



ISTANBUL MEDENİYET UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF OTTOMAN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**The Armenians and the development of photography in
the Ottoman Arab lands**

Master's Thesis

Rahaf Almomani

Supervisor

Doç. Dr. M. Talha Çiçek

November 2022



ISTANBUL MEDENİYET UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF OTTOMAN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**The Armenians and the development of photography in
the Ottoman Arab lands**

Master's Thesis

Rahaf Almomani

Supervisor

Doç. Dr. M. Talha Çiçek

November 2022

THESIS JURY APPROVAL

This Master's Thesis titled "The Armenians and the Development of Photography in the Ottoman Arab Lands." written by Rahaf Almomani at the Department of Ottoman International studies was accepted by our jury.

JURY MEMBERS

SIGNATURE

Supervisor:

Doç. Dr. M. Talha ÇİÇEK

.....

İstanbul Medeniyet University

Other Jury Members:

Doç. Dr. Elif BAYRAKTAR TELLAN

.....

İstanbul Medeniyet University

Dr. Öğr.Üyesi Nuri SALIK

.....

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University

Date of Defense: 08/ 11 / 2022

STATEMENTS

Style and Reference Manual Statement

Having reviewed this thesis written under my supervision, I confirm that it has been written in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style and used its [footnote/in text] reference format consistently throughout the entire text.

Signature

Doç. Dr. M. Talha ÇİÇEK

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that all information in this dissertation has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conducts, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Signature

Rahaf Almomani

GENİŞ ÖZET

Ermeniler ve Osmanlı Arap Topraklarında Fotoğrafın Gelişimi

Almomani, Rahaf

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Uluslararası Osmanlı Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı

Danışman: Doç. Dr. M. Talha ÇİÇEK

Kasım 2022

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda çeşitli ticaret ve zanaatların gelişmesinde Ermeni cemaati büyük rol oynamıştır ve fotoğrafçılık da bunlardan biridir. Bu çalışma, Ermenilerin neden fotoğrafçılığı bir meslek olarak ilk ele alanlar arasında sayıldıklarını anlamaya ve analiz etmeye çalışarak, genel olarak Arap topraklarında ve özel olarak da Kudüs'te fotoğrafın gelişmesi ve yayılmasında son dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermenilerin öncü rolünü incelemektedir. Ayrıca, Ermenilerin bu yeni alanda öne çıkmalarına, Osmanlı fotoğrafçılığının öncüleri haline gelmelerine yol açan faktörleri, Ermenilerin bu alandaki faaliyetleri ve katılımları konusundaki anlayışımızı genişletmek için arşiv ve görsel materyalleri kullanarak araştırmaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Ermeni toplumunun ilk günlerinden itibaren Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda fotoğraf alanına katılımına yol açan ve buna katkıda bulunan faktörleri, İstanbul'u başlangıç noktası olarak, ardından Kahire'den Beyrut'a, Bağdat'a ve nihayet Kudüs'e kadar, birkaç Osmanlı vilayetinden gelen önemli Ermeni fotoğrafçıların yaşamlarını ve kariyerlerini izleyerek ve analiz ederek keşfetmek ve açıklamaktır. Ayrıca Ermeni toplumunun Yakın Doğu'da fotoğraf ve kartpostal üretiminde aktif olduğu sosyal ve politik bağlamın izini sürmeye çalıştım. Dördüncü bölümde, Ermeni fotoğrafçıların özellikle Osmanlı Kudüs'ündeki faaliyetlerini, faaliyetin bölgedeki bu alanın yerel uygulama üzerindeki etkisini anlamaya çalışırken, yerel Ermeniler ve Ermeni olmayanlar arasında fotoğrafçılık becerilerini geliştirme ve yaymadaki rollerini inceledim.

Bu çalışma, Ermenilerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki fotoğraf alanına katılımlarını, stüdyolarının Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun her yerine yayılması ve örneğin Kudüs'te ilk fotoğraf atölyesini ve ticari fotoğraf stüdyosunu kurmaları ile temsil edilen açık ve belirgin olarak göstermektedir. Kraliyet fotoğrafçısı, Osmanlı sarayı resmi

fotoğrafçısı, resmi kurumların fotoğrafçısı ve önemli makamlar gibi önemli mevkilerinde bulunmayı başardıklarını ve bu onlara pek çok ayrıcalığın getirdiği prestijli bir sosyal statü kazandırdığını da göstermektedir. Patrik Yessayi Garabedian'ın kariyeri, Ermeni dini liderlerinin Ermeni toplumu üyelerini farklı türde beceri ve zanaatlarda ustalaşmaya teşvik etmede nasıl önemli bir rol oynadıklarının harika bir örneğiydi ve fotoğrafçılık da bunlardan biriydi.

Ermeni dini kurumunun da bu tür faaliyetlere mali destek sağlanmasında rolü olmuştur ve Avrupalı misyonerlerin İstanbul'da giderek yaygınlaşması, Ermenileri fotoğrafçılık dahil birçok sanat ve zanaatı öğrenmeye teşvik ederek Ermeniler üzerinde de etkili olmuştur. Ayrıca Ermeni toplumunun Batı ile, özellikle de Avrupa ile olan ilişkilerinin Ermeni bilimsel, pratik ve kültürel rönesansı üzerinde nasıl büyük etkisi olduğunu görmüş olduk. Bununla birlikte, Müslümanların ilk yıllarında Osmanlı yerel fotoğraf sahnesinden yokluğunu, İslam'ın görüntülerin üretimini ve dağıtımını yasakladığını, Hristiyanlığın izin verdiğini söyleyerek haklı çıkarmak, Ermeni veya Rumlar gibi gayrimüslimlerin başlangıcından beri fotoğrafçılıkla uğraşmalarına dair sağlam bir argüman değildir. Osmanlı padişahları birçok kez fotoğraflarının çekilmesini talep ettikleri ve ayrıca saray için resmi fotoğrafçılar görevlendirdikleri için bu iddiayı destekleyecek güçlü referanslar veya kanıtlar bulamadım. Ayrıca farklı sosyal sınıflardan Müslümanlar da fotoğraf çekirtmek için sık sık fotoğraf stüdyolarına gidiyorlardı.

Bu çalışmada incelediğim fotoğrafçıların yaşamlarından elde edilen birkaç kanıt, Ermeni toplumunun bu yeni alanda ustalaşmak için gerekli bilgi ve becerileri kazanmalarına yardımcı olan zengin zanaatkar ve zanaatkar yeteneklerine sahip olduğunu gösterdi. Örneğin, hem Vicen hem de Kevork Abdullah, film geliştirmek, kağıt boyamak, el boyaması yapmak, fotoğraf rötuşlamak için gerekli olan yüksek sanatsal becerilere sahipti. Aynı şey, fotoğrafçılıkta ustalaşmadan önce suluboya ressamlığı yapan ve Ermenilerin sanata olan ilgi ve yeteneklerinin bir göstergesi olan Gabriel Lekegian için de geçerli. Genellikle eczacı, kimyager ve doktor olarak çalışan Ermenilerin profesyonel geçmişleri de fotoğrafçılık becerilerinin kazanılmasında büyük rol oynamıştır. Bu, fotoğraf üretmek için gerekli olan doğru kimyasalların karıştırılmasına büyük ölçüde bağlı olduğundan, fotoğrafçılık pratiği yapmak için gerekli becerileri edinmelerine yardımcı olmuştur. Bununla birlikte, fotoğrafçılığı bir

meslek olarak seçmelerinin nedeni, hayatlarını kazanabilmeleri ve nereye giderlerse gitsinler ailelerinin geçimini sağlayabilmeleri için kendilerinden alınamayacak becerilere duydukları ihtiyaçtı. Bu, Ermeni toplumunun Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son dönemine kadar Anadolu topraklarında coğrafi kısıtlamalar olmaksızın barış içinde yaşamasından sonra yüzleşmek zorunda kaldığı bir gerçektir. Bu, Ermeni cemaatinin üyeleri arasında, fotoğrafçılık gibi çeşitli zanaatlarda açıkça aile varlığını haklı çıkarır; bu, o dönemden sonra çeşitli faktörler nedeniyle her durumda zorunlu olarak devam etmeyen bir olgudur ve Abdullah ve Krikoryan aileleri buna çok iyi bir örnektir.

Ermenilerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda fotoğrafın yayılmasına ve fotoğrafın belirli yönlerinin sanatsal ve üretken olarak gelişmesine büyük katkıları olması, bu alanda etkin olan tek etnik grup oldukları anlamına gelmez. Erken dönem Osmanlı fotoğrafçılık faaliyeti sahnesinde Yunan fotoğrafçılar da göze çarpıyordu. Bununla birlikte, Ermenilerin katılımı hala çok açık ve bu da bazı araştırmacıların Ermenileri neden baskın bulduğunu, diğerlerininse işgalin etnik tekeli olarak adlandırdığını haklı çıkarıyor. Ermenilerin fotoğraf işindeki yoğun varlığı, aynı dönemde, yerel pazarın talebini bilmeleriyle desteklenen fotoğraf ekipmanı ve malzemelerinin pazarlanmasıyla da kendini gösteriyordu. Bu müdahale, Ermenilerin hayatlarını kurtarmak ve yeni hayatlar kurmak için kaçmak zorunda kaldıkları ve öğrendikleri fotoğrafçılık becerilerinin bir geçim kaynağı olarak işe yaradığı Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında daha belirgindi.

Ermeniler, Beyrut'taki Sarrafian kardeşlerin dev işletmesi örneğinde gördüğümüz gibi, fotoğrafçılık bağlamında Kodak gibi köklü şirketler için acenta olarak çalışıyorlardı. Ermeni fotoğrafçıların da devletle çeşitli bağlantıları olması, en son teknolojiye ayak uydurmalarının yolunu açtı. Dahası, on dokuzuncu yüzyılda Osmanlı başkentinde ikamet eden ve Ermeni toplumunun üyeleri arasında teknoloji ve beceri transferinin dinamiğini şekillendiren Avrupa topluluğuyla çok iyi bağlantıları vardı.

Sonuç olarak, Ermenilerin Osmanlı fotoğrafçılığı alanında öncü olarak ortaya çıkmalarına katkıda bulunan birçok faktör olmasına rağmen, bunun bir tesadüf veya şans meselesi olmadığını belirtmek gerekir. Ermeni cemaatinin üyeleri arasında sahip oldukları güçlü ağlarla desteklenen, sürekli hareket etmeleri ve o dönemde yaşadıkları

zor koşulların bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmış olabilecek uzun vadeli bir vizyona sahip oldukları kimse için bir sır değildir. İşbirliğini ve fotografik bilgi, beceri ve teknolojinin akışını kolaylaştırdı. Ayrıca stüdyolarının yerlerini seçerken bilinçli bir strateji izlediler ve yerel halkın, turistlerin ve önemli şahsiyetlerin ve yetkililerin geniş ve çeşitli bir kesimine hitap ettiğinden emin olarak sağladıkları hizmetlerin doğasını akıllıca seçtiler. Bunun kendileri ve stüdyolarının bulunduğu merkezlerdeki ekonomi ve turizm faaliyetleri için büyük ekonomik faydaları oldu. Ermeni fotoğrafçılar, fotoğrafçılık mesleğinde çalışarak hayatlarını kazanmak için çok çalıştılar ve bu onlara yaşadıkları topluluklarda varlıklarını güvence altına alan bir sosyal statü sağladı. Ermenilerin değişen koşullar altında yaşamaları ve sürekli olarak yer değiştirmek zorunda kalmaları, onları eğitim, zanaat veya sanat gibi statülerini yükseltecek ve yaşam koşullarını iyileştirebilecek her şeye yatırım yapmaya sevk etmiş olabilir. Onlar için fotoğraf, geniş bir coğrafyada kendilerini kanıtlamanın en önemli araçlarından biriydi.

Bu tez, özellikle az çalışılan Kudüslü Joseph Toumayan ve Bağdatlı Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian gibi bazı Ermeni fotoğrafçılara ışık tuttuğu için, ve genel olarak Yakın Doğu'da fotoğraf tarihi ve özel olarak da Ermenilerin fotoğrafın gelişmesi ve yayılmasındaki rolü üzerine büyüyen literatüre katkıda bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca, Ermeni fotoğrafçıların tüm bir kuşağının başlangıcına işaret eden Kudüs'teki Ermeni fotoğrafçıların faaliyetleri hakkında ayrıntılı bir fikir verdim. Ayrıca bu fotoğrafçıların bıraktıkları görsel modeller ve bu alandaki faaliyetlerinin sosyo-politik yönleri ve etkilerinin daha fazla araştırılmasının yolunu açmaktadır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki birkaç Ermeni fotoğrafçının çeşitli illerdeki katılımını incelemeye çalıştıysam da fotoğraf alanına katkıları ve daha fazla çalışılması gereken birçok fotoğrafçı hakkında bilmediğimiz birçok bilgi ve detay var ki, gelecekteki çalışmalarda bunları yeterince sunmayı umuyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: fotoğrafçılık, Ermeniler, Osmanlı fotoğrafçılığı, Kudüs, görsel tarih, erken fotoğrafçılık.

ABSTRACT

THE ARMENIANS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE OTTOMAN ARAB LANDS

Almomani, Rahaf

Master's Thesis, Department of Ottoman International studies

Supervisor: Doç. Dr., M. Talha ÇİÇEK

November 2022

The Armenian community played a major role in the development of various trades and crafts in the Ottoman Empire, and photography is one of them. This study examines the leading role of Armenians in the late Ottoman empire in the flourishing and spreading of photography in the Arab lands in general and Jerusalem in particular, seeking to understand and analyze why Armenians were among the first to take up photography as an occupation. It also explores the factors which paved the way for Armenian to stand out in this new field and become pioneers of Ottoman photography, using archival and visual materials to expand our understating of their activity and involvement in this area.

Keywords: photography, Armenians, Ottoman photography, Jerusalem, visual history, early photography.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix
CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	1
1.1. Brief History of Photography.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE	11
2.1. Introduction to Photography in the Ottoman Empire:.....	11
2.2. Photography in the Hamidian Era	15
2.3. Yıldız Palace Photography Collection	22
2.4. Image And Photography Production from A Religious Perspective.....	23
CHAPTER 3: ARMENIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE ARAB LANDS	27
3.1. The Ottoman Armenian Community	27
3.2. Armenian photographers in Istanbul and the Arab lands	30
3.2.1. The royal photographers of the Ottoman court: The Abdullah Brothers.....	30
3.2.1.1. The three Armenian brothers Viçen, Hovsep and Kevork Abdullah.....	32
3.2.1.2. Kosmi Abdullah and Antuan Zilpoşyan	41
3.2.2. The eye of Beyoğlu Mihran Iranian.....	45
3.2.3. The Artisan of Cairo: Gabriel Lekegian.....	49
3.2.4. The pioneers of postcard production: The Sarrafian Freres	56
3.2.5 The Armenian Photographer of Baghdad: Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian.....	62
CHAPTER 4: The ROLE OF ARMENIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS IN JERUSALEM	69
4.1. The beginnings of the photography profession in the holy lands	69
4.2. Armenian photographers in Jerusalem	72
4.2.1. Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem: Yessayi Garabedian	71
4.2.2. Sultan Abdülhamid II's photographer of Palestine: Garabed Krikorian	78
4.2.3. The master of Portrait photography: Johannes Krikorian.....	91
4.2.4. The eye of Jerusalem: Yusuf Joseph Toumayan	98
CONCLUSION.....	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. The Boy Scientist.....	2
Figure 2. Using the camera obscura to examine sunspots. Source: Scharf.....	2
Figure 3. Using the camera obscura in painting.....	3
Figure 4. Diorama of Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre.. ..	5
Figure 5. a portrait of Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre	7
Figure 6. Replica of Daguerre-Giroux camera.....	8
Figure 7. The First Photograph of a Human Being.....	9
Figure 8. Article In Ceride-i Havadis Newspaper.....	12
Figure 9. Photograph taken after Sultan Abdulaziz's abdication	14
Figure 10. A portrait of Sultan Abdülhamid II as a prince	17
Figure 11. A portrait of Sultan Abdülhamid II	19
Figure 12. Cover of Le Petit Journal.....	19
Figure 13. The Abdullah brothers, Viçen, Hovsep and Kevork.....	33
Figure 14.. Abdullah Frères, Sultan Abdülaziz, Istanbul	38
Figure 15. Abdullah Frères, Portrait of Sultan Abdulaziz	39
Figure 16. Two men reciting Quran at the tomb of Sultan Abdülaziz.....	45
Figure 17. Mihrimah Sultan Mosque	46
Figure 18. A man standing Inside the blue	47
Figure 19. Mevlevi Dervişler taken in 1890s by Mihran Iranian.....	47
Figure 20. The back of Cabinet card by Gabriel Lekegian	48
Figure 21. Craftsmen in workshops in one of the streets of Cairo	50
Figure 22. Studio photograph taken in Cairo	50
Figure 23. The funerary complex of Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay.....	51
Figure 24. Houses overlooking a pond in Cairo	52
Figure 25. Chicago world's fair.....	53
Figure 26. A studio portrait of one of the Ottoman Sultans taken in cairo.	54
Figure 27. Princess Nazli in Cairo	54
Figure 28. Gabriel Lekegian works.....	55
Figure 29. the interior of a building in Cairo	55
Figure 30. A postcard of a young woman teaching two young girls.....	56
Figure 31. The back side of postcard no.25	56

Figure 32. A family portrait of the Sarrafian brothers and their families	57
Figure 33. Portrait of Abraham Sarrafian.	58
Figure 34. Postcard showing the Dome of the Rock.....	59
Figure 35. Postcard showing two traditionally dressed women in a doorway	59
Figure 36. Women during work in Lebanon, by Sarrafian Frères	60
Figure 37. A cabinet card of Assyrians from Alqosh.....	61
Figure 38. High-ranking Turkish military officer.	63
Figure 39. A back of a cabinet card taken in Antep.....	63
Figure 40. A studio portrait of Avedis Jamgochian	64
Figure 41. Photographer Zorababel Donatossian himself.....	65
Figure 42. Patriarch Yessai Garabedian.....	72
Figure 43. Patriarch Yessai Garabedian.....	74
Figure 44. The back of a cabinet card by Garabed Krikorian.....	79
Figure 45. The back of a cabinet card by Garabed Krikorian.....	80
Figure 46. Studio portrait of young Garabed Krikorian.....	82
Figure 47. Studio portrait of Garabed Krikorian with his bride Karimah Tannous...	82
Figure 48. A group of men Bragining for a photograph.	83
Figure 49. A studio portrait of a man dressed in traditional Arab clothes	85
Figure 50. . Studio Group portrait of women dressed in Palestinian clothes.	86
Figure 51. Studio Group portrait of women dressed in Bethlehem and Ramallah clothes..	86
Figure 52. Studio portrait of a Rabbi taken Garabed Krikorian.....	87
Figure 53. Garabed Krikorian presenting the album German Emperor II. Wilhelm's trip to Syria to The sultan.....	89
Figure 54. a photo from the German Emperor Wilhelm II's trip to Syria.....	89
Figure 55. a photo from the German Emperor Wilhelm II's trip to Syria.....	90
Figure 56. a photo from the German Emperor Wilhelm II's trip to Syria.....	90
Figure 57. Portrait of photographer Johannes Krikorian	92
Figure 58: Najla Nijim Krikorian dressed in native Bedouin costume.....	93
Figure 59. Aida and her cousins on a family picnic.....	94
Figure 60. Aida, Johannes Krikorian's and Najla Raad's daughter.	95
Figure 61. Family portrait with native Palestinian costumes.	97

Figure 62. Tourists portrait dressed in native Palestinian costumes.	97
Figure 63. Women dressed in traditional Palestinian customs	98
Figure 64. Tourists in Palestine, early 20th century dressed in local costumes.....	99

Introduction

The nineteenth century marked the beginning of a new phase of human consciousness and memory. Technical and scientific developments reshaped knowledge and human thought in ways that had not been possible before. Viewing images of objects, countries, people, and events that were distant in both space and time became the invention of the process later called photography. As Wendy Shaw writes in her book *Possessors and Possessed* (2003), "photography offered new modes of documentation and transport of information. Together, these technologies transformed the ways in which cultures could be recorded and disseminated."¹ With the invention of photography, it became possible for people to mechanically preserve the past with all the details of the moment- something that oil paintings could not do, and that no human memory had been able to convey before.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable renaissance in the study and analysis of photography as a cultural, visual, and social historical document, which has led to a growing number of studies on foreign and local activities in the field of photography in the Ottoman Empire. Many studies have provided an overview of the temporal development of photography in the Ottoman Empire from various aspects. Few, however, shed light on the crucial role that ethnic communities played in the development and dissemination of this new medium throughout the Ottoman Empire. My interest in this topic began after taking a course on non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, which led me to research more about the role they played in the economic, social, and cultural life of the Ottoman Empire. Then I noticed that the Dildilian family came up, a family that practiced photography in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and the United States. Which led me to read more on the topic and realize how understudied it is.

When reading about the history of photography in the Ottoman empire during the late-nineteenth century, you clearly see that some of the principal studios in Constantinople were owned and operated by photographers of Armenian descent. Pascal Sebah, for

¹ K., Shaw Wendy M. In *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 131. Oakland, USA: University of California Press, 2003.

instance, opened his "*El Chark*" studio in 1857, and by 1873 had achieved such success with his elegant, crisply detailed portraits that he opened a second branch in Cairo, Egypt. By the time of his death thirteen years later, the new managing partner, Polycarpe Joaillier, changed the name of the studio to "Sebah and Joaillier."² Another prominent name is Febus Efendi (Bogos Tarkulyan) who had an important role in portrait photography in Istanbul. He was the assistant of the famous Abdullah brothers in their studio before he established his own. Beginning in the 1870s, a firm called the Karakaşyan Brothers established themselves as importers and dealers in cameras and other equipment too. These are just a few names among many others.³

In this thesis, I seek to find an answer to the question of why Armenians were among the first to engage in photography in the Ottoman Empire. I will examine this question in the context of the Arab lands in general and Jerusalem in particular, as the first photographic workshop in Palestine was founded by the Armenian Patriarch Yessayi Garabedian in Jerusalem, where several Armenian photographers received their photography training. In the course of my research, I attempt to evaluate three main arguments while following the careers and contributions of some important photographers in Jerusalem and other major Arab capitals like Cairo and Beirut and Baghdad. These three arguments are often considered as the main reasons behind the massive participation of Armenians in the photography business in the Ottoman Empire. The first argument is religion, that is, whether the fact that Armenians were Christians played a role in encouraging them and facilitating their participation in local photography at the beginning of the 19th century, since there was no ban on the production of images and visual materials, which probably influenced the involvement of Muslims in this new field in the early years,⁴ the second argument is that the great talent of Armenians as craftsmen helped them to master photographic techniques such as hand-coloring and retouching and to develop a particular style that distinguished them. The third argument is the role of Armenians' strong ties with Europe and the

² Trish, Greene. "The Abdülhamid II Photo Collection: Orientalism and Public Image at the End of an Empire." *Metamorphosis* (2018), 34.

³ B. Ü, Erutku. "EVALUATION ON PHOTOSHOOTS TAKEN FOR TURKEY'S BEAUTY CONTEST IN 1929". *İnönü Üniversitesi Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi* 6 (2020), 5.

⁴ Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The craftsman's art Armenians and the growth of photography in the Near East (1856-1981)-by Dickinson Jenkins Miller*. Diss. (1981), .80.

European community in the Ottoman Empire in the acquisition and transfer of photographic knowledge and technology. It is also important to note that there is a huge number of Armenian photographers that deserve to take place in research, however, I chose to include the ones that fit into the general scope of this study.

The Data collection for this study relied mainly on archival and library research for primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, I used archival documents from the Ottoman archives like official letters, orders, and bills to better understand the nature of the photographers' relationship and interaction with the state, and visual materials such as photographs and postcards from various archives, albums, and private collections, primarily the Ottoman archives, Sultan Abdülhamid's Yıldız albums among others. In addition, I made use of oral history to examine the life of Garabed Krikorian, who established the first commercial studio in Jerusalem, through an interview conducted by Lebanese filmmaker, photographer, and archivist Akram Zaatari with his granddaughter Aida Krikorian in 1995. For secondary sources, I depended on the existing literature on the history of photography in the Middle East, where I adopted the inductive and textual analysis method to examine the biographical information of the lives and careers of the Armenian photographers covered in this study. I also analysed visual models of their works to better understand the periods of their activity and their photographic styles.

This thesis consists of four main chapters. The first chapter includes a brief technical history of photography in order to understand the technical development of photography from its first years, and better understand the intersection and the importance of having knowledge of chemistry in mastering photography and how it helped Armenians who worked as pharmacists, chemists, and doctors pick the necessary skills to practice photography pretty early.

In chapter two I discuss The Ottoman Empires first encounter of photography, and the Ottoman Sultans, especially Abdülhamid II, role in spreading and developing photography in the Ottoman lands. I also touch upon photography from a religious perspective to understand the religious context of accepting this new invention in the Ottoman Empire, also as an attempt to understand why some researchers believe that the emergence of Christians, such as the Armenians and the Greeks, as the first local

photographers in the Ottoman Empire, stemmed from the absence of religious prohibition from engaging in this new field.

In chapter three, I examine the Armenian community in the Ottoman context, the various roles they played and contributions they made as craftsmen, artists, traders, and photographers. In this chapter I mainly focus on Armenian photographers' activity in the Arab lands, through three main case studies of Armenian photographers starting from Istanbul with The Abdullah brothers and Joseph Toumayan, the Sarrafian brothers in Beirut, and Gabriel Lekegian in Cairo and Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian in Baghdad, where I discuss the social and political position they acquired in the Ottoman Empire through this new field, the clients they were dealing with through biographical information and showcase samples of their works.

