CROSSING CULTURAL, NATIONAL, AND RACIAL BOUNDARIES:
PORTRAITS OF DIPLOMATS AND THE PRE-COLONIAL
FRENCH-COCHINCHINESE EXCHANGE, 1787-1863

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ABSTRACT

ASHLEY BRUCKBAUER: Crossing Cultural, National, and Racial Boundaries: Portraits of Diplomats and the pre-colonial French-Cochinchinese Exchange, 1787-1863
(Under the direction of Dr. Mary D. Sheriff)

In this thesis, I examine portraits of diplomatic figures produced between two official embassies from Cochinchina to France in 1787 and 1863 that marked a pre-colonial period of increasing contact and exchange between the two Kingdoms. I demonstrate these portraits’ departure from earlier works of diplomatic portraiture and French depictions of foreigners through a close visual analysis of their presentation of the sitters. The images foreground the French and Cochinchinese diplomats crossing cultural boundaries of costume and customs, national boundaries of loyalty, and racial boundaries of blood. By depicting these individuals as mixed or hybrid, I argue that the works both negotiated and complicated eighteenth- and nineteenth-century divides between “French” and “foreign.” The portraits’ shifting form and function reveal France’s vacillating attitudes towards and ambivalent foreign policies regarding pre-colonial Cochinchina, which were based on an evolving French imagining of this little-known “Other” within the frame of French Empire.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ........................................................................................................vi

SECTION

I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 1

II. THE 1787 COCHINCHINESE EMBASSY, FRENCH FANTASY, AND MAUPÉRIN’S PORTRAIT OF PRINCE CÀNH ................................................................. 7

III. DIVIDED ALLEGIENCES AND PORTRAITS OF FRENCH MANDARINS, 1789-1824 .................................................................................................................... 30

IV. THE 1863 COCHINCHINESE EMBASSY, MIXED REALITY, AND POTTEAU’S *COLLECTION ANTHROPOLOGIQUE* .................................................. 42

V. CONCLUSION .......................................................................................................................... 58

ILLUSTRATIONS .......................................................................................................................... 61

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................................... 95
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1  Maupérin, Portrait of Prince Nguyễn Phúc Cảnh, 1787................................. 61
Fig. 2  Antoine-François Callet, Portrait of Charles Gravier, c. 1781 ......................... 62
Fig. 3  Hyacinthe Rigaud, Portrait of Louis XIV, 1710............................................. 63
Fig. 4  Jacques-André-Joseph Aved, Portrait of Said Effendi, 1742 .............................. 64
Fig. 5  Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Mohammed Dervish Khan, 1787 .................. 65
Fig. 6  J. Laroque, Indons, from Encyclopédie des voyages, 1796 ............................. 66
Fig. 7  Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, Reception of the Children of the Marquis de Bonnac
by the Ottoman Vizier, c. 1713-24................................................................. 67
Fig. 8  Claude Seraucourt, Portrait of Said Mehmet Pacha Begler, 1741 ..................... 68
Fig. 9  Petit, Portrait of Mehmet Meshoud Bey, son of Said Mehmet Pacha, 1742 ..... 69
Fig. 10 Pierre d’Ulin, Reception of Mehmet Effendi at the Hotel des Invalides, 1721 ... 70
Fig. 11 Unknown artist, Portrait of Son of Grand Vizier Shuja-ud-Daula, c. 1753-75 ... 71
Fig. 12 Johann Zoffany, Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons, 1764-65 ............ 72
Fig. 13 Jean-Louis Tocqué, Le Dauphin, fils de Louis XV, 1739 ............................... 73
Fig. 14 Maupérin, Portrait of Pigneaux de Béhaine, 1787 ...................................... 74
Fig. 15 Paul Sarrut after unknown artist, Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau,
c. 1805 ............................................................................................................. 75
Fig. 16 Unknown artist, Miniature of Jean-Marie Dayot, c. 1789-1809 ..................... 76
Fig. 17 Unknown artist, Philippe Vannier and his family, c. 1815 ............................. 77
Fig. 18 Unknown artist, Jean-Marie Dayot and his brother Felix, c. 1788-1809 ........ 78
Fig. 19 Unknown artist, Portrait of Philippe Vannier, c. 1825-42 ............................. 79
Fig. 20 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Ho-van-huan, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué, Secrétaire
du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère class from Collection
Anthropologique 1863 ..................................................................................... 80
Fig. 21 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Huang Indromtry, 1861 ........................................ 81
Fig. 22 Adolph Diedrich Kindermann, Portrait of Antoine Édouard Thouvenel, 1854 ... 82

Fig. 23 André-Adolphe-Éugène Disdéri, Carte de visite of Napoléon III, 1859 .............. 83

Fig. 24 Franz Xaver Winterhalter, Portrait of Napoléon III, 1855 ...................... 84

Fig. 25 Alexandre Cabanel, Napoléon III, c. 1865 ........................................ 85

Fig. 26 André-Adolphe-Éugène Disdéri, Portraits of French Ministers in medallions, 1860 ................................................................. 86

Fig. 27 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Negative of Ta Hué Ké, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué, Secrétaire du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère class, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 ........................................ 87

Fig. 28 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Positive of Ta Hué Ké, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué, Secrétaire du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère class, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 ........................................ 88

