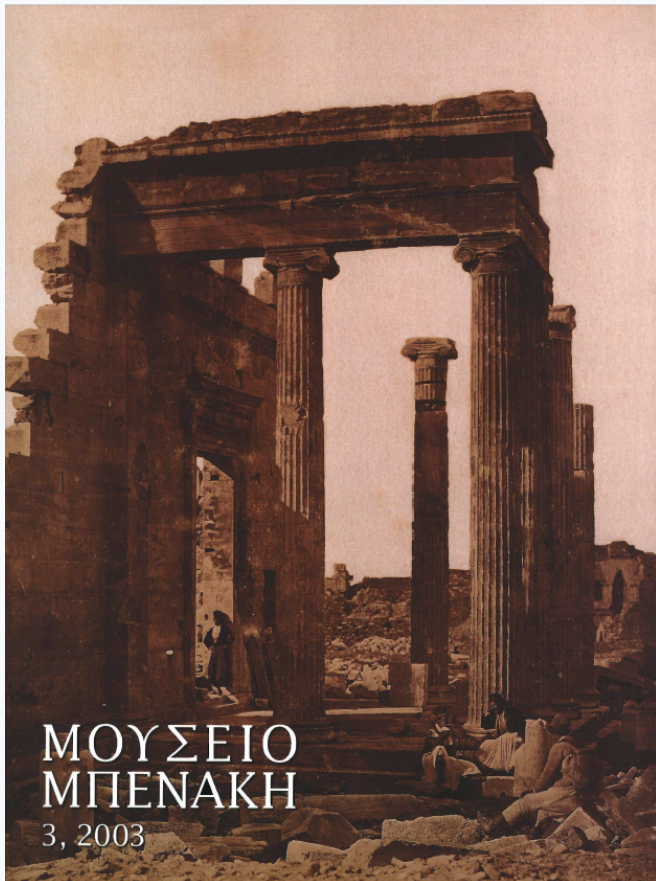


## Μουσείο Μπενάκη

Τόμ. 3 (2003)



Η στερεότυπη εικόνα της Ελλάδας: φωτογραφίες του 19ου αιώνα στα Φωτογραφικά Αρχεία του Μουσείου Μπενάκη

*Aliki Tsirgiou*

doi: [10.12681/benaki.18237](https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.18237)

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### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Tsirgiou, A. (2018). Η στερεότυπη εικόνα της Ελλάδας: φωτογραφίες του 19ου αιώνα στα Φωτογραφικά Αρχεία του Μουσείου Μπενάκη. *Μουσείο Μπενάκη*, 3, 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.18237>

## The stereotyped vision of Greece: 19th century photographs in the Benaki Museum archives

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE of the Benaki Museum was founded in 1973 with the object of collecting, storing and classifying photographs of monuments and works of art of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine eras. Over the years the initial thematic repertoire of the Archive has been expanded, so that it now covers all aspects of modern Hellenism and is currently exploring trends in contemporary Greek photography. The Museum's photographic collection comprises 300.000 negatives and 25.000 vintage prints which have been acquired by the Archive mainly through major donations and purchases. Outstanding among the material from the 19th century is the oeuvre of the European photographers James Robertson and Alfred Nicolas Normand, as well as that of the Greeks Dimitrios Constantinou and Petros Moraitis. The impressive twentieth-century collection includes the archives of professional photographers such as Nelly's, Voula Papaioannou, Periklis Papachatzidakis, Dimitris Harissiadis, Nikolaos Tompazis, Henri Paul Boissonnas and Nikolaos Rizos, as well as amateurs.

The discussion that follows is based on an examination of the material held in the Photographic Archive, specifically the vintage nineteenth-century prints taken in Greece by foreign photographers. The photographic work produced in Greece during the nineteenth century has often been characterised as having a certain sameness, and a study of the photographs at the Benaki confirms this uniformity of subject matter. Yet beyond this thematic unity one may find an underlying diversity, and a closer analysis of the photographs supports the thesis that in the case of Greek antiquities the same subject was

observed, examined and documented by each photographer from a different perspective.

The stereotyped perception of Greece

Interest in travelling to Greece has a long history and, to judge from the ever-increasing number of visitors, the desire to see the country remained unaffected by the constant political and social changes within Greece.<sup>1</sup> "What increasingly focused attention on Greece for its own sake was its antiquities and the hope of finding them".<sup>2</sup> The travellers were often accompanied by artists whose task was to produce textual or visual documentation of the main places of interest. Most visual images depicted the antiquities and most published writings described the ruins and historical background associated with them. Over the years, and as a result of this thematic preoccupation, these artistic and literary endeavours created a stereotyped perception of Greece – a perception which was adopted by photographers during the nineteenth century.

The majority of photographers documenting Greece imitated their predecessors, the illustrators and writers, by confining their thematic choices within the domain of the Greek antiquities. It is therefore no coincidence that early photographic work in Greece reflects a homogeneity of subject matter. However, as mentioned above, differences in approach emerge if one examines the work more carefully. As Susan Sontag remarks, "*the photographer was thought to be an acute but non-interfering observer – a scribe, not a poet. But as people quickly discovered that nobody takes the same picture of the same thing, the suppo-*

sition that cameras furnish an impersonal, objective image yielded to the fact that photographs are evidence not only of what's there but of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world".<sup>3</sup>

Over the centuries, Greece has attracted visitors of different origins and cultures. Due to its geographical location the country has served both as a place of transit for voyagers to the Holy Land and as a destination in itself. The large number of conquerors who occupied the Greek territories and the hazardous conditions of travel within the interior of the country did not diminish the interest of travellers in Greece, and many of those intent on visiting the country appear to have been undeterred by difficulties of transport and accommodation<sup>4</sup>. Even if, unlike Italy, Greece was not included in the pre-arranged destinations of the Grand Tour,<sup>5</sup> the country became an important stopping-off point for a number of travellers visiting the Holy Land. Although commercial motives became an increasingly important reason for travelling to Greece, its antiquarian interest remained the principal attraction.

Curiosity about Greece and its past did not develop until the late thirteenth century with the revival of classical learning. A number of factors, such as the translation of ancient Greek texts and their introduction into university curricula,<sup>6</sup> led to Europe's heightened enthusiasm for the historical background of the country. By the end of the 15th century, "Europeans had studied Greek manuscripts, admired and collected Greek coins and expressed their fascination for Roman copies of lost Greek sculptures".<sup>7</sup> The "works of most of the ancient Greek historians, poets and philosophers, from Homer to Plotinus, were available in Latin translations"<sup>8</sup> and the traveller had become familiar with ancient literature both from his studies and from his own private reading. As a result of this revival of classical studies, visitors came to Greece with the desire to identify the "Homeric sites"<sup>9</sup> and the Athens of Pericles, and in search of the 'ideal' of the ancient Greek civilisation described in these works.

