

Édifices publics

**Oriental Library
Saint Joseph University of Beirut**



**Conservation and Restoration
of the Map Archive**

Call for Support

1. The Oriental Library: A Unique Heritage in Lebanon and the Near East

The Oriental Library, founded on the rich troves gathered by generations of Jesuit scholars since the 19th century, is a leading research institution specializing in Middle Eastern studies. As the third largest private heritage library in the region, it houses an extensive collection of 230,000 volumes, including early editions of chronicles and travelogues by Oriental scholars, alongside works by Arab poets and intellectuals. The library also holds 1,800 journals and periodicals, an extensive collection of Armenian studies materials, and a rich collection of newspapers and magazines dating back to the early days of the Arabic press in Beirut and Cairo during the late 19th century. Additionally, the library possesses 250 lithographs and 3,700 manuscripts in Arabic and other Oriental languages including Syriac, Turkish, Persian, and Armenian. Its map collection features 4,110 historical maps and geographical plans of Lebanon and the region, while its photo archive, comprising 250,000 images, is the largest and most comprehensive in the Middle East. Furthermore, from 1906 to 2000, the Oriental Library published the annual multidisciplinary journal *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, which covered archaeology, history, epigraphy, and philology of the Near and Middle East.

The Map Archive

Among the most extensive in the country and the region, this collection includes 4,110 geographical maps and plans, featuring approximately 250 maps of Lebanon, with around 60 specifically detailing Beirut. Notable items include the 1861 French expedition map of Lebanon and the 1908 plan of Beirut. This collection has been foundational in researching 19th-century Beirut, a period of significant economic, demographic, and social transformations. It also provides valuable insights into the historical connections between France and Lebanon, particularly through the French Army's early work in territorial mapping and representation.

Additionally, the collection features other significant series, such as the Tübingen Collection (100 maps) and maps from the Atlas of France (80 maps).

The maps cover a wide range of themes, encompassing topography, economics, geology, archaeology, demographics, and hydrography, among others.

2. Conservation and Restoration Needs

A conservation specialist has assessed the map collection, classifying the maps based on their condition into three categories: severely damaged, moderately damaged, and lightly damaged.

The deterioration is due to multiple factors, including dust accumulation, foxing, acidity, various gaps and tears (particularly along the folds), and the use of brittle materials and adhesive tape. It has been identified that approximately 74 maps require urgent attention for conservation and restoration.

