Finding aid for the Louis Vignes Views and Panoramas of Beirut and the Ruins of Palmyra, 1864 2015.R.15

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Special Collections

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Summary Information

Repository: Special Collections

Creator: Vignes, Louis, 1831-1896

Title: Louis Vignes views and panoramas of Beirut and the ruins of Palmyra

ID: 2015.R.15

Dates: 1864

Extent: 47 photographic prints (2 boxes)

Request Materials: Request access to the physical materials described in this inventory through the catalog record for this collection. Click here for the access policy.

Language: No linguistic content.

Abstract: The collection of 47 photographs contains views of the city of Beirut, Lebanon and the ruins of the ancient city of Palmyra and the town of Al-Rastan in Syria, taken by Louis Vignes in 1864 when he accompanied Honoré Théodoric d'Albert, duc de Luynes, on his expedition to the Dead Sea region. They represent the earliest photographs of the remains of Roman Palmyra and are also among the earliest photographs of Beirut.

Preferred Citation

Louis Vignes views and panoramas of Beirut and the ruins of Palmyra, 1864, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 2015.R.15.

http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa2015r15

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Biographical / Historical

Louis Vignes (1831-1896) was born in Bordeaux, France, where his father was director of the mint. Vignes entered the École Navale in 1846 at age 15. He rose steadily through the naval ranks and by 1860 he had directed the building of the port of Beirut and attained the rank of lieutenant. In 1862, Vignes captained a steamer attached to the division of the coasts of Syria. By the end of his long and successful

naval career Vignes had attained the rank of vice admiral and had become Inspecteur général de la Marine.

Early in his career Vignes was already practicing photography as an amateur, but how or where he obtained photographic training is unknown. Between June 1859 and October 1862, while pursuing his naval duties, Vignes traveled from the south of France to Lebanon via Sicily, Turkey and the Palestine. During his tour of duty around the Mediterranean basin he made the 52 calotype negatives of landscapes, monuments, and sites now held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Photographies négatives de Louis Vignes, FRBNF41425799). That he also photographed naval life as well is evidenced by a group of portraits he made of himself and his fellow ship's officers in 1859 that are held in the present repository (accession no. 2016.R.40).

Vignes met Honoré Théodoric d'Albert, duc de Luynes, in October 1863, while the latter was staying in Hyères, France. Luynes, who was planning his first expedition to the Dead Sea region, recruited Vignes to serve as the expedition's climatologist and photographer. Vignes's knowledge of photography, together with his familiarity with Syria and the Middle East, his demonstrated military leadership, and his navigational skills and knowledge of astronomy, made him an ideal member of the expedition. Vignes was granted leave from the navy effective February 1, 1864, and by the ninth of the month he and the other expedition members had set sail from Marseilles.

The expedition reached Beirut on the twenty-first of February, 1864. There, Vignes took at least one two-part panorama of the city before the travelers moved on to Jerusalem via Sidon and Tyr, and then headed to the Dead Sea. The expedition traversed both the west and east sides of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea in *Le Ségor*, an iron boat that could be dismantled and transported by camels, that Luynes had had built in the shipyards of Seyne, France. Unfortunately, Luynes was compelled to leave the expedition at Petra on the seventh of June due to illness. Vignes and the other members of the expedition — geologist Louis Lartet and naturalist Dr. Gustave Combe — completed the expedition, returning to Beirut on June 24.

Vignes remained in Beirut after the other two men had returned to France, as he still had another commission to complete for Luynes, that of making a photographic record of the ruins of ancient Palmyra. After fulfilling his mission in the fall of 1864, Vignes returned to France. From that time forward he seems to have devoted himself exclusively to his increasingly important naval positions, and any photographs he may have made after 1864 have yet to come to light.

