"The last corner of the world": The Chilean Landscape for Emigrants

If even those who undertake a brief vacation or recovery trip in their homeland like to be provided with a printed vademecum in which they can find advice on everything that is worth knowing—as the huge circulation of the travel guides by Baedeker, Berlepsch and many other authors conclusively proves—, how much greater must be the longing for such works among those starting long voyages across the ocean or even more those emigrating from their homeland for an indefinite period, maybe forever, to undertake a weeks-long journey to a country completely unknown to them in which they plan to settle. That which represents a mere convenience which the leisure or spa traveller would only reluctantly forgo, is absolutely necessary for the emigrant, since it very much depends on this whether can avoid his first steps on the ground of the new homeland proving to be missteps often followed by ominous consequences.

For that reason it is almost incomprehensible that nobody has yet conceived the obvious idea of offering a reliable, handy and also relatively inexpensive guide that gives to the thousands of people who leave Europe every year, hastening to the hospitable shores of this country, comprehensive information on everything that might be important for travellers of different classes, especially for immigrants, and allows them to find their way into and through this country without depending on outside help (Kunz 1890a: n. pag.).

Although Hugo Kunz actually presented the most extensive work up to 1890, from the middle of the 19th century numerous guidebooks [1] for German-speaking emigrants had been published with the objective of preparing them for the journey across the ocean and the conditions that awaited them in their new homeland. They were usually penned by authors who had known the South American country for many years and wanted to win their compatriots over to follow suit and dare to take the step into the new world. Whether they worked as government agents like Philippi, were founding private colonies like Kindermann or, like Ried, just wanted to make other German-speaking settlers aware of this far-away country, the authors of all these publications praised the advantages that the future colonists could expect to find in Chile, the South American land offering the best prospects, as was often emphasized. Among these advantages were a favourable climate for agriculture, the fertile soils, the many year-long tax exemptions and the ease of obtaining Chilean citizenship. The objective of this essay is to trace what role the Chilean landscape played in the migration guides as an element of publicity for the country. To that purpose the paper will first briefly deal with the development and extent of German-speaking immigration to Chile. An analysis of the migration guides as sources of this history of migration will follow, and finally the focus will be on their presentation of the Chilean landscape.

1. On German immigration to Chile

In the course of the 19th century, transatlantic emigration became a mass phenomenon. Around 90% of all German emigrants went to the USA. Among the Latin American countries, Brazil and Argentina were the ones receiving most immigrants. The reasons for the migration were mainly economic or political. Growing industrialization led to intensive urbanization and migration from East to West and from the countryside to the city. The traditional craftsmen's workshops were replaced by large companies. The large number of job seekers and the lesser demand for manpower due to the rationalization of production meant an increasing unemployment rate and, for many, life at the margin of subsistence; in addition, there were catastrophic famines.

The essential political motives for emigration in the 19th century were the failed liberal German Revolution of 1848 and the Anti-Socialist Laws of 1878, which moved many people to seek a free, democratic life overseas.

By virtue of its Law of Selective Immigration of November, 18th 1845, Chile established the conditions for a regulated immigration. As in other countries, the main interest was to increase the total population [2] and hand over as yet uncultivated land to farmers. The first years of German immigration to Chile are connected especially to the names of Bernardo

- The bibliography at the end of the paper lists, among other literature, all the 19th and 20th century migration guides on Chile that could be identified and to which I had access.
- [2] In the middle of the 19th century Chile had around 1.5 million inhabitants.
- [3] The map most frequently available in the migration guides of the middle of the 19th century was by Philippi, dated 1846.
- [4]
 Cast belonged to those who had
 never visited Chile themselves. His
 main sources of information were
 essentially Kindermann and Ried.

Philippi, who recruited German colonists on behalf of the Chilean government, and Franz Kindermann, who did it within the framework of a private venture. Nevertheless, the success of the recruitment was only moderate. According to Bromme

one saw there [1850] the arrival of two shiploads, one composed of more than 100, the other of 85 German emigrants, who established themselves in the South, in the province of Valdivia. Others followed, but their number is not significant: Whether in the future there will be a large number of immigrants in Chile is yet to be decided (Bromme 1853: 463-464).

