

PLACING JULES ITIER'S BODY OF WORK IN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The photographic work done by Jules Itier around the China Sea in 1844-45 while traveling with the Lagrené Mission was thought to be, up until recently, some of the earliest photographs of several Asian countries. A new round of research has established that they are indeed the earliest extant photographs of Asia, while proposing new readings of a few outstanding daguerreotypes such as the DaNang fort and the 360° panorama of Canton made-up of 14 plates. This paper looks at the longer term and theoretical implications of what we can now call a ground-breaking body of work.

Key Words: Jules Itier – Asian History of Photography – Daguerreotype – Panorama – Reportage

Discovered in the late 1970s by the collector Gilbert Gimon, the photographic work of Jules Itier was given public attention with the publication of two articles, the first one in French in the journal *Prestige de la Photographie*¹ in 1980, and the second in English in *History of Photography*². The first one was titled *Jules Itier, le reporter aux 1000 daguerreotypes*, but the rigorous scientific journal in which the second one was published opted for a sober *Jules Itier, Daguerreotypist*. In fact, right below the emphatic heading of the first article, the introduction mentioned a much more realistic number of around one hundred twenty plates. Despite the exaggeration of the title, Gimon's discovery was truly important. With the exception of Japan, the history of photography had been mostly written from a European and American perspective until then. Although not produced by an Asian person, Itier's work dealt with the cultures and landscape of a number of Asian countries barely five years after the announcement of the daguerreotype in 1839. References to photographic works done in Asia in the initial phase of the medium's history were very few in the early 1980s, but the daguerreotypes of Singapore, Manila, Macao, Canton, Danang and Galle were undoubtedly exceptionally early for this part of the world. Gimon's articles were in fact among the earliest dealing with photographic history in Asia. Three decades later, Terry Bennett asserted Itier's daguerreotypes of Macao and Canton as the first existing photographs of China in his *History of Photography in China - 1842-1860*³. In 2015, my paper *Jules Itier and the Lagrené Mission*⁴ established

that Itier's daguerreotype of the Tian Hock Keng temple shot on the 6th July 1844 in Singapore (Figure 1) was indeed the earliest extant and dated photograph of Asia.

1) Gilbert Gimon, 'Jules Itier, le reporter aux 1000 daguerreotypes, 1. Le voyage en Chine: 1843-44', *Prestige de la Photographie*, 8, 1980, 78-98; and Gilbert Gimon, 'Jules Itier 2, le voyage en Egypte: 1845-1846', *Prestige de la Photographie*, 9, 1980, 4-31.

2) Gilbert Gimon, 'Jules Itier, Daguerreotypist', *History of Photography*, 5:3, 1981, 225-44.

3) Terry Bennett. (2009). *History of Photography in China, 1842-1860*. London: Quaritch: 3-6.

4) Gilles Massot. (2005). 'Jules Itier and the Lagrené Mission', *History of Photography*, 39:4. 319-347.

Gimon's suggestion that Itier had done the work of a reporter, more than half a century before the emergence of the profession that would define the media industry and the 20th century with it, might seem at best rather anachronistic, if not plainly irrelevant. Gimon's understanding of the grand narrative of photography, however, had led him to identify the specificities that put the work of Itier in a league of its own: the combined use of image and text into a final form of narrative. Clearly, this amateur daguerreotypist had put his focus on recording occurrences as opposed to producing pictorial works, as was then mostly the norm. However, not only had he emphasized the documentation of events, he had, most importantly, done so in relation to a text that reported in great detail the events, experiences and observations collected over the course of his two-over years journey. Gimon's proposition to read this body of work as heralding a not-yet-existing form of photojournalism was substantiated by the use of three plates illustrating Itier's *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846*⁵. The three volumes contained a meticulous recording of the facts that dealt alternately with the historical, scientific and mundane aspects of life encountered in the day to day unfolding of his mission. For he was indeed on a two-sided mission: the official and professional one was diplomatic and economic and it made him work at the forefront of globalization. But he had also incidentally given himself the lead role of a grander cultural task: the bringing of photography to Asia.

