ALGIERS A CITY IN TRANSITION — 1900
Leroux, Alexandre - Photographer

ARCHIVE: Twenty-Five Photographs of Algiers c.1900 from the Studio of Renowned Photographer Alexandre Leroux.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF ALGIERS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A substantial group of twenty-five large-format photographs documenting the architecture, streets, public spaces, and daily life of Algiers around 1900. Produced by the studio of Alexandre Leroux, an established photographer in Algiers, the collection presents a varied visual record of the city during the period of French colonial administration.

The photographs range from panoramic views of the harbor and port to architectural studies of prominent landmarks, including Notre Dame d'Afrique, the Cathedral of St. Philippe, the Place du Gouvernement, and Place Bresson. Other images record the older streets and passages of the Casbah, commercial activity, market labor, and local musicians.

Together, the photographs document both the monumental architecture of colonial Algiers and the more intimate settings of everyday urban life. The variety of subjects makes this a particularly useful group for the study of the city's architecture, social history, and photographic representation at the turn of the century.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Twenty-five original large-format photographic prints, averaging approximately 22.5 × 30 cm (8.75 × 11.75 inches). Produced on period photographic paper using multiple photographic processes. Numerous prints bear the 'Leroux, Alger' studio credit and stock or plate numbers incorporated into the negative.

The photographs are individually housed in modern archival sleeves and presented together in a protective display folder.

KEY FEATURES

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN VIEWS: Panoramic harbor and port scenes, monumental civic and religious buildings, commercial districts, and the narrow streets of the Casbah.

SOCIAL DOCUMENTATION: Photographs of local musicians, market workers, street activity, and other aspects of daily life in Algiers.

STUDIO IDENTIFICATION: Numerous images carry the 'Leroux, Alger' credit within the negative, identifying their association with the photographer's Algiers studio.

LARGE-FORMAT IMAGES: Prints measuring approximately 8.75 × 11.75 inches, offering substantial detail in architectural features, street settings, and individual figures.

CONDITION

Overall Good to Very Good. The photographs exhibit varying tonal qualities and age-appropriate handling wear, including light edge rubbing and occasional creasing. Two prints have more substantial corner losses, although the image areas remain largely unaffected.

Several retain particularly good contrast and detail. A sound and usable group, now individually housed in modern archival sleeves.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

ALEXANDRE LEROUX AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF NORTH AFRICA

Alexandre Leroux (1836–1912) was a French photographer associated with the documentation of Algiers and North Africa during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His studio produced photographs of the region's architecture, landscapes, monuments, and inhabitants, contributing to the growing circulation of photographic images of the Maghreb.

ALGIERS UNDER FRENCH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

Dating from approximately 1900, this group records Algiers during a period of continued urban development under French rule. Its subjects encompass the city's expanding port and monumental public architecture alongside older neighborhoods, commercial streets, and local occupations. The photographs preserve a visual record of a city in which European colonial architecture and institutions existed alongside established Algerian urban and cultural traditions.

The group offers valuable primary visual material for research into the architectural history of Algiers, French colonial photography, North African urban development, and the representation of Algerian society around the turn of the twentieth century.

CLASSIFICATION & REFERENCES

SUBJECTS: Algiers History, North African Photography, Alexandre Leroux, French Colonial Urbanism, The Casbah, Maghreb Studies, Orientalist Photography, Late-Victorian Documentary, Mediterranean Harbor History, Original Photography, Studio-Issue Archive, Portfolio

GENRES: Original Photography, Studio-Issue Archive, Portfolio

Acquisition: $1250

Institutional Terms: Deferred billing (Net 30 or Net 60 days) is available to libraries, museums, and universities. Materials will be shipped immediately upon receipt of an institutional purchase order. We are pleased to accommodate custom invoicing, split billing, or specific fiscal-year procurement requirements to facilitate acquisition.

Featured Plates & Comprehensive Index

To demonstrate the depth of this collection for curatorial review without introducing narrative fatigue, this section presents two fully developed sample analyses from the dossier followed by a complete, scannable index of the twenty-five album prints.

I. Featured Plate Analysis

Plate 1278: Alem [Street Musician with Gembri] *Dimensions:* 7.875 × 10 inches *Technical Markings:* Plate number '1278' and subject title 'ALEM' in lower left negative; 'PHOT. LEROUX ALGER' in lower right negative.



