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Urban life in late Ottoman, Hashemite and early Saudi Jeddah, as documented in the photographs in the Snouck Hurgronje collection in Leiden

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The photographic collection of Snouck Hurgronje in the Leiden University Library

The famous »Bilder-Atlas« of Mecca, published by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in 1888 as an addition to his voluminous work on Mecca, as well as the Bilder aus Mekka (1889) have long been recognised as a remarkable early (albeit not the earliest) visual document about late 19th century Mecca, comprising both photographs and engravings.

1 I would like to thank Léon Buskens for his kind invitation to Leiden in November 2011, and him and Jan Just Witkam for encouraging me to undertake this article. Jan Just Witkam and Arnoud Vrolijk gave me valuable advice and provided me with materials with regard to the Snouck Hurgronje papers and photographs at Leiden. Without their kind advice this research would have been impossible, and I also thank the library for the permission to reproduce the photographs. John Frankhuizen and the staff of the Oriental Reading Room at Leiden University Library patiently helped me with the practicalities of obtaining the material and the reproduction of the photographs. As all the photographs come from the Leiden collection, this will not be indicated individually. Nelida Fuccaro helped with methodological references, Christoph Herzog, Rana von Mende, Gülhan Balsoy and a number of ZMO colleagues provided helpful references, and Jannis Hagmann and Selma Schwarz helped me to access the necessary articles and books. I am grateful to Claudia Ghrawi and the anonymous reviewers for their comments. My warmest thanks goes to all of them.


3 P. Sj. van Koningsveld, Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam, Den Haag 1988, p. 116f. On the working relation between Snouck Hurgronje and ’Abd al-Gaffār, see the commentary as well as the very interesting letters by ’Abd al-Gaffār reproduced in Claude W. Sui, »Die Pilgerfahrt zu den heiligen Stätten des Islam und die frühe Photographie«, pp. 56-60.
of Snouck Hurgronje’s stay in Jeddah, spanning the period from the mid-1880s to the 1930s. They attest to Snouck Hurgronje’s anthropological interest which led him to combine philology and participant observation with the most recent methods of documenting local culture photographically and phonographically. In this approach, he was one of the first Orientalists, like his sometime friend C.H. Becker who followed contemporary as well as classical themes and believed in the importance of ethnography as much as philology. It is not surprising that many of these new-style Orientalists, who in many ways also laid the foundations for the development of Middle Eastern anthropology, became involved in the imperial endeavour. Snouck Hurgronje, who served many years as advisor on Islam in the Netherlands East Indies, was considered as one of the “pioneers of practical anthropology”, by which was meant a “closer relationship between academic anthropology and the colonial administration.”

Moreover, they illustrate a number of lesser known aspects of the social and religious history of Jeddah which was of special interest to the Dutch Orientalist. Apart from the pilgrims from Southeast Asia and any information he could gather on religious life there and in Mecca, it is this theme which stands out in Snouck Hurgronje’s “diary” and which is taken up in this essay. And while other travellers and a number of more recent historical anthropological studies refer to these themes, they are rarely illustrated in photographs, which makes the collection by Snouck Hurgronje unique in comparison to other early and often spectacular photographs of the Hijaz, taken by Arabs and foreigners alike. The photographs can also be used to contribute to a better understanding of other aspects of Jeddah’s urban history, which this essay will illustrate.

An extensive stylistic analysis of the different photographs and photographers would exceed the scope of this paper, and would benefit from a full catalogisation of the photographic collection as well as a more comprehensive classification of photographers than has been hitherto possible. Nevertheless, it can be hypothesised that later photographers who sent their images to Snouck Hurgronje had more freedom of movement with the camera in outside settings. Hence, many of the images of the city, and people moving outside, seem to be of a later date. In contrast, Snouck Hurgronje had to rely on a local friend for outdoors photographs (most notably in Mecca, but there are few if any outdoors photographs of Jeddah which have him as undisputed author). Furthermore, both the images published in “Bilder-Atlas” and many of those found unpublished in the collection seem more staged. This might have to do with the increasing acceptance of photography in the local population, but also with the development of the photographic equipment which became more easy to transport with the development of photographic film and box cameras in the late 1880s, i.e. just after Snouck Hurgronje’s departure from the Hijaz. With the spread of the 35 mm cameras, they became a much less conspicuous instrument to use in public.