Itier's daguerreotypes of Asia are the images that allow us to see the furthest back in time for that part of the world. What matters most from a theory point of view in the search for the

'first photograph of Asia' is the phenomenological dimension underlying it. Itier's shot of the Singapore temple isn't just a graphic interpretation of it. In it, we can see the actual light that fell on the Earth at that moment. It is a recording of energy; the recording of the electromagnetic field perceived as light by the human senses, and not just the physically disconnected visual narrative produced by painterly interpretation that constituted a pictorial documentation until the apparition of photography in 1839. Itier's daguerreotype manifests the physical experience of a shift in world history through a medium that was altering the human perception of time and space. It is in this respect that the time and subject of the recorded occurrence, a Chinese temple in an Asian British outpost shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, became meaningful to the larger historical narrative of civilizations. It not only represents this shift; it actually constitutes it.

An anecdote related by Itier in the opening of his first Singapore chapter gives the context in which this defining moment of Asian photography history took place:

SINGAPORE – 3rd July 1844

"It is now nine o'clock in the morning and we throw anchor in the splendid roadstead of Singapore. Next to us is a steamer ready to leave for Suez, with the English plenipotentiary Sir Henry Pottinger on board; he is returning to his homeland, after attaching his name to one of the greatest events of this century, the first treaty by which Europe firmly took hold of China to never let it free. May we too add our own stone to the

social edifice rising from the new combinations induced by these contacts between Chinese and European civilizations and see France accorded a share worthy of its grandeur in this colossal oeuvre".⁶

Jules Itier was a customs officer by profession and upon his return from a first mission to Senegal and Guyana in 1842-43, he was appointed commercial counselor to Théodose de Lagrené⁷ who was about to head the first French diplomatic mission to China. Preparations had started in the early 1840s, when King Louis Philippe's Department of Foreign Affairs realized that while its attention had been focused on Africa, other Western powers had made great progress in Asia. Lagrené was appointed as plenipotentiary minister to negotiate a treaty with 'the government of the Chinese Emperor Daoguang⁸. The official aspect of the mission was completed with the signing of the Treaty of Whampoa on board the steamer *l'Archimède* on the 24th October 1844.

The confidential aspect of this mission was the exploration of locations for the establishment of a French port in the China Sea. These included the island of Basilan in the Sulu archipelago and DaNang in Vietnam⁹. Itier would mention both of them

in his journal as places where daguerreotypes were made. Of these mentions, only two plates produced in DaNang survived, but one of them would help Itier to substantiate his argument in favor of Vietnam as a place of great possibilities for the future French presence in Asia. By 1842, the growing colonial ambitions of European nations entered a new phase with the Treaty of Nanking signed on the 29th August 1842, enforced by the United Kingdom onto the Qing Dynasty as a way to end the First Opium War (1839-42). This war was the result of the long escalation of tensions created by the trade imbalance between the two nations. Its outcome would be devastating to Chinese independence and pride, the first of what the Chinese would later call 不平等条约 or an 'unequal treaty'¹⁰.

European life style in the 18th century had been marked by a fashion for all things Chinese, so widespread and defining of the times that it became known as *Chinoiserie*. British society in particular developed such passion for the exotic brew of tealeaves that the account books of the British India Company importing tea from China showed abysmal losses. British society could no longer function without a cup of tea, but it had little to offer in return that China might want, at least not with the same unrestrained abandon. Thanks to the stimulation

5) Jules Itier. *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846*, vol 3., Paris: ed. Dauvin et Fontaine, 1848 (vol.1, vol.2), 1853 (vol.3)

6) Jules Itier. *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine*, 1, 199.

7) Marie Melchior Joseph Théodose de Lagrené (1800-62) was a French legislator and diplomat who occupied a number of prominent positions in the French Foreign Service in Russia, Turkey and Spain.

8) Negotiations between the French and the Chinese delegation led by the Manchu statement Ki Ying (1787-1858) took place in the Kuan Im temple that had already been used for the negotiation and signing of the Treaty of Wanghia on 3rd July 1844 between China and the United States of America.

9) The island of Basilan, where the local sultan had not paid allegiance to the King of Spain, had been suggested by Jean Mallat (1806-1863). The port of DaNang, south of the imperial Vietnamese capital Hue, had been part of the places visited by the missionaries of the Missions Etrangères de Paris since the 17th century.

10) The term 不平等条约 (bù píngděng tiáoyuē) or 'unequal treaty' came into use in the 1920s to designate the numerous disadvantageous treaties that China had been forced to sign over the course of almost a century.

of the wealth generated by the early Qing dynasty, the quality of Chinese skills and materials had reached such a peak that nothing as exquisite could be found anywhere else in the world, at least not in the eyes of most Chinese.