Often, travellers' activities were not restricted simply to touring archaeological sites. Many writers and artists produced textual and pictorial documentation of their visits to Greece, and since their interest was exclusively directed towards its antiquities, this was naturally reflected in their work. The increased demand for information concerning Greece and its ancient history found

a response when travellers started "writing about the life and sensibility of the ancient Greeks"<sup>10</sup> and portraying Greek antiquities. Consciously or unconsciously, writers and artists both satisfied and further stimulated the interest in antiquities through their work. The texts consisted largely of descriptions of the sites,<sup>11</sup> usually accompanied by historical narratives linked to a specific antiquity.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, paintings, drawings, engravings, lithographs and, later in the nineteenth century, photographs also depicted the ruins.<sup>13</sup> Evidence of artistic interest in other subjects, such as the contemporary social scene or modern Greek architecture, is almost non-existent. Unconsciously, travellers, along with the large number of other artists and writers who documented the ancient remains, provided Greece with a distinct identity that was closely related to its past. "The culturally located ways of framing sights and arranging narratives is a selective process that usually reproduces the predictable; the already said, written and photographed".<sup>14</sup> Before considering the various factors that led to this homogeneity of subject matter, it may be useful to examine how the cultural representation of a country is formed.

Man has always felt a strong desire to explore the limits of his world. Natural curiosity and the thirst for knowledge have brought travellers into contact with unknown civilisations and exotic locations. The search for the "extraordinary"<sup>15</sup> and the "otherness"<sup>16</sup> of a different country or civilisation has encouraged the urge to travel. In Greece, this search for the exotic and the unfamiliar found its response in the archaeological sites: the peculiar and diverse character of the Greek landscape did not attract the traveller, who concentrated on the discovery or rediscovery of the remains of ancient Greek civilisation.

According to historians of tourism, the remoteness of a place is what awakens human curiosity and the urge to travel to that location. This leads to an attempt to capture the large "range of signs, images, symbols" and "make the sight familiar to us in ordinary culture".<sup>17</sup> In other words the cultural representation of a tourist site is formed by "symbols, images, signs, phrases and narratives".<sup>18</sup> The sum total of these representations reproduce what Tim Edenson calls the "otherness"<sup>19</sup> of a travel destination. In this respect, Greece was represented only by characteristics that were closely related to its past, to ancient Greek civilisation. Consciously or unconsciously, the traveller





Fig. 1. P.-G. Joly de Lotbinière, *The east façade of the Propylaea*, October 1839 (from: *Excursions Daguerriennes: Vues et monuments les plus remarquables du globe*, Noël-Marie Paymal Lerebours [(Paris 1842)]. Aquatint, 15.4 x 20.8 cm.

sought to find in Greece its ancient identity, in other words those features that distinguished this country from others.

Guidebooks played a unique role, since in their own way they determined the routes the voyagers followed. Greece, set apart by linguistic and topographical barriers, necessitated the consultation of such books, the majority of which proposed visits to the archaeological sites, often commenting on their singular qualities.<sup>20</sup> Nearly all guidebooks began their itineraries with Athens because of the attractions it provided in itself and also because of its convenience as a starting point for tours to the interior of Greece. Travellers were recommended first to visit the Acropolis, which dominated the landscape, and then the ruins surrounding it, such as the Monument of Phi-

lopappos, the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and the Theseion. After the antiquities of Athens, they were directed to other archaeological sites throughout the rest of the country, such as Delphi, Corinth and Aegina. In this way they were encouraged to follow a pre-determined route and some of them, in their turn, documented the pre-selected sites recommended by these publications.

Another fact that recommended people to visit and document antiquities was the distinctive architectural eclecticism of Athens. “Perhaps no town on the world possesses such an extraordinary melange of different styles of buildings as Athens, which may be accounted for, from its having fallen under so many masters, each of whom has left some specimen of the architectural style of their nation”.<sup>21</sup> Eastern elements could be found in the presence of





Fig. 2. A.-N. Normand, *View of the Acropolis and the Temple of the Olympian Zeus*, 1851. Albumin print from calotype negative, 15.4 x 20.5 cm.

Turkish mosques and, at the same time, Western influences in the modern architecture. Many travellers expressed their feelings of disappointment on arrival at the sight of what was described as the ‘dirtiest little town in all Christendom’.<sup>22</sup> A traveller in Athens during the 1850s remarked: “*There is nothing particularly Greek in the physiognomy of Athens. The houses of the better sort are German in outward appearance, while the poorer dwellings resemble those of the Italian villages.*”<sup>23</sup> The feature that justified the “otherness”<sup>24</sup> of Greece which most travellers were looking for was its antiquarian interest.

#### Nineteenth century photography in Greece

According to Gary Edwards, “*early photographers of Greece followed what might be called a standard icono-*

*graphic programme in selecting sights at which they pointed their cameras, an iconographic tradition that not only predated photography... but continued for about 25 years following Joly de Lotbiniere’s 1839 views*”.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the thematic uniformity of early photographs of Greece was encouraged by the physical properties of photography itself. During photography’s first years, it was not possible to document moving objects with clarity because of the long exposures required. Thus photographers turned their lenses to ‘stable’ objects such as architectural views, and, in the case of Greece, archaeological sites.

When the invention of photography was presented at the Académie des Sciences in Paris on 19 August 1839, the Frenchman Francois Dominique Arago declared that the discovery had many marvellous applications. Specifi-