The government continued the official recruitment of German colonists to Chile until 1869 (cf. Hettner 1903: 19), but many of the people who met the requirements were reluctant to migrate because of the long journey across the ocean and the high travel costs. The authors of migration guides constantly tried to counter these arguments:

As significant as the difference in distance and price of the ocean journey may seem at first sight, this difference decreases significantly when taking into account that emigrants travelling to North America need to undertake an expensive one hundred or more miles long journey through the country from their landing place, while in the South of Chile it is possible to undertake from Valparaíso a cheap sea trip to Valdivia or San Carlos, supposing that the ship transporting the emigrants has not already arrived directly at one of these harbours, which she certainly can do if she specialises in transporting emigrants. The price of a cabin from Hamburg to Valparaíso amounts to 190-280 thaler, the intermediate deck price is 90-100 thaler. [...] The journey is not as long as many people think, and the Cape Horn, in former times ill-famed due to the bad winds, is currently circumnavigated at every season and with no resulting losses. The regular passage lasts 110-120 days (Philippi 1969: 25). Simon also advertised the comfort that an exclusively maritime journey implied: If Germany's eyes were still directed to North America it was only for the sake of convenience. The journey to the eastern states is short and cheap, one can cover it in 6-7 weeks, while around 4 months are needed to travel to Australia or the western states of South America. Nonetheless, this advantage is only illusory, since after the sea voyage an expensive land and river route awaits the wanderers travelling to the western states of North America, the only possible destiny that the German farmer can reach on his own, while emigrants to South America and Australia arrive almost immediately at the colonies, and thus travel more comfortably (Simon 1850: 9).

But even this seems to have convinced only relatively few potential emigrants. According to the statistics of the *Ministerio del Interior* of 1888, the number of foreigners in the country amounted to 87,011, of whom 6,808 were Germans, 1,275 Swiss and 674 Austrians (Kunz 1890a: 27). In comparison, at least 37,000 Germans found a new homeland in Brazil between 1818 and 1860 (Hehl 1896: 302). In the relative remoteness of the province of Valdivia, considered from a European point of view, Ried saw the advantage that at least through its situation it was protected from the swarms of loose mobs that prowl all new colonies and infest like harpies the inexperienced newcomer, taking from him the last of his belongings, tempting him to vice, and often taking away his highest good, his honesty (Ried 1847:11).

The discussion on whether the German immigrants would keep their culture and language in the respective target country, a debate conducted with great passion in the 19th century, drew very divergent opinions with regard to Chile. While Ried defended the view that in Chile the immigrants would keep their languages pure, their nationality intact, and their German sense completely immune to all alien influences, "which could not but have a gratifying repercussion on the mother country" (Ried 1847: 11), other authors considered that the huge distance to Germany would very quickly lead the emigrants to lose all their contacts with Europe and interest in the developments of the former homeland.

The German colonies, however limited their extent may be in comparison with other target countries of the German immigration, definitely proved to be quite successful in the first third of the 20th century.

In the cultivated areas there are around 20,000 German settlers, especially from Württemberg and Hessen, who came around the middle of the past century. Their settlements, such as Puerto Octay, Puerto Varas and Puerto Montt, enjoy a high prosperity (Klingspor 1919: 123).

2. Migration guides to Chile

Around the middle of the 19th century there already existed several ways to gather information on Chile as a potential host country. These sources of information became more detailed

and precise in the course of time. Particularly those authors who had themselves migrated to Chile, like Ried and Philippi, could help the compatriots who came behind them with much information on the journey across the ocean and the first steps in the process of settling in South America.

Some special periodicals regularly reported on the concerns of the immigrants. The oldest one, the *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung* was first published on 29th September 1846 in Rudolstadt and was printed until 1870. Its objective was to offer those interested in migrating the latest information on German settlements all around the world, as well as to inform on available crossings, travel costs, migration laws and new publications. The usually very extensive advertisement section promoted among other things specific migration companies and other possible sources of information. Other periodicals dealing with alternative migration and settlement possibilities in the middle of the 19th century were the *Allgemeine Auswanderungszeitung: Organ für Kunde aus deutschen Ansiedlungen* (Bremen 1848-49); the *Hamburger Auswanderungs-Zeitung: Organ für deutsche Auswanderung und Colonisation* (Hamburg 1859); the *Deutsche Auswanderer-Zeitung* (Bremen 1852-75); and *Der Deutsche Auswanderer: Centralblatt der deutschen Auswanderung und Colonisierung* (Frankfurt am Main 1847-50).