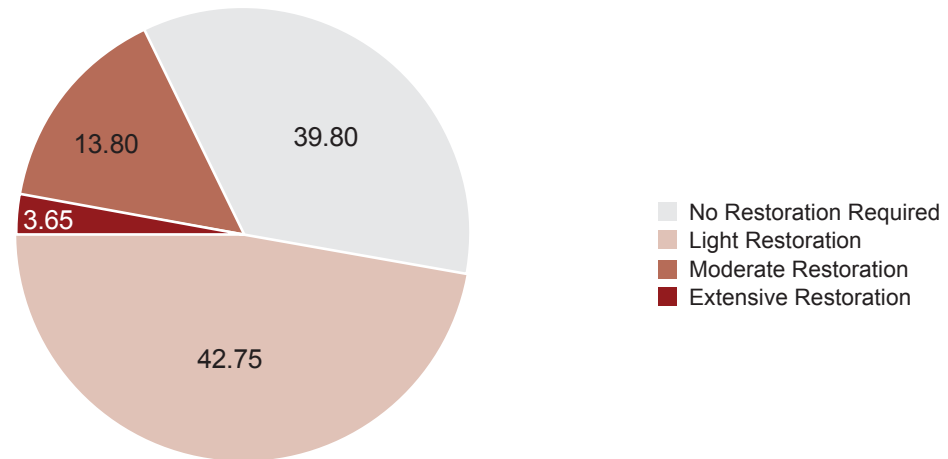


Figure 1 | General Condition of the Map Archive



Figures 2 and 3 | General Map of