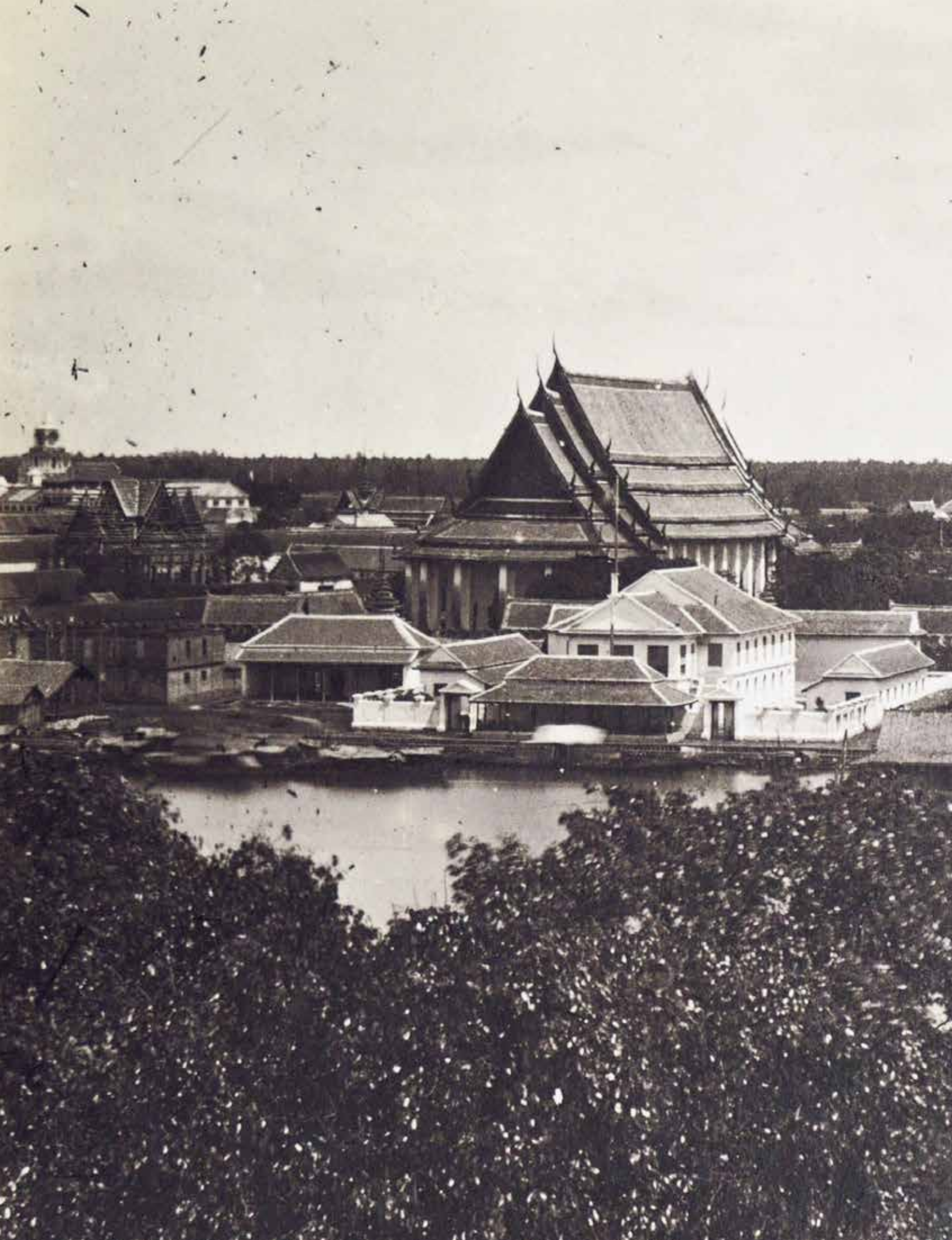




# August Sachtler and John Thomson Photographing Siam, 1865–1866

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## ABSTRACTS

The Prussian August Sachtler (ca. 1839–1873) and the Scottish John Thomson (1837–1921) were both pioneering photographers who visited Bangkok during the Fourth Reign (1851–1868). Both were in partnership with a brother at Singapore, both traveled through Siam simultaneously, though apparently not together. While the latter became one of the most notable photographers of the East, the former almost fell into oblivion. Only recently have details surfaced which shed light on the career of both artists. This essay considers hitherto unpublished and little-known documents about the activity of both these photographers in the vicinity of Bangkok and Phetchaburi province in 1865 and 1866.

ออกุสต์ แซคท์เลอร์ ชาวปรัสเซีย (ประมาณพ.ศ. 2382–2416) และจอห์น ทอมสัน ชาวสกอต (พ.ศ. 2380–2416) เป็นช่างภาพรุ่นบุกเบิกที่มาเยือนกรุงเทพในช่วงรัชกาลที่ 4 (พ.ศ. 2394–2411) แซคท์เลอร์ร่วมหุ้นกับน้องชาย ส่วนทอมสันร่วมหุ้นกับพี่ชาย ทั้งสองคนต่างก็มีห้องภาพที่สิงคโปร์ และทั้งคู่เดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวสยามในเวลาเดียวกัน แต่ไม่มีหลักฐานว่าเคยร่วมทางไปด้วยกัน ขณะที่ทอมสันกลายเป็นช่างภาพผู้ถูกกล่าวถึงมากที่สุดคนหนึ่งในโลก ตะวันออก แซคท์เลอร์กลับแทบไม่ได้รับการกล่าวถึง จนกระทั่งเพิ่งค้นพบข้อมูลที่ทำให้ความกระจ่างเรื่องอาชีพการงานของทั้งสอง บทความนี้พิจารณาหลักฐานที่ยังไม่เคยตีพิมพ์และไม่เป็นที่รู้จักมากนักเกี่ยวกับกิจกรรมของช่างภาพทั้งสองที่เกิดขึ้นในละแวกใกล้เคียงกรุงเทพมหานคร และเพชรบุรีใน พ.ศ. 2408 และ 2409