Those who were not content with written information but wanted face-to-face advice could consult migration agents or associations. In both cases there was of course the danger of receiving only an improved version of the state of things in the targeted migration country due to the interest of the respective contact persons. Such was the case at the *Gesellschaft für nationale Auswanderung und Colonisation*, founded in Stuttgart in 1848, whose objective was to recruit colonists for the Chilean properties acquired by the trader Franz Kindermann's company without offering them further information on the migration alternatives in the country or the region's suitability for agriculture. The migration guide by the same Kindermann and the one by his brother-in-law Simon urged their readers to consult with this society when considering migrating to Chile. On the contrary, the *Berliner Verein zur Centralisation Deutscher Auswanderung und Colonisation*, founded one year later, provided a comprehensive informative work on the opportunities and dangers of migration. Of course, the most convincing sources for potential emigrants were the letters they received from relatives and acquaintances who had already dared to take the step into the new homeland and could now give an account of their new life in a foreign country. The information they offered was the most authentic and questions with regard to the migration process were

land and could now give an account of their new life in a foreign country. The information they offered was the most authentic and questions with regard to the migration process were answered directly and from personal experience. In consequence it was no coincidence that some publications often printed such letters from people who had migrated in the past. Manuals and booklets for migrants, the so-called migration guide books, supplied compact information on one or several destination countries. They usually dealt with questions around the journey across the ocean, the immigration legislation, the potential settlement areas and the professional groups most appropriate to help them establish themselves with success, and also gave guidance on the climate, flora and fauna, economy, trade and transport. Likewise, the intentions of the authors that inspired the description were crucial for the narrations in the migration guides. In some cases they seemed to be more interested in social utopias and political commitments than factual information. Simon, for example, interpreted the migration in the middle of the 19th century as a movement from Europe's darkness into America's brighter light:

Emigration, which up to now had been a tendency of instinct, misery, speculation and material interests, now acquires the character of a moral migration of peoples. It is no longer a passive part in the process of time. It is a political momentum that intervenes legislatively in the future of humankind. It is the migration of freedom, humanism and morality, and it leaves behind nothing but darkness, barbarism and vice (Simon 1850: 5).

All the guides had in common an informative rather than warning character in regard to migration, always presupposing that the emigration to a certain country had been carefully considered and the decision had not been taken lightly but based on sufficient information. In this spirit, Ried introduced his text as follows:

If one considers the unutterable misfortune, the far too bitter sufferings, the thousands of thousands who, possessed by a migrant demon, thoughtlessly leave their homeland to abandon themselves, their wives and children to all the storms and uncertainties of an unknown country, then one must doubt whether the suggestion of a new, untouched open country could rather be a curse than a blessing. Hunger, diseases and various miseries haunt these incautious peoples; because destiny is inexorable, and those who contravene the rules of reason must infallibly expiate their offence. [...] Instead, provided that one has located countries and conditions where the suffering fellow being really could improve his days; where in a few years, instead of fighting against hollow-eyed poverty, he could become, if

not rich, at least independent, then it is one's sacred duty to inform the afflicted of the existence of such a refuge; to show him all the difficulties he must expect, and then to lead him there with the hand of experience (Ried 1847: 1-2).

The first more extensive mention of Chile appeared in a guide of the year 1846, that is, soon after the Chilean Law of Selective Immigration of November, 18th 1846 came into force. The appendix to the work by Johann E. Wappäus *Deutsche Auswanderung und Colonisation included an essay with the title Über die Vortheile, welche das südliche Chile für deutsche Auswanderer darbietet* penned by Bernardo Philippi, who was convinced that

among the American states originated from the former Spanish colonies [...] Chile was the one that has suffered the least political commotions and made the biggest progress both in its intellectual and material development (Philippi 1969: 13).

He recommended as particularly adequate for the German immigrant the region of Valdivia, south of the 44th parallel, as well as Chiloé Island and its Archipelago. The specific concern of his narration was to describe: "How colossal the Creoles' ignorance and indolence in regard to everything is, and in consequence how colossal the advantages that an industrious farmer can obtain here, will be explained in the following" (Philippi 1969: 14).

In his writings on the province of Valdivia from 1851 and 1852 he still considerably extended his first report. Philippi worked in the service of the Chilean government, on whose behalf he tried to recruit immigrants. In the subsequent migration guides of the 19th century the authors continued to focus on the southern regions of Chile, since on the one hand its climate was very similar to that of Germany and on the other hand it was still scarcely populated. The guides often did not even mention the existence of an indigenous population in Chile. And even when they did, the potential conflicts were never referred to:

They belong to the tribe of the Mapunchos [sic], are baptized Christians dedicated mainly to cattle breeding and agriculture and incidentally lead an idle and carefree life. They presently provide the markets with all sorts of cattle and for decades they have been living with their

Even though as exclusive sources of information on the South American country the depictions in the migration guides were often not sufficient to guarantee a successful and trouble-free migration, up to today they remain interesting testimonies of the history of migration to Chile.