In chapter four, I focus on the activities of the local Armenians in the field of photography in Ottoman Jerusalem by tracking and studying their careers and social lives to understand the factors that contributed to their professional involvement and the spread of their studios throughout Ottoman Palestine. Moreover, the role Armenians played as founders of the first photography workshop and commercial photography studio and how it contributed greatly to the training of a big number of local Armenians and non-Armenian photographers, while also trying to understand the heavy family involvement of the Armenian and their extended families in this new medium and the transfer of their skills from one generation to another.⁵

Literature Review

I conducted this study with the help of the existing body of literature specialized in the history of photography in the Ottoman Empire and the Arab world, and some of them dealt with the activity of ethnic groups in this field in particular. Here, I must say that I faced some difficulties due to the lack of sources and limited access to some of them, however, I tried to cover the subject of this thesis as much as possible using the available sources. In this section of the study, I mention a number of the studies, books,

⁵ Richard G, Hovannisian. "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire." *East European Quarterly* 6.1 (1972): 1.

and articles that provided me with the necessary information and theoretical and historical context to address the subject of this study.

Engin Özendes is a Turkish photography historian who has written several books on the history of photography in the Ottoman empire. Her book *Photography in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1923* describes the time photography reached the Empire right after its discovery, between 1839 and 1923. Özendes also describes the Ottoman society's approach to photography and the Ottoman sultans' interest in this new invention, while describing the support they gave to the photographers of the empire. She also thoroughly discusses the social life of that period through photographs, each of which is a historical document. Engin Özendes, also gave a detailed list of photographers who worked within the borders of the Ottoman Empire in this book, which offers a very important reference for future research. Özendes has also done comprehensive research on the photographic career Ottoman-Armenian Abdullah Frères in her book *Abdullah Frères, Ottoman Court Photographers (1998)*. This book provided me with an account of the lives of these three brothers and their role as Ottoman Court photographers and the social and political implications of it.

In 1981, Dickinson Jenkins Miller wrote the most comprehensive account on Armenian photographers' activity in the near east focusing on Lebanon. His MA thesis titled, *The Craftsman's Art: Armenians and the Growth of Photography in the Near East (1856-1981)* (MA in Middle Eastern Studies, American University of Beirut, 1981). The significance of this study is that it is one of the very few specialized studies in English that investigates the history of photography in the near east thoroughly and in which the author uses primary Armenian sources. Miller conducted interviews with some Armenian photographers in Lebanon in 1980-1981 and used interviews conducted by other researchers. He also collected and analysed many information and statistics to examine what some called an "ethnic monopoly" of the field of photography in the Near east by the Armenians as an ethnic group. In his study, Miller examines the career path of a number of early Armenian photographers in the near east, highlighting the photographic methods they followed and the factors that contributed to their adoption of this field as a source of income and the impact of the Armenian diaspora in various parts of the Middle East on this ethnic-occupational phenomenon. Miller also included three detailed appendices that provide the names of

the first Armenian photographers and their places of activity, and the names of their masters who taught them photography.

One of the writers who researched the history of photography in the Middle East in general and Palestine, in particular, is Badr El-Hage. He also devoted some of his works to study the activity of Armenian photographers in the Middle East. In his article entitled “The Armenian Pioneers of Middle Eastern Photography” (2007) issued by the Institute of Palestine Studies, Badr El-Hage discussed the exceptional political, cultural, economic, and scientific circumstances that contributed and paved the way for the Armenian community to occupy a very important space in the field of photography in various parts of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, this article is a source of great importance for understanding the history of photography in the Ottoman Empire and the role Armenians played in it.

For a more in-depth analysis of the photography of Ottoman Armenians in the provinces. David Low presents a study titled “Photography and the Empty Landscape: Excavating the Ottoman Armenian Image World” (2015), in which he presents a detailed analysis of the role of the Armenians in contributing to photography in various provinces of the Ottoman empire. The importance of this study lies in the fact that it is a research initiative away from historical narratives cantered around Istanbul as a centre of Ottoman-Armenian photography. It also highlights how Armenians' participation in the field of photography helped strengthen the solidarity among members of the Armenian community in the context of mass migration and massacres.

Another contemporary book that has benefited me massively in this study is “*Camera Ottomana*”. The book touched on a fundamental issue, in my research which is the central role of Armenians in the development of photography in the Ottoman Empire, as the studios that were established inside and outside the imperial capital were mostly owned by Greeks and Armenians most of the time.

Stephen Sheehi's book *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860-1910* (2016), is a different model from what is usually presented regarding the study of the history of local indigenous photography in the Ottoman Empire and the Arab world away from the common Orientalist perspective. Sheehi approaches the topic through a framework that goes beyond the use of photography as a tool to serve

Orientalism and colonialism.⁶ He also provides detailed information about the nature of the practice of photography in the Middle East and the names of some local not very well-known photographers and their studios and discusses the historical and ideological context of this new field and its implications on the social class in Ottoman society. Sheehi mainly studies the activity of Arab and Armenian photographers in the field of studio portraits in Ottoman Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine, with the aim of understanding the nature of the involvement of the early local photographers from their point of view away from any external influence.

It is important to note that despite the increase in the number of studies and research related to the history of photography in the Near East in general, and the involvement of Armenians and their role in the development and spread of photography in particular, still needs more detailed and in-depth study, using sources in the Armenian language and various archival documents and photo albums that have not yet been studied.

In addition to the available literature that was previously written on this topic or related, I used various visual materials of photographs and postcards in this study from several public and private collections, namely: Photographs from the Online Catalogue of the Library of Congress. Sultan Abdülhamid II Yıldız Photography Collection at the İstanbul University Rare Works Library. A selection of photographs from the Malikian Collection by Joseph Malikian includes works of different Armenian photographers in the Near East from the 1850s to the 1960s. Selected photographs from Graham Pilecki Private collection, and other available digital sources.

⁶ Sheehi, Stephen. *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860-1910*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, (2016), xxi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor DR. M. Talha iek for his support and understanding throughout the thesis writing process. I would also like to thank the faculty members of Medeniyet University International Ottoman Studies department from whose expertise I have greatly benefited. I also owe my sincere thanks to Dr. Elif Bayraktar Tellan, and Dr. Nuri Salık, the jury members, for their valuable suggestions.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
BOA.	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
DH.MKT.	Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubî Kalemi
Ibid	ibidem
İ..DH..	İrade Dahiliye
MF.MKT.	Maarif Nezareti Mektubî Kalemi
ML.EEM.	Maliye Nezâreti Emlâk-ı Emiriyye Müdüriyeti
TS.MA.e.	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, Evrak
Y.PRK.BŞK.	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Başkitabet Dairesi Maruzatı
Y. PRK. NMH	Yıldız Perakende Nâme-i Hümâyûnlar

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the technical history of the invention of the camera and the first photographic experiments, its historical background and the development phases of photography, in order to understand the point of intersection between the importance of having knowledge in chemistry to master photography in its early days, due to its great dependence on mixing the right chemicals required to produce photographs, and how later the Armenians' experience and knowledge in the field of pharmacy, chemistry and Medicine helped them master the skills necessary to practice photography from its early days.

1.1. Brief History of Photography

Photography is a collective term for the process of producing images on light-sensitive surfaces (plate, paper, film). The term photography goes back to the two Greek words *photos* ("light") and *graphein* ("to draw"). Which means drawing with the light. Until the year 1839, when the discovery of photography was announced to the world, photography had gone through many technical and chemical phases. When we look at the history of photography, this discovery is not a result of coincidence, but a result of necessity and accumulated efforts of generations of scientists from various parts of the world.⁷

The working method of the photographic camera is based on the *Camera Obscura*, which has been used in various forms for centuries. It was described in detail in the manuscript of the 11th-century Arabian scientist Alhazen (Ibn al-Haitham) of Basra, on optics. A simplified explanation of the operation of the *camera obscura* consists of the light entering through a small hole in the wall of a dark room, reflecting the outside image inverted on the opposite wall or on a white screen placed in a certain distance from the hole.⁸

⁷ Doble, Rick. "A Brief History of Light & Photography." *Preuzeto* 29 (2013): 2020, 2.

⁸ Nicholas J, Wade, and Stanley Finger. "The Eye as an Optical Instrument: From Camera Obscura to Helmholtz's Perspective." *Perception* 30, no. 10 (2001): 1157–77. <https://doi.org/10.1068/p3210>.

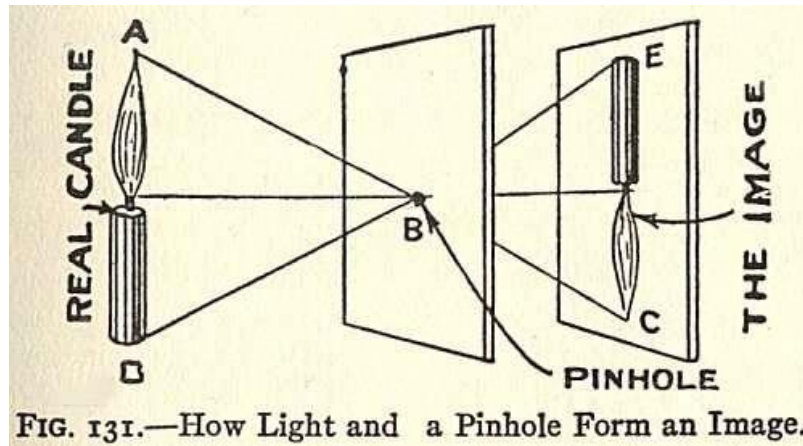


Figure 1. The image formed by the penetration of light on the wall of the dark room. Source: The Boy Scientist, 1925.

European scholars used Alhazen's transcribed work on the *camera obscura* as a primary source in the following years. It is also known that the *camera obscura* was used in the field of astronomy, especially in the study of sunspots and eclipses, in the five centuries following Alhazen's work.⁹

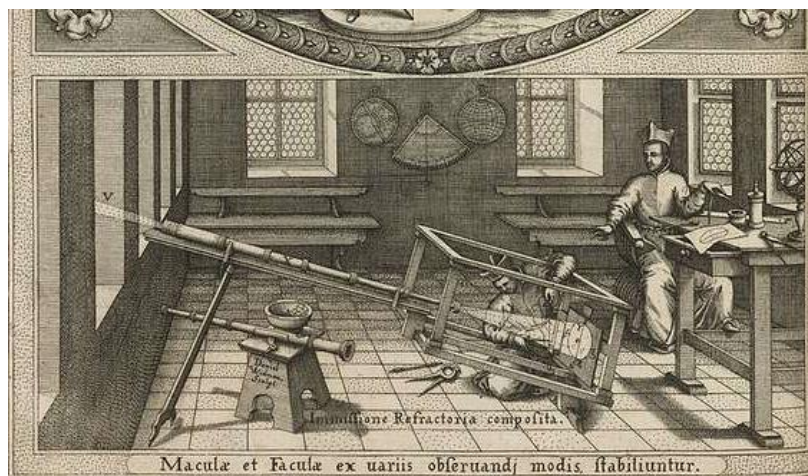


Figure 2. Using the camera obscura to examine sunspots. Source: Scharf, 1968.

Information on the theoretical method and application areas of the *camera obscura* were presented in printed books for the first time in 1521 by a student of Leonardo da Vinci, Cesare Cesariano, then in 1545 by Gemma Frisius, a Dutch mathematician with explanatory drawings. In the same years, thanks to the double-sided convex lenses,

⁹Michel, Frizot. *A new history of photography*. Könemann, (1998), 18.

which were first used by the Milanese physicist Girolamo Cardano, considerable progress was achieved in the practical use of the camera obscura. With this development in optics, it became possible to obtain a clearer image than before. Naple's scientist Giovannibattista della Porta not only explained the *camera obscura* in great detail in his book *Magiae Naturalis* (in English, *Natural Magic*), published in 1558, but also stated for the first time that this method provided great benefits for painting. By the 17th century, the *camera obscura* had been widely used in field painting and topographical surveying by many famous scientists and artists such as Johannes Kepler and Athanasius Kircher.¹⁰ Again, in the 17th century, for the first time in the history of *camera obscuras*, which was reduced to hand-held sizes, 45-degree mirrors were used to obtain horizontal and directional images. By the 18th century, the *camera obscura* was being used very often by educated people. In addition to miniature models whose dimensions were reduced to 10x20 cm, cabinet or table-type models with complex equipment were also produced so that artists could work on portrait and landscape subjects in more detail.

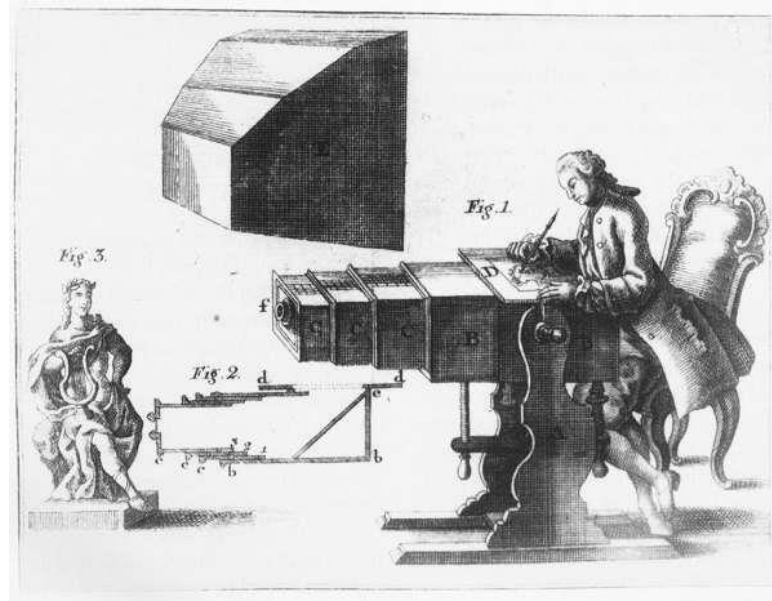


Figure 3. Using the camera obscura in painting. Source: Athanasius Kircher's *Ars Magna Lucis Et Umbrae* (1645).

Italian painter Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697-1768), famous for his Venetian

¹⁰ Bahattin, Öztuncay. "Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları." *Koç Kültür Sanat ve Tanıtım Hizmetleri* (2003), 17.

landscapes, and Swiss Jean Etienne Liotard (1702-1789), described as the "painter of realities", were among the artists who used the *camera obscura* in their work.¹¹ The basic theories of photography and the development process of the optical part of it goes back to centuries ago. However, in order for the image obtained using the *camera obscura* to be transferred to a carriable material in a permanent way, studies had to be carried out in another branch of science, chemistry.¹² Later in this study I will elaborate on how the Armenians knowledge and experience as chemists, goldsmiths, and pharmacists, helped them gain the skills necessary for photography, in particular a thorough knowledge of the chemical processes used in developing films.

The first observations on these subject dates to the beginning of the 18th century, when Johann Schulze, professor of anatomy from Nuremberg, observed for the first time in 1725 that silver salts, the basic chemical substance of almost all photographic methods, change color and darken when affected by light. However, the limited knowledge available in the fields of chemistry and optics at that time was not sufficient to enable practical progress in obtaining permanent images with the use of *camera obscura*. Nevertheless, after a while, the brothers Nicéphore Niépce and Claude Niepce, who would successfully combine the two separate disciplines in practice for the first time, would pioneer the works that would revolutionize the invention of photography. Nicéphore Niepce (1765-1833), one of the brothers who were officers in the French army, retired from military service in 1815 and started to work on lithography, which was his field of interest before. The lithographic printing method, which was invented by Alois Senefelder of German origin in 1796, attracted great attention, especially in France and Niepce was trying to be successful in this field of art.¹³

However, the lithography technique required special dexterity in practice, just like painting. Niepce soon realized that he did not have such a talent, and thereupon he devoted himself to working on image acquisition by photochemical methods. Niepce tried to obtain images with the help of *camera obscura* by using different chemicals in

¹¹ Heinrich, Schwarz. *Art and Photography: Forerunners and Influences: Selected Essays*. Olympic Marketing Corporation, (1985), 102.

¹²Bahattin, Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, 18.

¹³ Josef Maria, Eder. "XIX. Joseph Nicephore Niepce." *History of Photography*. Columbia University Press, (1945), 193.

his research that lasted for years, but most of the images he obtained were not at the desired level. In addition, since it was only in its first stages, images of objects that were actually white and light in nature remained in dark tones in Niepce's work. Niepce also conducted experiments using 'light-curing chemicals'. He had some successful results in this direction, the most successful of these experiments was a profile portrait of Cardinal d'Amboise, painted in 1826. Niepce called this method the *heliograph*. Thus, the earliest known image in the history of photography was obtained by Niepce in 1826 on a tinplate.¹⁴

While Niepce was busy with his experiments, Parisian painter Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851), on the other hand, was running scenographic entertainment theatre called *Diorama*, unaware that he would become one of the most prominent figures in the history of photography during these pursuits. In the course of these performances, huge pictures created by Daguerre's own hand were turned into impressive day and night images with various light effects on the stage.

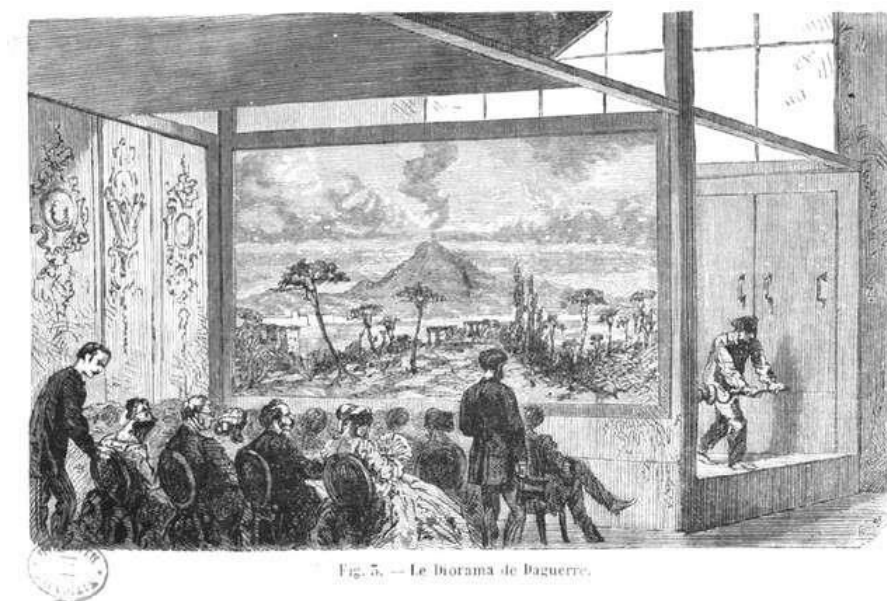


Figure 4. Diorama of Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Tissanier, 1874. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Daguerre became aware of Niepce's successful work through Charles Chevalier, a Parisian salesman of optical instruments, and in the same years, he himself began

¹⁴ Ibid, 194.

working on obtaining images with a *camera obscura*. Upon Daguerre's written insistence, Niepce sent him samples of his work, and in 1827, after watching Daguerre's diorama performances in Paris, he was persuaded to work with him. The two researchers decided to combine their experience and knowledge by signing a 16-item partnership agreement on 14 December 1829. Thanks to this agreement, 64-year-old Niepce and 42-year-old Daguerre saw a great commercial future ahead of them through this field. Pursuant to the agreement, Niepce sent the technical information about the method he developed to Daguerre, and Daguerre immediately started working in the light of these technical details.¹⁵

But just three years after the signing of the partnership agreement, Niepce died on May 5, 1833, and Daguerre was left alone in his research. Daguerre, who could not make any significant progress that could be added to Niepce's studies at the beginning of his experiments, as a result of the suggestions of his chemist friend Jean-Baptiste Dumas, Daguerre found the key to the solution when he started to experiment with silver iodide instead of bitumen (black sticky petroleum derivative, asphalt) used in the heliograph method and which has limited sensitivity to light. Daguerre's initial images were rather weak. Fortunately, one night, Daguerre forgot one of the poor looking silver-plated copper plates in his locker, where he kept the chemical supplies. When he woke up the next morning, a big surprise awaited him. The blurred image on the metal plate from the night before stood before him, clearly. After a short period of bewilderment, Daguerre determined that this result was caused by the vapor of mercury in the cupboard. Thus, suddenly, great progress was made in his research. As a result of his ongoing experiments, Daguerre succeeded in fixing this image in hydrochloric solution, and finally succeeded in developing a practical method to use and was aware of the enormity of the opportunity that lay before him.¹⁶

Isidore Niepce (1805-1868), son of Nicéphore Niepce, was entitled to the partnership agreement with Daguerre due to his father's death. Although he was mainly a research artist, Daguerre was ultimately a businessman with commercial ambitions, and he took over the joint patent rights from Isidore, who was in financial trouble, ensuring that

¹⁵ Bahattin, Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, 20.

¹⁶ Ibid, 21.

his invention was named only after himself. Daguerre, who wanted to use his invention commercially and to guarantee patent rights, was looking for a strong financier.¹⁷



Figure 5. a portrait of Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre by Jean Baptiste-Sabatier-Blot 1844.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Finally, this revolutionary breakthrough was recognized by the French government on June 14, 1839, through François Arago (1786-1853), a politician and scientist who is a member of the chamber of deputies who convinced the French government to award Daguerre and Niepce's son with lifetime pensions in return to making the details of their process public. Arago gave a presentation on daguerreotypes at the Paris Academy of Sciences, where he emphasized that this invention would provide great benefits in scientific research, especially in the field of archaeology. There was no longer any obstacle to the spread of photography, or rather the daguerreotype method, all over the world.¹⁸

Meanwhile, by a twist of fate, on March 3, 1839, a fire broke out from the paint can that a worker on the stage knocked down causing Daguerre's Parisian diorama to be destroyed, He urged firefighters to prevent the fire from spreading to the fifth floor of

¹⁷ Anne, H Hoy. *The book of photography*. National Geographic Society, (2005), 32.

¹⁸ Ibid, 33.

the adjacent building, which held all of his daguerreotype notes, and equipment and specimens. The daguerreotype was a laborious method that also required manual dexterity. As a first step, a thin copper plate with a silver-coated and polished surface was made light-sensitive by being exposed to iodine vapor. Exposure times of between 3 and 30 minutes were applied to this plate in the photographic camera in the first years of the use of the method, reduced to less than one minute in later years thanks to the lenses developed, and down to five or ten seconds, depending on the light situation, starting from the 1850s.¹⁹



Figure 6. Replica of Daguerre-Giroux camera, the original made in 1839 by Alphonse Giroux. Source: Science Museum group.

Viewing a boulevard in Paris from the roof of his house in 1839, Daguerre unwittingly succeeded in taking the first human image known in the history of photography. Due to the long exposure time, vehicles, and people didn't appear in and the boulevard looked as if it is empty in this daguerreotype. But one lucky person standing on the curb to get his shoes polished went down in history as the first person to be photographed.²⁰

¹⁹Bahattin, Öztuncay, *Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*, p.21.

²⁰ "The First Photograph of a Human Being." 2022. *Open Culture*. Accessed April 16. <https://www.openculture.com/2017/11/see-the-first-photograph-of-a-human-being-a-photo-taken-by-louis-daguerre-1838.html>.



Figure 7. The First Photograph of a Human Being Taken by Louis Daguerre in 1838.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

In the following years, Daguerre continued to strive for the development of the method, making it more useful. He especially tried to shorten the exposure times but did not achieve significant success. Attempting to take a portrait of King Louis Philippe on March 6, 1841, Daguerre, upon the unsuccessful result, decided to leave Paris and return to *Bry-sur-Marne*, in great dejection. Here, as the last example of the painting skills he had left from the diorama period, Daguerre made a huge oil painting that decorated the walls of the district church. He passed away on July 10, 1851.²¹

Daguerre and Isidore Niepce had their invention registered with the British Royal Patent Office on August 14, 1839, even before reaching a definitive agreement on patent rights with the French government.²² The discovery of the daguerreotype was also heard in the lands of the Ottoman Empire in a short time, and less than two months after the daguerreotype guide was published in Paris, the first news about this great invention was published in the *Calendar*, published in Istanbul on October 28, 1839. It was published in the *Takvim-i Vekayi* newspaper.²³

It's important to note that each daguerreotype was a unique photographic work, as

²¹ Michael W, Davidson. "Pioneers in Optics: Louis Daguerre and George Eastman." *Microscopy Today* 18.2 (2010), 18.

²² Josef Maria, Eder, *History of Photography*, 200.

²³ Şinasi, Barutçu. *Foto Konuşmaları*. Ankara. (1947), p.30.

there was no negative method and therefore no possibility to reproduce the image. The daguerreotype method had a great impact shortly after it was announced and became widespread all over the world, going beyond the borders of Europe.

CHAPTER TWO: PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In this chapter, I discuss photography in the Ottoman empire the Sultans reaction to it, I also make an overview of photography from a religious perspective as an attempt to understand the religious context of the Ottoman Empire's acceptance of this new art, and the reason why some researchers believe that the emergence of Christian subjects, such as the Armenians and Greeks, as the first local photographers in the Ottoman Empire,²⁴ is due to the lack of a deterrent or religious reservations against practiced photography. Finally, I go over Sultan Abdülhamid II stand on photography and the Yıldız Palace Photography Collection of Sultan Abdülhamid II

2.1.Introduction of Photography to the Ottoman Empire:

Photography was accepted in the Ottoman Empire along with other fields such as painting and music as part of the *Tanzimat* reforms and supported by the Ottoman palace. In the second half of the 19th century, Ottoman sultans, courtiers, and high-ranking soldiers began to take an interest in photography, and along with palace painter, palace photographer became an official title. As the Ottoman administration made reforms and innovations, it took a while for the people to accept these reforms. Istanbul made its first official acquaintance with photography in the early years of Sultan Abdülmecid's reign through Europeans who were invited to the city as part of the reform movements. The French engineer Ernest de Caranza photographed Istanbul in 1852 and 1854 and presented them to the Sultan. However, the unofficial arrival of photography in Istanbul dates back to 1840 - through travelers.²⁵

Inventions in Europe were closely followed in the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Istanbul was still the capital of a great empire and a mysterious attractive city for European writers, painters and artists who were both impressed by the beauties of Istanbul and its people and deeply curious about the Ottoman Empire and its capital, where church bells mingled with the sounds of prayer and where different religions and cultures met. Moreover, Istanbul was an important center for Europeans to market

²⁴Michèle, Hannoosh. "Practices of photography: Circulation and mobility in the nineteenth-century Mediterranean." *History of Photography* 40.1 (2016), 7.

