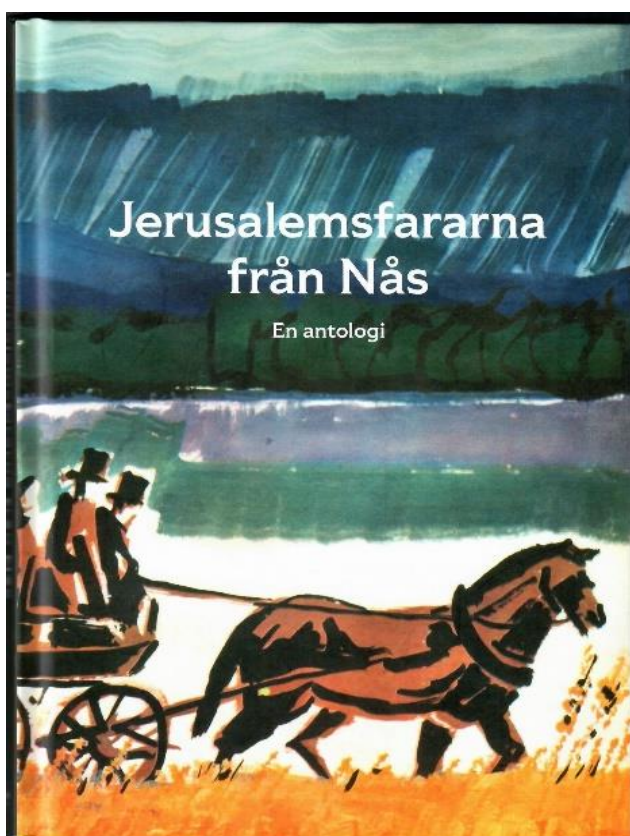




Jerusalemsfararna från Nås – seminarium 2024



Föreläsningsdokumentation



PHOTOGRAPHY AND GENIUS LOCI: HOL LARS (LEWIS) LARSSON'S "KAISERIN AUGUSTA VICTORIA STIFTUNG ON OLIVET" (1910–1914) JULY 01, 2024

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[SLIDE # 00] Thank you to Vicky, Bjorn, and Curt for inviting me to this special anthology launch. I hope the Anthology is soon translated into English and distributed to wider audiences. In Spring 2021, the University of Oslo School of Religion launched a threevolume - fifty-chapter trilogy titled "Tracing the Jerusalem Code, Christian Cultures in Scandinavia." The Trilogy aimed to write the history of Christianity in Scandinavia with Jerusalem as a lens, making it accessible to English-speaking researchers; the trilogy investigates the image—or rather the imagination—of Jerusalem in the religious, political, and artistic cultures of Scandinavia from the Middle Ages to the modern era. This short presentation focuses on the photographer's interpretation of the spirit of place [Genius Loci]. Sven Hedin purchased the photograph when in Jerusalem in August 1916, along with 260 other photographic prints created by Larsson and the American Colony photographers and brought these to Sweden. Part of this magnificent collection is available to the public at the Etnografiska 2 Museum. However, more than half of Hedin's photographs is still unavailable, and we, in Jerusalem and Nås, gathered forces in trying to access this body of original photographs. When I was invited to contribute one chapter to the third volume, "The Promised Land, 1850–1920," it was clear that I would focus on Sven Hedin's collection of ACPD photographs, kept in Stockholm. [SLIDE # 01] I viewed Hedin's collection for the first time with Vicky, Dr. Håkan Wahlquist, Karolina Mikulska and Theo Larsson, in search for missing part of the Larsson family collection I had been processing then. A comparative inventory of the available photographs at the Ethnographic Museum, versus the Vester & Co. receipt of actual purchase, proved beyond doubt that a major part of this photograph collection is missing. Early in creating the American-Swedish Colony Archive in Jerusalem, I understood that essential data related to the American Swedish Collective, needs to be put in sight. A fascinating part of my professional and personal voyages in Sweden resulted in filling in missing



