



From Khartoum to Jerusalem: The Dragoman Solomon Negima and his Clients (1885?1933)

Rachel Mairs



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In 2014, a collection of papers was found on eBay: a scrapbook, inside which was written 'Testimonial Book of Dragoman Solomon N. Negima'. The letters pasted into the testimonial book bear recommendations of Negima's services as dragoman ? a combination of tourist guide and interpreter ? in the Holy Land, from travellers of different nationalities, social classes, religions, genders and races.

Using these reference letters, and the first-hand published and unpublished accounts of the travellers themselves, this book tells the stories of several such tourists, including the intrepid Victorian female traveller, Ellen E. Miller, and an African?American minister, Rev. Charles T. Walker, who had been born into slavery. Between the lines of others' letters, Solomon Negima's remarkable life story also emerges: from a German mission school in Jerusalem, to the British army in the Sudan, to a successful career as a dragoman in Palestine and Syria, and finally to comfortable retirement with his son, Aziz, and daughter, Olinda, at a Mormon mission in Jerusalem.

The discovery of this unique scrapbook allows us an insight into the lives of individuals whose histories would otherwise be lost to us, and a new perspective on the history of travel in the Middle East.



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