

PIERRE JOSEPH ROSSIER (1829-1886) - PIONEER PHOTOGRAPHER IN ASIA



Siamese Lady, c. 1861

The identity of the ghost-like, nineteenth-century photographer, P. Rossier, eluded photo-historians for many years. In researching for my 2006 book *Photography in Japan 1853-1912* and sensing the importance of the contribution made by this mysterious photographer, I decided to follow up on one or two leads to see what might be discovered. The results of this research were published in the December 2004 issue of *The PhotoHistorian-Journal of the Historical Group of the Royal Photographic Society*. Since then, from time to time, I have come across snippets of additional information. These, together with several other facts discovered in recent years by friends and colleagues in France and Switzerland, have prompted me to update the general findings and to re-confirm Rossier's importance as a pioneer of early photography in China, Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Rossier was known to have had some involvement with the London firm of the camera and scientific equipment sellers, Negretti and Zambra, who published, in stereographic form, the first commercial views

of the above countries between the years 1859 and 1861. Furthermore, Japanese sources agree that in 1860, while in Nagasaki for a few weeks, Rossier taught wet-plate photography to Japanese photography pioneers Ueno Hikoma, Horie Kuwajiro, Maeda Genzo and others. The collection at the Siebold Museum, Nagasaki, also contains a photograph of Alexander Siebold, taken by Rossier at Nagasaki in 1859. In addition, the British National Archives has panoramic photos of Nagasaki by Rossier in 1860. These were referred to in the official correspondence between the British Consul at Nagasaki and the British Minister at Yedo [Tokyo]. (1) Two contemporary references to the photographer refer to him as M. Rossier. Researchers have taken this to be *Monsieur* Rossier, given that Rossier is a French name. Outlined below is the story of how his real identity was revealed.

Pierre Joseph Rossier was born on 16 July 1829 in Grandsivaz, a small village in the Canton of Freiburg, Switzerland. That Rossier's nationality turned out to be Swiss was not a surprise to me. Before starting the research, I noticed references to a photographer, 'P. Rossier,' having produced some 1860s or 1870s stereoview photographs of Freiburg and Einsiedeln in Switzerland. (2) Given the stereo format of the Negretti and Zambra series, this seemed to be a curious co-incidence worth investigating. But, on the other hand, Rossier was not an uncommon Swiss name. And Freiburg is, and was, a French-speaking area of Switzerland.

I needed to check the Swiss museums to see their holdings of Rossier's photographs. I was introduced to the Swiss photo-curator, Sylvie Henguely, without whose help the task would have been more difficult. Sylvie uncovered some stereos and cartes-de-visite of Swiss scenes and portraits scattered across various Swiss museums using her connections and specialist knowledge. From the printed captions on either the front or the back of the mounts, it was clear that P. Rossier was a photographer who had a studio in Freiburg. Other photographs shown to me by the late Swiss photograph collector, Gerard Bourgarel, demonstrated that Rossier also had a studio in Einsiedeln. However, none of the museums had anything besides Swiss photographs, and no other information, including Rossier's first name, had come to light.



Group of French Sailors at Canton, 1858

Sylvie and I visited the Freiburg Town Archives. The staff was most helpful, and the head archivist, Hubert Foerster, assisted greatly; he produced trade directories which included a photographer named Pierre Rossier, copy passports issued to him in 1855 and 1872 and other information also. Despite Rossier being a common name in Freiburg, we were able to build up a family tree after some time.

Rossier was born into a Catholic farming family of modest means, the 4th eldest of 10 children. But unlike his brothers and sisters, Pierre was not destined to follow a farming career. Nevertheless, he must have shown early intelligence because, at the age of 16, he took a teaching post at a school in the nearby village of Mannens-Grandsivaz. (3) On the 19 October 1855, Rossier was issued a passport for three years. It noted his occupation as a photographer, living in Bulle, and that he intended to practice his profession in France and England. Rossier was aged 26 and described as 5 feet 3 inches tall (1.6 metres) with brown hair and grey eyes. (4) After leaving the country, Rossier was away for seven years and did not return until late 1862.

REGISTRE DES PASSE-PORTS.

N^o 335

Valable pour deux ans.



PASSE-PORT

POUR VOYAGER DANS L'ÉTRANGER.

SIGNALEMENT.

TAILLE (mesure de France).

5 pieds, 3 pouces, 8 lignes.

Âge 25 ans.

Cheveux bruns.

Sourcils bruns.

Barbe brune.

Yeux gris.

Nes moyen.

Bouche moyenne.

Menton carré.

Front découvert.

Visage rond.

Signes particuliers.

Signé de requérant

Prix 2 fr. 20 cent.

LA DIRECTION DE LA POLICE CENTRALE

DU CANTON

DE FRIBOURG EN SUISSE

Insiste, sous offre de réciprocité, toutes les Autorités civiles et militaires, chargées de garantir l'ordre public, à laisser librement passer Pierre Rogier

originaire de la commune de Grandbivaz

domicilié à Brüllo

de son état photographe

allant en France et Angleterre

dans l'intention de travailler de son état

Le présent Passeport, signé par le requérant et délivré sous la signature du Directeur de Police centrale, sera valable pour la durée de deux ans.