The Prussian August Sachtler (ca. 1839–1873) and the Scottish John Thomson (1837–1921) were both pioneering photographers who visited Bangkok during the Fourth Reign (1851–1868). Both were in partnership with a brother at Singapore, both traveled through Siam simultaneously, though apparently not together. While the latter became one of the most notable photographers of the East, the former almost fell into oblivion. Only recently have details surfaced which shed light on the career of both artists. This essay considers hitherto unpublished and little-known documents about the activity of both these photographers in the vicinity of Bangkok and Phetchaburi province in 1865 and 1866.

## Brief Biographies of the Two Photographers

### *August Sachtler (ca. 1839–1873)*

August Sachtler<sup>1</sup> started his career as mechanic in the company of the “Telegraphen-Bau-Anstalt von Siemens & Halske in Berlin”, Markgrafenstraße 94, and was also a member of the Prussian Eulenburg expedition which sailed to various Asian ports between 1860 and 1862: Singapore, Tokyo, Nagasaki, Shanghai, Nanking, Tianjin, Yantai, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, and Anyer in West Java (Rose 1895). On 18 April 1872 Sachtler claimed that he had started to take photographs when he was about 17 years old.<sup>2</sup> This would explain why he was already taking photographs in Japan in 1860–1861,<sup>3</sup> the official photographer of the Eulenburg expedition, however, was Carl Bismark (1839–1879).<sup>4</sup>

The earliest document of August Sachtler’s activity as commercial photographer is an album kept in the National Library of Singapore as part of the Lee Kip Lin and National Library Board. On the front cover of this album is printed: “VIEWS & TYPES OF SINGAPORE. 1863. SACHTLER & CO. – PHOTOGRAPHERS”. This album contains 40 albumen prints, 20 of which are oval in shape.<sup>5</sup> August Sachtler’s companion (“& Co.”) was Hermann Sachtler, apparently his brother. That the photographic studio of Sachtler & Co. in Singapore started its business in 1863 is also shown by the *Singapore Directory* for 1864, which lists the studio under “Other Trades and Professions – Photographic Artists” located in “High Street (p. 91)”.<sup>6</sup>

Starting in July 1864, August Sachtler (“A. Satchler”) announced that he had “Selections of the choicest Views

of Singapore and its Surroundings always on hand” and that “Photographs [can be] taken at any hour during the day”. Furthermore, we learn that “Messrs. Sachtler & Co. beg to give notice that they have disposed of their Photographic business to Mr. A. SACHTLER by whom the business will in future be carried on”. It is also announced that “Mr. A. SACHTLER in taking to the above business, respectfully solicits a continuance of Patronage from the supporters of the late firm, and begs also to give notice that Mr. S. FEILBERY [*sic*] will sign his name per procuration from this date”.<sup>7</sup> This “Mr. S. FEILBERY” is no other than the Danish photographer Kristen Feilberg (1839–1919), whom we know from the *The Straits Calendar and Directory, for the Year 1865* is listed as photographer in the United Service Hotel in Singapore, while A. Sachtler had his own studio in High Street.<sup>8</sup> However, the same Directory lists both photographers as living in High Street.<sup>9</sup>

In 1865 the situation changed. Only August Sachtler is listed as operating the photographic studio in Singapore’s High Street,<sup>10</sup> while Kristen Feilberg and Hermann Sachtler had moved to Penang where they opened a photographic studio on Beach Street.<sup>11</sup> In that same year, August Sachtler and John Thomson were the only listed commercial photographers in Singapore.

### *John Thomson (1837–1921)*

John Thomson was born in 1837 in Edinburgh, Scotland. From 1851 onward, he was trained to become an optician and scientific instrument maker. In 1862, he decided to join his elder brother William Thomson (born 1835) in Singapore who apparently had reached there in mid-October 1859.<sup>12</sup> William was already active as photographer in Singapore, running a studio together with a certain person named “Sack”<sup>13</sup> on Beach Road, Singapore.<sup>14</sup>

John Thomson left Edinburgh in April 1862. His arrival in Singapore in June of the same year was announced in the local newspaper. A notice published on 23 June 1862 is as follows:

MR. J. THOMPSON [*sic*], begs to intimate that he is now prepared to undertake Photographs of all kinds, including Micro-photographs for Jewellery, Album Portraits, Stereoscopic and large views. Hours for Portraits from seven to eleven and two to four o’clock.<sup>15</sup>

In October of the same year, J. Thomson announced that he “is now prepared to take Micro-Photographs for charms from any ‘Carte de Visite’ Portraits done by him, also to copy likenesses Microscopic Size”.<sup>16</sup> It seems these “Micro Photographs” were a great specialty of John Thomson, especially since a few years later he published two short articles on this subject in *The British Journal of Photography*.<sup>17</sup>

Both William and John—the latter often being mentioned as “James Thomson”<sup>18</sup>—are listed as the only commercial “Photographic Artists” in Singapore for the year 1862, a situation which was soon to change with the arrival of another European competitor in the name of August Sachtler.<sup>19</sup>

## Siam in 1865–1866

As the above statements have shown, by 1865 both August Sachtler and John Thomson were well established photographers in Singapore. When both of them independently decided to pay a visit to Siam in that year they did not travel in virgin soil with regards to photography.

