

IDA PFEIFFER'S JOURNEY ON THE DANUBE FROM VIENNA TO CONSTANTINOPLE

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Abstract

In 1842, Ida Pfeiffer, a well-bred woman of the respectable Viennese middle class made an unconventional decision: she undertook her first long journey alone at the age of 45 which took her from Constantinople to Jerusalem and Egypt. Undertaking such a journey was quite exceptional for a woman to do by herself. Only few years had it become possible for ships to navigate the entire length of the Danube and on its banks were still devastating fever and plague epidemics. The Balkans were of major interest only to a few travellers, and also for Pfeiffer they seem to have been just an obstacle to overcome in order to reach Constantinople. Although there has already been much research on Pfeiffer, not much attention has been paid to her journey on the Danube and also Pfeiffer herself probably didn't consider it of great importance. This article therefore explores, through the writing of this exceptional woman, the importance of the Danube not just as a means of travel and communication, but also as a frontier holding back the Plague, and thereby moving what was considered peripheral to the center of attention.