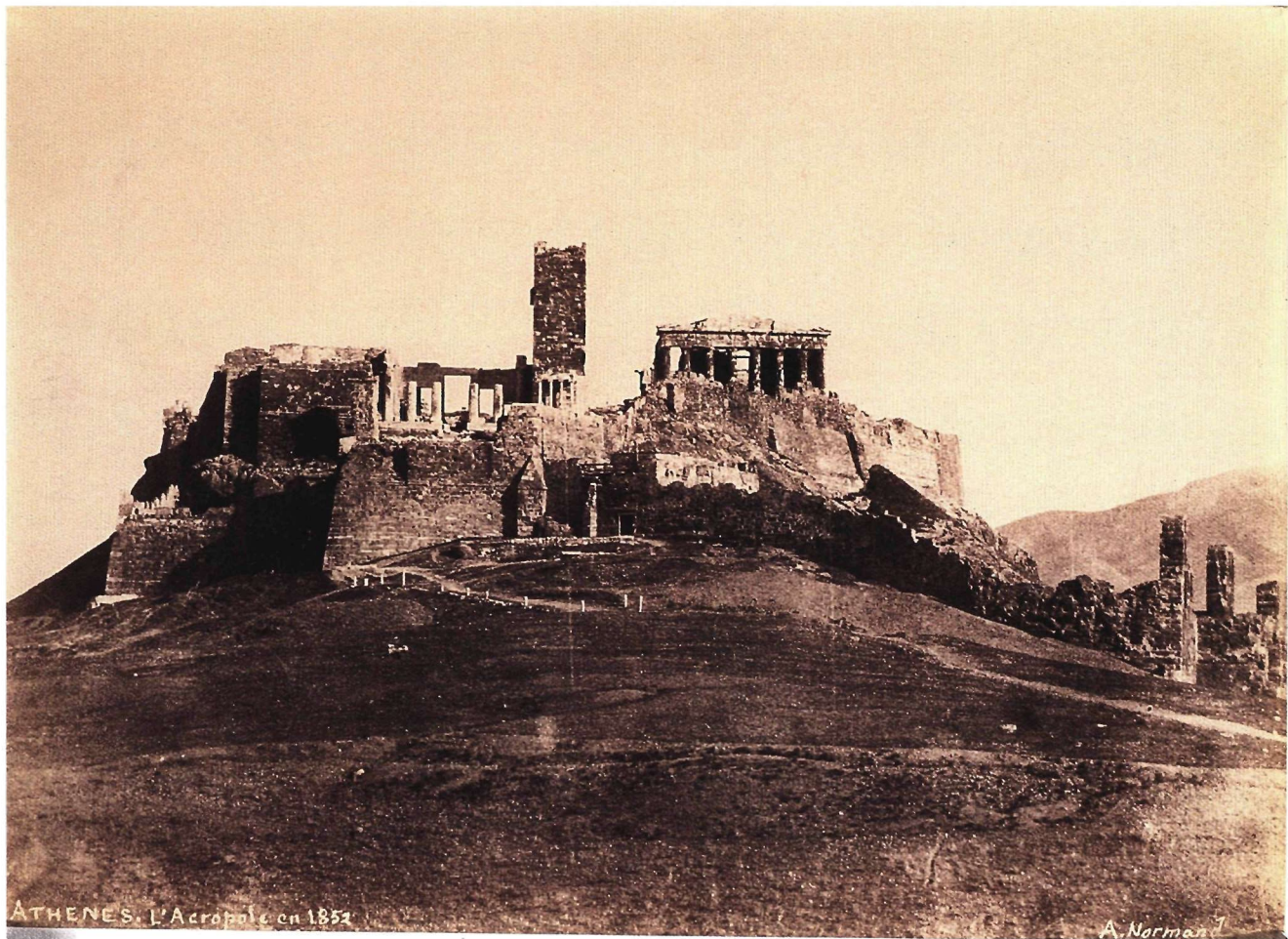


Fig. 3. A.-N. Normand, *The west slope of the Acropolis*, 1852. Albumin print from calotype negative, 14.9 x 20.4 cm.

cally, he mentioned that in order “to copy the millions and millions of hieroglyphics that cover (even on the outside) the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis Karnak etc. one would need twenty years and legions of draftsmen. With the daguerreotype, one single man could do this enormous work by himself”.<sup>26</sup> Following the announcement, the French publisher Noël-Marie-Paymal Lerebours (1807-1873) supplied travellers with photographic equipment and sent them to document on his behalf the “most remarkable monuments of the globe”.

Among the first daguerreotypists despatched by Lerebours was the Canadian Pierre-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière (1789-1865).<sup>27</sup> Lotbinière, who was travelling in the Mediterranean, visited Athens in October 1839 and photographed its antiquities for the first time. As was to

be expected, the ‘most remarkable one’, the Acropolis, was the prime subject chosen by the first photographer in Greece. The daguerreotypes he produced<sup>28</sup> resulted in an illustrated album entitled *Les Excursions Daguerriennes: Vues et Monuments les plus remarquables du globe* (1840-1844),<sup>29</sup> which included three engravings made from the daguerreotypes depicting Athenian antiquities (the Parthenon, the Propylea [fig. 1] and the Temple of Olympian Zeus). The Benaki Archive contains two copies of the three aquatints produced from these, the first daguerreotypes taken in Greece. In this volume Joly de Lotbinière described his impressions while photographing in Athens: “I had already admired the beauties of the Acropolis in detail when I first went there with my daguerreotype camera. At that time I was a strict





Fig. 4. J. Robertson, *South front of the Theseion seen from the south-east*, 1853-1854.  
Albumenized salt print, 23.5 x 29.4 cm.

observer of Daguerre's rules, and I intended not to waste a moment in exposing my plate to the rays of the sun. Nonetheless I was greatly confused by the need to choose among so many masterpieces, I turned my camera first one way and then another. In the end, the position of the sun led me to decide on the view of the Propylea, that marvellous gateway which is such a worthy introduction to the wonders of the Acropolis. I cannot deny that I regretted having to turn my back on the divine Parthenon and the Erechtheion, but my regret soon faded before the magical view laid out before me".<sup>30</sup> No previous photographic work existed for Joly de Lotbinière to use as a starting point, but he himself laid the groundwork for later photographers by adopting and exploiting the thematic repertoire of the printmakers who had preceded him.

The 'iconographic tradition' was next adopted by the

photographers of the calotype era.<sup>31</sup> One of the pioneer calotypists to visit Greece was the famous French architect Alfred-Nicolas Normand (1822-1899). In 1846, Normand was awarded the Prix de Rome, which allowed him to continue his studies in Italy, and while in the Italian capital he learned photography from the celebrated writers Maxime Du Camp and Gustave Flaubert. Normand briefly practiced photography in Rome, Pompeii and Sicily, before travelling to Greece in the company of Alfred Mézières. The two men arrived in Thessaly in the autumn of 1851 and travelled south to Athens, reaching the capital on 8th October,<sup>32</sup> where they remained until the 25th of the same month, documenting the ruins (fig. 2). In one of his letters Normand describes his experiences while in the Greek capital: "*Finally, I am in Athens, near the monuments I so admired. However, I had*



not imagined the city to be so small, miserable, melancholic and waterless. [...] What compensates (the visitor) for all the minor tribulations is the Acropolis and the antiquities that surround it. It is difficult to find something as beautiful as the Acropolis".<sup>33</sup> On their way back, they toured the region of Pelion and Ossa, and stopped in Salonica before finally reaching Constantinople. Normand visited Athens again in January 1852 on his way to Ancona (fig. 3). In 1855, he abandoned photography and returned to the practice of architecture. It is recorded that Normand made a total of 130 calotypes during his tour of Greece but only a few exist today. The Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum owns what could be described as the oldest single collection of photographs preserved in Greek archival collections, consisting of 24 albumin prints produced from calotype negatives dated 1851-1852 and 7 albumin prints signed 1887. Normand's depictions of the Greek capital are among the earliest surviving photographs of Athens, and he documented the Acropolis and its surrounding antiquities in the state of abandon brought about by centuries of foreign occupation. His images move us, but at the same time they display a beauty and power which are only apparent on careful examination. Despite some aesthetic differences, the work of the calotypists in Greece largely conforms to the 'iconographic programme' of photographing Greek antiquities.