Be that as it may, from advertisements in the *Bangkok Recorder* it is known that Siam had already a well-known commercial local photographer in the name of Francis Chit (ฟรานซิสชิต; 1830–1891). The same notification was published twelve times in the newspaper for the year 1865 alone. August Sachtler probably arrived in Bangkok in early September 1865. An announcement made in the *Bangkok Recorder* on 16 September informs:

MR. A. SAIHTLER, [*sic*] PHOTOGRAPHER. Begs to inform the inhabitants of Bangkok, that he has arrived here upon a visit, and during his stay will be glad to take portraits, landscapes and views of houses etc. of all sizes, to 15 inches [ca. 38 cm]. His *atelier* is at Falks [*sic*] Hotel New Road.<sup>20</sup>

The following issue of the *Bangkok Recorder* adopts the same text of the above advertisement but adds: “[...] He is now ready to take photographs between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. Parties can be waited upon at their residences. Cloudy weather does not interfere with the operations. His *atelier* is at FAEKS [*sic*] HOTEL. NEW ROAD”.<sup>21</sup>

To put things in a nutshell, unlike John Thomson who signed most of his larger photographs taken in Bangkok, August Sachtler never marked or signed any of his photographs. A considerable number of Sachtler’s images



FIGURE 1. Wat Arun by August Sachtler, 27.9 x 23.7 cm (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)

is of a comparatively large size, up to around “15 inches” to quote his 1865 advertisement. In another advertisement published two years later, Sachtler announced that he could produce photographs from the size of a *carte-de-visite* up to 30 x 37 cm, thereby referring to the size of the full glass-plate rather than the size of the print.<sup>22</sup>

### *Wat Arun and Panoramic Views of Bangkok*

One of Sachtler’s larger photographs taken in Bangkok shows a view of the *prang* (ปราสาท: tower-like spire) of Wat Chaeng (วัดแจ้ง; modern Wat Arun = วัดอรุณ) as seen from the land [FIGURE 1]. This print measures 27.9 x 23.7 cm, a wood engraving based on this image was published in 1878 as full-page illustration (Lehnert 1878: II, opposite 704). Although John Thomson’s photographs taken in Siam never exceeded the size of about 24.5 x 19 cm, this image [FIG. 1] was attributed to him (Sakda 2555: 54). The Royal Collection Trust in Windsor, UK, which owns the image published about a decade ago, is more careful in not ascribing it to anybody.<sup>23</sup> However, a reproduction of FIGURE 1 as *carte-de-visite* distributed by the Chinese photographic studio known as Pun-Lun (蘋綸)<sup>24</sup> in Saigon

(modern Ho Chi Minh City) reveals that it is cropped at the top because the copy distributed by Pun-Lun shows a lot more of the sky-area (Bennett 2020: 278) [FIGURE 2]. The back of this carte-de-visite informs that it was distributed from Pun-Lun's branch in Saigon,<sup>25</sup> where August Sachtler had spent some four months in 1866 by making use of the photographic studio of French Émile Gsell (1838–1879).<sup>26</sup> The original, uncropped print would have been considerably larger, thus supporting Sachtler's print size advertised by the latter for his larger-sized images.<sup>27</sup>

August Sachtler is one of three photographers who between 1865 and 1866 took a panoramic view of Bangkok from a vantage point at Wat Arun on the other



FIGURE 2. Wat Arun by August Sachtler through Pun-Lun, photographic carte-de-visite, 8.1 x 5 cm (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)



FIGURE 3. Part 1 of a panoramic view of Bangkok taken from Wat Arun by August Sachtler, approx. 15.1 x 19.9 cm (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)

**Opposite above:** FIGURE 4. Part 2 of a panoramic view of Bangkok taken from Wat Arun by August Sachtler, similar size (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)

side of the river in Thonburi.<sup>28</sup> As with John Thomson, only three views that can be put together to result in a panoramic view have been found so far.<sup>29</sup>

The first, leftmost, northernmost of Sachtler's photographs of this panoramic view [FIGURE 3] shows in its center the area of the Wat Phra Kaeo (วัดพระแก้ว) with the Phra Si Rattana Chedi (พระศรีรัตนเจดีย์) and the top of Prasat Phra Thep Bidon (ปราสาทพระเทพบิดร: Royal Pantheon) under construction (Bautze 2018: 312–313, figs. 5–6). The second photograph from left exists in its oval (Bautze 2018: 311, fig. 3) as well as in its rectangular shape [FIGURE 4]. This image roughly corresponds with Thomson's first image from left or third image from right. Its monuments shown therein were properly identified recently (Paisarn 2015a: 100–101). Sachtler's third view from left in this panorama has not been found yet, but the fourth view is presented here as FIGURE 5. This view corresponds roughly to the third view by Thomson from left, or to the first photograph from right. The latter photograph has Thomson's "signature". The major monuments visible in this view were also recently identified (Paisarn 2015a: 104).