Fifty-two of Vignes's photographs from the Dead Sea expedition were reproduced as photogravures by Charles Nègre for the *Atlas* of the duke's account of the expedition, *Voyage d'exploration à la mer Morte, à Petra, et sur la rive gauche du Jourdain*, published in 1875, eight years after Luynes's death. Nègre (1820-1880) had studied with the academicians Paul Delaroche and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, who encouraged him to explore the newly emerging medium of photography for use as a painting aid. Nègre, who pursued painting, photography, and printing throughout his career, made his first daguerreotype landscapes in 1844 and began making calotypes in 1848. In 1851, Nègre became one of the founding members of the Société Héliographique, the first French organization dedicated to photographic endeavors.

As the photographic aspect of his career progressed, Nègre became known for his well-crafted heliographs, a type of photogravure, and by 1856 he had patented his own version of Nicéphore Niépce's heliographic process (héliogravure), which he named paniconography. His dedication to the

perfection of the heliograph was prompted in large part by his pursuit of the 8,000-franc prize Luynes had announced in 1856 for the invention of the photomechanical process that could best reproduce photographs for publication. In 1865, when Luynes gave Nègre the negatives Vignes had taken during the expedition, including those from Palmyra, commissioning him to make both photographic prints and photogravures from them, the prize had not yet been awarded. Although Luynes himself preferred Nègre's photogravure process, the independent jury finally awarded the prize to Louis-Alphonse Poitevin for his photolithographic process in 1867.

Sources consulted:

Aubenas, Sylvie, "Louis Vignes (1831-1896)." *BNF Shared Heritage, Biblothèques d'Orient*. https://heritage.bnf.fr/bibliothequesorient/en/louis-vigne-art

Foliot, Philippe. "Louis Vignes and Henry Sauvaire, Photographers on the Expeditions of the Duc de Luynes." In *History of Photography*, 14:3 (1990) 233-250, DOI:10.1080/03087298.1990.10442460. https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1990.10442460

Hellman, Karen Reed. "Le Secq, Henri (Jean-Louis Henri Le Secq des Tournelles), 1818-1882." In *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, edited by John Hannavy, II:837-839. London: Taylor & Francis, 2008.

Luynes, Honoré d'Albert, duc de. *Voyage d'exploration à la mer Morte, à Petra, et sur la rive gauche du Jourdain*. Paris: Arthus Bertrand, éditeur, 1874.

Martini, Jean-Mathieu. "At a Crossroads." In *Henri Sauvaire (1831-1896): voyage d'exposition a Hebron, Karak, Djafar, El-Heca, Chaubak, Dausak, Twahné et Zatt-Rass*. Munich: Daniel Blau, 2015.

Montiero, Stephen. "Nègre, Charles (1820-1880)." In *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, edited by John Hannavy, II:982-985. London: Taylor & Francis, 2008.

Paviot, Alain. *Le voyage du duc de Luynes: photographies de Louis Vignes, [exposition], 6 mars-13 mai 1980: voyage d'exploration à la mer Morte, à Petra, et sur la rive gauche du Jourdain, févier-juin 1864*. Paris: Galerie Octant, 1980.

Terpak, Fran, "Acquisition Approval Form for 'Louis Vignes (French, 1831-1896), 47 Photographs of Palmyra and Beirut, Albumen Prints, 1864,'" accession no. 2015.R.15, May 20, 2015.

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Scope and Content of Collection

The collection comprises 47 photographic views of the city of Beirut, Lebanon, the ruins of the Roman city of Palmyra, and the village of Rastan (al-Rastan, Ar-Rastan) taken by Louis Vignes following the conclusion of the duc de Luynes's first expedition to the Dead Sea region in 1864. Vignes's photographs

of Palmyra are the earliest taken of the ruins and, as such, mark the beginning of modern documentation of the site. His photographs of Beirut are also among the earliest photographs taken of that city.

