

African Photography in the Atlantic Visualscape

Moving Photographers – Circulating Images

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African photographers have been actively involved in writing and shaping the visual history of their continent since the mid-19th century. If we attempt to trace and comprehend the history of how photography, the first truly global visual medium, was adopted in West and Central Africa, we must do this within the wider context of the ever increasing concentration of economic, social and political connections across the space of the Atlantic Ocean. In the process of Africa's adoption of photography, the production and consumption of photographic images are closely linked to one another, at least in the sense in which the French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau refers to a form of consumption which is, in fact, a form of production. This "other" production, as he writes, "does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its ways of using the products" (de Certeau 1984: xii–xiii). Therefore, in the following paper, we will pay particular attention not only to the photographers themselves, the producers of photographs, but also to the ways in which photographs are used in terms of social practice and the way in which they are integrated into everyday life. We will also pay attention to the ways in which photographs are circulated in time, space and in and between different types of media. These are the key elements required to understand the long process by which photography became a ubiquitous visual medium throughout the African continent.

According to Anthony Giddens' analysis of the dynamics of modernity, within the "Atlantic Visualscape" (Schneider 2010, *idem* 2011), a landscape

both physically tangible and imaginary located at the “*Schnittstelle von Materialität und Diskursivität*”¹ (Geppert/Jensen/Weinhold 2005:18), photographs can be classed as “disembedding mechanisms” (Giddens 1991:18, see also Cassel 1993: 84–87). According to Giddens, “disembedding” means “the ‘lifting out’ [deterritorialisation]² of social relations from local contexts and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space.” (Giddens 1991: 18) This clearly has implications for interpersonal relationships, which must be repeatedly re-established as part of their practice. Disembedding mechanisms include both symbolic media (“symbolic tokens”), such as money, and expert systems. Giddens groups both together using the term “abstract systems” (Giddens 1991: 18), “codified forms of expert knowledge which have been lifted out of their local context” (Giddens 1992: 26). The central thesis of this paper is that the establishment of a wider transcontinental socio-political and economic area spanning Europe, West and Central Africa and North and South America was, if not exclusively then in some crucial regards, a process mediated by visual images. This is true whether it developed as a result of European colonial expansion or as a result of complex migratory processes; under duress as part of the slave trade or freely through remigration to and internal migration within Africa. Images, and photographs in particular, when seen (as with money) as symbolic media in the light of Bourdieu’s “economy of practices” (Bourdieu 1986: 242) and given the changes to and expansion of possibilities in communication across wider areas (as a direct consequence of the process of globalisation) played a central and integrative role in this process (for a detailed discussion of this theory see Schneider 2011). It can also be demonstrated that photography represents an expert system, again in terms of Giddens’ “abstract systems”, which functions in terms of trust, not in people, but rather in an abstract system (Giddens 1990: 79–100).

The history of African photography began at a point in time when the transatlantic slave trade was coming to an end and was being replaced by “legitimate” trade in the context of the “commercial transition” (Law 1995, Lynn 1997, Mann 2007: 1–12). It is also closely linked to transcontinental migratory movements and migratory movements within Africa, Christian missionary work, the ever greater exploration of the African continent, the

1 “interface between materiality and discursivity” (translation: SC).

² Deleuze/Guatarri (1972); Deleuze/Parnet (1980: 144–158).

transition to colonialism and the growth of towns and cities along the coast. These phenomena resulted in intensive economic and social contact between the coastal cities of West and Central Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Against this backdrop, and assuming that in order to work as a photographer a minimum level of Western education and knowledge of the Western world and, of course, access to Western markets was required, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the first African photographers we are able to identify in our sources is Francis W. Joaque, whose grandfather had been resettled in Sierra Leone as a freed slave, whose father was an esteemed member of the Krio society in Freetown, and who himself had attended schools there run by the Church Mission Society and retained his links with the protestant mission throughout his life (Schneider 2010). In her study of the role of migrants from Sierra Leone in the early history of modern Nigeria, Jean Herskovits Kopytoff notes (in perfect keeping with Joaque's family background) “[a]s the century wore on, liberated Africans, especially from Freetown, became prominent in aiding the spread of European influence – direct or indirect; political, religious, or economic – from the Gambia to the Cameroons.” (Kopytoff 1965, see also Ajayi 1965, Aderibigbe 1975) The cultural proximity of early African photographers to Europe is evident not least in their names – Grant, Decker, Holm, Lutterodt, Sawyer and, of course, Joaque.

MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHERS

If we disregard the photographer Augustus Washington,³ who emigrated from America to Liberia in the early 1850s, then we can say with certainty that there were a number of photographers born in Africa working across the continent from 1866 onwards. A photograph taken by John Parkes Decker in Gorée, Senegal originates from this period. As the historian Christopher Fyfe wrote, Decker, who was originally from the The Gambia (Fyfe 1963: 362),

3 After August Washington was first mentioned by Vera Viditz-Ward in the early 1980s with a note that his daguerreotypes had most probably been lost (something which later proved to be false), a series of essays were published which shone new light on the life and works of Washington. Viditz-Ward (1985: 46, incl. fn 2); Viditz-Ward (1987: 511); Shumard (1999); Johnson (1996); Dinius (2012).

moved between Sierra Leone and Fernando Pó in his work as a photographer over the following years. Indeed in his logo, he always put his place of work as the “West Coast [of] Africa”. The last known photographs by Decker are of the Polish explorer Etienne de Szolc-Rogozinski and his wife taken on Fernando Pó in 1890.⁴

Decker’s mobility as a photographer was typical for early African photographers, who in many cases did not just work from one location but rather, following clients and seasons, covered wider areas. It was common for photographers to advertise in local newspapers that they would be available for work for a given period, generally for several weeks, in a certain place (usually in the most important coastal cities such as Lagos, Accra, Cape Coast etc.). We know that Augustus Washington not only worked in Liberia, which was his main place of residence and business, but also in Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Senegal. On 29th June 1857, he put an advertisement in the newspaper *New Era* (Freetown, Sierra Leone), which closed with the following words: “Mrs. Washington will be in attendance to receive ladies, and assist in arranging their toilet.” (Shumard 1999: 14, 22, fn 45)⁵ Francis W. Joaque emigrated from Sierra Leone to Fernando Pó, where he worked for some years, only to then establish himself in Libreville in the mid-1870s and finally return to Sierra Leone in the 1890s. Members of the Lutterodt dynasty worked in Cameroon, Fernando Pó and in the Gold Coast. Neils Walwin Holm, who was born in Accra around 1865 and who became a member of the *Royal Photographic Society* in 1895, worked in his place of birth for many years before moving his business to Lagos in 1886.

The steamers which sailed regularly between Great Britain and West and Central Africa from 1852 onwards played a central role in the development and dynamics of both transatlantic travel and travel within Africa. They made it possible to draw up timetables, even if these could not always be adhered to fully (something often complained about by travellers) (Osterhammel 2009: 1014). The historian Martin Lynn, who sadly died prematurely, characterised the rise of steam travel in West and Central Africa in the early

4 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cartes et Plans WE, 141, Société de Géographie de Paris; La Ilustracion Española, año XXXV, Núm. XI, 22. March 1891, 189.

5 Vera Viditz-Ward already made a reference to this advertisement in the 1980s: Viditz-Ward (1985: 46, incl. fn 2); Viditz-Ward (1987: 511).

1850s as a “radical break in the history of the region’s external commerce” (Lynn 1992, see also Dike 1956, Lynn 2002: 182–183). It was not only white traders and missionaries who used this means of transport to travel back and forth between Africa and Europe, but Africans too. The photographer N. Walvin Holm took the steamer several times between 1890 and 1910 to travel to England. For instance, in 1900 he made the trip in order to participate in the first *Pan-African Conference* organised by Henry Sylvester Williams in his role as the secretary to the Lagos branch’s *Pan-African Association* (Lara 2000: 273).

There is no definitive answer to the question of how the first African photographers came into contact with photography as a technical process and from whom they learnt their profession, as there are very few written sources dating from this period. In the photographer (and cabinetmaker) John McCarthy Blair’s obituary, we are told that he learnt photography without the aid of a teacher.⁶ However, this can hardly be the norm as, during the 1880s, advertisements appeared in local newspapers throughout West Africa offering photography courses and seeking apprentices (Grant 1884: 1; Messrs. Lutterodt & Sons 1893: 13; also a.u. 1885, October 17: 1). Even before this, there were opportunities to observe (European) photographers at work. A few examples should illustrate this point.