**Opposite below:** FIGURE 5. Part 3 of a panoramic view of Bangkok taken from Wat Arun by August Sachtler, similar size (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)





FIGURE 6. Laotian houses near Phetchaburi by August Sachtler or Francis Chit, 15.1 x 20 cm (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)



FIGURE 7. Laotian woman at Phetchaburi by Pierre Rossier through August Sachtler, 20 x 15.2 cm; inscribed at bottom with “Country Woman, Siam” (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)

### *Lao Countryside in Phetchaburi*

FIGURE 6 shows a photograph of a Lao Song (ลาวโซ่ง) village near the city of Phetchaburi which was also visited by John Thomson.<sup>30</sup> Although its present oval shape would suggest that August Sachtler is the author, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City ascribes this photograph, which is part of the Franklin Blake Album, to John Thomson.<sup>31</sup> However, given the comparatively large amount of photographs taken by Francis Chit in the Metropolitan collection, it cannot be totally ruled out that this view was actually taken by the Siamese photographer instead. Another image from apparently the same village is labeled “Country woman, Siam” [FIGURE 7]. In this case, the oval shape of this print only indicates that it was once used by A. Sachtler; the actual photographer, however, was Swiss Pierre Joseph Rossier (1829–1886) who had taken it probably in early 1862.<sup>32</sup> Sachtler in all likelihood got a print of this photograph from F. Chit, who in turn incorporated many of Rossier’s photographs in his own stock of images for sale.<sup>33</sup>

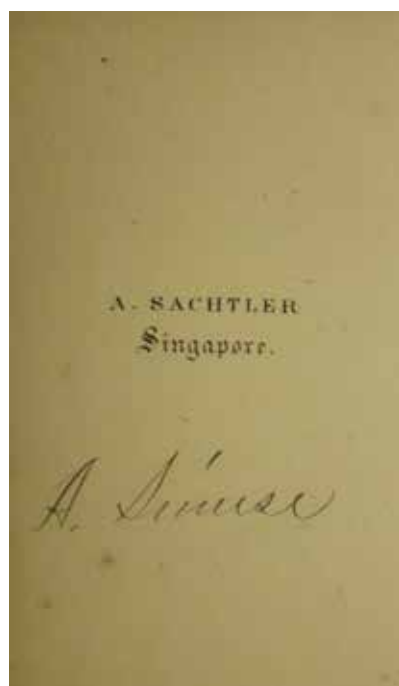
J. Thomson probably had privileged access to members of the Siamese royalty in Bangkok through the office of Daniel Beach Bradley (1804–1873), an American Protestant missionary to Siam. The only possible local support of A. Sachtler, however, was born Prussian Sir Robert Schomburgk (1801–1865) who was the British Consul-General in Siam from 1857. He died in Berlin-Schöneberg just before Sachtler reached Bangkok in September 1865.<sup>34</sup>

### *Siamese Society and Royalty*

Sachtler, like all commercial photographers, produced a large number of photographic cartes-de-visite. FIGURE 8 shows a Siamese “gentleman” seated with his legs wide apart on a chair. His right forearm rests on a small round table, his right hand holds a straight bladed sword below the cross-guard, and his left hand rests on his left knee. The reverse side of this carte-de-visite [FIGURE 9] reveals August Sachtler’s printed studio logo in Singapore, the city name printed in a kind of Gothic or Fraktur font. A penciled label reads: “A. Simese [*sic*]”. The question which arises is: how can we be sure that this is really a photograph by A. Sachtler taken in his studio? Since he was the only photographer then to use large-sized negatives the prints of which exceeded the size of 30 cm, it is appropriate to compare this carte-de-visite photograph with another print showing identical studio props like the round table



FIGURE 8. A Siamese gentleman by August Sachtler, photographic carte-de-visite, approx. 7.8 x 4.9 cm (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)



**Left:** FIGURE 9. Reverse of FIGURE 8 (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)

and the floor covering [FIGURE 10]. This print, titled “Hindu woman”, measures 32.6 x 23.6 cm and was hence also photographed by A. Sachtler.

On 30 September 1865, the *Bangkok Recorder* informed its readers: “The Steamer Chow Phya arrived at the bar at 4¼ o’clock P.M. on Wednesday 27th ult. Passengers Capt. Burn, Mr. Barlow and Mr. Thomson photographer”.<sup>35</sup> The “Steamer Chow Phya” is legendary. It is mentioned by John Thomson (1875: 78) as well as by Anna Harriette Leonowens (1831–1915; see Leonowens 1870: 285) along with its captain, George Orton (1823–1885). The S[team] V[essel] Chao Phya connected Bangkok with Singapore and is mentioned in numerous entries made in the print media from Bangkok,<sup>36</sup> Singapore<sup>37</sup> and London during those years.<sup>38</sup> “Arrived at the bar” means that Thomson, on that day, was not yet in Bangkok but at Paknam (ปากน้ำ), that is the mouth of the Chao Phraya River, as he himself remembered: “I went ashore at Paknam, the first town on the river [...]” (Thomson 1875: 78). Bangkok was reached the following day: “I arrived in Bangkok on September 28, 1865, and steamed up through the floating city in the dimness of the early morning light” (Thomson 1875: 79).



