VOYAGE EN PERSE

Henry-Réné d’Allemagne

Du Khorassan au pays des Backhtiaris, trois mois de voyage en Perse
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Photographs by
Henry-René d’Allemagne

Adnan Sezer / Bruno Tartarin
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Exceptional archive regrouping a set of 403 original photographs, printed on albumen paper from a glass negative, or in some cases on argentic paper, and mostly taken by Henry-René d’Allemagne during his various archaeological, ethnographic and artistic expeditions in Persia between 1898 and 1907. They were used as the main iconography for his mammoth book entitled Du Khorassan au Pays des Backhtiaris: trois mois de voyage en Perse (From Khorassan to the Land of Backhtiari: three months of travel in Persia), Paris, Hachette, 1911, 4 vols.

Of those 403 photographs, 386 were used to illustrate the book – six of them being printed twice – and 17 had never been published before.

The majority of these photographs were taken by Henry-René d’Allemagne, while some were taken by Jacques Bizot (33), General Bazirguian (7), Paul Nadar (4) and Dr Jean-Baptiste Feuvrier (2). Our set includes nine of the 33 photographs by Jacques Bizot and one photograph (of the two) by Feuvrier.

These original photographs were mounted in an unbound album, each image accompanied by a written legend, carefully printed. However, some variations may appear. Some prints come with handwritten notes in the margins, probably added by Henry-René d’Allemagne himself.

Many photographs from this ensemble were enhanced with gouache and potassium ferrocyanide to obtain the best quality possible during the photo-engraving process while printing out the book.

The photographs show some really interesting genre scenes with numerous famous people of the time (Persia’s Shah, for example), along with disciples of Nestorianism, Dervishes, children, women, families, and the author himself with his travelling companion, soon-to-be Dr Vinchon, posing on several occasions for posterity (I, p.224 out-of-text; III, pp.140, 188 and 198; IV, pp.155 and 213). The photographer immortalised different ethnic groups: Jews, Kurds, Persians, Armenians, Ghebres, Talshis from Mazandaran Province, Turkmen, Balchitar, Cossacks and Russians.

Also of note are some splendid views of landscapes, various palaces, mosques, numerous bazaars, cemeteries, schools, a scholar’s library, interiors of an antique shop, ruins, etc.

The photographs offer multiple picturesque scenes of daily life and its various occupations: grocers, bakers, dentists, barbers, dry cleaners, carpenters, potters, bankers, peddlers, singers and musicians, street merchants selling poultry or syrup, craftsmen, cooks, wood merchants, painters, ceramic painters, farm workers, customs officers, falconers, “Jewish antiquities dealers in search of a good deal”, as well as numerous activities like the production of bread, butter, clothing, carpets, felt, bricks and opium, laundry cleaning, house building, weddings, dances and feasts, traditional costumes, wrestling, religious parades, prayers, ablutions, harems, the transportation of corpses, burials, the cleaning of turquoise stones after mining, tiger hunting, etc. We can also observe scenes of field ploughing, harvesting, seed grinding, cotton and tea picking, along with carding, wool spinning and mowing, the throat-slitting of goats and the immolation of sheep and other animals (donkeys, camels, horses, oxen, goats, sheep, rams and dogs).

Eminent archivist and palaeographer, librarian, historian, image collector, art historian, amateur photographer, Orientalist and traveller Henry-René d’Allemagne (1863–1950) is an encyclopaedic reference, a true representative of erudition and the enlightened art of collecting in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th.

It was with the opening of the Trans-Caspian railway, which was under construction between 1879 and 1895, that Henry-René d’Allemagne was first inspired to visit Persia. In 1890 he planned a trip with his friend, engraver Émile Vaucanu, but he soon realised the impossibility of such an enterprise. Vaucanu, nevertheless attracted by the prospect, went on alone and without funds, boarding a boat in Marseille to Batumi, where he started to make a living from drawing. On his way to Tiflis he was assaulted and left for dead, only to be saved in the nick of time by a charitable soul. After this regrettable incident he received help to make his way to Baku, then crossed the Caspian Sea to Ashgabat where he forged a strong friendship with a French engineer working on the construction of the Trans-Caspian railway. Vaucanu continued his journey towards Samarkand, and from there went south-west towards the Pamir mountains in order to make sketches of the scenery, which were destined for inclusion in an album of etching designs. Around 275 kilometers from Samarkand, in a location free of Russian authority, he encountered some Turkmen, who murdered him, thinking they were rob-
D’Allemagne obtained permission to carry on some excavating and the right to keep any discovered objects. But while photographing views of Guchian’s streets and bazaar, d’Allemagne was arrested and thrown into jail on suspicion of espionage. During this incident the permissions that had been granted by Meshed’s Viceroy “mysteriously vanished”. On the verge of winter, d’Allemagne left the country for Russia.

