Towards a History of the Asian Photographer at Home and Abroad: Case Studies of Southeast Asian Pioneers Francis Chit, Kassian Céphas and Yu Chong

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Southeast Asia, a vast peninsula and insula chain of lands, peoples and cultures stretching from Myanmar (Burma) to the Philippines and on to New Guinea in the Melanesian west Pacific, is an elusive entity for historical photography surveys. English-language “world histories” of photography published in Euro-America between the 1930s and 1980s largely treat the region as a minor subset of the 19th-century global diaspora of Western technology. Their greater focus has been on colonial India, Hong Kong and the treaty ports of China and Japan. These older studies also favour careers of expatriate Euro-American photographers in Asia. Over the last two decades, foreign and regional postcolonial-era scholars have paid more attention to how photography was received in the region as a modern medium, and what role locals, including Asian-born as well as foreign photographers, have played in the medium’s acclimatisation in Southeast Asia.¹

Most 19th-century pioneer practitioners in Southeast Asia were European but from the mid-century onwards, immigrant overseas Chinese prevailed. From around 1900, Chinese studios were numerically dominant in British Singapore (which had a majority population of Chinese), Java and French colonial Indochina (with their substantial Chinatowns). A few Thai photographers were at work in Bangkok by the early 1860s, but Vietnamese, Malay, Burmese, Indonesian and Filipino-run studios were atypical in these lands before the mid-20th century. Japanese studios appeared in small numbers throughout Southeast Asia.²

¹ British curator John Falconer has notably contributed to studies on early photography in Burma, Singapore, Malaya and Brunei and Southeast Asia in general. The Netherlands has a strong history of bilingual publication since the 1980s on early photography in the former colonial Dutch East Indies, and the Alkazi Foundation in New Delhi has published since the 1990s on the British Raj photographers and 19th-century Indian photographers. The Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris, has published a number of bilingual texts on photography in Indochina since the late 1980s. American scholarship covering Southeast Asia has been significant in the last decade or so, see, James L. Hevia et al., Photographies East: The Camera and its Histories in East and Southeast Asia, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). The online peer-reviewed journal Trans Asia Photography Review, http://tapreview.org/ by Hampshire College in collaboration with the Michigan Publishing, a division of the University of Michigan Library, provides an accessible and current path to texts and issues in Southeast Asian photography. The number of regional photohistorians in Southeast Asia remains small.

² Indian- or Muslim-named studios were
The extent and impact of the diaspora of Chinese and Japanese photographers across mid-19th to 20th-century Southeast Asia and the Pacific has yet to be studied. Japanese studios date chiefly from the early to mid-20th century.

Modern texts are inconsistent as to whether his name should be reproduced in accented form. This essay retains the accent, in part because it derives from Képhas, the Greek transliterated form, which was itself a translation of the old Syrian/Aramaic word for “rock” or “stone.” This was the name given by Jesus to the apostle Simon Peter, signifying his role as the rock of the church (John 1:42). Additionally, Céphas consistently used the accent in his professional signature, his images in the negative, his studio imprint (sometimes barely visible or left off in the capitalised form) and in signing his personal letters. See Sylvie Aubenas et al., Des photographes en Indochine, Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchine, Cambodge et Laos au 19e siècle [Photographers in Indochina—Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina, Cambodia and Laos in the 19th century] (Paris: ed. Réunion des musées nationaux, Éditions Marval, musée Guimet, 2001), 241.

Background

Soon after their public debut in Euro-America in the 1840s and 1850s, daguerreotype and glass plate photography on paper processes appeared in the busiest port cities of Southeast Asia. A number of Euro-American commercial daguerreotypists circulated between China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Java and Manila, but none seem to have reached the mainland Straits Settlements, Bangkok, Saigon or Rangoon. A few residents across Southeast Asia imported cameras and succeeded in teaching themselves.

In these formative decades, the new camera professionals from abroad had to move from port to port. The tiny communities of affluent foreign and elite indigenous and immigrant Chinese customers in Southeast Asian ports buying one-off daguerreotype plates, were insufficient to sustain permanent studios. Newspaper reports indicate that thousands of daguerreotypes were made but less than 200 examples survive. However, some lost originals can be traced as they were used as the basis for engraved illustrations in Euro-American publications in the late 1850s and 1860s.