²⁵Semra Germaner, and İnankur Zeynep. *Constantinople and the Orientalists*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, (2008), 41.

such an important invention. Considering all these reasons, it is not surprising that one of the first places that photography reached was the Ottoman lands and its capital city in particular. According to Fulya Ertem, the earliest known commercial daguerreotypes taken in Istanbul were the work of a French photographer identified as Kompa, one of Louis Daguerre's students. Kompa, who seems to have been present in the city in the summer of 1842, had been advertised in issue 95 of *Ceride-i Havadis* which stated that a traveling photographer named M. Kompa, one of Daguerre's apprentices, came to Constantinople and exhibited his photographic works and offered to teach those who were interested; there were also news and advertisements about photographing people and landscapes.²⁶ Thus, the arrival of photography in Istanbul was announced through the press.



Figure 8. Article In *Ceride-i Havadis* Newspaper reports Mr. Kompa's work in Istanbul in issue no. 95, 17 July 1842 (Source: Engin Özendes's collection)

After initially entering the country photography quickly spread locally as the

²⁶ Fulya, Ertem. "Facing the 'Other': A Critical Approach to the Construction of Identity Narratives in the Early Photographic Practice of the Ottoman Empire." *Early Popular Visual Culture*, vol. 9, no. 4, (2011), 293–307., <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2011.621317>.

Armenian and Greek Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire opened their own photo studios. It was not until the end of the 19th century that Muslim photographers joined the scene. The first Muslim photographers in Istanbul all had military backgrounds, as photography had been taught at Ottoman military academies as part of art instruction since the 1860s. These photographers were officers who had graduated from the Imperial College of Naval Engineers, founded in 1783, the Imperial College of Engineers, founded in 1795, or the War Academy, founded in 1834. They included such notable photographers as Servili Ahmed Emin, Üsküdarlı Ali Sami, Yüzbaşı Hüsnü, Bahriyeli Ali Sami, Yüzbaşı Sadullah İzzet, Miralay Ali Rıza, Hüseyin Zekai Bey and Kenan Resid Bey, some of whom also wrote books on photography.²⁷ On the other hand most early Ottoman Armenian photographers had a background in some kind of art or craft like painting, carpentry and jewelry making, etc.

The first local photography studio in Istanbul belonged to Vasilaki Kargopulo, who started his business in 1850 at 311 Grand Rue de Pera, next to the Russian Embassy in *Beyoğlu*. Kargopulo first took portraits in his studio and then began to create a collection of photographs under the title "Costumes and Professions" to attract the attention of tourists in Istanbul. In his early photographs, Sultanahmet Square and Topkapı Palace were photographed, as well as stereographs of Nuruosmaniye and Sultanahmet Mosques taken in 1860. Having worked in close association with the palace during the reign of Abdülmecid (1839-1861), Vasilaki Kargopulo lost this privilege when Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876) ascended the throne. The enthronement of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) restored success to Kargopulo, who had tried for many years to support himself by his own efforts. Until his death in 1886, Kargopulo retained the title of *Mabeyn-i Hümayun Fotoğrafçısı* (Royal Photographer), which had been bestowed upon him shortly before by the new sultan.²⁸

The interest in portrait photography that began during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz continued unabated during the 33-year reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. However, while

²⁷ Bahattin, Öztuncay. *Dynasty and Camera: Portraits from the Ottoman Court*, Ömer M. Koç Collection, AYGAZ, İstanbul, (2011), 71.

²⁸ Bahattin, Öztuncay. *Dynasty and Camera: Portraits from the Ottoman Court*, 72.

the former sultan frequently posed for photographs, the second sultan avoided the camera except on a few rare occasions.²⁹ Which will be discussed further in the next section of this study.



Figure 9. Photograph taken after Sultan Abdulaziz's abdication, June 1876. Taken by: Vassilaki Kargopulo. Source: (Bahattin Oztuncay Collection)

The above is a photograph of Sultan Abdülaziz after he had been deposed and is a striking example of the use of photography in court politics. In this photograph taken by Kargopulo sometime in the four days between 30 May 1876, when Sultan Abdülaziz was deposed, and his suspicious death on 4 June 1876, shows the sultan slovenly dressed, with some lower ranking palace officials looking almost impudent standing behind him (Figure 9). Clearly his successor Murad V and his supporters intended the photograph to convey the deposed sultan's state of degradation.³⁰ In the 1860s and 1870s professional studio photographs were generally of the *carte de visite* (6 x 10 cm) or *cabinet* (10 x 14 cm) size, and these became important elements of decoration used in daily life at the palace, displayed in glass cabinets, on bookshelves, grand pianos or console tables, or hung on the walls in decorative frames. They enabled members of the royal family to keep the faces of loved ones, living and dead,

²⁹ Ibid, 77.

³⁰ Ercan, Karakoç, and Gökhan Durak. "The Reign of Sultan Abdulaziz in the American Press." *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 14.28 (2021): 199-224.

constantly in view around them. From the 1880s advances in photographic technique made it possible to print larger photographs. Portrait photographs in these new large sizes mounted on studio cards became popular with members of the Ottoman royal family, who inscribed them.³¹

The large collection of photographs shows that some members of the Ottoman imperial family were particularly interested in portrait photography. For example, Abdülmecid Efendi, Crown Prince Yusuf İzzeddin Efendi, and Princes Osman Fuad and Ömer Faruk stand out in this regard and are represented by portraits taken throughout their lives from childhood onward. From 1900 onwards, photographs with inscriptions addressed to relatives and friends show the sentimental value attached to portrait photographs in the Ottoman palace. These photographs also reflect the way family ties grew even stronger during the hard times and increasing political upheaval caused by the Balkan wars and then the First World War.³² In conclusion, the importance of photography for the Ottoman rulers had two aspects: first, it aided control and containment of an Empire that was increasingly showing signs of unrest and revolt and, second, it provided an opportunity for dialogue with the West in demonstrating the modernity of the Empire, its progressiveness, and the coexistence within its borders of the various ethnic groups of the Empire.

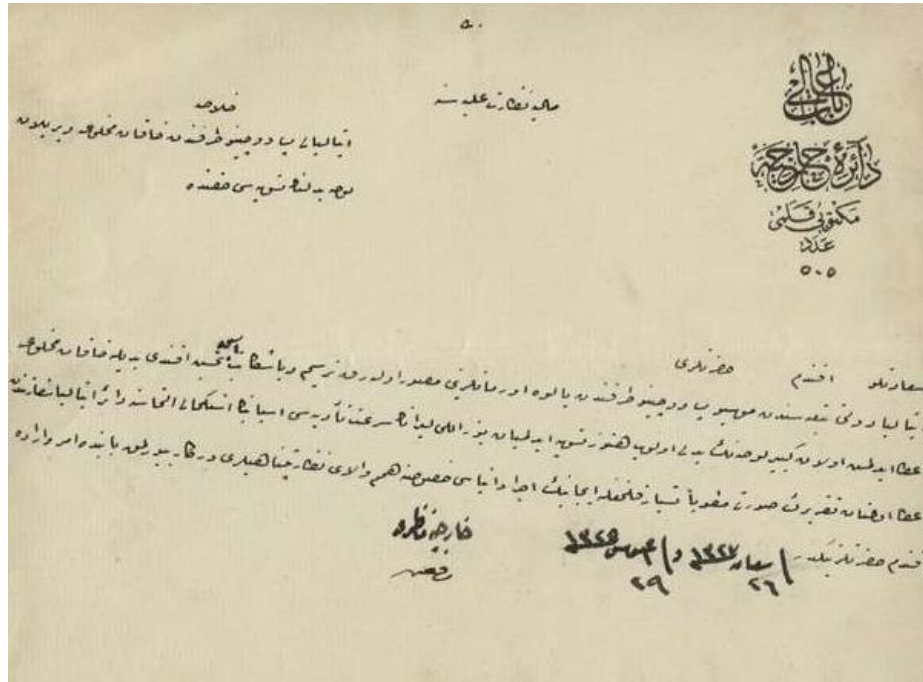
2.2. Photography in the Hamidian Era

Sultan Abdülhamid II, who came to the throne after the short three-month reign of Sultan Murad V, was the biggest supporter of photography among the Ottoman sultans. He also understood the power of photographic representation and used it wisely. During his reign, he introduced the principle of a central administration and made the Yıldız Palace the heart of the state administration. The palace was not only the administrative headquarters, but also a center for information, culture, and art. It was among Sultan Abdülhamid's prospective goals to follow the world, cultures, technology, science, developments, innovations, and art. He himself was engaged in woodworking and promoted many modern and traditional arts such as painting,

³¹ ³¹ Öztuncay. *Dynasty and Camera: Portraits from the Ottoman Court*, 74.

³² Nancy, Micklewright. "Late Ottoman Photography: Family, Home, and New Identities." *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East*, (2003), 70.

theater, tiling and weaving.³³ The Document below states Sultan Abdülhamid's demand for payment of the price of the oil painting plate given to him by the Italian Painter Monsieur Periné (Istanbul).³⁴ which might be used as an example of the great interest and investment the Sultan made in Artists and their works.



Furthermore, he was an expert in physiognomy. He selected the students who were eligible to enter the military school by looking through photo albums of the finest families of Istanbul. Moreover, on the 25th anniversary of his reign, he decided which prisoners in the empire would benefit from an amnesty by looking at their full-body photos individually or in groups of three and identifying them by name, crime, and length of sentence.³⁵ Because of the very diverse origins of the prisoners, these albums also serve as invaluable ethnographic documentation of the costumes worn in different parts of the empire.

³³ Wendy M. K. Shaw. "Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century: An 'Innocent' Modernism?" *History of Photography*, vol. 33, no. 1, (2009), 80–93., <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087290802582996>.

³⁴ (The Ottoman Archives) BOA. ML.EEM. 762-45. İtalyan Ressam Mösyö Pavoçino'nun II. Abdülhamid'e verdiği yağlı boya resim levhası bedelinin ödenmesi talebi. (İstanbul). 2.

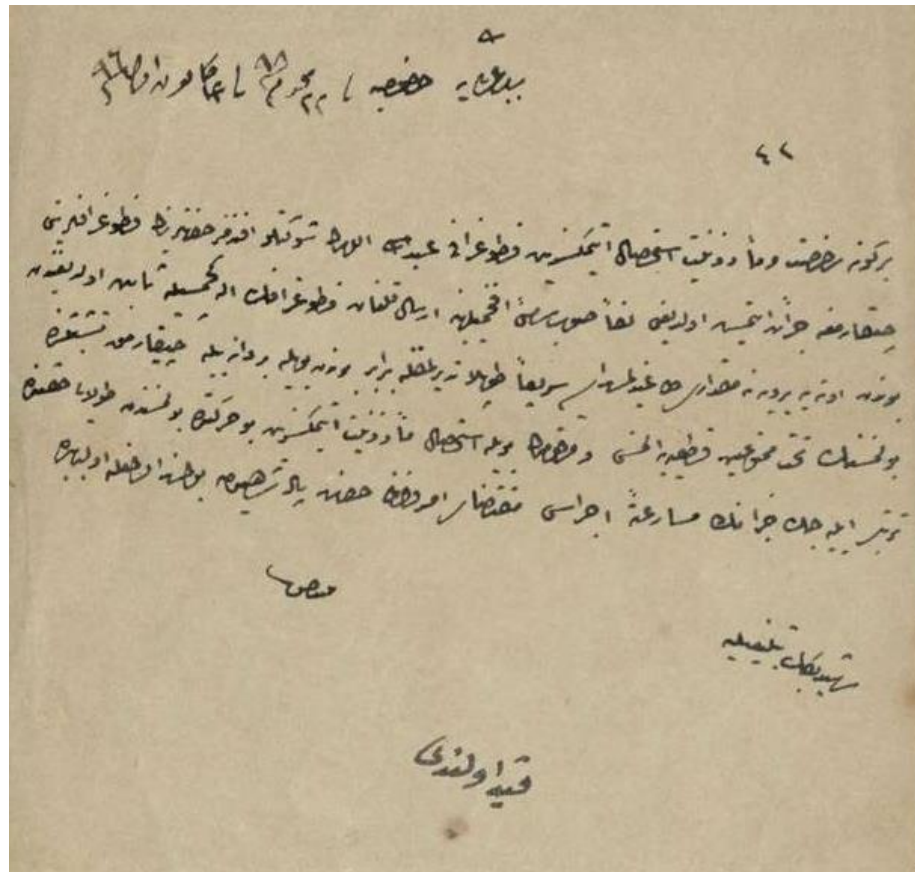
³⁵ Ufuk, Adak. "On the margins of the city: Izmir Prison in the late Ottoman Empire." *Understanding the City through its Margins*. Routledge, (2017), 77-93.



Figure 10. A portrait of Sultan Abdülhamid II as a prince during a visit to England with his father, taken by Wiliam in 1867. Source: Library of congress

As Mentioned before, Sultan Abdülhamid II was very strict about having his own photograph taken and distributed. The document below is a declaration by Sultan Abdülhamid II to confiscate the photographs of himself taken and reproduced without permission and to immediately give the photographer Abdullah the necessary punishment,³⁶ which might indicate how strict the sultan was about this issue.

³⁶ BOA. Y.PRK.BŞK. 4-33. p.1. Abdülhamid'in izinsiz olarak çekilip çoğaltılan fotoğrafının toplatılıp gerekli cezanın fotoğrafçı Abdullah'a derhal verilmesine dair irade tebliği.



Therefore, both Ottoman and foreign publishers had to make do with one of only three photos taken before the young Abdülhamid took the throne in 1876. The portrait of Sultan Abdülhamid taken by the British photographer William Downey in England in 1867 (Figure 10), when he accompanied Sultan Abdülaziz on his state visit to Europe along with his brother Mehmed Murad and his cousin Yusuf Izzeddin, and the portrait taken by the Abdullah brothers in 1869 (Figure 11) are the best-known examples of these early photographs. When the latter portrait was used in later years, the publishers added a beard to make sultan Abdülhamid look older and thus pass it off as a contemporary photograph. The photograph of Abdülhamid used on the cover of the February 1897 issue of the French *Le Petit Journal* (Figure 12) was again the photograph taken by Downey thirty years earlier in England, showing how impossible it was to obtain a recent photograph of the sultan.³⁷

³⁷ Erin Hyde, Nolan. "Two-faced: Translations of a portrait of Abdülhamid II." *EM, Troelenberg, K., Schankweiler, & AS, Messner, Reading objects in the contact zone, Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality* 9: 38.



Figure 11. A portrait of Sultan Abdülhamid II (as a prince), taken by Abdullah Frères in 1869. Source: Länsmuseum Gävleborg Collection.



Figure 12. Cover of Le Petit Journal, with copy of Downey portrait of Sultan Abdülhamid II (as a prince), 1869. (Source: Smarthistory.com)

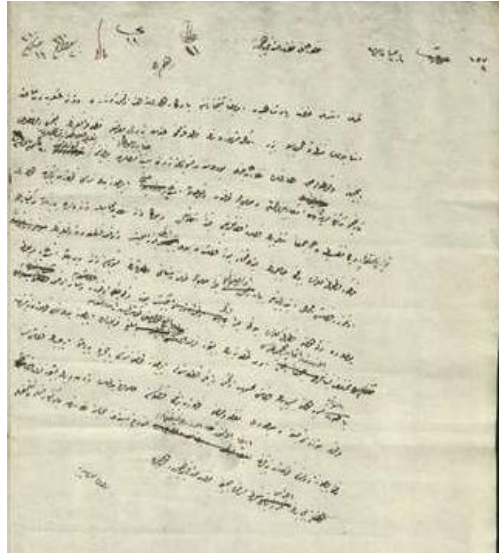
Despite the fact that Sultan Abdülhamid was not interested in having his own portrait taken after he ascended the throne, he believed in photography's ability to represent and communicate information. Here are some of his words on this regard:

Every picture is an idea. A picture can inspire political and emotional meanings which cannot be conveyed by an article of a hundred pages; therefore, I benefit greatly from photographs rather than written records. (Quoted in Çizgen, 1987: 22) He also stressed the importance of photography for the Ottoman Empire in relation to its representation through the European lens stating: Most of the photographs taken for sale in Europe vilify and mock our well-protected domains. It is Imperative that the photographs to be taken in this instance do not insult Muslim people by showing them in a vulgar and demeaning light.

During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman capital, like the empire at large, was witnessing great transitions and transformations, in an attempt to present a new, westernized image abroad while preserving the traditional character of the city. Together with his advisors, the Sultan commissioned six different photography firms, including Abdullah Brothers, to create a series of photo albums that would show the world the recent modernization projects in the Ottoman Empire. It was important for him to show the Empire in a positive light, as it was experiencing territorial and political instability at the time. The albums featured images of Ottoman landscapes, including famous views of the Bosphorus, and historical monuments -including ancient and Byzantine sites- and scenes of educational, industrial, military, and modernization projects in the empire. Noticeably, the Abdülhamid albums are full of images of the new, European-style quarters of the city (and established European quarters like Pera) while largely ignoring the old-style buildings and houses of the mostly Muslim quarters. The district of Pera (today called *Beyoğlu*) was historically the most European area of the city. Pera retained its Western character after the Ottomans took control of Constantinople in 1453 and became the designated district for most of the European inhabitants of the city. As such, the culture and architecture of Pera closely resembled

that of the home countries of the people who lived there.³⁸

The encyclopedic approach of the photo albums commissioned by the sultan can also be found in other photographic survey projects of that time and in trends such as the World's Fairs. After the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, the albums were sent as diplomatic gifts to the United States in 1893 and Great Britain in 1894.³⁹ According to the following Document from the Ottoman archives Sultan Abdülhamid II ordered giving an extra sufficient amount of money, to facilitate taking photographs of the military offices and the general view of Istanbul by the Abdullah brothers photo firm, as a gift to the Library of America by the Sultan, due to his belief in the propagandist power of photography.⁴⁰ Another example of how photo albums were used as diplomatic gifts is an official document from the shows the German Empress's appreciation and thanks of Naile Sultan's photographs that has been sent to her.⁴¹ Today, these albums are available to be viewed online as individual photographs in the digitized collections of the Library of Congress for researchers and the public.



³⁸ Trish, Greene. "The Abdülhamid II Photo Collection: Orientalism and Public Image at the End of an Empire." *Metamorphosis* (2018), 10.

³⁹ Gabriel, Koureas. "Parallelotopia: Ottoman transcultural memory assemblages in contemporary art practices from the Middle East." *Memory Studies* 12.5 (2019): 495.

⁴⁰ BOA. DH.MKT. 230-6. p.2. Padişah tarafından Amerika Kütüphanesi'ne hediye olmak üzere askeri daireler ile İstanbul'un umumi manzarası ve güzel mekanlarının fotoğrafçı Abdullah kardeşler tarafından fotoğraflarının alınması için gerekli olan meblağın tesviyesi.

⁴¹ BOA. Y.PRK.NMH. 3 – 42. P. 1-6. Alman imparatoriçesinin kendisine gönderilen Naile Sultan'ın fotoğraflarını çok beğenmesi ve teşekkürüne verilen cevap.

2.3.Yıldız Palace Photography Collection

The "Yıldız Palace Photography Collection" of Sultan Abdülhamid covers the period from 1862 to 1917. According to IRCICA (Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture), this collection consists of 38,599 images collected in 962 albums. About one thousand of the photographs were colored by hand. Each of them has significant value as a historical document and as a work of art. This collection shows the richness and diversity of the 19th century. Sultan Abdülhamid commissioned many different photography firms, including the Armenian brothers Abdullah of Istanbul, Gabriel Lekegian of Cairo, and Garabed Krikorian of Jerusalem, to cover many different themes including the architecture of Ottoman palaces, historical events, portraits of members of the dynasty, city views, political events, natural disasters, military, government buildings, and albums showing the criminal world as well as scenes from over 40 countries, providing a window into the visual history of the 19th century.

The content of these albums testifies to Sultan Abdülhamid's curiosity to learn more about the world. Therefore, this visual legacy is part of the universal memory that conveys the history and culture of many 19th century countries. The photo collection of Sultan Abdülhamid's Yıldız Palace is now kept in the Rare Works Library of Istanbul University. The collection was re-digitised between 2018 and 2019 by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey using state-of-the-art technology. Detailed marking and classification work for the collection is currently being carried out by Istanbul University. The collection was transferred from the Yıldız Palace to Istanbul University Library in 1925 on the instructions of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Today, the Yıldız Palace Photo Collection is kept in a special climate-controlled environment at Istanbul University's Rare Works Library.⁴²

2.4. Image And Photography Production from A Religious Perspective

The Ottoman Empire was an Islamic polity that emerged in Anatolia in the early fourteenth-century, and the Ottoman dynasty itself was Muslim. However, this does not mean that the population was uniformly Muslim. On the other hand, ethnic and religious minorities such as Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Arabs, Albanians, Serbs and

⁴²Zeynep Devrim, Gürsel. "A picture of health: the search for a genre to visualize care in late Ottoman Istanbul." *Grey Room* 72.01.09 (2018), 59.

Circassians lived in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, they were free to speak their own languages and practice their own religions. However, Islam was the predominant religion, and the political structure of the empire reflected this fact.⁴³ Although Islam was the dominant religion in the Ottoman Empire, anyone who studies the history of photography in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East can see the beginnings of local Ottoman photography were neither Muslims nor Jews, but Armenians, Syrians, and Greeks Christian subjects of the empire. Some scholars studying the history of photography in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East believe that one of the factors that may have played an important role in hindering Muslims from engaging in photography in various parts of the empire such as Istanbul, Anatolia, and the Arab lands, including Jerusalem -which I will discuss in more detail in chapter four- is related to Islam's religious prohibition against depicting people and beings that God created. I believe this prohibition may partly explain the reason for the spread, and interest in photography among Christians, but not completely.

Carney E.S. Gavin was the first scholar to take a serious interest in this issue. He used the following statement, which he recorded when he interviewed a third-generation Armenian photographer in Amman, Jordan:⁴⁴

There are three reasons: Back in my grandfather's day when it all began, many of us were able to acquire technical training in Turkey; we are Christians and have no worries about making pictures; above all, in the time of persecutions we had to be able swiftly to begin life again "naked" in a new place. Skills cannot be robbed, and we could always get new lenses and paper wherever we fled.

However, I do not find this argument alone not sufficient to explain and justify the activity of non-Muslims in the case of this study the Armenians in the field of photography, or at least it may make more sense if observed in the context of the close association of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire with Western authorities and culture, which may have paved the way for them to see the latest scientific innovations

⁴³ Engin, Çizgen. *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1919*. Haet Kitabevi, (1987), 80.

⁴⁴ Carney E.S. Gavin, and Evelyn Hofer. 1978. Essay. In *Bonfils and the Early Photography of the Near East*, 444. S.l.: s.n.

and technological developments. The support of the local Christian community and the missionary movements that were active in that period, and their close relationship with ambassadors and politicians residing in the Ottoman capital might also have been of great influence in this regard. As for the reaction of the Ottoman rulers to this invention, it is remarkable that from the era of Sultan Mahmud II, the Ottoman sultans hung their pictures on the walls of state buildings and offices without any reservations. It was also very common to find pictures of Sultan Abdülhamid II everywhere in all the Ottoman provinces. Which shows the Ottoman Sultans flexibility and acceptance in this regard even though they are known to be very considerate and cautious of religious issues.⁴⁵

Regarding pictures in the religion of Islam, there is no verse or command that explicitly prohibits it in the Holy Qur'an. Some verses of the Qur'an mentioned the traditions and customs of the pre-Islamic era regarding idolatry and paganism, for example: "Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him"⁴⁶(Quran 4:116), and "And those who shun the worship of false gods, turning to Allah alone, will have good news."⁴⁷ (Quran 39:17). However, at the beginning of the rise of Islam, idols were worshiped and there was no drawing not to be used for the same purpose. That is why what is said about idols in the Qur'an is also considered to be applicable to *Tasweer* (depiction or representation)⁴⁸, and some prophetic *hadiths*⁴⁹ later made it clear that whoever paints living creatures will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection and punished. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: "Whoever makes a picture will be punished by Allah till he puts life in it, and he will never be able to put life in it"⁵⁰

The sultans of the Ottoman Empire were very sensitive to religious matters as they

⁴⁵ Nancy, Micklewright. "Late Ottoman Photography: Family, Home, and New Identities." *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East: Houses in Motion*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, (2003), 69.

⁴⁶ Quran 4:116, Saheeh International.

⁴⁷ Quran 39:17, the Clear Quran.

⁴⁸ "Www.almaany.com." 2022. Accessed May 25. <https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/>.

⁴⁹ A collection of what was reported from the Prophet Muhammad, containing sayings, deeds, or an ethical or moral characteristic, with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunna).