Leiden University Library has spent much effort to digitalise a growing number of items in the collection. They can be accessed through its website, http://www.library.leiden.edu/ and are hidden in the special collections under the search term Snouck Hurgronje with a link from the catalogues of ubl085 and ubl215 (as well as some of the other catalogues) to the digitalised images.

Snouck Hurgronje's photographs as historical documents

It was common in the early era of photography to consider photographs as “objective, impersonal,
and authentic ways of representing the real,\(^\text{11}\) and it might indeed have been this very perspective which encouraged Snouck Hurgronje to use the technique as one of the methods of his ethnography. Thus, it has been argued that already his »Bilder-Atlas« (pictorial atlas), the title chosen for his collection of pictures, illustrates this documentary desire.\(^\text{12}\) Among the photographs chosen below for a discussion of selected aspects of late Ottoman, Hashemite and early Saudi Jeddah are, as mentioned above, a number of pictures taken by other people, usually members of the Dutch community or travellers who were in touch with the Dutch consulate and/or Snouck Hurgronje. If they are treated in the following essay in a fashion similar to the one’s taken by Snouck Hurgronje himself, it is mainly because they seem to reflect quite a number of interests expressed by Snouck Hurgronje in his writings, and because they are clearly linked to themes or people with which he was concerned in his local observations.

1 Fords for passenger traffic to Mecca of the bus service Jeddah-Mecca, March 1926

And although these photographs also demonstrate the changes in material culture and infrastructure, as can be seen, for example, from the pilgrim buses and trucks shown in photograph 1,\(^\text{13}\) which was taken in 1926 by Dr. van Voorhuyzen, it can be assumed that most of these were either taken at the explicit request of Snouck Hurgronje or at least orientated towards his interests. Thus, many of them follow a logic not dissimilar to his own.\(^\text{14}\)

It has since been recognised that ethnographic photographs have to be subjected to similar source criticism as other types of sources, i.e. that attention needs to be paid as much to the photographer as to the photographed, considering motivation, arrangement and audience, brief, the context in which the visual archive came into existence.\(^\text{15}\) Thus, the context of Orientalism and particular types of the portrayal of »the other« have been discussed extensively in the literature.\(^\text{16}\) However, there has also been an increasing realisation that in spite of the necessity to reflect on the motivations and circumstances of photography, the resulting images can tell us something about the past, and notably about certain aspects of the material culture and everyday life which otherwise might remain obscure.\(^\text{17}\) On a theoretical level, Roland Barthes’ elaboration of the photographic paradox, which distinguishes between the depiction and its connotation or context has opened the way for such a reflection, even if his point of departure was the genre of journalistic photography which, one could argue, is different from an academic documentary endeavour.\(^\text{18}\) The existence of at least some notes by the photographing academic, keen on recording as much as possible of his experience in the Hijaz, is a particularly fortuitous coincidence. In addition, there are a good number of other sources illuminating a number of issues


\(^{12}\) Sui, »Die Pilgerfahrt zu den Heiligen Stätten des Islam und die frühe Photographie«, p. 56. C.f. p. 57, where Sui contends that the eradication of ‘Abd al-Gaffār’s name from the photographs in Bilder aus Mekka was due to the the consideration of photography as a reproductive rather than an artistic medium.

\(^{13}\) Picture 1, collection Snouck Hurgronje, Cod. Or. 12.288 CSH B.28.

