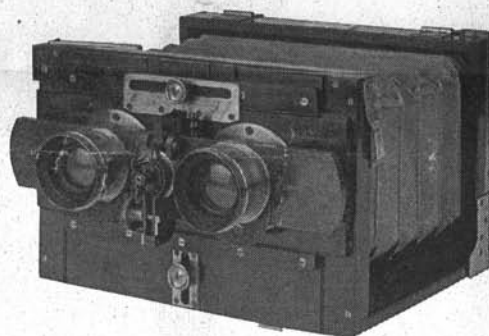


## CULTURE PHOTOGRAPHY FILM BOOKS



An exhibition at the Museum of Macao is showcasing early photographs of Macao, Hong Kong and mainland China. At left, an 1890 image of the Governor's Palace in Macao by Robert Crisp Hurlley. Below from left, photos of government offices and the Bazaar Temple Square in Macao from the early 1900s, and a stereoscopic travel camera.

IMAGES FROM MUSEUM OF MACAO; MUSÉE NICÉPHORE NIÉPCE (BELOW RIGHT)



# Visiting Macao's past in images

MACAO

## Exhibition highlights photographs from 19th and early 20th centuries

BY SONIA KOLESNIKOV-JESSOP

The earliest remaining known photographs of China were taken by Jules Itier, a Frenchman who traveled to China in the 1840s as part of a diplomatic mission sent by King Louis-Philippe.

Itier passed through Macao in 1844 and the subjects of some of his photographs — like the ruins of St. Paul's Cathedral, once the largest Catholic cathedral in Asia — look little changed today. But most of his photographs tell the story of a very different Macao, the one that existed before land reclamation and rapid urbanization.

His work is a highlight of an exhibit called "A Journey through Light and Shadow — The Invention of Photography and the Earliest Photographs of Macao, China," which will run until Aug. 23 at the Museum of Macao.

Along with 180 photos of Macao, Hong

Kong and mainland China taken between 1844 and the early part of the 20th century, the exhibit displays photographic antiques that were used in the production of some of these early photos.

The various collections are on loan from the Musée Nicéphore Niépce in Chalon-sur-Saône, France, and 12 other museums, cultural institutions and private collectors in France, Britain, the United States and Macao.

In the first part of the exhibition, some of the world's earliest cameras and accessories chronicle the history of photography from the 1830s through the early 1900s, when photography evolved from the use of bulky cameras requiring long exposure times to more portable cameras and the photography of moving objects.

"We felt it was important to retrace the history of photography, because the first photos of Macao were daguerreotype," said Cécile Leon, a curator of the exhibition.

Though the earliest remaining known photographs of China are those taken by Itier, cameras had already reached China by 1842, and possibly even earlier, said Régine Thiriez, an independent researcher in early Chinese photography

based in France.

"Some of these early cameras made it in the luggage of British officers fighting in the First Opium War (1839-1842), which opened up some of the country's ports to international trade," she explained in an e-mail. "But the photos taken back then were not for military purposes." Photography was a curiosity, a hobby, and China was just opening up and was still quite unknown in the West, she added.

During the second half of the 19th century, photography in China developed along with an increased Western presence but remained mostly confined to the treaty ports. As the Macao exhibition underlines, few early photographs showed people in natural settings. Ms. Thiriez said this was partly because Chinese crowds were inquisitive and would have disturbed the long shooting process.

"In any case, people had to remain still and 'candid' street scenes only started in the early 1880s, when the faster dry-plate process made its way to China," she added.

Itier's photographs on display focus on the facade of the A-Ma Temple, still standing and little changed today; views of Taipa harbor filled with small

Chinese junks; and the then magnificent Praia Grande bay with its promenade of double-story grand colonial houses, which have long disappeared following extensive redevelopment and land reclamation.

Beyond being a record of the landscape and architecture of a bygone age, the old photographs also hint at the economic developments of Macao.

In 1870, John Thomson, a pioneering Scottish photographer, took numerous pictures of the Portuguese enclave, including interesting street scenes that present a rather sleepy and gentle Macao with locals going about their business. But by the turn of the century, photos show a port city bustling with activity.

Some of the most fascinating images on display are of Hong Kong, with a barely recognizable Pedder Street and its distinctive clock tower or Victoria Peak without skyscrapers. Another photo shows a camel caravan right outside Beijing's old city walls, the start of the Silk Road.

ONLINE: MACAO'S HISTORY

☑ A slide show of photos and cameras from the exhibition at the Museum of Macao. [global.nytimes.com/arts](http://global.nytimes.com/arts)