Since the closing of its doors to the outside world during the Ming dynasty, China had lived as an inward looking culture that considered itself to be superior to any of the 'barbarian nations' coming to trade in the few ports that remained open to foreign presence, such as the Portuguese settlement in Macao¹¹ or the port of Whampoa downstream east of Canton that served as a deep water anchorage for foreign ships trading with Canton. By 1684, foreigners were allowed to reach Canton from there, but only at certain times of the year and under specific conditions. With the implementation of the Canton System in 1757, all other ports in China were closed to foreigners and trade was restricted to the warehouses or *Hong* lining the riverfront in Canton¹². These three ports would be the sites for Itier's daguerreotype activity in China and thus the subject of the earliest extant visual photographic documents of the Qing Empire known so far. The district reserved to the *Hongs* stood outside the city proper, where no foreigner was allowed at any time. These were the warehouses where opium entered China in increasingly huge amounts¹³, and this is where, by 1839, recurring conflicts between English merchants and local authorities attempting to enforce its prohibition flared-up

into a full-fledged war that turned China into the "sick man of Asia"¹⁴. So essential was this trade to the British economy that the black heavily fragrant poisonous substance happened to also be the reason behind Raffles' political gamble that resulted in the founding of a British free port in a part of Asia that had been under Dutch control since 1619¹⁵.

By the late 18th century, opium had proven to be the one product that Chinese people desired with such unrestrained abandon that it could offset the deficit created by the British addiction to tea, and even generate a profit. The opium trade was thus aggressively enforced by the British India Company, from production in India where farmers were forced to drop their original crops, to consumption in China, despite repeated attempts at the prohibition of the addictive substance by the Qing government. The shipping of the goods between the two sides involved in the trade took place across the Malay Archipelago where the only port freely accessible to British ships was Penang, north of the Malacca Straits. Raffles saw a task worthy of his ambitions in the opening of a new port ensuring British access to the South China Sea. William Farquhar, the British Resident in Malacca since 1813, was aware of a dynastic dispute in the house of the Riau Lingga Sultanate, of which the island of Singapore was a part. Together, they plotted a political manipulation by which they could bypass Dutch authority while respecting international law: the creation of a

new sultanate, the Sultanate of Singapore, whose ruler, Sultan Hussein¹⁶, could grant permission to open the new port. Although at first infuriating the British officials in Calcutta and the Dutch in Batavia, the maneuver quickly turned out to be a tremendous success by making full use of the island's strategic location at the crossroad of maritime routes between the East and the West. Often described by his contemporaries as a dubious character driven by ambition, the figure of Raffles nonetheless became a symbol of the self-proclaimed civilizing aspects of British colonialism. So much so that in the late 1960s, the first government of the Republic of Singapore chose to keep this figure of colonial authority on its pedestal. As paradoxical as it might seem, there was an advantage to keeping Raffles as the symbol of the city's foundation in the early 19th century: it pushed the original Malay identity of the island-turned-nation far into the limbo of distant history and thus indirectly strengthened the cohesion of a multiracial society born out of migration, and as a society that had just gone through a traumatizing period of deadly racial riots. In 1972, the Singapore government even went as far as to erect a new statue of him on the bank of the Singapore River, right next to the national parliament on a spot deemed to be Raffles' landing site. But there is more to the Singapore River than the role of this colonial icon. This was the location of 14th century Temasek, the ancient Malay port the trading activity of which had been revived by the British in the form of a free port by the time that Itier photographed the modern warehouses of the historic maritime hub.

The point of view of the daguerreotype *Vue de la ville de commerce à Singapour* (Figure 2) indicates that it was taken from the height of today's Fort Caning, the hill at the centre of the city, which was the centre of power where both the kings of Temasek and British Residents lived. On the 4th July 1844, Itier mentions in his journal his intention to visit Mr. Butterworth, the then governor of Singapore, in his residence on Signal Hill, which was another name given to the hill after the signal flagpole overlooking the port. The governor was not in and so Itier spent some time contemplating the activity of the port:

11) The Ming dynasty government granted the right for a Portuguese outpost in Macao in 1557.

12) Each *Hong* was allocated to a specific foreign nation and counted in total up to thirteen by the time that the Canton System was phased off in 1842.

