the reign of Joseph, the well was distinct because of its fresh water and great depth. Travelers could have a look at the bottom through a special passage. Blyden then visited the mosque of Sultan Hassan which was well known for its distinct architecture. Inside the mosque, Blyden stated that there were no chairs, pews or pictures because the mosque was for devotional purposes and not for pleasure. What was notable about the mosque was a space found on the surroundings called the Roumaylee which was used for resort (Blyde,1875). By July 13th, Blyden's stays in Egypt ended and he had to take the first steamer from Alexandria port to Jerusalem.

III. The journey to Jerusalem and the Arrival at the Holy Land

On July 15th, 1866, Blyden caught sight of the city Yafa or as he called it "the Joppa of the Bible" from which he could feel the charming atmosphere of the holy land. Yafa was considered the oldest city in the world. Founded by Japheth, the son of Noah, Blyden stated that the city formed the nucleus of a very dynamic commercial enterprise of "the land of Israel". Blyden did not have long time in Yafa and he immediately moved to Beirut by 16th July. For Blyden, Beirut had two important cities: Sidon and Tyre. Sidon formed an important historic place and a strong maritime power of Phoenicia while Tyre occupied the lower part of Beirut. Known in history as "the Liverpool of the Mediterranean", the city connected ancient Phoenicia and Palestine. Moreover, mountains were picturesque. The view of Shepherds ascending the top of mountains were extraordinary. Blyden had been told that the Shepherds had a very difficult life. They were assigned to keep the herd safe from any wild beast or robber, and to guide the cattle morning and night along tangled thickets and caves for food. Indeed, the view of the mountains was very inspiring for Blyden. He wrote:

"Nothing can surpass the magnificence of cloud scenery as it is witnessed from these mountains in the view towards the Mediterranean. In the distance, the sea and sky, both of a deep blue color, seem to blend mysteriously, so that

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it is altogether impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends-The clouds, of a sparkling brightness, float about in the sea or sky like celestial islands. When the sun is approaching the western horizon, its fading light sheds a rich splendor over the gorgeous heavens; and the brilliant islands we saw in the early part of the day, assuming fantastic shapes and robing themselves in ineffable beauty, dance, apparently, at the very base of the mountains; to which now, by a singular illusion, the horizon seems to approximate" (Blyden, 1873)

Blyden spent hours in July and August and seemed unable to resist the beautiful view of sun-set, the special color of the sea in his back and the fresh and amazing atmosphere. Here Blyden could have met two missionaries: Rev. Messrs. Calhoun and Bird. They accompanied Blyden in one of the native congregations held mostly in Arabic.

Native wedding was very special in these villages connecting Beirut with Syria. Under the accompany of Dr. Bliss, Blyden attended wedding in 18th August. The bride and bridegroom of these regions had their celebrations separated each in his house or in nearer villages. This celebration usually took seven days before they could meet in the bridegroom house. The bride took the center of the hall while female relatives and friends surrounded her. The bride was asked to close her eyes and offered very rich and costly attire clothes. The bridegroom gave the bride as a gift more than twenty pieces of gold adorned by the bride on her head. The time Blyden entered the room, the bride still keeping her eyes closed approached them with the help of her bridesmaid and welcomed them. Keeping a stiffened face, the bride was supposed to follow certain rules and "to have laughed, or even smiled, would have exposed her to lasting disgrace" (Blyden, 1873). Blyden then had some kind of food and the chance to see for the first time native dance:

"They soon brought us sherbet, a, kind of lemonade, and then coffee in very small cups. After a while the dancing women were admitted, and one by one performed the dance, to the sound of music made by the voice and clapping of hands. There were over twenty-five women and girls engaged in clapping; and they did it with a regularity and order that produced the harmony of a musical instrument" (Blyden, 1873)

Feeling excited to move to the bridegroom house, Blyden did not lose the chance to be among the first to arrive. Similar to the house of the bride, the room was full of male friends while the bridegroom sit on one side of the room. Usually, new comers from the side of the bride were met with the Zaltaht, a kind of special voice produced by woman in the entrance representing happiness and joy. Blyden also attended another wedding at Deir-el-Kamr, a Syrian village, where similar celebrations were held. As to the system of marriage in these regions, Blyden mentioned that among these peoples there was nothing known as of love relations or mutual affection, but rather the two sides knew each other through the opinions of relatives and friends. Blyden also noted the widespread use of the veil among women. As man considered the turban or tarbush an important element of his dress, the woman by virtue of religion and culture considered the veil as a sacred and never to be off the head in front of strange men (Blyden, 1902).