Donné à Fribourg, le 19
de Octobre l'an mil huit cent 85
(1885).

pour du mois

Le Directeur de la Police centrale,

N^o Vu pour légalisation du sceau et de la signature ci-dessous

Fribourg, le

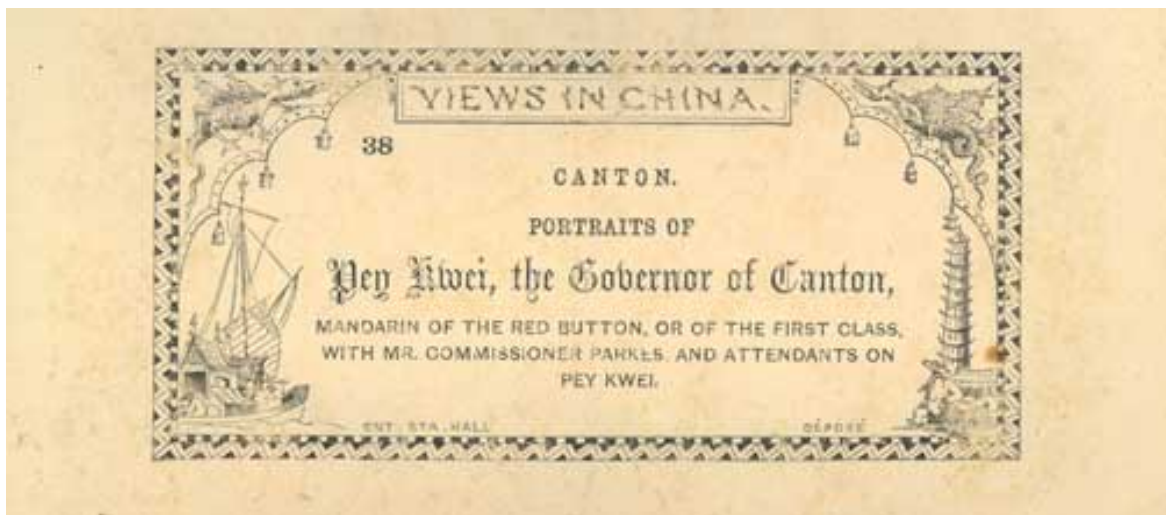
Le Chancelier,

Rossier's 1855 Passport

Negretti and Zambra was a successful London firm specialising in manufacturing and selling photographic equipment and scientific instruments. The firm, which also operated photo studios, received a considerable boost when it was appointed as official photographer to the Crystal Palace Company in Sydenham, London, which opened in 1854. Partly because of this, Negretti and Zambra became one of the most successful photographic businesses in the country. Alongside their manufacturing concerns, Negretti and Zambra was a large retailer of stereoscopic views, issuing many collections from the early 1850s onwards. We do not know when Rossier joined the firm, but he must have been considered one of their best photographers since he was selected to travel to China to photograph the Second Opium War of 1858-60.



Portraits of Pey Kwei & Commissioner Parkes,
Canton, 1858 (notice the 'NZ' signature)



Reverse side

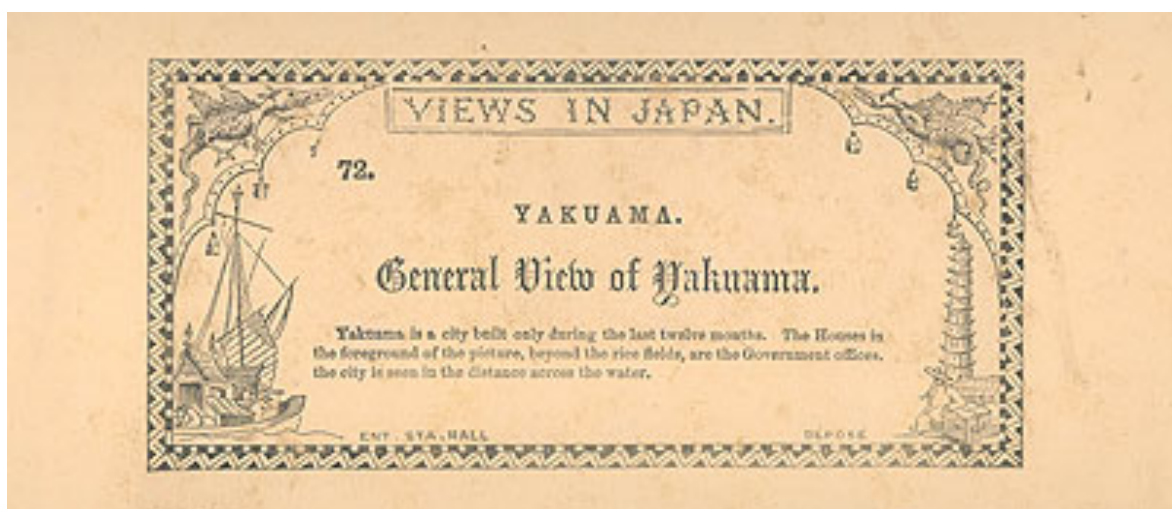
In April 1859, Negretti and Zambra published the stereoviews that Rossier sent back to London in a set of 25. A set of 35 views can be found at the Biblioteque Nationale, Paris, with an accession date of 25 March 1859. A more extensive collection of 50 was published on 19 November 1859. (5) Taken almost exclusively in and around Canton (Guangzhou), they

were favourably reviewed by the photographic periodicals of the time. (6) Interestingly one of these reviews clarifies that Rossier's instructions were not just to restrict himself to China on his "...roving commission to the East in search of novelties....The time seems rapidly approaching... [to] be able to see the most distant corners of the world in miniature in the stereoscope...and the pictures we have received of Chinese people, costumes, and buildings, will, before long, be followed by others of Japan....The photographer, a portion of whose work we have before us, left Canton, according to his instructions, and proceeded to the Philippine Islands...." (7)

Rossier's detour to the Philippines was also reported in the Illustrated London News. (8) '...Some time since Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, with an amount of enterprise for which they deserve the thanks of the public, dispatched a representative of their firm to China and Japan....Having accomplished a considerable part of this interesting and difficult mission, he was directed to make his way to the Philippine Islands, and visit the Taal Volcano.' What then follows is a report from Rossier, in his own words, describing the difficulties encountered in securing these photographs.