On the whole it might seem from the surviving artefacts that the new imaging medium at this first stage of its evolution had limited quantifiable impact in Southeast Asia. The potential, however, was obvious to the locals.
Royal courts in Thailand and Java for example, were among the first patrons to seek out photographers and to have courtiers trained in the new art (fig. 5.1).

Resident studios only developed in Asia in the 1860s with the arrival of the British wet plate process on glass negatives of 1851 that provided reproducible and thus easily marketable photographs on sensitised albumen-coated paper. The wet plate was easier and cheaper than the daguerreotype, and its replication and portability facilitated more entries into the profession, as well as a wider range of products and thus customers. The multiple-print process sustained the establishment of permanent studios offering portraits and views.

Affluent locals and travellers could afford to buy likenesses as well as prints of scenic views and “native types,” available singly or packaged in elaborate travel albums. One of the most widely adopted new formats in the 1860s was the miniature carte de visite (calling card-sized) portrait which was within reach of even those of modest means. A flood of novelties accompanied the new process, including lockets, embossed leather family carte de visite and travel albums, and vivid three-dimensional stereographs. Stationers and pharmacies in large ports became emporiums of imported and local photographic goods, and the mass production of prints also found a ready market in illustrated travel magazines appearing from the 1860s onwards in Euro-America. Photography became collectible.

The photographic trade in Southeast Asia was not limited to the exports to colonial heartlands and metropolises abroad; there was also a growing domestic market. European plantation, mining and mercantile development brought investors, settlers, administrative staff and labourers. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 trebled trade and brought in a constant stream of travellers, explorers and tourists, as well as set Southeast Asian countries on a path of rapid growth in terms of the number of residents able to afford or make use of photography. Studio numbers increased steadily over the next decades, particularly from the 1880s to the 1890s when mass-produced commercial dry plate processes and other quality refinements made photography better, easier, cheaper and more versatile for both commercial and amateur photographers. The picturing of Asia could begin.
From the mid-1860s, Chinese-operated painter-photographer studios sprouted up across Asia Pacific port cities producing oriental and Western-style views and portraits for foreign as well as domestic clients. As well as photographs, these studios specialised in paintings from or over photographs that were finished as miniatures or enlargements on card, canvas, paper and ivory. Their technical flexibility allowed for the production of quality work for the more affluent, and cheaper products for the bulk of clients. The dominance of the Chinese studios over other ethnic operators, and their successful competition with foreign operators, would seem to arise from the adoption of the century-old model of Chinese painting studios across Asia.

The first to publicly comment on the phenomenal growth of Chinese photographic studios was Scottish professional John Thomson (1837–1921), who made extensive photographic sorties in East and Southeast Asia between 1862 and 1872. When operating one of the first studios in Singapore in 1862 Thomson found he had to train “two Madras men […] to act as my printers and assistants, the Chinese having, at that time, refused to lend themselves to such devilry as taking likenesses of objects without the touch of human hands.” Based in Hong Kong a decade later, Thomson found that the Chinese studios were well established:

It may not be generally known that the Chinese in Hong-Kong and other parts of China have “taken kindly” to photography. In Queen’s-road, the principal street of Victoria, there are a score of Chinese photographers, who do better work than is produced by the herd of obscure dabblers who cast discredit on the art in this country [Britain].

Thomson did not speculate on the causes of the rise of Chinese studios. For him, it was technical aptitude: “There is something about the mystery of photographic chemistry, the nicety of manipulation implied in its various processes which suits the Chinese mind.” However he was not impressed by the Chinese studios in Hong Kong churning out painted portraits based on photographs, worked up within a day or so for travellers.
Thomson included a plate showing a typical Hong Kong painter-photographer at work in the first of his four-volume series featuring photographs of China and the Chinese (fig. 5.2). The image was not of an actual studio but staged by Thomson in Hong Kong for one of his stereoscopic views. His text implies that the model for this type of studio-factory was that of the Cantonese painter Lam Qua (1801–1860), celebrated for his skill in making highly detailed Western-style portraits in oil, some of which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. Thomson knew of Lam Qua only by reputation (the artist had died in 1860), but he could have seen Lam Qua’s paintings in Hong Kong or Canton.