3. The representation of the landscape

neighbours in perfect harmony (Cast 1849: 15).

Most of the migration guides started their narration with a brief overview of the country's so curious geography and climate:

Chile stretches as a narrow coastal country on the West side of South America from the Atacama desert to the Strait of Magellan and from the Andes mountains to the Pacific Ocean. It is bordered to the North by Bolivia, to the East by the mountain range dividing it from Argentina, to the West by the Pacific Ocean and to the South by the Tierra del Fuego. [...] Due to the huge extent of the pastures and the wide range of weather conditions the Chilean climate is very diverse; in the North a rainless, hot desert climate prevails, while in the central provinces the winter rains fall regularly. [...] Then again, the South of the country is cooler and unusually rainy. [...] Chile is very mountainous; in the East it hosts the high Andes mountain chain with its tremendous mountain peaks; in the West, the lower Coastal Range; and the Cordillera del Medio passes through the great Central Valley. Among the highest mountains there is a large number of volcanoes, fourteen of which are still active. Nevertheless, their eruptions do not cause much damage, since they are all located in the High Andes and their devastation cannot reach the cultivated fields. Due to the volcanic nature of the mountains, earthquakes are not uncommon and they can have devastating effects at times. The North of the country has hardly any rivers while there are many in the South (Meinecke 1896: 80-81).

Except for Bromme, who located the country "in the eastern coast of South America" (Bromme 1853: 458), the information on the general geography was similar in all the migration guides. However, some authors were much more precise than Meinecke when specifying longitude and latitude. It is doubtful, nevertheless, whether the future German immigrants were really able to develop an image of the height of the Andes or an active volcano, especially since most of the guides did not include any illustrations or maps. The authors relatively quickly turned their attention to the South of Chile, which they considered to be the most suitable region for the German settlement. At this point it was assumed that the climate was very similar to that in the Southern European countries, the fields fertile and thus best

suited for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, around the middle of the 19th century the provinces of Valdivia and Chiloé were so sparsely populated that numerous families could find enough land in the region to engage in agriculture and cattle raising well beyond subsistence level. At that time, however, the information on landscape and climate was still based mainly on assumptions: "Unfortunately nobody has yet undertaken a thermometer observation and as a result one must make do with quite vague presumptions" (Philippi 1851a). Also, neither provinces was not yet completely mapped: [3] "As for this province [Valdivia], the maps are throughout inaccurate. There has been a lack of time and the necessary equipment to supply a scientific plan of this important point" (Ried 1847: 4). Among the reasons offered for this incorrect data were the fact that the Chilean government had given priority to other regions and its interest had only recently reached the southern country.

Nevertheless, the authors tried to convey to potential immigrants the idea that these regions were still worth the long journey and offered the best prospects for the future. To this purpose, some of them resorted to drawing comparisons with Europe. For example, Dávila-Larrain wrote that in its general physiognomy Chile bore a great resemblance to the most fertile regions of Switzerland, Italy and France (cf. Dávila-Larrain 1884: 1), and Philippi explained: "At the foot of the mountain range and in the lowlands, distinguishing the province of Valdivia from all the others in the republic, lie several lakes that vie in romantic beauty with those in Switzerland and Lombardy at the foot of the Alps" (Philippi 1851a: 6). Simon also drew an analogy with the Alps: "The lowlands in the provinces of Valdivia and Chiloé [...] are [...] full of all the charms of Alpine nature, crossed by ranges of hills and bathed by innumerable rivers and streams" (Simon 1850: 17). However, he seemed to find the landscape of the High Andes less attractive than the highest European mountain range: "They lie there in their rigid overwhelming dimensions, a touching picture, which nonetheless lacks all the character of the Alps, richer in its variety of forms and idyllic scenery" (Simon 1850: 18). Even though most of the potential immigrants had never visited Switzerland or Italy, because of the multitude of travel reports illustrated with copperplate engravings and lithographs, the landscape views of these countries were very widespread in Europe, and were thus enough to convey a mental picture of the new homeland.

