



Searching For Jules the Re-enactment: 1844/45–2014/19 *(work in progress)*



The artistic side of the historical research I am pursuing under the title “Searching for Jules” involves the re-enactment of a number of shots produced by Jules Itier during his journey around Asia in 1844/45. These photographic re-enactments were one of the main purposes of the travelling completed in January-February 2014 to Macao, Guangzhou, Manila and Sri Lanka, and then Pondicherry and Danang in December 2014.

In each of these places, contacts established with diverse academics and local researchers enabled me to identify the locations seen in Itier’s 19th century shots and go back to these locations to re-enact the shots, or if the place had been completely transformed, find suitable replacements that could stand as an appropriate venue for the intended re-enactment. The artistic pictorial aspect of this part of the work, this body of work is also contributing invaluable information on the transformation on the Asian urban landscape over the last century and half by doing a comparison between the now-and-then conditions of these different locations.

This historical-factual research on the places visited by Itier is complemented by a parallel body of works developed from the perspective of theory of photography, another field prominent in the development of my work. For this part of the work, I shoot the re-enacted images with a pinhole camera on 120mm film. Once developed, the negative image is scanned and the digital file is printed on analogue silver paper by using the electronic light of a video projector. The final print is thus a summary of the technical evolution of the photographic medium, from the atmospheric touch of the pinhole image to the digital feel of the video grid through which it is imprinted as a range of black and white shades characteristic of the silver analogue film era.

SINGAPORE



Pagoda (Tian Hock Keng)

1/4Plt(?), 6 July 1844

Bordeaux

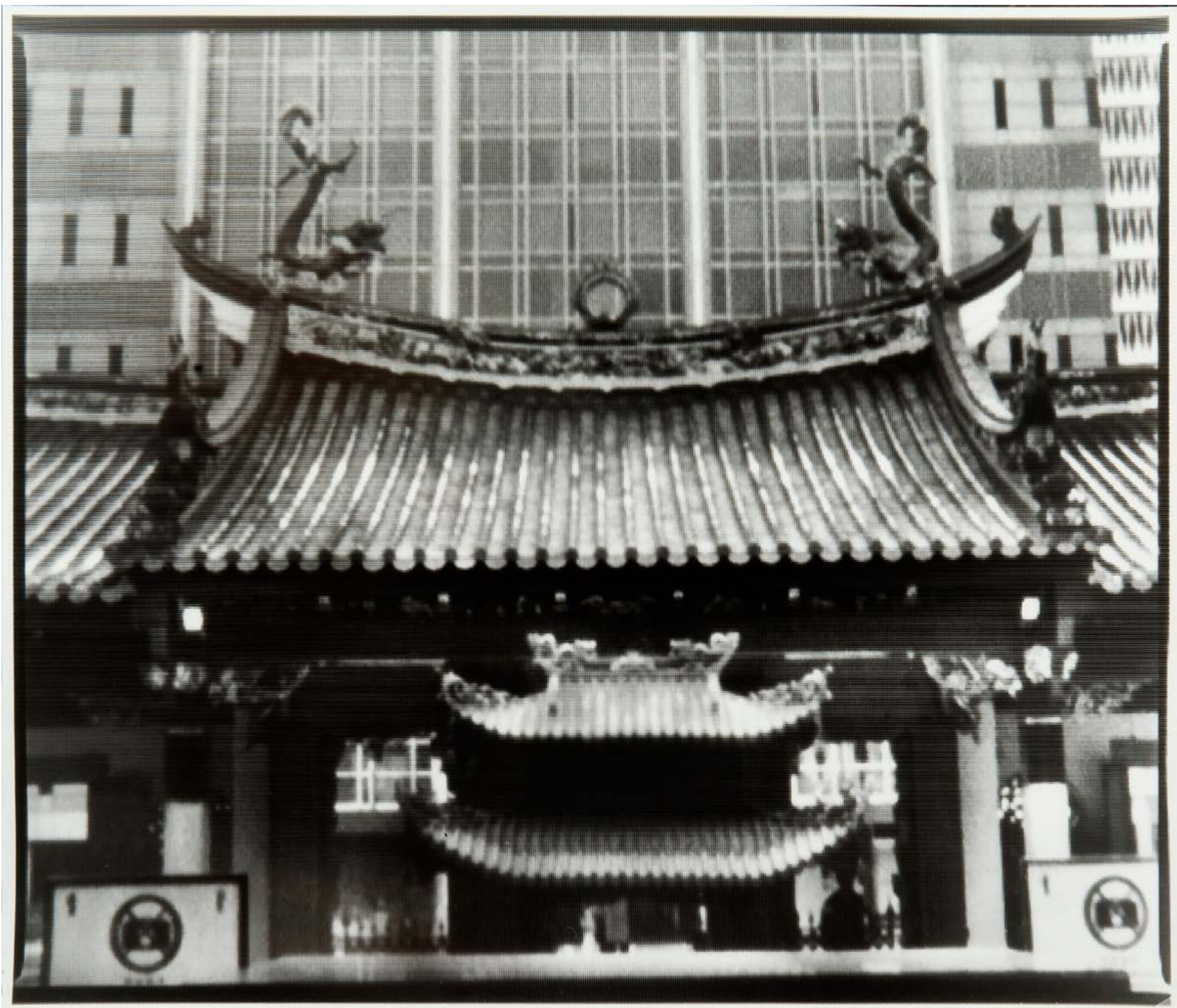
Unknown

The shot of the Tian Hock Keng pagoda by Itier is one of the most important images of the whole series. It is the first mention of the use of the daguerreotype camera in his journal and the fact that it is dated by the day (6 July 1844) makes it the oldest dated photograph of not just Singapore but Asia.

The temple was built in 1839 and was then a very new landmark in the growing Chinatown that stretched south of the Singapore River. It was dedicated to the Sea goddess Ma Zu to whom Chinese migrants came to pay respect upon safely reaching the British port. It has since then played a very important role in Singapore religious life and it was gazetted as a national monument on the 6 July 1973, interestingly enough exactly 129 years apart with Itier's shot.

In his journal Itier gives a very clear description of how the resident monk allowed him to place his camera on the altar in order to take his shot. The configuration of the temple has seen very little alteration, and I could therefore produce an image fairly close to the original. However, the cityscape beyond the temple rooftop shows a tremendous transformation.







Two Malay men and their cart
 1/4Plt, July 1844
 Prestige, HoP
 Unknown

This daguerreotype of two Malay men and their cart is remarkable in many ways. The July 1844 date given is not absolutely certain, since Itier pass by Singapore four times during his time in Asia. But the only time he mentions going out in the streets to use his camera is known thanks to the mention of the Tian Hock Keng view. It would thus seem reasonable to infer that the excitement of the discovery of a new world led him to use his camera over these few days he spent to visit the city at the beginning of his first stay. Leisure time during the subsequent visits saw him rather venturing out of the city for outings in the jungle.

The view of these two men is also rather well composed and the cart behind the two men perfectly framed, making this image one of his most successful. Most significantly it is rather unique in its topic on two aspects. If it was indeed shot in July 1844 as I infer, the image of these two men would thus be the earliest extant photograph of Asian persons. But most importantly, it is the ethnographic documentation intent that makes it exceptional at a time when very few images with such a clear scientific purpose had been produced.

My re-enactment was shot much later than the other Singapore views as I needed to find the right persons to do it. I intended at first to look for a Malay taxi driver and his son. But it turned out that Arif, a Malay student of mine, started driving a van as a job during his last year in school, at a time when the two of us were regularly in contact for a project dealing with Malay history in Jambi, Sumatra. Arif truly loved his van, so much so that when the time came to produce an art work for the final exhibition of this *Crossing the Straits* project, he reproduced unknowingly but exactly Itier's shot in both composition and position. The uncanny coincidence was a clear sign that he had to be the model for my re-enactment.