**Right:** FIGURE 10. “Hindu woman” by August Sachtler, 32.6 x 23.6 cm (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)

Since Thomson's photographs from Siam are widely published, only some of the lesser-known images are considered here. That Thomson's photographs were so well published is mainly due to the fact that in 1921 he had bequeathed his negatives to Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853–1936). These are now in the Wellcome Library of the Wellcome Institute in London and constitute one of the largest collections of early glass negatives of people and monuments taken in Southeast Asia and China (Schupbach 2015). In contrast to Sachtler, Thomson varnished his exposed glass plates. Sachtler, however, seemed to have cared less for his glass plates. This is self-evident when looking at some later prints from his earlier negatives which may show large black areas as an effect of flaked off collodion.

On the very first page of his description of Siam, Thomson made a remark about the local hairstyle: "The cool and peculiar fashion of dressing the hair, adopted by both sexes, alike resembled an inverted horse-brush laid upon the crown of the head" (Thomson 1875: 79–80). This description is reflected by an engraving published in Thomson's report [FIGURE 11]. Thomson's Siamese photographs in the carte-de-visite format are among his least published photographs, and FIGURE 11 is apparently based on one of them [FIGURE 12]. This illustration [FIG. 12] introduces a hand-colored carte-de-visite which

on the back shows a penciled inscription corresponding exactly to the title below the engraving of FIGURE 11: "Siamese Lady" above the customary imprint "THOMSON, SINGAPORE", found at the bottom of many rear sides of his cartes-de-visite (Bautze 2016: 154–155, pls. 3b, 4b, 5b). FIGURE 13 is based on the same negative as is FIGURE 12, with the noticeable difference that the printer here put more weight on the face of this Siamese lady rather than her upper part of the body. The reverse of FIGURE 13 is unlabeled, but the brand mark is identical with that on the back of FIGURE 12. A least-known Siamese carte-de-visite and photograph of J. Thomson is probably FIGURE 14. It is labeled in French "Jeune Roi de Camboge [*sic*]" (i.e., young king of Cambodia) and very likely shows a young member of the royal court in Siam before tonsure. It was photographed in the veranda of the Emerald Buddha Temple also known as Wat Phra Kaeo.<sup>39</sup> That this picture belonged to a photo session undertaken by J. Thomson at the veranda of the royal temple is made clear by two other published photographs of which the negatives are kept in the collection of the Wellcome Institute in London. The first one bears Thomson's negative number 622 (Wellcome Library, no. 19492i),<sup>40</sup> the second is Thomson's negative number 618 (Wellcome Library, no. 19484i).<sup>41</sup> FIGURE 14 shares with both stereoscopic pictures the following details:



FIGURE 11. "Siamese lady", woodcut, 8 x 5 cm, including caption (PHOTO: © Thomson 1875: 92)



FIGURE 12. Siamese lady by John Thomson, hand-colored photographic carte-de-visite, approx. 8.9 x 5.4 cm (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)



FIGURE 13. Siamese lady by John Thomson, photographic carte-de-visite, approx. 8.9 x 5.4 cm (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)



FIGURE 14. A member of the royal court in Siam before tonsure, ascribed to John Thomson, approx. 8.9 x 5.4 cm  
(PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)

1. The table to the right of the “Young Siamese man with a Samurai sword”.
2. The Samurai sword on the table.
3. The posing stand which Thomson used to reduce the movement of the prince’s body during the longer exposure time. The foot of this back support can be seen very well in his photograph titled “Monk and young Prince outside the chapel of the Emerald Buddha” as well as in **FIGURE 14**.

Thus **FIGURE 14** is in all probability based on one of the halves of a stereograph as demonstrated by **FIGURE 15**, a photographic carte-de-visite with Thomson’s red trademark on the back which is an allusion to the Order of the Garter.<sup>42</sup> Both halves of this stereograph, Thomson’s negative number 621,<sup>43</sup> were—in contrast to most other stereographs—not exposed simultaneously but at different times. The result are two entirely different views. **FIGURE 15** is a detail from the right-hand half of Thomson’s 621 which was published recently.<sup>44</sup>



FIGURE 15. Buddhist monk with pupils by John Thomson, photographic carte-de-visite, approx. 8.9 x 5.4 cm  
(PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)

Another group of less-known views taken by Thomson in Siam includes those which are not signed, but the negatives of which were acquired in 1921 by what is now the Wellcome Library in London. One of these image measures 20.5 x 25.5 cm and is hence rather large. It depicts another view of a Lao Song village [**FIGURE 16**], which may or may not be the same as the one reproduced above [**Figs. 6–7**].<sup>45</sup>

John Thomson (1875: 108), who traveled to “Petchiburee” (Phetchaburi) together with his missionary friend Dan Bradley (Ovenden 1997: 9; Thomson 1875: 108), left the following account about his visit:

In the vicinity of Petchiburee are a number of pretty Laos villages, the abiding place of four or five thousand captives who have been planted there in former times. The Laos bondsmen are permitted to grow their rice on crown land free of impost, but are taxed immoderately in other ways. Thus, at times they are compelled to give six months unpaid labour to the government. It was the Laos slaves of



FIGURE 16. Laotian houses near Phetchaburi by John Thomson, after a glass plate, 20.5 x 25.5 cm (PHOTO: © Wellcome Library, London, inv. no. 19938i)

Petchiburee who built the palace for the king, and they had to find their own maintenance during the whole of that employment. [...] The women, some of them, were of fair complexion and exceedingly pretty, having their long dark tresses coiled up so as to form an ample and picturesque covering for the head. Their costume consisted either of an embroidered jacket or long strips of cloth covering the bust, and a petticoat of striped red, yellow, and blue (primary colours), manufactured by themselves, and peculiar to the Laotian tribes. The houses of the village were raised five or six feet above the ground on strong posts and built of wood and bamboo. [...] Viewed from a distance, the settlement, hidden among palms and fruit-trees, rose from the wide expanse of level plain like a green island in the sea (Thomson 1875: 114–116).