After the remaining members of the Luynes expedition had returned to France, Vignes waited out the summer heat before traveling to Palmyra from Tripoli via Homs and Hamah, two ancient cities on the Orontes River. He was accompanied on the journey, which lasted from September 15 to October 11, by a naval cadet named Fouet. The men reached Palmyra on September 28, leaving the site on the second of October. Twenty-nine of the 35 photographs Vignes took of Palmyra are present in the collection, including two panoramic views of the site consisting of two and three prints respectively. The three-part panorama was taken from Diocletian's monument. Twenty-four single prints depict the site from various vantage points and show its monumental 3,000 foot-long colonnade, the triumphal arch, the Temple of Bel and Temple Baal Shamin, the monument of Diocletian, and the tower tombs in the Valley of the Tombs bordering the city on its southwest side.

While the specific views Vignes took during the expedition when Luynes was present were made at the express request of the duke, as evidenced by his diary entries (published posthumously in *Voyage d'exploration à la mer Morte…*), those he made at Palmyra must necessarily have been of his own decision, guided perhaps by the duke's general instructions to "precisely map the exact position of the ruins."

On their return route Vignes and his party turned north at Homs towards Rastan, a village built on the Roman site of Arethusa which was established in the third century B.C. They made camp there on October 6. The river Orontes, which flows northward from Lebanon through Syria and Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea, is the subject of two of the three photographs related to Rastan present in the collection. The third image is a view of the expedition's camp at Rastan. Vignes returned to Beirut on October 12 before returning to France with the fruits of his labors.

The city and port of Beirut, the most significant Middle Eastern trading center in the mid-nineteenth century, is documented in the collection by one four-part and three two-part panoramas. Vignes took one of his two-part panoramas of Beirut from the house of Aimé Péretié, the dragoman-chancellor of the French consulate in Beirut and a well-known collector of antiquities. This, along with an image of the salon in Péretié's home, was most likely made when Vignes first arrived in Beirut with Luynes and the other expedition members. Three single photographs depicting the city's famed stone or umbrella pines, and one showing the road to Damascus complete the photographs of Beirut.

Excepting one of the two-part panoramas of Beirut, Vignes used dry collodion glass plate negatives to produce the images found in this collection. In 1865, the duc de Luynes commissioned Charles Nègre to print albumen photographs from all of the negatives Vignes took during the expedition. The photographs in this collection formed part of the original set of albumen prints Nègre produced for the duke's personal collection, and were presumably completed before Luynes's death in 1867. Unlike Vignes's photographs from the Dead Sea, the Palmyra images were not reproduced by Nègre as photogravures, and consequently had never been published prior to being acquired by the repository.

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Arrangement

Arranged in a single series: Series I. Louis Vignes views and panoramas of Beirut and the ruins of Palmyra, 1864.

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Administrative Information

Access

Restricted. Contact the repository for information regarding access.

Publication Rights

Contact Library Reproductions and Permissions.

Acquisition Information

Acquired in 2015.

Processing History

The collection was processed by Beth Ann Guynn in 2015 who wrote the finding aid in 2020.

Digitzed Materials

The collection was digitized in 2015 and the images are available online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2015r15

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Related Materials

Related Archival Materials

The repository holds a significant body of materials related to Louis Vignes and the duc de Luynes's expeditions. Materials relating to the duc de Luynes's expeditions to the Dead Sea region, accession no. 2019.M.20, is an extensive collection of both visual and written materials from both Luynes's 1864 and 1866 expeditions. *Voyage d'exploration à la mer Morte, à Petra, et sur la rive gauche du Jourdain par M. le duc de Luynes; œuvre posthume publiée par ses petits-fils sous la direction de M. le comte de Vogüé*, 1874, id no. 2850-401, is the three-volume publication resulting from the expedition. Photographs from the 1866 expedition are found in Henri Joseph Sauvaire photographs from the duc de Luynes's second expedition to the Holy Land, accession no. 2019.R.32.