The first reference to a photographer in West Africa dates from the year 1840. It referred to the French naval captain Louis Édouard Bouët-Willaumez, who in 1840, while sailing up the West African coast, put briefly into harbour at Elmina (in present day Ghana) and set up his camera (Yarak 1995: 8, see also Haney 2004). The Briton John Holt described in his journal how E.I. Smith, who, like Holt, worked as a trader on the island of Fernando Pó in the Gulf of Guinea, had a portrait taken of himself in November 1864 aboard the Royal Navy ship the *Vindictive* at just off the island’s capital city Clarence, following his wedding to one Chin Cherry (Nassau 1874: 92). Between 1861 and 1864, the French naval officers Paul Serval and Griffon du Bellay reconnoitred the West and Central African coast. One of their journeys took them up a tributary of the Ogooué River to Lake Onague in Gabon (Société 1889, Mitchell 1989). In 1865 Griffon du Bellay published a detailed account of this journey in *Le Tour du Monde*. It was illustrated with numerous images based on photographs taken by the officer Houzé

6 Sierra Leone Weekly News, March 16, 1889, p. 3.

d'Aulnoit, which du Bellay described as “faithful reproductions of the photographs” (du Bellay 1865: 273). In March or April of 1862, at exactly the same time as Serval and Griffon du Bellay were exploring the Ogowe, both the British consul to Fernando Pó, Richard F. Burton, and the hunter and adventurer Henry Leveson reported how a French naval officer (most probably the aforementioned Houzé d'Aulnoit) photographed a young gorilla sitting on the lap of the trader Robert Bruce Napoléon Walker (Leveson 1867: 468, Burton 1876: cpt. 1). Numerous other examples demonstrate that cameras were certainly taken on many expeditions from the 1860s onwards; as the historian James Ryan suggests quoting an anonymous source from 1864 “[f]or the purpose of science, an explorer and a photographer should be convertible terms”.⁷

Some of the white traders in West and Central Africa already owned and used cameras in the 1860s. Some, as the British trader J.F. Napier Hewett writes, to “astonish the natives” (Hewett 1862: 18–19). The ranks of the missionary societies operating in West and Central Africa also brought with them cameras and provided their mother house with visual material of their missionary work, sometimes also buying photographs on the local market or swapping them with colleagues. During the 1850s, the *Basler Mission* (Basel Mission Society) offered photography courses to those who were preparing for work overseas. In 1860, the missionary Wilhelm Locher travelled with his camera to the Gold Coast and subsequently sent several dozen photographs back to Basel between 1860 and 1867. Another missionary who worked as a photographer in West Africa was the Scotsman Daniel West. In 1856 while working on the Gold Coast, he produced a series of daguerreotypes or ambrotypes (also known as collodion positives) which has unfortunately been lost. However, they have survived as reproductions in the memoirs which his brother dedicated to him in 1857 after his death (West 1857). The *Norddeutsche Mission* (North German Mission Society) also equipped its workers with cameras in the early 1860s (Jenkins 1993, idem 2006). Therefore there were plenty of opportunities for Africans to observe photographers at work, to ask them questions and perhaps to gain an introduction

⁷ A.u.: Art. VII. The Quarterly Review (October 1864), 498–499. As cited by Nasau 1904: 21, fn 37.

into the art of photography. The necessary materials could be readily ordered from Europe, as numerous advertisements in the local papers demonstrate.⁸

“Accepting and appropriating the new technology [of photography]”, as Christraud Geary remarks, “was, of course, a complex process that unfolded in distinct ways in different milieus, regions and time periods.” (Geary 2002: 103) In this respect, a range of sources show both fear of and enthusiasm for the new medium, but also demonstrate the various ways in which photography spread, both socially and geographically. But even in the early 1880s, Max Buchner, the first governor of Cameroon and the later director of the *Münchner Ethnografisches Museum* (Munich Ethnographical Museum), wrote that even in the hinterland of Luanda, „die Photographie bereits in Mode [sei]“⁹ (Buchner 1880–81: 175–176). And Chris Geary notes, “[a]t the end of the 19th century, taking pictures in Africa had become commonplace.” (Geary 1997: 93) By this time, the competition between photographers, at least in certain areas, must have been so great that it was no longer enough to be simply able to take a photograph. In an advertisement in the *Gold Coast Times* in 1883, the photographer John M. Blair stated that “[i]n common with other departments of arts, photography has had additional ‘BOON’ conferred upon it during the last few years, so now no common-place photos can find a place within the range of its circle.”¹⁰