The Englishman James Robertson (1813-1888)<sup>34</sup> also travelled to Greece in the early 1850s. It has been suggested that Robertson was born in Middlesex, England and studied at the University of Edinburgh, but he spent most of his professional life in Constantinople as Chief Engraver of the Imperial Mint. Robertson's interest in photography began to show itself in 1850, when he spent some time in Malta, taking calotype views of the island<sup>35</sup> with Felice Beato (c. 1830 - c. 1906). A few years later he opened a photographic studio in Pera, the European quarter of Constantinople, thus facilitating his access to Greece. His photographs of Greek ruins taken in 1853-1854 were published in two albums (figs 4, 5). The first, entitled *Grecian Antiquities Photographed by James Robertson, esq., Chief Engraver to the Imperial Mint, Constantinople*,<sup>36</sup> consisted of forty-eight photographs on salted paper and the second, *Photographs by Robertson: Athens and the Grecian Antiquities*, contained forty-four albumenised salted paper prints. A copy of the latter was presented



Fig. 5. J. Robertson, *The north porch of the Erechtheion from the north-east*, 1853-1854. Albumenized salt print, 30.7 x 26 cm.

to the Benaki Archive by Rena Andreadis in 1989. A feature of Robertson's photographs is the inclusion of human figures in local Greek costumes, while sharpness and an overall penetration of detail with a rich gradation of tone are the basic characteristics of his camera vision. Although the images of the photographers mentioned above fall within the 'iconographic programme' described by Gary Edwards, the personal vision of each individual is apparent, and closer analysis reveals a difference in style and approach—for example the 'romantic vision'<sup>37</sup> that Robertson transferred to his views through his particular way of positioning of the human element.

The late 1850s was a period of further transition in photographic technology. The calotype was replaced by the wet collodion process, making photography more resistant to elements such as hot climates. Additionally, travellers became increasingly intrigued by the 'new discovery', and the profession of photographer began to appear more attractive in commercial terms.<sup>38</sup> Thus





Fig. 6. C. Schiffer, *The Parthenon*, c.1859. Albumin print, 16 x 21.2 cm.

began a dynasty of photographers whose photographic views of the Grecian antiquities would invade Europe in the form of souvenirs brought home by tourists. Prominent among them are Francis Frith (1822-1898), Francis Bedford (1816-1894) and Jacob August Lorentz (1813-1884). At the same time, one finds a number of foreign photographers becoming established in Greece. Carl Schiffer, probably of Bavarian origin, spent a considerable time in Athens. According to Schiffer's 'announcements', he worked there from late 1859 to 1863 and called himself a "*painter and a photographer*".<sup>39</sup> Photography historians have suggested that Schiffer was one of the first photographers to open a proper indoor studio (i.e. one with large glass windows) in Greece. His work is not restricted to portrait photography but also

illustrates the architecture and archaeological sites of the time. The Benaki Museum has recently acquired an interesting view of the Parthenon signed by this photographer (fig. 6).

By the end of the 1850s stereo photography had begun tackling everything from architectural views to sociological scenes. The stereoscopic effect, produced by two slightly dissimilar photographs taken from viewpoints 10 to 20 centimeters apart, affected the photographer's vision and the public's way of seeing. Stereoscopy secured a perception of relief and depth and, thus, "*created a comprehensive pictorial catalogue of the world, comparable to a detailed topographical survey*"<sup>40</sup>. Included in the Photographic Archive are 10 stereoscopic views of Athens taken by Vassilaki Kargopoulos (1826-1886).



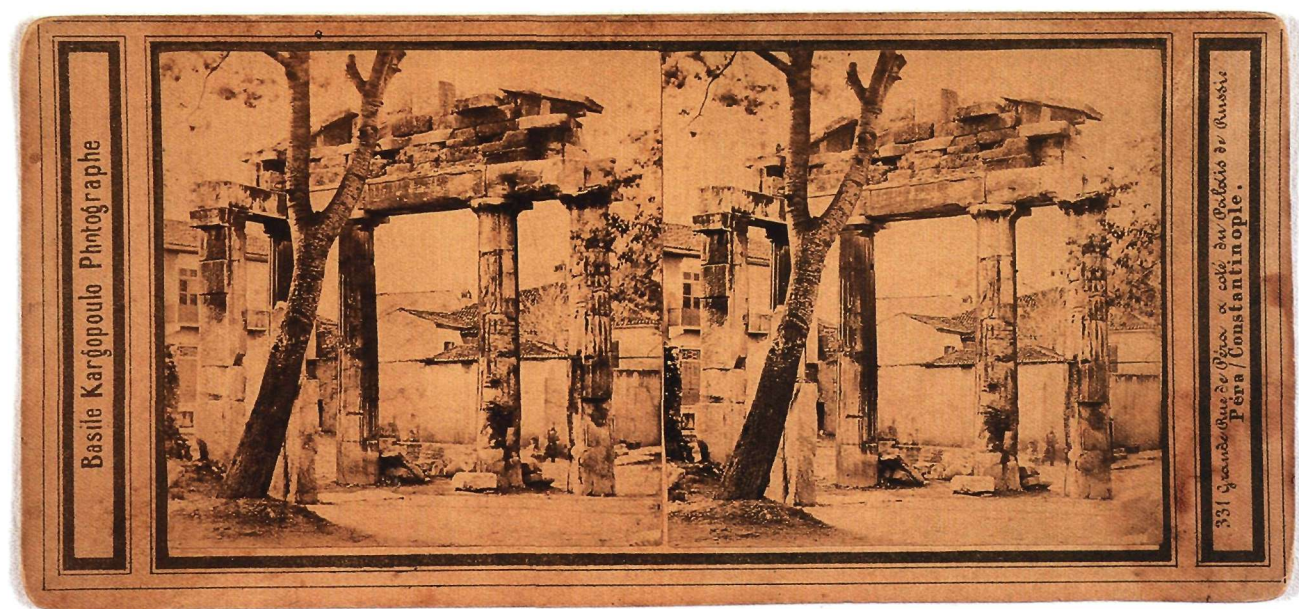


Fig. 7. V. Kargopoulos, *The Gate of Athena Archegetis in the Roman Agora*, 1860. Stereoscopic photograph, albumin print, 7.2 x 14 cm.

Kargopoulos is one of the most important names in the history of photography in Ottoman Empire, and is best known as a master of the art of portrait photography. Having been appointed ‘Chief Photographer to His Imperial Majesty the Sultan’ he photographed members of the imperial family, and leading civil and military officials in the government service. It is not known if he was Greek in origin<sup>41</sup> but photography historians have called him the first Greek photographer in Constantinople.<sup>42</sup> Kargopoulos opened his studio in 1850, when he was 24 years old, in Beyoglou, next to the Russian Embassy. Probably in 1878, he moved to a new address “*Tünel Meydani 4, which would become the setting for the most brilliant years of his professional life*”.<sup>43</sup> Some time at the beginning of the 1860s Kargopoulos visited Greece and documented the Athenian monuments (fig. 7).

