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Three Reviews

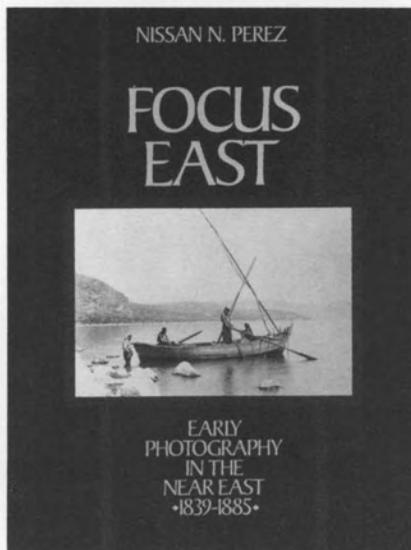
by T.K. Treadwell

Since there are so few books on early stereography, we must often draw on general histories of photography for the fragments they contain about our specialized field. Often, even these are few and far between; a good example is the eastern Mediterranean, roughly from Greece to Egypt. Although this area was well-stereographed from the earliest days, due to its historical significance and importance to several religious groups, books about it are rare. Indeed, White's book about Frith, published by Dover, is the only one which leaps to mind.

It's noteworthy, then, that in recent months not one, but three books on the subject have appeared, two specialized, one more general. These are *History of Greek Photography, 1839-1960*, by Alkis X. Xanthakis, published by the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archives Society of Athens; *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1919*, by Engin Cizgen, from Hashet Kitabevi A. S. of Istanbul; and *Focus East — Early Photography in the Near East, 1839-1885*, by Nissan Perez, published by Abrams of New York City. While all of these are welcome, they do vary in both basic quality and their interest to stereo scholars.

National in scope and modest in size is the *History of Greek Photography*, in paperbound octavo, 248 pages. This is the third edition; the first two were in Greek and not available here. The approximately 100 photo reproductions are generally good, and the translation is fluent. Particularly fascinating is the account of the interactions between the many foreign photographers (usually transients) and the resident Greek workers. The coverage of foreign workers, while not in great depth, seems reasonably complete; all of the Greek photographers are unknown to me, even though two are shown operating stereo cameras. The latter half is given over to the 20th century; while interesting, it will be of little value for those working with vintage stereographs. Even

though only part of it will be of interest to most of us, this little book is certainly worthwhile if you have stereos of Greece in your collection. (*Hellenic Historical Institute, \$32.00.*)



Ms. Cizgen's quarto-sized, hardbound, 230 page look at *Photography in the Ottoman Empire* is a mixed bag. Many of the approximately 200 reproductions of photos are of mediocre quality, and both the writing and translation are occasionally eccentric. The emphasis is on local photographers; some (but not all) foreign workers are included. Although the geographical coverage is primarily of modern Turkey, the Empire included much of the Near East, and there are several references to other areas. An interesting analysis is made of the religious constraints which discouraged both Moslems and Jews from engaging in photography, in spite of which rulers like Sultan Abdulhamid II were strong supporters of the art. Equally useful is a summary of historical events of the Empire, a subject little-known to most of us. The first section of the book places photography into the social context of the region; the next follows the development of various fields of coverage such as travel and photo-

journalism; and there are biographies and examples of the work of the more important photographers. A general bibliography is provided, plus a detailed listing of materials published in Istanbul, the capital. Overall, this is a good general reference, though its limited use to stereo enthusiasts and the rather high price may discourage all but those with a deep interest in the area. (*\$68.00 post-paid from Hashet Kitabevi A.S., Box 219-Beyoglu, Istanbul, Turkey. U.S. checks OK.*)

Finally, *Focus East* is another quarto, hardbound volume. The 268 illustrations are superbly reproduced, the credentials of Mr. Perez (Chief Curator of Photography at the Israel Museum) are outstanding, and the writing is excellent. The first half of the book is a fascinating analysis of the primary types of photography done: As documentation for historical research, and as tourist souvenirs. In the latter case, photographers both resident and visiting produced views to meet the preconceptions of their customers, and these were often posed and captioned with minimal relation to reality. The second half is a listing, with capsule biographies, of all the known workers in the area, and examples of their work. While most of this section is excellent, there are some notable blind spots. B. W. Kilburn, for example, who as early as 1874 issued copy views of the area, and whose staff photographers later took hundreds of fine stereos, is dismissed with a couple of cribbed sentences about the general operation of his company. But these are minor flaws in a generally excellent work. Since the geographical coverage is the Grand Tour Mid-East from Turkey to Egypt, and the time frame is the heyday of stereography, it is a "must have" general reference for stereo students with any interest at all in that area. (*\$52.60 post-paid from A Photographers Place, Box 274, Prince St., New York, NY 10012.*) ■