⁵⁰ Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 3, Book 34, Hadith 428

received their religious education in the palace since their childhood, especially Sultan Mehmed the conqueror, who had his own portrait painted, was knowledgeable in every subject, and he would always consult with his teachers first before doing anything. After the conquest of Istanbul, the gates of the West opened to the Eastern world. In this period, the Ottoman lands had taken an interesting development, contrary to the fact that it had not received the attention it deserved until then. In the meantime, great changes were taking place in Italy, the medieval traditions in thought and art were being shaken to their foundations, and old values were being replaced by new ones. The Ottomans followed these developments with curiosity and interest. During this period the Ottoman palace opened itself to the West and showed great interest in painting, the most powerful weapon of the Renaissance.⁵¹

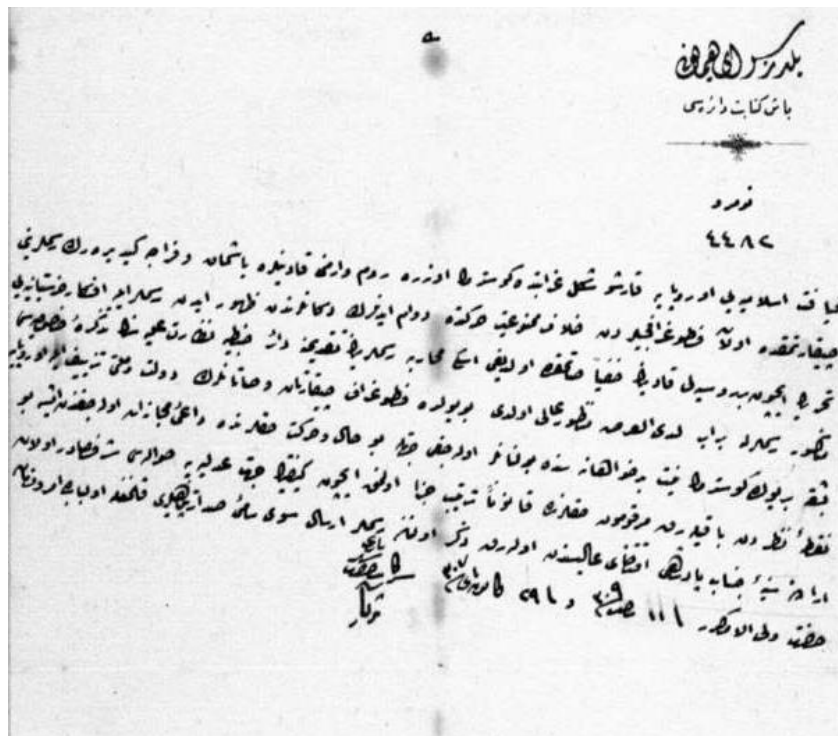
Mazhar İpşiroğlu notes in his book “*Painting Ban in Islam and Its Consequences*” that when Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror brought Gentile Bellini from Italy and had his portrait painted. For we also know that he had frescoes made by the same master on the walls of his palace, hosted foreign artists in his palace, gathered scholars around him, and informed himself about the resources of the Western world.⁵² The fact that paintings and photographs were actively used in the Ottoman Empire, especially during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid, is an indication that they were used and accepted within a certain framework. Perhaps one of the most important reasons for this absence is the Ottomans’ approach to painting and sculpture first, and then photography. This is shown in the following article, which gives us an idea about this matter, it was published by *Şeyhülislam* in connection with photography in the August 1920 issue of *Ceride-i İlmiye*, which is still published by *Şeyhülislam*’s office, long after the *Takvim-i Vekayi* newspaper announced the invention of photography on October 28, 1839:⁵³ the article stated that it is a sin for a Muslim to make painting or photographs of a human being or animal or buy a house adorned with pictures. *Şeyhülislam*’s stand on painting and photography might be an indication of how there

⁵¹ Alan, Crookham. "Art or Document? Layard’s Legacy and Bellini’s Sultan." *Museum History Journal* 8.1 (2015), 11.

⁵² İpşiroğlu, 111.

⁵³ BOA. İ..DH.. 1264-99376. 1.

were different opinions on this issue, which might explain the Ottoman Sultans engagement in it yet the Muslim publics withdrawal from involving in this new field. The document bellow sheds the lights on a relatable aspect of photography and religious identity, it states that a penalty was issued against photographers who took pictures of Greek and Armenian women dressed as Muslim women in *ferace* (full body covering gowns). Which suggests that due to religious beliefs it was not common for Muslim women to be photographed. Further research on this topic would help us understand this issue better, to have a clearer understanding of the duality of religion and photography in the Ottoman empire.



Lastly, when it comes to the non-participation of the Ottoman Jews community in the field of photography, it can be attributed to the fact that Judaism strictly forbade the painting of Human beings. Which led them to apply the ruling on the prohibition of painting humans in photography as well. "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." (Exodus 20:4)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid, 16.

CHAPTER 3: ARMENIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE ARAB LANDS

This chapter discusses the Armenian Ottoman community and their main features, activities, and professions. I also trace the activities of several Ottoman Armenian photographers in different parts of the Arab lands thoroughly, starting from Istanbul to Cairo, to Beirut then Baghdad. Aiming to understand how the educational background and craftsmanship skills of the Armenians contributed to their mastery of photography, the role of mass immigration and the close family relations in their involvement in this field, and how they occupied an important place in the ottoman photo production scene, which made some researchers consider it as a kind of ethnic monopoly. This chapter includes four case studies of Armenian photographers The Abdullah brothers and Mihran Iranian in Istanbul, the Sarrafian brothers in Beirut, and Gabriel Lekegian in Cairo, lastly Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian in Baghdad. I discuss the social and political position they acquired in the Ottoman Empire through this new field, and the clients they were in contact with by providing biographical information and analysis of samples of their works from portrait and landscape photographs and postcards.

3.1.The Ottoman Armenian Community

Armenians settled in different parts of the Ottoman Empire for centuries and contributed greatly to the development of crafts, arts, and trade. As most of the crafts that flourished in the Ottoman Empire were developed by Armenians, such as carpet weaving, jewelry making, painting, trade, money exchange, and many other crafts. They were also representatives of liberal professions both in the capital and in the central cities of the empire.⁵⁵ A strong family involvement in crafts and various trades was very common among Armenians, as they often passed their craft skills from one generation to the next, which helped them perfect their skills and establish their businesses wherever they went. Since Armenians were naturally inclined and well trained in crafts and arts, which contributed to them playing an important role in the development of arts and crafts, literature, history, medicine, and many other fields in the Ottoman Empire. Carpet weaving, for example, was a very popular craft among

⁵⁵ Nora Emma, Khatcherian. "Armenian Crafts in the Ottoman Empire: Cultural Exchange and Armenian Identity." (2015), 8.

Armenians, especially in Anatolia. Armenian gunsmiths were also very famous in the country and supplied weapons to the Ottoman army for centuries.⁵⁶

Armenians also occupied an influential position in foreign and domestic trade, industrial production, and banking in the Ottoman Empire. Armenians adopted Turkish as their language and were kind of Turkified, so that at the beginning of the 19th century were called The Loyal Nation. Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire started to progress on the way of becoming an independent state starting from the beginning of the 19th century they were called to loyal nation. However, Compared the Turkish bourgeoisie compared to Armenians were in a derivative state and did not form a significant element in the service of the Ottoman economy. The Young Turk rulers were very concerned that the economic and material strengthening of the Armenians would be the basis for their future political victories. Gradually, the Turkish authorities came to believe that the oppressed Armenians of yesterday would sooner or later take over their power, as they did in the economic field.⁵⁷

The early production of photography in Ottoman Istanbul, Anatolia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine was mainly, but not exclusively, by established ethnic and religious minorities, such as local Armenians and Greeks, Syrian Catholics, Italians, and people from *Sham* the levant (Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian locals and Christian emigrants and expatriates in Egypt) and travelling photographers from Europe. In his book, Stephen Sheehi, argues that

The considerable presence of minorities in the history of Ottoman photography has been erroneously explained by the "natural" inclination of Eastern Christians and their historical attachment to the West and Western knowledge, as well as by Muslim prohibitions on image production.⁵⁸

Armenians contributed greatly to the establishment of photography in various parts of

⁵⁶ Richard G. Hovannisian. "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire." *East European Quarterly* 6.1 (1972): 1.

⁵⁷ Erdal, İlder, *Ermeni Meselesinin Perspektifi ve Zeytin İsyanları (1780-1915)*, 2nd Press, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yay., Ankara 1995, p.30.

⁵⁸ Stephen, Sheehi. "The Arab Imago." *The Arab Imago*. Princeton University Press, 2021, p.xxxiv.

the Ottoman Empire. Although it might be difficult for us to understand all the factors behind this phenomenon, it is empirically clear that ethnic and religious minorities, first and foremost the Armenians, played an important role in the development and spread of photography in the first decades of photography throughout the Ottoman Empire from Istanbul to Anatolia to various parts of the Arab world.⁵⁹ However, noticeably, throughout the world, it was easiest for chemists, jewelers, and pharmacists to learn photography because they possessed the skills and knowledge of the chemical processes required to develop negatives and make photographs, and Armenians possessed all these skills.⁶⁰

Early Ottoman Armenian photographers including the Abdullah Frères, The Dildilian family, to Yessayi Garabedian and his student Garabed Krikorian and so many other names, were a crucial linchpin in the production, and dissemination of photography throughout the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, Armenians dominated the studio scenes in virtually every major provincial capital from Istanbul to Beirut to Baghdad to Jerusalem, which lead some historians to try to understand the characteristics, reasons, and factors that lead Armenians to hold what some consider an ethnic monopoly of photography in the Near East, as well as the transfer of skills between family members and Armenians all around across the Ottoman Empire, a topic that was thoroughly discussed by Dickinson Jenkins Miller in his MA thesis titled “*The craftsman's art Armenians and the growth of photography in the Near East (1856-1981)*”.⁶¹

It is important to highlight that the Armenians' social and economic ties with the Arab world existed centuries before the Hamidian massacre in the mid-1890s but became stronger after the Armenian were scattered across different parts of the Arab world. The long-established Armenian communities in Arab cities such as Aleppo, Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo, and Alexandria, some of which had existed for centuries, were

⁵⁹ Abelina, Galustian. *Orienting the Politics of Images: The Armenian Role in Orientalizing Near Eastern Photography, 1850-1930*. Diss. University of California, Santa Barbara, (2021), 10.

⁶⁰ Badr, El-Hage. "The Armenian Pioneers of Middle Eastern Photography." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 31 (2007), 24.

⁶¹ Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The craftsman's art Armenians and the growth of photography in the Near East (1856-1981)-by Dickinson Jenkins Miller*. Diss. (1981).

similar to but far more established than other minority communities such as the Greek, Italian, and Syro-Lebanese Christian communities in Alexandria and Cairo. These communities facilitated the geographic mobility of Armenian photographers from all parts of the empire. Armenian technicians and professionals were able to move between provincial centers to settle in similar ethnic communities and expand their business and commercial activities easily.⁶²

As I mentioned before, this study is not aiming to address the history of Armenian photography in the Arab world, a topic that needs to be researched using Armenian sources. However, I try to track Armenians activity in the field of photography through some centers in the Ottoman empire like, Istanbul, Cairo and Lebanon focusing on Jerusalem. I also aim to understand the ability of Armenians to transplant themselves in different parts of the Ottoman lands, and the well-established network Armenians had that facilitated the transfer of skills, knowledge and collaboration in photography production, exchange, circulation, and social network of the production of *carte de visite* in the late nineteenth century.⁶³ When Armenians were forced to leave their homelands and were obliged to settle in new places, they took their photographic, like other crafts and skills they possessed, became their means of survival. From the mid-19th century, Armenians taught photographic techniques in most cities of the Ottoman Empire, especially in Constantinople, Beirut, Trabzon, Cairo, Alexandria, Aleppo, Damascus, and Amman.⁶⁴

3.2. Armenian photographers in Istanbul and the Arab lands

3.2.1. The royal photographers of the Ottoman court: The Abdullah Brothers

The Abdullahyan family, whose roots went back to *Kayseri* and who settled in Samatya in Istanbul, descended from Aleksan Gesaratsi (from *Kayseri*) who was born in 1610. The identity of those older than him is unknown. Many members of the Abdullahyan family members were deeply involved in arts, crafts, and literature, which was passed down from one generation to the next in the family. For example,

⁶² 15:10:00, 2009-10-19. "Armenians in the Ottoman Economy." *Hetq.am*, 19 Oct. 2009, <https://hetq.am/hy/article/31209>.

⁶³ Magdi, Guirguis, and Majdī Jirjis. *An Armenian Artist in Ottoman Egypt: Yuhanna Al-Armani and His Coptic Icons*. American Univ in Cairo Press, (2008), 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Migirdic Kevork, born in 1751, was a Venetian Mikhitarist who held high spiritual positions in Istanbul as a researcher and writer.⁶⁵

Hürmüz, born in 1788, and Kevork, born in 1792, Hovhannes' thirteen children, most of whom died early from epidemics, not only continued their father's profession as artists, but became so famous that they won the recognition and appreciation of statesmen and foreigners and contributed to the spread of the family name. Of Hovhannes' thirteen children, only Kevork continued the family name by marrying and having children. Some of the family members who continued the mystery started with Hürmüz in the 1740s for many years from generation to generation were called "*Sırmakeş*" and some "*Sırmakeş Kavafları*". There were also some who used the surname Sırmakeşyan. The use of Abdullah as a surname is consistent with Asdvadzadur Hürmüzyan, who was born in 1757. The reasons why the Hürmüzians came to Istanbul are unclear. However, some Armenians moved from their villages to big cities voluntarily, while others were settled in big cities like Istanbul under pressure from some influential people to contribute to the work of these cities due to their superior artistic talent in the field of fine arts.⁶⁶

The Abdullah brothers' grandfather, Asdvadzadur Hürmüzyan, who was born in 1757, worked as a chief merchant in the palace of Sultan Abdülhamid, who ruled from 1774-1789. Due to his modesty, morality, and superior intelligence, he became a popular and respected person. The notables of the palace were fascinated by these qualities and invited him to become a Muslim. Asdvadzadur was a religious Christian, and in order not to offend the palace officials, he responded to the offer as follows: "My name is Asdvadzadur (Tanrverdi)⁶⁷. From now on, you may call me Abdullah (*Tanrıkulu*)⁶⁸. In this way, you will be pleased with me, and my heart will be at peace." From that day on, the name Abdullah was used instead of Hürmüzyan, which passed from the father to the grandson.⁶⁹

⁶⁵Engin, Özendes. *Abdullah Frères: Osmanlı sarayının fotoğrafcıları*. Vol. 35. Yky, (1998), 20.

⁶⁶ Engin, Özendes, *Abdullah frères*, 21.

⁶⁷Tanrverdi means God-given in Turkish.

⁶⁸ Tanrıkulu means God's servant in Turkish.

⁶⁹ Engin, Özendes, *Abdullah frères*, 27.

The father of the Abdullah brothers', Apraham, was born in Istanbul in 1792. Their mother, Roza, was a member of the Bengliyan family. Apraham worked with silk maker Kazaz Artin Amira at a young age and became his friend and colleague, dealing with silk businesses for a long time. Later he established his own business in trading silk fabrics. Apraham was a very popular person with many talents and a respected personality. He had 3 girls and 5 boys with his wife Roza. His children Viçen, Hovsep and Kevork were engaged in fine arts. Kevork was born in 1839 in *Ortaköy*, Istanbul. This part of the city was considered a meeting place of Armenian intellectuals and nobles. This area was also home to the Lusavoriçyan School, which was one of the most popular schools and had a staff of talented teachers.⁷⁰

3.2.1.1. The three Armenian brothers Viçen, Hovsep and Kevork Abdullah

The Abdullah family is a great example of Armenians great skills in arts and crafts; as they were also known as doctors, pharmacists and chemists in Diyarbakir, Sivas, Trabzon, Elaziğ, and Istanbul. Therefore, it was easy for them to pick up the first photographic technique, daguerreotype, since the photographers of that time had to prepare all the photographic chemical mixes themselves. In addition, Armenians learned a lot about arts at the Murad Raphaelian School in Venice, which had been opened in 1836 by the Mekhitarists under the name Raphaelian. The school, which was financially supported by the legacy of Yetvart Raphael Garamyan (1734-1791), placed great emphasis on art education. Armenian families living in different parts of the empire sent their children to this school in Venice to learn art. Kevork Abdullah also looked forward to attending the Murad Raphaelian school in Venice, where exemplary and worthy people like his teacher Beşiktaşlıyan received his education.⁷¹

⁷⁰Ibid, 29.

⁷¹ Ibid, 30.



Figure 13. The Abdullah brothers, Vichen, Hovsep and Kevork.
Source: Engin Özendes Collection.

In 1852, Kevork learned that a group of twelve peers attended the Murad Raphaelian school in Venice. Kevork Abdullah set out from Istanbul with a group of thirteen other Armenians, including Tovmas Terziyan, Sirabion Tigliyan, Migirç Acemyan, and Hovhannes Şahinyan, to attend the Murad Raphaelyan School in Venice. Kevork Abdullah became one of the most popular students at the school in a short time due to his morals, diligence, and friendliness; he was top student for six years and showed special interest in art classes.⁷² Given his great success in oil painting which will help greatly later in his photographic career, he was asked by his teachers to go to Rome for two years to specialize. However, due to some family problems, he could not take advantage of this great opportunity that promised him a great future and had to return to his family in 1858.⁷³

The "Abdullah Brothers", who undoubtedly came to own the most important professional studio in the Ottoman Empire, was founded by Viçen Abdullah in *Beyoğlu* in 1858. The fact that Viçen (Vincent) Abdullah, who was Armenian, adopted the name Abdullah Şükrü Efendi in the last stage of his life as a Muslim, led to his dramatic exclusion from his community as a typical victim of ostracism.⁷⁴ Miller points the same Issue quoting what the leading ecclesiast of the Armenian Catholic

⁷² Stephen, Sheehi. *The Arab Imago a Social History of Portrait Photography*, 8.

⁷³ Özendes, Abdullah frères, 31.

⁷⁴ Ostracism: An old Athenian democratic procedure in which any citizen who constitutes a social danger is excluded from society.

Church in Lebanon saying that "Catholic leaders would have categorically refused the services of an Armenian apostate. Conversion is a very serious matter in the Armenian community and the Abdullah(ian) Frères risked ostracism if this was the case."⁷⁵

In his book "*Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları*", Bahattin Öztuncay argues that for this reason, it can be observed that Viçen Abdullah is completely pushed to the background in many publications about the photographers Abdullah Brothers in the 20th century.

⁷⁶ However, the information, documents and original photographs found clearly show that the Abdullah Brothers business under Viçen Abdullah held an undisputed position in the history of Ottoman photography for more than forty years.⁷⁷

Viçen Abdullah began learning photography and working as a retoucher in 1856 with the German chemist and daguerreotype photographer Rabach, who came to Istanbul the same year after the Crimean Wars and opened a studio in *Beyazıt* in 1856. Viçen's ability to paint miniatures on ivory caught the attention of photographer Rabach, as he was a first-rate miniaturist who attracted so much attention for his artwork. He painted for Sultan Abdülmecid and Sultan Abdülaziz and many famous generals.⁷⁸ The fact that the technique of miniature painting was similarly applied to hand-colouring daguerreotypes opened up a new field of work for Viçen. When Rabach decided to return to Germany in 1858, Viçen Abdullah took over his studio, which was located in Pera now *Beyoğlu* opposite the Hotel England at number 274. The family's comfortable financial situation probably made it easier for Viçen to take over Rabach's studio. Thus, the foundation was laid for the studio business of the Abdullah brothers under the management of Viçen Abdullah.⁷⁹

The studio began operating in the fall of 1858, they had printed advertisements and company labels in the early days under the name "Vincent Abdullah F.res" titled "*Daguerreotype et Photographie*" in French, Turkish, Greek, and Armenian stating

⁷⁵ Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The Craftsman's Art: Armenians and the Growth of Photography in the Near East*, 19.

⁷⁶ Bahattin, Öztuncay. "Dersaadet'in Fotoğrafçıları." *Koç Kültür Sanat ve Tanıtım Hizmetleri* (2003), 179.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 190.

⁷⁸ Engin, Özendes. *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1919*. Haşet Kitabevi, 1987, p.91.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.91

that in addition to daguerreotypes and portraits on paper, they produced landscape and costume photographs, miniatures on ivory, oil portraits and portraits for brooches. It also said that photography classes were given, and photographic equipment was sold, another field which Armenians dominated in later years.⁸⁰ However, Viçen seems to have changed the name of the firm to "Abdullah Frères" after 1861. Viçen's mastery of photography and miniature art was noticed throughout the Ottoman Empire that the priest Yessayi Garabedian (1825-1885), who came to Istanbul in 1859 and would later establish Jerusalem first photography workshop, received information about photography from the artist in his studio in Pera.⁸¹

The Abdullah brothers were always eager to keep up with new technologies and followed with great attention the news that came from the west. The portrait masters, the Abdullah brothers, constantly pursued new innovations in the field and never compromised on their artistic approach, which is evident in the detail and excellence of their portraits, which were like a mirror of the people they photographed, as they paid attention to the photographer's compatibility with the model's age, physique, habits, and traditions. Viçen and Kevork Abdullah had gone to Paris in the early 1860s in order to gain on-the-spot information about new developments in the collodion method, where the opportunity to meet Count Aguado (1827-1895), a founding member of the *Société Française de Photographie* and *Société Héliographique* who was impressed with their works and showed them samples of his own works.⁸²

By the end of 1862, there were no portraits of Sultans Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz or other members of the Ottoman dynasty not taken by the Abdullah brothers. The document below shows the great support and cooPeration the Abdullah brothers received from the Ottoman dynasty. The Sultan made an ordered to provide the necessary convenience to the Abdullah brothers who will take pictures of *Mekteb-i Sultani*, *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* and *Müze-i Hümayun*.⁸³

⁸⁰ Bahattin, Öztuncay. *the Photographers of Constantinople*, 183.

⁸¹ Ibid, 185.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ BOA. MF.MKT. 128-4. 1.

۱۷ - ۱۴۹۶



ABDULLAH FRÈRES
PHOTOGRAPHES
DE SA MAJESTÉ IMPÉRIALE LE SULTAN
Constantinople, Péra.

M. Doi

برآمد البوده الندی	۵ لرا
بسمه دهن بیولر رسد	۱ لرا
ایکی عهد افندمران بویا رسدی	۱۰
صحفانه اوله التي لیرا	۱۴
نفا بنیم ارنی احمدی بید	۱۰
همیشه	
P. acquit Abdullah Frères	
TSMA-E	8/4



Figure 14.. Abdullah Frères, Sultan Abdülaziz, Istanbul, undated carte de visite, albumen. Source: Engin Özendes Collection.

Thanks to their close relations with the Grand Vizier Keçecizade Mehmet Fuat Pasha (1815-1868), they were able to make a series of portraits on June 25 of many famous members of the cabinet of Sultan Abdülaziz, who ascended the throne in 1861, as well as other prominent statesmen and military officers.⁸⁵ This series of photographs of statesmen, taken by the Abdullah brothers in 1862 in the size of *cart de visite*, is a first in the history of photography in the Ottoman Empire. Now people had the opportunity to purchase photographs of themselves and their relatives, as well as important figures of the time, at affordable prices. The year 1863 was a turning point in the professional life of the Abdullah brothers. In that year they received the title of "Photographers of the Ottoman Palace". On the advice of Grand Vizier Fuat Pasha, Sultan Abdülaziz invited the Abdullah brothers to his hunting lodge in Izmit and had their portraits taken. The reason was that he was not satisfied with the photographs that had been taken by the French photographer Derain, who had a studio in Pera.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Özgüner, Emin Artun. n.d. "Twisting Realism: The Representation of Power in the Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in the Early Photographic Era," 12–13.

⁸⁶ Öztuncay, In *the Photographers of Constantinople*, 190.

Abdullah brothers' photographs won the admiration of Sultan Abdülaziz. Subsequently, they were officially appointed as "Photographers of the Ottoman Palace" by Sultan Abdülaziz which opened a great horizon for them, and their studio was preferred by all the local and foreign dignitaries of *Beyoğlu*, and European ambassadors and other notable foreigners in Istanbul were coming to Abdullah's studio for portrait shooting.⁸⁷



Figure 15. Abdullah Frères, Portrait of Sultan Abdülaziz, 1860s. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Source: Abdul Hamid II Yıldız Collection.

According to the information we have, it is understood that the first exhibition in which the photographs of the Abdullah brothers were shown was *the Sergi-i Umumi-i Osmani*, which was held in Sultan Ahmet Square in Istanbul in February 1863. At this exhibition, which was opened by Sultan Abdülaziz on February 27, the works of the Abdullah brothers were displayed in the fine arts section. Another important event in the professional life of the Abdullah brothers was the Paris Exhibition of 1867 which was held between April 1 and November 3 with more than 52 thousand participants from 42 countries. Their fame was worldwide that the newspaper *La Turquie* of November 14, 1867, touched upon this success referring to an article published in the

⁸⁷ Stephen, Sheehi. *The Arab Imago a Social History of Portrait Photography*, 9.

London Times. The following words were quoted from the Times: "We should not neglect giving an honourable mention to the two Istanbul landscapes exhibited by the Abdullah brothers. Abdullah or Abdallah; this name is one of the few names recognized by both Muslims and Christians."⁸⁸

Sultan Abdülaziz visited the exhibition at the invitation of Napoleon III, which had great political repercussions, because it was the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire that a sultan travelled to Europe.⁸⁹ The Abdullah brothers undoubtedly played a major role in this success. For their works, which were shown in this exhibition, are among the masterpieces of the Abdullah brothers and among the most important examples of the visual photographic representation of Ottoman empire.⁹⁰

The Abdullahs were above all masters of studio photography. For this reason, various patterned panels, velvet curtains, columns, fashionable sofas, and tables that symbolize the East were indispensable accessories for their work. Natural light played a major role in their work, and as masters of using light to create amazing shots, they carefully directed the sunlight streaming in from the ceiling of their rooftop studio with curtains and reflective screens. The magnificent glass-roofed shooting room was the centrepiece of the studio, which always played an important role in their contact with clients. As time passed they achieved perfection in their works, mainly due to Kevork's strong will, passion, good taste, and knowledge in the field of art. He was very disciplined, speaking French, German, Italian and Greek as his mother tongue, which made it easier for him to keep up with the latest developments in photography around the world.⁹¹ Their works are characterized by the subtlety of shadows, the harmony of colours and the longevity of their works, although they were recorded only a few years ago. In a magazine published in Armenian, Kevork Abdullah attributed the secret of his success to the care and meticulousness in preparing a liquid called collodion, which gave his works a harmonious transition of light and shadow with a beautiful

⁸⁸ *Türk Fotoğraf Sanatı, Dünü Bugünü, Yeni Fotoğraf*, (1978), 14.

⁸⁹ Aziz, Tekdemir. "1867 Paris Sergisi ve Sultan Abdülaziz'in Sergiyi Ziyareti." *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 3.06 (2013): 1-19, 1.