\(^{14}\) The album containing Or. 12.288 CSH B.1-69 holds a postcard by the photographer, dated June 29, 1927, thanking Snouck Hurgronje for his advice before the journey and offering these images as a gift.


from the Austrian Consulate about »trying, but to no avail, to take photographs« when a visitor came to call on him. Soon afterwards, Snouck Hurgronje’s diary contains a slightly frustrated sounding note about »trying, but to no avail, to take photographs of the passing mahmal from the Austrian Consulate«, and, still in the first fortnight of his stay, he reports that he had been »busy with photography« when a visitor came to call on him.20 He also notes the arrival of some photographic equipment and the sending of photographs to his mother, in addition to regularly reporting to take particular photographs of people or spending time on photography.21 In addition, Snouck Hurgronje seems to have discussed the subject of photography not only with potential collaborators, but also with some men of religion, such as the Egyptian-born Shaykh Husayn al-Baqari, who considered it to be permissible.22

This academic motivation notwithstanding, the overall context is necessary for the decoding of images. Thus, it needs to be remembered that Snouck Hurgronje’s journey was supported financially and logistically by the Dutch government because of Dutch official interest in pan-Islamic movements, notably those which impacted on or emanated from pilgrims in Southeast Asia. Thus, a significant number of the photographs taken by Snouck Hurgronje show pilgrims from the Dutch colonies, grouped presumably by the photographer in order to show the characteristic features of specific ethnicities, and thus possibly contributing to the typification of Dutch colonial subjects.23 There exists, however, no hint anywhere in the diary or in the other papers by Snouck Hurgronje that he was asked to take specific pictures and hence fulfil a specific colonial task.

Furthermore, it is not surprising that it was a Hadhrami muwallad, the nephew of the son of Pontianak, who was the first with whom Snouck Hurgronje discussed the possibility of photographing Mecca.24 This, however, does not seem to have affected the way in which he looked at the city of Jeddah, and there is no evidence that he regularly supplied the Dutch government with photographs taken.

It might be interesting to note besides such typological photographs, more portrait-like pictures were another genre that appears among the images. This enabled Snouck Hurgronje to use photography as a door-opener to »establish friendships and acquaintances«.25 Thus, after his conversion, he was invited to meet the governor of the Hijaz, who offered him his hospitality when visiting Mecca. Snouck Hurgronje also noted: »Shows me badly taken photographs of himself, and would like to have better ones.« A few days later, the governor returned, »in order to be photographed later on in the building of the Consulate.«26 This might be seen in the established context of Ottoman portrait photography which began around the 1840s. In addition, and given that the governor was a very high-ranking Ottoman official, the wish for a good photograph might have also arisen in the context of the sultan’s efforts to document both the people and the sights of the Empire, leading to many officials sending the Sultan photographs of themselves and their realms. This official sultanic endeavour seems to have sprung from two motives – the desire to present the outside world with a particular image of the (modernising) Ottoman Empire, and the interest in seeing (and to some extent visually controlling) the vast Empire from Istanbul.27

To some extent, this mixture of motivations would also have held true for a number of the local officials and notables whose portraits will be discussed in the last part of this article. The resulting images are often of a distinctly formal nature and might say as much about the self-representation of the portrayed as about the photographer. There was at the time no photo-studio in Jeddah, but given the cosmopolitan nature of its population, photographs were known and at least privately appreciated by the educated elite. Indeed, the contemporaneous resolute rejection of photography

19 Jeddah Diary, p. 1.
20 Jeddah Diary, Translation, p. 11 and 14.
21 Jeddah Diary, p. 25, 37, 36-38, 40 and passim.
22 Jeddah Diary, p. 35.
24 Jeddah Diary, p. 8 f.
25 Witkam, »Fifty Years of Dutch-Arabian Relations in Images (1885-1935)«, p. 11. In the Jeddah Diary, Snouck Hurgronje mentions sending photographs to his mother, but does not indicate that he sends any to the government.
26 Jeddah Diary, Translation, p. 54ter.
by contemporaneous Wahhabi scholars was at that time a matter confined to their domains in the Najd.