Narrative Description: An expressive full-length studio or courtyard portrait of a barefoot Algerian street musician, captured mid-performance while holding a traditional three-stringed gembri lute. Leroux's lens focuses sharply on the rich textures of the subject's heavily weathered, striped outer tunic and the dynamic posture of the performance against a plain stone column. This image represents a vital ethnographic record of the street culture and indigenous musical traditions of Algiers at the turn of the twentieth century, deliberately highlighting the human element over colonial architectural backdrops.

Curatorial Data:

The Instrument: The musician is playing a gembri (also known as a guembri, sintir, or hejhouj), a traditional North African three-stringed plucked lute with a skin-covered soundbox made from a hollowed log or tortoise shell, associated deeply with Gnawa musical traditions. The curved wooden peghead shows cloth or twine wrapping to secure the tuning mechanisms.

The Clothing: The figure is wearing a heavily textured, vertically striped, tattered outer tunic or djellaba over a lighter under-garment. The coarse fabric shows significant fraying and a large, visible tear at the left thigh, documenting the working-class reality of street performers in the colonial urban landscape. A traditional hood or koufeya covers the head, accented by a white under-cloth framing the face.

Plate 1226: Femmes de Bou-Saada [Two Women in Ceremonial Ouled Naïl Dress]
Dimensions: 7.875 × 10 inches *Technical Markings:* Plate number '1226' and subject title 'FEMMES DE BOU-SAADA' in lower left negative; 'PHOT. LEROUX ALGER' in lower right negative.



Narrative Description: A highly technical and detailed double portrait capturing two women dressed in the elaborate, traditional ceremonial attire of the Ouled Naïl. Leroux utilizes controlled lighting to emphasize the complex metallic ornamentation, heavy woven textiles, and traditional jewelry that characterized the visual identity of women from the Bou-Saada oasis region. Rather than a romanticized scene, the image serves as an exceptional material record of turn-of-the-century Algerian textile arts and personal adornment.

Curatorial Data:

The Adornment: The subjects are adorned in characteristic Ouled Naïl jewelry, including heavy, layered coin necklaces, wide metallic fibulae used to secure the drapes of their garments, and intricate hinged bracelets. The precision of the print permits a close study of the specific coinage and metalworking techniques utilized in the region circa 1900.

The Textiles: The portrait captures the interplay of diverse fabric weights, from voluminous head coverings to heavily embroidered brocade panels and fringed sashes. The documentation of these garments provides essential primary source material for regional costume history and North African material culture.

Final Master Album Sequence Index

Every photograph in the portfolio is accompanied by its own facing, dedicated historical and analytical research sheet matching the format shown above. The complete sequence is indexed below:

1. Photo 25 (Plate 2): Cathedrale et Palais du Gouverneur [Facade and Public Square View] | 8.5 × 11.5 inches

2. Photo 20 (Plate 22): Notre-Dame d'Afrique [Basilica and Bell Tower Landscape] | 11.5 × 8.75 inches

3. Photo 13 (Plate 32): Place du Gouvernement Alger [Public Square and Ketchaoua Mosque] | 10.5 × 8.75 inches

4. Photo 15 (Plate 33): L'Amiraute Alger [Admiralty Fortifications and Lighthouse] | 10.25 × 7.75 inches

5. Photo 19 (Plate 34): Une partie de l'Amiraute et du Port [Harbor Panorama with Foreground Rocks] | 11.75 × 8.5 inches

6. Photo 3 (Plate 38): Mosquee Sidi Abderrahman Alger [Mosque and Cemetery of Sidi Abderrahmane] | 8.75 × 11.75 inches

7. Photo 11 (Plate 42): Cafe Maure a Alger [Interior of a Moorish Coffeehouse] | 7.5 × 9.75 inches

8. Photo 14 (Plate 153): Allee des Bambous au Jardin d'Essai [Tunnel of Towering Bamboo Stalks] | 8.75 × 11.25 inches

9. Photo 16 (Plate 259): Mustapha Superieur Alger [Hillside Residential Quarter] | 11 × 8 inches [Clipped Corner]

10. Photo 9 (Plate 349): La Danse des Almees [Women Dancing in Courtyard with Frame Drums] | 7.5 × 9.75 inches

11. Photo 2 (Plate 497): Interieur de la Mosquee El-Kebir Alger [Interior of the Great Mosque] | 8.75 × 11.75 inches

12. Photo 5 (Plate 498): Palais d'Ete du Gouverneur [Governor's Summer Palace] | 10 × 8.5 inches

13. Photo 8 (Plate 768): Arabe d'Alger [Elderly Man with Walking Staff] | 7.75 × 10 inches

14. Photo 12 (Plate 888): Rue de la Mer Rouge [Cantilevered Architecture of the Casbah] | 7.75 × 9.75 inches

15. Photo 10 (Plate 1081): Rue Kleber [Stepped Streetscape of the Casbah] | 7.75 × 9.75 inches

16. Photo 4 (Plate 1093): Officier Indigene [Indigenous Military Officer on Horseback] | 8.75 × 11.75 inches

17. Photo 17 (Plate 1226): Femmes de Bou-Saada [Two Women in Ceremonial Ouled Nail Dress] | 7.875 × 10 inches

18. Photo 1 (Plate 1278): Alem [Street Musician with Gembri] | 7.875 × 10 inches

19. Photo 7 (Plate 1280): Yaouled. Alger [Young Street Vendor on Balustrade] | 7.25 × 9.75 inches

20. Photo 22 (Plate 1311): Ecole arabe Alger [Courtyard Classroom Scene] | 11.5 × 8.75 inches

21. Photo 18 (Plate 1563): Les Quais a Alger [Lower Wharfside Rail Yards] | 11.5 × 8.75 inches [Clipped Corner]

22. Photo 21 (Plate 1570): Port d'Alger [High-Angle Harbor and Warehouse Panorama] | 11.75 × 8.5 inches

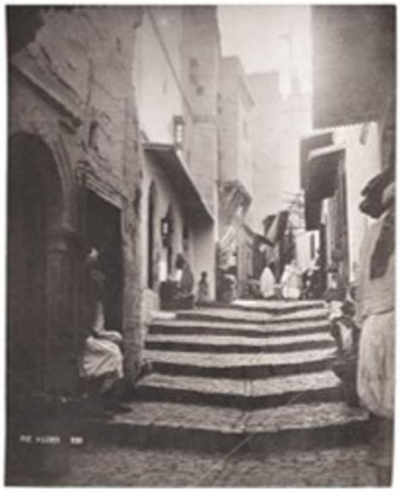
23. Photo 23 (Plate 1749): Interieur de la Bibliotheque a Alger [Courtyard of the Mustapha Pacha Palace] | 8.75 × 11.25 inches

24. Photo 24 (Plate 1794): Allee des Palmiers au Jardin d'Essai [Avenue of Palms Landscape] | 8.5 × 11.5 inches

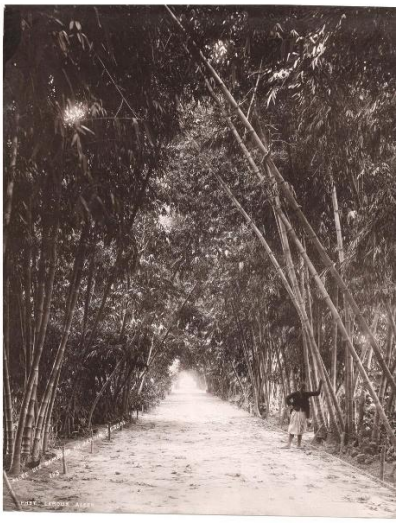
25. Photo 6 (Plate Unnumbered/To Be Determined): Boulevard de la Republique et le Port [Waterfront Arcades and Harbor Yards] | 11 × 8.75 inches

Additional Examples





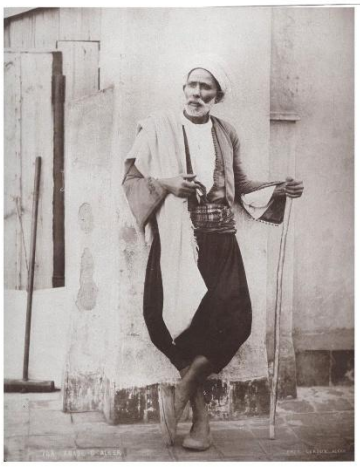


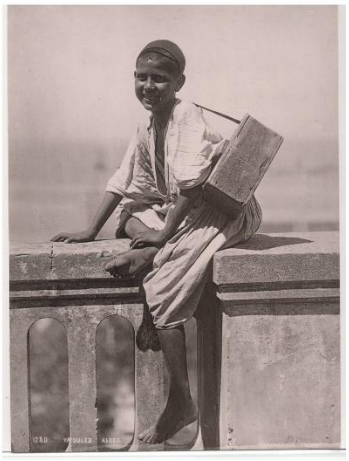












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