July 14/2018
HP



View of the river from Fort Caning

1/4Plt, dated 1843(?) in Prest1, 1844 in HistOf.
Pictorial History of Singapore, Catalogue Paris
2012

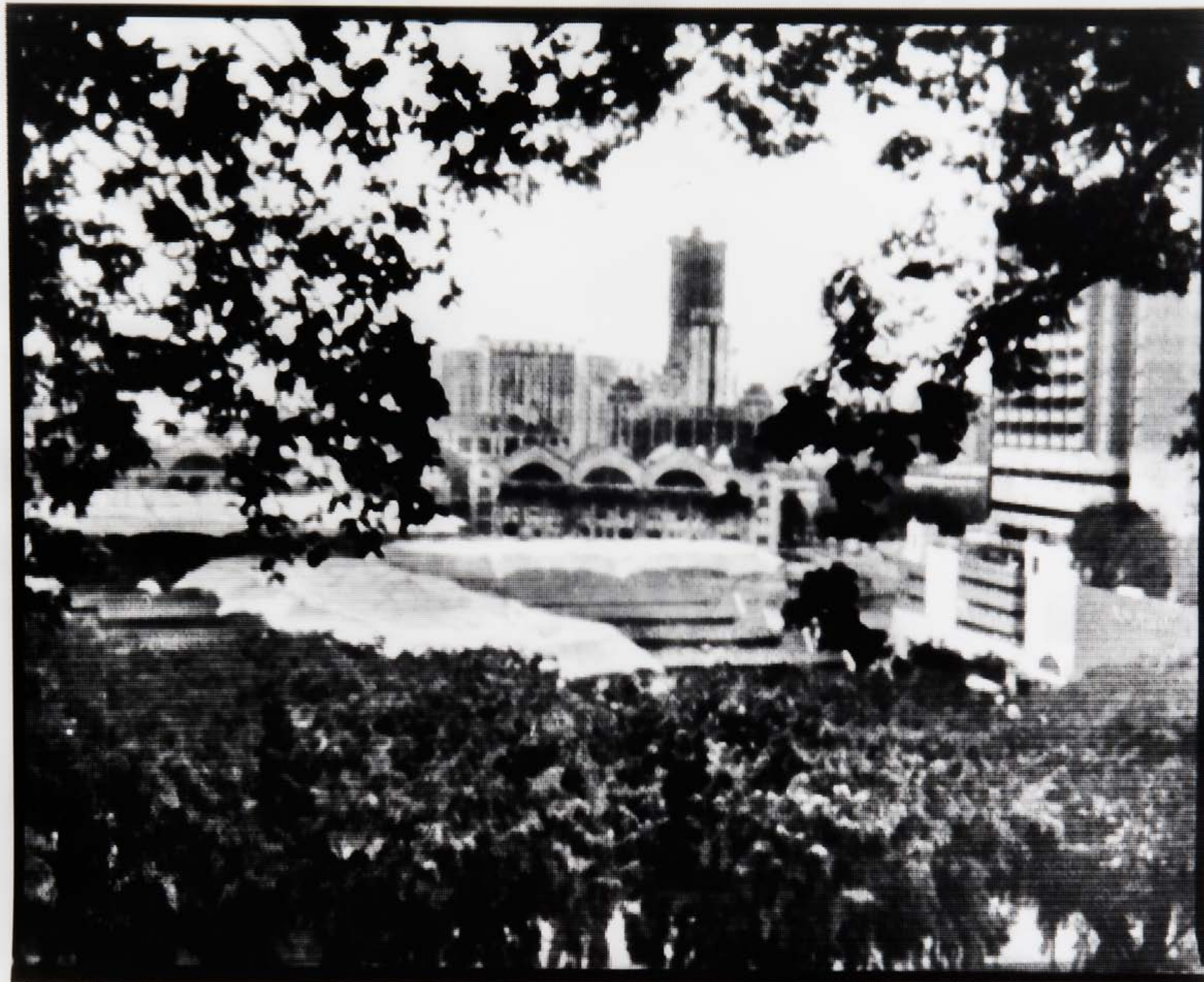
National Museum of Singapore

daguerreotype of Boat Quay in Singapore taken from Government Hill, Jules Bie, 1844.
collection of the national museum of Singapore.

Itier's shot of the Singapore River is now part of the collection of Singapore National Museum. It is not mentioned in Itier's journal, although he mentions a visit to M. Butterworth on Government Hill on the 4th July and could therefore have been taken on that day.

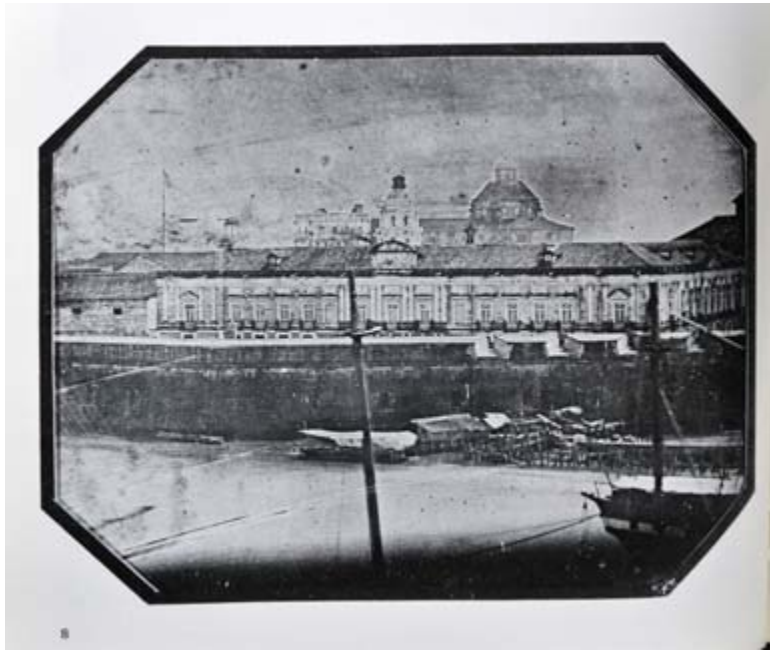
Looking at the map of Thomson survey, contemporary to Itier's visit, it looks like the shot was taken in a south east direction, with some of the buildings on the left bank of the river in the foreground and the right bank in the background. For the re-enactment however I discovered that most of the view available today from Fort Caning is now obstructed by either buildings and more surprisingly by large trees that were not there in 1844. In order to catch at least a glimpse of the river as we can see it in Itier's shot I had to slightly change the angle of the shot to a southwest direction.





July 2018
AP

MANILLA



Manila, Custom Office

1/4Plt

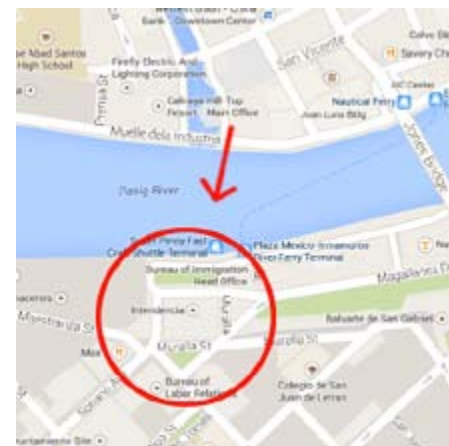
Prest2 (no date), Vente Dec 1844

Unknown

Although there is no mention of the use of the daguerreotype camera in Itier's journal at all, two shots from Manila were recovered by Gimon and published. Itier stopped in Manila 3 times during his stay in Asia, 25 July to 5 August 1844, 15 December 1844 to 2 January 1845 and finally 20 June to 10 July 1845, and there is not clear indication as to when this 2 plates might have been produced.