Both the consumption of photographs and the practice of accumulating them as cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1983, Jurt 2007) caught on more quickly in the coastal regions (particularly the main coastal cities) than in the hinterland. Similarly, Africans living in the economic and political centres along the coast were faster to integrate photographs into their everyday practice, perhaps because of their contact with Europeans and access to Western consumer goods and Western consumer practices, including photographs and the practice of displaying them in their homes.

There were many descriptions of the adoption of a European lifestyle by the local African elites (something often referred to disparagingly as “mimicry” in European sources), also in reference to the use of photographs. For example, in his book “Dahomey as it is”, published in 1874 in London, the

8 Sierra Leone Weekly News, July 17, 1886, 1; Gold Coast Times. December 03, 1881, p. 4.

9 “photography is already in fashion” (translation: SC).

10 Gold Coast Times, December 28, 1883, p. 6.

Englishman J.A. Skertchly describes “abundant evidences of the owner’s [Quinun, the king’s, Gele’s, agent] mimicry of European customs”. Amongst other things, he describes the walls of a living room as being “decorated with gaudy-coloured German prints, vile even for them – and last, but by no means least, was a yellow, sun-spoilt photograph of Quinun in his war paint.” (Skertchly 1874: 13) Max Buchner reports how a large photograph of King Akwa’s father hung in his state rooms (in Douala, Cameroon) (Buchner 1887: 54). In his memoirs, the British trader John Witford describes a visit to King Eyo in the Niger Delta, “[In his] principal audience room is a likeness of the Queen, cut from the Graphic, and gummed against the wall in a good light, and it is the best ‘old master’ in Eyo’s gallery. He shows with pride a photographic album and then kindly invites us down-stairs to the other palace, where in the courtyard a band of rude music plays” (Whitford 1877: 299).

Flora S. Kaplan’s assessment that photographs in the modern culture of Benin reinforce and pay tribute to existing relationships, but also are used to create new relationships is also true for the 19th century and, in general terms, for many African societies (Kaplan 1990: 323, 326–327). Photographs were accumulated, in the terms of Bourdieu’s theory of forms of capital, as cultural capital in both objectified and embodied states and as symbolic capital in order to create, expand and sustain “a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” (Bourdieu 1986: 248) In his essay on the history and practices of indigenous photography among the Fante in Ghana, Tobias Wendl argues that the practice of using photographs was to “sie in die allgemeine Bildzirkulation einzuschleusen: also sie zu verschenken oder zu tauschen. Man gibt Bilder von sich gerne weg, um anderswo in Form eines fotografischen Substituts präsent zu sein; und man nimmt – aus dem gleichen Grund – die Bilder anderer entgegen.”¹¹ (Wendl 1999: 292) In the context of migration and mobility in Fante society, he described photographs as “symbolic dams holding back the increasing loss of social cohesion.” (Ibidem)

11 “introduce them into the mass of images in general circulation: to present them as gifts or to exchange them. People like giving away pictures of themselves as they enable them to be present somewhere else in the form of a photographic substitute, and – for the same reasons – they enjoy receiving pictures of others.” (translation: SC)

Sources from the 19th century in which such acts of exchanging and presenting photographs are named explicitly are extremely rare. Adolph Burdo, a member of the Belgian *société géographique* (geographical association), who visited the *Roi de Dakar* in 1878 (a common tourist attraction for the period), reported,

“Cela lui vaut, [visits by tourists], dit-on, une rente assez rondelette, nombre de steamers y faisant escale, et ayant toujours à bord beaucoup de passagers, qui s’en vont au Brésil ou en reviennent. [...] Je laisse à deviner ce qu’il me présenta en échange. Ce ne fut ni du vin de palme, ni un gri-gri, ni une amulette; ce fut...son portrait, son portrait photographié par un vrai photographe, M. Bonnevile, qui habita quelque temps le Sénégal.” (Burdo 1880: 16)¹²