Lam Qua has the distinction of being the first Chinese artist to be photographed. In Canton in 1842, he sought a demonstration of “the admirable apparatus that can draw by itself” from visiting French customs inspector and amateur daguerreotypist, Jules Itier (1802–1877), one of the heads of the Franco-Chinese trade treaty signed at Whampoa in 1842. Itier made a portrait of Lam Qua which he presented to the painter in a green leather case. A week later Lam Qua returned with a gift for Itier: a miniature copy painted on ivory, set in a matching case. Both originals are lost but the image of their exchange as equals is vivid. Lam Qua’s gift was lent by Itier to an exhibition in Paris on his return, and an engraving of it appeared in L’Illustration: Journal universel (fig. 5.3).

Just as Thomson singled out Lam Qua for praise in distinction from his imitators, he unre-serveedly praised the quality of Chinese photographer Afong (c. 1839–1890) whose studio was in the same street as his own in Hong Kong. Thomson’s appreciation of the best Chinese painter and photographer is notable; he recognised that they, like himself, were far above the general run of artisans.

Few Chinese studio photographers active in Southeast Asia had the public profile of Afong or the Pun Lun studio of Cantonese brothers Wan Chikhing and Wan Leong-hoi, established in Hong Kong from the 1860s to circa 1900 and unusual in also maintaining branches in Foochow, Singapore and Saigon. Images by the Pun Lun studio are among the earliest surviving records of Saigon. The earliest-known professional photographer in Vietnam is Đặng Huy Trừ (1825–1874), a
former mandarin in the Nguyên Dynasty. He learnt photography in Hong Kong in 1865 and opened the first studio in Hanoi in 1869 with a camera bought from Guandong, China. The literal meaning of the name of his studio Cảm Hiệu Đường is “the road to filial piety,” suggesting his early adoption of memorial portraiture for Chinese customers.\[17\]

Among the earliest local studios in Hanoi in the 1890s were those of Du Chượng, Đông Chượng and Mỹ Chượng—whether these are Chinese- or Vietnamese-operated is not clear. Their clients were the French colonial community and travellers, as well as immigrant Chinese wanting portraits to send home. Vietnamese Nguyên Văn Xuân (1884–1946), the most notable indigenous photographer in Indochina, began work in Hanoi in 1890 as a pupil of Du Chượng before opening his own studio in 1892 under the name Khánh Ký. He relocated to Saigon in 1907, forming large and successful studios and branches on a par with that of the Armenian Onnes Kurkdjian (1851–1903) in Surabaya.\[18\] Khánh Ký also bucked trends by immigrating to the West; he had a studio in Paris in the early 20th century.

One successful and sophisticated Chinese painter-photographer-run studio in Vietnam was that of Yu Chong who operated in Hanoi from circa 1889 to 1915.\[19\] His studio was atop a shophouse in the old quarter where many Han Chinese businesses were located. Yu Chong produced the usual range of European-style portraiture but promoted his specialty of portraits on ivory, which gave a luminous softness to the portraits especially suitable for women’s complexions (figs. 5.4 and 5.5). The shift of the Indochinese colonial capital to Hanoi in 1902 would have been a boon for Yu Chong who also worked for François-Henri Schneider, the energetic businessman, printer, photographer and publisher of the first postcards in Indochina.\[20\] Yu Chong appears to have been successful but had little international presence comparable with the name recognition for Chit and Céphas in publications, travel accounts and picture magazines. It appears his studio produced mostly portraits rather than having a range of views and souvenir images of local life, by which photographers in Asia became known in the West. His work may also have been uncredited in Schneider’s various publications. The few surviving examples of Yu Chong’s hand-coloured work attest to his skills.\[21\]
Majestic Pioneers in the Royal Courts: Francis Chit and Kassian Céphas

The two most prominent first-generation indigenous professionals in 19th-century Southeast Asia were from Thailand (then known as the independent Kingdom of Siam) and Indonesia (then the colonial Dutch East Indies). Francis Chit (1830–1891) was court photographer to Kings Mongkut (Rama IV, r. 1851–1868) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V, r. 1868–1910) in Bangkok from circa 1861 to 1891 and Kassian Céphas (1845–1912), royal photographer to the Yogyakarta Sultanate in Java from 1875 to circa 1908.