Several of Thomson's glass-plate negatives exposed in Siam broke before they ended up in the collection of the Wellcome Library in London. Unless Thomson



FIGURE 17. John Thomson's signature, detail from FIGURE 18 (PHOTO: © Wellcome Library, London, inv. no. 19938i)

“signed” them in the negative, it is at times hard to decide if a photograph was exposed by Thomson or another commercial photographer. Thus, a photograph on the base of which an engraving has been published prior to 1865 cannot stem from J. Thomson (Bautze 2016: 57, pls. 9a, 9b). “Signed” means that J. Thomson scratched his name in inverted print letters on the layered side of the glass plate so that the “signature” would appear in black letters and true sided on the print. Occasionally it is quite difficult to detect this type of “signature” especially when it can hardly be seen against an evenly dark background as in **FIGURE 17**, the close-up of a larger scene of *khon* (โขน: masked dance drama) and *lakhon* (ละคร: performing art) Siamese troupe [**FIGURE 18**]. This photograph belongs to a sequence of views which Thomson made on his way to Phetchaburi (1875: 109–110; see also *supra*). In the few previously published reproductions of this photograph, Thomson’s “signature” is not apparent.<sup>46</sup>

**FIGURE 19** similarly introduces a “signed” portrait of a “Siamese noble”, none other than Prince Nilarat of Alongkot (พระองค์เจ้านิลรัตน์ กรมหมื่นอลงกฎกิจปรีชา; 1811–1867),<sup>47</sup> the fifty-seventh son of King Rama II (r. 1809–1824), born in 1811, and a younger brother of Rama IV or King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868). Prince Nilarat introduced both Fedor Jagor (1816–1900)<sup>48</sup> and John Thomson to his elder brother, the sovereign in place. This “signed” photograph by John Thomson surfaced only in 2006 and is now part of



FIGURE 19. “A Siamese noble” by John Thomson, 24 x 18 cm (PHOTO: © Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee, Singapore)



FIGURE 18. *Khon* and *lakhon* troupe and musicians, 16 x 24 cm (PHOTO: © P&G collection, Karlsruhe–Berlin)



FIGURE 20. King Mongkut during the tonsure ceremony of the Crown Prince, 25 x 20 cm (PHOTO: © Collection of Philippe Damas, Singapore)

an extremely important collection held in Singapore.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the smaller posing stand seen in **FIGURE 14**, the base of the one noticed in **FIGURE 19** is partly covered with leaves, probably with the intention of concealing it.

Finally, **FIGURE 20** belongs to a well-known sequence of Thomson's "signed" photographs illustrating stages of the tonsure ceremony of Crown Prince Chulalongkorn in early January, 1866.<sup>50</sup> It was so far apparently never published in an English language publication.<sup>51</sup> The photograph is labeled in Siamese Ratchasap (a special vocabulary used in communicating with or about royalty), with partial translation in French:

เสด็จออกพระที่นั่งอามรณ์ทิโมกข์ พระพิเทศพานิชย์เฝ้า

Le roi sortant de la salle du trône [sic] Amphon phīmôk.

Which would properly read in modern Thai Ratchasap and fully translate into English as follows:

เสด็จออกพระที่นั่งอามรณ์ทิโมกข์ พระพิเทศพานิชย์เฝ้า

The king leaving the throne room, Amphon Phimok; Phra Phithet Phanit [from among the audience] comes to pay respects.<sup>52</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

Having taken photographs during the diverse ceremonies celebrating the crown-prince's tonsure ceremony, Thomson headed for Angkor in Siem Reap province, then Siamese territory, on 27 January 1866 (Thomson 1867c: 7; Thomson 1875: 118). The *Bangkok Recorder* thus informs:

J. THOMSON. Photographer. BEGS to intimate that copies of his series of views of Siam, may be had (during his absence from Bangkok) at the residence of Capt. Ames, Klang Kot Mai Fort. *January, 16th 1866.*<sup>53</sup>