Despite the ease of stereoscopy, many photographers created panoramic views in an attempt to give an illusion of depth to their images. The Benaki’s Photographic Archive has recently acquired five of the six sections which comprise a photographic panorama of Athens taken around 1865 by Baron Paul von des Granges (1825-1887). Des Granges was born in Kalamata where he lived until 1848. He studied in Germany and,

for a few years, in Italy. It seems that his first contact with photography took place in Florence in the early 1860s, and in 1865 he toured Greece, systematically documenting its beauties:<sup>44</sup> among the places he visited were Athens, Corinth, Delphi, Aegina, Sparta and Santorini. In 1869 Des Granges published a remarkable selection of photographs in a volume entitled *Classische Landschaften und Denkmäler aus Griechenland nach der Natur photographisch aufgenommen von Paul des Granges in Athen*.<sup>45</sup> The importance of the panorama lies in the information it contains not only on the state of the antiquities around Athens, but also on the city’s contemporary urban planning.

By the end of the 1860s the photographic market for monuments and genre scenes had proliferated beyond all expectations. As a consequence, the first large commercial photography studios appeared in order to satisfy the demand for souvenir images. Among the best known were those belonging to the Alinari brothers and the Bonfils family. The Alinari studios were founded in Florence in 1852 by Leopoldo Alinari (1832-1865), and taken over on his death by his brothers Romualdo (1830-1890), and Giuseppe (1836-1890). The firm *Fratelli Alinari, Fotografi e Editori*, covered a wide range of photographic





Fig. 8. Fratelli Alinari, *The Gate of Athena Archegetis in the Roman Agora*, c. 1890. Albumin print, 25.5 x 19 cm.

activity from the reproduction of works of art to the documentation of Italian scenery and costumes. They rapidly made an international name in the photographic industry through their contacts with important museums and art historians.<sup>46</sup> It is not known which of the Alinari brothers visited Greece or when exactly this occurred, but they are generally said to have photographed in Greece in the late 1860s.<sup>47</sup> However, a close examination of the photographic prints in the Benaki Museum reveal that the visit must have taken place in the late 1890s (fig. 8). In 1890 the two eldest brothers, Romualdo and Giuseppe, died and control of the firm passed to Vittorio Alinari (1859-1932), Leopoldo's son. The Alinari firm took on a new direction, focusing on the documentation of the entire national territory.<sup>48</sup> By the end of the century the firm's catalogue listed about 20,000 subjects and comprised 70,000 itemized negatives.

Another important acquisition by the Benaki's Pho-

tographic Archive is the work of the Frenchman Felix Bonfils (1831-1885). Bonfils was an established commercial photographer in Beirut from 1866, and he was later joined by his son, Adrien, who continued the operation of the studio after Felix's retirement. Adrien sold up the studio in 1894, by which time, presumably, "the market for professional photographs of the monuments [...] was dwindling in the face of new technologies which put the art of photography within the range of the ordinary traveler".<sup>49</sup> Felix Bonfils made at least two trips to Athens, in 1870-1872 and again in 1877.<sup>50</sup> His photographic images of Greece, eight of which are included in his album *Architecture Antique: Egypte, Grèce, Asie Mineure. Album de photographies* published in 1872 and ten in *Souvenirs d'Orient*, published in 1878, once again illustrate pre-constructed themes of ancient ruins such as the Parthenon, the Erectheion and the Theseion (fig. 9). Andrew Szegedy-Maszak has characterised Bonfils's images as beautiful but at the same time 'conventional',<sup>51</sup> created to satisfy the taste of the eager nineteenth-century market. A closer examination, however, shows Bonfils's "austere and scholarly approach to the sites",<sup>52</sup> the result of this photographer's interest in the archaeological, as opposed to merely picturesque, details of the antiquities.

Pascal Sebah (1823-1886) was a leading photographer in Constantinople who visited Greece and documented the 'important' archaeological sites in 1873-1874. He was born in 1823 and established a photographic studio (which he named 'El Chark') on Pera's Postmen Street<sup>53</sup> in 1857. A few years later, in 1873, Sebah opened a second studio in Cairo, where he collaborated with H. Bechard.<sup>54</sup> In his book *The Athens of Alma Tadema* Richard Tomlinson mentions that in an advertisement of 1880 the Sebah studios offer complete collections of views in all forms of Egypt, Nubia, Greece, Constantinople, Bursa, Adrianople and Smyrna.<sup>55</sup> Most of his depictions of Greece illustrate the antiquities of Athens but there also exist photographic images of the ancient ruins of Corinth, Nemea and Mycenae.<sup>56</sup> In 1875, he published a catalogue entitled *Catalogue des vues d'Egypte, Nubie, Athènes, Constantinople et Brousse* which consisted of 400 photographs.<sup>57</sup> The album itself was not for sale but it was compiled to assist in the marketing of his work. The Photographic Archive has recently acquired two signed albumin prints depicting the Ancient Theatre of Dionysos (fig. 10) and the Propylaea. Sebah's pho-





Fig. 9. F. Bonfils, *The Arch of Adrian*, c. 1870. Albumin print, 21.1 x 27.9 cm.

tographs are notable for their careful lighting, effective posing, use of attractive models, and careful attention to detail, as well as for the excellent print quality produced by his technician, A. Laroche.<sup>58</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century more and more tourists were visiting Greece and the introduction of easy-to-use cameras made photography more accessible to amateurs. In 1888, Kodak manufactured and marketed the first cameras that enabled tourists to take their own photographs. As photography became mass-produced, the iconographic interest began to change. 'Traditional' depictions of the antiquities were now found dull and new ideas were explored. An interest in Greece's social environment and political life began to emerge; indeed, despite all the difficulties still involved

in the photographing of moving subjects, photographers were now to be found at events of every kind.

Stereo-photography became even more popular in the 1880s and 1890s. Once again Greek antiquities attracted photographers, mostly Americans and Germans, who took pictures on behalf of stereoscopic agencies abroad. One of the larger 19th century photographic agencies specialising in the production and sale of stereoscopic pictures<sup>59</sup> was Underwood and Underwood News Photos Inc., founded in 1880 in Ottawa, Kansas, by Elmer and Bert Underwood. The two brothers started their business by buying and selling stereoscopic photographs. When the demand for such photographs increased towards the end of 19th century, the company began to buy up other international agencies, and it soon





Fig. 10. P. Sebah, *The Theatre of Dionysos*, c. 1872. Albumin print, 26.2 x 34.4 cm.

became the leading photographic agency in America. The company did not restrict its activities to simply purchasing the photographs but it also produced them, and in 1901 production appears to have reached 25,000 photographs per day. The company's personnel was trained to specialize in scenes of everyday life: many of them, whose names are mostly unknown today, travelled the world, documenting places as far afield as Japan. The stereoscopic photographs that were taken in Greece on behalf of Underwood and Underwood Publishers date from 1897 to 1906. A total of 100 such photographs (albumin prints, 8 x 7.2 cm) were issued as an album—in the form of a box resembling a closed book—entitled *Greece, Through the Stereoscope*. The Benaki Archive contains a copy of this album along with a large number

of stereoscopic photographs that date from the 1860s to the 1910s.