Chit and Céphas are distinctive for their identifiable oeuvres and regional profiles from the 1870s to early 1900s. Their Western education and English-language skills as Catholic and Protestant Christian respectively, favoured their entrée into the business of operating commercial studios for foreign and local clients. No other Southeast Asian photographers held equivalent royal rank in the 19th or early 20th centuries. The national roles of Chit and Céphas are akin to that of their contemporary Raja Deen Dayal (1844–1905) in India, although the latter’s enterprise was on a greater scale and of higher international profile. Both Chit and Céphas are celebrated today as founders of the photographic profession in their modern nations.

In Southeast Asia, encouragement of indigenous photographers was pursued most actively in the royal court of Thailand. Daguerreotype activity was introduced to Bangkok in 1845 when Monsignor Jean-Baptiste Pallegroix (1805–1862), Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Siam for the French Société des Missions Etrangères, asked Father Jean Baptiste François Louis Larnaudie (1819–1899) to bring a daguerreotype apparatus with him from Paris. Pallegroix was a naturalist with interest in the latest scientific advances, a linguist and scholar. He shared scientific interests and a friendship with the young Prince Chau Fa, an heir to the throne then serving as a Buddhist priest, to whom he taught Latin. The prince became Rama IV, King Mongkut in 1851. Father Larnaudie was an expert in chemistry, watchmaking and electromagnetic devices, and instructed several young Thai men in the operation of the daguerreotype camera. The first was Homot (Mot Amatyakun) (1821–1896), a talented metalworker who became the first director of the Royal Mint in 1860, earning him the title of Luang Wisutyothamat. He was also the first to work in the wet plate process and is regarded as the first Thai photographer (fig. 5.6).
The French clerics’ interest in importing the new photographic process was in line with their role as purveyors of Western science and technology, including printing, which was eagerly sought after by the Chakri kings and their courtiers. Pallegroix and Larnaudie succeeded in making daguerreotype portraits from 1845 until the late 1850s. While reigning monarch Phra Nangklao (Rama III, r. 1824–1851) refused to be photographed, his other ministers and royal princes were keen. Prince Chau Fa (who would become Rama IV, King Mongkut) was interested in Western science and technology, printing and photography, but Pallegroix was unwilling to part with his apparatus, and Chau Fa unsuccessfully sought the help of Reverend Jesse Caswell in 1845 to secure him an apparatus from America.

This flurry of imaging was accelerated by King Mongkut after his accession in 1851, when he commissioned royal portraits to be used as diplomatic gifts and granted sittings to visiting foreign photographers. This action allowed Mongkut to establish an appropriate visual equality with Western monarchs. His brother Vice-King Pinklao and several courtiers were also supporters of modern technologies including photography. The diplomatic exchanging of portraits was impelled by the British Bowring Treaty of 1855 that allowed free trade by foreigners in Bangkok, and the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation of 1856 that opened the ports of five Japanese cities to trade.

King Mongkut received and reciprocated gifts of daguerreotype portraits from Pope Pius IX, French Emperor Napoleon III, Queen Victoria and the American President James Buchanan. He finally received his own daguerreotype apparatus from Queen Victoria and possibly a stereographic apparatus from Napoleon III in 1855. When first received, the cameras from Queen Victoria could not be operated by the King’s court photographers. Their instruction waited until 1861 and the arrival of Swiss professional photographer Pierre Rossier (1829–c. 1899). Rossier was making stereograph images in Asia for the London opticians and stereograph publishers Negretti and Zambra (fig. 5.7), and while in Bangkok undertook a commission from the French zoologist Firmin Bocourt.

Daguerreotype portraits of Mongkut, his Queen and children sent to Queen Victoria and the American President in 1856 survive in Windsor Castle and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, variously attributed to Pallegroix, Larnaudie or Wisutyothamat, and a number of wet plate albumen prints sent to Emperor Napoleon III in France and to Pope.
Pius IX in 1861 are in the Vatican and Missions Etrangères de Paris collections. The latter portraits on paper can now be attributed to Luang Wisutyothamat as letters to Queen Victoria from King Mongkut state they were made by “our native photographers.”