Fig. 29 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Ta Hué Ké in profile, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué, Secrétaire du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère class, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 ........................................ 89

Fig. 30 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Ta Hué Ké frontal, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué, Secrétaire du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère class, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 ........................................ 89

Fig. 31 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Sam-Diam, 75 ans, Cochinchinoise née à Hué, fille de Mandarin et Vve de Mr. Vannier, ancien officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi Gia-Long, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 ......................................................... 90

Fig. 32 Adolphe François Pannemaker, Jeune fille cochinchinoise, from Illustrations de mœurs, usages, et costumes de tous les peuples du monde, 1843-44 ............. 91

Fig. 33 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Marie Vannier, 40 ans, née à Hué de Seu-Dong cochinchinoise, et de Mr Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia Long en pied, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 .............................................................. 92

Fig. 34 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Marie Vannier in profile, 40 ans, née à Hué de Seu-Dong cochinchinoise, et de Mr Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia Long, from Collection Anthropologique, 1863 .............................................................. 93

Fig. 35 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, Marie Vannier frontal, 40 ans, née à Hué de Seu-Dong cochinchinoise, et de Mr Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia Long,
Fig. 36 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, *Michel Vannier in profile, 51 ans, né à Hué de Sam-Diam cochinchinoise, et de Mr. Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia-Long*, from *Collection Anthropologique*, 1863 ......................................................... 93

Fig. 37 Jacques-Philippe Potteau, *Michel Vannier frontal, 51 ans, né à Hué de Sam-Diam cochinchinoise, et de Mr. Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia-Long*, from *Collection Anthropologique*, 1863 ......................................................... 94
I. INTRODUCTION

The Séminaire des Missions Étrangères in Paris houses a full-length portrait (Fig. 1) of seven-year-old Prince Nguyễn Phúc Cánh (1780-1801) standing within a French interior wearing fantastical Franco-Cochinchinese dress. This unstudied work by little-known French painter Maupéron (active ca. 1774-1800) memorializes the first diplomatic embassy from Cochinchina to France in 1787 and marks the beginning of a larger narrative surrounding pre-colonial diplomatic exchange between the two countries.¹ During the eighteenth century, Europeans applied the label “Cochinchina” to the Nguyễn Kingdom located in modern-day central Vietnam.² Beginning with Maupéron’s image, this thesis examines three chronologically discrete groups of portraits featuring diplomatic figures involved in the French-Cochinchinese contact between 1787 and the eve of French colonization of the region in 1863.

¹Maupéron was a member of the Académie de Saint Luc and exhibited there in 1774. He also exhibited work at the Salon de la Correspondance in 1782 and, after the Revolution, at the official Salon at the Louvre in 1791 and 1800. In 1774, Pierre Adrien Le Beau (1744-1817) engraved a portrait of Marie Antoinette after a painting by Maupéron, but I have been unable to track down the location of the painting. However, this royal commission does signal Maupéron’s presence at Versailles and his engagement with the Queen. The Getty’s Union List of Artist Names identifies Maupéron’s first names as François Nicolas, but these do not appear in Bénézit or other sources, where he is simply identified by his surname. The alternative spelling “Maupérrin” is used in several of the Salon livret including works by the artist.

²In the eighteenth century, Cochinchina was the southern Kingdom in a larger area connected by language and a theoretical allegiance to the region’s Lê Dynasty king. After French colonization in 1864, the term moved south to encompass the lower-third of Vietnam, which became the French colony of Cochinchina. The northern parts became the French protectorates of Annam and Tonkin. With the signing of the Geneva Agreements in 1954, colonial Cochinchina and Annam were combined to create the state of South Vietnam. Therefore, Cochinchina is a rather unstable and in some sense problematic term that shifts meaning over time. Nevertheless, I have chosen to employ it rather than the Vietnamese or modern-day labels because it was the term used by the French during the period with which this paper is concerned. I use the designation Cochinchinese for the peoples of Cochinchina rather than Vietnamese for the same reason. I will apply both words much as the French did, that is to say inconsistently, to the peoples and places of the southern Kingdom ruled by the Nguyễn clan between 1558 and 1778, the southern territories fought over by the Nguyễn and Tay Son between 1771 and 1802, and the larger united territory of the Nguyễn Dynasty between 1802 and 1863.
Produced between two Cochinchinese embassies to France in 1787 and 1863, the portraits under discussion demonstrate the increased level of exchange between France and Cochinchina in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The continual movement of the represented figures back and forth across the geographical boundaries between France and Cochinchina results in their crossing of cultural boundaries of costume and customs, national boundaries of loyalty, and racial boundaries of blood. I argue that the portraits of these French and Cochinchinese diplomats foreground the sitters’ crossing of boundaries and present them as culturally, nationally, or racially mixed. The portraits’ suggestion of the indeterminacy or hybridity of these figures outstrips the liminality associated with the diplomat as a cultural mediator, and the images undermine diplomatic portraiture’s conventional purpose of representing the diplomat as a synecdoche for a larger national or ethnic identity. By visualizing the “Other” within, the images discussed complicate eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notions of stable and hermetic “French” and “foreign” identities, as well as the divisive “us”-“them” binary typically cast over the colonizer-colonized dynamic in European imperial history.