Some photography historians claim that these photographs were taken by the Underwood brothers themselves. However, no evidence exists to support this view, particularly as the photographs bear only the name of the company. They explore a wide area of Greece, covering places such as Athens, Corinth, Patras, Corfu, Meteora, Delphi, Epidaurus and Olympia (figs 11, 12). Although they provide an extensive record of the archaeological monuments and other buildings of historical importance, this did not remain the photographers' sole interest: the Greek countryside and scenes of daily life are also documented, thus demonstrating how photography can overcome its static and silent nature and befriend reality. On the back of each





Fig. 11. Underwood & Underwood, *The Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus*, 1897. Stereoscopic photograph, 8.1 x 15.5 cm.

Fig. 12. Underwood & Underwood, *Olympia*, 1897. Stereoscopic photograph, 8.1 x 15.5 cm.



photograph there is a text by Rufus B. Richardson which links the image with its historical background. In 1925, the Underwood brothers retired, leaving behind them a veritable treasure-house of stereoscopic photographs.

### Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of the article, a certain sameness characterises the photographic work produced in Greece during the nineteenth century, and our examination of the photographic collection of the Benaki Museum has confirmed the uniformity of subject matter at this time. Yet beyond the thematic unity an underlying diversity of approach can be observed. Although early photographs of Greece may at first sight appear indistinguishable because of photography's propensity to render an apparently objective view of the world, in fact each photographer took a slightly different approach

in his photographing of the Greek antiquities.

For us today collections such as the Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum are of invaluable and inspirational interest. They present a unique record of the critical state to which the antiquities had been reduced through the plundering and vandalism that took place during the years of Ottoman rule. Nineteenth century archaeological photography in Greece can assist archaeologists and conservators today in the difficult task of restoring Greek monuments: indeed for the gradually developing science of archaeology the camera was –and still remains– indispensable.

Aliki Tsirgialou  
*Photography Historian*  
 Benaki Museum  
 e-mail: tsirgialou@benaki.gr

### NOTES

1. F.-M. Tsigakou, *Through Romantic Eyes: European Images of Nineteenth Century Greece from the Benaki Museum* (Athens 1991) 10. The number of travellers visiting Greece has often been linked with the political and social changes of the country. The frequent conquest and occupation of Greece and the hazardous conditions created by war did not prevent travellers from visiting the country: “*The Veneto-Turkish War in the mid-seventeenth century drew European attention to political and military developments in the area*”.

2. *Ibid.* 10.

3. S. Sontag, *On Photography* (London 1977) 88.

4. Travellers in Greece were received either at foreign consulates or at inns. The usual method of transport in the interior of the country was on horseback. One of the most vivid descriptions of the discomforts awaiting the traveller was written by Edward Lear: “*Then we reach some village where any house does for our night's dwellings – for little iron bedsteads with mattresses are put up directly and on these a large muslin bag tied to the ceiling; into which I creep by a hole, which is tied up directly I am in it, so that no creature gets in, and one sleeps soundly in a room full of vermin*”. Quoted from the *Journals of a Landscape Painter* (1851) by Tsigakou (n. 1) 22.

5. “*The institution of the Grand Tour was born in Elizabethan England to finance the trip of young adults destined to become the managing class. It was an itinerary through Europe towards the Holy Land*”. Nineteenth century travellers could take the steamship from Southampton, Marseilles, Brindisi,

or Trieste to Alexandria. Then they made their way to Cairo where they took the steamship up the Nile to Aswan or Wadi Halfa and finally reached Palestine and the Holy Land. On their return, most travellers passed through Constantinople and with a few exceptions, Athens. For further information on the Grand Tour see also H. Chr. Adam, *Reiseerinnerungen von Damals* (Dortmund 1985) 7-9, 215-27 and I. Zannier, *The Grand Tour in the Photographs of Travellers in the 19th Century* (Paris 1997).

6. Classical studies were first introduced at Oxford University in the reign of Henry VIII.

7. F.-M. Tsigakou, *The Rediscovery of Greece, Travellers and Painters of the Romantic Era* (London 1981) 13-14.

8. *Ibid.* 14.

9. *Ibid.* 25.

10. *Ibid.* 20. Writers propagating the ideals of human life and culture based on ancient Greek principles include C. A. Demoustier and Abbé Barthélemy. In 1786, Demoustier published *Lettres à Emilie sur la mythologie*, a number of “*sentimental dissertations and poems on the deeds of the heroes of Greek mythology*”. Two years later in 1788 Barthélemy published an “*idyllic panorama of the ancient world*” entitled *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*.

11. One of the best-known examples of written documentation by a traveller in Greece is William Gell's *Classical and Topographical Tour Through Greece* (1819), which provides a



systematic topographical description and a detailed investigation into the antiquities.

12. A good example of a work which describes the physiognomy of an antiquity and recounts the history associated with it is A. de Burton's *Ten months' Tour in the East. Being a guide to all that is Most Worth Seeing in Turkey in Europe, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt and the Nile* (1870). This gives a general description of Greece and a summary of its 4.000-year history before going on to describe all the antiquities of Athens, devoting a whole chapter to the Acropolis.

13. Tsigakou (n. 7) 18.

14. T. Edenson, *Tourists at the Taj, Performance and Meaning at a symbolic Site* (London 1998) 13.

15. Ch. Rojek, Indexing, Dragging and the Social Construction of Tourist Sights, in: Ch. Rojek, J. Urry, *Touring Cultures, Transformations of Travel and Theory* (London 1997) 52.

16. Edenson (n. 14) 13.

17. Rojek (n. 15) 53.

18. Edenson (n. 14) 13.

19. *Ibid.* 13.

20. "It certainly inspires one with wonder and admiration to behold these massive pillars, which have stood for so many ages, still retaining all their pristine majesty". Quote from Fr. Herve, *A Residence in Greece and Turkey; with Notes of the Journey through Bulgaria, Servia, Hungary and The Balcan* (London 1837) 125-28.

21. *Ibid.* 125-28.

22. T. H. Usborne, *A New Guide to the Levant; for the Use of Travellers in Greece, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor* (London 1840) 49.

23. Tsigakou (n. 7) 68.

24. Edenson (n. 14) 13.

25. G. Edwards, Photographs of Greece in the Musée d'Orsay's Album of the Duc de Chartres, *History of Photography* 14 (1990) 171.

26. L. Vaczek, G. Buckland, *Travelers in Ancient Lands, a portrait of the Middle East, 1839-1919* (Boston 1981) 34.

27. *Ibid.* 17. The daguerreotypes produced by Lotbiniere no longer exist. The earliest surviving photographic images of Greece were taken by the Frenchman Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (1808-1892). De Prangey toured the Mediterranean during the years 1842-1844, travelling through Italy, Greece, Egypt and Palestine. He returned to France with over 1000 daguerreotypes, a selection of which he published in a volume entitled *Monuments Arabes d'Egypte, de Syrie et d'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1846).