Blyden visited many cities before he could arrive at Jerusalem. In the 1st of September he left to Beirut where he stayed several days. Under the steamer Stambul, Blyden passed through Haifa, a very small city near Mount Carmel, moving to Jaffa in 6th September. Jaffa was a fertile land bordered by the Plain of Sharon. Blyden recounted instances where the Bible mentioned some cities he was visiting. He saw Lydda where the Bible mentioned that the paralytic Eneas recovered by the help of Peter. In the South situated Gaza where Samson took "away the doors of the gate" (Blyden,1873). A bit to the north lied Caesarea where Paul was believed to settle for a while before moving to Europe. Next Blyden moved to the famous city of Ramleh. For Blyden, Ramleh was known as "the Arimathea of Scripture" where many stories of Jesus were mentioned in the Bible. Though these travels were tiring for Blyden, he insisted on carrying the journey to Jerusalem on horseback.

Finally, Blyden reached the holy land, Jerusalem through the Jaffa gate. After having the morning in Damascus Hotel, Blyden did not want to waste time and with the help of the United States vice-consul, Mr. Finkelstein, visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Blyden,1888). According to the Christian settlers, the Church had two important sacred entities: Mount Calvary and the body of Christ. As a sight of attraction for pilgrims from all parts of the world, Blyden could have seen the place where Christ was believed to be buried and the sacred stones of the angels. He also noticed the place where the three crosses stood. Moreover, there were many chapels belonging to Abyssinians, Roman Catholics, Armenians, Copts and Greeks. Blyden left the Church to approach the Garden of Gethsemane crossing a street named Via Dolorosa where Christ was believed to have had carried the cross (Blyde,1875).

On Sunday September 9th, 1866, Blyden visited the English Cathedral at Jerusalem and on Mount Zion. He had the opportunity to attend one of its prayers. The prayers started and Mr. Barclay read verses from the Bible while Bishop Gobat preached versed 12 and 14 from John XVI. Along with the English language, the Church also allowed religious services in Hebrew and German languages. Outside the Church, Blyden noticed that there was nothing of Sabbath in Jerusalem and all Jews and Muslims carried their trade similar to other days of the week. Peoples usually use camels in all their commercial dealings. In addition, Blyden could have visited a number of Jewish synagogues. For Blyden, the present time was of New Year Festival where Israelites gathered from all corners of the world to worship. While at the Spanish and Polish synagogues, Blyden stated that some people were greatly involved in worshipping while others looked at him with strange looking while continuing praying. In the words of Blyden, "they all had a singular motion of the body, waving to and fro, while reading or chanting, as if in agony"(Blyden,1873). For females, entrance was not allowed into the synagogues. Generally veiled, females took sides of the passages and listened and repeated prayers.

Still venturing into the interior of Jerusalem, Blyden visited many notable places. Blyden destined the birth place of Christ. Meanwhile, Blyden viewed the Valley of Hinnom and "Hill of Evil Counsel" where the Jews rallied together and planed for Christ death. Nearby, there existed some of the remaining of buildings and a tree, believed the place where Judas hanged himself. One hour later, Blyden reached a very sacred place according to Muslims that was of the tomb of Bachel. As part of its holiness, the Muslims surrounded

it with a mosque. Yet, many Jews came to the tomb to weep and pray. Taking the Southern-Western road, Blyden passed through the Pools of Solomon. Jerusalem was supplied by water out of the three big reservoirs of the pools (Blyden,1876).

Bethlehem presented another place of attraction for Blyden. He first moved along a village named Urtas or as Blyden named it "the Bed of the Glen". The village appeared to be in a deep glen. The center of the glen, according to Blyden, encompassed sixty yards wide and over a mile in length. Solomon was believed to build gardens and supply water and after it the place was named the "gardens of Solomon". Blyden admired the place and recalled verses from Eccles. ii, 4-6 where Solomon described how the region was abundant of riches:

"I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees" (Blyden,1873)

According to Blyden, the pools were of 580 feet in length and 236 in depth. At Bethlehem, Blyden also was eager to see the Church of the Nativity. The Church got eminence because there existed the place where Christ was born. Built in approximately a.d. 325 by the Empress Helena, the Church seemed to be like a cross, having had the place of a sacred babe, the shepherds moving along the courtyard and other sacred sights pertaining to the Saviour's nativity. While still at Bethlehem, Blyden met the German missionary, the Rev. Mr. Muller with whom Blyden had a very rewarding talk on the divinity of the surrounding places (Blyden,1888).