In 1907 and now a veteran traveller in these areas, d’Allemagne was entrusted by the French Ministry of Education with an archeological mission in Persia – to investigate the condition of ancient monuments, a great number of which had deteriorated or been destroyed during the recent wars and the 1907 revolution. Simultaneously d’Allemagne received an invitation from Serdare Assad, military chief of the Backhtiari tribe, to come and visit his domain. During this journey, between September and November 1907, d’Allemagne decided to enter Persia via Russian Turkestan, sojourning briefly in Meshed, and then went to Tehran afterwards, taking the opportunity to visit Nishapur, Sabzevar, Shahrud and Varamin. From Tehran he made his way to Ispahan, following the main road that goes through Qom and Kashan. He then went to Djosoungoum, the Backhtiari’s summer residence and his host’s permanent home. The return trip followed the same itinerary to Tehran, from where he made way to Europe along the road from Qazvin to Recht and Enseli, and then to Baku across the Caspian Sea.

To ensure the successful completion of his journey and the development of his book, d’Allemagne enlisted the help of Hadji Ali Gholi Khan, who arranged for a group of soldiers from his tribe to accompany the French traveller. Khan also took part in the elaboration of the book, writing essential notes on the manners and customs of Persia in general, and of his tribe in particular. Soon-to-be Dr Jean Vinchon, d’Allemagne’s travelling companion, also played his part during the expedition, consigning to a precious journal or log book his feelings upon observing the imposing Persian landscapes. This book became a “constant guide” for d’Allemagne. Meanwhile, a precious note on miniaturist painters and Persian manuscripts was written by Georges Marteau, engineer of the arts and manufacture.

General Barzigianu, director in chief of the Indo-European Telegraph Company in Tehran, shared with d’Allemagne a collection of photographs taken by a Russian industrialist, Sevruguin, who over a period of 30 years had compiled a remarkable collection of images, subsequently destroyed in 1909 during the fall of Mohamed Ali Shah when looters raided houses owned by Europeans. Some of these photographs were utilised by Jacques Bizet, general inspector for finances, who was at the disposal of the Persian government between 1908 and 1909 and was assigned with the task of reorganising the Persian administration.

Thanks to his materialistic and artistic approach to the objects, Henry-René d’Allemagne contributed to numerous collections of his time, which he compiled in a manner and a format personal to him. He is the author of several important publications that remain of interest to anyone approaching the art of curiosities and collecting arts, thanks to his great passion for the object itself along with its context and period.

He is also one of the greatest specialists of his time on ironwork’s history and locksmithing art, from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance through to the 17th century, his historical knowledge being combined with a training that was initially theoretical after completing his thesis at the École des Chartes, and deepened by a rigorous practical learning from 1885 to 1890 in the workshop of one of the most brilliant art locksmiths and restorers of his time, “the iron sculptor” Pierre-François Boulanger. Boulanger was known mainly for creating masterpieces of the utmost artistic locksmithing, along with remarkable works like those decorating the central gate of Notre-Dame de Paris, laid out under the supervision of Viollet-le-Duc in 1867 after 12 years of craftsmanship.

he could now appreciate meticulous original creations in the context of an unmatched historical and practical approach, placing him at the peak of his art. In 1899 he was entrusted with organising the luminary section of the Paris World Fair. During the 19th century, France showed a strong interest in the Ottoman Empire, as preventing England from using the sea route to India. And finally, another major milestone was reached in this fascination for the Oriental world with the French Campaign in Egypt from 1798 to 1801, when General Bonaparte tried to seize control of this country, and more widely the Orient, as well as preventing England from using the sea route to India. And finally, the last major event that contributed to this interest was the Greek War of Independence from 1821 to 1830, during which Greece, supported by Russia, England and France, freed itself from the Ottoman Empire’s domination. Lord Byron, a major figure in the Orientalist literature, was amongst the most distinguished philhellenes, and his example would be followed by Chateaubriand, Larmartine, Nerval, Flaubert and others. As for painting, Ingres, Vernet, Delacroix, Decamps, Chassériau, Fromentin, Gérôme drew their inspiration to some extent from a real or imagined Orient.

Émile Prisse d’Avennes (1807–1879), a civil engineer and archaeologist known by the name of Edris-Effendi, was a distinguished figure in Oriental studies, the arts of Islam and the Oriental Middle Ages, as well as a brilliant Egyptologist. With photographer Édouard Athanase Jarrot (1835–1873), he used photography to make a systematic account of Egyptian monuments. From 1850, with a brand-new approach that was extremely precise and rigorous, he drew up a prodigious photographic documentation of the ceremonial approach, placing him at the peak of his art. In 1899 he was entrusted with organising the luminary section of the Paris World Fair. During the 19th century, France showed a strong interest in the Ottoman Empire, as preventing England from using the sea route to India. And finally, another major milestone was reached in this fascination for the Oriental world with the French Campaign in Egypt from 1798 to 1801, when General Bonaparte tried to seize control of this country, and more widely the Orient, as well as preventing England from using the sea route to India. And finally, the last major event that contributed to this interest was the Greek War of Independence from 1821 to 1830, during which Greece, supported by Russia, England and France, freed itself from the Ottoman Empire’s domination. Lord Byron, a major figure in the Orientalist literature, was amongst the most distinguished philhellenes, and his example would be followed by Chateaubriand, Larmartine, Nerval, Flaubert and others. As for painting, Ingres, Vernet, Delacroix, Decamps, Chassériau, Fromentin, Gérôme drew their inspiration to some extent from a real or imagined Orient.