The first one shows the Aduana in Intramuros. Itier mentions Aduana, the Custom House of the nearby port, as being the only stately building of importance to be seen in the Spanish colony. It was photographed from the other side of the river, from Binondo, the Chinatown and commercial district, where Itier resided. The original building is today in ruins but still occupies the same spot. Next to it stands the Bureau of Immigration Head Office the volume and outline of which appears to be quite similar to the original Aduana.

For the re-enactment, only a small part of the Aduana façade can now be seen behind the Immigration Office. The visual reference used to try to come as close as possible to Itier's original was the alignment of the Aduana with the dome of the cathedral seen in the background. Although destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly, the cathedral still occupies the same spot in Intramuros and the top of the dome jutting out from behind the higher modern building can still be seen from the opposite river bank.







Rue du Faubourg de St-Miguel, Manila
1/4Plt, HistOf 1845, German 1844/45
Collection W. & T. Bosshard

The San Miguel district was an early residential extension of Binondo and Lavollée, Itier secretary, gives a very good description in his own published journal of the type of houses found along San Miguel streets that fits very well Itier's daguerreotype. The district took on an altogether different character when the original summer residence of the Spanish governor built in 1750 was turned into Governor-General's official residence after the 1863 earthquake that destroyed the original Palacio del Governor in Intramuros. It is today the residence of the Presidents of the Philippines. The prestigious function of the presidential palace however isn't quite reflected in the identity of the district around it. Upmarket residential area have moved to other parts of the metropolis and much of the district is devoted to functional and commercial buildings.

Itier doesn't clearly identify the street in his daguerreotype, but the long straight street featured can be taken as an element of identification. After discussing the diverse possibilities with Pr Trota, archivist of the Santo Thomas University, my choice of location went for the Gen Solano St. that still runs in a similar straight line parallel to the Pasig River.





Jefferson Road
RP

MACAO



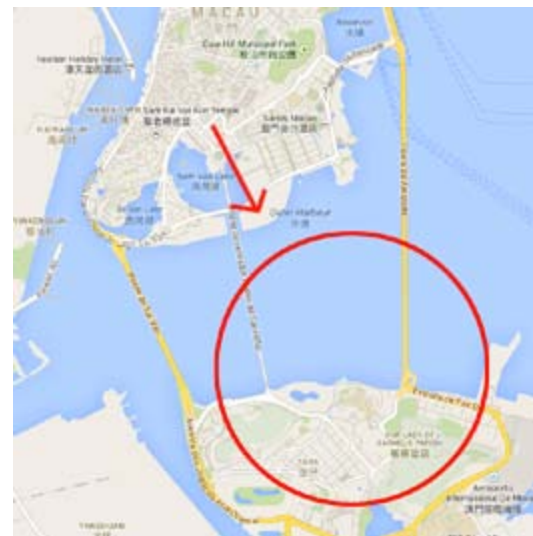
Vue Prise de Macao

1/4Pl, Oct 1844

Paris, Caption as panorama of Canton in
Macao cat
MFP

The bay of Macao has seen drastic transformation over the last couple of decades with a major land reclamation exercise that filled up much of the former bay to replace it with a brand new district devoted to tourism and casinos. The island of Taipa seen in a distance in Itier's daguerreotype is now linked to Macao peninsula by 3 bridges. Yet despite this major transformation in Macao urban configuration, much of the old town has remained in place and offers a rather palatable juxtaposition of eras and life styles.

Much of what used to be the seafront being now occupied by buildings, the choice of location of the re-enactment of the daguerreotypes showing Macao bay was restricted to the artificial lagoon that now occupies a portion of what used to be the bay and from where one can still get an open view of Taipa.





Port de la Tay Pa de Macao (blur ships)

Oct 1844, Macao, Paris,
MFP

Itier did two stays in Macao, the first and longest one was devoted to the negotiation of the treaty lasted two month and half, from the 13 August to the 28 October. Itier does mention the use of the daguerreotype in his journal on the 18 and 19 october and one can reasonably assume that the Macao plates that have reached us were taken at that time. The second stay took place between the 12 July and 31 August, a stay during which he visited Hong Kong as well. Itier had fallen sick asked and mention being treated more efficiently by Chinese than Western medicine. He asked the permission to leave the diplomatic mission ahead of the rest of the team, permission granted by the ambassador Lagrené. Itier left Hong Kong on the 1st September 1845 on the English steamer Lady Mary Wood, heading for Galle, via Singapore, Malacca and Georgetown.

The location for this second shot Macao bay is the same as in the previous one. However for the re-enactment the use of a multiple hole pinhole device allowed me to create a blur effect evocative of the blur found in Itier's original shot.





Jillor June 1015
RP



View of the Praja Grande (redressée)
Oct 1844, Macao, Paris,
MFP

The Praja Grande remained for a long time the very one sight that said “Macao”. However, by the 1980s, land reclamation started drastically changing the shape of the coastal line, but the road that ran along it originally remained in place. While most of the urban landscape is by now beyond recognition, the one element that has remained in place is that road and more specifically the curve at the eastern end of the Praja Grande when it reaches the Fort San Francisco. The view being now completely obstructed with buildings, this curve stands as the topographical element that makes a clear connection with Itier’s shot.

Judging by the angle of the original shot, Itier must have stood on the terrace of San Francisco Fort, a complex of buildings dating back to the Portuguese colonial era, which is now the Office of the Secretary For Security. Part of it, including the terrace on which Itier must have stood, has been turned into the Museum of Macao Security Forces. Although the museum was closed for renovation, the topic of my research proved to be interesting enough to the authorities in charge to allow me in and take the needed shot. In fact, the curators of the museum were not aware of these views of the fort by Itier, the earliest existing. I provided them with a copy of the files in my possession, which they will be used in the revamped display the curatorial team is currently working on.