It is likely that Francis Chit (fig. 5.8) learnt wet plate photography from both Luang Wisu-tyothamat and Rossier around this time. Chit Chitrakani was born in 1830 in the Kudi Chin west bank district of Bangkok, near the Santa Cruz Catholic Church and adjacent to the Foreigners’ Quarter. He took the name Francis upon baptism and as part of his professional name. Kudi Chin was home to descendants of Portuguese and Catholics from the former royal capital of Ayutthaya, north of Bangkok, and Christian immigrants from Laos and Cambodian immigrants. It is misleadingly named after an old Chinese temple but is not the Chinese Quarter now known as Yaowarat, located on the east bank. Yaowarat dates back to the foundation of the new Krungthep Maha Nakhon (Bangkok) capital in 1782. Immigrants from Southern China formed a significant community in the old capital at Ayutthaya and by Chit’s era, were almost equal in numbers in Bangkok to the Thai. The Chinese were more integrated than in other Asian port cities, and like the Portuguese-Asian Christians, served the palace and comprised a majority of the merchant class.

Confirmation is sought as to the identity of Chit’s father being Teng, a Chinese Christian soldier. This theory was proposed in December 2011 in an article by Angela Camila Castelo-Branco, “O Império Invisível da fotografia Portuguesa na Tailândia” [The invisible empire of Portuguese photography in Thai-

By 1863, Chit was clearly skilled enough to set up a commercial studio under his own name in a raft-house on the canal in front of his Kudi Chin residence. Foreigners, traders and visitors had arrived in great numbers as a consequence of the 1855 Bowring Treaty, and this made the English-speaking Chit’s business viable. His advertisements in the local English-language newspapers were confident and expertly expressed, and promised all the latest wet plate photographic specialities.

Chit served everyday clients with portrait services and also sold cartes de visites of Thai royalty. The 1864 six-part panorama of Bang-kok with which Chit announced his public career, is comparable with the best productions of the era. In 1866 King Mongkut honoured him with the title “Khoon Soondr Sadis Lacks” (Officer for Fine Likeness Image). Chit promptly added the title and his role as “Photographer to his Majesty the King of Siam” to the back of his cartes de visites and advertisements.

Chit continued the role of royal photographer under Mongkut’s heir King Chulalong-korn after his accession in 1868, and covered the king’s second coronation in 1873 (fig. 5.9) as well as various official events in the life of Crown Prince Vajirunhis in the 1890s (fig. 5.10). Chit accompanied King Chulalongkorn on an inland expedition to observe the Transit of Venus in 1874 and possibly on royal visits to Burma, India, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies. His role as royal photographer was not, however, exclusive. In 1874 Mongkut made German Henry Schüren (active c. 1870–1880)
an honoured official photographer, a role soon after assumed by the firm of German G.R. Lambert from Singapore. By 1880, Chit had done well enough to move from his canal boat to a shophouse in Bangkok’s Charoen Krung (New Road), a mall precinct for foreign traders built by Mongkut in the 1860s. That same year, King Chulalongkorn bestowed upon Chit the rank of Luang Akani Naruemitr. “Akani” translates as fire and the title likely relates to Chit’s role in the illuminations managed by the Gas Division for celebrations at the palace.

Chit’s fellow practitioners and photographic enthusiasts in his lifetime included his own sons and both the Chakri Dynasty kings Rama IV and VI, their families, entourage and descendants down to the present day—a level of royal participation in the new medium arguably unmatched by any royal photographers. Chit & Sons was awarded a Bronze Medal at the 1893 World’s Colombian Exhibition by which time his sons were managing the business following their father’s death in 1891.

Unlike their contemporaries such as G.R. Lambert & Co. in Singapore and Woodbury & Page in the Dutch East Indies, Chit & Sons did not seek to have an inventory of scenic views and images from outside the Bangkok region. Chit’s career over his nearly three decades of work has been covered in a number of Thai publications, but the full international appreciation of his substantial career awaits a major English-language monograph.31

Kassian Céphas

Several itinerant daguerreotypists visited Java in the 1850s, of whom the most significant was Swedish adventurer Cesar Düben (1819–1888). Düben’s travel memoir, published in Stockholm in 1886, included a number of lithographic plates made after his Asian daguerreotypes. Within his memoir, Düben related how after photographing the family of Sultan Hamengkubuwono VI (r. 1855–1877) at Kraton Yogyakarta in 1857, the sultan asked Düben to instruct a court member in the photographic process. The sultanate was effectively under Dutch control and managing his status as a native ruler was an ongoing challenge. Like his contemporary King Mongkut in Thailand, Hamengkubuwono saw the potential of using the new art to achieve visual parity with Western rulers. Düben found the courtier lacked aptitude but presented his camera to the sultan as a parting gift.
There is no record of the fate or usage of Düben’s apparatus. Hamengkubuwono VI had to wait six more years to secure the services of an official court photographer from Wilhelm Camerik (1830–1897), a Dutch East Indies military sergeant major and a drawing master-turned-photographer based in Semarang on the north coast of Java. In 1864 Camerik marketed a set of cartes de visite of the principal “native grandees” of Surakarta, Yogyakarta and Magelang. This must have had official blessing from the sultan as Camerik continued as official photographer for the next few years.