Syria (1899) by A. Tohmeh

Sample Maps Used for Assessing the General Condition of the Archive

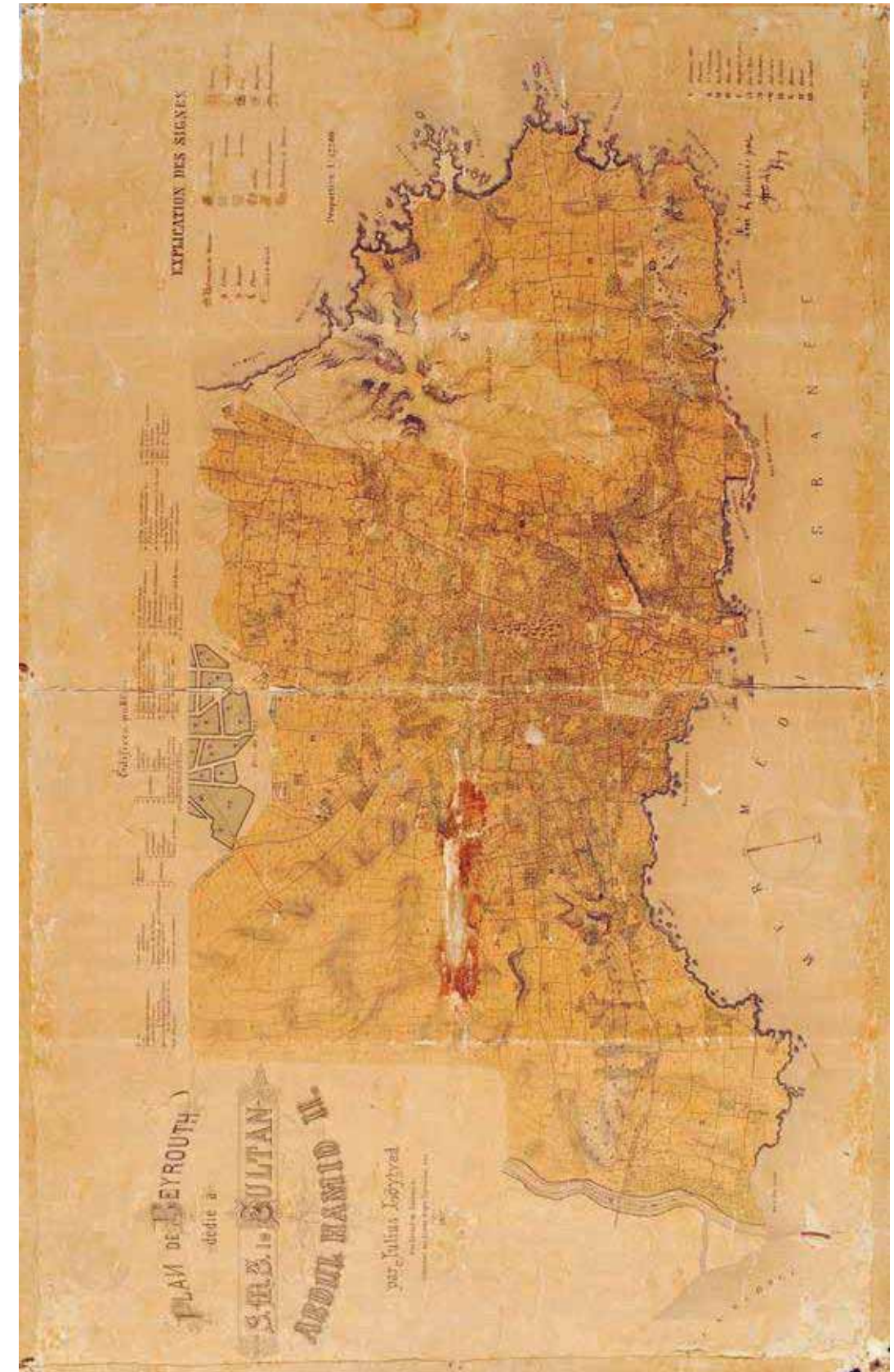