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monuments he had studied. For two whole years, Prisse d’Avennes and Jarrot documented and photographed a number of important monuments, first in Cairo, and then in Middle and Upper Egypt.

Orientalism in France reached its peak thanks to the contribution of eminent art historians like Gaston Migeon (1861–1930), Émile Molinier’s attaché and curator of the Louvre museum. With true foresight, he was a fervent advocate for the creation in his museum of a section dedicated to the arts of Islam, thus allowing these major arts to enter this noble institution. From his travels in the Orient he brought back objects that would gain a certain value thanks to important and resounding exhibitions, fuelled by the very practical knowledge he gained there, allowing major works of Oriental art to be considered as equals with Occidental masterpieces.

Henry-René d’Allemagne takes full part in this ancient and esteemed tradition; he is one of the most enduring and eminent scholars of Orientalism, benefiting from his field experience as well as his extraordinary knowledge of the vernacular culture. He contributed significantly to expert knowledge of the Orient. He was an enlightened collector and generated a strong enthusiasm for the Orient, influencing many followers through multiple articles, exhibitions and publications as well as his much appreciated sharing of knowledge and images.

Alongside this exceptional set of photographs, we offer the following publication:

**Allemagne (Henry-René d’). Du Khorassan au Pays des Backhtiaris: trois mois de voyage en Perse (From Khorassan to the Land of Backhtiari: three months of journey in Persia)**


**Original edition** of this important and superb account of an archeological, artistic and photographic journey in Persia in the early 20th century, undertaken by order of the French government under the supervision of one of the most distinguished scholars of the period. This book contains, much like an encyclopedia, extremely detailed information on all aspects of culture, traditions and Persian civilization.

Although the title of the publication mentions “960 photographs and 255 out-of-text prints”, only 816 images are true in-site photographs, mainly general views, architectural or of objects. The other images are reproductions of drawings, prints or objects from the personal collections of the author. Our archive contains half of the images made to illustrate this publication, 379 out of 816 photographs, including 60 out-of-text images out of 156.

Printed at 510 copies, this being one of the 250 numbered prints (no. 41) in wove paper.
From Meshed to Tehran
Our camp in the room of a private caravanserai.
Here go the leather bags filled with Krans,
the only money accepted in this region.

Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad.
Asking for a native’s hospitality.
Road to Tehran from Meshed.
A "tahiveh khaneh" decorated with murals near Hichaboor's doors.

Opposite: Road to Tehran from Meshed.
Ruins of the Aiwan-i-Kaif bridge.
Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad.
Jewish traders looking for antiquities near Sebævar.

Festivities for a wedding ceremony in Nestorian lands near Urmia’s lake.
Baku’s ancient wall, the Minaret of the Khan’s Palace.

Clergé Lessan: two Mullahs.
Preparations for prayers, Muslims praying.

Penitents' procession, time for praying.
Mujtahed and Mullahs taking tea.
Shah Abdol-Azim’s mausoleum/shrine near Tehran.

Groups of Seyides (with green turbans) and Mullahs (with white turbans).
A Seyide.

Mujtahid and his family.
Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad.
A pond near Ahuan.
Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad.

Near Iman Gouli, the miraculous fountain.
Jews people from Afghanistan.

Previous page: Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad, caravan of pilgrims on their way to the Holy City.

A group of Afghan Dervishes.
Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad.
Variety of natives from Khorassan.

A traveling cook preparing the “Kabab”.
A Zemhifouroache (peddler).

Turkey. Wrestling practice.
Nestorian women grinding seeds and making bread.
Armenian women in ceremonial clothes.

Armenian and Persian women making carpets in Sultanabad.
School for young Jewish girls in Persia.

Previous page: Russian Turkestan, a Persian bazaar.

Singers and musicians.
Inside a Persian home.
On the foreground, a young woman bathing, in the background, an old lady and a little girl seated in a kursi.
A falconer.

Persian policemen, groups of Kurds.
Groups of Kurds from the whereabouts of Urmia.
(Kurd Cheqquaq of Samaq).

Tehran, looter soldier after the bombing of June 23rd, 1908.
Isfahan.
Entrance of the Imperial Bazaar, in northern Meidan.
Inside a Persian scholar’s library.

Procession of servants carrying gifts to the Shah for the “Norouz” (New Year).
One of the Tehran Royal Palace’s room behind the Throne’s hall.

Arcade gallery of the Royal Place in Tehran.
The 403 photographs are available on request

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Road to Meshed from Ashkhabad.
Rich merchant followed by his servant.

Opposite: View of the Kishlak village.

Back cover: Tehran,
The Imperial Persian bank on the Yup Meidan.