13) The British export of opium to China grew from an estimated 15 long tons (15,000kg) in 1730 to 900 long tons (910t) by the 1820s.

14) The First Opium War was triggered by the confiscation of a large cargo of opium on order of the scholar official Lin Zexu and by a skirmish between British sailors in Kowloon and local residents in Tsim Sha Tsui in July 1839.

15) Founding of Batavia by the Dutch East Indies.

16) Sultan Hussein Mua'zzam Shah ibni Mahmud Shah Alam (1776-1835) was the oldest son of Sultan Mahmud Shah III who died in 1812 without naming a heir, at a time when Hussein was away in Pahang, on the Malay peninsula. His younger son, Abdul Rahman, was given the preference by a Bugis faction of the court and with the support of the Dutch, a coronation ceremony was hastily organized before the return of Hussein.

"On this shore where less than twenty years ago stood just a few miserable Malay huts, half fishermen, half pirate, [...] stands today a sizeable city and its hard-working population. [...] Just about a quarter century ago, the trade of the Indo-Chinese archipelago was almost fully controlled by the Dutch. While they did not succeed in totally destroying the rich natural resources of this region in their attempt at remaining the exclusive suppliers of spices to the international market, they had nonetheless managed to prevent its commercial development through a monopoly imposed without respecting any of the trade treaties in place. [...] This state of affairs couldn't last much longer. One just had to indicate to the residents of this archipelago a commercial meeting point where they could freely exchange their goods to put an end to the narrow minded and egoistical politics of the Dutch."¹⁷

As in the case of the journal extract quoted earlier, Itier's analysis of the British impact on regional trade is loaded with the assumptions by which European nations were, and often still are, justifying their interventions in Asia and other parts of the world. It is also representative of Itier's contribution to the Lagrené mission as a commercial attaché. A custom's officer by profession, Itier had a wide range of interests, among which botany and geology were given a prominent place in his journal with long descriptions of the natural environment of the countries that he visited. The purpose of his journey remained the redaction of a report on the suitability of agricultural and industrial Asian products for the French market and the identification of opportunities for French goods to be introduced to this part of the world. On the one hand, he saw this as evident

of the superiority of European technical advancements resulting from the rigorous application of scientific knowledge. On the other hand, he was adamantly republican and fervently catholic at the same time, a humanist at heart and a child of the Enlightenment; a staunch believer in the republican ideal of a universal brotherhood uniting humankind. He was an idealist hoping for world harmony; something that he saw as eventually made possible by the prosperity generated by free trade. The pioneering aspect of his photographic work done in Asia should thus be considered in the context of the economic perspective underlying his journey. He was, at once, working at the forefront of both future international trade and the emerging society of image and information, which are two defining elements of the world today. As the first extant photographs of Asia, his daguerreotypes of Singapore are best understood as not just manifestations, but literally as the instruments of the global changes happening.

Taken together, the view of the river and the view of the temple frame the two aspects of Itier's contribution to history: the former acting on a political and economic level and the latter on the cultural and artistic aspects. The daguerreotype of the temple in particular stands as a manifestation of the photographic promise outlined by Arago in his historical presentation to a joint session of the Académie des Sciences and the Académie des Beaux Arts on the 19th August, 1839. Arago had called for this joint session of the two academies to announce a discovery that, according to him, would contribute equally to the progress of the arts and sciences. Itier's plate of the Tian Hock Keng temple is a noteworthy conflation of

Asian art and European technology that is reflective of Arago's vision. Its existence as a factual documentation of the 19th century occurrence establishes the meeting of two parts of the world at the crossroads of an ancient trading route, the trace of which is still here for us to experience; all of these things adding an extra symbolic dimension to this historically important artifact.