fragments of this collective's historical Jigsaw. MEETING IN JERUSALEM, AUGUST 1916 In August 1916, in the middle of WWI, the photographer Hol Lars (Lewis) Larsson met the renowned Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, [Slide # 01] who was visiting Jerusalem – to his words - "not as an explorer, but as a pilgrim." The meeting between Larsson and Hedin proved instrumental for both. Hedin brought back with him to Sweden a vast collection of ACPD photographs and 3 dozens of his drawings of ethnic types and Jerusalem views, all recollecting his visit. These were published in 1917 in his book "Till Jerusalem". The photograph "Kaiserin Augusta Victoria Stiftung on Olivet" included in this collection and in "Till Jerusalem," is the subject of our discussion. [SLIDE #02] On his visit to Palestine in October 1898, Wilhelm II, Kaiser of Germany, and King of Prussia [SLIDE # 03] inaugurated the Church of the Redeemer [on remains of Constantin's Church], the first Lutheran church in Jerusalem,] and decided to build the Augusta Victoria Stiftung on the Mount of Olives at the request of the German Protestant community in Jerusalem. [SLIDE #04] "Officially a religious pilgrimage site, (the location of the complex on the Mount of Olives was linked to the Ascension of Christ) it also offered an unusual strategic advantage bordering the highest mountain range of Jerusalem and the deep slope towards the Dead Sea." (Lily Arad, see reference in the attached article). This photograph was selected as the center of my discussion first due to its stunning artistic beauty, but mainly since it meets the Trilogy's idea of Jerusalem Code from the following points: One: It consists of a vast virgin landscape, an unbuilt area of Jerusalem of soft hills merging. Two: It consists of a traditional Arab-cultivated fruit garden, The Bustan. Three: At its center is a modern complex built on Jerusalem's sacred site to Christianity. "Augusta Victoria Stiftung" is a hand-painted photographic print attributed to Lewis Larsson, the chief photographer of the ACPD. "Painting over photography," a genre excelled by the ACPD was implemented directly on the photographic print, not before the photographic surface were partially sealed, to prevent from absorbing 4 excess color during the painting process. The painting was then done by experienced painters with diluted colors, aspiring to leave the photographic qualities intact. In other words, painting over photography turned the photograph into an artwork while maintaining the original's photographic attributes and sense of depth as can be seen in the painted photograph. After it was built, the Church of the Redeemer, inaugurated by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898, was criticized in Germany for its lack of dominance, almost hidden in the Old City matrix. The German aspiration for the new generation of religious



buildings in Jerusalem was that these should dominate Jerusalem's skyline, offering the city the achievements of modern German architecture: [SLIDE #05] "It is probable that because of these efforts, part of the historical the character of the city and the landscape will be lost, which is, of course, regrettable but also inevitable – for why a city of such international importance as Jerusalem should not be permitted to participate in the achievements of a culture of our day and age." [SLIDE #06] The painted photograph conveys poetic qualities achieved by careful staging of the photograph space, and by implementing soft colors on the photographic print. When positioned against the natural setting, with the pinkish-redblue sky of the Moab Mountains in the background, the fortress-like monument looks like a jewel in Jerusalem's landscape. Let us look further into the photograph's lower plain. We notice a fruit garden, a typical Palestine cultivated style, with olive and fruit trees, and vines, surrounded by 5 a low stone fence and with a metal gate. [Slide #07] When we further examine the Bustan, we can see a figure of a Fellaah [farmer] dressed in a white robe and with an abaya, looking at his garden or maybe towards the new monument. The Fellaah, have the know-how of the Bustan and nourished it until the trees and bushes bear fruits. [Slide #08] Larsson stages the photographic space by creating an apparent harmony of the new building complex, merging the virgin, and cultivated landscapes, but this is an imagined harmony. The fortress-like building presence in other photographs taken around the same time reveal that it is far from being a jewel in the landscape [Slides 9, 10, 11] We assume that by juxtaposing the vernacular, cultivated fruit garden, and the foreign monument, Larsson encodes a criticism alerting of the dangers presented to the vernacular by the attempts of the European Empires to dominate Jerusalem's landscape. Is this assumption valid or imagined? (SLIDE #12) Let us examine what Charles Robert Ashbee wrote about the European Empires monumental architecture: [SLIDE 13] Charles Robert Ashbee, a prime mover of England's arts and crafts movement in England served as a professional adviser to the Town Planning Commission in Jerusalem between 1918 and 1922. Ashbee aspired to protect the city's Indigenous vernacular character and to revive its art and crafts industry. Ashbee initiated the repair of the damaged Dome of the Rock, and to realize this plan, and many others, he collaborated with the Colony photographers whose photographs he used for his beautiful design sketches (SLIDE #14 Copyrighted do not use) About the architecture initiated by foreign European powers, Ashbee wrote: [SLIDE #15] 6 Coming into the City from the old pilgrim route, we notice how ancient Jerusalem is all but obliterated: we see