If Snouck Hurgronje delegated the outdoor photography in Mecca to his friend, this was not so much because of a general rejection of photography and had much more to do with his European origin and the fear of being declared an (unbelieving European) intruder, which could have endangered his life.28 This fear was not entirely unfounded: after all, it was press reports about Snouck Hurgronje’s presence in Mecca under the name of ’Abd al-Gaffar (and Turkish agreement to his presence) which prompted the Ottoman governor to order his immediate departure just before ’id al-adhā 1895.29

Snouck Hurgronje’s passion: Islamic scholarship and religious practices

Snouck Hurgronje’s diary shows that he was very much interested in the religion of Islam, including religious practice, as well as in the Muslims themselves and their traditions, religious or otherwise. His fascination with Islam as a theology and Islamic history is well-documented in many of his scholarly publications. For example, he collected as much information as possible on Islamic learning and noted with great diligence the prescribed books in religious schools between Mecca and Java, as can be seen both from his diary as well as from many of his studies, it is the documentation of this religious lived culture which will be highlighted in the following as it is clearly evident in the photographs. Thus, while the images of Mecca, many of which were taken by his Meccan friend for reasons of security, might still be linked to the more traditional interest in the holy places of Islam, Snouck Hurgronje was also very interested in the local practices. For example, he spent quite some time attending ceremonies for muḥarram at the Iranian consulate, and describes them in some detail.30

An interesting detail is that the photographic collection contains photographs of the arrival of the Egyptian mahmal, the ceremonial palanquin containing the kiswa or cloth covering the kaʿba which was renewed annually.31

It was accompanied by Egyptian officials and military, and its arrival in Jeddah, as well as its procession to Mecca and Medina was accompanied by much pomp and music. This provided a joyful occasion for the local population until the mahmal’s ban in 1926. It seems that this photograph cannot have been taken by Snouck Hurgronje, it is clearly very much in line with his interests. However, Snouck Hurgronje, who had to leave the Hijaz before being able to witness the arrival of this well-known mahmal, describes a quite different variety of ceremonial palanquin, and of a very secular nature. Namely, when the Ottoman governor Osman Nuri Pasha reached Jeddah in January 1885, all the quarters organised processions in his honour, centering around such palanquins. They were carried by people dressed up as Ottoman officials and competing about presenting the most beautifully decorated mahmal. This gave rise to a fight between the awlād of two different quarters.32 Incidentally, Snouck Hurgronje here confirms the importance of the quarter organisation, also known from other parts of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, in spite of the important differences in local building styles and the spatial organisation of quarters.33 He seems to have only

28 Sui, »Die Pilgerfahrt zu den Heiligen Stätten des Islam und die frühe Photographie«, p. 46.
29 Witkam, »Introduction«, p. 129.
witnessed this in passing, as the diary notes that »[r]egrettably I could see nothing of the mahmal processions«. 34

What is, with regard to the ethnography of Jeddah, of great interest are the photographs linked to the end of the breaking of the fast at the end of ramadān contained in the collection. 35

3 Kleine Feest (The »minor feast«), unknown date

4 Children on swings (subtitle U.F.), unknown date

These are of an unclear date, but seem to relate to the common context of the festivities of the »Minor Feast« or ‛īd al-fitr. Snouck Hurgronje did not experience this particular feast. However, he describes on a number of occasions how he witnessed children during festive occasions. Thus, on 1 October, 1884 he writes, apparently on the occasion of the ‛īd al-adhā (he calls it »great haji-day«) and describing what seems to match very closely the three photographs: 36

At several locations in town some Turkish swings with girls and boys in them. Sweets (pies, beans, candies, dates) were sold nearby. Also here and there dances (war dances and also a sort of cancan) by negro slaves. Beautifully clad children with gold-embroidered clothes and gilded amulet containers hanging from their necks or waists walk through town […]. 37

He also describes the presence of well-dressed children (and adults) on the last day of the month of Šafar as well as on the occasion of the Birthday of the Prophet on 12 Ḳa‘b al-awwal. 38 On the first occasion, he also refers to other interesting traditions, such as the camping outside the city and the organisation of

36 Jeddah Diary, Translation, p. 18.
37 Leiden Diary, Translation, p. 18. About the swings, c.f. Trābulsī, J i d d a … ḥ i k ā y a t  m a d ī n a, p. 333-336 (and an image of a wheel), Muḥammad Nāṣir ʿAlī Āl Hašbūl al-Asmārī, »Tārīḫ al-ḥayyāt al-ijtimāʿiyya fī madīnat Jidda 1300h-1343 h/1882 m-1924m«, unpubl. MA thesis, King ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz University, Jeddah 2008, p. 98.
38 Jeddah Diary, p. 42f.
donkey, horse and camel races at the end of ṣafar which are not easily found in other sources on Jed-
dah. Another photograph depicts young boys en-
gaged in a mock fight with shields and sticks.\textsuperscript{39}