A third daguerreotype taken in Singapore expands on Itier's contribution to photographic history by touching on portraiture and even ethnology, while keeping in line with colonialism, documentation, and the development of nascent photojournalism: the image of two Malays captioned "deux Malais conducteurs de palanquin à Singapour" (Figure 3). The two men are photographed in a street, standing-up in a full frontal pose with the tool of their trade behind them. The straightforward composition of this shot emphasizes the informative content dealing with aspects of the local society. There is no indication at any point in his journal of an intentional ethnographic purpose. Maybe because the process by which the camera could objectify human beings subjected to scientific study, and consequently, contribute to the racial construct inherent to colonialism, had yet to be fully conceptualized by the time that Itier had left France in 1843¹⁸? He does, however, mention in relation to the shot of the Vietnamese fort in DaNang that he regards the medium as producing "irrefutable evidence"¹⁹ of an event. The scientist in him appears to have seen beyond the pictorial dimension of the medium to grasp its indexing potential for the factual classification of transient events in the form

of photographic recording. Lastly, a fourth plate shows a horse cart photographed in a street. The shot, taken in a straightforward manner, can be seen of as another suggestion of Itier's intention to produce factual documentation of the indigenous lifestyle. Taken together, these daguerreotypes produced in

17) Jules Itier. *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine*, 1, 205-207.

18) E. Thiesson implemented the first use of the photographic profile pose for ethnographic purpose in August 1844 to photograph two South American Botocudo Indians in Paris at the request of the Academy of Sciences.

19) Jules Itier, *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine*, 3(88).

Singapore at the start of the Asian section of his journey give an indication of the scope and nature of the work produced over the next year and a half: a body of work dealing with all three levels of a practice that would become photojournalism, the political, the cultural and the societal, while documenting places visited and the events of the mission. Indeed, it was understood by Gimon to be a form of reportage relating events, both historical and ordinary, while coincidentally writing the first page of extant Asian photographic history.

The next stop was Manila, for which two daguerreotypes by Itier exist, but of which there was no mention in the journal. Photography is widely mentioned as having reached the Philippines in 1841 or 1842 with the Spanish Sinibaldo de Mas. However, none of his work has been recovered. Research conducted regarding the authenticity of this claim²⁰ brought to light a situation by which the rigorous biographers of de Mas never mentioned his use of the daguerreotype, while only historians of photography do, thus casting serious doubts on the veracity of this widely accepted statement. Thus, Itier's material appears to be the earliest images of the Philippines that

20) The research conducted with Gael Newton in 2015-16 was concluded by a correspondence with the Spanish historian David Marinez Robles, who in a mail dated 13th April 2016, told us that: "The next two years, in the Philippines, he wrote an encyclopedic work in which he explains some personal experiences there, but he never mentions the daguerreotype. And when a few years later he lived in China, he once again painted several portraits, but never took photographs. All this suggests that it is not very likely that Sinibaldo de Mas had introduced the daguerreotype or any kind of photographic technique to the Philippines. [...]" The earliest mention of the use of the daguerreotype by de Mas seems to be an unsubstantiated claim in a Barcelona newspaper article published in 1910.

can be dated with some accuracy²¹. The two existing plates offer a contrasting view of the second oldest European settlement in Asia. The plate showing the Aduana (Figure 4) or the Spanish customs office in the walled city of Intramuros, can be paralleled to the view of the Singapore river warehouses in the way that it is a representation of the colonial presence in Asia, while the other plate showing Filipino houses lining-up along the road leading to the suburbs of St Miguel (Figure 4) gives a view of the local lifestyle. In Macao, the members of the Lagrené Mission finally come down to business: the

negotiation of the treaty with the members of the Chinese delegation. This is where Itier's documentation of the mission proper begins with views of the pagoda where the negotiation took place and portraits of the persons involved in the negotiation. One of the plates showing the Kun lam temple to the north (Figure 6) of the city features two Chinese servants in the foreground and a group of soldiers from the French royal navy in the background. Standing at the core of the negotiation

21) A lot of 18 anonymous daguerreotypes was discovered in 2007 in the Hispanic Society, New York. Based on the type of material used they have been dated to the 1840s-50s.

process was the interpreter Joseph Marie Callery²². Itier did two portraits of this man (Figure 7) who played a most important role since the Chinese delegation had no interpreter of its

own. There is also one portrait of the ambassador Lagrené (Figure 8), and the two men, Lagrené and Callery, are also part of the group shot of the treaty signatories (Figure 9) taken on

the steamer *L'Archimède* on the 26th October 1844²³. Today, the extant photographic recording of this event by Itier's camera is by far the most reproduced image from his body of work in contemporary publications, an observation emphasizing the anachronistic photojournalistic dimension of this documentation of a historical event.