⁹⁰ Özendes, Abdullah frères, p.39.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.65.

appearance. Thorough examination of all their surviving it can be seen that Abdullah brothers' most successful outdoor photographs were taken between 1862 and 1866. Among these early works by Abdullah brothers, of which very little has survived, are the streets of *Beykoz*, *Beyazıt* and *Sultanahmet*.⁹²

3.2.1.2. Kosmi Abdullah and Antuan Zilpoşyan

Interestingly, Kosmi Abdullah, one of the five brothers of the Abdullah family, opened his own studio in *Beyazıt Kökçülerbaşı* in the 1870s. From the description on the back of the *Carte de visite* produced at his studio, it can be seen that this photography business was not a branch affiliated with the centre in *Beyoğlu*. Kosmi Abdullah's photographic activities remained obscure in many respects. In the 1870s, Kosmi also operated a joint portrait studio with Armenian-born photographer Antuan Zilpoşyan in Izmir. Zilpoşyan learned photography from the Abdullah brothers, then opened a portrait studio at number 47 in *Beyazıt Okçularbaşı* in the second half of the 1860s, first under his own name and then together with Mateos Papazyan and settled in Izmir after a short time. Zilpoşyan continued to work alone and in the following years took over the studio in Izmir that he had run together with Kosmi Abdullah. There are very few portraits of Kosmi Abdullah from the Beyazıt branch. In 1879 Kosmi handed over this studio to the Greek-born photographer Nikolaos Andriomenos and continued his photographic activities in a small studio at *Tarlabası* 52 until the late 1880s. After 1900, Abro and Levon Abdullah, who will run a studio called "Abdullah Frères Fils", are the children of Kosmi Abdullah.⁹³

3.2.1.3. The Abdullah brothers and the Armenian Question

In 1875, the Abdullah brothers became embroiled in religious sectarian conflicts fuelled by the wars of interest between Russia and France. By an edict issued in 1857 in accordance with the provisions of *Hattı Hümayun* (February 18, 1856), the same privileges granted to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Fener and the Armenian Gregorian Patriarchate of *Kumkapı* were transferred to Patriarch Andon Hasun Efendi (1809-1884), the spiritual leader of the Armenian Catholic Association. The

⁹² Ibid, 66.

⁹³ Öztuncay, *In the Photographers of Constantinople*, 212.

imperialist states also made great efforts to bring along these various sects living in the lands of the Ottoman Empire in accordance with their own interests. For this purpose, the Orthodox and Gregorian denominations were shared by Russia, the Protestants by England, and the Catholics by France. The Russian ambassador Nikolas Pavlovich Ignatiev (1831-1908), who had great political skills both to push back the influence of France and cause harm to the Ottoman Empire from within, fought behind the scenes with all means to prevent the development of the Armenian Catholic community. At the same time, an administrative conflict broke out between the civil and spiritual leaders of the Armenian Catholics, and in 1868 a "*Hasunist - Antihasunist*" struggle broke out that lasted for 20 years.⁹⁴ As a result of these disagreements, some important civil figures and clergy left the Catholic sect and returned to the Gregorian Etchmiadzin Church. Among these families were the Abdullah Brothers, which caused great joy in the Armenian Gregorian community and among the supporters of Patriarch Nerses Varjabedyan II (1837-1884). The conflict between the Gregorian and Catholic communities had reached relentless proportions.

Towards the end of 1875, dark times were looking for both the Abdullah brothers' palace photographers and the Ottoman government. Revolts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, uprisings in Bulgaria, and threats from Tsarist Russia paralyzed the political administration. The results of the war that broke out on April 24, 1877, were bittersweet for the Ottoman government. The Russian army passed through the *Çatalca* lines in a short time and reached the border of Istanbul, *Yeşilköy*. Desperately, Sultan Abdülhamid II had to accept defeat and the Treaty of Aya Stefanos *Yeşilköy* with all its harsh conditions. After the treaty signed on March 3, 1878, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich (1831 - 1891) and the Russian officers accompanying him stayed in *Yeşilköy* for a while, in the mansion of the Arakel Dadyan (1821 - 1911). Meanwhile, Kevork Abdullah, who had the idea of photographing Grand Duke Nikolai and other Russian officers, and who seemed to be a prisoner of extreme nationalist sentiments all his life, had brought disaster to years of being the Ottoman palace photographer. The priest Yessayi Dayetsi describes the thought-provoking events on this matter in his book, written in 1929 on the basis of the handwritten autobiography

⁹⁴ Ibid, 213.

of Kevork Abdullah in the monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice.⁹⁵ He gave bright and costly banquets in his house, and these incredible events were heard by Sultan Abdülhamid II. The result was a disaster for the Abdullahs. Sultan Abdülhamid II naturally perceived these events as a betrayal of those who worked for him and therefore took away all sorts of privilege, and the title of palace photography was immediately withdrawn from the Abdullah brothers. Kevork Abdullah, in his memoirs compiled by the priest Dayetsi, blames the rival photographer Kargopulo and the Sultan's spies instead of self-criticism in this matter. The sale of portraits of the sultan and members of the dynasty is now completely forbidden. A memorandum sent to the Sublime Porte on December 26, 1880, demanded that all sultan's photographs bearing the signet of the Abdullah brothers be confiscated and that those who possessed them be punished.⁹⁶

Vasilaki Kargopulo, who had been appointed as the palace photographer in place of the Abdullah brothers since 1879 and successfully performed this task, later, died suddenly in 1886 and was replaced by his son Konstantin Kargopulo. As a result of the failure of his appointed inexperienced son, in 1889 Viçen would be given the opportunity to show himself again. But even if a new period seems to begin, the firm will never really manage to recover due to the heavy blow of 1878. The disgraced Abdullah brothers had to make a living by taking daily portraits in their studios.⁹⁷

With the loss of their titles as palace photographers, the company suddenly faced great financial difficulties. On the one hand, there was a lack of orders from the palace, and on the other hand, the great competition from professional photographers in Pera caused the Abdullah brothers' earning potential to drop to a minimum. In desperation, Kevork begins to focus more on community affairs in the Armenian Patriarchate. In addition to his work at the studio, Viçen tried his luck in the fabric and clothing trade, his father's profession, at number 299 in *Mahmutpaşa*. Former photographer Rafael Nazaret and technician Louis Aurelj, who worked on retouching in the Abdullah studios, were forced to leave in the mid-1880s. In 1885, the Abdullah brothers were

⁹⁵ Özendes, Abdullah frères, 148.

⁹⁶ Özendes, Abdullah frères, p.183.

⁹⁷ Öztuncay, In *the Photographers of Constantinople*, p.235.

also removed from the register of the *Société Française de Photographie*, of which they had been members for 15 years. By 1886, the family's financial difficulties had reached their peak. The Abdullah brothers found a solution by trying to borrow money and sell their assets. To this end, Viçen and his brothers sat down in front of the general manager Morgan Hugh Foster, for whom they had photographed 23 years ago with the founding contract of the Ottoman Bank, to borrow money this time. On November 30, 1886, Viçen Abdullah, his mother Rosa, his brothers Hovsep and Kevork signed a loan contract for 1500 liras with a repayment of one and a half years and an interest rate of eight percent by offering the Ottoman Bank their house at number 75 *Beyoğlu* Main Street.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Özendes, *Abdullah Frères: Osmanlı Sarayının Fotoğrafçıları*, 100.

3.2.2. The eye of Constantinople Mihran Iranian

Another photographer who mainly took landscape and portrait photography in Istanbul towards the end of the 19th century was the Armenian photographer, Mihran İranyan. İranyan's first known studio was located in *Beyoğlu* in 1891. Later, İranyan moved to d'Andria Passage, No. 3, and opened another studio in 1895, also in *Beyoğlu*, together with another Armenian photographer, Gugasyan. İranyan's works from the early 1890s include classic city scenes of the Bosphorus, the streets of Galata and *Beyoğlu*, as well as series of street vendors and professions taken outdoors and in real settings. These photographs were printed on albumen prints on paper measuring approximately 20x26 cm; the negatives include French explanatory notes, serial numbers, and the artist's signature.⁹⁹



Figure 16. Two men reciting Quran at the tomb of Sultan Abdülaziz and Sultan Mahmmoud. Taken by Mihran Iranian. Source: Library of congress

The number of negatives found so far is over 240, which indicates that İranyan photographed intensively for at least a few years in the early 1890s. However, the small number of surviving photographs suggests that the artist was unable to compete with the other major studios. From the existing examples, however, it is clear that İranyan created very successful works using the latest photographic techniques from an aesthetic point of view. Iranian was a master at capturing the mood of a place. His photographs have a remarkable immediacy and documentary veracity that is quite different from similar photographs taken by other photographers of his time. This is

⁹⁹ Engin, Özendes. *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1919*. Haşet Kitabevi, (1987).

perhaps why he was ultimately unsuccessful as a commercial photographer. He was one of the few Ottoman photographers with an individual and subjective approach that deserves proper evaluation. (Figure 16 and 17) are samples from the works of Mihran Iranian that are found in the Sultan Abdülhamid II photo collection. There are around 18 photographs carrying his signature M. İranian, all of them are printed on the same type of paper as part of one Album that seems to have the theme of the Interior and exterior of Istanbul's biggest mosques and their tombs, and the fact that this album is found in the Abdülhamid II photo collection might indicate that Mihran Iranian was one of the photographers that were commissioned to take pictures for the Sultan. There is not enough information about this matter unfortunately. Some rare examples of Istanbul photographs with the signature of Gugasyan, who left his partner İranyan and began working alone, have survived to this day.¹⁰⁰



Figure 17. Mihrimah Sultan Mosque and its surroundings in Üsküdar by Mihran Iranian. Sultan Abdülhamid II photo Albums.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.



Figure 18. A man standing Inside the blue mosque in Istanbul by Mihran Iranian. Source: Sultan Abdülhamid II photo Albums.



Figure 19. Mevlevi Dervişler taken in 1890s by Mihran Iranian. Source: Online Auction.

3.2.3. The Artisan of Cairo: Gabriel Lekegian

There are many European and Armenian photographers who devoted and embraced their career in photography in Cairo Egypt, focusing on documenting archaeological ruins such as the Pyramids, the temples in Luxor and the Nile, and unique desert landscapes to portraits and lifestyle of wealthy families or important personalities who could afford to undertake a trip that would fulfil their interest in Egypt and its culture and history. Gabriel Lekegian is one of the most prominent examples of Armenian photographers who ended up in Cairo like the Abdullah Frères.¹⁰¹



Figure 20. Source: The back of Cabinet card by Gabriel Lekegian, Source: Lusadaran Armenian Photography Foundation

¹⁰¹ Olena, Romanova. "Unknown Old Photos of Karnak Monuments." *Arheologia* 1 (2020): 136-142, 7.

Gabriel Lekegian was born in the Ottoman Empire in the late 1850s to an Armenian family. In his early artistic career, he was known as a watercolour painter, which benefited him greatly in mastering photography as it requires attention to details, retouching skills and talent in using light. Around 1880, Lekegian was a student of the famous Italian artist Salvatore Valeri in Constantinople (Valeri later married Lekegian's sister Maria). Lekegian worked with watercolours and created a wide range of extremely detailed figurative paintings. Although Armenian Gabriel Lekegian's work was highly meticulous, it reflects his passion and desire to objectively document the daily life of the people of the Ottoman Empire. He shows a certain Orientalist tendency, probably due to the influence his masters Valeri and Jerome had on him, However Lekegian's inclination towards realism is most evident.¹⁰²

Lekegian began his career as an artist also in Constantinople, where he made watercolours on the subjects of customs and classics, but soon moved away from these to work on more naturalistic and realistic works of everyday life. The reason and date of Lekegian's sudden move from Constantinople to Cairo remains unknown, and there is also no information about his first contact with photography. However, the exceptional quality and style of his first works suggests that he may have been trained in one of the studios of Armenian or Greek photographers before opening his own. Alternatively, he may have chosen to become a photographer because of the promising commercial advantages of this new field throughout the Ottoman Empire and the success of many Armenians with similar backgrounds in the field. Gabriel Lekegian decided to set up his studio across from the Shepherd's Hotel located in the heart of the European Quarter in Cairo. Gabriel Lekegian described himself as an "artistic" photographer, meaning that his work incorporates both the aesthetic and visual aspects that come from originally being a painter.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid, 7

¹⁰³ Teresa, Montiel Alvarez. "Pioneros de la fotografía en Egipto (1857-1890)(Colección Abeledo-Llabata-Santiago Entrena)." *ArtyHum, Revista digital de Artes y Humanidades* 14 (2015): 199-208. 201.



Figure 21. Craftsmen in workshops in one of the streets of Cairo By Gabriel Lekegian, Source:V&A's collections



Figure 22. Studio photograph taken in Cairo in the 1890s. Source:Polly Parkers' photo album taken

The name of the studio of the Armenian Gabriel Lakegian appears on many photographs taken in Egypt at the end of the 19th century. Lekegian's studio occupied a special place among Cairo photography studios for almost three decades during his

thirty-year career, until 1910. He tried to give his photographs a high-end aesthetic. Because of his skill and the quality of his work, Lekegian became the favourite photographer of the Egyptian royal family, of whom he took many pictures, including Princess Nazli. Then Lekegian achieved further success as a photographer when he was appointed the official photographer of the British Army in Egypt, which led to a flourishing business in Cairo. Then Lekegian began to work in a new field closer to documentary photography, as he was asked to take "reportage" photographs related to government construction projects in the region, and despite these albums are not the most famous among his works, but they are of great importance, as they serve as visual documentation of an era long gone. After the early 1920s, Lekegian concentrated on producing portraits and postcards. There is no exact date, but it is possible that he stopped working in the studio shortly after that.¹⁰⁴



Figure 23. The funerary complex of Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay, Cairo. Source: V&A's collections.

¹⁰⁴ *Armenian Photography Foundation*, <http://lusadaran.org/artists/gabriel-lekegian/>.



Figure 24. Houses overlooking a pond in Cairo, Source: V&A's collections.

Gabriel Lekegian developed not only as a photographer, but also as a businessman, as he was aware and familiar with the demands of the market and having the technical means to satisfy the different types of clients, especially those who liked his artistic style capturing the East, which impressed his European and American clients. Lekegian's photographs possessed an unprecedented sense of art and aesthetics in structural terms, which drew the attention of some French and British Orientalist painters to his works, including the famous painter Gerome, who borrowed one of his photographs for a painting.¹⁰⁵

Gabriel Lekegian's outstanding works and prestigious status which he achieved over the years allowed him to participate in several international exhibitions like the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago where he received a grand prize and a gold medal in Paris in 1892. The document below is a page from the book *History of the World's Fair* where Gabriel Lekegian's work and great talent was mentioned and praised.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

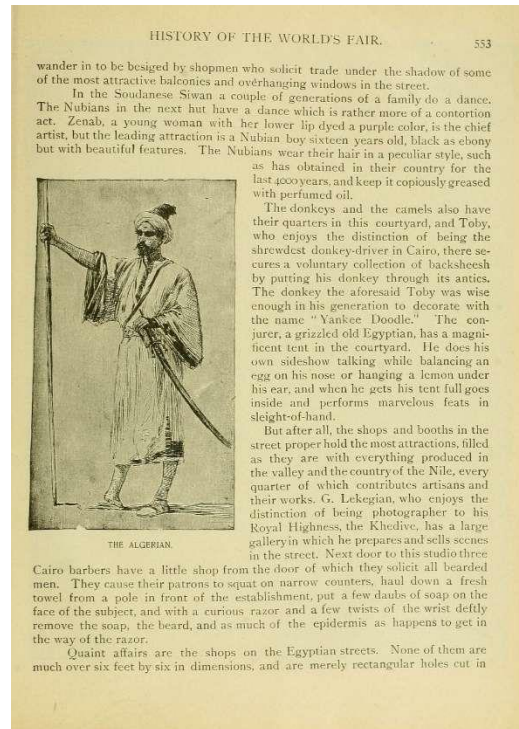


Figure 25. Chicago world's fair. A list of photographers participating in the fair and their works. Source: Library of congress.

However, all this success did not separate him from the humanistic component of his photographs, as he distinguished himself by photographing documenting the various social classes of Egypt, a characteristic we can observe in most other Armenian photographers in the East, many of his works include peasants and city people, where he achieved a realism that captures the evolution of traditional Egyptian society at the end of the century, influenced by the introduction of European customs in the country. Little is known about the life of Gabriel Lekegian, but he left a significant body of work under the name of his studio "*Photographie Artistique G. Lekegian & Cie*". With many now historic photographs of Ottoman Egypt, he documented Egypt's rich daily life, nature, and architectural diversity at the beginning of the 19th century and what remained of his works is now in the New York Public Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, among others. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Romanova. *Unknown Old Photos of Karnak Monuments*, 138.



Figure 26. A studio portrait of one of the Ottoman Sultans taken in Cairo. Source: Sultan Abdülhamid II collection.



Figure 27. Princess Nazli (1906) in Cairo by Gabreil Lekegian. Source: Wikicmmon.

It's important to note that it was common for Ottoman photographers to move or open branches of their studios in Cairo from Constantinople. The fact that they were in the centre of the most attractive archaeological discoveries for the public was essential to offer a variety of images and photographs, as well as to have a studio that photographed

travellers visiting ruins, temples, climbing the pyramids or riding camels. This type of photography contrasts with the more artistic and documentary side, which involves capturing landscapes, monuments and, above all, native customs, and their inhabitants in their familiar spaces, already transformed into the painterly.¹⁰⁷

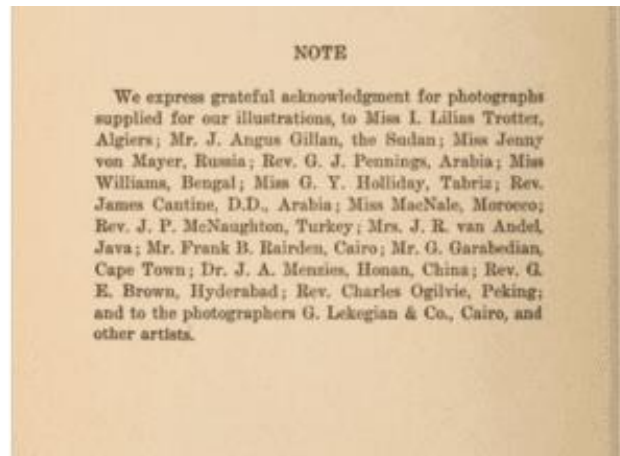


Figure 28. Gabriel Lekegian works featured at Childhood in the Moslem world book.
Source: Library of congress.



Figure 29. the interior of a building in Cairo by Gabriel Lekegian. Source: Sultan Abdülhamîd II collection

¹⁰⁷ Stephen, Sheehi, *The Arab Imago*. xx.

3.2.4. The pioneers of postcard production: The Sarrafian Frères

The "Sarrafian Frères" or Sarrafian Bros. were three brothers named Abraham (1873-1926), Boghos (1875-1934) and Samuel (1884-1941) Sarrafian. They came from a Protestant Armenian family from *Dikranagerd* modern time Diyarbakır. Abraham and Boghos both attended Armenian National Primary School and then continued their complementary studies at the American High School in Mardin, Turkey. At the age of 14, Abraham studied science as well as Arabic and English there, graduating after four years. Boghos attended additional studies in English and Arabic in the meantime. As a young man, at the age of eighteen, Abraham Sarrafian was sent to teach at the American school of Mediet. A year later, he returned to his hometown of Dikranagerd, opened a photo lab there with his brother Boghos, and went to Berlin for an advanced training course.¹⁰⁸

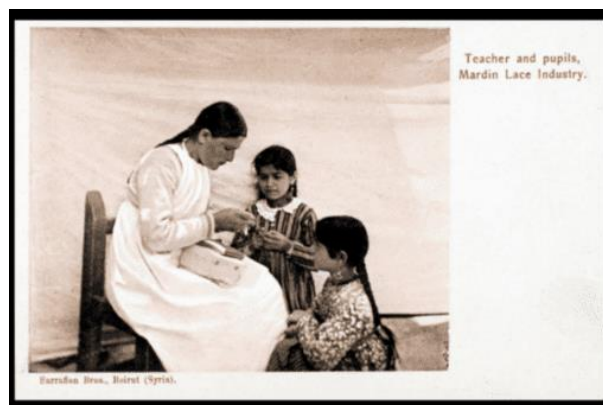


Figure 30. A postcard of a young woman teaching two young girls. Published by Sarrafian Bros., Beirut (Syria). Source: SALT Research Archives.

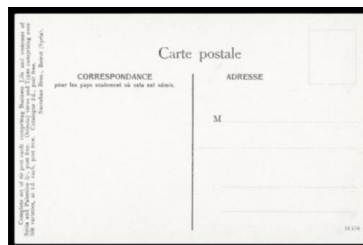


Figure 31. The back side of postcard no.25

¹⁰⁸ Low, David. "Photography and the empty landscape: Excavating the ottoman Armenian image world." *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 6 (2015): 31-69, 32.

Passionate about photography, the two brothers undertook an eight-month expedition to Mesopotamia in 1894, which took them as far as Mosul, where they photographed the ancient remains of the city. The views captured on their travels reflect their ability to adapt to discoveries on the ground. Following their father's example, they opened an antique shop after returning from their trip. Mr. Sarrafian, who is a banker by profession, also dealt with carpets and was known as an antique dealer and numismatist. Their fathers' occupation probably explains the origin of their surname "Sarraf-ian": which means money changer in Arabic, a word that passed into Turkish.¹⁰⁹



Figure 32. A family portriat of the Sarrafian brothers and their families in 1897-1925 Beirut, Syria . Source: onefineart.com

Three months after their return to *Dikranagered*, the tragic events of 1895 occur that will shape the course of their lives. The Sarrafian brothers managed to escape and survive during the massacres of 1895, then decided to leave their homeland in 1897. They arrived in Beirut with the intention of reaching Europe. Being very proficient in the Arabic language, Lebanese and Protestant missionaries encouraged Abraham and Boghos to settle in Beirut and bring their families there. In February 1896, Abraham Sarrafian married Yeranig Garabedian, the daughter of the head of the Armenian

¹⁰⁹ Wehbe, Rana. "Seeing Beirut through Colonial Postcards: A Charged Reality." *Department of Architecture and Design: Beirut, Lebanon* (2006), 2.

Episcopal Church of *Dikranagered*, who was educated at the English school of Jaffa and then at the school of Mardin. Thus, their younger brother Samuel entered the American University of Beirut and obtained a degree in business management. Due to their honesty, intelligence, high competence, and the energy they put into their work, they became very successful. They travelled throughout the Near and Middle East, photographing various archaeological sites and famous monuments in Lebanon and Syria and Mosul, and gradually made a name for themselves in the region. In 1895, they set up their studio in the Bab Idriss neighborhood of Beirut. This studio continued long after the death of the Sarrafian brothers, until 1975, when the civil war began in Lebanon.¹¹⁰

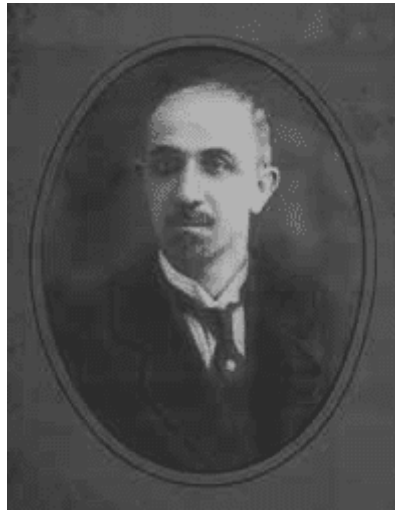


Figure 33. Portrait of Abraham Sarrafian. Source: Joyce Sarrafian's collection.

The Sarrafian brothers, whose main activity was photography and the publication of postcards, later expanded their business and opened new branches in the cities of Syria and even in Jerusalem. The notoriety of their branches and their work has grown over the years. For example, the Sarrafian brothers were quickly recognized as the largest publishers of postcards in the Middle East, and Abraham Sarrafian, who had become the official photographer of the Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut), won a prize for best photographer in the *Dhour el-Shoueir* competition in 1925. Samuel Sarrafian was responsible for selling postcards and

¹¹⁰ Jean-François, Breton, and Micheline Breton. "LES PHOTOS D'HERMANN BURCHARDT DE LA COLLECTION SARRAFIAN." *Tempora. Annales d'histoire et d'archéologie* (2011), 65

artwork within the Sarrafian company.¹¹¹



Figure 34. Postcard; printed; tinted monochrome photograph showing the Dome of the Rock with trees in front, Jerusalem. Published by Sarrafian Brothers, ca. 1920s. Source: British Museum.



Figure 35. Postcard; printed; monochrome photograph showing two traditionally dressed women in a doorway, captioned 'Women of Ramallah' and 'Types of Palestine-Syria' in French, Ramallah. Published by Sarrafian Brothers, ca. 1920s. Source: British Museum.