With the photographs taken at Angkor, J. Thomson returned to Bangkok briefly and soon departed for Scotland to publish the first photographs of this famous archeological site (Thomson 1867c). The rest is history.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 For the biographical data of Johann August Gottlob Sachtler, see Dobson (2020: 48ff).
- 2 “Johann August Sachtler. – I am a Photographer, and have been for last 16 years. Have taken photographs of drawings and writings”. *The Straits Times*, 20 April 1872, Fourth Day: 5, column 6. From this statement it seems that Sachtler’s scope of function at Siemens & Halske included the photographic documentation of design drawings for new components of telegraphs and telegraph lines.
- 3 See *Illustrierte Zeitung* (Vol. 36, No. 933, 18 May 1861, illustration p. 336, bottom and p. 338, column 2); *ibid.* (Vol. 36, No. 934, 25 May 1861, p. 361, illustration top left); *ibid.* (Vol. 36, No. 935, 1st June 1861, p. 373, top); *ibid.* (Vol. 37, No. 950, 14 September 1861, p. 185, 3 illustrations). For actual photographs, see Dobson (2011).
- 4 For his photographs taken in Siam, see Bautze (2016: 72–81); for his photographs taken in Japan, see Dobson (2011).
- 5 Available online (accessed on 24 November 2021): <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/pictures/Results?q=Views+and+types+of+Singapore%2c+1863&q=content&page=1> and: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/pictures/Results?q=Views+and+types+of+Singapore%2c+1863&q=content&page=2>
- 6 *Singapore Directory* (1864, under “Trades and Professions”, p. 91).
- 7 *The Straits Times* (8 October 1864, p. 3, advertisements, column 1); and *The Straits Times* (22 October 1864, p. 5, column 3).
- 8 *Singapore Directory* (1865, under: “Trades and Professions”, p. 46).
- 9 *Singapore Directory* (1865, under: Part IV, List of the Principal Inhabitants and their Addresses in Singapore, p. 6 and p. 14, respectively).
- 10 *Singapore Directory* (1866, under: “Trades and Professions”, p. 49).
- 11 *Singapore Directory* (1866, under: “PENANG” and “Trades and Professions”, p. 14).
- 12 *The Straits Times Extra* (15 October 1859, p. 1, column 1, as “W. Thompson [sic]”).
- 13 His name, however, is not mentioned in the list of “The Principal Inhabitants of the Straits Settlements, Singapore” for 1861 in *Singapore Directory* (1861: 17).
- 14 *Singapore Directory* (1861, “Photographic Artists”, p. 42).
- 15 *The Straits Times* (18 October 1862, p. 3 advertisements, column 5).
- 16 *The Straits Times* (1 November 1862, p. 3, advertisements, column 2); *The Straits Times* (20 December 1862, p. 5, advertisements, column 1).
- 17 Thomson (1867a) and Thomson (1867b). I am grateful to William Schupbach, Wellcome Library, London, for having brought these articles to my attention.
- 18 An error also made by Anna Leonowens when she expressed her thanks for the photographs of John Thomson, which she reproduces in her book: “[...] indebted to [...] the able English photographer, James Thomson, F.R.G.S. [...]” (Leonowens 1870: vii). Thomson, of course, was from Scotland.
- 19 *Singapore Directory* (1863, under “Trades and Professions”, p. 55).
- 20 *Bangkok Recorder. A Semi-monthly Journal* (Vol. 1, No. 17, 16 September 1865, p. 172).
- 21 *Bangkok Recorder* (Vol. 1, No. 18, 30 September 1865, p. 182).
- 22 *De Locomotief. Samarangsch Handels-en Advertentie-Blad* (1867, No. 145, Maandag 9 December 1867, p. 4, column 1).
- 23 RCIN 2702984, size: 28.4 x 22 cm. See: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/2702984/wat-arun-temple-bangkok>.
- 24 Details about this studio provided in Bennett (2013: 100–106).
- 25 For a colored reproduction of an identical reverse side, see Bennett (2020: 358, o.A109b).
- 26 *Ibid.*: 63, 260.
- 27 For two more recently published photographs by A. Sachtler from Singapore of the larger variety, see Lee (2020: 96–97 and 352).
- 28 The other photographers were John Thomson and Francis Chit, see Bautze (2018).
- 29 For the three views by Thomson, see Paisarn (2015a: 98–104) and Paisarn (2015b: 136–138). For the joined views, consult the Franklin Blake album, Gilman collection at the Met in NYC, acc. no: 2005.100.583 (38a–c), 68 × 17.3 cm: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/728288?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=John+Thomson&offset=320&rpp=20&pos=322> (accessed on 24 November 2021). On this album, see also Ovenden (1997: 9).
- 30 The Lao Song people are also known as Lao Song Dam (ลาวทรงดำ) or Thai Song Dam (ไทยทรงดำ); their ancestors were Tai Dam (ไทดำ) or “Black Tai”, originally migrating from northwestern Vietnam. The village in question may possibly be Nong Prong (หนองปร่ง) in the district of Khao Yoi (เขาย้อย), about 15 km to the northwest of the city of Phetchaburi. Many thanks to Nicolas Revire and Samerchai Poolsuwan for this information.
- 31 The Franklin Blake album, Gilman collection, Met, NYC, acc. no. 2005.100.583 (7b), 17 × 20.8 cm: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/728118?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=John+Thomson&offset=40&rpp=20&pos=57> (accessed on 24 November 2021).
- 32 For details, see Bautze (2016: 62–63). It seems Sachtler’s version is a copy-print, i.e. a print of a photograph of the original photograph, which would somehow explain the bright spots in this print.