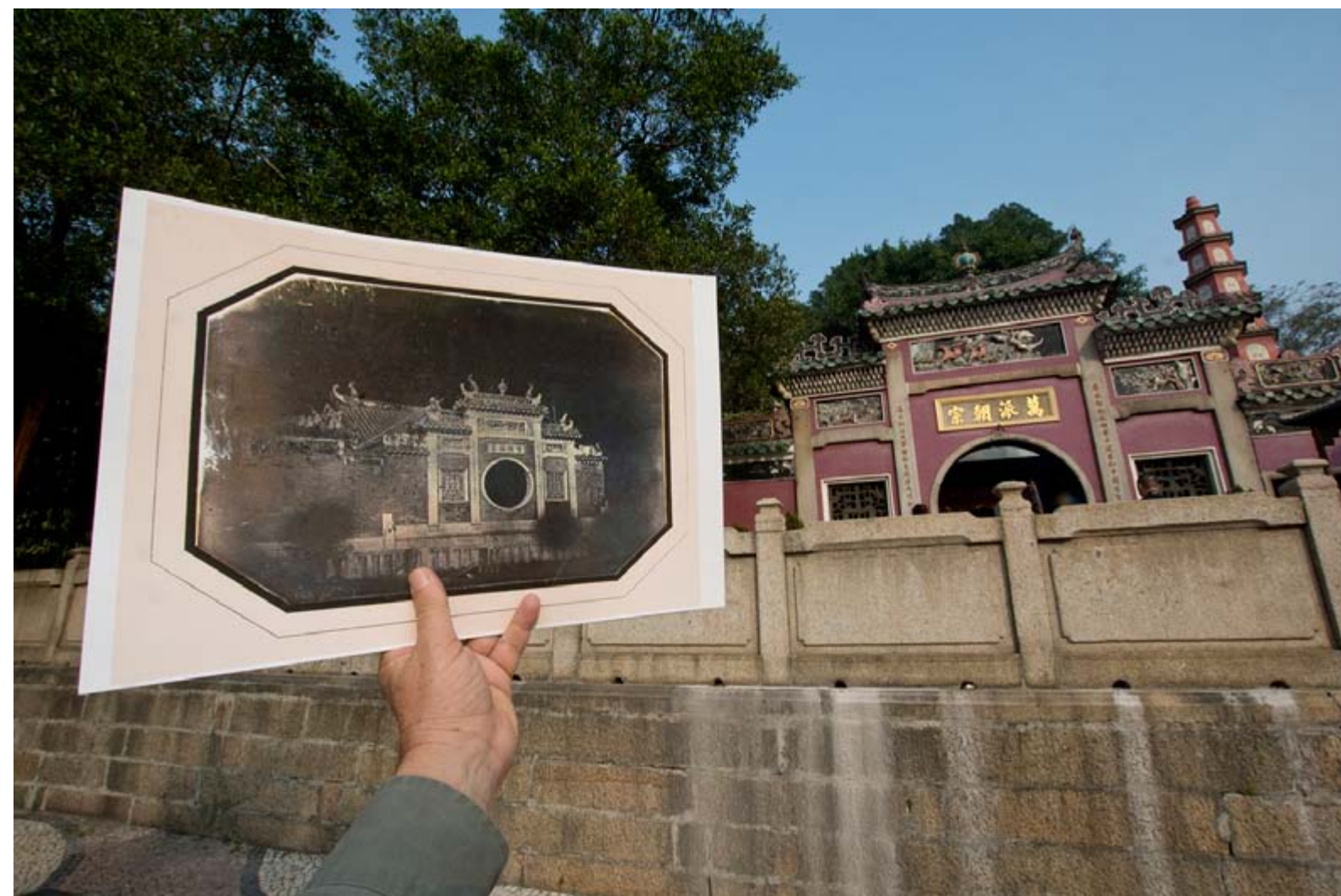




La grande pagode de la ville chinoise à Macao (hor.)
Paris, Oct 1844, Macao
MFP

The A-Ma temple at the western tip of Macao peninsula is possibly Macao's most important landmark, as it is thought that the name Macao given by the Portuguese in the 16th century is derived from it. This temple dedicated to Ma Zu, the South China Sea goddess, was built in 1488 by a group of fishermen as a thanks giving for having been saved from a raging storm through their prayers to the goddess. Interestingly enough, it seems that Itier, otherwise generally acute in his collection of information, missed out completely on the historical significance of this temple, because in his journal he gives it as being dedicated to Kuan Im, the Goddess of Mercy, another highly popular Chinese deity.

While in the case of the Praja Grande the landscape has changed beyond recognition, the historical and spiritual significance of this temple, enlisted on Unesco World Heritage List in 2005, saved it from any major disruption. In short, the site looks exactly the same as when Itier visited and photographed it. The two shots are therefore pretty similar to the original ones.





Yellow Mountain 1912
H.P.

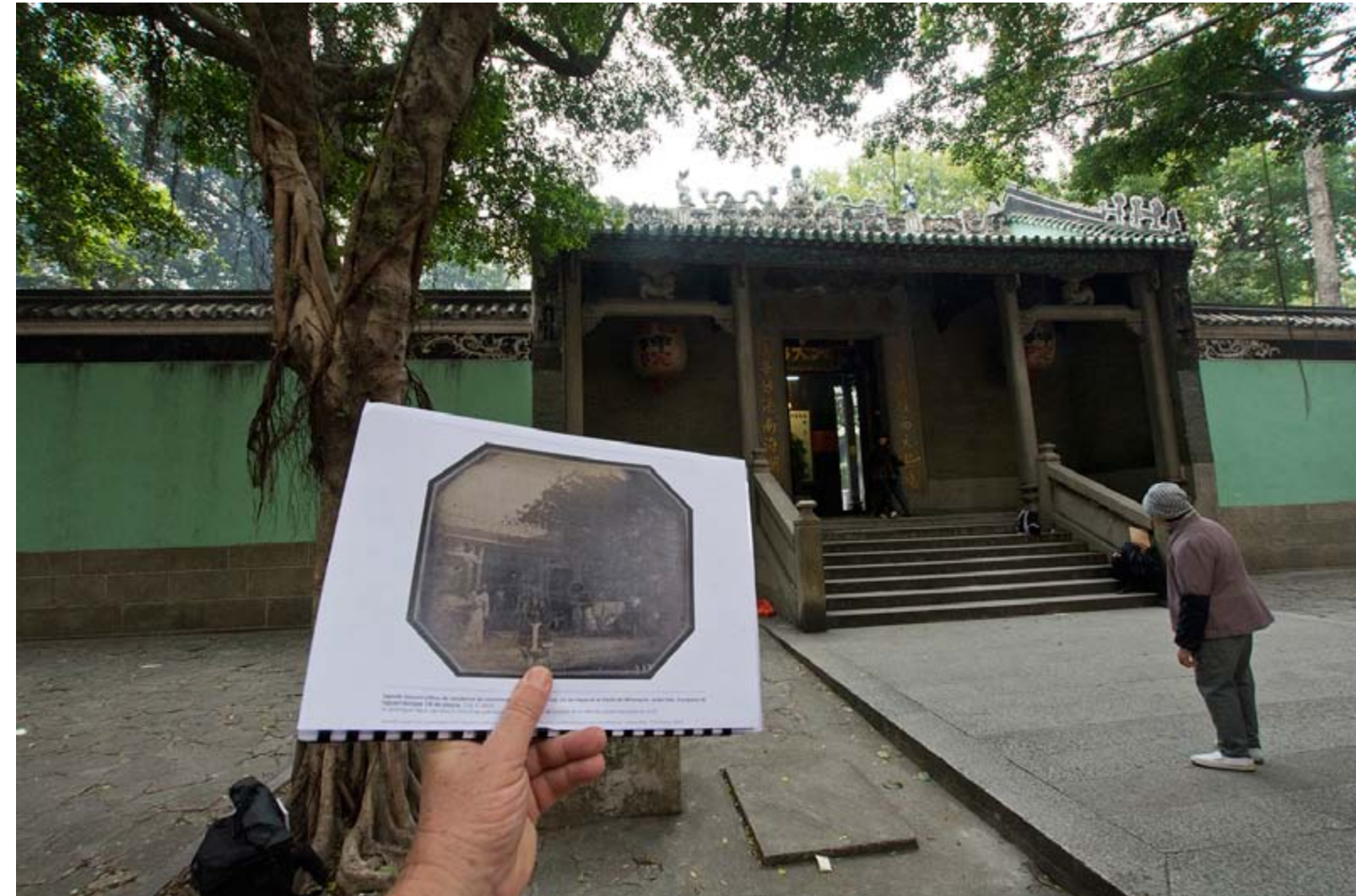
DIPLOMATIC MISSION



**Pagode du traité de l'Amitié
(avec 2 serviteurs chinois)**
1/6pl, 3 Oct 1844, Prest1, Paris
Col. F.Hoch

The Pagoda of the Friendship Treaty was not clearly identified by Itier, neither on the plate nor in his journal. He simply mentioned that it was a pagoda located on the outskirts of town, north of Macao, used by the Chinese emissary as a residence and the place where the treaty was negotiated. A look at an 1852 map of Macao revealed in deep a pagoda in the location described by Itier, in what was at that time a rural area of Macao. When discussing this possibility with Pr. Van Dyke he then said that in fact this temple had been used slightly earlier then the visit of Itier in October 1844, for the negotiation and the signing of the Treaty of Wang Hiya on the 3 July 1844 between China and America. It was therefore a likely possibility.

