

Travelling | Visiting and “revisiting” the Orient | Photos of the “Orient”

The invention of photography in the late 1830s revolutionised the ways in which travellers to the “Orient” could record – with an “artistic eye” – what they saw and imagined.

With the development of the daguerreotype in 1839 a relatively simple method of recording pictures was invented. The new technique – due to its unprecedented potential to record important events and encounters relatively instantly – was soon widely disseminated and used in a range of circumstances. Travellers, too, benefitted from this new technology; many – whether diplomats, scientists, explorers, early elite tourists, or indeed, artists – accumulated a large body of photos during their sojourns in the Arab and Ottoman world. Shots could be purely documentary, like the first ever panorama of Istanbul taken in May 1854, but others – most popular from the second half of the 19th century onwards – captured ethnographic subjects and “exotic” types to satisfy the Western interest in “Oriental” society and the “Other”. Curiosity, fascination, imagination and voyeurism drove some photographers; others created images driven by an imperialist ideology, designed to assure people back home in the West of their culture’s superiority and legitimate the right of the colonisers to rule over the colonised.



Working Number: IT2 096

Name: A Druze Bride from Lebanon

Holding Museum: National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography “Luigi Pigorini”

Date: c. 1881

Materials: Albumen

Curator Justification: The lives of “Oriental” women proved irresistible to many European photographers. A most immediate attraction was the bewildering variety in their costume, distinct according to culture, region, social status and stage of life. The attire and headdress of this woman identifies her as a Druze bride from Lebanon.



Working Number: IT2 095

Name: A Woman from Cairo

Holding Museum: National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography “Luigi Pigorini”

Date: c. 1880

Materials: Albumen

Curator Justification: The image appears to show an ordinary Cairene woman. Although apparently an “incidental” shot, pictures like this one were generally staged to evoke a certain atmosphere. Orientalist painters often relied on such photographs to compose their canvases back home.



Working Number: IT2 094

Name: A Woman from Cairo

Holding Museum: MIBACT | National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography “Luigi Pigorini”

Date: c. 1880

Materials: Albumen

Curator
Justification: The historical photos of Enrico Hillyer Giglioli's archive were collected with the purpose of propagating diplomatic and commercial relations with Egypt. The "genre" images appear to be created ad hoc, in order to represent human diversities along a historical timeline.



Working Number: IT2 098
Name: Types of Cairo
Holding Museum: National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography "Luigi Pigorini"
Date: c. 1913
Materials: Albumen
Curator
Justification: A major fascination among Europeans was the astonishing diversity and appearance of the peoples they encountered. This assemblage of "types" from Cairo – collected by the Italian zoologist and anthropologist Enrico Hillyer Giglioli during his travels – shows a subject of particular recurring interest: women.



Working Number: SP 010
Name: Photograph: Music School, Syria
Holding Museum: National Museum of Anthropology
Date: 1898–1906
Materials: Silver gelatin print, grey cardboard
Curator
Justification: This photograph was taken by the Keystone View Company, which from 1892 to 1963 produced educational and ethnographic stereographs to satisfy a European interest in other cultures.



Working Number: SP 009
Name: Photograph: Arabic School, Learning the Koran, Egypt
Holding Museum: National Museum of Anthropology
Date: 1899
Materials: Silver gelatin print, grey cardboard
Curator
Justification: This photograph of children learning to read the Qur'an was taken by the Keystone View Company, which from 1892 to 1963 produced educational and ethnographic stereographs to satisfy a European interest in other cultures.



Working Number: SP 008
Name: Photograph: A Mohammedan Funeral, Egypt
Holding Museum: National Museum of Anthropology
Date: 1899
Materials: Silver gelatin print, grey cardboard

Curator Justification: This photograph of a Muslim funeral was taken by the Keystone View Company, which from 1892 to 1963 produced educational and ethnographic stereographs to satisfy a European interest in other cultures.



Working Number: SP 006

Name: Berber woman (Nailiya) lying down

Holding Museum: National Museum of Anthropology

Date: 1856–1858

Materials: Albumen print, cardboard

Curator Justification: Eduardo Álvarez Ardanuy, a captain of the Spanish Army, was a cartographer in Morocco for more than 30 years at the beginning of the 20th century. The photograph, taken during this 30-year period, illustrates Europe's fascination with Arab culture and also the impact of their presence in the colonial period.



Working Number: SP 007

Name: Seated Berber woman (Nailiya)

Holding Museum: National Museum of Anthropology

Date: 1856-1859

Materials: Albumen print, cardboard

Curator Justification: Eduardo Álvarez Ardanuy, a captain of the Spanish Army, was a cartographer in Morocco for more than 30 years at the beginning of the 20th century. The photograph, taken during this 30-year period, illustrates Europe's fascination with Arab culture and also the impact of their presence in the colonial period.



Working Number: TR2 006

Name: Lithographs after the panoramic photograph taken by Robertson and Beato, Faust: Poligrafisch Illustrierte, Zeitschrift, 1857, Vienna

Holding Museum:

Date: Ömer M. Koç Collection

Materials: 1857

Curator -

Justification: British photographer James Robertson is said to have been the first to take 360-degree panoramic photographs of Istanbul. The first panoramic image, taken in May 1854 from Beyazıt Tower, headquarters of the Ottoman War Ministry, consists of 12 separate photographs.



Working Number: TR2 009

Name: British Soldiers Near Selimiye Barracks in Scutari Waiting to be Dispatched to Crimea

Holding Museum:

Ömer M. Koç Collection

Date: 1854
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: The British photographer James Robertson's photographs of the Crimean War represent important documentation of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century. The Crimean War was the first war in history to be extensively covered by press correspondents.



Working Number: FR 076
Name: Cairo: houses and gardens in the French quarter. Flaubert in the foreground.
Holding Museum: National Library of France
Date: 1852
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: In the later 19th century, photography became a convenient way for travellers to record their progress in foreign lands. This photograph of the French writer Gustave Flaubert is a type of souvenir shot that was popular with European tourists in the region.



Working Number: RO 037
Name: Postcards showing Romanian tourists in Egypt
Holding Museum: National Museum of Romanian History
Date: Beginning of the 20th century
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: The picture postcard gives a wonderful glimpse of 19th-century European tourists in Egypt. Carefully posed in front of the pyramids, the Romanian travellers are accompanied by local guides as well as donkeys and camels used for transportation.



Working Number: DZ 156
Name: Woman in traditional dress, Jardin d'Essai
Holding Museum: Musée Public National des Antiquités
Date: -
Materials: -
Curator
Justification: This photograph, showing an Algerian woman in a garden, illustrates Europe's fascination with Arab culture.



Working Number: FR 073
Name: Harem
Holding Museum: National Library of France
Date: c. 1870
Materials: -

Curator
Justification:

The harem held a fascination for many Western artists who travelled in the "Orient".