On many of these festive occasions, religious and secular, as well as at family parties such as wed-
dings, a variety of music was played and dances performed. While photograph 6 shows a dancing boy, Snouck Hurgronje himself took a number of photographs of musicians with their instruments.\textsuperscript{40}

Image 7 shows a band of slaves, slavery being a very common feature of Jeddawi society at the time, with most wealthy households owning one or more slaves), whereas the bagpipe-like instrument in picture 7 is played by a «musician from Jeddah».

It is interesting that he mentions a musical performance among women in his neighbourhood, something which has been described otherwise mostly in the context of weddings and the like and attests to the existence of a somewhat richer social and cultural life for women than is often acknowledged.\textsuperscript{41}

The portraits of individuals and groups

A large number of the photographs taken by Snouck Hurgronje depict people, both local and pilgrims, as has been discussed above. Quite a number of them were clearly taken in an arranged indoor setting (or in the courtyard of the Dutch consulate). What is of interest here are the social and habitual differences which are demonstrated in the photographs and which help us understand the society of Jeddah of the late Ottoman and early post-Otto-
man society. What stands out in particular are the different dress codes observed by Hijazis, Otto-
mans, Europeans and Najdis, visualising differences between these groups. This notwithstanding, it needs to be noted that the groups dressed by no means in a homogeneous way, details of dress and fabric as well as different types of uniform being important markers of social distinction.\textsuperscript{42}

Thus, photograph 8 shows a young man, portrayed by Snouck Hurgronje himself in the courtyard of the Dutch consulate, in traditional Hijazi garb with a turban.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} While I have not been able to conduct a comprehensive research into these issues, it seems that most current books on the local traditions also don’t mention this tra-

\textsuperscript{40} Pictures 6 and 7, collection Snouck Hurgronje, Cod. Or. 12.288 CSH N.17 (entitled »Slaves with Tūmbura (Jed-

\textsuperscript{41} Jeddah Diary, p. 18.


\textsuperscript{43} Picture 8, collection Snouck Hurgronje, Cod. Or. 12.288 CSH O.3.
He is clad in a manner similar to that of the Jiddawi pilgrim agents or wukalā’ in photograph 9, probably photographed in the early years of the 20th century by the then Dutch consul Scheltema in front of the consulate. 44

These agents worked in close cooperation with the muṭawwifīn (pilgrims’ guides) in Mecca and were responsible for the reception of the pilgrims in the harbor, their accomodation in Jeddah and the organisation of their onward transfer to Mecca. Upon the return of those pilgrims who did not proceed to Medina and Yanbu, they accompanied the departing pilgrims from their arrival until their final departure to their home countries. 45 An interesting detail in the photograph, found on a number of the outdoors images, is the umbrella, used as a protection against the scorching sun, but apparently still rare enough to serve as a suitable prop in such a formal photograph. 46

In comparison to the long robes of the Hijazis, Ottoman officialdom must have appeared distinctly foreign, and possibly Western, ranging from the odd portrait of the policeman in photograph 10 the image of whom seems to reflect the rather low status of such Ottoman officials to the more dignified, as in the image of the chairman of the Commercial Council (majlis al-tijāra) in photograph 11. 47

It is basically the fez, the headgear introduced in 1829 and already deeply unfashionable among nationalists by the end of the Empire, which clearly marked the Ottomans as distinct from Europeans. 48 However, the overall proximity in habitus is particularly striking in photograph 12, depicting Ahmad Rātib Paşa, Governor-General of the Hijaz (1892-94 and 1895-1908), with the Dutch Consul Scheltema, as well as Dr. Yūsuf Bey, a physician in the sanitary installations and the dragoman of the Dutch consulate as well as a (from his dress ap parently fairly high-ranking) Arab retainer of the Governor-General. 49