The thirty-three known daguerreotypes²⁴ produced during the one and a half month stay in Canton²⁵ constitute the largest group of plates done in one single location during the entire journey. This was also an occasion for Itier to produce some of his most remarkable images, among which is a group of

coolies photographed in a street of Canton (figure 10). This shot features four coolies standing in front of a plain wall in a composition carefully staged to bring out features and silhouettes. The alternate symmetry combines frontal and profile positions, men in headgear and bareheaded, empty-handed

22) Joseph Marie Callery's (1810–62). Callery first came to Macao in 1836 as a missionary but quickly left the religious orders to work for the French consulate in Macao. His contributions to Sinology include the publication of an influential phonetic transcription of the Chinese language, the *Systema Phonicum Scripturae Sinicae*, and the first translation of the *Li Ki*, one of the five great *King* or canonical Chinese books.

23) The shot also includes "Ky-ing, vice-roi de Canton, M. de Ferrière, secrétaire de la légation [...], M. Cécille, contre amiral". The shooting session is briefly mentioned by Itier in his published journal but is also described by François-Edmond Pâris, commandant of the *Archimède* in his own manuscript journal as having been a rather difficult shooting session.

24) Twenty-nine of them are kept by the Musée Français de la Photographie / Conseil départemental de L'Essone.

25) 29 October - 10 December 1844.

men and gear carriers; all with a clear factual descriptive intent hinting at a possibly purposeful ethnographic intention. As in the case of the portraits of Callery and Lagrené, the portrait of the Mandarin "Paw-ssé-tchen"²⁶ is representative of the tight half-body cropping adopted by Itier for most of his portraits (Figure 11). The use of a plain white background characteristic of his portraiture aesthetic also defines the composition of the shots being placed side-by-side as in "Mr. Durant de Macao and Cum Chou de Canton" (Figure 12). Mr. Durant was a French trader based in Macao, an opium dealer and a prominent member of the foreign community of Macao²⁷, while Cum Chou was the secretary of Paw-ssé-tchen, a man

whose avid scientific curiosity was greatly appreciated by Itier. The portrait of these two men of different ethnicities, placed side by side on equal footing, can be seen of as symbolically signifying the camera's contribution to the creation of a global world. Itier's masterpiece is the 360° panorama of Canton executed on fourteen plates from the top of the American factory on the 7th November 1844²⁸. That day, Itier was assisted in this endeavor by Pâris, whose drawing of a 360° panorama of Macao done a few weeks earlier might have been the inspiration behind this photographic version of a view of Canton. Pâris was a talented draftsman who had also left France with a daguerreotype, which he intended to use as a tool to

26) Paw-ssé-tchen was a prominent Cantonese merchant and one of the four Mandarins involved in the negotiation of the treaty. His country house west of the city, being one of the most luxurious in the province, was used to entertain the foreigners who could not enter the city.

27) Durand was a friend of the English painter George Chinnery, who included him in his well-known composition "Dent's Verandah, Macao", 1842.

28) Panoramas predating this one are rare, and its only equivalent in respect to the full circle view is the 360° view of London shot by Claudet in 1842, only known through the woodcut interpretation published in the London Illustrated News in 1843. In 1842, Frederic von Marten shot a series of panoramic view of Paris using a swinging lens camera and single curved plates that corrected the perspective. In 1842, Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey shot a panorama of Rome and in 1844, he shot another one in Jerusalem.

make pictorial notations to be developed as drawings at a later date²⁹. However, the technicality of the mechanical medium quickly bored him and he left the use of the camera to Natalis Rondot, a member of the commercial mission³⁰. The session is mentioned by Itier but Pâris gives a detailed account that brings forth an essential point in the differing results respectively achieved by pictorial and photographic recordings: instant and effortless detailing.

"I forgot to mention that the last few days I climbed to the rooftop from where Mr. Itier did his panorama. Before climbing, I was planning to do a pencil sketch on which I could note the colors, so that by gathering our respective materials, we would complete a real panorama, but I soon realized that it would be far too difficult a task for me due to the complexity of the rooftops patterns. [...] Mr. Itier managed to produce some very good images, but I doubt he will be able to gather them to complete the full circle of the horizon".³¹

Gathering the images was needed to complete the full circle as he did, as proven when I digitally assembled the fourteen plates (Figure 13). Although plate 9 is missing and plate 14 is erased, a superimposition of the plates over a map of Canton shows that he succeeded in doing so (Figure 14).