However, immigrants who wanted to engage in agriculture were mostly not so much interested in romantic beauty, but in information on the vegetation, irrigation and transport possibilities for their products. The guidebooks also took extensive account of this need. According to Cast, [4] for instance:

In the middle of this natural boundary, rich in splendid scenic beauties of the most varied kind, a stretch of land spreads on a 1200 square mile territory, not very widely curved, full of immeasurable virgin forests and profuse meadows among which majestic rivers, springing from the numerous and marvellous water reserves at the foot of the Andes, flow towards the sea forming frequent meanderings and attracting plenty of smaller navigable waters, with bays and gulfs that in places are accessible for bigger ships, and through the harbours of Ancud and Valdivia even for larger seagoing vessels. [...] This stretch of land is extraordinarily rich in waters. [...] Six large inner lakes [...] at the foot of the Andes are inexhaustible basins of the most magnificent freshwater. [...] In terms of volume and abundance of water many of these lakes exceed by far Lakes Geneva and Constance (Cast 1849: 8-9). In this part Cast also named one of the most important resources of the region, namely its richness in wood. In particular, larch timber served as building material for houses and ships. Even in the last quarter of the 19th century, the ratio between cultivated land and forest was 4 to 9 (cf. Ott 1882: 545). The colonist families were usually given forested land to clear, cultivate and build their farms. In addition to their agricultural activities, many guides often encouraged the emigrants to build a sawmill in order to move forward.

The agricultural products that could grow in the South of Chile were diverse and the profits apparently rich. To the constantly mentioned products belong wheat and other cereals, as well as wine, fruit and vegetables. With regard to stock farming, sheep breeding played an important role. Although the soil and the transport and watering possibilities were considered positive for agriculture, it was not hidden from the emigrants that "farming was at the level reached by the patriarchs 3,000 years ago" with respect to the methods and equipment employed (Ried 1847: 8).

With regard to the climate, the authors repeatedly assured that it was exceedingly healthy and mild:

The sea breeze cools the hot summer days and, with the exception of the earthquakes, which only seldom strike the country and do not have any destructive intensity, the climate may be compared to that of northern Italy. In consequence, one cannot speak of epidemic diseases anywhere along the whole country (Kindermann 1849: 6).

Other authors compared the climate to that of southern Germany "except that the winters

are much milder due to the sea winds; snow and ice are unknown" (Philippi 1969: 15). The precipitation rate in southern Chile was three times higher than in Germany.

Regarding the native wildlife, the immigrants were reassured that there were almost no poisonous animals, neither snakes nor insects, and only very few mammals manifested themselves in the forests, rivers and lakes:

Apart from the Chilean lion, named puma, who by the way is fearful and cowardly and does not have in common with the known lion either the size, or the strength, but in fact only the colour, which is the reason why it is incorrectly called a lion, there are no other predators that could endanger or cause any sort of damage to people or cattle. The jaguar, very common in the La Plata states, at the other side of the border, does not cross the Andes and has never been seen west of the mountain range, just as little as poisonous reptiles such as snakes, scorpions, biting houseflies and other vermin. The harmful birds of prey are also rare, even though the Andes are their home (Cast 1849: 13-14).

In contrast, it was apparently very easy for the immigrants to establish their European domestic animals in Chile and to breed them with profit.

Considering in its entirety the information contained in the migration guides on the provinces of Valdivia and Chiloé, this was presented as a region with a paradisiacal landscape in which nature provided all the conditions needed to successfully start cultivating and initiate agricultural ventures at a substantial profit. Despite such favourable terms, immigrants were advised not to expect to acquire a fortune without any effort and in just a little time: "Chile is not a fantastic El Dorado; it is just one of the calmest countries in America and one of the more fertile on earth; everyone works in Chile, and only he who knows how to save, becomes rich" (Dávila-Larrain 1884: 48).

4. Conclusion

When the German-speaking emigrant chose Chile as his new homeland, he had definitely several reasons to do so. For instance, one of them might be to settle in a region in which he could to a large extent stay among compatriots and continue to communicate in his mother tongue. The climate in southern Chile, always very positively described in the migration guides, and the fertile soil were certainly further important attractions. The scenic beauty of the region, often compared to Switzerland, was probably only of minor importance for the German emigrants and would not have sufficed to awaken their desire to migrate to the South American country. However, comparison with the homeland might have led the Swiss to feel a certain familiarity with Chile that might even have gone much further than the landscape. Whatever concrete reasons may have led migrants to settle in Chile, the South of the country seems to have been a good choice:

While in northern and central Chile the Englishmen have the privilege of the industrial exploitation and commerce of the country, relegating the Germans to a secondary place, the Germans rank first in southern Chile, where especially the middle-class settlements, the small craft industries and the consequent commerce flourish (Fändrich 1924: 30).

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