44 Picture 9, collection Snouck Hurgronje, Cod. Or. 18.097 CSH S.66.1 A17.
45 Kābilī, al-Ḥirafiyyūn fī madīnat Jidda, p. 79.
46 C.f. Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 26.365 OID 12 (unpubl.).
47 Pictures 10 and 11, Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 26.368 OI G. 25, G.44 (unpubl). The dates and photographer are not known.
Thus, the visual appearance makes it likely
that John F. Keane’s observations on the Turks
were shared by many locals, albeit surely from
a different perspective and thus different value
judgements. Keane visited the Hijaz in 1877 and
commented that, to his mind, but also locally, the
Turks were »the most civilised«. He adds, however,
that they were hated as the ruling power, »both on
account of their adoption of European costume and
their introduction of such Christian innovations as
forks, chairs, and, it is whispered, even wine into
the holy Meccah«. 50

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider the well-
known image of Amīr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Saʿūd, Sultan
of Najd, with Shaykh ʿAbdallāh ʿAlī Riḍā, qāʾim-
maqām of Jeddah in Ottoman, Sharifian and Saudi
times, and prominent member of one of its foremost
trading families.51 In this position, he officially sur-
rendered the city to Ibn Saʿūd after a long siege
and fierce criticism of Sharifian rule by a number
of local notables. The picture was taken in 1925,
thus shortly after the entry of Ibn Saʿūd on 23
December 1925. 52 It shows the two men at a table in
a setting reminding of a coffee-house, drinking
Turkish coffee – the Arabian variant being served
in smaller cups. The image brings out nicely the dif-
ferent styles of dress (note the overcoat, but most
strikingly the difference between the Hijazi turban
and the shammākh, the checkered cloth worn on
the head and held with the ʿaqqāl). These were per-
ceived as emblematic of the cultural differences
between Najd and Hijaz, resulting in the slow ad-
aptation of Najdi dress as the dress of the new elite
in the following decades.

It is, however, noteworthy that Snouck Hurgron-
je was not just interested in portraits and »types«
(of pilgrims, social groups etc.). This might not
be reflected in his own photographs, but certain-
ly is obvious in the collection. Snouck Hurgronje
himself mentions visits to coffeehouses in various
parts of the city.53

Jeddah, as many port cities, featured a wide va-
riety of such coffeehouses. They served as public
spaces of communication and entertainment for
the majority of inhabitants. In addition, they (or
some of them also provided affordable shelter for
travellers, notably during the pilgrimage when
Jeddah became crowded.54 Besides the coffee-
houses, there existed private seating outside the
houses on benches or small platforms as well as
benches in public spaces (marākiz). These served
as regular meeting places for the daily interaction
between small, fairly well established groups of
friends (šilla) who met there in a more intimate set-
ting than in the coffeehouse, but they could also be
rented out during Hajj.55 Finally, many people met
inside the houses where they kept salons to receive
their visitors, either in the more business-like set-
tings of the cantors on the ground floor or in larger
sitting rooms, often situated on the first floor of the
multi-storeyed buildings.

The cafés were convenient sites for Snouck Hur-
gronje’s fieldwork, for example a place where he

50 John F. Keane, Six Months in Meccah: An Account of the
Mohammedan Pilgrimage to Meccah, London 1881, p. 90.
51 Picture 13, collection Snouck Hurgronje, Cod. Or.
1, 2nd ed. Jeddah 1985, p. 136-144.
52 On the political development, see Alexei Vassiliev, The
History of Saudi Arabia, London 1998, p. 264 and, for a Hijazi
perspective, Trabulsī, Jidda… hikāyat madīna, p. 585-596.
53 Picture 14, »Koffieclub naast Nederl. Consulaat«, col-
lection Snouck Hurgronje, Cod. Or. 12.288 CSH B.26. See
Jeddah Diary p. 19, 22.
54 Trabulsī, Jidda… hikāyat madīna, pp. 196-202 and Heinrich
Freiherr von Maltzan, Meine Wallfahrt nach Mekka. Reise in
der Küstengegend und im Innern von Hedschas, 2 vols Leip-
zig 1865, here vol. 1, p. 251, 254.
55 Trabulsī, Jidda… hikāyat madīna, pp. 202-206, interviews
in Jeddah, March 2009.
could listen to a storyteller. This was in line with his deep-rooted interest in many aspects of popular (and religious) culture, such as lullabies, rain prayers or dreams, and in the festivals associated with the Islamic calendar and the pilgrimage, on which he had, after all, written his dissertation.