Indeed the visit on site reveals that the building was exactly the same as the one seen in Itier's plate. It was the Kuan Im temple, founded in 1632, one of Macao three most famous temples. The temple complex was now surrounded by the thriving city, and the field where Itier must have stood to take his shot replaced by a busy street filled with a constant flow of traffic. The re-enactment was also made a little difficult from a photographic point of view by the large trees that shaded the temple entrance and the poor lighting condition due to an overcast weather.





July 1978
AP

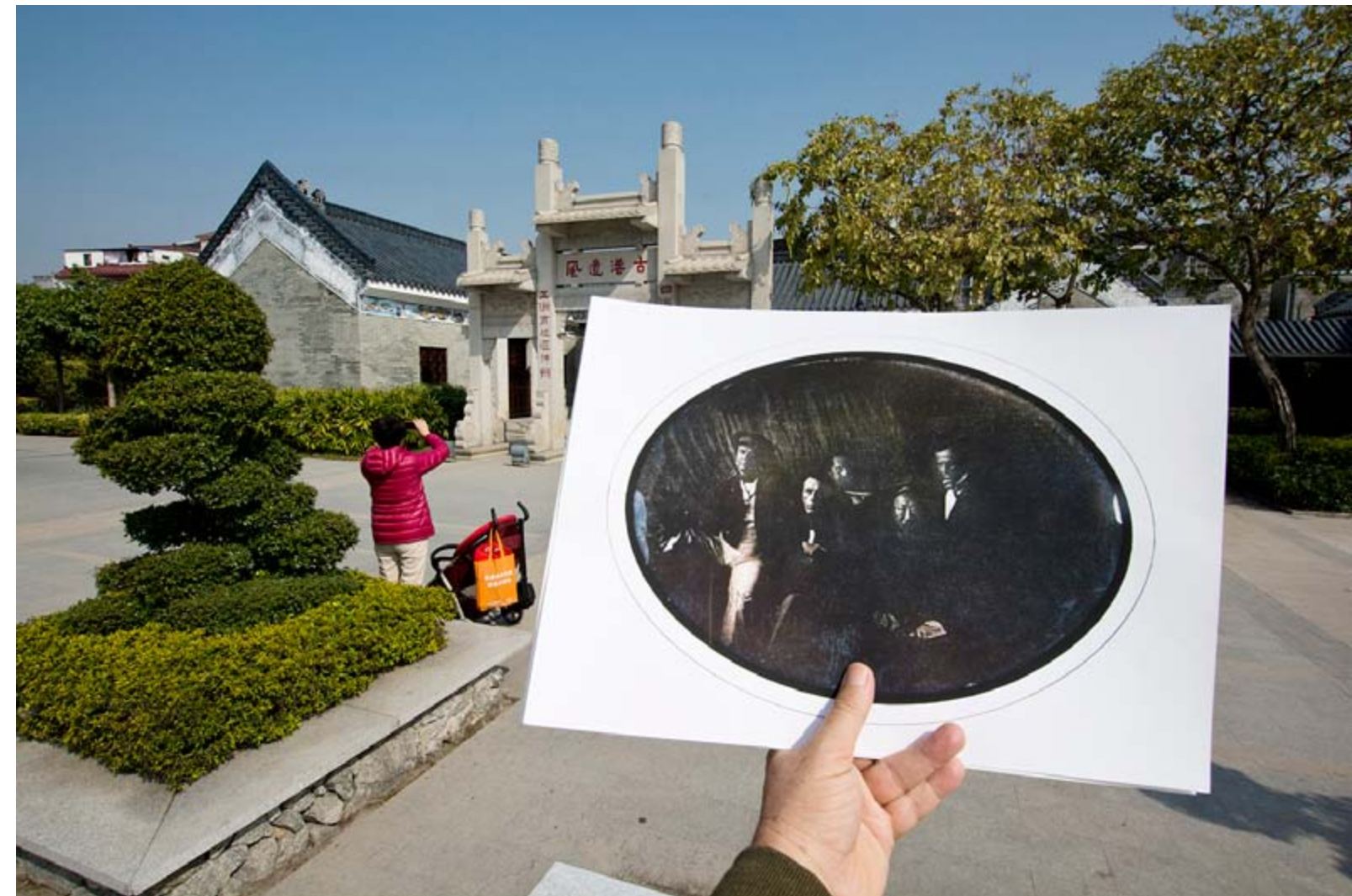


**Les plénipotentiaires réunis sur le vapeur
L'Archimède au moment de la signature du
traité entre la France et la Chine, 24 Oct 1844**
1/4pl , Paris, Bennett
MFP

While the same venue had been used for the negotiation and the signing of the treaty between China and America, for some reasons, it was decided that the signing of the treaty would take place on board the steam ship l'Archimède in Whampoa, the port south of Guangzhou used as an anchorage by foreign ships until the treaty of Nanking in 1842. For most of the 18th century Whampoa had stood as the only point of contact between China and the rest of the world. The French ships of the diplomatic mission went up the estuary of the Pearl River delta after negotiation of the treaty in Macao and the treaty was signed on the 24 October 1844.

One of Itier's most famous plate is precisely the one showing the plenipotentiaries from both countries on the deck of the ship, after the signing of the treaty. Re-enacting the shot as such was made a little difficult by the number of models it required; further more the exact location remained rather hypothetic. However, the visit to Whampoa revealed the rather nice surprise of an old Chinese town that had been thoughtfully restored over the last few years to bring to life this important page of Chinese history.

While the port proper and its original buildings of the custom house and other offices had long disappeared, a rather convincing reconstitution of the complex was built in the early 2000s to welcome the Queen of Sweden on the occasion of the visit of the ship Gotheborg to Whampoa and Canton in 2006. I then chose this place as a location for the shot, with the student of the Sun Ya Tsen University who guided me on this visit holding the print of the original photograph, in front of the gate saying that many foreigners had visited this port in the past.





gellert/maat 2018
AP

CANTON



Vue renversée des factoreries européennes de Canton prise de la rive droite de la rivière du Tigre

1/4pl. Nov 1844, Macao, Paris
MFP

The visit of Canton was clearly the high point of Itier's journey, a visit that in fact gave its title to the published journal: *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine*, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846 – Vol I, II, III. Ever since the implementation of the Canton System by the Qing government in 1757, Canton had remained the only place in China where foreigners could trade and get a glimpse of the Middle Kingdom. Following the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 at the end of the First Opium War, China was forced to agree to open more ports to foreigners and to the cession of Hong Kong island to the British, therefore bringing an end to the so-called Canton System. But for visitors in 1844, life in Canton however was still restricted to the district of the factories on the north bank of the Pearl River, outside the walls of the Chinese city proper, which remained out of bound to them.