The First World War brought a series of misfortunes to Mount Lebanon: the blockade imposed by the Ottoman authorities reduced the population by a third and led to

¹¹¹ Ibid.

famine, epidemics, and a locust invasion. Armenians were victims of severe persecutions during this period; a considerable number of them were sent to the deserts of *Deir ez-Zur*, and Kirkuk to be tortured and massacred there. The Sarrafian brothers showed exemplary commitment and dedication and help not only to their compatriots, but also to other victims of this tragic period. The Three brothers and their families were all true Armenian patriots, who can for example be seen through Abraham Sarrafian efforts as an episcopal advisor and the first representative of the evangelical community. Abraham Sarrafian put his work and family on hold to tirelessly help his people. He provided many services to the thousands of people who have come from Cilicia to Syria and especially to Beirut. Through his positions in many organizations and wisdom, he managed to maintain good relations with members of the government and was able to carry out his volunteer work.¹¹²

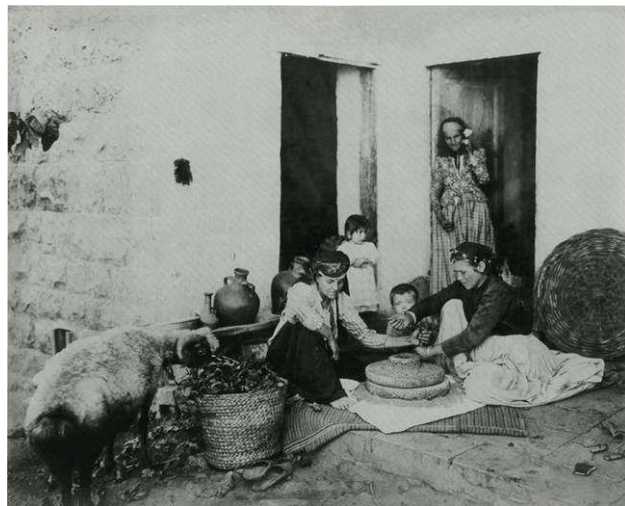


Figure 36. Women during work in Lebanon, by Sarrafian Frères, ca. 1907. Source: Lusadaran Armenian Photography Foundation

These three brothers, through their colossal postcard production, transmitted with great fidelity the traditional life in the villages, the traditions, and customs of that time as can be seen in (Figure 35 and 36). The works they produced taken over more than thirty years, are considered of great importance for studying and understanding the lifestyle and social transitions of that period of the Near and Middle East, as their works served as a testimony of 20th century Lebanon, Yemen, Palestine, Turkey and even Iraq, without addition or retouching. Their studio was one of the largest postcard

¹¹² Stephen, Sheehi, *The Arab Imago a Social History of Portrait Photography*, xxxvi.

manufacturers in the Middle East between 1900 and 1930. A recently published album gathers the entire production of this company on Lebanon in its present borders. It represents a documentation of inestimable historical, archaeological, and ethnographic value. Unfortunately, very little is known about their photographic practice.¹¹³

The Sarrafian brothers were one of the main reasons why Armenians in Lebanon became more and more involved in local photographic ventures. For many of them, photography was a clean and safe occupation that came with a certain status, since most of the people who could afford it were local elites, statesmen and members of royal and ruling families. It is important to mention that Sarrafian's shop offered not only photographs and postcards, but also photographic equipment, for example, they sold Kodak supplies before it ran into financial difficulties. In this context, it is crucial to highlight that the Armenian participation in the sale of camera equipment and supplies was also remarkably strong, Miller says in his study of the activity of Armenian photographers in Lebanon, that seven of the eight local agencies that advertised camera equipment and supplies were Armenian.¹¹⁴ Both the studio photography and paper supply categories continued to be dominated by Armenians. These observations need to be further investigated as there is a lack of detail in this regard, such as the quantities of what was imported or sold and by whom.



Figure 37. A cabinet card of Assyrians from Alqosh, photographed by Sarrafian Brothers, ca. 1890, Mosul. Source: Unknown source reddit.com

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The craftsman's art*, 55

3.2.5. The Armenian Photographer of Baghdad: Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian

Armenian photographers were pioneers in their field. They practiced their art in every corner of the Ottoman lands, and as we saw in this chapter the Arab lands were no exception, starting from Gabriel Lekegian in Cairo and Istanbul to The Sarrafian Brothers in Beirut to the Armenian Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian who is considered the first established photographer in Baghdad and one of the best in Iraq in the first decades of the 20th century. Unfortunately, however, very little is known about his life prior to his arrival in Baghdad. Available sources indicate that Zorapapel was born in 1870 in Arapgir, a town and district of Malatya province in Turkey. He immigrated to Iraq in 1896 and married Takouhi Takvorian in Izmit in 1904. That same year he first worked in Basra and eventually settled and opened his own studio in Baghdad. His photography studio was located on Khalil Pasha Avenue, the most important street of that time, which was later renamed Rashid Avenue, which shows how much importance Armenian photographers give to the location of their studios. Donatossian worked in more than one city and based on the writings on the back of cabinet cards printed by his studio it was only after he settled in Baghdad that he began to write the name of the city on the frame of the cabinet cards printed with his name as can be seen in Figure 38.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, as can be seen in Figure 38 before settling in Baghdad the frames of Donatossian studio's cabinet cards didn't carry the name of any city, perhaps he did that considering the fact that he changed his place of residence often. Figure 39 for example was most likely taken during the years he was photographing in his hometown of Arapgir, also that's when he used to sign his photographs by D. G. ZORABABEL.

¹¹⁵ Minasian, Mihran. "Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian." *Houshamadyan*, <https://www.houshamadyan.org/arm/mapottomanempire/vilayetaleppo/ayntab/economy/tradesphotographers.html>.



Figure 38. High-ranking Turkish military officer, photo by Zorababel Tonatosian, Paghtat, early 20th century. Source: Mihran Minasian Collection.



Figure 39. A back of a cabinet card taken in Antep by Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian, the has writing in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian and French, without the name of any city. Source: Mihran Minasian collection.

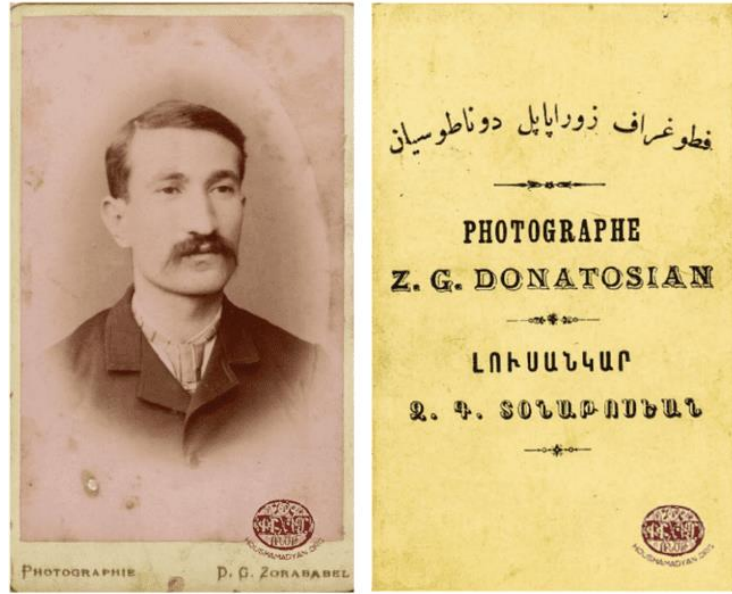


Figure 40. A studio portrait of Avedis Jamgochian taken by Zorababel Krikor Donatossian, ca 1890.

According to Mihran Minassian, an Armenian scholar of Armenian subjects related to the Arab World, Donatossian taught at Antep Seminary for a period when various students who had graduated from the local Central Turkish College began teaching at the same institution in 1882. The years of his stay, study, teaching, and photographic career at Antep are not known to us, nor is it known what he taught in the seminaries. Donatossian's biography also shows that he was active in Erzurum too. The following information explains why and how. As mentioned before in this study Sultan Abdul Hamid II showed great interest in photography and sent master photographers like Lekegian of Cairo to various corners of the Ottoman Empire to photograph local landscapes and architectural structures etc. Zorapapel Donatossian was part of a group of experts sent by Sultan Abdülhamid II to various corners of the Ottoman Empire to photograph landscapes and buildings. He captured numerous scenes of the city of Erzurum, its mosques, Islamic tombs, palaces, barracks, government officials, markets, fountains, and general views of the city, etc. These photos (or some of them) were later printed in an album in Turkish entitled "*Gravür ve eski fotoğraflarla Erzurum*" - "In gravures and old photographs" by Dr. Erol Kılıç, Atatürk University publication, Polis, 1998, photo number 39-84. During the inauguration of the dam on the Euphrates in 1912, one of the major modernization projects launched by Sultan Abdülhamid II, he was responsible for photographing the celebrations in the presence

of the Emir of Mosul, Fazil Pasha, as well as many Ottoman dignitaries.¹¹⁶

The tragic events of 1915 effected Donatossian, along with about 40 other Armenians, Catholics, Jews, and Tajiks, who were arrested by the government and exiled from Baghdad to Mosul, where a message immediately came from Baghdad to send troops to the mountains and divide the villages one by one. But thanks to the intervention of the Patriarch of the Chaldeans of Mosul and a Turk named Sabancı, they were kept there. Then, thanks to the same patriarch, they were brought back to Baghdad and remained in prison until their release.¹¹⁷

Zorapapel Donatossian died in Baghdad in 1926 and was buried in the British Protestant Cemetery, adjacent to the local Armenian Protestant Cemetery. The above photos were probably taken of him during his years in his native *Arapgir*. Due to the lack of information about Donatossian's life and career, it remains unknown whether his activities were limited to taking photographs for the Sultan and commercial reasons at his studio or whether he also took photographs in other places for different institutions or authorities.



Figure 41. Photographer Zorababel Donatossian himself with his wife and son Levon.
Source: Donatossian family collection, United States.

¹¹⁶ *L'Orient Des Photographes arméniens*, Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris, (2007), 14.

¹¹⁷ Minasian, Mihran. "Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian." *Houshamadyan*,
<https://www.houshamadyan.org/arm/mapottomanempire/vilayetaleppo/ayntab/economy/tradesphotographers.html>.

CHAPTER 4: The ROLE OF ARMENIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS IN JERUSALEM

In this chapter, I focus on the activity of the local Armenians in the field of photography in Ottoman Jerusalem by tracking and studying their careers and social lives to understand the factors that contributed to their professional involvement and the spread of their studios throughout Ottoman Palestine and the Levant. I also explore the role Armenians played as founders of the first photography workshop and commercial photography studios and how it impacted the local photo-production scene, as they trained a big number of local Armenians and non-Armenian photographers. Moreover, I aim to acknowledge the heavy family involvement of the Armenians in this new medium and the transfer of knowledge, skills, and crafts from one generation to another.

4.1. The beginnings of the photography profession in the holy lands

The development of photography into a widespread local profession is one of the phenomena of the twentieth century. In this century alone, numerous photography studios were established in several Palestinian cities, most notably in Jerusalem and Jaffa, followed by Haifa, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Ramallah, indicating that photography became a profession practiced by local people of the country. According to Nassar the studies of the history of photography in the Middle East indicates that the late development of photography as a profession practiced by Palestinians does not mean that Palestinians in the nineteenth century did not practice photography at all, either as professionals or amateurs.¹¹⁸

There were not many factors that paved the way for the acceptance, use and development of photography in the Holy Land, with the exception of the presence and sporadic work of travelling photographers from Europe. Thus, if we compare the beginnings of photography in Jerusalem with Western Europe, we find that photography in the Holy Land was introduced from the outside into a closed and relatively traditional society that was economically backward compared to Western

¹¹⁸ Issam, Nassar. *Laqatat Mughayra 1850 - 1948: Early Local Photography in Palestine*, (2005), 48.

Europe, where the introduction of photography was a natural consequence of general scientific development. Yeshayahu Nir in his book *The Bible and the Image* stated that William Turner of Petersburg, Virginia, in his book *'El-Khuds, the Holy: or Glimpses in the Orient'*, reports that a local photographer named Dennis took a photograph of him during a visit to Jerusalem in early 1859. His account provides an understanding of the environment in which Dennis and other local photographers began their work in the field of photography.¹¹⁹

It is important to note that photography was used quite differently in Europe than in the Holy Land, as photography was part of the collection of souvenirs usually sold to travellers, where a photograph of the visitor could be included in his own souvenir.¹²⁰ Thus, the local photographers in Jerusalem differed not only from their traveling counterparts, but also from those living temporarily in Jerusalem, but the main difference between them is that they reside in Jerusalem and photography is their livelihood, and they are subject to the economic and cultural restrictions of the country. On the other hand, what they all had in common was that they were Christians of small ethnic communities and that they met the demands of the foreign visitors.

While the economic situation in industrial Europe was prosperous, the inadequacies of the existing economic structure in Jerusalem resulted in the lack of a local market for photography, in result, there was no starting point for local craftsmen to engage easily in this new field.¹²¹ Moreover, understanding the backgrounds and life stories of the early photographers helps us to understand and shed light on the social status of photographers and photography as a profession in the Ottoman Empire generally and Jerusalem specifically. As I have noted in previous sections of this study, the first local photographers were Christians, which confirms the distance of the local Muslims and

¹¹⁹ Yeshayahu, Nir. *The Bible and the image: the history of photography in the Holy Land, 1839-1899*. University of Pennsylvania Press, (1985), 11.

¹²⁰ Dalachanis, Angelos, and Vincent Lemire. *Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840-1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City*. Brill, (2018). 410.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, 113.

Jews, from involving in photography for religious reasons that prohibited it. Consequently, religion had a significant impact on the emergence of local Muslim and Jewish photographers in Palestine.¹²²

We need to point out the important role those Christian institutions played in the development of local photography in Jerusalem and subsequently in supporting the members of the Christian community learn the craft. Considering the fact that these institutions were in many ways more advanced than the other local religious institutions because of their connection with industrial Europe, pilgrims, travellers, and explorers.¹²³ The Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem found in photography a field that offered them a comparative advantage over the local Jews and Muslims. They were also greatly supported by the Christian religious institutions and missionary movements in Jerusalem, contributing to their development and excellence in the field of local photography since its inception.¹²⁴ Also, when we talk about the cultural obstacles that stood in the way of the spread of photography among the local population of Jerusalem at that time, we must remember that cameras in the 1850s were not small boxes hanging from the shoulders of photographers and travellers, but large wooden boxes that were difficult to transport and carry. Therefore, the residents of Jerusalem could not ignore these photographers as they wandered between them year after year, taking pictures with their heavy cameras, eventually over time photography gradually became a familiar part of the local scene.¹²⁵

Armenians were among the first to be active in the field of photography in the Ottoman Empire, their names were common among nineteenth-century photographers throughout the Near East, and they held a prominent position among the first local

¹²³ Manoogian, Sylva Natalie. *The Calouste Gulbenkian Library, Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 1925-1990: An Historical Portrait of a Monastic and Lay Community Intellectual Resource Center*. Diss. UCLA, (2012), 29.

¹²⁴ Yeshayahu, Nir. *The Bible and the image: the history of photography in the Holy Land, 1839-1899*. University of Pennsylvania Press, (1985), 213

¹²⁵ Rob Niederman. "Kinnear Cameras-Large Format in a Small Size.", 2.

photographers in Jerusalem.¹²⁶ According to Berberian, a contemporary Armenian photographer from Amman, Jordan, photography attracted Armenians for three reasons: first, the opportunity to receive the technical training necessary to practice the profession in Turkey; second, Christians had no religious concerns about practicing photography, and third, Armenians suffered from persecution and displacement for many years, so they were always interested in learning a craft and skills that will not be lost.¹²⁷ Herag Herkelian adds to that saying that the 1840s witnessed a renaissance of Armenian literature, and with the gradual spread of European missionaries in Istanbul, Armenians were encouraged to practice many arts and crafts, including photography.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Karène, Sanchez Summerer, and Sary Zananiri. *Imaging and Imagining Palestine: Photography, Modernity, and the Biblical Lens, 1918–1948*. Brill, (2021), 30.

¹²⁷ Carney E.S. Gavin. "Bonfils and the early photography of the Near East." (1978), 3.

¹²⁸ Jasmin, Michael. 2018. "Histoire De Jérusalem." *Que Sais-Je?*, doi:10.3917/puf.jasmi.2018.01. 312.

4.2. Armenian photographers in Jerusalem

4.2.1 Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem: Yessayi Garabedian

Yessayi Garabedian was one of the most prominent Armenian photographers of the last quarter of the 19th century, he was an important impetus for the Armenian involvement, development and spread of photography in Jerusalem and the Levant. As mentioned by Kevork Hintlian, author of the *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land*, “Yessayi Garabedian was born in 1825 at Talas, *Kayseria* (Turkey), and spent his youth in Istanbul. He arrived in 1844 in Jerusalem, became a student at the seminary, and stayed in Jerusalem until 1859, during which time he engaged in photography. In 1859 he left for four months for Istanbul where he improved his techniques of photography. He was patronized by wealthy Armenians. He was back in Jerusalem the same year. In 1863 he left for Europe, and visited Manchester, London, and Paris, in each place picking up something new for his passion - photography.”¹²⁹

In 1834 when Yessayi who was born to a poor family was nine years old, he was sent to Constantinople, where he was trained to work as carpenter. It was common for Armenians to send their kids to other cities or even countries to get better education, training and opportunities, and the strong ties between the members of the Armenian community throughout the Ottoman Empire and Europe facilitated that. Young Yessayi Garabedian continued working as a carpenter until 1844. In the same year Garabedian travelled to Palestine through *Diyarbakır* to study for priesthood in Jerusalem.¹³⁰ Garabedian's desire to photograph and document the Holy Land led him to learn the art of photography. We still do not know when, where, and with whom Yessayi Garabedian first came into contact with photography, whether through photographers visiting from Europe who came just to take pictures, or perhaps during his work as a librarian in the Armenian convent before he was elected Patriarch of the Armenian

¹²⁹ Yeshayahu, Nir. *The Bible and the Image*, 121.

¹³⁰ Michael E., Stone, and Avedis Krikor Sanjian. *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem*. Caratzas Bros, (1979), 16.

Church (1865-1885).¹³¹ In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the city of Jerusalem was still relatively closed which made it kind of difficult for foreign pilgrims to settle. According to Dickinson Miller, Yessayi Garabedian might have established the photography studio in the St. James Building to meet the growing demand for inexpensive, portable souvenirs from the Holy Land.¹³² The Armenian Cathedral of St. James which later will hold the first photographic workshop for the reproduction of old documents and photographs under Yessayi Garabedian's is one of the five most important traditional Christian pilgrimage sites in Jerusalem and one of the largest and architecturally most beautiful churches in Jerusalem in the 19th century. The interior design and decoration of the cathedral and other buildings of the complex also serves as clear evidence of the richness of Armenian traditional arts and crafts.¹³³

The nineteenth-century Armenian marriage register in Jerusalem lists seven men with the profession of "image makers," which means that they may have been painters or photographers. It was also common for Armenians to work in fields such as handicrafts, art, pharmacy, pottery, etc., including the opening of the first printing press in Jerusalem.¹³⁴ It is important to note that Patriarch Yessayi Garabedian modernized and renovated the printing presses. This project was completed in 1875. In total 165 titles were printed in his tenure.¹³⁵

Inside the cathedral there is a library which, after the manuscript collection of Soviet Armenia, contains the largest collection of ancient Armenian manuscripts in the world, with about 4,000 manuscripts. Additionally, Oded Shay elaborates on the essential role Yessayi Garabedian played in developing the Armenian Library saying that Garabedian founded the Armenian Library, Archives and Museum in 1854 while he was still a priest. He was also known for his diverse talents and skills, which were reflected in all his works in the Armenian convent in 1848-1851. He was not only a

¹³¹ Issam, Nassar. "Early local photography in Jerusalem: from the imaginary to the social landscape." *History of Photography* 27.4 (2003): 320-332, p.7.

¹³² Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The Craftsman's Art*, 20.

¹³³ Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The Craftsman's Art*, 20.

¹³⁴ Yeshayahu, Nir. *The Bible and the Image*, 118

¹³⁵ Sylva N, Manoogian. *The Calouste Gulbenkian Library, Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 1925-1990: An Historical Portrait of a Monastic and Lay Community Intellectual Resource Center*, (2013), 48.

professional calligrapher, but also mastered gold plating and zincography. He led the compilation of the first catalogue of all manuscripts and books held in the Armenian Library in Jerusalem. The catalogues prepared by Yessayi Garabedian show that in 1857 the library contained 1,004 volumes. In the middle of the 19th century, this library underwent a great expansion, especially after the persecutions of the Armenian people during that period, when a large number of manuscripts was brought to Jerusalem for safekeeping.¹³⁶



Figure 42. Patriarch Yessai Garabedian. Source: The Bible and the Image.

Yessayi Garabedian's passion and interest in photography led him to go to Constantinople in 1859 to acquire photographic and printing skills from the Abdullah brothers, the official photographers of the Ottoman palace and one of the pioneers of

¹³⁶ Oded, Shay. "The Early Stages of Historical Documentation and Modern Archives in Jerusalem Society at the End of the Ottoman Period." *Strategies for Tourism Industry-Micro and Macro Perspectives*. IntechOpen, (2012), 4.

local photography throughout the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁷ Miller notes that Yessayi Garabedian may have known the Abdullah family before his trip to Constantinople, but this is unlikely, as Kevork Abdullah was still a young child at the time. But after he met them in 1859 to learn the art of photography from them, they became friends for life.¹³⁸ Later, at the end of 1859, the Armenian priest Yessayi Garabedian established the first locally run school and photography workshop in St. James Monastery in Jerusalem, which institutionalized photography as part of the curriculum in this school. This photography school is perhaps the most important contribution made by Yessayi to the spread of photography in Jerusalem and the Near East.¹³⁹ A French traveller wrote in 1884 that "in his studio in an attic at the patriarchate Yessayi initiated into photography a number of young local Armenians and some others from various provinces of the Ottoman Empire."¹⁴⁰ Numerous Armenian and Arab photographers such as Garabedian, Wickyfork Krikorian, Khalil Raad and others were trained. Thus, this school and the Armenians contributed significantly to the spread of the craft of photography among local Arabs and Armenian in the Levant.¹⁴¹ This is not surprising in Garabedian's case, as he highly encouraged the Armenian community in Jerusalem during the years, he was the patriarch to learn crafts, arts, printing and to keep up with the latest technological developments.¹⁴²

It is reported that when his election as Patriarch was being considered, after holding the position for several years, he asked the voters to reconsider his candidacy. He felt that he would be of more benefit if he devoted his time and effort to photography. In 1863, With the financial support of the Sbartialian brothers in Constantinople, Garabedian travelled to Europe to learn the latest techniques in photography and

¹³⁷ Geoffrey, Roper. *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East*, Brill, Leiden, (2013), 67.

¹³⁸ Dickinson Jenkins, Miller. *The Craftsman's*, 20.

¹³⁹ Salim, Tamari, Issam Nassar, and Stephen Sheehi. *Camera Palaestina: Photography and Displaced Histories of Palestine*. Vol. 5. Univ of California Press, (2022), p.5.

¹⁴⁰ Yeshayahu, Nir, *The Bible and the Image*, 121

¹⁴¹ Badr, El-Hage, *The Armenian Pioneers of Middle Eastern Photography*, 5.

¹⁴² Yeshayahu, Nir, *The Bible and the Image*, 121

printing, Armenian merchants living in Manchester, England, also helped him visit Paris, London, Liverpool, and Manchester also to learn for the photographers there.¹⁴³



Figure 43. Patriarch Yessai Garabedian. Source: wikicommon.

It is important to mention that Garabedian had written several manuals in Armenian, that have not been published yet but still preserved in the monastery's library, according to Miller these manuals are (Nos . 2772, 2773, 2775, and 2777).¹⁴⁴ These manuals contain handwritten detailed documentation of the knowledge he gained about photography during his years of work in this field and his travels to Europe and Constantinople in one of these manuals, therefore these manuals are considered historical documents of great importance. Garabedian devoted Manual No. 2773, to explaining the techniques he had learned during his visit to Paris in 1863, he also wrote a detailed explanation of how negative plates were processed, displayed, developed,

¹⁴³ Miller, *The Craftsman's Art*, p,21.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 21.

and printed, and the wet-collodion processes which he also taught at his workshop in Jerusalem.¹⁴⁵

Garabedian continued to develop his profession by familiarising himself with the latest developments and photographic techniques, as shown by an incident he describes in his manuals referring to his contacts with the Austrian consul residing in Jerusalem in 1863¹ and their discussion of the collodion processes, and about a type of "albumen print"¹⁴⁶ brought from Vienna. This type of printing paper was not yet known and aroused the curiosity of Patriarch Garabedian, who quickly asked the consul for help in learning the method of paper making. In the same manual Garabedian also mentioned his contacts with the Abdullah brothers in Constantinople on similar topics in 1873.¹⁴⁷

Thus, photography flourished in Jerusalem during the tenure of Yessayi Garabedian as Patriarch of Jerusalem (1865-1885). He and his assistants, such as Father Yezekiel Kevork and Deacon Garabed Krikorian - who would later become one of the most important pioneers of early local photography in Ottoman Jerusalem and Palestine - took pictures called *Carte de visite*, in which a person is looking upward or directly toward the photographer, whether standing or sitting. The *carte de visite* is a small photographic portrait of a person patented in Paris in the late 1850s by French photographer André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri.¹⁴⁸

Since the samples of photographs taken by Garabedian and his assistants in the studio of the Armenian monastery are not accessible and only a few copies are available, it was difficult for me to analyse and observe Garabedian's style in detail, so I will mention and comment on Yeshayahu's notes in this regard. Yeshayahu described how

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 42.

¹⁴⁶ The albumen print is paper coated with a layer of albumen (egg white), and a salt (ammonium chloride) and sensitized by subsequent treatment with a solution of silver nitrate. This process was introduced by French photographer Louis-Désiré Blanquart-Evrard in January 1847, and was used extensively for 60 years afterward, it became popular among photographers because it produced rich sharp images. In its early days the process was done by applying albumin and silver solution by hand, but by 1869 the processed paper could be stocked and marketed in bulk.

¹⁴⁷ Yeshayahu, *The Bible and the Image*, 122

¹⁴⁸ Issam, Nassar. *Different Snapshots, 1850–1948: Early Local Photography in Palestine*, (2005), 50–51.

Garabedian used a professional studio camera, specifically designed for indoor use, to take portraits. It is therefore unlikely that Yassayi learned how to use this type of camera from, for example, the Austrian consul or other traveling photographers, as they had no need for this type of camera for their landscape photography. Therefore, it is likely that Garabedian learned this technique during his visit to Europe in 1863.¹⁴⁹

When looking at the photographs produced by the studio of the Armenian convent, it is striking how similar they are to the European models in photography, to the extent that the poses and decoration of these photographs, due to their similarity to the images taken in Europe, do not give any indication of the identity of the place where these photographs were taken.¹⁵⁰ In fact, it is actually a natural consequence of the fact that Garabedian and his assistants had learned photography from Western photographers and that photography was a source of income for the Armenians of Jerusalem, a commercial business and a service for the Armenian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land, and since the local Muslim and Jewish population showed no interest in this new art at that time, no attempt was made to give the photographs a local character reflecting the land and its inhabitants.