Possibly with encouragement from the sultan, the young Céphas, then serving in a minor administrative position at the Kraton, learnt photography from Camerik around 1867. He was Javanese but in 1860 had taken “Céphas,” the Aramaic name for “rock” given by Jesus to the apostle Simon Peter, when he was baptised into a small Christian church run by the Dutch Protestant lay teacher Mrs Christina Phillips-Stevens in Purworejo, southern Central Java.

After Camerik’s departure, Céphas set up his own studio in 1871 in his home in Yogyakarta, where he lived in a mixed quarter of artisans and colonial administrators. A few years later the Céphas studio card imprints proudly listed his role as “Photographist to the Sultan.” As well as royal commissions, Céphas collaborated in the 1880s and 1890s with the sultan’s Dutch physician Isaac Groneman (1832–1914), an amateur archaeologist and ethnographer. Their projects included photographing the ancient Hindu temple complexes of Borobudur and Prambanan in Central Java, as well as a complete performance of classical Javanese dance dramas at Kraton Yogyakarta in 1884.

In later life, when aided by his son Semuel, Céphas noticeably placed himself in some three dozen images of Javanese antiquities and sites of cultural significance that were sold by the Céphas studio. These include a self-portrait with him reverently touching the base dome encasing the Buddha sculptures on the top tier of the Borobudur complex (fig. 5.11).

That Céphas was intentionally placing himself in images is supported by a quite extraordinary series of examples that have no need of a figure for scale. In one charming image, shaded by an umbrella with his trousers rolled up, Céphas smiles towards the camera whilst paddling in the surf on the west coast (fig. 5.12). For his Javanese and more literate Dutch colonial viewers, the significance of the beach is apparent. This is the coast where the
Yogyakarta sultans of the Mataram dynasty re-enact a marriage ceremony with the Queen of the Southern Ocean, from whom their dynasty is legitimised.\textsuperscript{34}

These images seem to mimic the informality of the new era of amateur snapshots in the 1890s. But the kinds of expensive glass plates used by Céphas, even after the introduction of the convenient dry plate in the 1880s, do not favour spontaneity. Plates are not wasted. Exposures require careful planning, timing and arrangement. The practice of placing figures to denote scale and distance at different planes within a photograph was common in 19\textsuperscript{th}-century topographical views. The consistency of Céphas’ presence in his late images, however, is unprecedented in the work of any comparable photographer at the time in Asia. John Thomson does not appear repeatedly in his China work, nor does Isidore van Kinsbergen, the Dutch commercial photographer in Jakarta who was employed to make archaeological records for the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in the 1860s and early 1870s. Céphas intended the images to say something by his presence: they are clearly titled, signed, dated and marketed as prints, and exist in a number of collections.

The 1890s were peak years wherein Céphas’ heritage work for Groneman gained official recognition and reward. He was able to secure Dutch citizenship in 1891 for himself and his sons, which was symbolically significant but also had practical and legal benefits for the family. Céphas joined the Masons in 1892, the same year he was made an extraordinary member of the Batavian Society of the Arts and Sciences. In 1896 he was also made an honorary member of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies in Leiden, and in 1902 received an Honorary Gold Medal of the Royal Dutch Order of Orange-Nassau from the Dutch Crown in recognition of his work on Javanese cultural heritage. Only Deen Dayal in British India received a comparable level of official recognition. The honours shown to Céphas reflected the new Ethical Culture policy aimed at developing a class of Indonesian leaders loyal to the Crown. An examination of his work from this period, evinced by his self-portrait series, suggests he sought a new sense of self as a Christian and as a Javanese and possibly an incipient nationalist spirit.