Several collections comprise materials related more directly to Vignes's photographic output during the 1864 expedition. Of particular note is an album of photographs by him, *Vues de Phénicie, de Judée, des pays de Moab et de Petra / photographiées par M. Vignes Lieutenant de vaisseau pendant son voyage, en 1864, avec le duc de Luynes de Beyrouth à la mer Rouge et son retour avec M. Lartet de Jérusalem à Damas par la rive gauche du Jourdain*, accession no. 2012.R.14. Photographic reproductions of two maps drawn by Vignes, with assistance from Dr. Gustave Combe, are found in Louis Vignes maps from the duc de Luynes's expedition to the Dead Sea, accession no. 2015.R.16. Thirty-three loose photogravure plates made by Charles Nègre after Vignes's photographs and published in *Voyage d'exploration à la mer Morte*, are contained in the Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist photography collection, accession no. 2008.R.3. Two versions of a view from Mar Saba (a two-part photographic panorama by Vignes and a photogravure after it by Nègre) can be found in the Joachim Bonnemaison collection of panorama photographs, accession no. 98.R.19. Finally, a self-portrait that Vignes took at age 28, five years before he accompanied Luynes to the Dead Sea, forms part of the Louis Vignes self-portrait and portraits of naval officers, accession number 2016.R.40.

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Controlled Access Headings

Subjects - People

- Nègre, Charles, 1820-1880

Subjects - Topics

- Antiquities, Roman -- Syria
- Architecture, Ancient -- Syria
- Stone pines -- Beirut -- Lebanon

Subjects - Places

- Beirut (Lebanon) -- Description and travel
- Orontes River -- Description and travel
- Palmyra (Syria) -- Antiquities
- Rastan (Syria) -- Description and travel

Genres and Forms of Materials

- Albumen prints -- Lebanon -- 19th century
- Albumen prints -- Syria -- 19th century
- Panoramas -- Lebanon
- Panoramas -- Syria
- Photographs, Original

Collection Inventory

Series I. Louis Vignes views and panoramas of Beirut and the ruins of Palmyra, 1864

Louis Vignes views and panoramas of Beirut and the ruins of Palmyra (Digitized version)

Scope and Contents: The photographs are numbered in the negative with the numbers repeated on their versos in brown ink.

Arrangement: Arranged in order of receipt.

Title/Description	Containers
Palmyra	
2015.R.15-v55: [Northwest Corner of the Courtyard of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra] *Scope and Contents*: Numbered in negative and on verso: 1.	Box 1
2015.R.15-v56: [Gate of the Courtyard of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra] *Scope and Contents*: Numbered in negative and on verso: 2.	Box 1
2015.R.15-v57: [Columns, Eastern Part of the Courtyard, Temple of Bel, Palmyra] *Scope and Contents*: Numbered in negative and on verso: 3.	Box 1
2015.R.15-v58: [Gate, Temple of Bel, Palmyra] *Scope and Contents*: Numbered in negative and on verso (twice): 4.	Box 1
2015.R.15-v59: [View of the Temple of Bel from the Northwest Corner of the Courtyard, Palmyra] *Scope and Contents*: Numbered in negative and on verso: 5.	Box 1

2015.R.15-v60: [Colonnade, Northwest Corner of the Courtyard, Temple of Bel, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 6.

2015.R.15-v61: [Temple of Baalshaman, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 11.

2015.R.15-v62: [Triumphal Arch and Great Colonnade, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 9.

2015.R.15-v63: [West Side of the Colonnade, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 10.

2015.R.15-v64: [Central Part of the Colonnade, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 12.

2015.R.15-v65: [Southwest Exterior Corner of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 13.

2015.R.15-v66: [Exterior, Southwest Corner of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 14.

2015.R.15-v67: [East Side of Colonnade, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 15.

2015.R.15-v68: [Tower Tomb of Elahbel, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 16.

2015.R.15-v69: [Valley of the Tombs, Palmyra, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 18.

2015.R.15-v70: [East Side of the Colonnade, Palmyra] — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 20.

[Two-part Panorama of Palmyra Featuring the Colonnade]

2015.R.15-v71: Left print — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 21.