Photographic evidence of urban and material change

Snouck Hurgronje himself does not mention many of the sights of the city in which he spent five and a half months, staying, until his conversion to Islam, at the Dutch consulate. This might, at the time, have been housed in a building similar to the one in this photograph, possibly taken by Snouck Hurgronje himself.

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He describes, albeit without too much detail, a number of visits to the market. A picture dating from 1926 and showing one of the market streets gives a vivid impression of one of the quieter markets. Featuring oil barrels in the middle of the street, it also illustrates the slow change in material culture. Oil was already imported to Jeddah from the United States by the time Snouck Hurgronje visited in 1884, probably mostly for cooking and lighting. Motor transport, introduced some time in the early 20th century, would have greatly increased demand. The commercial transport of pilgrims to Mecca by bus was discussed in Jeddah in 1910, in parallel to speculations surrounding the possible construction of a rail link between the two cities which was considered a supplement to the Hijaz railway. In March 1911, the British consul reported that an omnibus had arrived from Liverpool, originally destined for the transport of pilgrims between Mecca and Arafat, but that the buyer had refused to accept it because vehicle turned out to be a defunct second-hand item.

A number of photographs in the collection show both such subtle (and not so subtle) changes in the urban material culture as well as more directly the urban development which Jeddah witnessed. Thus, van Voorthuysen also sent a picture of the customs station and another one of the new seawater desalination plant, the first Ottoman installation of 1908 having become defunct after a few years (incidentally also providing a view of the almost derelict old prison building).
families and the consulates. These can be seen lined up against the wall separating the city from the lagoon.66

Conclusion: Snouck Hurgronje’s collection as an important source for Arabian history

This discussion of a few of the photographs from the Leiden collection has, of course, by no means exhausted the wealth of historical detail depicted therein. Both the range of the images, depicting people in formal and less formal settings as well as outside scenes showing water carriers, port workers as well as market scenes contain much to illustrate the history of Jeddah in an unprecedented way. For example, the images of women working clearly shows that, unsurprisingly but hardly proven in documented form, the generalised notion of women’s seclusion was very much a phenomenon linked to class. Children, depicted in the photographs of ‘id al-adhā, hardly appear in the written record. Furthermore, the images give much incidental information about the material culture, from details of dress and furniture to oil barrels and the shades with which the market streets were protected against the sun.67

It should be added that the collection also comprises numerous photographs of other parts of the Arab world (not to mention Southeast Asia, which this paper consciously does not even touch upon). Thus, historians of Egypt, Bilad al-Sham as well as Yemen, notably Hadhramawt, might also want to consider consulting Snouck Hurgronje’s photographic archive. A full description of this archive still remains a desideratum.

Nevertheless, it took a long time until piped water reached the quarters and later individual houses. Until then, the water tanks of the houses were regularly filled by water carriers who brought the precious good from the various sources of supply to the houses by camel or donkey, as in photo 18 by an unknown photographer.65

Other photographs, dating from 1906, show the development of the northern front of the Ḥārat aš-Šām, which was built up in the last part of the 19th century and became the quarter inhabited by rich Consul Jeddah, 20.8.1899. The customs house is depicted on Or. 12.288 CSH B.10.

Picture 19, Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 26.363 Of B.02 (unpubl.), showing the French, British and Austrian consulate from the building rented by the Dutch.

It is typical of photography of this period that much information about the everyday is accidental to most photographs, see Annegret Nippa, »30 Minuten Orient in 18.000 Bildern: Anmerkungen zur Lesbarkeit der Orientfotografie« in: Mit Kamel und Kamera – Historische Orient-Fotografie 1864-1970 (Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, Bd. 38), 2008, pp. 33-58, here p. 50.
This paper has merely attempted to show a few avenues for the use of these images in future historical research, and to highlight some of the particular strengths of this collection, which result to a large extent from the specific anthropological interests of its former owner, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje.

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