The increased contact and mixing of French and Cochinchinese peoples revealed in these portraits of diplomatic figures reinforced the need to negotiate “French” and “non-French” identities in relation to one another. Images played a central role in this negotiation. The eighteenth century saw an outpouring of travel literature and costume books that organized foreign peoples into clear, qualifiable categories. The plates in these sources present inhabitants of foreign lands as “types,” distinguished not only by a difference in culture but also, perhaps more tellingly, by differences in rank, status, and occupation within a culture. In the nineteenth century, the nascent pseudo-sciences of
ethnography and anthropology shifted the determinant for hierarchical placement of peoples to race and employed so-called race photography for support. The portraits of diplomats in this study disrupt these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century frameworks of difference by visualizing slippages between “self” and “Other,” “French” and “foreign,” and “white” and “non-white.”

In this thesis, I separate the terms “diplomatic portrait” and “portrait of diplomats.” I place the portraits that I analyze in the latter category due to their deviation from traditional diplomatic portraiture in their form and function. Diplomatic portraits depicted figures such as ambassadors, consuls, and ministers of State. The images were often official commissions, and the finished products usually hung in official residences or government buildings alongside the rest of the royal or state collection. Some portraits were also engraved, printed, and circulated as single sheets or illustrations in books such as the Royal Almanac. Recent appointments and shifts in title of French diplomats, as well as foreign embassies’ visits to France, merited commemoration of an individual with a diplomatic portrait. These official commissions often served as diplomatic gifts between France and its allies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³

Antoine-François Callet’s (1741-1823) Portrait of Charles Gravier (Fig. 2) from 1781 includes several elements common to traditional diplomatic portraiture in France: a dignified male figure wearing official regalia, positioned next to instruments of learning and exchange that befit the station of the diplomat, and situated within a decorative interior indicative of status and wealth. Callet completed the painting, one of many portraits of the Comte de Vergennes (1717-1787), after Louis XVI (1754-1793)

³In addition to giving French representations of foreign diplomats as gifts, portraits of the French sovereign were also a popular diplomatic gift given on behalf of France to its allies.
appointed Gravier Minister of State in 1774. The artist depicts the French diplomat seated in the foreground of a Neoclassical French interior beside a writing desk with rocaille decoration. Vergennes bears the insignia of the French chivalric Order of the Holy Spirit and holds a letter marked “au roi.” The abundance of cultural, national, and ethnic objects and regalia often found in diplomatic portraits such as Callet’s communicate an official message concerning the wealth, status, and character of the homeland and ostensibly function to represent the diplomat as a paragon of the larger French or foreign population to which he belongs.

Unlike Callet’s diplomatic portrait of Vergennes, most of the portraits of diplomats that I engage present the sitters in costumes, settings, and compositions or with objects, regalia, and labels that combine “French” and “foreign” markers of identity. These images highlight the sitters’ hybridity, challenging the clear definition and separation of various cultural, national, and in some cases racial identities typically reinforced by diplomatic portraiture. While diplomats are liminal or “in-between” figures that negotiate between two countries, cultures, and sets of interests, often adopting cultural sensitivity for foreign customs, they ultimately attempt to satisfy the official ends of their home country. The escalating levels of cultural, national, and racial crossing indicated in the portraits related to the pre-colonial French-Cochinchinese exchange extend beyond the purpose of cultural mediation or serving the diplomatic interests of the homeland and in some cases threaten those interests. The crossings and mixtures signaled in the portraits range from superficial cultural customs such as dress that could

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4This cultural sensitivity or adoption of foreign customs is clearly seen in diplomatic portraits surrounding the French-Ottoman exchange in the eighteenth century. Jean-Baptiste Vanmour repeatedly depicts European diplomats wearing “robes of honor” during their welcome reception by the Ottoman sultan. These were worn over European dress, which was considered immodest by the Ottomans due to its close fit to the body.
be easily put on or taken off, to aspects of national character such as religion or allegiance to country that required greater efforts to shift, to, finally, biological racial realities of parentage and blood that were inalterable. This hybridity reveals a more nuanced and ambivalent relationship between France and pre-colonial Cochinchina than studies of French Empire typically acknowledge or assume. However, by collapsing “French” and “foreign” in paint or in reality, hybrid figures contributed to the French desire to establish and control the French people’s cultural and racial purity and superiority, propelling eighteenth-century typologies and nineteenth-century inquiries into anthropology, ethnology, and race theory.

The portraits of diplomats discussed also vary from diplomatic portraiture in terms of the station of the individuals pictured. As demonstrated in Callet’s portrait, the figures portrayed in diplomatic portraits hold an official diplomatic title, such as Consul, Ambassador, or Minister of State. Though some of the sitters I discuss, such as Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau (1769-1832) and Phan Thanh Gián (1796-1867), did retain the titles of French First Consul to Hué and Cochinchinese First Ambassador, others participated in diplomatic roles or served diplomatic functions in an unofficial or honorary capacity, further demonstrating the ambiguity of the figures depicted. However, I refer to this broad range of characters—royals, missionaries, naval officers, court mandarins or scholar-bureaucrats, and mixed-race individuals—as diplomatic figures because each served officially or unofficially as an intermediary between or representative and sometimes plenipotentiary of the Nguyễn and French governments. Finally, with the notable exception of Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cạnh, the portraits I examine were not generated within the official context of a government commission, though the first and
third groups of portraits were associated with official embassies. Instead, the sitters and their families sometimes privately commissioned these works, as in the case of the second group, or the images publically circulated within scholarly arenas, as in the case of the third group.  

5Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cánh is assumed to be a commission by the Crown, considering the artist’s earlier portrait of Marie Antoinette. Alternatively, it may have been commissioned by the Missions Étrangères de Paris along with Maupérin’s portrait of Bishop Pigneaux de Béhaine completed the same year.

6As with most new research on an understudied topic, this project had several limitations. While a good deal of secondary research on French involvement in Cochinchina has been published, there are currently no scholarly studies of the images produced within the context of this exchange. Primary documents were obtained when possible, but archival documents in France and Vietnam remain a largely unexploited resource in this paper and may shed light on numerous questions about the images that have gone unanswered. This information is most urgently needed in relation to the provenance and authorship of several of the works. Finally, the dearth of scholarship on eighteenth-century Vietnamese art and art of the Nguyễn court, combined with my own lack of expertise in the field of Southeast Asian art history, has prohibited a more comparative, and perhaps holistic, approach.
II. THE 1787 COCHINCHINESE EMBASSY, FRENCH FANTASY, AND MAUPÉRIN’S PORTRAIT OF PRINCE CANH

Maupérin’s (active ca. 1774-1800) portrait (Fig. 1) of Prince Nguyễn Phúc Cánh (1780-1801) from 1787 depicts the seven-year-old heir to the throne of Cochinchina standing within a French interior at Versailles. The young Prince dominates the work through his central placement, nearness to the picture plane, and extravagant costume. Set within the otherwise dark or muted interior, the vivid crimson color of his velvet jacket and splendid silk turban immediately capture the viewer’s eye. Likewise, the glittering gold cord trim of his jacket and a series of tassels extending down his torso call attention to his form and add to his spectacular appearance. These flourishes, along with the white chemise seen protruding from the sleeves of his jacket, suggest the costume’s European or French influence, recalling both hussar military uniforms and the French royal livery.

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7 The Prince died of smallpox at the young age of twenty-one.

8 An anonymous miniature portrait of the Prince, commissioned by Pigneaux de Béhaine and given to his nephew as a gift, shows Cánh in the same elaborate costume. This work is mentioned and reproduced in Paul Bouvet and André Masson, *Iconographie historique de l’Indochine française* (Paris : Les Editions G. Van Oest, 1931), 26, pl. 38.

9 A painting by Italian artist Peitro Longhi of the Sagredo Family from c. 1752 currently in the Galleria Querini Stampaglia in Venice pictures the young son of the family in a coat with cords, tassels, and frogging very similar to that of Prince Cánh. Madeleine Delpierre notes in her *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century* that “the aristocracy liked to dress their children up in, for instance Hungarian dress, heavy with frogging and derived from the clothes worn by pages or from military uniforms.” Madeleine Delpierre, *Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 30. Pages of the bedchamber also wore the royal livery made of crimson velvet coats with gold braid. Gold braid, tassels, and frogging also became a popular embellishment of French and British dress in the eighteenth century and can be seen in many portraits of the aristocracy, such as on the bodice of the Marquise de Lamure’s dress in Charles Antoine Cypel’s portrait from c. 1745 and
The Prince stands upright, his body turned at an angle, and his gaze focused outward at the viewer in a manner evoking traditional French royal portraits, such as Hyacinthe Rigaud’s (1659-1743) *Portrait of Louis XIV* (Fig. 3) from 1701, or images of French dignitaries and diplomats, such as Antoine-François Callet’s (1741-1823) *Portrait of Charles Gravier*. Čánh appears more like one of these distinguished figures in miniature than a seven-year-old child in a foreign environment. He rests his left hand on his hip, and he extends his right hand outward to touch an object, likely a Cochinchinese mandarin or scholar-bureaucrat’s hat, which sits on the richly draped table beside him. A similar hat positioned on a cushion in the seat of a chair on the opposite side of the Prince balances the first. Both items appear decorated with gilt, inlay, and precious stones, perhaps representing diplomatic gifts intended for the French king.

Luxurious fabrics decorate and partially obscure the space surrounding the Prince. A plush ornamental carpet with stylized vegetal designs covers the floor of the apartment, and the dark emerald color of the leaves recurs in a heavy drape that flows down behind the figure and partially conceals the background. A golden cloth with heavy braiding and fringe around its edges extends over the table and echoes the decoration on the Prince’s jacket, as well as the gold of the foreign objects on the tabletop and cushion, the curved golden legs of the chair, and the Prince’s own tawny complexion. Čánh’s black hair appears from beneath a tightly-wrapped headdress, and his dark eyes gaze out at the

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11 Diplomatic gifts were a common feature of images produced surrounding diplomatic exchange. They often appear in the foreground of works representing diplomatic receptions by the sovereign.
viewer, drawing the focus to his adolescent and distinctly non-French face as the centerpiece of this assortment of French and foreign splendor.

