

*From Baghdad to Paris: 1897*

*Journal of a Journey to Europe by Land via Damascus and Beirut*

On April 10th 1897, a young man of Eastern European origin named Alexander Svoboda set out with his parents and several other travelers on an arduous journey from Baghdad to Europe. The journey, began over land with a caravan through the deserts of Western Mesopotamia, then Syria, Lebanon and Egypt finally crossing the Mediterranean Sea by ship. Though only nineteen years old, and despite the difficulties of overland travel, Alexander-Richard Svoboda faithfully kept a daily travel journal documenting the conditions, events and high points of his journey to Europe.

Written in Arabic, and entitled "Journal of a Journey by Land to Europe via Damascus and Beirut, Starting on April 10th 1897," the diary begins in Bagdad, with an account of the plans, the arrangements for supplies, and the farewells to friends; and ends abruptly on July 16th of the same year just as the writer is leaving Paris to travel to London with his parents.

Written more than a century ago when the Middle East was still part of the Ottoman Empire, these writings reveal the interaction of lives in disparate and remote societies; of European values that were incorporated into parts of the Middle East and the astonishment of Alexander Svoboda himself as he encounters a level of modernism not before seen in his home in Bagdad. It is a remarkable documentation of diverse aspects of a bygone and distant life.



From Baghdad to Paris: 1897



FROM BAGHDAD  
TO PARIS:  
1897

*Journal of a Journey to Europe*  
*By Land Road via Damascus and Beirut*  
By Alexander-Richard Svoboda

*TRANSLATED by Nowf Abdul-Majid Allawi*  
*EDITED and INTRODUCTION by Walter G. Andrews*

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## *Dedication*

*To the late Professor Henry A. Svoboda who for decades trusted me affectionately to share his passion and work on Joseph Mathia Svoboda's diaries and the journal of Alexander R. Svoboda.*

*To my beloved late father Abdul-Majid and late mother Feriba who by their sincere and deep faith in Allah taught me to find inner peace of the heart and true love and respect for all humankind.*  
*Nonf A. Allami*



## *Acknowledgements*

WORK ON Alexander's *Journal of a Journey* has been a team project spanning many years and involving a large number of people who worked on aspects ranging from historical and linguistic research to the development and application of digital methodologies for the production of a *New Book*. Very few of the people who worked with us were compensated financially for their efforts and those who were gave far more effort to the project than could ever have been repaid.

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Much of the teamwork in the latter stages of the project was managed by our graduate student managing editors Connie Cannon (2009-2010) and Monica Meadows Morrice (2011-2012). Another University of Washington graduate student, Joshua Crowgey, was instrumental in building the on-line version of the *Journal* and the *Svobodapedia*. Work on the programs for the print on demand version of the 'Journal' was originally undertaken by Jon Crump, and the original website was created by Shruti Santosh More and Padmavathy Nageshbabu Vaithyam. Jeremy Caci made significant improvements to our web display of the journal.

The support of the Svoboda family throughout the process has been invaluable. We are greatly indebted to them for allowing us to share their family story and for their

kind cooperation at every stage of our work. We owe special thanks to Carole Boucherot Duster, Veronique Svoboda, Evelyne Boukoff, and Louis Svoboda.

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In a project that depends on so many people for its success, we are certain that some people who richly deserve our heart-felt thanks will go unmentioned. We hope that they will accept our gratitude and forgive us for unwillingly and unwittingly omitting the recognition they merit.

Nowf asked that we mention that neither she nor any of the staff will profit financially in any way from the publication of this book. It has been our contribution and a labor of love.

Lastly we would like to dedicate our work to the memory of Professor Henry Louis Alexander Svoboda who is in most ways the father of this project.

Nowf A. Allawi

Walter G. Andrews



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ARABIC DIARY TEXT

يوميات السفر الى اورپا بطريق البر  
مروراً بدمشق و بيروت