
Photograph album of Isabella Bird's travels on horseback from Baghdad to Tehran in 1890, 1890

Processed by Jane Carpenter with assistance from Simon Elliott; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

UCLA Library Special Collections

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Photograph album of Isabella Bird's travels on horseback from Baghdad to Tehran in 1890

Date (inclusive): 1890

Collection number: 94/93

Creator: Bird, Isabella L. (Isabella Lucy), 1831-1904, photographer.

Physical Description: 1 album (101 photographic prints) : b&w, 32 x 44 cm (album)

Photographer, title, and date from front cover.

Photographs are mounted on recto and verso of first [27] light beige cardboard leaves, two to a page; last [31] p. of album are blank. Interleaved with the photographs are printed leaves of descriptions, each numbered to correspond with a particular photograph, although there are many gaps in the numbering sequence. The descriptions are so eloquent and detailed that they were probably written and inserted by Mrs. Bird herself.

Bound in dark gray and black pebbled grain morocco; gold-stamped cover title "I.B. Photographs. Persia 1890."

Spec. Coll. copy: two photographs are missing from their respective pages: nos. 43, and 144. Housed in modern beige cloth-covered clamshell box; spine label "Journeys in Persian and Kurdistan."

Abstract: Album containing 101 black-and-white photographs documenting Isabella Bird's journey from Baghdad to Tehran in 1890.

Language: Finding aid is written in English.

Language of the Material: Materials are in English.

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.

Los Angeles, California 90095-1575

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

Restrictions on Access

Open for research. STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

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Provenance/Source of Acquisition

Presented to Caro O. Minasian by Mr. Leon Aganoor & family, Ishfahan, August 22, 1953.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Photograph album of Isabella Bird's travels on horseback from Baghdad to Tehran in 1890 (Collection 94/93). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

UCLA Catalog Record ID: [6403594](#)

Biography/History

Nineteenth-century English traveler, explorer, writer, photographer, natural historian, and humanitarian. Isabella Lucy Bird was born in the north of England, at Boroughbridge Hall in Yorkshire, in 1831, the eldest daughter of an Anglican Evangelical clergyman. As a child, she suffered from various spinal ailments, but once she began traveling, her health improved. Her 1854 trip to the United States and Canada, described in her book, *The Englishwoman in America*, was the beginning of a lifetime of travel for her. After the death of her father in 1858, the family moved to Scotland, but Isabella was never happy living a life of domesticity. She began traveling abroad again in 1872, with trips to Hawaii where she spent six months, learning to ride not sidesaddle but astride like a man, and the Rocky Mountains, where she was wooed by the outlaw Jim Nugent, followed by tours of Japan, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore. Her marriage, at age fifty, to her sister's physician, Dr. John Bishop, was cut short by his untimely death five years later. In 1887, Isabella studied nursing at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, so that she could help the people she met in her travels in remote regions, and in 1888, embarked on a trip to India, Tibet, and Persia, founding hospitals in Islamabad and Srinagar, in memory of her husband and sister, respectively. Travels later in her life--a trip to Persia in 1890, and a tour of Japan, Korea, and China in 1894--led to the publication of two books: *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* in 1891, and *Korea and Her Neighbours* in 1898. She studied photography at the Regent Street Polytechnic in 1892, and lectured widely in England and Scotland, becoming one of the first women members of the Royal Geographical Society. Isabella Bird died in Edinburgh in 1904.

Scope and Content

Early in 1890, Bird, accompanied by Major Herbert Sawyer, an intelligence officer in the Indian Army, began the journey on horseback from Baghdad eastwards through Kurdistan towards Tehran. The photographs document the rugged landscape and the native peoples she encountered along the way in Khaniqin, Kirmānshāh, Hamadān, and Qum. In the remote camps and villages she visits, Bird photographs groups of native peoples--Armenians, Bakhtiyaris, and Lurs--and describes their homes, tents, clothing, food, customs, and government. Some of the photographs are portraits of local chieftains or "khans", often posed with their extended families, and there are several photographs of groups of Bakhtiyaris, including groups of women in their robes and headscarves. The British presence in Persia is documented in several photographs of the British Residency in Baghdad, and the summer home of the British Agent outside Kirmānshāh. There are also a few photographs of the Tehran Legation: one includes the British minister to Persia, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, seated with other British government officials, another portrays the Legation servants gathered on the front terrace of the Legation building, a third shows the Legation State room, with portrait of the Queen in coronation robes over the fireplace. Photographs from Iṣfahān show the Anglican church there, the Church Missionary Society school for boys, the Society's school for Armenian girls, and Aganur, agent for the British government to the court of the Sultan, with his family. Captions note the presence of Bird in several of the photographs.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

Bird, Isabella L. (Isabella Lucy), 1831-1904 --Travel.
Bird, Isabella L. (Isabella Lucy), 1831-1904 --Photographs.
Bakhtiari (Iranian people) --Photographs.
Lur (Iranian people) --Photographs.
Armenians --Iran --Photographs.
British --Iran --Photographs.
British --Iraq --Photographs.
Women travelers.
Voyages and travels.
Baghdad (Iraq) --Photographs.
Khanaqin (Iraq) --Photographs.
Kirmānshāh (Kirmānshāhān, Iran) --Photographs.
Hamadān (Iran) --Photographs.
Qum (Iran) --Photographs.
Iṣfahān (Iran) --Photographs.
Tehran (Iran) --Photographs.
Iraq --Photographs.
Kurdistan --Photographs.
Iran --Photographs.

Genres and Forms of Material

Photographic prints.
Photograph albums.

Other Index Terms Related to this Collection

I.B. photographs Persia 1890
Photographs Persia 1890
Aganoor, Leon, former owner.
Minasian, Caro Owen, former owner.

Related Material

Part of the [Photograph Album Collection \(Collection 94\)](#) in UCLA Library Special Collections.

For additional photographs documenting British missionary activities in Iṣfahān, as well as other topics on the genealogical and local history of Iṣfahān, consult the [Minasian collection of Armenian material, ca. 1800-1968](#) (Collection 1632); and the [Minasian collection of Near Eastern manuscripts, ca. 1100-1899](#) (Collection 1147) in UCLA Library Special Collections.

Isabella Bird photographs of the landscapes, buildings, and people she encountered in her travels are housed in the [John Murray Archive at the National Library of Scotland](#). For Isabella Bird's own account of her travels in Persia, cf. *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan : including a summer in the Upper Karun region and a visit to the Nestorian rayahs* / by Mrs. Bishop (Isabella L. Bird) ; in two volumes ... ; with portrait, maps, and illustrations. New York : G.P. Putnam's Sons; London : John Murray, 1891. For detailed information on Isabella Bird's family life, upbringing, education, marriage and life's work, historical and political background of the time, and a map of Bird's travels in Persia and Kurdistan, see C.E. Bosworth's "The Intrepid Victorian Lady in Persia: Mrs. Isabella Bishop's Travels in Luristan and Kurdistan, 1890," *Iran* 27 (1989), 87-101.