General View of Yakuama (Yokohama), 1859



Reverse side

Neither the *Photographic News* nor the *Illustrated London News* mentions the 'representative' by name. Unfortunately, Negretti and Zambra's early records were destroyed in the bombing of London during the Second World War. Still, it seems entirely possible that Rossier was hired by Negretti and Zambra directly after he left Switzerland in 1855.

The passenger lists shown in the 8 July 1858 issue of the *China Mail* records that Rossier sailed from Bombay for Hong Kong on 16 June. He arrived on 7 July, according to the *North China Herald* issue of 17 July. We get our first 'sighting' of Rossier when the English author, Albert Smith, meets him in Hong Kong on 25 August 1858. "*Paid a visit to Messrs. Negretti and Zambra's photographer, M. Rossier, who lived at the Commercial Hotel, belonging, I believe, to Messrs. Lane and Crawford. He complained much of the effect of the climate on his chemicals.*" (9)

Photo historians had conjectured that Negretti and Zambra's China and Japan photographs had been taken by somebody other than Rossier – perhaps Walter Woodbury, Felice Beato or the British Consular Secretary, Abel Gower. We now know that Pierre Rossier was the photographer, and several sources confirm this. (10) The first is particularly significant and comes from a private journal I discovered some years ago. It was written by one of the officers of the British ship, HMS *Sampson* – the ship charged with escorting the British Minister, Rutherford Alcock, and the other Consuls to Japan. There they would take up their positions ahead of the official opening of the country on 1 July 1859. (11) The journal entry for the 8 July 1859 reads: "*I was included in a photographic view taken by Mr. Rossier, a gentleman we brought from Nagasaki, employed by the Crystal Palace Company.*" At that time, Negretti and Zambra were almost synonymous with the Crystal Palace. From the journal, it is clear that the photograph was taken in Yedo (Tokyo) on the same day that a party of British naval officers inspected Alcock's Legation and residence-to-be, Tozenji Temple. The ship also visited Kanagawa and Yokohama; Rossier would have also had ample opportunities to photograph in those places.

The clearest evidence linking Rossier with Negretti and Zambra is in an advertisement placed by the photographer in the 28 December 1858 issue of the *Hong Kong Register*. (12)

Photographic Likeness

P. ROSSIER

Assistant and Representative of MESSRS. NEGRETTI & ZAMBRA Photographers to the Crystal Palace Company, begs to announce to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Hongkong, that he has taken private apartments at the Commercial Hotel - Hours to be seen from 10 o'clock to 2 o'clock.

Hongkong, 21st December, 1858.

We do not yet know how Rossier occupied his time in the early part of 1859, but we know that at the beginning of June 1859, he made a short trip to the Philippines where, under instructions from his firm, he photographed the famed Taal Volcano. He presumably attempted to take other views in the Philippines, but the climatic conditions may have interfered with his chemicals and prevented his doing so. Besides three successful pictures of the volcano, no photographs of the country were listed or referred to in contemporary photographic periodicals or Negretti & Zambra's catalogues. A fascinating account of Rossier's visit to Taal appeared in *The Photographic Journal* on 15 November 1859 (pp.280-1): *PHOTOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENCE*. "...Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, the official photographers to the Crystal Palace Company, have some time since had a gentleman in their service, who has been devoting his energies to the delineation of subjects of considerable interest in China, some of which we noticed casually in our report of a soirée, given by the Lord Mayor at the early part of the present year...To this volcano [Taal, Luzon, the Philippines] the enterprising photographer wended his way, according to instructions

received from Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, incited thereto by some zealous geologists who were anxious to pay a visit to the spot in such a convenient manner by deputy; and, having been there, he brought away with him that for which he went – an exact transcript of the crater. We cannot forbear laying before our readers the following extract, so full of interest, from a letter received by Messrs. Negretti and Zambra from their representative.'

"According to your instructions I started from Canton and proceeded to the Philippines. Arrived at Manilla, I went on to the village of Taal, from thence on to the crater. I left the village at midnight and got to the spot at