There were altogether 13 factories, each one allocated to a different nation. These so-called “factories” were in fact storehouses for trading goods in and out of China and included only basic facilities for the foreign residents, such as rudimentary offices and living quarters. The Hong, or Chinese merchants in charge of the trade overlooked both trade and everyday life, providing the exclusively male foreigners with the translators, servants and other goods and services needed during their stay.





jill of mason 2018
10P



Vue redressée des factories européennes de Canton

1/4pl. Nov 1844, Macao, Paris
MFP

Following yet another major fire that destroyed most of the district in 1856, just as the foreign nations were mobilizing for the Second Opium War, the factories were moved to the nearby man-made island of Shamian, a little further up-stream from the previous location. The island of Shamian developed as the center of Western presence throughout the later part of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. The whole island and its stately art deco buildings was the subject of extensive restoration over the last decade. The island has now become a pleasant tourist attraction and the romantic atmosphere of its streets has made it one the local favorite sites for wedding photography.

The initial district of the factories on the other hand has gone through extensive transformation, although much of the surrounding district preserves the bustling trading original atmosphere. Under the Communist government, the area where the factories stood was turned into a park named Guangzhou Cultural Park, famous since the early 1950s for its festival celebrations such as the Spring Flower Fair or the autumn Lantern Show of the Lantern Festival. Part of the 3 streets that stretched north of the river front and along which stood the factories however have been preserved beyond the wall of the park and the prevailing chaotic commercial activity still give a sense of what the place might have been like when Itier visited it.





10/1/58
H

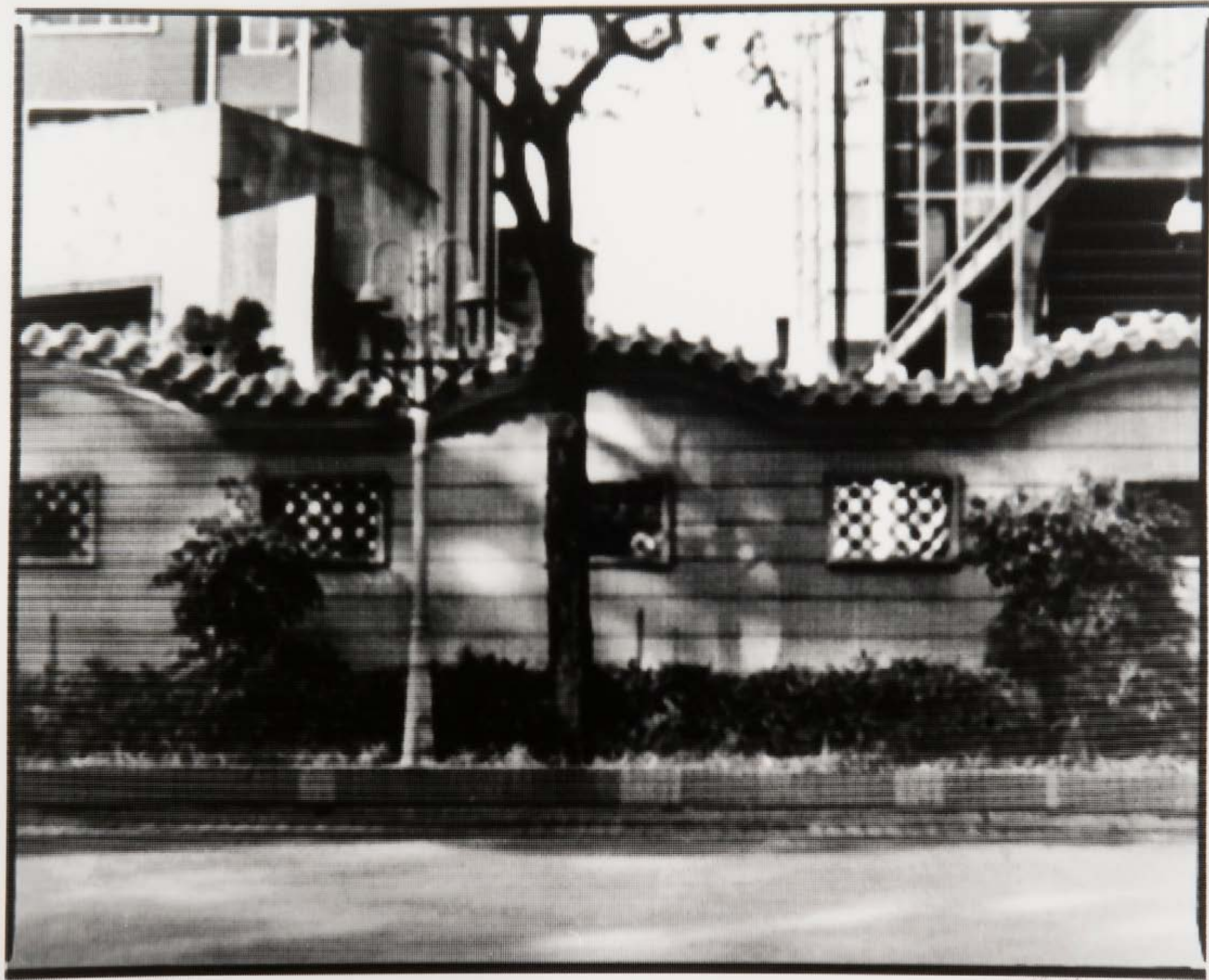


**Mur de Clôture en briques, débarcadère et
jardin des factoreries européennes à Canton**
1/4Pl, Nov 1844, Macao
MFP

Following the years of conflict of the First Opium War, tension between the Chinese and foreign community led to further riots and the resulting destruction of three factories. In order to keep their quarters safe, the foreign merchants built the American Garden along the riverfront and surrounded the area with a high fence that kept it secured from the Chinese crowd, further isolating the factories front the rest of the city. It is this brand new wall that Itier photographed in 1844.

For the re-enactment of this shot, I selected a section of the park now surrounding the Culture Park





July 1945
RP

Itier's use of daguerreotype in Canton is by far the most important of the whole trip. There are over ten mentions of its use in the journal, by far the largest number of mentions for any of the countries visited. And there are also 28 known plates, again the largest number of existing plates for any of the countries visited during the journey. Furthermore, fate has it that the bulk of the Chinese plates were sold by a descendant of Itier in the late 70s to a private collector whose collection became the Musée Français de la Photographie. Most of the plates concerning China are therefore accessible, while many of the other plates are now kept private collections and almost impossible to track.

One of the outstanding piece of the Chinese series is a panorama of Canton made of 13 plates shot from the rooftop of the American factory. This unique document showing the skyline of a Chinese city in 1844 hasn't been fully studied yet and I am currently trying to reconstruct it the best we can. The version shown below is what I have been able to put together so far but I need to further investigate the missing plates or other possible arrangement when I will visit the MFP later this year.

The re-enactment of this panorama was clearly a little hypothetic at first. Guangzhou is now a city of skyscrapers where the view is mostly obstructed unless one goes to the top of one of these towers in which case the angle is vastly different from the original one. Doing it from a spot close to the original one seemed to be also problematic. It turned out that my hotel in Shamian was the perfect location for this part of the project. Shamian is indeed very close to the original factories location and served anyway as the foreign enclave after the shift. The island is surrounded by either the river or a number of highway that keeps high-rise buildings in a distance and the hotel stood a few floors away from the surrounding art deco building. From the roof terrace I could get the ideal view for the re-enactment of Itier's panorama in the 21st century.