- 33 For an example, see Bautze (2016: 101). This view was actually taken by P. Rossier, but marketed by F. Chit who managed to forward a copy of it to G. R. Lambert (1846–1907), probably through the latter fellow countryman, A. Sachtler in Singapore in 1867. See Bautze (2020b: 401, fig. 2).
- 34 Both Schomburgk and Sachtler were born in what was then part of Prussia. For Schomburgk's career, see *Illustrirte Zeitung* (Vol. 44, No. 1136, Leipzig, 8 April 1865, p. 227, central column).
- 35 *Bangkok Recorder* (Vol. 1, No. 18, 30 September 1865, p. 184).
- 36 *Bangkok Calendar* (1865: 42) and (1866: 53).
- 37 *Singapore Directory* (1862: 64, Steam Communications with Singapore); (1863: 42); (1865: 51); (1866: 158); (1867: 187); (1868: 88 and 172, List of the Principal Inhabitants and their Addresses in Singapore); (1869: 87 and 221); (1870: 86, 132, 146 and 143); (1871: 87, 128, 138 and 141); (1875: F10, Steam Lines and K14, List of Inhabitants residing in Singapore); (1877: 15, Alphabetical Directory); (1879: 33 and 38–39).
- 38 *The London and China Telegraph* (Vol. 3, No. 57, 29 March 1861, p. 196); *The London and China Telegraph* (Vol. 8, No. 196, 4 January 1866, p. 5); *The London and China Telegraph* (Vol. 12, No. 366, 5 September 1870, p. 593); *The London and China Telegraph* (Vol. 13, No. 392, 6 March 1871, p. 168); just to mention a few.
- 39 For this part of the temple as photographed by John Thomson, see Ovenden (1997: 24, fig. 7); Montague & Mizerski (2014: 39, full-page plate); and Paisarn (2015a: 8–9, 90).
- 40 “Young Siamese man with a Samurai sword”. See: <https://iiif.wellcomecollection.org/image/L0056701/full/full/0/default.jpg> and <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/td5vr2mf> (accessed on 24 November 2021). Reproduced in Montague & Mizerski (2014: 37, fig. 47—only the left half of the stereograph is shown, cropped); and Paisarn (2015a: 92—only the left half of the stereograph is shown).
- 41 “Monk and young prince outside the chapel of the Emerald Buddha”. See: <https://iiif.wellcomecollection.org/image/L0056697/full/full/0/default.jpg> and <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/quqr58m7> (accessed on 24 November 2021). Reproduced in Montague & Mizerski (2014: 36—only the left half of the stereograph is shown, cropped); and Paisarn (2015: 93—only the right half of the stereograph is shown).
- 42 For a colored reproduction of an identical brand, see Bautze (2016: 153, pl. 2b); and Newton (2020: 17, fig. 16).
- 43 Wellcome Library, no. 19490i. See: <https://iiif.wellcomecollection.org/image/L0056651/full/full/0/default.jpg> (reversed), and <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/f85pnaea> (accessed on 24 November 2021).
- 44 Montague & Mizerski (2014: 46, full-page illustration, mirror inverted) and Paisarn (2015a: 69).
- 45 Wellcome Library, no. 19938i, Thomson's negative number 1100. See: <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/rgwehejd> (accessed on 24 November 2021), so far only reproduced once fully in Montague & Mizerski (2014: 53). For a heavily cropped reproduction, see FAD (2548: 178, bottom).
- 46 White (1985: 72–73, pl. 32); FAD (2548: 275, bottom). For the somewhat better-known print which belongs to the same session as **FIGURE 18**, see Döhning (1923: 59, pl. 129, cropped); FAD (2548: 275, top, cropped); Montague & Mizerski (2014: 48, fig. 61, cropped); and Paisarn (2015a: 80–81).
- 47 For his full name, see *Bangkok Calendar* (1865: 37 under “Younger Brothers”, no. 4 from top).
- 48 For Jagor's photograph of the Prince of Alongkot, taken in January 1861, see Bautze (2016: 36, pl. 12).
- 49 For details, see Bautze (2016: 159, pl. 11).
- 50 See White (1985: 64, pl. 20); Sakda (2535: 79, no. 3.49); Phiphat (2544: 56–57); Pramin (2547: 50); FAD (2548: 96–97); Anake (2548: 294); Sakda (2555: 4, top right); Montague & Mizerski (2014: 33, no. 41); and Paisarn (2015: 70–73).
- 51 For reproductions in relevant Thai publications, see Phiphat (2544: 57, no. 72); and Anake (2548: 295, full-page plate).
- 52 The identity of this “Phra Phithet Phanit”, seen standing below in the audience of King Mongkut, is known as Mister Tan Kim Ching (มิดเดอตัน กิมจิง). He was the first Consul-General for Siam in Singapore at the time, and later became governor of Kraburi (กระบือรี), in today's Ranong province, by royal order in 1868 (*Annals of the Fourth Reign*, no. 22, art. 4). See: <https://vajirayana.org/ประชุมพระราชนิพนธ์ในรัชกาลที่๔-ภาคปกิณณกะ-ภาค๒/เรื่อง-ตั้งพระพิเทศพานิช-ตันกิมจิง-เป็นพระยาอัครภูงคตทิศรักษา> (accessed on 24 November 2021). Thanks to Nicolas Revire and Pitchaya Soomjinda for their assistance with the Thai reading and sources. An inscribed photographic portrait of Tan Kim Ching belonging to the same album as **FIGURE 20** is reproduced and discussed in Bautze (2020a: 376, fig. 26).
- 53 *Bangkok Recorder*, Vol. 2, No. 10, 15 March 1866, p. 4, column 2; see also Anake (2548: 146).