the once golden dome no longer, a bastard Florence, a bastard Nuremberg, a bastard Moscow, an imitation Lourdes, a Bavarian suburb, and an imitation Oxford . . . Round and about the City circuit, within or without the walls, we note an arrogant assertion of the various national codes. All modern buildings have been strangely prophetic of the War. In this statement, Ashbee asserts that the European powers have robbed Jerusalem of its inherent character, aspiring to self-glorification rather than preserving the City's natural, spiritual, and cultivated ambiance. Did Larsson and his colleague photographers and members of the American Colony, similarly criticized the political play of forces in Jerusalem while collaborating on the restoration of the city? Only a few researchers and writers explored the internal social dynamic of the American Colony except in its waning years. Most contemporary writers, praise or demonize Anna Spafford, the dominant leader of the Colony while entirely ignoring the unusual social dynamic inside the collective and between the collective and residents of Jerusalem - permanent or temporary –a dynamic that inspired younger members of the collective to grow as open minded and independent creators. What else can be said on the American Colony to support our assumption? 7 One: It was a non-denominational, self-sponsored, and multi-national entity that developed from the "inside out," bridging idealism and practical demands. Unlike other missionary entities in Jerusalem, it developed versatile activities and constantly reached out to Jerusalem and the world. Two: Besides its social, artistic, and cultural gravity, the American Colony, known for its hosting capacities, became an influential hub and a meeting place for Jerusalem's multicultural groups. Three: The younger generations departed from their parents' faith and chose secular moral codes and creative life instead—Larsson, the Lind brothers, Ernest F. Beaumont, and others grew to become creators on their accounts and good critics who challenged their environment and the American Colony regime alike. For example, their sharp criticism against loosening the Colony's moral codes of ethics led to legal dispute and the split of the American Colony and the equal division of its property in 1932. At that same time, Larsson served as Consul General of Sweden in Jerusalem, the only Scandinavian Diplomatic presence until 1947. He was well-informed and dared criticize even the Swedish Jerusalem Society in Stockholm from attempting to prevent the expansion of the Swedish school in Jerusalem, Sweden's neutral approach towards the plans to divide Palestine led to the bombing of the Consulate door and the robbing of Larsson's photographic heritage, but this is a different story. 8 Larsson's careful definition of the Augusta



Victoria Stiftung's photographic space indicated his sensitivity towards the Indigenous people of Jerusalem, and criticism against the German political aspirations to dominate Jerusalem. Unlike Charles Robert Ashbee, whose critical vocabulary has no merci, Larsson's criticism is indirect and intertwined in his refined artistic language. [Slide # 15] EPILOGUE The Augusta Victoria Stiftung photograph was created on the verge of dramatic political changes. Soon after, Ottoman Palestine was plunged into World War I, the foundation's function – a declared missionary and pilgrimage site – changed dramatically when Ahmed Djemal Pasha turned it into his and the allied German forces' headquarters. At the same time, the missionary activity was reduced to a minimum. The fortress-like character of the building fulfilled its concealed architectural message. On December 9, 1917, the morning after the Turks retreated from Augusta Victoria towards Jericho, Larsson took the rare set of iconic photos, capturing the surrender of Jerusalem to the British in Sheikh Bader at the city's western outskirts. [Slide 16] Some hours later, Larsson and his photographer colleague Lars E. Lind were ordered to destroy these photographs by Major General Sir John Shea, who was planning the staged entry of General Edmund Allenby to Jerusalem on December 11. Larsson resisted and tried to reverse the order by applying in writing directly to Allenby when the General arrived at Christmas reception at the American Colony. At the end of the day, Shea Aid-de-Camp forced Larsson to burn the plates and all the photographs in his presence at the AC fireplace, the British flag was raised above Augusta Victoria and it became the British Government House until 1927 when an earthquake destroyed large parts of it. Reading the photographic language unfolds parts historical jigsaw of life in Jerusalem and in the Swedish American Colony, twenty years after the arrival of the Swedes to the City. The lecture extracts ideas widely expressed in Rachel Lev's published article "Photography and Genius Loci," which is attached here for your convenience. -- See attached appendix of photographs listed throughout the presentation.

Bilderna till föreläsningen bifogas som separat fil – se bilaga 5.

Rachels föredrag baseras på en längre artikel som hon skrev 2021. Den finns att läsa i bilaga 6: Boken har titeln *Tracing the Jerusalem Code, Christian Cultures in Scandinavia*. Den gavs ut av University of Oslo, School of Religion i tre delar och Rachels kapitel återfinns i den tredje delen: *The Promised Land, 1850–1920*.