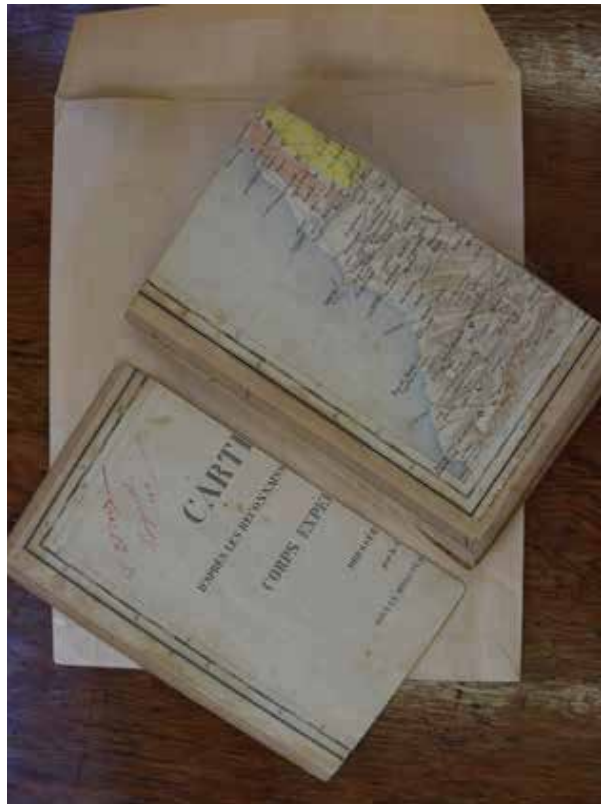
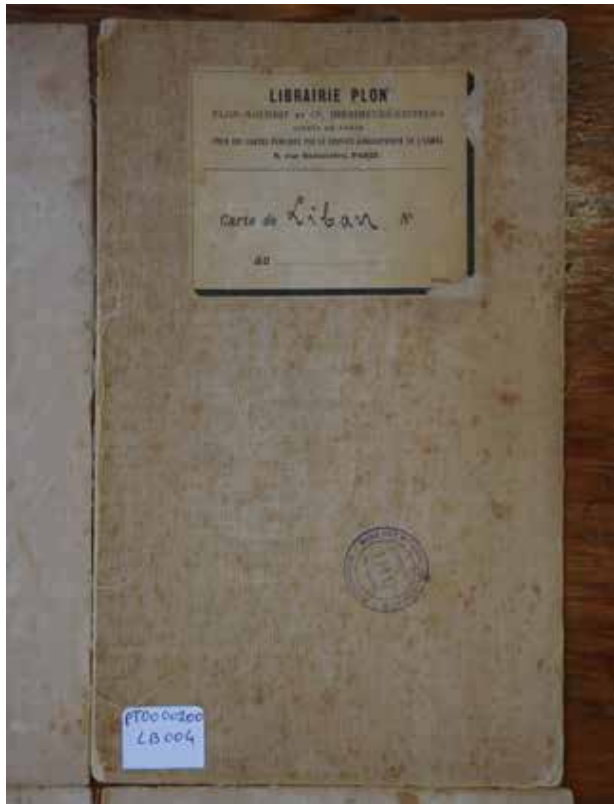
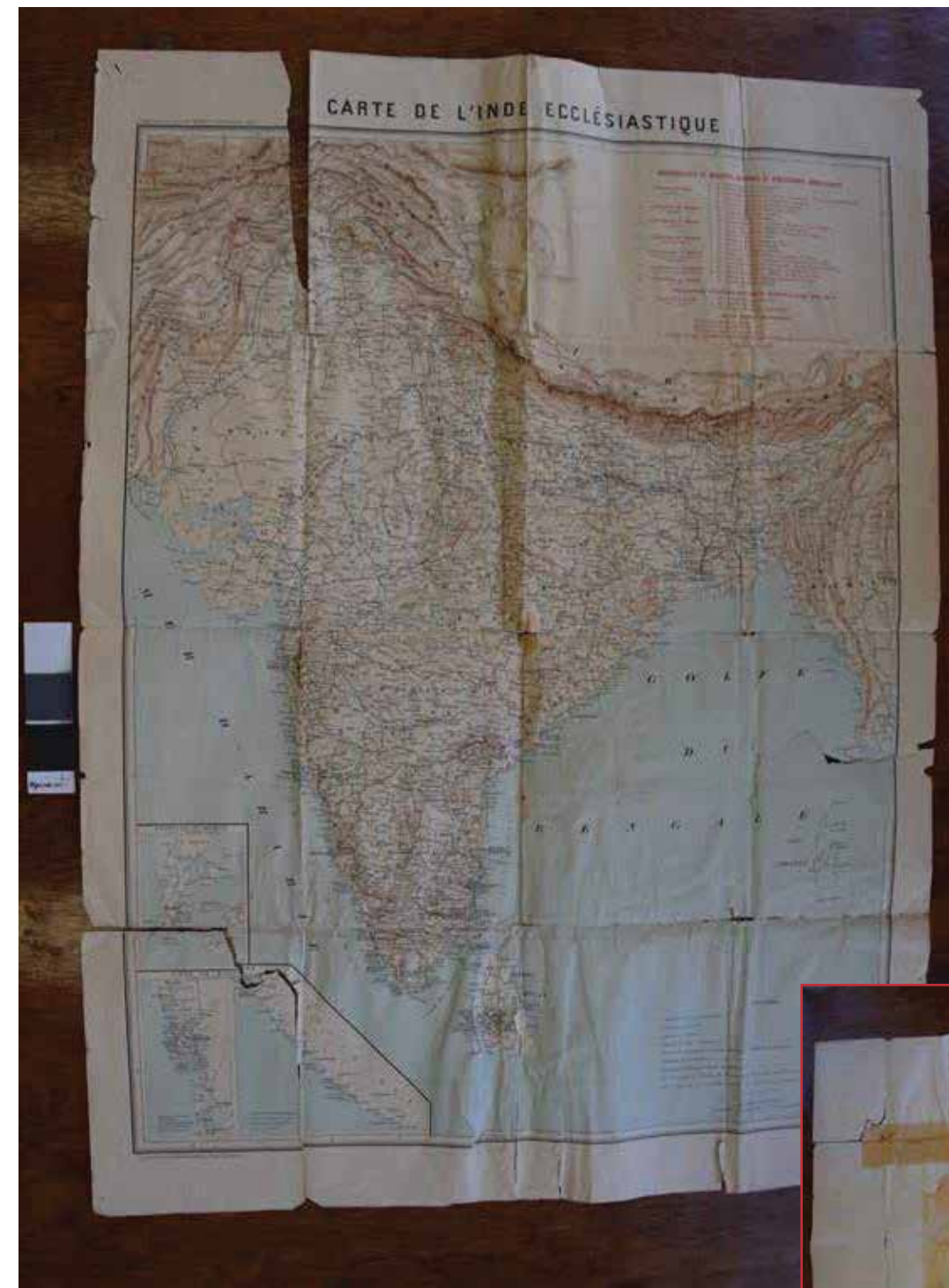