The photographs taken in St. James's Cathedral show merchants, clergymen, elegantly dressed pilgrims and Ottoman officers. It is also noted that there are dates in Armenian script and handwritten greetings in the white margins of the photographs, as most of these photographs were gifts and souvenirs from the Holy Land. All the photographs found today were taken in the cathedral's studio in the 1860s and 1870s, and most of them were customized photographs, or *carte de visite* postcard-sized souvenirs. These photographs found include images of clergy and pilgrims, without dates or names of the photographer, as well as landscapes of Jerusalem taken by Yessai Garabedian from 1860.¹⁵¹

In this study, a clear recurring pattern can be seen among Armenians, namely their great interest in learning and mastering a craft, manual skill, or art, and their eagerness to pass on the acquired knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. An

¹⁴⁹ Yeshayahu, Nir. *The Bible and the Image*, 122

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 122

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 122

example of this is the Balyan family, an Armenian family that consisted of court architects who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the Karakashians, a three-generation family of Ceramicists in Jerusalem and many other families, as most Armenians mastered a craft or art, even if they decided to study something else.¹⁵² The same pattern can be observed for the profession of photography in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, and Yessayi Garabedian is no exception. According to information provided by the Armenian historian Arshag Alboydjan, Miller argues that it is possible to trace five generations of photographers emerging from Yessai Garabedian. This line is represented by the Armenian Lebanese Gulbank(yan)¹⁵³ family, which is one of the most important importers of photographic equipment in the country.¹⁵⁴

The patriarch's nephews, Harutyun and Sarkis Stefian, left their hometown of Talas and travelled to Palestine to learn the art of photography from their uncle, Yessayi Garabedian, and established their own studio there in 1890. Harution also travelled to Constantinople after completing his training in Jerusalem to pursue education in the fine arts. In 1891, he was appointed as a drawing teacher at a local Orthodox school and held this position until 1907-1908. Both Sarkis and Harutyun lost their lives in 1915 during the First World War, but they still have surviving grandchildren in Beirut and Cairo, some of whom even devote themselves to photography.¹⁵⁵

Yessayi Garabedian played an important and central role in the spread and development of photography in the 19th century, starting with establishing the first local photography training workshop in the Armenian convent in Jerusalem and training dozens of local Armenian and Arab photographers. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of information that needs to be thoroughly researched so that we can learn more

¹⁵² Alyson, Wharton. *The architects of Ottoman Constantinople: the Balyan family and the history of Ottoman architecture*. Bloomsbury Publishing, (2015), 15.

¹⁵³ It is believed that the Gulbenkian family descended from the Rshtunis, an Armenian noble family that settled around Lake Van in the 4th century AD. With the arrival of the Ottoman Turks, the Turkish equivalent of the name, Gülbenk, was adopted. The family had settled in the town of Talas and lived in the region until the mid-18th century, when they eventually moved to Istanbul. Their property in Talas was eventually confiscated and is now owned by the Turkish government.

¹⁵⁴ Miller, *The Craftsman's Art*, 32.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 32.

about the life and career of Patriarch Yessayi Garabedian. I also think that a look at his photo archive and the four manuals he wrote would have been of great benefit.

4.2.2. Sultan Abdülhamid II's photographer of Palestine: Garabed Krikorian

After following the path of Patriarch Yessayi Garabedian, we could see how many local photographers came out of the Armenian photography workshop in Jerusalem, who practiced photography professionally and soon dominated the local market. Two of Garabedian's students were the first local photographers in Palestine, Garabed Krikorian who later became Palestine's most prolific and well-known photographer, and Ezkiel Vartabed Kevorkian. They trained to be photographers at St. James photography workshop and trained other students, however, little is known about Kevorkian's activities.¹⁵⁶ Interestingly Badr El-Hage suggests in one of his articles that Garabed Krikorian actually had a brother named Kevork training with him at the Yessayi Garabedian's photography workshop, and he adds that the quality and style of Kevork's and Krikorian's photographs were very similar, as they received their training in photography in the same place and from the same source, however Krikorian printed his photographs on more expensive cardboard¹⁵⁷, additionally Kodak and other large suppliers supplied Krikorian's pre-printed photographic postcard paper.¹⁵⁸ Also, they each had a different printed insignia on the back of their photographs. Thus, Krikorian adopted the inscription "Photographie du Convent Armenien" in French, while Kevork adopted "Sun Pictures, Kevork, Jerusalem, Armenian Convent" in Armenian on the back of the photographs he took in his studio.¹⁵⁹ This could indicate that Garabed Krikorian was in contact with pilgrims and tourists who visited the Armenian convent's workshop, and therefore he chose to print his insignia in the French language to reach a larger number of visitors, or that who is thought to be Krikorian's bother is Garabed himself but his insignia changed over time as his career developed which can be

¹⁵⁶ Issam, Nassar. *Different Snapshots, 1850–1948: Early Local Photography in Palestine*, (2005), 52.

¹⁵⁷ Badr, El-Hage. "Khalil Raad-Jerusalem Photographer." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 11-12 (2001), 11

¹⁵⁸ Annelies, Moors, and Steven Machlin. "Postcards of Palestine: interpreting images." *Critique of Anthropology* 7.2 (1987): 61-77, 63

¹⁵⁹ Yeshayahu, Nir, *The Bible and the Image*, 124.

observed from Garabed's photography cards from different periods of time. (Figure 44 and 45)

According to available sources, Garabed Krikorian was probably born in 1847 in Smyrna, modern time Izmir in Turkey, into a poor Armenian family. In 1859, at the age of 12, he moved to Jerusalem, where he was a priest, a deacon at the Armenian convent St. James in Jerusalem's Old City.¹⁶⁰ Based on an Interview conducted by the Lebanese filmmaker Akram Zaatari with Aida Krikorian, Garabed Krikorian's granddaughter in 1998, Little Garabed escaped to Jerusalem and stayed at the Armenian convent then started learning photography at the workshop.¹⁶¹ Generally speaking, it was common for Armenian families to send their children to different cities or countries to learn a trade, craft, or art, or to go to church to join the priesthood.



Figure 44. The back of a cabinet card by Garabed Krikorian, with writing in Armenian,

¹⁶⁰ Hashem, Abushama. "Politics of Portraiture." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 81: 142, 142

¹⁶¹ Aida, Krikorian. "Aida Krikorian/ On Photography People and Modern Times." Interview by Akram Zaatari. *Vimeo*, uploaded by akram zaatari Channel, 10 Jan. 2021, <https://vimeo.com/498931024>.

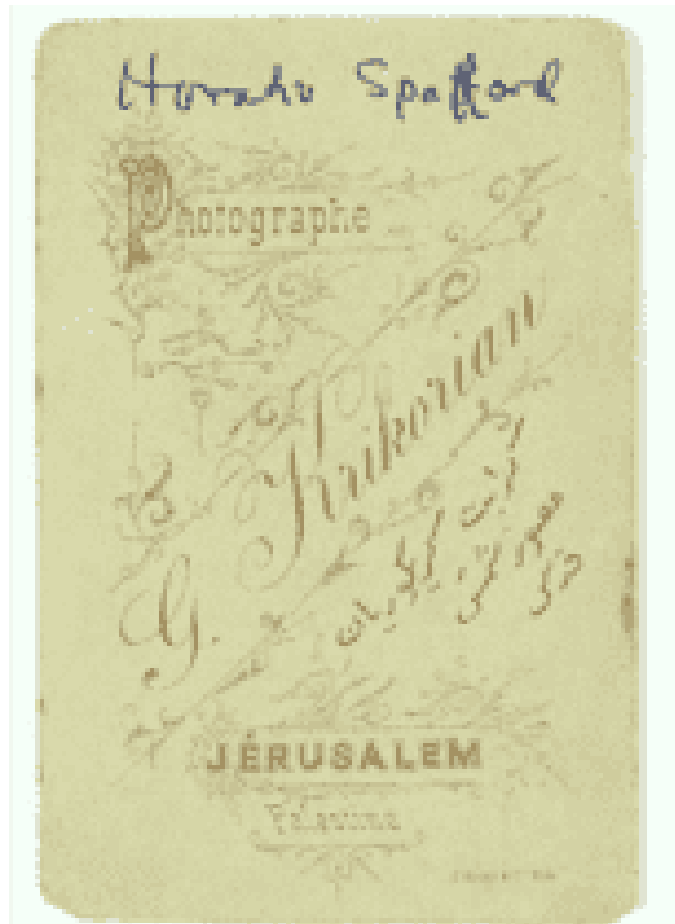


Figure 45. The back of a cabinet card by Garabed Krikorian, "Photographe G. Krikorian Jerusalem, Palestine" a. 1885, with writing in Arabic, English, and French. Source: Laddy Kite's private collection.

When Yessai Garabedian established the first photography workshop in Jerusalem and the region in 1860 before being elected patriarch of the Armenian church in Jerusalem, Krikorian began learning photography under Yessayi Garabedian in the workshop. Notably, Garabed Krikorian was one of Garabedian's most distinguished students. He showed great talent and skill in the field of photography, which led Yessai Garabedian to put him in charge of managing and teaching the students at the workshop after he was appointed Patriarch of the Armenian Church in 1865, which shows Garabedian's confidence in his abilities and good management. In this regard Aida Krikorian mention in the interview that her grandfather Garabed picked up photographic skills

pretty fast which indicates that he was probably talented (Krikorian, Aida 08:50–09:15). Photography historian Mary Pelletier also adds: ¹⁶²

He was an extremely ambitious man and had a lot of courage. But it was also a period of the Arab renaissance, and perhaps he capitalised on that, which led to his success as well. Then he transfers his skills to other people – Khalil Raad, Abraham Guiragossian, who was an apprentice who eventually goes off to Beirut and takes over the Bonfils studio.

Garabed krikorian worked at the photography workshop in St. James until 1885 the year in which patriarch Yessayi Garabedian passed away. Shortly before that, at the workshop, he met Karimah Tannous, a Lebanese novice from the Talitha Kumi orphanage who came to get her photograph taken, and later their relationship developed and they decided to get married, but then Krikorian became a follower of the Protestant church. (Figure 46) As a result, he was no longer accepted by the local Armenian community,¹⁶³ and as Mordechai Beck, says “The Armenian Church's loss was the local photographers' gain”¹⁶⁴. Later in 1885 ¹⁶⁵Garabed Krikorian opened his own photography studio Jerusalem that lasted for more than two generations. This studio made him the owner of the first commercial photography studio in Palestine, soon his studio which is located in front of Jaffa Gate or Bab Al-Khalil in Arabic -one of the most important gates of the Old City of Jerusalem- became an important landmark in the “new city” away from the old city of Jerusalem. ¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Mary, Pelletier. “Armenian Studio Photographers in the Ottoman Empire.” *The Classic*, (2020), 62.

¹⁶³ Hashem, Abushama. “Politics of Portraiture.” *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 143.

¹⁶⁴ Beck, Mordechai. “Images of Jerusalem past.” *The Jerusalem Report*, Jul 25, 2016, 36. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/images-jerusalem-past/docview/1811913685/se-2?accountid=14511>.

¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, some sources mention that Garabed Krikorian opened his own studio in 1870, without mentioning the year 1885. I reviewed all available sources on the subject, and I think it is likely that the studio was actually opened in 1885, especially if we consider the above-mentioned series of events that led to his decision to leave the Armenian quarter and start his own commercial studio.

¹⁶⁶ Issam, Nassar. “Familial Snapshots: representing Palestine in the work of the first local photographers.” *History & Memory* 18.2 (2006): 139-155, 145.



Figure 46. Studio portrait of young Garabed Krikorian, taken by an Unknown photographer at the Armenian convent, prior to 1884. Source: *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in The Holy Land, 1839-1899* p.124



Figure 47. Studio portrait of Garabad Krikorian with his bride Karimah Tannous at George Sabounji Photo Studio in Beirut, ca. 1885. Source: Public Domain

Issam Nassar emphasise that the location of the studio itself has acquired great importance in the world of local photography in Jerusalem, since most of the studios were opened in the same area close to Krikorian's studio in this early period, these included the photographer's Saba Savides, Joseph Toumayan, Sam'an al-Sahar, Abu 'Issa Freij, and Elia Kahwajian, among others.¹⁶⁷ Nassar also adds that it is likely that Garabed Krikorian chose this location for his studio photography because the area was an important touristic centre in Jerusalem, as it was always populated with carriages and cars of local travellers coming from cities like Jaffa, Bethlehem and neighbouring villages, as well as the atmosphere of Hotel Fast and Thomas Cook Travel Agency¹⁶⁸, the first travel agency in Palestine, which means that the area was always active and populated with Western tourists and visitors to Jerusalem.¹⁶⁹



Figure 48. A group of men Bragining for a photograph by Garabed Krikorian & Mitry Studio, ca. 1900. Source: Malikian Collection.

Examination of the photographs taken by early local photographers reveals that these early local photographers, including Krikorian, took individual and group portraits and landscapes of religious sites such as the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy

¹⁶⁷ Pay attention to what is written on the sign: in addition to "fresh Kodak movies" and the usual development and printing services, the store also offers the tourist to be photographed in "native costumes".

¹⁶⁸ When Thomas Cook, the founder of the travel agency, arranged his first tour to Egypt and Palestine in 1869, many people, especially pilgrims, joined him to visit Palestine and the holy sites. By the end of the nineteenth century, the company had organised trips to Palestine for about 12,000 people. One of the most notable travellers ever to take part in these tours was the German Emperor Wilhelm II. which crowned the efforts of the Thomas Cook's company.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Sepulchre, and others in biblical style to sell to tourists and pilgrims as souvenirs of their visit to the Holy Land, for tourism and pilgrimages were an important outlet for the work of photographers in Jerusalem. This is evident in the advertising of local photographers and their insignia, which often included the name of the photographer and the services he or she offered, as well as the location of the studio in foreign languages. Over the years, Garabed Krikorian has used several languages, including Armenian, French, Ottoman Turkish and English.

Pelletier says:

By the turn of the century, business was booming for photographers on Jaffa Road, who catered to locals as well as increasing numbers of tourists eager for souvenir photos, postcards, and scenic views.¹⁷⁰

The vital role Garabed Krikorian played in the expansion of photography throughout the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, is demonstrated in his collaboration with other local photographers like Mitry, there are also evidence from early *cartes de visite* that suggests that he associated with Beirut's most prominent photographer, Jurji Saboungi, and later trained and partnered with Daoud Saboungi in Jaffa.¹⁷¹ Together with his students who carried their skills with them and opened photo studios in different places, and his family members who were involved in his business and carried it for two generations.¹⁷² In addition Garabed continued to develop his skills in photography, mastering and specializing in individual and group portraits. He also decorated his own studio with various Oriental backgrounds, costumes, and accessories from different local regions such as Ramallah and Nablus so that his clients could wear to take souvenir photographs, as most of his clients were Christian pilgrims and tourists, but also photographs of local Arab and Jewish can be found among his works.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Pelletier. *Armenian Studio Photographers in the Ottoman Empire*, 69

¹⁷¹ Stephen, Sheehi, *Portrait paths*, 14.

¹⁷² Badr, El-Hage. "Khalil Raad-Jerusalem Photographer." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 11-12 (2001), 2-6.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*



Figure 49. A studio portrait of a man dressed in traditional Arab clothes. Garabed Krikorian & Mitry Studio. ca. 1900. Source: Malikian Collection.

He also provided models and darkroom facilities and started selling photographic supplies for visiting amateur photographers, another field in which Armenians excelled, and whose market they dominated.¹⁷⁴ Commenting on her experience at her grandfather's photo studio Aida Krikorian says: "I went often (to her grandfather's studio). I used to play with a basket full of little things Villagers used to wear and be photographed with" and explains, "There were many. It's a pity much is gone. Other than the Bethlehem clothes that my mother was photographed with. There were the Ramallah clothes. They also had gowns, outfits, and swords for men." (Krikorian, Aida 01:15–02:45).

¹⁷⁴ Yeshayahu, Nir. *The Bible and the Image*, 124



Figure 50. Studio Group portrait of women dressed in Palestenian clothes, at Garabed krikoriana & Daoud Saboungi, ca. 1890. Source: Malikian Collection.



Figure 51. Studio Group portrait of women dressed in Bethlehem and Ramallah clothes. Garabed Krikorian Studio, ca. 1900. Source: Malikian Collection.

During a visit of the German Emperor Wilhelm II in 1898, for which Krikorian served as official photographer along with Daoud Saboungi of Jaffa, Krikorian took outdoor

photographs of the event, calling himself the "court photographer of the Prussian Emperor." While most of his photographs were signed "G. Krikorian," some others bore the signature "G. Krikorian & D. Saboungi," indicating further collaboration between the two local photographers. On another note, it was a common occurrence among photographers for them to they called themselves the official photographers of the important personalities they photographed, for example, Joseph Toumayan signed his photographs as the official photographer to the Spanish king.¹⁷⁵

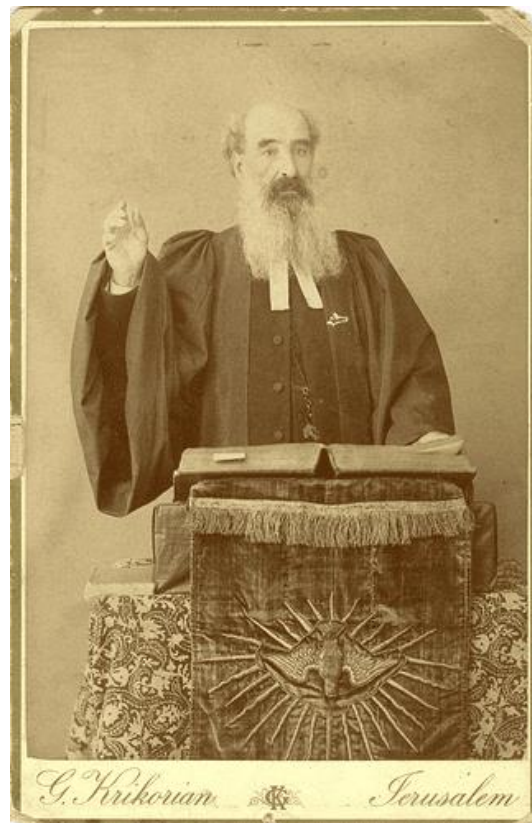
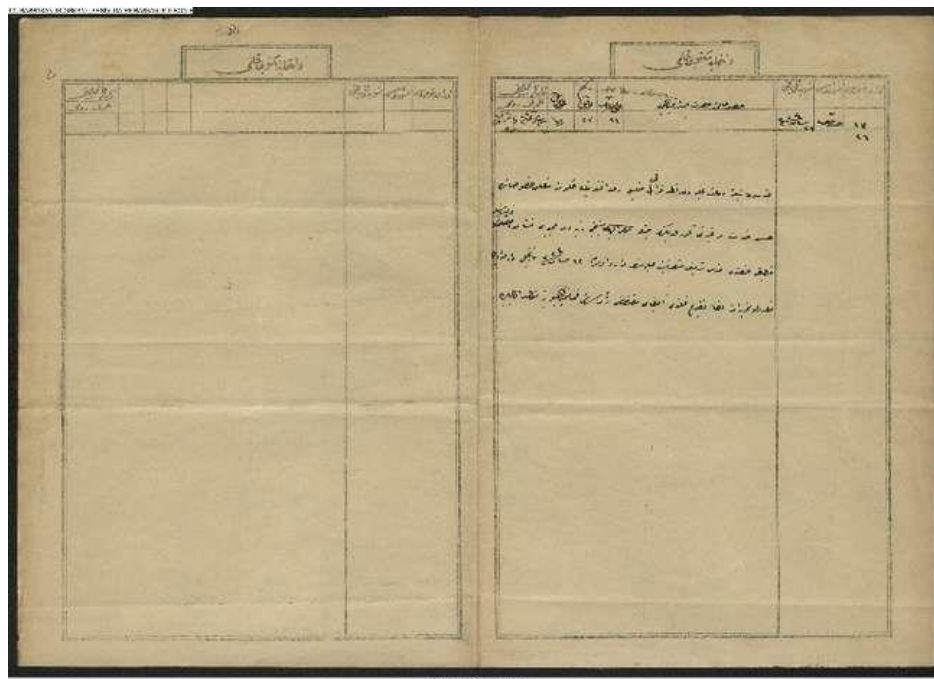


Figure 52. Studio portrait of a Rabbi taken Garabed Krikorian. Source: Graham Pilecki's private collection.

Garabed Krikorian devoted twenty-eight years of his life to imparting his skills and knowledge of photography to the younger generations of Armenian, Arab, and Jewish residents of Jerusalem. (Figure 52) Thus, a generation of photographers emerged from Krikorian's studio like Khalil Raad who was his student, main competitor and later his in-law, and the Armenian Abraham Guiragossian, and many other local photographers

¹⁷⁵ Vigen, Galstyan. "Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners." *TOUMAYAN, JOSEPH / Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners*, <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/toumayan-joseph/>.

of Armenian and non-Armenian origin.¹⁷⁶ An official document from the Ottoman archives stated that Khalil Raad was granted *Medjidi Medal Tebea-i Devlet-i Aliyya* in Jerusalem for his good service.¹⁷⁷



It's important to note that associating with non-Armenians was not very common around that time but was not surprising for a man who had already left the confines of the priesthood and the Armenian compound to pursue a career in photography. Garabed Krikorian didn't attain his prominent position in the history of local photography and became the most prestigious commercial in Jerusalem and Palestine by chance, as he was constantly striving to develop his skills, which led him to travel extensively to keep abreast of the latest developments and technologies in the field of photography.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Mary, Pelletier. *Armenian Studio Photographers*. 143.

¹⁷⁷ BOA. DH.MKT. 1253-66. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Abushama, *Politics of Portraiture*, 42.

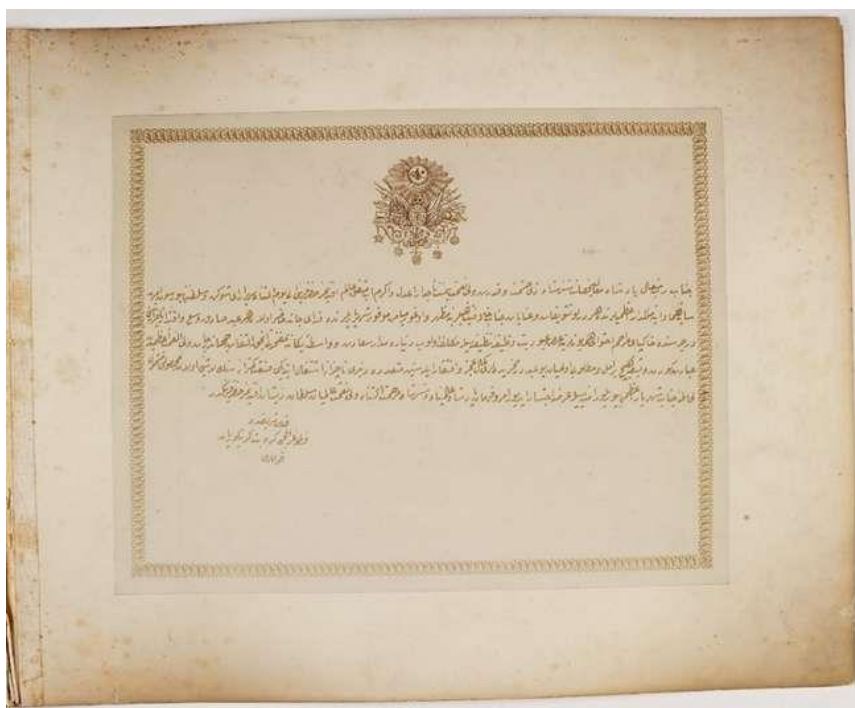


Figure 53. Garabed Kirkorian presenting the album German Emperor II. Wilhelm's trip to Syria to The sultan. Source: Sultan Abdülhamid II collection.



Figure 54. a photo from the German Emperor Wilhelm II's trip to Syria Source: Sultan Abdülhamid II collection



Figure 55. a photo from the German Emperor Wilhelm II's trip to Syria Source: Sultan Abdülhamid II collection



Figure 56. a photo from the German Emperor Wilhelm II's trip to Syria Source: Sultan Abdülhamid II collection

4.2.3. The master of Portrait photography: Johannes Krikorian

Garabed Krikorian's major role in the development and spread of local photography in Jerusalem and Palestine is being acknowledged more and more in the literature that studies the history of local photography in the Near East, as he trained many local photographers, including his son Johannes or Yohannes (Figure 57), who inherited his father's great talent and knowledge in photography. Johannes Krikorian ran his father's studio from 1913 until it closed in 1948.¹⁷⁹ Johannes Krikorian began learning photography at his father's studio in Jaffa Street. Later around 1911, Garabed Krikorian sent his only son Yohannes to Germany for two years to learn more about photography techniques from a German photographer says Aida Krikorian Johannes first daughter(Krikorian, Aida 09:55-10:15). It is important to highlight that Johannes Krikorian was a young man with many talents and great appreciation for good music. He also played the piano and loved opera.¹⁸⁰ It was common for Armenians to send their kids to receive their education or learn certain skills in the west or western educational institutions where they were living as we have seen in the case of the Abdullah brothers and the Sarrafian brothers.

After finishing his studies in Germany Johannes returned to Jerusalem, and married Najla (Figure 58), the niece of his father's former student and only competitor in the profession at the time, photographer Khalil Raad, who parted company with his master and opened his own commercial photo studio across the street from Garabed Krikorian's studio in 1890.¹⁸¹ The marriage of Garabed's son Johannes to Khalil's niece Najla served as a peace treaty between Raad, the student, and Krikorian, his master. Thus, the competition that lasted between Khalil Raad and Garabed Krikorian until about 1913 ended.¹⁸²

Johannes Krikorian excelled in portrait photography and often photographed his foreign clients in one of the native costumes of Palestine that he had available in his

¹⁷⁹ Issam, Nassar. "Early local photography in Jerusalem: from the imaginary to the social landscape." *History of Photography* 27.4 (2003): 320-332, 352.

¹⁸⁰ Abushama, *Politics of Portraiture*, 142.

¹⁸¹ Stephen, Sheehi, *Portrait paths*, 23.

¹⁸² Abushama, 143

studio. (Figure 62) This style was used by a number of photographers, including "Bonfils" in Beirut, -later, the Bonfils studio becomes the property of one of Krikorian's students Abraham Guiragossian¹⁸³- and this tradition was widespread and described by a few travellers who visited Palestine during this period.¹⁸⁴ on the other hand, the Krikorians, merely utilized Orientalist representations for commercial purposes.