Japanese Ladies in Full Winter-Dress Costume 1859/60

eight in the morning, travelling by canoe. Arrived at the edge of the crater, I pitched my tent; but such was the heat of the place, and so dense the steam that arose from the fissures, that I was glad to move further off to avoid being suffocated. Having found a more convenient spot I tried my first plate; nothing! Second, ditto; third, fourth – all black, all over-done: suffice it to say, that though I had been giving from thirty to forty seconds, with the same light and chemicals, the day before, I obtained the negatives I send you with four seconds' exposure – a curious circumstance deserving investigation. I was surrounded by sulphurous vapour, more especially when the wind (which was continually shifting) was blowing towards me: such was the density of vapour, that on one occasion indeed my two guides bundled into my tent, to the great danger of my bath and chemicals. I send you the three negatives I was enabled to take, and would have gladly sent you duplicates, but after about a couple of hours' work my bath got covered with a black pellicle which adhered to the collodian, causing the plates to stain all over, so that I was obliged to give up. On the north-east of the small crater you will see a small lake: its waters are covered in a white vapour like steam; its borders strewn with a greenish white sulphurous substance, caked like ice on the edge of a pond. The effect all along the edge of the lake is very curious. I attempted to descend from the great crater to the inner one, in order to follow your instructions as to the temperature and density of the water; but I felt so weak from excessive perspiration that I was obliged to desist: it has to be done by a rope. I however sent down one of my guides who brought up a gourd full of water, the temperature of which, was, when I received it, 110 degrees Fahrenheit. I will send it to you if I have no accident, as it might be interesting to some of your scientific friends. I left the crater about twelve o'clock, and returned to Taal by half-past five, having wind and current in my favour. I have already told you of the many difficulties I had, especially in Canton; but this volcano photographing beats all. I sincerely hope your friends will not suggest any more such interesting objects for your photographer to take. As to Japan, I have no doubt I shall get on very well but if I hear that a volcano exists there I shall be tempted to turn back, as I think one volcano in my life will be sufficient."

'Three admirably-printed glass transparent stereographs, from the negatives mentioned in the above extract, are before us, and anything of the kind more interesting it is not easy to conceive of... We sincerely trust that Messrs. Negretti and Zambra will meet with the encouragement they so richly merit, by an extensive demand for these highly instructive and interesting subjects, and thereby be induced to renew their efforts for placing before the public specimens so well calculated to elevate the taste and inform the mind.' (13)



Taal Volcano, glass stereoview, 1859

By 18 June, Rossier was back in Hong Kong, according to the passenger lists in the 22 June issue of the *Overland China Mail*. He then immediately set out for Nagasaki. The HMS *Sampson* journal stated that Rossier was already in Nagasaki when the ship arrived from Shanghai with the Consuls on board. On 20 June 1859, the ship left Nagasaki for Yedo with Rossier and the Consuls. One of the latter was Abel Gower, whose portrait, signed 'P. Rossier', is in the Nagasaki University photograph collection. An unexplained mystery is how Rossier managed to get so quickly from Hong Kong to Nagasaki - a sea journey that one would expect to take several days. In any case, Rossier witnessed Japan's re-opening to the West on 1 July 1859. Quite how long he stayed in Japan is not clear, but he photographed in Yedo (Tokyo), Yokohama, Kanagawa, and Nagasaki.

We now lose track of Rossier until he reappears again when the *North China Herald* issue of 10 March 1860 lists him among the passengers arriving at Shanghai from Nagasaki. He then travels to Hong Kong, arriving on 27 March (*China Mail* 29 March 1860, passenger lists). On 5 April, he is in Canton photographing the departure of the Commanding Officer of British Troops in China, General Sir Charles Straubenzee. (14) We know that he was in Shanghai on 27 June 1860, staying at the exclusive Astor House Hotel and that before that, he had been in Hong Kong. (15) He may have gone to Shanghai for photographic chemicals. It is far more likely that Rossier was there to convince the British or French military authorities to allow him to accompany them to the scene of the imminent conflict in North China. If so, it seems that he was singularly unsuccessful.

The British already had Felice Beato and John Papillon, and the French had Charles Du Pin, Antoine Fauchery and possibly Louis Legrand. Rossier would have been devastated. Negretti and Zambra would have expected an explanation from their 30-year-old employee, who had, after all, been sent to China at great expense.

We know that Rossier was not in Peking during the sacking of the Summer Palace on October 18 and 19 because he was in Nagasaki taking photographs of the harbour on behalf of the British Consul, George Morrison. In a letter of 13 October 1860 to Minister Alcock in Yedo, enclosing the photos, Morrison reports that he has "...taken advantage of the presence of a



Catholic Priest, Fribourg, c. 1860s (front & reverse)

professional photographer ...here for the moment, Mr. Rossier, an employe (sic) of the firm of Negretti & Zambra of London...the cost ...namely seventy Dollars...but considering that M. Rossier's time is specifically devoted to other purposes, and that he was occupied with them for several days...as he is not a tradesman here for the sale of photographs, was not in a position to bargain...and have seen very fair photographs taken, unassisted, by a pupil of M. Rossier...." (16)

It is unclear when Negretti and Zambra first published Rossier's Japan stereoview photos. As far as I can tell, the earliest reference to their arrival from Japan is January 1860. The *London & China Telegraph* announced in its issue of 13 January (p.88): 'Among the cargo brought by the Delta steamer, which arrived from Alexandria, was a large package containing photographic negatives, taken in Japan by an artist despatched specially for the purpose by Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, of London.' Then, on 23 May 1860, *The Times* (p.5) published the following advertisement: 'JAPANESE LADIES IN FULL DRESS -A STEREOGRAPH of the above interesting subject, taken by Messrs. NEGRETTI AND ZAMBRA'S artist, now in Japan, forwarded on receipt of 24 stamps – 1, Hatton Garden, and 59, Cornhill.' Five days later (p.5), *The*

Times repeated the advertisement with the insertion of the words 'full coloured' after STEREOGRAPH. This would have likely been the first hand-coloured photograph of Japan.