On 11th September Blyden, after a long walk on the streets of Jerusalem, reached the Mosque of Omar, on Mount Moriah. Known also as Kubbet-es-Sakhrah-the Dome of the Dock, the mosque was built upon a large stone, believed to be sacred by Jews, Christians and Muslims. In entrance, you face a large bare limestone rock under the dome. This place was surrounded tightly so as visitors could not approach and touch the rock and the dome. For Blyden, the mosque was not intended principally for prayers but rather to protect the sacred place. Blyden associated the divinity of the place to Muslims incident of Israa and Meraaj. Describing this milestone event, Blyden stated the following:

"the Moslem tradition is, that from this rock Mahomet made his famous ascent to heaven on his celestial steed Borak ; and they show in the rock marks of the horse's hoofs. They say further that the rock rose to follow Mahomet as he went up from the earth, but was held in its place by the angel Gabriel, the impression of whose fingers in the rock they point out with great gravity" (Blyden,1873)

Blyden seemed to be amazed by the historic as well as the religious roots of the rock. He gave further details about the physical appearance of the sacred rock:

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"This remarkable rock, occupying the greater part of the inner area of the mosque, is irregular in its form, and measures about sixty feet in one direction, and fifty in the other. It projects about five feet above the marble pavement of the mosque, which is itself twelve feet above the general level of the enclosure. At the south-east corner of this rock is a descent, by a flight of steps, to an excavated chamber, irregular in form; its superficial area being about six hundred feet, the average height seven. In the center of its rocky pavement is a circular slab of marble, which, being struck, returns a hollow sound, clearly showing that there is a well or excavation beneath" (Blyden,1873)

Outside, Blyden walked a bit to see the Mosque-el-Aksa in the south-west of Mount Moriah. The most part of the surroundings of the mosque consisted of huge stones, largely believed to be the remaining of Solomon's Temple. Upon entrance, Blyden noticed the Harem which represented the whole hall of the mosque and the seat of Mahomet where Muslims believed that it was a special place for the prophet Mahomet during the judgment day (Blyden, 1902).

The last place visited by Blyden was the wailing place of the Jews. Blyden stated that the Jews set Friday as the special day for wailing, but for circumstances of the holiday, the Jews visited the place regularly. Encompassing Jews of different sexes, the Jews wailed over centuries of persecution and history of scattering. The women, for example, kept calm and the tears seemed falling down their faces while young girls, seemed embarrassed by the new comers, hide their heads between walls and wept. Old men showed signs of great sadness. They touched the stones, silently and with trembling lips read some prayers and regularly kissed the stones. On the afternoon, Blyden passed through the Valley of Hinnom to En-Rogel, known by Muslims as the "Well of Job". For Blyden, Hinnom was largely common by Christians. Occupying the Southern part of Jerusalem, the valley was about a mile and a half-length. The place was of miraculous view as visitors could see several graves while the ones who approached the bottom of the valley could easily scrutinize tombs and their historic as well as divine roots (Blyde,1876). At the Valley of Hinnom, Blyden's wonderful and very insightful journey to the Middle East and to the holy land ended that by 13th September 1866 he returned back to Jaffa as to carve his road to West Africa.

Conclusion

The article examined Blyden's journey to the Middle East and the holy land. The article traced the beginning of the journey as not only to describe the physical landscape of the way from West Africa to England then the East, but also to scrutinize the thinking schemata of the people who generally held antagonistic beliefs about the whole world of the Negro. The article further gave details about the land of Egypt and the wonderful sights of the pyramids. Here, the study based its analysis on both the religious, political and cultural building-up of the land and its peoples. The study also traced the historic as well as the religious origins of the pyramids giving different theoretical and structural basics of the sight as considered among the Seven Wonders of the World. Moreover, the article gave an insight into Blyden's

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journey to the holy land, Jerusalem. To this point, the reader is exposed to monumental landmarks of the Middle East cities like Beirut, Syria and the surrounding villages before setting foot at Jerusalem. The article, through a historic as well present eye-witness of an intellectual like Blyden, provided a through description of important religious monuments and their physical and religious histories. Indeed, the article opened a fruitful discussion on the contribution of journeying in writing history and invited further investigations of the same kind to know about the history of the land and the accuracy of journeying in shaping world history.

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