Planche n.1 du panorama de Canton (1)
1/4pl, nov 1844, Macao
MFP





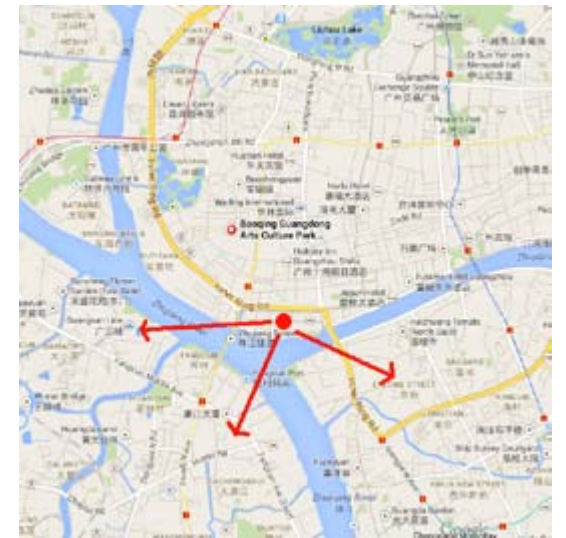


**Vue à l'ouest de Canton, temple de Chang Show Gan
Située à 3/4 de mille au sud des factories dans la
ville ouverte” (4)**

1/4pl, nov 1844, Paris, Bennett
MFP

The caption of this shot given by Itier at the back of the plates is a little puzzling as the directions given do not seem to correspond to what should have been the configuration of the city. Furthermore the temple mentioned could not be identified by Pr Zhou Xiang from the Sun Ya Tsen University who helped me with the identification of the locations.

Below is the second part of the re-enacted panorama, shot from the other side of the building and looking south towards the river.





La Maison de Campagne de Pan Tse Chen
1/4pl. Oct 1844, Macao
MFP

Pan Tse Chen was a prominent local mandarin of the time who was part of the Chinese team in charge of negotiating the treaty in Macao. After the signing of the treaty, he proved to be a most hospitable host to the French party in Canton and invited Itier on a few occasions to visit him at home as well as visiting his country house on the outskirts of town, a visit described in great details in the journal. During those friendly visits, Itier used his daguerreotype to produce a number of plates of his new friend, his family and the country house.

According to Pr Zhou Xiang, it is known that Pan Tse Chen's country estate was located west of Guangzhou, in an area that became later on in the 19th century a praised residential area famous for its scenery and beautiful mansion. With the political change of the 20th century, the area was turned into a park by the Communist government and became the Liwan Lake Park. A few of the mansions along the Lizhiwan Rd and the adjoining canal were preserved and turned into museums.

For the location of the first re-enactment, my choice went for the garden of a dim sum restaurant in the park where a covered alleyway made a good evocation of the gallery seen in Itier's plate. It so happened that one of the waiters seating on a bench could stand as the character seen in the lower left of the original image.







Mr Durant de Macao & Cum Chou de Canton

1/6Pl, Prest1 4 Nov 1844, HistOf (1844-45),

Vente 4 Nov 1844

Unknown

This shot of a Western and a Chinese man side by side occupies a rather special place in the history of photography as one of the earliest image showing an Asian and a Caucasian side by side.

Research in the Karl Smith archives kept in the Macao archives have enable me to get a fairly good understanding of who Durant (or Durran, or Durand as his name appears in different spellings) was an opium trader, owner of the schooner Lyra, who arrived in Macao in 1837 from Calcutta. He lived in Macao where he became one of the socialite figures of the time and passed away on the 20 February 1857, in his house n2 Traversa de Padre Antonio. He was a close friend of the painter George Chinnery, a prominent artist of the time, who featured him in a number of his paintings and drawings showing scene of the colonial life in Macao and Hong Kong. Research on Cum Chou however didn't bring any result, but one can probably assumed that he must have been a Canton merchant visiting Macao.

The re-enactment of this shot was done with the collaboration of Pr. Paul Van Dyke who greatly contributed to my research in both Macao and Guangzhou. A resident of Macao for many years where he was teaching in the local university, Pr Van Dyke is now a professor in Guangzhou Sun Ya Tsen University. The shot was re-enacted in fact on the steps of the History department of that university with one of his colleagues from the department. So instead of 19th century merchants, the shot associate two 21st century academics.





Gilley/Forst 2010
BP



Grands Mandarins de Canton
1/4 PL, 21 Nov 1844, Macao, Paris
MFP

Quite a number of the plates produced in Canton are portraits featuring the particularly modern aesthetic mentioned earlier on. For the re-enactment of these images I had to rely on the help that my local contacts could provide me. One of them was Kent Wu, a master student in the history department who had come to attend my talk at the beginning of the stay and who had shown great interest in the topic.

The city was preparing for Chinese new year and the campus was about to close for a long holiday. Kent however was originally from Guangzhou and so would be around for the whole of the second half of my stay and free to help me. He enrolled the help of few friends and we planed for one shooting session on the campus to re-enact 3 of the shots.

The first one was the “3 mandarins”, a shot dated by the day in Itier’s journal and taken during his visit to Pan Tsé Chen family on the 21st November 1844. These 3 mandarins were part of a group of dignitaries who happened to visit their friend that day. They were respectively Vice-Governor of the Canton province, the Tartar general, commandant of the Manchu troops, the Custom Director, the Master of Studies in charge of Imperial examinations and the Administrator of Store Houses and Granaries. Each one of them wanted to have their portrait taken and Itier describes how he had to use stratagems in order to keep some plates for himself. He mentions overall doing about a dozen of plates that day.





Jillory M. Davis 2015
AP



Famille de Pon Tin Quoi Pan Tsen Chin
grand mandarin première class bouton
rouge plume de paon
 1/4 PL, 21 Nov 1844, Macao, Paris
 MFP

Itier mentions doing altogether about a dozen of plates that day. One of them is the family of Pan Tsé Chen. For the re-enactment, besides the friends of Kent who had kindly agreed to share their time with me for this project, we managed to enroll the help of a lady who was passing by with a young boy. The presence of the child was indeed an important element of the image.





Jill & Mark 2018
NP



Groupe pris dans une rue de Canton
1/4Pl, Novembre 1844, Macao, Paris
MFP

Another important aspect of Itier's photographic work all along this journey is that he placed his camera in the street to shoot ordinary people and everyday life scene. This approach is highly unusual for the time, as this kind of low status subject was generally not regarded as worth the use of the expensive material needed to produce the images. Most of the subjects at the time were therefore restricted to portraiture and scenery.

As Gimon suggested in his original article published in *Prestige de la Photographie*, Itier could then well be regarded as one of the inventors of "reportage", pointing his objective towards everyday life scenes and re-cording aspects of other people life for the sake of documentation.

One such image is a group of people taken in the street in Canton. The scene is clearly posed for the sake of exposure and the character placed in a rather stiff arrangement. The shot was re-enacted with the help of Kent's friend in Sun Ya Tsen University.





Jelly Posit 10/2
RD



Mes deux domestiques chinois à Canton

1/6 pl Oct 1844, Prestige

Unknown

As in the case of Macao, Itier also took a shot of his two servants in Canton, again with this kind of modern aesthetic that makes me compare these images to those of Avedon.

In Guangzhou, things proved to be somehow easier and I could get a waiter and a cook from the coffee shop to pose for me on the outdoor terrace.