A second (?) batch of negatives arrives five months later. An announcement in *The Times*, 3 October 1860 (p.11): 'Photographs From Japan – A case of rare and curious photographs of the scenery of this interesting country, and illustrative of the manners and customs of the Japanese tribes, which have been executed by a special artist sent out for the purpose by the enterprising firm of Negretti and Zambra of London, are expected by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamship *Ceylon*, which will probably arrive at Southampton on Wednesday.'

Despite the above, the photographic journals at this time are silent regarding a publication date. There is a strong suspicion that the quality of these early Japanese views was not of a standard acceptable to Negretti & Zambra. At around this time, the photographic journals carried occasional articles containing heated discussions on the competing qualities of the respective photographic printing of Negretti & Zambra and their great rivals in Paris, Ferrier & Soulier. (17) Against this background, it is entirely possible that Negretti & Zambra delayed publication of the Japanese views until they felt they had sufficient numbers of quality images to offer for sale as a set. Indeed, some insight into the difficulties experienced by Rossier is indicated in a letter sent by Henry Negretti to the *British Journal of Photography* and published in the 15 May 1861 edition: "...With reference to M. Lacan's statement that M. Ferrier has used his process in hot and cold climates without any inconvenience, has M. Ferrier ever been further than a few hours' journey from any large town or city where he could obtain any chemicals required for the albumen process, or even obtain a fresh stock of prepared plates from home if needs be? His having taken views in Italy or Switzerland is no test that he would not be at times inconvenienced in distant countries, such as China, Japan, or Siam, where one of our photographers is at present, and at times where not even a drop of rain water is to be had; where on occasions, through the failure of a steamer, spoiling of chemicals, or some such casualty, the photographer has had to set to work with only his camera, lens, and glasses in his possession..."

We do see some of these views in published form in George Smith's book *Ten Weeks In Japan* which included five from the series, including the one advertised in *The Times* on 23 May 1860. Smith's book appeared on 9 April 1861. (18) Rossier's first Japan series consisted of 25 views. His second consisted of 40 views which were also published on glass. In November 1861, most or all of his first series were announced, and this appears to be the earliest date that Negretti & Zambra made a concerted effort to market this first set. (19)

We next hear that Rossier is in Siam (Thailand), as the *Overland China Mail* issue of 15 October 1861 refers to Rossier leaving that country for Hong Kong on 22 September. The *North China Herald* of the 26th October records 'P. Rosier' [sic] as having arrived in Shanghai on 20 October. We don't know exactly when, but between 10 December 1861 and 30 July 1862, Rossier assisted the French zoologist Firmin Bocourt by taking ethnographical portraits of Siamese subjects which a French museum commissioned. (20) The *British Journal of Photography*, 1 October 1861 (p.350), also reported that: 'His Royal Highness the King of Siam is about to become a practical photographer and is impatiently awaiting the arrival of a complete set of apparatus manufactured for him by Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, and has, beside, engaged the services of a gentleman to initiate him in the principles and practice of photography. It is likely that Rossier arranged the transaction and gave the King lessons in photography'.

While he was in Siam, Rossier also produced a set of 30 stereoviews which were later marketed by Negretti & Zambra. (21) These were exhibited in May 1862, on glass, at the *International Exhibition*, London, together with his China and Japan views. (22)

Rossier was coming to the end of his time in the East. Although we can't be certain, it is likely that the following advertisement placed in the 1 March 1862 issue of the *North China Herald* represents his decision to dispose of his photographic equipment and supplies:

FOR SALE A BARGAIN A new and complete set of photographic apparatus comprising: A Patent Mahogany Folding Camera, with all improvements, first class in every respect. A Ross Portrait Lens, very superior A Ross Landscape Lens, do. All in small portable case. ALSO, A Portable Mahogany Tripod Stand, with Ball and Rocket Joint and Patent Screw Adjustment. ALSO, A Travelling case completely fitted up, containing all the necessary apparatus, together with a large fresh supply of Chemicals just received from London, and two practical works on photography. The whole quite new and in perfect order. The above is to be sold A BARGAIN, in consequence of the owner's leaving Shanghai. For further particulars apply at the "Shanghai Dispensary", Bridge Street. Shanghai, 27th February, 1862.

Around the time of the above sale, Rossier had been in Shanghai. He left on March 7 or 8 and arrived in Hong Kong on 11 March. (23) The Rossier trail then goes cold. Although not completely. Photo-historian Joachim Bautze quotes from a letter written 10 June 1862, by the British Consul-General in Bangkok, Sir Robert Schomburgk. Writing to his friend, the traveller and amateur photographer, Fedor Jagor, Schomburgk refers to Rossier's studio being active in Bangkok: *'Herr Rosier der Photographer ist nach Bangkok zurückgekommen und hat sein Atelier wieder aufgestellt – unterdeßen hat er aber einen großen Nebenbuhler in einem Siamesen Koon Mot, der, wie ich glaube Unterricht bei ihm genommen und die Sachen wohlfeiler obgleich nicht so gut ausführt'*. We can also assume he was still in Bangkok on 2 July 1862, photographing the funeral of the then vicar apostolic of Siam, Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, because an engraving of the photograph appeared in the 20 December 1862 edition of *Le Monde Illustré* (p.389). It was captioned: *'D'après une photographie de la maison Negretti et Zambra de Londres.'* (24) This report may well have been Rossier's final photographic engagement before returning to his home in Switzerland - probably together with Firmin Bocourt, who left Bangkok on 30 July 1862 and reached Paris on 15 November 1862. (25)

Rossier's stereoviews of China, Japan and Siam are the first commercial photographs taken in those countries and are difficult to find. The views of the Taal Volcano are even rarer. Until he arrived in Nagasaki in 1859, Japanese students of photography had struggled to master the subject – this despite the unstinting assistance of the capable Dutch medical instructors. Finally, a seasoned professional photographer like Rossier, equipped with the right chemicals and equipment, provided the necessary impetus to Japanese self-sufficiency.

