



Smithsonian
*Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

Charles Isaacs Collection

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
Title:	Charles Isaacs Collection
Date:	circa 1850-1900
Identifier:	FSA.A2002.01
Creator:	Isaacs, Charles (Collector) Saché, John Edward, 1824-1882 Beato, Felice, b. ca. 1825 Kusakabe, Kimbei, 1841-1934 Bourne, Samuel, 1834-1912 Skeen & Co. Scowen & Co.
Extent:	73 Albumen prints (various sizes.)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Image(s): Charles Isaacs Collection

Administrative Information

Provenance

Gift of Charles Isaacs, 2002.

Preferred Citation

Charles Isaacs Collection, FSA A2002.01. National Museum of Asian Art Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository.

Biographical / Historical

British photographer Charles T. Scowen arrived in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the early 1870s, where he was first employed as a clerk. By 1876, Scowen had established a studio, Scowen & Co., in Kandy, with a second location appearing in Colombo by the 1890s. There appear to have been several Scowens working in the studios, as Charles T. Scowen returned to England in 1885. C. Scowen was listed as the proprietor until 1891 and M. Scowen was the proprietor when the firm was finally sold in 1893. Images from Scowen & Co. were used to illustrate a number of books about Ceylon and the tea trade.

Biographical / Historical

Skeen & Co. was a commercial photography studio active in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from 1860-1903. In 1860, William Skeen, who was the official Government Printer, purchased J. Parting's photography studio in Colombo for his son, William Louis Henry Skeen, who had studied at the London School of Photography. In 1891 another Skeen & Co. studio was opened in Kandy. The firm was known for its images of agriculture (particularly tea and spices), industry (the construction of the Ceylon railroads and the Colombo Breakwater), landscapes and ethnic groups.

Biographical / Historical

John Edward Saché (1824-1882) was an American commercial photographer, born in Prussia as Johann Edvart Zachert. He arrived in Calcutta in 1864 and for the next twenty years traveled widely in northern India, photographing major towns and sites. Saché's first professional association was with W. F. Westfield in Calcutta but he would go on to establish other studios, either alone or in partnerships, in Nainital, Bombay, Lucknow and Benares, among other locations.

Biographical / Historical

Samuel Bourne (1834-1912) had already begun to earn recognition for his work in England, having exhibited at the London International Exhibition of 1862, when he decided to give up his position in a bank and depart for India to work as a professional photographer. He arrived in Calcutta early in 1863, initially setting up a partnership with William Howard. They moved up to Simla, where they established a new studio Howard & Bourne, to be joined in 1864 by Charles Shepherd, to form Howard, Bourne & Shepherd. By 1866, after the departure of Howard, it became Bourne & Shepherd, the name under which the firm continues to operate to this day. Although Bourne only spent 6 years in India, his time there was extremely productive. He undertook three major expeditions in the Himalayas, creating an impressive body of work which combined the highest technical quality and a keen artistic eye, while working under difficult physical conditions. Bourne left India for good in 1870, selling his interest in Bourne & Shepherd shortly thereafter and abandoning commercial photography.

Scope and Contents

73 albumen photo prints, some mounted, many signed and numbered in the negative and some with handwritten penciled identifications, various sizes. A small number are hand-tinted. Images depict Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Japan and China. Subjects include portraits, people in daily activities, street scenes, city views, architecture, fauna and gardens, and landscapes. Photographers include Scowen & Co., Skeen & Co. and Samuel Bourne. Images depict architectural monuments, city and village views, and picturesque landscapes such as the Great Imambara and Mosque in Lucknow, the quadrangle of the Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque) in Agra, the Memorial Well in Kanpur (Cawnpore), numerous views of villages, bridges and landscapes in Kashmir, and the botanical gardens at Ootacamund (Udagamandalam). There is also one photograph, an unmounted albumen print, signed and numbered in the negative, by John Edward Saché (active 1860-1880), also depicting a landscape in India. Additionally, an ethnographic portrait (unmounted albumen print) of two Sri Lankan aboriginal men titled "Veddahs" by Charles T. Scowen is included in the collection.

Arrangement

Four flat boxes.

Local Numbers

FSA A2002.01

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Imambaras
- Mosques

Types of Materials:

- Albumen prints
- Photographs

Places:

- China
- Guangzhou (China)
- India
- Jammu and Kashmir (India)
- Japan
- Kanpur (India)
- Lucknow (India)
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Udagamandalam (India)