Figure 57. Portrait of photographer Johannes Krikorian ca.1917. Source: Aida Krikorian's collection at the Arab Image foundation, Beirut.

Aida recalls the details of her father's photo studio and says: "In the beginning. The studio was almost made of glass, the roof was glass and there were curtains underneath. Towards the end, later, a Jewish European named Kotach proposed to do the lighting for him. So, for some time he used projectors powered by electricity. But in most of the pictures he has produced, he used daylight." (Krikorian, Aida 03:00–03:50) From

¹⁸³ Abraham Guiragossian was one of Garbed Krikorian's students. He later moved to Beirut and managed to come on board as the Bonfil's studio's co-owner in 1909. Ten years later, in 1918, he managed to acquire the Bonfils family business in full of Lydia Bonfils, along with its entire archive of negatives.

¹⁸⁴Bar, Doron, and Kobi Cohen-Hattab. "A new kind of pilgrimage: The modern tourist pilgrim of nineteenth century and early twentieth century Palestine." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39.2 (2003): 131-148, 132

the same household Najla Raad¹⁸⁵, Johannes's wife and Raad's niece, was very involved in Krikorian's studio and helped her husband with his work in the studio. She colored and retouched the printed photographs by hand, prepared the costumes for the tourists and local women and helped dress up for their portraits. Aida, her daughter explains: "Mum had photographers in both sides of her family. Her uncle from her mother's side and her husband. So, she was very involved in it." and adds: "My mom used to go almost daily. She did some retouching. My grandfather had a retoucher. I do not know why he left later. She did retouching¹⁸⁶, she did water colour painting. She dressed some of the ladies in villagers' outfits." (Krikorian, Aida 01:30–04:05)



Figure 58. Najla Nijim Krikorian dressed in native Bedouin costume taken at Chalil raad Studio, 1919. Source: Alice Krikorian Abusharr's collection.

¹⁸⁵ At a very young age, Najla Najm moved with her mother Sarah from Lebanon to Jerusalem to live with her uncle Khalil Raad in his house after they lost contact with her father who moved to America. After Najla grew up a little, she changed her family name from Najm to Raad, since her uncle was like her father.

¹⁸⁶ Photo retouching is the removal of all imperfections from a photograph, including cleaning spots and scars on the skin without disturbing the naturalness of the skin texture, colour and tone correction, removal of dark circles under the eyes, and correction of the brightness, contrast, and saturation of the photograph. It can also include removing unwanted details from the photo.

Looking at the photographs colored and retouched by Najla Raad (Figure 59 and 60), one can see her attention to details such as clothing, accessories, background and especially the carefully colored skin that gives a realistic and colorful representation is exquisite. The tremendous evolution of Najla's coloring and retouching skills can be seen from her earlier attempts to her most recent work, which gives an idea of how much work and time she has put into perfecting her skills. Thus, her involvement the photo studio, probably the first or at least among the first woman to work as a photographer in Palestine.¹⁸⁷



Figure 59. Aida and her cousins on a family picnic. Source: Aida and Samira Kawar collection

¹⁸⁷ Abushama, *Politics of Portraiture*, 145.



Figure 60. Aida, Johannes Krikorian's and Najla Raad's daughter. Source: Aida and Samira Kawar

A few scholars have made important contributions to the role of women in the development and dissemination of photography in the Middle East. For example, in his article "Early Local Photography in Palestine: The Legacy of Karimeh Abbud"¹⁸⁸, Nassar highlights Abbud's pioneering role in local photography in Palestine in the 1920s not only as probably the first female professional photographer, but also as one of the first to challenge "European style traditions in portrait art and photography."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Karima Abboud (November 18, 1896 - 1940) was the first Palestinian female photographer, born in Nazareth, Palestine. Her father is Reverend Saeed Abboud, and she comes from a family with Lebanese roots that goes back to the southern city of Khiam. This family emigrated to Nazareth in the mid-nineteenth century, and some of its members were active in evangelization. In a study by Mitri the Monk entitled *Karima Abboud: The Woman Behind the Lens*, he referred to the roots of the Abboud family living in Nazareth and Bethlehem in the area of Marjayoun in the Upper Galilee in southern Lebanon, originating from the village of Khiam and coming from a Maronite family. Grandfather Abboud went to Bethlehem in 1890 and worked as a teacher at the English School and moved between different jobs. Karima was born in Bethlehem on November 13, 1893 AD.

¹⁸⁹ Issam, Nassar. "Early Local Photography in Palestine: The Legacy of Karimeh Abbud." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 46 (2011). p.30.

Like most Palestinians, Johannes Krikorian and his wife Najla lost most of their possessions in 1948, including the photography tools and equipment, traditional customs, and accessories in the studio. Fortunately, the Krikorian family managed to preserve several photographs by Garabed and Johannes, most of them with Aida, Johannes' daughter, and some in the Library of Congress. Joseph Mallikan also has a collection of photographs from the Krikorian studio. Johannes died of cancer shortly after the Nakba, around 1951. Aida commented on the Krikorian families' loss, saying:

There was someone called Yusuf Saeed, who is the cousin of Edward Saeed. The studio was near the city wall. They made a hole and retrieved his collection. He had landscapes of the Holy Land, they were slides, they managed to take these. He gave the collection to the family, but he was instrumental in saving them... When my dad visited the studio, he didn't find anything at all. He had taken a little camera, not the big one. He retrieved it. He had taken some dresses and a camera. Otherwise, he lost everything. It affected his health so much because it was his life's work his entire life.¹⁹⁰

The Krikorian family is like many other Armenian families of photographers whose work has contributed greatly both to the development and cultural documentation of photography and to the social history of the last Ottoman era. The Krikorians, the father and the son along with the local photographers they trained, played a dominant role in introducing photography to Ottoman Jerusalem. This is due to the central role of photography in the lives of Armenians, but also to the broader intersections of photography, migration, and exile, a topic that can be further explored in future studies within a broader interdisciplinary framework.

¹⁹⁰ Aida, Krikorian.



Figure 61. Family portrait with native Palestinian costumes Johannes Krikorian Studio, ca. 1925. Source:Malikian Collection.



Figure 62. Tourists portrait dressed in native Palestinian costumes at Johannes Krikorian Studio, ca. 1920. Source:Malikian Collection.

4.2.4. The eye of Jerusalem: Joseph Toumayan

Joseph (or Yusuf) Toumayan is an Armenian photographer who owned a photography studio in Jerusalem and was active between 1900 and 1920. Joseph Toumayan studio “*Photographie de la Palestine*” was established in Jerusalem in 1907 and was located across the street from the French Embassy in Palestine. There is not much information about Toumayan's first contacts with photography, but according to Issam Nassar in his article “*Palestinian Photographers before 1948*”, he was one of the students of the photography Workshop in the Armenian convent under Yessai Garabedian. Which is very likely, and if not, he was probably trained by Garabed Krikorian or his student Kalil Raad, the first Arab photographer in Palestine.¹⁹¹



Figure 63. Women dressed in traditional Palestinian customs shot at A. Haschadour & J. Toumayan Studio, ca. 1900 (Malikian Collection)

According to a magazine advertisement in German published in the 1910s, Joseph Toumayan's studio, like other local photographers in Jerusalem, offered various services, such as portraits and traditional Palestinian customs from various cities, selling photographic equipment, and the documentation of official and special family

¹⁹¹ Issam, Nassar. "Photography as Source Material for Jerusalem's Social History." *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi* (2009): 137-158, 142

occasions such as weddings. (Figure 63 and 64) are two photographs from Joseph Toumayan's studio in Jerusalem, showing a group of ladies in local costume - specific to Ramallah, Bethlehem, and the Bedouin - and other accessories that were available to clients in Toumayan's studio. Unlike some other studios, Tuumayan's clients were not only European tourists and visitors, but also local Palestinian women, as the habit of photographing themselves in "traditional dress" has spread among middle- and upper-class Palestinian women. This is very important in this context because such photos do not have an oriental character.¹⁹²



Figure 64. Tourists in Palestine, early 20th century dressed in local costumes taken at . A. Haschadour & J. Toumayan Studio. Source: Le Magasin Pittoresque collection.

Photography was Joseph Tomayan's source of income. Similar to his competitors Krikorian and Raad, he photographed picturesque views of Jerusalem, its historical monuments, its landscapes, the various ethnic groups that lived there, and other types of photographs. Although he adhered to the general biblical style when photographing the holy sites, Tumayan took photographs of the streets and neighborhoods of Jerusalem and the biblical sites with an elegance and in an unprecedented figurative manner that marked a qualitative leap in the work of Armenian photographers on documenting the holy sites. In the 1910s Tomayan partnered with A. Hashador, and

¹⁹² Vigen, Galstyan. "Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practioners." *TOUMAYAN, JOSEPH / Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practioners*, <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/toumayan-joseph/>.

around 1913 with the Jewish art photographer Shlomo Narinsky (1885-1960). It is very likely that Narinsky's artistic and esthetic style of landscape photography greatly influenced Toumayan's practice in later years. It is not known how long Joseph Toumayan worked in his studio and whether the studio survived the war, but available sources indicate that he stopped working in the studio in the 1930s.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore and explain the factors that facilitated and contributed to the participation of the Armenian community in the field of photography in the Ottoman Empire from its early days, by tracking and analysing the lives and careers of key Armenian photographers from several Ottoman provinces, taking Istanbul as a starting point, then from Cairo to Beirut to Baghdad, and finally Jerusalem. I also sought to trace the social and political context in which the Armenian community was active in the production of photography and postcards in the Near East. In the fourth chapter, I studied the activity of the Armenian photographers in Ottoman Jerusalem in particular and their role in developing and spreading photographic skills among local Armenians and non-Armenians, while trying to understand the impact of this activity on the local practice of this field in the region.

Through the course of this study, the involvement of Armenians in the field of photography in the Ottoman Empire was clear and noticeable, represented by the spread of their studios throughout the Ottoman Empire, and them establishing the first photography workshop and commercial photo studio in Jerusalem for example. We could also see how they succeeded in occupying important positions as royal photographers, official photographers of the Ottoman Palace, photographers of official institutions, and important authorities, which gave them a prestigious social status that came with many privileges. The career of Patriarch Yessayi Garabedian was a great example on how Armenian religious leaders played a major role in encouraging members of the Armenian community to master different types of skills and crafts, and photography was one of them.¹⁹⁴

The Armenian religious institution also had a role in securing financial support for such activities, and the gradual spread of European missionaries in Istanbul, also had an influence on Armenians as they encouraged them to learn many arts and crafts, including photography. We also saw how the relations of the Armenian community

¹⁹⁴ Rotem, Rozental. *Photographic Archives, Nationalism and The Foundation of The Jewish State, 1903–1948*. Diss. State University of New York at Binghamton, (2019), 130.

with the West, mainly with Europe, had a great impact on the Armenian scientific, practical, and cultural renaissance. However, justifying the absence of Muslims from the Ottoman local photography scene in its early years, by saying that Islam prohibits the production and circulation of images, and that Christianity allowed it, is not a solid argument to why non-Muslims like the Armenians and the Greeks, for example, engaged in photography since its beginnings. I did not find strong references or evidence to support this argument, as the Ottoman sultans requested that their photos be taken on many occasions, they also assigned official photographers for the palace. In addition, Muslims from different social classes frequently went to photo studios to get their photos taken.

Several pieces of evidence from the lives of the photographers I examined in this study indicated that the Armenian Community possessed a wealth of artisan and craft talents that helped them pick up the skills and knowledge necessary to master this new field. For example, Both Viçen and Kevork Abdullah possessed high artistic skills which were of great importance, as it was necessary for developing films, dyeing paper, hand-colouring, and retouching photographs. The same goes for Gabriel Lekegian who was as a watercolour painter, before mastering photography, and which serves as an indicator of Armenians' talent and interest in Art. The craftsmanship of the Armenians also played a major role in paving the way for them to acquire photographic skills, as they usually worked as pharmacists, chemists, and doctors which helped them in picking up the necessary skills to practice photography due to its great dependence on mixing the right chemicals required to produce photographs. However, their choice to take up photography as a profession was driven by their need for skills that cannot be taken away from them so that they can earn a living and provide for their families no matter where they move. This is a reality that the Armenian community has had to face after living in peace throughout the Anatolian territory without geographical restrictions until the last period of the Ottoman Empire. which justifies the clear family presence among the members of the Armenian community in various crafts, such as photography, a phenomenon that did not necessarily continue after that period in all the cases for several factors, the Abdullah and Kerkorian families are very good example of that.

The fact that the Armenians have contributed greatly to spreading photography through the Ottoman Empire and the development of certain aspects of photography artistically and productively, does not necessarily mean that they were the only active ethnic group in this field, Greek photographers were also visible in the early Ottoman photography activity scene. However, Armenians' participation remains very clear which justifies why some researchers considered it dominance while others called it ethnic monopoly of the occupation. Armenians' heavy presence in the photography business was also manifested in their engagement in the marketing of photographic equipment and supplies during the same period, which was supported by their knowledge of the local market's demand. This involvement was more noticeable during World War I when the Armenians found themselves in a situation where they had to escape to save their lives and establish new lives, and that's when the photographic skills they have learned came in handy as a source of livelihood.

Armenians worked as agents for well-established companies like Kodak in the context of photography, which greatly facilitated their extension and control of the market as we saw in the case of the Sarrafian brothers' giant business in Beirut. Armenian photographers also held various connections with the state, which paved the way for them to keep up with the latest technology. Moreover, they were very well connected with the European community that resided in the Ottoman capital during the nineteenth century, which shaped the dynamic of technology and skill transfer among the members of the Armenian community.

The conclusion is that although there were many factors that contributed to the emergence of Armenians as pioneers in the field of Ottoman photography, it must be mentioned that it was not a coincidence or a matter of luck, as it is no secret to anyone that the Armenians had a long-term vision which may have come as a result of their constant movement and the difficult conditions they experienced in that period, supported by the strong networks they had among the members of the Armenian community throughout the Ottoman empire which facilitated their collaborations and the flow of photographic knowledge, skills and technology. They also followed a deliberate strategy when choosing the locations of their studios and chose the nature of the services they provided wisely making sure it addressed a large and diverse

segment of the local population, tourists, and important personalities and officials, which had vast economic benefits for them and for the economy and tourism activity in the centres in which their studios were located. Armenian photographers worked hard to earn a living by working in the photographic profession and it provided them with a social status that secured their presence in the communities in which they resided. The Armenians lived under changing conditions and were forced to move countries constantly, which may have prompted them to invest in anything that might raise their status and improve their living conditions, such as education, crafts, or art. For them, photography was one of the main means through which they were able to prove themselves across a wide geographical area.

This thesis contributes to the growing body of literature on the history of photography in the Near east in General, and the role of Armenians in developing and spreading photography in particular, especially that I shed the light on some Armenian photographers that are understudied like Joseph Toumayan of Jerusalem and Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian of Bghadad. I also provided a close detailed insight into the activity of Armenian photographers in Jerusalem which marked as the beginning for a whole generation of Armenian photographers, it also paves the way for further studies of the visual models left by these photographers and the sociopolitical aspects and impact of their activity in this field. Although I tried to study the involvement of several Armenian photographers of the Ottoman Empire in several provinces, there is still a lot of information and details that we do not know regarding the contributions to the field of photography and many photographers that need to be studied further, which I hope to adequately present in future studies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

BOA. DH.MKT. 1253-66. Padişah tarafından Amerika Kütüphanesi'ne hediye olmak üzere askeri daireler ile İstanbul'un umumi manzarası ve güzel mekanlarının fotoğrafçı Abdullah kardeşler tarafından fotoğraflarının alınması için gerekli olan meblağın tesviyesi.

BOA. DH.MKT. 230-6. Padişah tarafından Amerika Kütüphanesi'ne hediye olmak üzere askeri daireler ile İstanbul'un umumi manzarası ve güzel mekanlarının fotoğrafçı Abdullah kardeşler tarafından fotoğraflarının alınması için gerekli olan meblağın tesviyesi.

BOA. İ.DH.. 1264-99376. Tebea-i Devlet-i Aliyye'den Kudüs'te fotoğrafçı Halil Raad Efendi'nin hüsn-i hizmetlerinden dolayı Mecidi Nişanı ile taltifi.

BOA. MF.MKT. 128-4. Mekteb-i Sultani, Mekteb-i Mülkiye ve Müze-i Hümayun'un fotoğrafını çekecek fotoğrafçı Abdullah biraderlere gerekli kolaylığın gösterilmesi.

BOA. ML.EEM. 762-45. İtalyan Ressam Mösyö Pavoçino'nun II. Abdülhamid'e verdiği yağlı boya resim levhası bedelinin ödenmesi talebi.

BOA. TS.MA.e. 8-4. Refia Sultan'ın 1289-1293 masraflarına ait Fotoğrafçı Abdullah'a yapmış olduğu ödemeler

BOA. Y.PRK.BŞK. 4-33. Abdülhamid'in izinsiz olarak çekilip çoğaltılan fotoğrafının toplatılıp gerekli cezanın fotoğrafçı Abdullah'a derhal verilmesine dair irade tebliği.

BOA. Y.PRK.NMH. 3 – 42. Alman imparatoriçesinin kendisine gönderilen Naile Sultan'ın fotoğraflarını çok beğenmesi ve teşekkürüne verilen cevap.

Secondary Sources

- 15:10:00, 2009-10-19. "Armenians in the Ottoman Economy." Hetq.am, October 19, 2009. <https://hetq.am/hy/article/31209>.
- "9. Missionary Photography and Photojournalism, 1885-1899." *The Bible and the Image*, 1985. <https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512818260-013>.
- Abushama, Hashem. "Politics of Portraiture." *Jerusalem Quarterly*, n.d.
- Adak, Ufuk,. "On the margins of the city: Izmir Prison in the late Ottoman Empire." *Understanding the City through its Margins*. Routledge, 2017. 77-93.
- Akın, Nur. Essay. In *19. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında: Galata Ve Pera*. İstanbul: Literatür, 2016.
- Armenian Photography Foundation. Accessed July 5, 2022. <http://lusadaran.org/artists/gabriel-lekegian/>.
- Ataöv, Türkkaya. Essay. In *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001.
- Cizgen, Engin. *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1919*. Istanbul: Haet Kitabevi, 1987.
- Crookham, Alan. "Art or Document? Layard's Legacy and Bellini's Sultan." *Museum History Journal* 8, no. 1 (2015): 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1936981614z.000000000037>.
- Çizgen Engin. Essay. In *Photography in the Ottoman Empire: 1839-1919*. İstanbul: Haşet Kitabevi, 1987.
- "Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practitioners." KRIKORIAN, GARABED | Database of Armenian photo-media practitioners. Accessed June 23, 2022. <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/krikorian-garabed/>.
- Dalachanis, Angelos, and Vincent Lemire. *Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840-1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City*. Brill, 2018.
- Doron, Bar, and Kobi Cohen-Hattab. "A new kind of pilgrimage: The modern tourist pilgrim of nineteenth century and early twentieth century Palestine." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39.2 (2003): 131-148.
- El-Hage, Badr. "The Armenian Pioneers of Middle Eastern Photography." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 31 (2007).

- Ertem, Fulya. "Facing the 'Other': A Critical Approach to the Construction of Identity Narratives in the Early Photographic Practice of the Ottoman Empire." *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9, no. 4 (2011): 293–307.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2011.621317>.
- Essay. In *Imaging and Imagining Palestine*. Brill, n.d.
- Essay. In *L'Orient Des Photographes arméniens*. Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 2007.
- Essay. In *Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840-1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global*. BRILL, 2018.
- Essay. In *Türk Fotoğraf Sanatı, Dünyü Bugünü*. Yeni Fotoğraf, 1978.
- Galustian, Abelina. "Orienting the Politics of Images: The Armenian Role in Orientalizing Near Eastern Photography, 1850-1930." PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2021.
- Galstyan, Vigen. "Database of Armenian Photo-Media Practioners." TOUMAYAN, JOSEPH | Database of Armenian photo-media practioners. Accessed July 1, 2022. <http://www.lusarvest.org/practitioners/toumayan-joseph/>.
- Germaner, Semra, and Zeynep İnankur. *Constantinople and the Orientalists*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008.
- Gürsel, Zeynep Devrim. "A picture of health: the search for a genre to visualize care in late Ottoman Istanbul." *Grey Room* 72.01.09 (2018).
- Hoy, Anne H. *The book of photography*. National Geographic Society, 2005.
- INALCIK, Halil. *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300- 1600*. LONDON: Phoenix, 1973.
- Issawi, Charles. *Asymmetrical Development and Transport in Egypt, 1800-1914*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968.
- İpşiroğlu M. Ş. Essay. In *İSLÂMDA Resim; Yasağı Ve sonuçları*. İstanbul: Doğan Kardeş Matbaacılık Sanayii, 1973.
- Jasmin, Michaël. "Histoire De Jérusalem." *Que sais-je ?*, 2018.
<https://doi.org/10.3917/puf.jasmi.2018.01>.
- Jean-François, Breton, and Micheline Breton. "LES PHOTOS D'HERMANN BURCHARDT DE LA COLLECTION SARRAFIAN." *Tempora. Annales d'histoire et d'archéologie* (2011).

- K., Shaw Wendy M. Essay. In *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 131. Oakland, USA: University of California Press, 2003.
- K., Shaw Wendy M. Essay. In *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Oakland, USA: University of California Press, 2003.
- Karakoç, Ercan, and Gökhan Durak. "The Reign of Sultan Abdulaziz in the American Press." *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 14.28 (2021): 199-224.
- Krikorian, Aida, "Aida Krikorian/ On Photography People and Modern Times. "Interview by Akram Zaatari. *Vimeo*, uploaded by akram zaatari Channel, 10 Jan. 2021, <https://vimeo.com/498931024>.
- Landau, Jacob M. *The Beginnings of Modernization in Education: The Jewish Community in Egypt as a Case Study*. University of Chicago, 1968.
- Low, David. "Photography and the empty landscape: Excavating the ottoman Armenian image world." *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 6 (2015): 31-69.
- Manoogian, Sylva N. Essay. In *The Calouste Gulbenkian Library, Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 1925-1990: An Historical Portrait of a Monastic and Lay Community Intellectual Resource Center*, 2013.
- Micklewright, Nancy. "Late Ottoman Photography: Family, Home, and New Identities." *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East*, 2003. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403982698_4.
- Miller, Dickinson Jenkins. *The Craftsman's Art: Armenians and the Growth of Photography in the Near East (1856-1981)*. Beirut: 20, 1981.
- Minasian, Mihran. "Zorapapel Krikor Donatossian." Houshamadyan. Accessed October 10, 2022. <https://www.houshamadyan.org/arm/mapottomanempire/vilayetaleppo/ayntab/economy/tradesphotographers.html>.
- Moors, Annelies, and Steven Machlin. "Postcards of Palestine." *Critique of Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (1987). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275x8700700206>.
- Narkiss, Bezalel, Michael E. Stone, and Avedis K. Sanjian. Essay. In *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem*. Israel: Japhet Press, 1979.
- Nassar, Issam, and Salim Tamari. "Camera Palaestina: Photography and Displaced Histories of Palestine." Essay. edited by Stephen Sheehi. University of California Press, 2022.

- Nassar, Issam. "Early Local Photography in Jerusalem." *History of Photography* 27, no. 4 (2003). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2003.10441267>.
- Nassar, Issam. Essay. In *Different Snapshots, 1850–1948: Early Local Photography in Palestine*, 2005.
- Nassar, Issam. Essay. In *Laqatat Mughayra 1850 ‘ - 1948: Early Local Photography in Palestine*, 2005.
- Nir, Yeshayahu. Essay. In *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land: 1839-1899*, 1. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.
- Nolan, Erin Hyde. "Two-fced: Translations of a portrait of Abdülhamid II." *EM, Troelenberg, K., Schankweiler, & AS, Messner, Reading objects in the contact zone, Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality* 9: 35-41.
- Özendes Engin, and Frères Abdullah. Essay. In *Abdullah frères: Ottoman Court Photographers*. Istanbul: Yapi kredi, 1998.
- Özendes Engin. Essay. In *Osmanlı imparatorluğu'nda fotoğrafçılık (1839-1923)*. İstanbul: YEM Yayın, 2013.
- Özendes Engin. Story. In *Abdullah frères: Osmanlı Sarayının fotoğrafçıları*. Istanbul: YKY, 2006.
- Öztuncay Bahattin. Essay. In *Dynasty and Camera: Portraits from the Ottoman Court, Ömer M. Koç Collection*. İstanbul: AYGAZ, 2011.
- Öztuncay Bahattin. Essay. In *The Photographers of Constantinople: Pioneers, Studios and Artists from 19th Century Istanbul*. Istanbul: Aygaz, 2006.
- Pelletier, Mary. "Armenian Studio Photographers in the Ottoman Empire." *The classic*, 2020.
- Roper, Geoffrey. Essay. In *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- S., Gavin Carney E, and Evelyn Hofer. Essay. In *Bonfils and the Early Photography of the Near East*. S.l.: s.n., 1978.
- Schwarz, Heinrich. *Art and Photography: Forerunners and Influences: Selected Essays*. Olympic Marketing Corporation, 1985.
- Shaw, Wendy M. "Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century: An 'Innocent' Modernism?" *History of Photography* 33, no. 1 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087290802582996>.

- Shay, Oded. "The Early Stages of Historical Documentation and Modern Archives in Jerusalem Society at the End of the Ottoman Period." *Strategies for Tourism Industry - Micro and Macro Perspectives*, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.5772/38664>.
- Sheehi, Stephen. Essay. In *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860-1910*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Sheehi, Stephen. *The Arab Imago a Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860-1910*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Tekdemir, Aziz. "1867 Paris Sergisi Ve Sultan Abdülaziz'in Sergiyi Ziyareti ." *rakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 3, no. 06 (2013).
- Wharton, Alyson. *The architects of Ottoman Constantinople: the Balyan family and the history of Ottoman architecture*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
- "Www.almaany.com." Accessed May 25, 2022.
<https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/>.
- Zeine, Zeine N. *Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism*. Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Özgüner, Emin Artun. "Twisting Realism: The Representation of Power in the Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in the Early Photographic Era," n.d.