28. The original daguerreotypes were copied in aquatint ('traced' and then 'rectified' on the etching plate) and published in periodic issues and in two volumes between 1841-1843.

29. A. Xanthakis, *History of Greek Photography 1839-1960* (Athens 1989) 24. The volumes were published by Lerebours in Paris during the years 1841-1842 and comprise a selection of 114 subjects and 1200 daguerreotypes. In 1839 the Daguerreotype was the first photographic process to be announced to the public: "A highly polished silver surface on a copper plate was sensitised by fumes of iodine, exposed in a camera, and the image developed by exposure to mercury vapour. [...] Since the image is in the form of a greyish-white deposit on a shiny silver surface, the Daguerreotype has to be held so as to reflect a dark ground against which the image is seen as a positive". For further information on this process see B. Coe, M. Haworth-Booth, *A Guide to Early Photographic Processes* (London 1983) 19.

30. Xanthakis (n. 29) 25.

31. "The calotype process was invented by William Fox Talbot in 1840 and was patented by him in 1841. Fine quality paper was sensitised with potassium iodide and silver nitrate solutions and exposed in the camera, typically from ten to sixty seconds in sunlight. The negative was then developed in a solution of gallic acid and silver nitrate, and fixed. The paper was generally waxed after processing to make it translucent, and was printed in sunlight onto salted paper". For further information on this process see Coe, Haworth-Booth (n. 30) 17-18.

32. G. Daux, L'Athènes Attique en 1851: Photographies d'Alfred Normand, *BCH* 80 (1956) 619.

33. H. Yakoumis, *La Grèce, Voyage Photographique et Littéraire au XIXe siècle* (Athens 1997) 56.

34. James Robertson's "photographic career began about 1850 in Malta where he took photographs with the Venetian-born, British-naturalised Felix Beato, whose sister Robertson later married. Robertson, sometimes working with Beato and sometimes alone, took photographs next in Constantinople, then in Athens in 1854, and then travelled to the Crimea. There in 1855 he took an important series of photographs showing the aftermath of the Crimean War". Robertson's photographs depicting the antiquities of Greece can be found in the Print Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Quote from Edwards (n. 27) 20. For further information on this photographer and his photographic work in Greece, see F. Kostantinou, James Robertson, A photographer-traveller in Athens, in: *James Robertson and the Grecian Antiquities 1853-1854* (exhibition catalogue, Benaki Museum, Athens 1998).

35. B. A. H. K. Henish, Robertson in Constantinople, *Image* 17 (1974) 1.

36. The undated album was published at The Photographic Establishment in Pera of Constantinople. A copy is preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

37. Kostantinou (n. 34) 49.

38. Zannier (n. 5) 38.

39. Xanthakis (n. 29) 59.

40. P.-M. Richard, Life in Three Dimensions, in: M. Frizot (ed.), *A New History of Photography* (Köln 1998) 175.



41. “Concerning the family background of Vassilaki Kargopoulo, a Roum—that being the term employed for those of Greek origin who lived within the borders of the Ottoman Empire—, it has not been possible to determine anything for certain. The results of queries made of those with the Kargopoulos surname who live in Greece today reveal the existence of families with that surname who lived in Epivates, where there was a large Greek community, and in Greek villages along the Tekirdag coast in Turkey’s Marmara region during the nineteenth century”, B. Oztuncay, *Vassilaki Kargopoulo, Photographer to His Majesty the Sultan* (Istanbul 2000) 14.
42. Xanthakis (n. 29) 92.
43. Oztuncay (n. 41) 44.
44. A. Xanthakis, Baron Paul von des Granges, a “Greek” Baron in Greece (1865), *Photographos* 102 (2002) 78-81.
45. Published by E. Quas (Berlin 1869); Xanthakis (n. 29) 90.
46. Fr. Heilbrun, Fratelli Alinari, Florence, in: M. Frizot (ed.), *A New History of Photography* (Cologne 1998) 156.
47. A. Xanthakis, Italian Photographers in Greece during the 19th century, *Opticon* 20 (1994) 32-36.
48. S. Weber, Ferruccio Malandrini, Fratelli Alinari in Florence, *History of Photography* 20 (1996) 52.
49. R. Tomlinson, *The Athens of Alma Tadema* (London 1991) 20.
50. A. Szegedy-Maszak, Felix Bonfils and the Traveller’s Train through Athens, *The History of Photography* 25 (2001) 125.
51. A. Szegedy-Maszak, True Illusions: Early Photographs of Athens, *The GettyMusJ* 15 (1987) 125.
52. *Ibid.* 132.
53. E. Ozendes, *Ottoman Life, an announcement* sited at [www.beyegm.gov.tr](http://www.beyegm.gov.tr). (27/9/2002).
54. Tomlinson (n. 49) 22.
55. *Ibid.* 22.
56. A. Xanthakis, Pascal Sebah and his photographs of Greece, 1874, *Photographos* 85 (2000) 56-59.
57. *Ibid.* 58.
58. E. Ozendes, *From Sebah & Joiallier to Foto Sabah: Orientalism in Photography* (Istanbul 1999).
59. Stereoscopic images consisted of two photographs placed next to one another, which had been taken from slightly different angles, usually by a camera with two lenses. When viewed through a stereoscope, the pictures give the impression of a single three-dimensional image.

## ΑΛΙΚΗ ΤΣΙΡΓΙΑΛΟΥ

## Η στερεότυπη εικόνα της Ελλάδας: φωτογραφίες του 19ου αιώνα στα Φωτογραφικά Αρχεία του Μουσείου Μπενάκη

Το άρθρο βασίζεται στο πρωτότυπο υλικό που φυλάσσεται στο Τμήμα Φωτογραφικών Αρχείων και πραγματεύεται το έργο των ξένων φωτογράφων στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα. Μέσα από τη μελέτη των φωτογραφιών αυτών προκύπτει μια ομοιομορφία ως προς τη θεματογραφία. Οι περισσότεροι φωτογράφοι επέλεξαν να καταγράψουν με τον φακό τους τις ελληνικές αρχαιότητες. Παράλληλα, πέρα από αυτή τη θεματική ομοιότητα, αποκαλύπτεται μια διαφορετική προσέγγιση του θέματος από κάθε φωτογράφο.