This portrait was widely circulated and was displayed in the collection of the *Mittelschweizerische Geographisch-Commerzielle Gesellschaft* in Aarau as a gift from one of the very travellers Burdo mentioned (Schneider 2006, a photograph of the “King of Dakar” is printed on page 119). The Swiss traveller Wilhelm Bolliger also made a stopover in Dakar on his journey from Europe to Brazil (where he lived) and visited the king who was clearly a tourist attraction. Another source in which such an exchange is described was published in 1899 in the German periodical *Globus*. In the article “Ihre Majestät, die Königin von Alt-Calabar” (Her Majesty, the Queen of Old Calabar), a certain H.T. describes himself as being surprised when, after his visit to the Queen, he was presented with a photograph as a parting gift. “Als ich mich verabschiedete, beschenkte mich zu meinem Erstaunen die Königin mit ihrer

12 “These [visits by tourists] bring in a tidy little sum for him, as many ships carrying tourists to or from Brazil often stop off in Dakar [...] I will leave it to the readers to guess what the King presented me with in exchange for my gift to him. It was neither palm wine nor a gri-gri or amulet. No, it was his portrait, his photographic portrait, taken by a real photographer, Monsieur Bonnevile, who had resided for some time in Senegal.” (translation: SC) A reproduction of the photograph can be found on page 14; also in Hickling (2014, 342). An advertisement in the Sierra Leone Weekly News on 2nd January 1886 announced Bonnevile’s presence in Freetown for the month.

Photographie, auf welcher sie in voller königlicher Tracht steht" (H.T./Globus 1899: 75).¹³

In their article published in 2005 on self-portrayal and local adoption of photography in the Niger Delta, Martha Anderson and Lisa Aronson work on the assumption that during the late 19th century at least some of the photographs of local elites such as Oko Jumbo, Jaja, Adda Allison, Cookey Gam and William Brown came to be in the possession of the Swiss adventurer Carl Passavant from Basel by means of such exchanges (Anderson 2005). William Brown, who like John Jumbo (Oko Jumbo's son) and King George Pepple and his brother went to school in Sierra Leone and England, seems to have been particularly proactive in giving photographs. Photographs showing him and his family and entourage in a variety of outfits and against different backgrounds can be found in a number of different collections (Tasie 1978: 42).

Fig. 1: William Brown with his entourage



Photographer unknown. 1880s, Courtesy Christraud M. Geary.

13 "To my astonishment, as I bade farewell, the Queen presented me with a gift in the form of a photograph of her in which she was shown in full royal attire." (translation: SC)

It can also be deduced, at least implicitly, from the photograph albums belonging to white traders and travellers that at least some of the photographs were gifts. For example, the estate of the late English palm oil trader Graceus Abraham Reece included numerous photographs of Africans in carte-de-visite format, not least the photograph of a certain Walter A. Jackman from Demarara (British Guiana).¹⁴

CIRCULATING PHOTOGRAPHS

Pictures of all kinds have circulated throughout the Atlantic Visualscape since the 16th century. They moved between individuals and institutions, were bought and sold, presented as gifts and incorporated into academic and private collections. They travelled from continent to continent and, especially since the rise of photography, have often been reproduced numerous times in a variety of different media and in different materials. These patterns of movement can be accurately traced over long periods of time by following the journeys of individual photographs.