This portrait commemorates Prince Cánh’s visit to the court at Versailles in 1787, the first official Cochininese journey to France. The Cochininese embassy coincided with ousted Prince Nguyễn Phúc Ánh’s (1762-1820) attempt to regain power over the Kingdom of Cochinchina after a series of revolts and battles that began in 1771. The envoy to France had the specific purpose of soliciting the aid of Louis XVI (1754-1793) and the French military in this endeavor. Nguyễn Ánh sent his son, Prince Cánh, as his representative, a testament to the Cochininese King’s seriousness and good faith in establishing a treaty with France. Nguyễn Ánh’s trusted advisor, French

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12 Several scholars note Mgr Pallu’s trip to Tonkin in 1672 and those of the missionaries Lefebvre and Geffraud in Hanoi, but a distinction must be made between French envoys to Tonkin and those to Cochinchina, as these were two separate and often antagonistic kingdoms between 1558 and 1777. Several of these documents are reproduced in Georges Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les texts de la France en Indochine des origins à 1914* (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955).

13 The Tay Son rebellion that erupted in 1771 due to high taxes and dissatisfaction with the regent, combined with attacks by the Trinh from Tonkin after almost a century of peace, initiated the crisis in Cochinchina that directly led to Nguyễn Ánh’s plea for help from France. The situation had become especially desperate after the entire Nguyễn royal family was killed in 1788, save Nguyễn Ánh, the new heir apparent, followed by the failure of Siamese operations in Cochinchina on behalf of Nguyễn Ánh in 1782, and the growing power of the Tay Son after their defeat of their former Trinh allies in 1786. Nguyễn Ánh had already sent embassies to Cambodia, Siam, India, and Malacca and attempted to negotiate direct assistance from the Dutch and Portuguese by the time Nguyễn Ánh sent his son and the rest of the embassy to France in 1787. For an overview of the Tay Son battles and antagonisms between Cochinchina and Tonkin, see Tana Li, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1998).

14 Nguyễn Ánh wrote to Pigneaux de Béhaine: “In the past, each country that entered into relations with one another would exchange a child as a guarantee of their good faith. I will let you take my son Cánh as a guarantee. Cánh is four years old and has only recently been separated from his mother’s bosom. I entrust him to your good protection. The mountains and streams are separated and our way is filled with thorns as there is a rebellion, so I charge you to guard and protect Cánh.” Cited in Wynn Wilcox, “Allegories of Vietnam: Transculturation and the Origin Myths of Franco-Vietnamese Relations” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2002), 152. In a letter to Louis XVI, Nguyễn Ánh writes “connaissant vos vertus, je me flatte que vous daignerez accueillir mon jeune enfant, que vous aurez compassion de son sort, et j’espère que dans peu j’aurai la joie de le voir revenir avec les secours nécessaires. » Cited in Taboulet, *La Geste française*, 178. Frédéric Mantienne questions whether Nguyễn Ánh sent the Prince to France to keep him safe during the rebellion rather than as a gesture of goodwill. Frédéric Mantienne, *Mgr. Pierre Pigneaux, évêque d’Adran et mandarin de Cochinchina*, 1741-1799 (Paris: Indes savants, 2012), 81. Wynn Wilcox also refers...
missionary Pierre-Joseph-Georges Pigneaux de Béhaine (1741-1799), and a small entourage of family members and servants accompanied the young Prince.\textsuperscript{15} France had long been interested in establishing commercial exchange with Cochinchina, and the circumstances surrounding the 1787 embassy seemed to provide the ideal opportunity for such involvement.\textsuperscript{16}

The embassy arrived in France in February of 1787, and several audiences with both Louis XVI and the Foreign Ministry took place in May, September, and November of that year. Pigneaux met with the King, his ministers, and several high-ranking members of the court in early May to make the case for French involvement in Cochinchina.\textsuperscript{17} During these visits, Prince Cạnh appears to have had a significant effect on the court as a captivating object of spectacle. Pigneaux wrote to M. Liot, “The young prince enchants everyone, [and] I am finding it difficult to believe that God does not have grand intentions for this child.”\textsuperscript{18} The Cochinchinese royal became a playmate for the to Prince Cạnh being brought to France as a “hostage” to “prove to European nations that there were surviving descendants of the Nguyễn house”. Wynn Wilcox, ed., *Vietnam and the West: New Approaches* (Ithaca: Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program, 2010), 75. I would add that in some ways Nguyễn Ánh’s sending of his son to Louis XVI recalls the sending of spectacular gifts to foreign courts as signs of goodwill.

\textsuperscript{15} Also, Béhaine’s presence signals the missionary involvement in the region which dates to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Béhaine, who belonged to the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), arrived in the Mac capital of Ha Tien in northern Vietnam in 1767, but he would meet Nguyễn Ánh in Siam, where the displaced Prince fled after the murder of his family in 1778. The French missionary became one of Ánh’s most trusted advisers during the subsequent years and exerted substantial influence over Nguyễn Ánh’s policy as a mandarin of the court. For a thorough study of the Bishop and his involvement at the Nguyễn court see Mantienne’s works.

\textsuperscript{16} The spread of Britain’s power in India and other parts of the world spurred competition with the French who clamored to have a stake in the region. Mantienne, *Mgr. Pierre Pigneaux*, 94-95.

\textsuperscript{17} For more on the contents of this interview and the Bishop and Prince Cạnh’s months in France see Mantienne’s work.