2015.R.15-v72: Right print — Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 22.

2015.R.15-v73: [Four Tower Tombs around the Mound in the Valley of the Tombs, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 23.

2015.R.15-v74: [Large Tower Tomb, Valley of the Tombs, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 24.

2015.R.15-v75: [Large Tower Tomb, Valley of the Tombs, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 25.

2015.R.15-v76: [Six Tower Tombs, Valley of the Tombs, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 26.

2015.R.15-v77: [Camp of Diocletian, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 27.

2015.R.15-v78: [Camp of Diocletian, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents:

2015.R.15-v79: [Man Leaning against a Column of Funerary Temple No. 86, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 29.

2015.R.15-v80: [Funerary Temple No. 86, Palmyra] Box 1

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 30.

[Three-part Panorama of Palmyra Taken from the Camp of Diocletian]

2015.R.15-v81: Left print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 36.

2015.R.15-v82: Middle print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 35.

2015.R.15-v83: Right print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso: 34.

Rastan

2015.R.15-v84: [Bridge over the Orontes River at Rastan] Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 37.

2015.R.15-v85: [The Orontes River above the Rastan Bridge] Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 38.

2015.R.15-v86: [Camp at Rastan] Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 39.

Beirut

[Panorama of Beirut Taken from Ras Beirut] Box 2

Scope and Contents: Two-part panorama.

2015.R.15-v87: Left print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 41.

2015.R.15-v88: Right print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 40.

[Panorama of Beirut Taken from the House of M. Amié Péretié]

Scope and Contents: Two-part panorama. Amié Péretié was the dragoman-chancellor of the French consulate of Beirut and a collector of antiquities.

2015.R.15-v89: Left print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 43.

2015.R.15-v90: Right print Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 42.

2015.R.15-v91: Vue prise aux pins (Beyrouth) Box 2

Scope and Contents: On original mount. Title written on mount and numbered: 32.

2015.R.15-v92: Vue prise aux pins près de Beyrouth Box 2

Scope and Contents: On original mount. Title written on mount and numbered: 26.

2015.R.15-v93: Vue prise aux pins (Beyrouth) Box 2

Scope and Contents: On original mount. Title written on mount and numbered: 33. Shows two trees that are substantially taller than the others.

2015.R.15-v94: [View along the Road to Damascus] Box 2

Scope and Contents: Numbered in negative and on verso of print: 47. Numbered in pencil: 68.

Panorama de Beyrouth du bord de la mer

Scope and Contents: Four-part panorama of Beirut. Title inscribed on versos of all of the parts.

2015.R.15-v95: Left print — Box 2

Scope and Contents: Annotation on verso in pencil: No. 1. Voyage du Duc de Luynes 1864. Panorama de Beyrouth du bord de la mer. E (1) E. Panorama de Beyrouth.

2015.R.15-v96: Second from left print — Box 2

Scope and Contents: Annotation on verso in pencil: No. 2. Voyage du Duc de Luynes 1864. Panorama de Beyrouth du bord de la mer. E (2), E (1). Panorama de Beyrouth.

2015.R.15-v97: Second from right print — Box 2

Scope and Contents: Annotation on verso in pencil: No. 3. Voyage du Duc de Luynes en Orient. 1864. Panorama de Beyrouth du bord de la mer. E (3), E (2).

2015.R.15-v98: Right print — Box 2

Scope and Contents: Annotation on verso in pencil: No. 4. Voyage du Duc de Luynes en Orient. Panorama de Beyrouth du bord de la mer. E (3)

[Panorama of Beirut] — Box 2

Scope and Contents: Two-part albumen panorama from paper negative. On original mount.

2015.R.15-v99: Left print — Box 2

2015.R.15-v100: Right print — Box 2

2015.R.15-v101: [Salon in the House of M. Aimé Péretié] — Box 2

Scope and Contents: On original mount. An album of photographs sits on the round table in the foreground, while the score of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* can be seen on the piano stand.

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