Rossier Returns to Europe

We don't yet know the exact date that Rossier returned to Switzerland. He may well have tried to establish a studio in Freiburg at the end of 1862. We know that Rossier moved to and opened a studio in Einsiedeln in May 1863 and then stayed until November that year. We do not know what he did for the next twelve months, but he returned to Freiburg and settled there in November 1864.

In June 1864, a certain Louis Rossier was recorded as operating as a photographer in Einsiedeln until 15 November, after which he sold off his equipment and left. This reference likely refers to Pierre's younger brother, Jacques Louis (1836-1881), about whom we know very little. (26) In October 1865, in the nearby town of Aarau, Rossier married Catharine Barbe Kaelin (1843 -1867), who came from Einsiedeln. (27) Less than a year later, on 30 July 1866, Christophe Marie Pierre Joseph was born. Perhaps Catharine failed to recover from the childbirth because, on 4 April 1867, she died at the tragically young age of 23.

Rossier continued to work in his studio in Freiburg at 211 Place du College. The town census shows him living in a single room in December 1870, at the same address as his future wife, Marie Virgine Overney, who may, at the time, have been his domestic servant. Times must have been hard for Rossier; the Franco-Prussian War, which started in July 1870, had hit tourism and brought about a financial crisis for Switzerland. On 24 May 1872, following the end of the War, Rossier applied for a one-year passport to travel to France.

Following extensive and meticulous research by French essayist Jean-Yves Tréhin-Saulière, we now know that Marie at this time was pregnant. The couple's child, Marie-Josephine, would be born a French citizen in Pontarlier (Doubs), France, close to the Swiss border, on 4 August 1872. She would be registered under her mother's name, Overney, as the couple were still unmarried. It is unclear why they chose to have their child in France or how long they remained in that country. Thanks to Tréhin's research, we know that in 1883 the couple lived at 89 Rue du Bac, Paris (7th district), where they finally married on 11 February 1883. Rossier's third child, Joseph Louis Rossier, was born in Paris on 16 March 1884. The family were then living at 14 Rue Delbet (14th district). (28)

In 1898, a Swiss book on the history of Freiburg Canton's notables and personalities mentioned that Rossier died in Paris but did not give the date. It went on to note that he was the first photographer to travel across the Far East taking photographs: '*Rossier Pierre, 1er photographe ayant parcouru les Indes. décédé à Paris.*' (29) We know almost nothing about Rossier's activities following his trip to France with his future wife in 1872. No record seems to have survived if he operated a studio in Paris. However, his studio in Freiburg was listed in the local directories until at least 1876. It does seem, however, that Tréhin's research has now established Rossier's place and date of death. He died on 22 October 1886 at the Catholic asylum, l'Asile Notre Dame du Bon Secours at 66 Rue des Plantes (14th district), situated just 200 metres from his last-known address at Rue Delbet. The recorded details of his death in the Archives de Paris are far from complete. The record does not show the cause of death but states that he was married, his name was Pierre Rosier [sic], aged 55 [sic], and that he was Swiss and born in Grandiv...[illegible, but assumed to be Grandsivaz]. His parents and wife are stated to be unknown. It is certainly possible that this information was transmitted verbally by Rossier, who might, at the time, have been incapable of giving a coherent response to enquiries. His being in the asylum suggests that he either suffered a mental breakdown or was perhaps the victim of a sudden accident and that this institution was the nearest establishment where he could receive treatment. Despite exhaustive research by Tréhin, no records of his burial have been discovered at the local Catholic cemeteries. It is quite possible he died in straitened circumstances and was buried in a common grave.

Rossier's Children

Rossier's daughter, Marie-Josephine Rossier, died in Paris on 28 September 1899 at the Boucicaut Hospital (15th district). She was single. Her widowed mother died aged 64 at the same hospital on 4 March 1911. Mrs Rossier had been a live-in housemaid at 81 Rue de Passy (16th district). (30) Rossier's second son, Joseph Louis Rossier, moved to Vevey, Switzerland, where he opened a café. He died there on 25 May 1927. (31)

Back in 2004, I had learned from the records in the Freiburg Archives that Rossier's first son, Christophe, who throughout his life would use his father's name, Pierre Joseph, had married an English woman. In 2016 I decided to pursue this thread, hoping that there were surviving descendants who could add something to what was already known about the photographer's life. At the turn of the 20th century, Christophe worked as a courier. A daughter, Margaret Evelyn Rossier, was born in West London on 30 September 1908. Her mother, Margaret Carlyle, is wrongly shown on the birth certificate as being Christophe's wife. Christophe was at that time married to a Swiss lady. He was living with Margaret Carlyle and their daughter in London when in March 1911, he was admitted to an asylum. He was discharged after a couple of months and married Margaret on 24 January 1912. The marriage certificate shows that he had divorced his Swiss wife by then. Shortly after the wedding, the couple separated and lived apart. Christophe died in London of pneumonia on 11 December 1941. He died without leaving a Will, and his personal effects amounting to £412 went to his widow, Margaret. The mother and daughter lived together until Margaret senior died in London on 8 July 1945 at age 65. (32)