\textsuperscript{18} « Le jeune prince enchante tout le monde, écrivait-il à M. Liot; j’ai bien peine à croire que Dieu n’ait pas de grandes vues sur cet enfant. » Louis Eugene Louvet, *La Cochinchinese religieuse* (Paris : E. Leroux, 1885), 28-29.
Dauphin and the other royal children, and the French court gave parties in his favor and wrote songs about him.\(^{19}\) Even if the Comte de Moré (1758-1837) found it difficult to see the child and his entourage without laughing given their “short stature,” he writes in his memoires that the legitimacy of the Cochinchinese Prince “didn’t appear doubtful to me for an instant.”\(^{20}\) Furthermore, the hairdresser of Queen Marie Antoinette, Léonard, reportedly invented a hairstyle for men that imitated that of the Prince and a chignon à la chinoise for the ladies of the court during the young foreigner’s visit.\(^{21}\) Thomas Jefferson, who traveled to Versailles the same year as the United States’ Minister to France, also mentions his audience with the Prince in a 1788 letter.\(^{22}\) Prince Cạnh’s popularity at court may have contributed to finalizing a treaty between France and Cochinchina, the so-called Treaty of Versailles of 1787, which Louis XVI’s Foreign Minister, Armand Marc or Comte de Montmorin (1745-1792), and Pignéaux signed on November 28\(^{th}\).\(^{23}\)

The treaty promised French military aid in the form of ships, supplies, and men to Nguyễn Ánh in exchange for French ownership of the Port of Tourane and the Island of

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\(^{22}\)Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: J.C. Riker, 1853), 347. The content of this letter primarily concerns Cochinchinese rice, a specific breed of which Jefferson was quite eager to acquire. During Jefferson’s audience with Prince Cạnh, he apparently asked the Prince to send a sampling of this rice to America upon his return to Cochinchina.

Poulo-Condore, as well as France’s exclusive right among the European countries to trade with Cochinchina.\(^{24}\)

An anonymous critic chastised Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cảnh, displayed at the Salon of 1791 with the title “Un jeune prince indien,” as a bizarre representation of the foreign subject.\(^{25}\) The critic employs the term “barbouillés” to refer to what he perceives as the muddled or confusing way in which Maupérin has rendered the figure.\(^{26}\) It is unclear whether the critic aims his distaste at the artist’s handling of the paint and style of the work or Maupérin’s non-empirical and fantastical portrayal of the Prince. The relatively high-finish of the work, detailed and naturalistic rather than sketchy or visually obscure, and the critic’s suggestion that after botching this depiction the artist “ought to hasten to send himself to the Indies” to observe the inhabitants support the latter alternative. The critic’s harsh evaluation of Maupérin’s portrayal of the Prince suggests an existing expectation of how such an individual should look and that the artist’s representation did not match this expectation. By adhering to French conventions of portraiture and mixing “French” and “foreign” objects, Maupérin tempers the Prince’s “Otherness” and presents a culturally ambiguous figure. It seems to be the critic’s

\(^{24}\)Poulo-Condore was a key gain for the French because it allowed them to occupy the coast of Cochinchina, which permitted them the ability to disrupt English trade routes between Canton and England.


\(^{26}\)Jean-François Féraud’s *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (1787-88) gives several definitions for the verb barbouiller including : « 1°. Salir, gâter. On lui a barbouillé le visage, se barbouiller les mains, être barbouillé d’encre. = 2°. Peindre grossièrement de quelque couleur avec une brosse; barbouiller des portes, des fenêtres. On ne le dit que par mépris. On dit plus ordinairement peindre. = 3°. Barbouiller du papier, beaucoup écrire, mais fort mal. = 4°. Barbouiller un récit; le rendre d’une manière confuse et embrouillée. » The verb was commonly used in Salon criticism to connote the second meaning, but I argue that the critic can be interpreted as implying both the second and fourth meanings in this particular instance.
discomfort with such indeterminacy that leads him to dub the painting as “barbouillés” or muddled.

Eighteenth-century critics and the wider Salon audience would have been familiar with representations of foreigners from “exotic”—unfamiliar, geographically distant, and often romanticized—lands through the images of “types” widely-circulated as illustrations in travel and costume books of the period. In addition to culture, images of “types” classify foreign peoples by status, such as ruler, noble, servant, and peasant, and by occupation, such as musician or soldier. They distill these categories into a single figure that becomes the category’s representative and is portrayed “empirically,” often against a sparse background or within a meticulously detailed “indigenous” landscape. Jesuit Christoforo Borri’s (1583-1632) *Relazione della nuova missione delli P.P. della Compagnia di Gesù al Regno della Cocincina*, published in 1631, was the first European account of Cochinchina, and Cochinchinese “types” appear in the 1806 edition of Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur’s (1757-1810) *Encyclopédie des Voyages* (1796), John Barrow’s *A Voyage to Cochinchina in the Years 1792 and 1793* (1806), and Auguste Wallen and Adolphe François Pannemaker’s *Illustrations de Moeurs, usages et costumes de tous les peuples du monde* (1843). These seem to be the sort of images the critic claims Maupérin departs from but should imitate when he suggests the artist travel to “the Indies” and refers to portrayals of “Indians” the French are accustomed to seeing. By contrasting Maupérin’s image with more common depictions of foreigners, the critic