Figure 4 | "Plan of Beirut – 1870" Recto: Dust accumulation, tears, gaps



Figures 5 to 8 | "Map of Lebanon – 1862" Recto, verso, and details: Dust accumulation, foxing, tears



Figures 9 and 10 | "Ecclesiastical Map of India" Recto and verso: Dust accumulation, tears, adhesive tape, and tears along the folds

3. Summary of Estimates

Restoration and Preservation of 74 Maps in Beirut

Item	Price (€)
Maps	
Restoration of Maps	53,280.00
RGB Pro Scanning (50 MB before restoration)	1,110.00
Drawer Cabinets for Maps	6,493.50
TOTAL	60,883.50

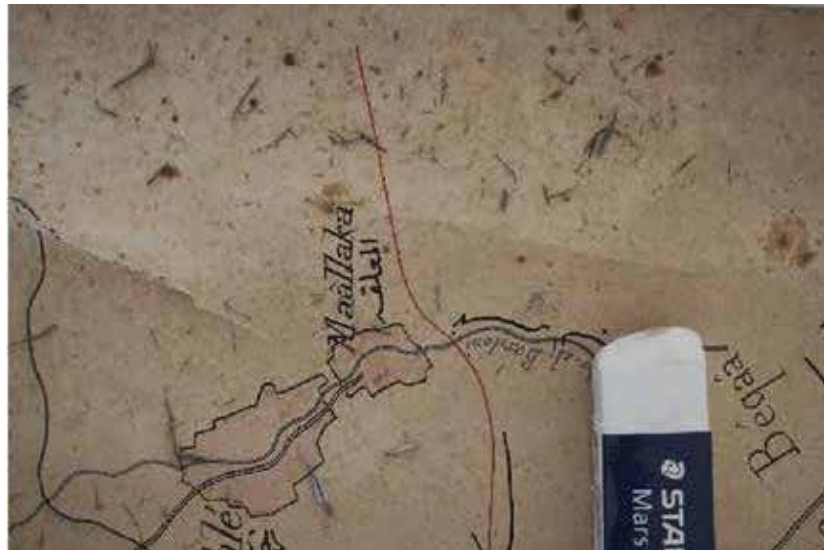
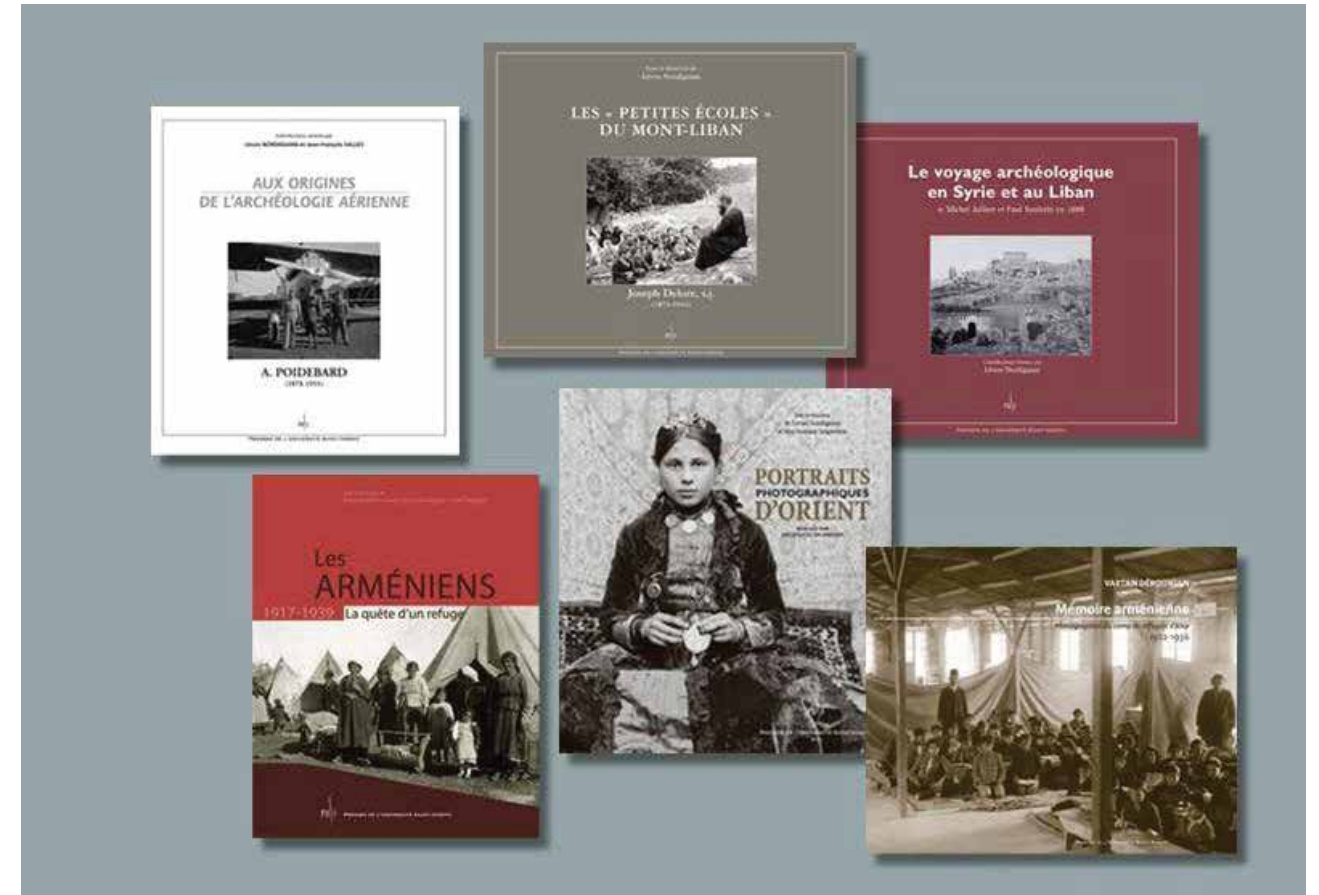


Figure 11 | Map of February 1914 General Government of Lebanon, Map of the Caza of Meten by A. Tohmeh

4. Showcasing the Archive's Value

Once restored, the map collection will be featured in a traveling heritage exhibition with a catalog. It will also be accessible through the Oriental Library's educational programs, promoting geographic research at the Saint Joseph University of Beirut and, more broadly, in local and international universities.