Στις 19 Αυγούστου του 1839 παρουσιάστηκε στη Γαλλική Ακαδημία Τεχνών και Επιστημών στο Παρίσι, η εφεύρεση της φωτογραφίας και συγκεκριμένα η μέθοδος του Louis-Jaques Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851), ο οποίος είχε καταφέρει να αποδώσει μια θετική εικό-

να επάνω σε μια χάλκινη πλάκα. Κατά τη διάρκεια της ανακοίνωσης, ο Γάλλος ακαδημαϊκός François-Dominique Arago (1786-1853) δεν παρέλειψε να τονίσει τις πολυάριθμες εφαρμογές της “πρωτότυπης” ανακάλυψης. Συγκεκριμένα ανέφερε ότι «για να αντιγραφούν όλα τα ιερογλυφικά των μεγάλων μνημείων των Θηβών, του Καρνάκ κ.ά, θα χρειαζόνταν 20 έτη και λεγεώνες σχεδιαστών, ενώ με τη δαγгеротτυπική μέθοδο ένα μόνο άτομο θα μπορούσε να κάνει αυτήν την τεράστια εργασία». Εμπνευσμένος από την ανακοίνωση αυτή, ο Γάλλος εκδότης Noël-Marie-Paymal Lerebours (1807-1873) εφοδίασε ταξιδιώτες με φωτογραφικό εξοπλισμό (δαγгеротτυπικές μηχανές) και τους έστειλε να καταγράψουν «τα πιο αξιοσημείωτα μνημεία του κόσμου».

Έτσι ξεκινά το ταξίδι των ξένων φωτογράφων στην



Ελλάδα. Αψηφώντας τις καιρικές συνθήκες και το βάρος του φωτογραφικού τους εξοπλισμού, έφταναν στον ελληνικό χώρο με σκοπό να καταγράψουν, ακολουθώντας τις προκαθορισμένες διαδρομές των ταξιδιωτικών οδηγών τους, τα “αξιοσημείωτα” μνημεία του. Η Ακρόπολη, καθώς και τα μνημεία που την περιβάλλουν, αποτελούσαν απαραίτητο σταθμό τους, με αποτέλεσμα η πορεία τους να ακολουθεί το ήδη διαμορφωμένο από τους περιηγητές-ζωγράφους στερεότυπο εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα, και στο έργο τους να μεταφέρεται η εικόνα μιας ιδεατής Ελλάδας που ταυτίζεται με αυτή της κλασικής αρχαιότητας. Το γεγονός αυτό ενίσχυε η περιορισμένη δυνατότητα του φωτογραφικού φακού, λόγω του μεγάλου χρόνου έκθεσης της φωτοευαίσθητης πλάκας, που καθιστούσε αδύνατη την αποτύπωση της κίνησης.

Ανάμεσα στους πρώτους δαγγεροτυπίστες που ανέλαβαν την αποστολή του Lerebours, ήταν και ο Καναδός Pierre-Gustave Joly de Lotbinière (1789-1865). Ο Lotbinière, που ταξίδευε στη Μεσόγειο, επισκέφτηκε και φωτογράφησε για πρώτη φορά τις αθηναϊκές αρχαιότητες τον Οκτώβριο του 1839, δύο μόλις μήνες μετά την επίσημη ανακοίνωση της εφεύρεσης. Όπως αναμενόταν, η Ακρόπολη ήταν το πρωταρχικό θέμα που επέλεξε.

Η δαγγεροτυπική μέθοδος δεν είχε τη δυνατότητα να παράγει πολλαπλά αντίτυπα, γεγονός που οδήγησε τους φωτογράφους να προτιμήσουν τη μέθοδο της καλοτυπίας, όπου με τη μεσολάβηση ενός αρνητικού μπορούσαν να εκτυπώσουν απεριόριστο αριθμό θετικών εικόνων. Ο διάσημος Γάλλος αρχιτέκτονας Alfred-Nicolas Normand (1822-1909) τράβηξε συνολικά 130 καλοτυπίες κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής του στην Ελλάδα. Μέσα από τον φωτογραφικό του φακό απθανάτισε κυρίως την Ακρόπολη και τις περιβάλλουσες αρχαιότητές της.

Τα χρόνια που ακολουθούν αποτελούν μεταβατική περίοδο για τη φωτογραφία. Η μέθοδος της καλοτυπίας αντικαταστάθηκε από την τεχνική του υγρού κολλο-

δίου και οι μεγάλοι χρόνοι έκθεσης της φωτοευαίσθητης πλάκας μειώθηκαν, προσδίδοντας στη νέα εφεύρεση ευκρίνεια, ευκολία στη χρήση και ανθεκτικότητα σε δύσκολες καιρικές συνθήκες, όπως το θερμό κλίμα της Ελλάδας. Την εποχή αυτή μια σειρά από γνωστούς επαγγελματίες και ερασιτέχνες φωτογράφους επισκέπτονται και φωτογραφίζουν την Αθήνα. Ανάμεσά τους ξεχωρίζει το έργο των James Robertson και Paul Baron des Granges. Αρκετοί ήταν και οι ξένοι φωτογράφοι που εγκαταστάθηκαν στην Ελλάδα. Χαρακτηριστικά αναφέρεται ο Carl Schiffer, πιθανώς βαναρικής καταγωγής, που εργάστηκε στην Αθήνα από το 1859 έως το 1863.

Προς τα τέλη του 19ου αιώνα όλο και περισσότεροι ταξιδιώτες-φωτογράφοι επισκέπτονταν την Ελλάδα. Η φωτογραφία είχε γίνει πιο προσιτή στους ερασιτέχνες, που έως τότε παρέμενε το προνόμιο των οικονομικά ισχυρότερων. Σε αυτό συνέβαλε και η κατασκευή της πρώτης εύχρηστης φωτογραφικής μηχανής από την Kodak, το 1888. Δεδομένου ότι η φωτογραφία πέρασε στη μαζική παραγωγή, το εικονογραφικό ενδιαφέρον άρχισε να αλλάζει. Το στερεότυπο της αποτύπωσης των αρχαιοτήτων έδωσε τη θέση του στις φωτογραφίες της σύγχρονης ζωής. Εμφανίζεται, δηλαδή, φωτογραφικό ενδιαφέρον για τα πολιτικά και κοινωνικά δρώμενα της Ελλάδας, παρά τις δυσκολίες που οφείλονται ακόμα στην αδυναμία της φωτογραφίας να καταγράψει με επιτυχία την κίνηση.

Λόγω της ραγδαίας εξέλιξης που έχει γνωρίσει το μέσο με την πάροδο των ετών, η προσπάθεια που κατέβαλλαν οι πρώτοι φωτογράφοι φαίνεται να υποτιμάται. Μελετώντας κανείς τις εικόνες αυτές, σπάνια διακρίνει τις τεχνικές μεθόδους ή ακόμα και τη φαντασία που επενδύθηκε για την πραγματοποίησή τους. Παρά τη θεματική ομοιομορφία που χαρακτηρίζει τη φωτογραφία του 19ου αιώνα στην Ελλάδα, ο κάθε φωτογράφος μετέφερε στις εικόνες του το προσωπικό του ύφος, αποτέλεσμα μιας ιδιαίτερης διερεύνησης του χώρου.