John J. ...
1910

DANANG

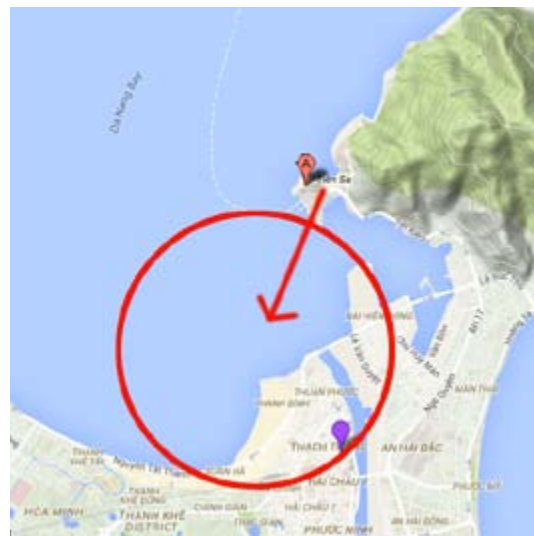


View of the Alemene in Tourane Bay
1/4Plt , 12 June 1845, 9am
Prest2, Bordeaux
Col Serge Kakou

In May 1845, some members of the mission received the order to go to Tourane (Danang) to negotiate the liberation of a French bishop held captive by the Vietnamese emperor. The stay in Danang was to know a rather eventful conclusion that saw Itier produce two daguerreotypes known to be the earliest existing view of Vietnam, while exploring the realm of photojournalism.

On the 12 June, after about two weeks of negotiations, the boat was ready to leave as soon as the bishop would be released. Itier then asked to be taken ashore to use his camera on the hill overlooking the bay and on which stood the fort of Non-nay that guarded the entrance. But soon after setting up his equipment, signal was given for the ship to weigh anchor. Itier then writes: *A few minute's delay could change the course of my destiny, but these few minutes are absolutely essential to me; if I am to carry away the irrefutable evidence of these journeys.* In a hurry, Itier exposes the plates and manages to reach the ship while processing them on the rowing boat. And upon reaching the ship, he gives an enthusiastic description of the successful daguerreotype that had captured the topology of Danang with the French ship in the bay.

The view could be successfully re-enacted from a 19th century lighthouse built by the French colonial government, from a point of view quite similar to the one Itier must have used. While the hill on which he stood has experienced little changes, reclamation has taken place at its foot and the commercial port originally developed by the French is now the container port of Central Vietnam capital.





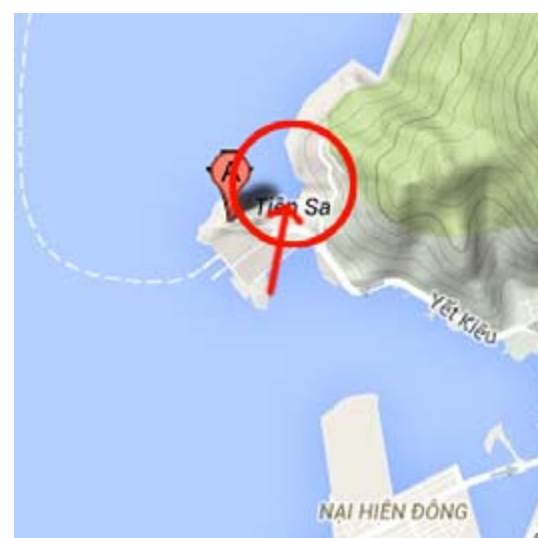
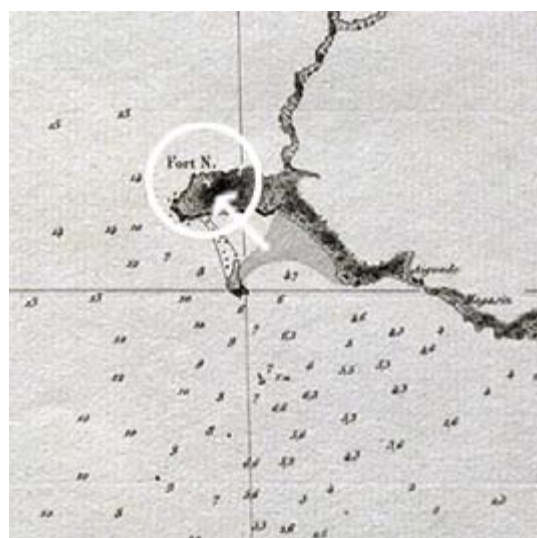


Fort de Non-Nay
1/4Plt, 12 June 1845
Catalogue de Vente 2006
Col Terry Bennett

Most prominent from a conceptual point of view is the shot of the Non Nay fort illustrating volume 3 of the journal. The sequence of events describing the eventful departure is one of the longest entries concerning daguerreotype in the journal, along with subsequent detailed considerations on a possible French military intervention in Vietnam, *for which a few regiments of infantry would suffice to complete the conquest*. In fact, this mission also intended to explore possible sites for the establishment of a French port in the China Sea and Itier's extensive analysis of the country from a geographical, economic and military point of view is a significant prelude to the eventual colonisation of the country by the French government.

Most significantly, it is the pictorially less interesting view of the fort that was interpreted as an engraving to support his observations of the poor Vietnamese defence system. This printed combination of photo-based image and text, as a commentary on political events, is remarkably early. Furthermore, Lavollée, his secretary, used the image again in 1854 to illustrate an article in the famous newspaper L'Illustration. From eventful shooting, to topic, to distribution, this image therefore carries all the elements that will subsequently characterise full-fledged photojournalism.

Judging by the position of the original Vietnamese on an 1843 map done by Cécille, the fort was probably replaced by the lighthouse mentioned earlier. And a new fort must have been built and the original topography has remained pretty much the same.





July 19, 1918
H.P.

GALLE



Beach scene in Galle

¼ plate, 1844 (?)

HistOf

Unknown

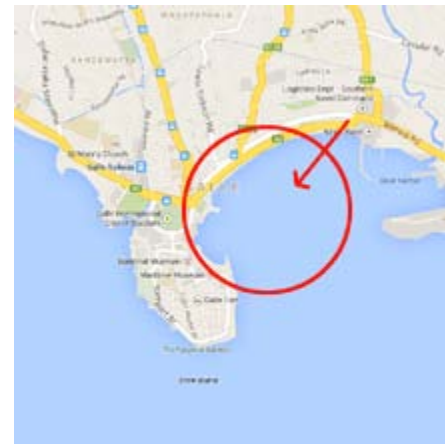


Figure 6. View of the village at Gall Point, Ceylon (ca. 1844). Quarter-plate daguerreotype.

The last shot of the series in Asia shows a group of people, probably fishermen, on a beach in Galle, Sri Lanka. Itier reached Galle, then the main port of Sri Lanka on the 19 September 1845 on his way back to France. He had to wait for one month before boarding the *Indostan* which would take him to Aden and from there Egypt where he produced a large number of daguerreotype as well.

Itier spent a whole month in Sri Lanka, venturing all the way to the high hills station of Nuwara Eliya, surveying the agricultural resources of the island on the way. Again there is no mention of the use of the daguerreotype in the journal and this plate is the only one that has reached us so far. It was the subject of only one publication in History of Photography.

For the re-enactment, I discussed the location with Ismeth Raheem, an architect who has done extensive research on early photography history in Sri Lanka, and we came to the conclusion that it had to be taken from the other side of Galle bay, with Galle Fort in the distance. The presence of a group of people in the shot indicted some form of human activity. Indeed upon reaching the intended location in today's context I was pleased to see that this area had preserved the fishing activity that must have existed at the time of Itier's visit.

The artist in me somehow had the hunch that the shot would be a successful photographic experience and indeed it was. As soon as I started placing my equipment, local fishermen started crowding around, my local guide explained to them what I was doing, they all got really interested and it was very easy to get four of them to pose in the same position as the original shot. Most interestingly, although I did quite a number of shots in order to get the correct exposure, it is the very first one that eventually proved to be the closest to Itier's image. It was indeed a "decisive moment".