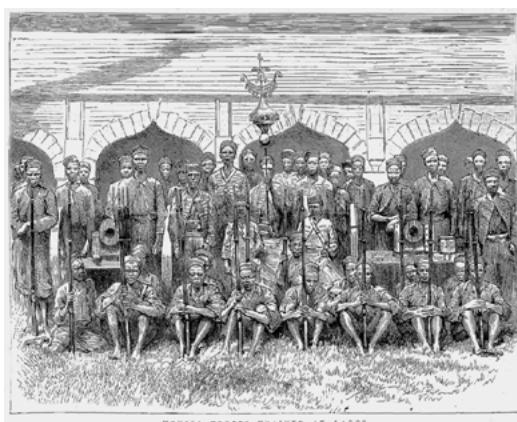
In this context, the significance of Christian missions should not go unmentioned. Both Catholic and Protestant missions used images in their work “in the field” not least “to challenge rival gods as well as to conceive of new forms of community and experience of the divine” (Morgan 2005: 147). On the other hand, missionaries sent home photographs of their experiences in order to secure continued support for their work. Many of these pictures helped to create a “visual lexicon of the faith” in the Western world from where the Christian missions had set out (Morgan 2005: 150–151). Nonetheless, it is clear that, even as late as the 19th century, there was very little visual knowledge of sub-Saharan Africa in the Western world (Jäger 2006: 137). “[T]he civilized world still knew little and cared less about Central Africa,” as the Finnish historian Leila Koivunen wrote, citing the political scientist Alain Cairns (Cairns 1965, Koivunen 2009: 2). It is only against the context of this absence of visual information that the enormous significance of the rise of a veritable flood of images which occurred in the 19th century becomes apparent (Jäger 2006: 137).

14 <http://africaphotography.org/collections/sue-taylor-collection/gallery>

A number of different factors contributed to the widespread distribution and circulation of photographs. On a technical level this is predominantly thanks to the fact that photographs are easily reproduced. One negative can create an almost unlimited number of prints. The carte-de-visite format introduced in the early 1850s is an excellent example of this. In the 1860s at the height of “cardomania”, several million of these small-format portrait photographs were in circulation worldwide. Photographs were also published in books, magazines and newspapers, first as wood engravings and then, from 1880s onwards, using the halftone technique, allowing them to be disseminated very widely indeed.

To meet the demand from a growing number of people for current news, information and entertainment, a large number of illustrated magazines were founded in Europe and in North and South America between 1840 and 1875. These did not play a major role in the reproduction of photographs from Africa as, in general, the African continent was reported on sparingly in them. Nonetheless, because of their large circulations, they should not be ignored. Photographs by Francis W. Joaque were published in 1876 in *Illustracion Espanola y Americana*, in 1884 in *Über Land und Meer* and in 1886 in *Globus*. John Parkes Decker’s photographs were printed in 1873 in *The Graphic* and *The Illustrated London News* and finally W.J. Sawyer’s photographs appeared in 1883 in *La Ilustracion Espanola y Americana*.

Fig. 2: “Houssa Troops Trained at Lagos”



The Graphic, 6th December 1873, p. 528.

Photographs or wood engravings based on photographs were not only circulated in illustrated magazines, but also in a great many books, missionary magazines and also in private photograph albums. The Marquis of Compiègne illustrated his two-volume report of his journey to Gabon published in 1875 with numerous photographs by Francis W. Joaque, “un noir qui réside habituellement au Gabon”¹⁵ (Compiègne 1875a, idem 1875b). The missionary Henry Roe also used photographs by Joaque to illustrate his report on the first few years of the “Primitive Methodist Mission” in Fernando Pó (Roe 1874). As for private photograph albums, those belonging to the Swiss adventurer Carl Passavant are a good example.¹⁶ A comparison of these albums with other photograph collections in which many of the Passavant photographs also feature gives us a good impression of just how far and over what long periods of time certain photographs travelled.

The role of Christian missionary societies in the circulation and reproduction of photographs from Africa and, in many cases, taken by African photographers has already been mentioned and is illustrated here once again by the example of the British Missionary Leaves Association (MLA). The MLA was founded in 1869 “[to] assist Church Missionary Society missionaries and indigenous clergy in the CMS mission areas”.¹⁷ This “assistance” included the MLA providing local branches of the CMS in Great Britain or interested media outlets with photographs from their missions in West Africa. A photograph specimen book served as an order catalogue from which prints of portraits of European and African missionaries (such as the very high-profile Bishop Samuel A. Crowther) as well as pictures of schools and churches in Sierra Leone and Nigeria could be ordered. Then the album was packaged up extremely carefully in order to “be sent back as soon as possible”.¹⁸ To what extent the local missionary societies made use of this service would require further research. What is certain is that the CMS itself used photographs from the photograph specimen book to illustrate its own maga-

15 “a black man who normally resides in Gabon” (translation: SC).