The Céphas studio became known around 1900 for its charming series of Javanese beauties circulated as postcards. These have a relaxed charm as compared with the blank stares and soft-porn aesthetic of other publishers.\textsuperscript{35}

Having a Javanese photographer must surely have affected the local models’ degree of relaxation in front of the camera and influenced the way they were posed (fig. 5.13). One of Céphas’ images of a dancer was chosen by the founders of proto-nationalist magazine \textit{Bintang Hindia} in 1905 as a promotional image.

Céphas retired from the studio in 1905, and his son Samuel managed the studio until his own accidental death in 1918. Céphas’ enigmatic work, intellectual background and recognition received as an artist remain to be studied in greater depth.

Céphas, like Chit, joins a handful of indigenous Southeast Asian photographic artists for whom we have personal images and basic biographies. They are the exceptions that highlight the general absence of indigenous studios in Southeast Asia outside of the as yet still poorly known history of the region’s immigrant and locally born Chinese and mixed-race photographers.

Both Chit and Céphas have significant positions as the vanguard of transitional figures in the “worlding” of the Asian Modern as characterised by Australian art historian John Clark.\textsuperscript{36} The current National Gallery Singapore research programme and young scholars of today will assuredly round out the picture of the photographic heritage of Southeast Asia and its photographers over the coming decades.
5.1 Attributed to Father F.-L. Larnaudie (also attributed to Bishop Pallegroix)  
*King Mongkut and Queen Debsirindra*  
1855  
Daguerreotype, colour dyes  
10 x 7.5 cm  
Harris Treaty Gift, Photographic History Collection, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington

5.2 *A Hong-Kong Artist* (a painter-photographer)  
5.3 Portrait of Chinese painter Lam Qua
An engraving based on Lam Qua’s miniature painting after Jules Itier’s daguerreotype of Lam Qua made in Canton in 1845; as published in *L’Illustration: Journal universel* 7, no. 182 (22 August 1846): 393.
Image courtesy of HathiTrust and University of California Libraries

5.4 Yu Chong (also known as Yi Tcheung and variants) (studio active c. 1889–1915, Hanoi, Vietnam)
*Portrait of a European Woman*
c. 1900
Oil on ivory plate
12.7 x 8.5 cm
Private collection, Singapore
5.5  Yu Chong (studio active c. 1889–1915, Hanoi, Vietnam)
Logo of the Yu Chong Studio, Hanoi, on cabinet print (verso)
c. 1900
16.7 x 10.7 cm
Private collection, Singapore

5.6  Attributed to Luang Wisutyothamat
(Mot Amatyakun, Thailand)
Portrait of King Mongkut and Queen Debsirindra
1861
Albumen print
20 x 15 cm
Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee

5.7  Pierre Rossier
(No. 3) Siamese Prince, Luhang Wonga
1861
Stereograph on glass
13 x 17.4 cm
Gift of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee
Collection of National Gallery of Australia

5.8  Francis Chit
Self-Portrait with Multi-Lens Carte de Visite Camera
c. 1863
Albumen silver photograph
Collection of National Archives of Thailand
Image courtesy of Anake Nawigamune,
as published in Anake Nawigamune,
Early Photography in Thailand (Bangkok: Sang Dad
Towards a History of the Asian Photographer at Home and Abroad
5.9  Francis Chit
*His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, on his Second Coronation, October 1873*
1873
Albumen silver photograph
27 x 21.5 cm
Collection of National Gallery of Australia

5.10  Francis Chit
*Prince Vajirunhis was Escort to the Grand Palace for his Investiture as Crown Prince, Bangkok, 14 January 1886*
1886
Albumen silver photograph
21.1 x 27.2 cm
Collection of National Gallery of Australia

5.11  Kassian Céphas, attributed to Semuel Céphas
*Borobudur*
Self-portrait of Kassian Céphas
c. 1890
Albumen silver photograph
16.7 x 21.8 cm
Collection of National Gallery of Australia
5.12 A  Kassian Céphas, attributed to Semuel Céphas
Kassian Céphas in the Sea in Front of the Gatehouse at Mantjiringan, Parangtritis
1897
Gelatin silver photograph
16.8 x 22 cm
Collection of National Gallery of Australia

5.12 B  Detail of Kassian Céphas

5.13  Kassian Céphas
Young Javanese Woman, Probably in Jakarta
c. 1885
Albumen silver photograph
13.7 x 9.8 cm
Collection of National Gallery of Australia
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