Books Published by PUSJ from the Oriental Library's Collections



Exhibition "A Jesuit in the Levant Sky", Antoine Poidebard Collection, 2000



Exhibition "The Armenians: Quest for Refuge in the Middle East", 2006

Appendix 1. Books and Exhibition Catalogs

Produced from the Oriental Library's Archive

1- Published by The Saint Joseph University Press (PUSJ)

- 1- Lévon Nordiguian and Jean-François Salles, *Aux Origines de l'Archéologie Aérienne*, PUSJ, 2000, Beirut.
Exhibition and catalog.
- 2- Lévon Nordiguian, *Le Père Joseph Delore et les « Petites Écoles » du Mont Liban*, PUSJ, 2003, Beirut.
Exhibition and catalog.
- 3- Lévon Nordiguian and Fabrice Denise, *Une Aventure Archéologique: Antoine Poidebard, Photographe et Aviateur*. Co-published by PUSJ - Musée de L'Arles Antique and Parenthèse, 2004.
Exhibition and catalog.
- 4- Lévon Nordiguian, *Le Voyage Archéologique en Syrie et au Liban de M. Jullien et P. Soulerin en 1888*, PUSJ, 2004, Beirut.
- 5- Raymond Kévorkian, Lévon Nordiguian, and Vahé Tachjian, *Les Arméniens 1917-1939: La Quête d'un Refuge*, PUSJ and RMN, 2006, Beirut - Paris.
- 6- Lévon Nordiguian and May Semaan Seigneurie, *Portraits Photographiques d'Orient Réalisés par les Jésuites en Mission*, PUSJ, 2010.
Exhibition and album.
- 7- Raymond Kévorkian, Lévon Nordiguian, Vahé Tachjian, et al., *Les Arméniens de Cilicie*, PUSJ, 2012, Beirut.
- 8- Christine Assaf Babikian, Carla Eddé, Lévon Nordiguian, and Vahé Tachjian, *Les Arméniens du Liban: Cent Ans de Présence*, PUSJ, 2017, Beirut.
- 9- Lévon Nordiguian (in collaboration with Marina Mattar), *Varoujan, Photographe des « Trente Glorieuses » du Liban*, PUSJ, 2019, Beirut.
- 10- Lévon Nordiguian and Jean-Claude Voisin with the collaboration of Marina Mattar, *La Grande Guerre au Moyen-Orient: Antoine Poidebard en Perse*, PUSJ, 2019, Beirut.

11. « *La photothèque de la Bibliothèque de l'Université Saint-Joseph, un patrimoine unique* », dans *La Photographie au Liban*, Kaph Books, 2018, Beirut.

2- Issues Featuring Approximately Thirty Photos, Tempora *

- 1- Vahé Tachjian, *Hassaké: Naissance d'une Ville Coloniale, Tempora 18*.
- 2- Pierre Louis Gatier, *Voyageur en Antiochène, Tempora 19*.
- 3- J. Fr and Micheline Breton, *Yémen: Les Photos de Herman Burkhardt, Tempora 21*.
- 4- Michel Gilet, S.J., *Missionnaire des Petits et des Humbles dans la Montagne Alaouite en Syrie (1934-1945), Tempora 22*.
- 5- *Le Voyage de Louis Jalabert en Transjordanie, Tempora 23 (forthcoming)*.

* Annals of History and Archaeology of USJ

3- Portfolios

- 1- Photographic Treasures of the Oriental Library 1-USJ. *Ancient Trades of Syria and Lebanon (12 folios)*, 2018
- 2- Photographic Treasures of the Oriental Library 2-USJ. *Sites and Monuments of Lebanon (18 folios)*, 2021

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