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27 Mantienne notes the importance of examining the eighteenth-century literature on Cochinchina because it is at the end of this century that the region begins to interest France commercially and strategically. Additionally, most of the ideas, true and false, that circulated about Cochinchina in the nineteenth century were notions born in the eighteenth, and these ideas play a key part in France’s involvement in the region during the Second Empire. Frederic Mantienne and Keith W. Taylor, *Monde du Vietnam= Vietnam World. Hommage à Nguyên The Ánh* (Paris: Indes savants, 2008).
implies that the latter are not “barbouillés” but rendered in a clear and truthful manner. The vague title of “a young Indian prince” assigned to Maupérin’s portrait in the 1791 Salon livret matches the generalized labels usually given to these images of “types” and perhaps indicates an attempt to erase Prince Cảnh’s specific and complex identity in favor of abiding by a typology. However, the title cannot deny Maupérin’s hybridization of Prince Cảnh in fanciful Franco-Vietnamese dress, in a pose befitting a French king, and surrounded by French and “exotic” grandeur. Maupérin abandons the tropes of the clearly foreign “types” from travel or costume books and presents an inexact figure. In this sense, the artist botches or “barbouillés” the portrait.

It is true that Maupérin’s portrait includes fantastic French-constructed flourishes that do not reflect an empirical recording of native Cochinchinese costume and character, but this type of elaboration was not uncommon in contemporary French portrayals of foreigners. More unusual was the artist’s depiction of an “exotic Other” in a way that adhered more to French conventions of portraying French dignitaries and royal figures than to those of depicting foreign “types” in travel and costume books. A comparison of the portrait of Prince Cảnh with one of the most well-known official monarch portraits, Rigaud’s *Portait of Louis XIV* (Fig. 3) from 1701, reveals immediate similarities in the organization of the compositions, poses and gestures of the figures, and included surrounding objects. Both Cảnh and Louis XIV are situated centrally within their respective compositions and occupy about one-third of the canvases. They hold a similar

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28 Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson’s *Un Indien* from 1807 and Marie-Guillemin Benoist’s *Portrait of a Negress* from 1800 employ the same type of vague labeling system that mimics the engraved “types” from travel and costume books. However, the title of “un jeune prince indien” is provocative in its erasure from public consciousness the specific identity of Cảnh and his visit to Versailles only four years prior. The vague label excludes the critics and public from this knowledge and begs the question of why Maupérin would have allowed for the use of such a title.
upright pose, with their bodies turned slightly towards the left side of the images and their gazes focused out at the viewer. Likewise, both rest their left hands on their hips and extend their right arms outward in a gesture towards an object of status and power. For Louis XIV, this object is his royal crown resting on a cushion and indicated by the line of the scepter on which the King leans. Alternatively, Prince Cành touches a Cochinichinese mandarin’s hat. However, a second piece of elaborate headgear sitting on a brocaded cushion opposite this hat visually echoes the French crown on the cushion in Louis XIV’s portrait. Finally, the portraits situate both figures in lavish French interiors partially obscured by heavy drapery as backdrops for the scenes.

By following the conventions of official French royal portraiture, presenting the Prince surrounded by trappings associated with Frenchness, and constructing an imagined Cochinichinese royal garb embellished with European gold cords, tassels, and frogging and topped with a flamboyant headdress, Maupérin’s portrait undermines the traditional reading of such a figure as entirely foreign. In other words, the artist represents the Prince crossing cultural, as well as geographical, boundaries between France and Cochinchina. Such a drastic departure from tradition begs the question of why the artist would embrace this extreme subversion. The portrait’s European and French components bring the non-French and non-European elements of Prince Cành’s person, costume, and gifts into high relief. This tension enhances the strangeness of the figure and likely indulged the late eighteenth-century French court’s notion of Prince Cành as a marvelous spectacle. However, such a slippage between “French” and “foreign” is not entirely
unique within the context of French representations of non-European visitors to Versailles.\textsuperscript{29}

Jacques-André-Joseph Aved’s (1702-1766) full-length portrait of Turkish Ambassador Said Effendi from 1742 (Fig. 4) depicts the Ottoman diplomat as an “Enlightened Turk” who has adopted manners perceived as characteristically French.\textsuperscript{30}

Like Maupérin’s image of Prince Cạnh, Aved’s portrait presents Effendi within a lavish and somewhat cluttered apartment at Versailles. Both figures appear undeniably foreign in their French interiors. The upright posture, three-quarter stance, and gaze out at the viewer of both individuals preclude their association with any pre-existing stereotypes of the languid or violent “Oriental.” Effendi extends his right arm, gesturing towards the many enlightenment symbols of learning and refinement that surround him, including numerous heavy leather-bound volumes, a smattering of parchment, along with a globe, telescope, and several maps. Prince Cạnh likewise extends his left arm to touch a mandarin’s hat, also an object of status and learning, though unmistakably non-French.

The two portraits’ creation within a diplomatic context suggests an additional significance behind their visual similarities. Indeed, both Cạnh and Effendi reflect a French Enlightenment model of mankind in a manner similar to portraits of French diplomats, such as Callet’s image of the Comte de Vergennes, and distinct from other

\textsuperscript{29}Images of culturally cross-dressed French and foreign diplomats also appeared earlier in the eighteenth century. In particular, cultural cross-dressing was common among French diplomats in the Ottoman Empire, and while Turks themselves did not don French costume for religious reasons, they sometimes adopted characteristically-perceived French manners for diplomatic ends.