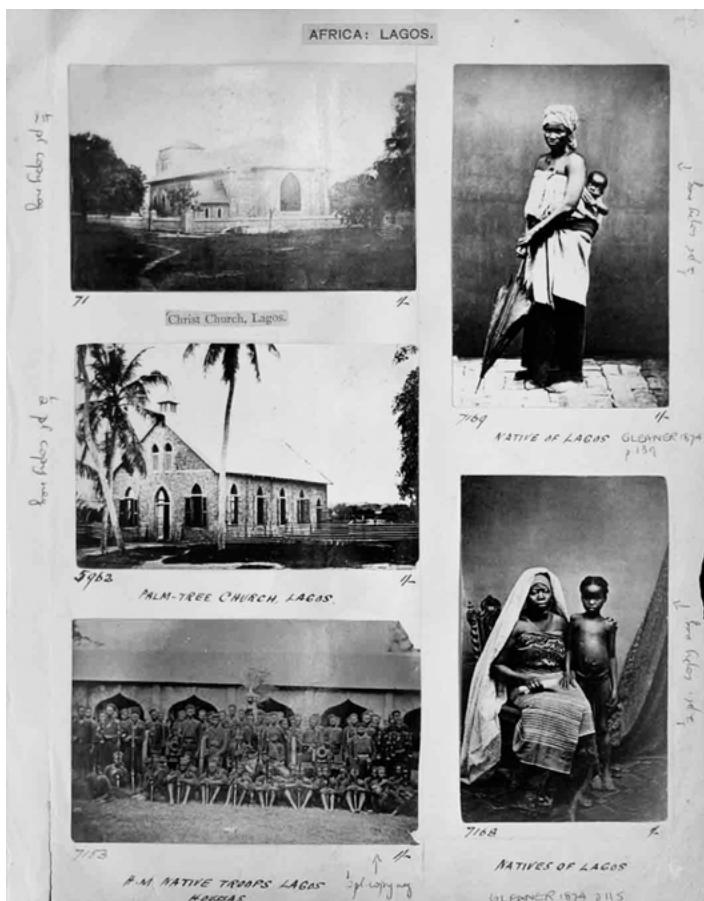
16 <http://africaphotography.org/collections/carl-passavant-grey-album/gallery>
<http://africaphotography.org/collections/carl-passavant-red-album/gallery>

17 <http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/44/1239.htm> [March 2013].

18 Missionary Leaves Association. Photo Specimen Book. Church Mission Society Archives, Oxford, UK.

zines (for example the *Gleaner*), and that many photographs from it also feature in other collections and publications. However, that does not necessarily mean that the photograph specimen book was the source of the photographs in other albums and collections. Instead, it was – just like other albums and collections – one of the many places in which different photographs – some of them bought, some received as gifts, some commissioned – were collected and sometimes shared with others.

Fig. 3: Page from the Missionary Leaves Association photograph specimen book



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African photographers worked in a market where they were subject to the laws of supply and demand, but which they nonetheless attempted to influence by meeting and anticipating the demands of a heterogeneous clientele. Clearly supply and demand changed over time. If in the 1860s and 1870s there was only a small group of photographers, who rarely ran their own studio from one single location but instead travelled along the coast, advertising their services in the largest coastal towns and cities, in the late 19th century the number of photographers increased significantly. In this period photographers often sought and trained apprentices, and there were increasing numbers of advertisements in local papers for photographic studios and their services. Their customer base also grew and became more diverse, thereby increasing the demand for photographs. Portraits were always good business. These were often commissioned by white traders, explorers and missionaries such as Grecius Abraham Reece, Savorgnan de Brazza or Robert H. Nassau and also by the local African elites. The former also had a penchant for “typical” scenes and landscapes. These were meant to offer family and friends back home an impression of “Africa” and were kept in stock by local photographic studios. Missionary societies, the colonial administration and traders also commissioned photographs of buildings, ports and other aspects of the urban infrastructure. With the rise of the picture postcard at the start of the 20th century, the range of photographic images and their circulation increased even further. Photographers, their clients and not least the photographs themselves were therefore integrated into a practice of displaying, buying and selling, exchanging and giving of photographs as gifts. They all served, as did the various print media, as vehicles and motors for the circulation of photographic images within the Atlantic Visualscape over considerable distances and periods of time.

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