29) On the use of the daguerreotype by Pâris, refer to Géraldine Barron's review of the 2012 exhibition of Itier's daguerreotype of China presented by the Musée Français de la Photographie. Geraldine Barron, *La Chine en Daguerreotype*, 11-11-2012, <https://paris.hypotheses.org/337>, last accessed 18-02-2019.

30) It is Rondot who produced the daguerreotypes of Pondicherry in late July 1844, which were daguerreotypes initially credited to Itier by Gimón. The four existing daguerreotypes of Pondicherry are the earliest dated extant photographs of India.

31) Pâris. (1844). 'Personal journal of the de Lagrené Mission', manuscript, Musée National de la Marine, 341-42

to carry away the irrefutable evidence of these journeys". Itier thus planned to make the images the visual support for the narrative that he intended to publish. In a hurry, Itier exposed the plates and managed to reach the ship while processing them on the rowing boat. The sequence of events is one of the longest entries concerning daguerreotype in the journal. It is followed by a long section of information concerning the country's culture, economy and geography gathered from conversations held with Isaupolis while traveling back to Singapore. The chapter on Vietnam then closes with detailed considerations on a possible French military intervention for which "a few regiments of infantry would suffice to complete the conquest". Most significantly, it is the pictorially less interesting view of the fort that was interpreted as a lithograph to support his observations on the poor state of the Vietnamese defense system and to substantiate his recommendation for a French intervention in Vietnam. Such a form of printed association of a photo-based image and text used in combination to substantiate commentaries on political events is remarkably early. Furthermore, Lavollée, his secretary, used the image again in 1854 to illustrate an article in the newspaper *L'illustration*³². From eventful shooting, to political topic, to mass distribution, this image follows all of the steps that will later characterize photojournalism. It isn't clear whether this daguerreotype had any impact on the decision taken by Napoleon III's government in 1858, when the French launched a joint military expedition with the Spanish to avenge the execution of two Spanish missionaries. The resulting capture of DaNang, however, is said to mark the start of the French colonial occupation of Vietnam. Five years after the publication of

his in-depth analysis, Itier's prediction for a French presence in Vietnam turned to reality in the exact way that he had envisioned.

This discussion of the wider implications of Itier's body of work will close with an anecdote that took place during the Cantonese stay in 1844 which relates to an earlier mention of the phenomenological difference that makes graphic and photographic recordings two very different phenomena that are too rarely perceived as such. On the 14th November, Itier writes that the previous week, he received a visit from the renowned painter Lam Qua³³, who had heard of this "admirable apparatus that can draw by itself and that so intrigued the

32) Charles Lavollée. (1854). 'Les Voyages en Chine. M. J. Itier – M. de Ferrière Le Vayer, *L'illustration*, 59–60.

33) The Cantonese painter Lam Qua (1801-60) specialized in Western-style portraits and was the first Chinese painter to be exhibited in the West.

painters of Canton"³⁴ The mass production of objects decorated with Chinese scenes was an important source of revenue for the Canton trade. At a time when miniature painters in the West were quickly adopting the daguerreotype to stay in business, local painters had noticed Itier's activity and they were rightfully concerned, intuitively sensing that this meant a radical transformation of their trade. To demonstrate the process, Itier took a portrait of Lam Qua, which he offered to his visitor. One-week later, Lam Qua was back with a similar morocco box that revealed, to Itier's delight, a miniature painting on ivory that faithfully reproduced the daguerreotype. Sadly, none of these two works, which encapsulate the dialogue between techniques and parts of the world that took place in this exchange of gifts, have been recovered. The image is known

to us though through the reproduction of the miniature as an engraving in *L'illustration* (Figure 16) to illustrate an article reviewing the Exposition d'échantillons "et de modèles rapportés de la Chine et de l'Inde. This exhibition held in 1848 gathered objects brought back by the members of the Lagrené Mission and Lam Qua's painting reproducing Itier's daguerreotype was part of it. This image, which first existed as a photographic recording, and then as a pictorial recording before finally reaching us as the printed mass media trace of vanished originals, stands as a summary of the early impact of the photographic evolution/revolution on the world; a summary loaded with such a wealth of symbols relating to cultural and technological history and exchanges that it can be seen of as a fitting illustration of the paradigm shift then taking place across the world.

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34) Itier, *Journal d'un Voyage en Chine*, vol. 2, 74: "cet instrument admirable qui dessine tout seul et dont les peintres de Canton sont fort préoccupés."

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