The daughter, Margaret Evelyn Rossier, then lived alone until she died in London in 1999. When I located her final home in Cricklewood, London, the present owner told me that he had been a tenant in the house and that when Margaret died, she left the property to him. He recalled that she had mentioned her father's abandoning her and her mother while she was a small child. She did not say anything about her grandfather, who had died before she was born, and he did not know whether she was aware of his history. Margaret's personal effects were left to him, and I could find no document or photograph which linked her to the photographer Pierre Joseph Rossier, other than some poignant seaside photographs of her with her father, the photographer's first son.

Final Thoughts

Pierre Rossier led a fascinating and eventful life; returning to his provincial hometown in Freiburg to settle down at 33 must have been hard for him. Looking through the local newspapers of the time, he barely gets a mention and indeed no recognition or appreciation of his remarkable achievements. Instead, it is evident from the local newspaper advertisements of the time that Rossier would have faced stiff competition from other established local studios. So perhaps it is not surprising that he sought out cosmopolitan Paris in later life. The details of what Rossier did there are as yet unknown. A photographic likeness is yet to be found. No account of his travels has been found. The only exception is the article above describing his trip to the Taal Volcano, the Philippines. Some Swiss institutions have samples of his local stereoview and carte de visite photographs taken following his return, but none appears to have any of his Far-Eastern work. (33)

As for his legacy, the evidence shows that Rossier was a talented and skilful photographer, overcoming the many impediments faced by photographers in nineteenth-century East Asia. His were the first commercial photographs of China and Japan, and this may equally apply to Thailand. A seasoned professional photographer armed with the most advanced photographic equipment of the time, he contributed significantly to spreading photographic knowledge across East and Southeast Asia. He deserves more recognition and to be added to the list of true photographic pioneers. (34)

Notes & References

1. National Archives, Kew. Ref: F.O. 46.8 contains the correspondence and Rossier's 3-plate and 8-plate panoramas of Nagasaki. Early Japanese references to Rossier are detailed in: Himeno, Junichi. "Encounters with Foreign Photographers: The Introduction and Spread of Photography in Kyushu". In *Reflecting Truth: Japanese Photography in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere, Mikiko Hirayama. (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2004), pp. 21–22; Ogawa Teizo and Sakai Shizu, eds., *Matsumoto Jun jiden, Nagayo Sensai jiden*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980.
2. James, H.A., *'The Price Guide to Photographic Cards'*, London: Bishopsgate Press, 1982 (see p. 94); Darrah, William C, *The World of Stereographs*, Gettysburg: William C. Darrah, author and publisher, 1977. (see p. 121)
3. Freiburg Archives: Ref: AEF.census, No. 8, 1845, reg. VI, p.427 (Pierre Rossier's occupation is shown as 'regent'). In 2016, the Swiss anthropologist and photo-historian, Philippe Dallais, tracked down Rossier's village home and introduced me to surviving Rossier descendants still living in the community. Unfortunately, they had not heard of their ancestor, and no trace of his activities remained.
4. Freiburg Archives: Ref: AEF, DPC II, 13,335
5. The set of 25 was referred to in the 1st May 1859 issue of *The Photographic Journal* (p.104). The set of 50 was formally entered in the Stationers' Hall Copyright Register as *Stereoscopic Views in China Nos. 1-50, published by Henry Negretti & Joseph Warren Zambra, No. 1 Hatton Garden, copyright – the same, date of publication 19th November 1859*. The National Archives hold this under reference: COPY 3/10 (appears on page 126)
6. See the *Photographic News* 4th November 1859, pp99-100; 11th November, pp. 110-2; 18th November, pp.124-6 and the *Photographic Journal* 1st December 1859, p.298; *La Lumière* 17th and 24th March 1860.
7. *Photographic News* 4th November 1859.
8. *Illustrated London News*, 4th February 1860, p.109
9. Smith, Albert, *To China and Back*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1974
10. For a discussion of authorship, see the writer's book *Photography in Japan 1853-1912*, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2006 (pp.44-45).
11. A ship's journal, written by one of the officers of HMS *Sampson*, Henry Purcell Ward, between 1st January 1858 and 31st October 1860. The ship was part of the British China squadron and was kept occupied by the disturbances in China during that period. The vessel transported Rutherford Alcock (first British Minister to Japan) and the other Consuls to Japan in June 1859.
12. I am grateful to photo historian Edwin Lai for bringing this critical advertisement to my attention.
13. See also the article on the same subject in *The Photographic News* 4th November 1859 (pp.99-100).
14. Rossier is in Canton as the following reference from the journal of Lieutenant Charles William Carrington makes clear: "5th April 1860. Overcast and cold, but fine. At 11 o'clock, the Major General [This would be General Sir Charles Straubenzee] accompanied by his staff and Major Pownall 3rd Buffs [3rd East Kent Regiment of Foot], appointed Commissioner in place of Major Fisher, Royal Engineers, and attended by a guard and the band of the Buffs, proceeded to pay a farewell visit to the Tartar General. After exchanging the usual amount of courteous speeches, and partaking of tea and [illegible], a photograph of the party was taken by a photographer, at present staying in Canton, and who attended for the purpose. [A stereo photograph of the scene appears in the Negretti and Zambra China series.] The Major General then called upon Laoh the Governor General, more civil speeches and expressions of respect, and another

photograph was taken, Laoh having proffered much anxiety to see the process used to have a likeness of himself." *Journal Quartermaster General of the Royal Marine Special Service Brigade in China 1859-1860* (Royal Marines Museum, ref: ARCH 11/67/3. Although Carrington's name is not shown, RM records confirm he was Quartermaster at this time).

15. *North China Herald*, 30 June, 1860 p.102. Rossier arrived from Hong Kong on the ship *Pekin*. I have to thank Eric Politzer for drawing my attention to this reference. Rossier's staying at the Astor House Hotel is mentioned in the *North China Herald*, 14 July 1860, p.110

16. National Archives, Reference: F.O. 46.8. See note 1. The pupil referred to is possibly Ueno Hikoma.

17. See, for example, *The British Journal of Photography* 15th May 1861 (p.192).

18. Smith, George. *Ten Weeks In Japan*, London: Longman, Green, 1861.

19. See *The Art Journal*, November 1861 (p.351). For a complete list of the 25 and 40 views in the respective first and second series, see the writer's *Photography in Japan 1853-1912* (2006, pp. 305-6).

20. I am grateful to both Claude Estebe and the late Gerard Levy for pointing out that Rossier made photographs in Siam for Firmin Bocourt, a French zoologist, who carried out a scientific expedition in Siam in 1861/1862. Reference to this was made in a lecture given by Milnes Edwards at the French *Académie des sciences* who stated: "... [M. Bocourt] profite de la présence à Bangkok d'un artiste habile (M. Rossier) pour obtenir une nombreuse série de photographies..." Source: *Académie des sciences*, Seance du 10 août 1863, cote Y 324, p. 2.

21. These appeared in the firm's November 1863 catalogue: *Negretti & Zambra. Catalogue of all the Stereoscopic Views on Glass, Published up to the Present Time*. The catalogue listed some 30 Siam stereoviews; one view of the Smoking Crater of Taal Volcano; the 40 views of Rossier's second Japan series.

22. *Photographic News* 25th July 1862 (p.354).

23. *China Mail* 13th March 1862 -passenger lists.

24. The only known surviving example of the actual photograph is in the P. Laycock collection, Brussels. The Joachim Bautze article: "Fedor Jagor, Traveller, Explorer, Photographer", *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol. 25, 2020, pp. 97-134.

25. Bautze, Joachim, K. *Unseen Siam Early Photography 1860-1910*. Bangkok: River Books, 2016 (p.69). This book also provides the most detailed account of Rossier's time in Thailand.

26. I am very grateful to the Einsiedeln researchers Susan Eberhard and Madeleine Schönböckler-Bingisser who accessed on my behalf the local newspapers and town registers: Bezirksarchiv: BAE_MI 8.3 Kontrolle der Aufenthalter / Wirtschaften / Eisenbahnarbeiter 1850-1876.

27. Freiburg Archives: Ref: AEF, RP582, p.60.

28. *Archives de Paris* and *Archives Ville de Pontarlier*.

29. Raemy, Alfred, *Livre d'Or du Canton de Fribourg. Nomenclature des Bourgeois de la Ville de Fribourg des Anciennes familles patriciennes et des Notabilités et Célébrités du Canton*, Fribourg : Bonny, 1898 (p.49). I am very grateful to Benoit de Diesbach Belleruche and Gerard Bourgarel who drew my attention to this publication.

30. Jean-Yves Tréhin-Saulière: *Archives de Paris*.

31. This additional information was discovered by Benoit de Diesbach Belleruche on further research into the Freiburg Archives.

32. Births/Marriages/Deaths: *National Archives*.

33. Rossier did donate some Siamese artefacts in 1863 to the Museum of Freiburg, but no photographs were included. And according to the museum, these artefacts appear to have been lost. We know of this donation because of an entry in a catalogue produced by the museum: *Catalogue du Musée Cantonal de Fribourg. Fribourg: L. Fragnière, 1882* [p.76: Aux noms de ces généreux donateurs, nous associerons avec reconnaissance ceux de M. Pierre Rossier, photographe, pour ses intéressants objets de l'Indo-Chine (1863)]. See pages 80-82 for those items donated by Rossier.

34. His work was turned into an exhibition curated by Philippe Dallais, including two 3-dimensional slideshows compiling all of Rossier's known Japan and Swiss stereoviews. It was first exhibited in Freiburg in 2016 and then in Japan in 2017: *A pioneer of photography in the Far East, 1858-1862*. 3D Photographic Exhibition. Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire, Fribourg (22.09.2016 – 12.11.2016) [See from 1 min 50 sec.: <http://www.rts.ch/play/tv/couleurs-locales/video/fr-la-journee-mondiale-du-patrimoine-audiovisuel-est-loccasion-de-rappeler-son-importance?id=8123156>] *Bakumatsu in 3D. Pierre Rossier: Swiss pioneer of photography in Japan and Asia, 1858-1862*. Galerie de la Maison franco-japonaise, Tokyo (24 March – 7 April).

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See the writer's article on Pierre Rossier which appeared in the December 2004 issue of *The PhotoHistorian-Journal of the Historical Group of the Royal Photographic Society*. Updated here: 1 August 2022.

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