\textsuperscript{30}Said Effendi, Ottoman Ambassador to France, was repeatedly praised for his fluency in French, familiarity with French manners, and general refined comportment. “Enlightened Turk” is Perrin Stein’s term and she examines this portrait in detail as a visualization of the type. Perrin Stein, “Exoticism as Metaphor: ‘Turquerie’ in Eighteenth-Century French Art” (PhD diss., New York University, 1997).
portraits of foreign diplomats, such as Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun’s (1755-1842) portrait of the sword-bearing Indian Ambassador, Mohammed Dervish Khan from 1788.

While the 1787 embassy was the first Cochinchinese diplomatic mission to France, many foreign embassies traveled to Versailles in the eighteenth century, and a large body of visual material with well-established conventions surrounds them. French artists have repeatedly depicted the embassies’ ceremonial entries and exits into the city, portrayed their reception by the sovereign, and—as in the case of the works central to this paper—made portraits of their participating diplomatic members. It is within this larger context of eighteenth-century French foreign policy and the visual production surrounding it that the 1787 Cochinchinese embassy and Maupérin’s portrait should be situated. Like the signed treaty, the portrait of Prince Cánh serves as a document of the first diplomatic contact between France and Cochinchina and their formal establishment of reciprocal relations. The Prince, in his father’s absence, performed as the representative member of the Nguyễn royal family while in France and played a role akin to a diplomat or an ambassador in the formation of the relationship between the two Kingdoms. Therefore, this image belongs to the broader genre of diplomatic portraiture.

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31 French contact and exchange with non-European countries was instigated by a larger European competition for commercial, missionary, and colonial presence outside the continent. The multiple diplomatic embassies in the 1680s between France and Siam, where the French hoped to establish a commercial and missionary base in the capital of Ayutthaya, provide an early example of French diplomatic exchange with Asia. Several engraved images of the entry of the Siamese embassies to Versailles and their reception by Louis XIV appeared in the 1687 Royal Almanac (Fig. 2). Almost thirty years later in 1715, Antoine Coypel (1661-1722) recorded a Persian embassy that traveled to Versailles in Louis XIV Receiving Mehemet Raza-Bey, Ambassador to the Shah of Persia. Two highly-publicized Turkish embassies to Versailles in 1721 and 1741 were commemorated by royal commissions and purchases, such as Charles Parrocel’s (1688-1752) large-scale Arrivée de l’ambassade turque et Mehemet Effendi and Jacques-André-Joseph Aved’s (1702-1766) Portrait of Said Effendi (Fig. 4). Finally, Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842) painted several members of a group of Indian ambassadors that visited the French court in 1788 (Fig. 5).
The portrait's diplomatic context does not fully account for the image's unusual hybridization of Prince Cánh. Portraits of individual diplomatic figures take on a different charge than the more formal images of ceremonial entries, receptions, and exits that illustrate the official contact of two cultures. By providing a close-up view of a usually high-ranking individual from one side of the exchange, diplomatic portraits distill the larger foreign embassy or diplomatic mission into a single figure. Diplomatic portraiture typically employs conventionally “French” or “foreign” costumes, poses, and surroundings to emphasize the figures' unadulterated and readily identifiable nationality and ethnicity, portraying the diplomat as a synecdoche for the embassy, as well as the government and populace of the homeland he represents. In this sense, diplomatic portraits have a similar purpose to the illustrated “types” in costume and travel books.

Callet’s *Portrait of Charles Gravier* (Fig. 2) discussed above is an exemplar of the genre and illustrates many of the tropes used to convey “Frenchness” in French diplomatic portraits. In the foreground, the French Minister of State sits upright in a high-backed chair and leans one elbow on an ornately carved writing desk covered with thickly-bound books, a stack of parchment, and an inkwell. He holds a folded letter in his right hand that bears the words “au roi,” signaling the importance of the communications and affairs in which he is immersed. The Minister bears the insignia—a rich blue sash and silver breast medal with a cross and dove—of his membership in the French chivalric Order of the Holy Spirit. Visible behind the drapery that flows diagonally across the background, the austere architecture of the larger interior, including an arched niche and classical sculpture, appears in the top right corner of the canvas. The many details of the composition—from the rocaille decoration of the desk and antique
sculpture in the background to the instruments that surround Gravier and his decorative costume—communicate the figure’s status as an enlightened intellectual, formidable dignitary, and, above all, a Frenchman.

Emphasizing a hermetic national and ethnic character by depicting the figure in their indigenous dress and surrounding them with markers of their homeland, French portraits of foreign diplomats often operated in a similar manner to those of French diplomats. Vigée-Lebrun’s portrait of the Indian Ambassador Mohammed Dervish Khan (Fig. 5) and Césarine Henriette Flore Davin’s (1773-1844) portrait of the Persian Ambassador Askar-Khan (1808) demonstrate the conventions of portraying foreign diplomats during their travels in France. In 1788, Vigée-Lebrun painted portraits of two of the ambassadors of Indian Sultan Tipu Sahib (1750-1799). Only one of the images survives and this work portrays Mohammed Davich Khan standing upright and facing frontally with his left arm bent behind his back and his right extended to the side holding a long, curved sword. He wears a long white robe, a coat embroidered with golden flowers, and an elaborately patterned sash tied at the waist. The Ambassador’s dark skin contrasts with his pale garments and echoes the golden color of the glittering embroidery on his coat and sash. He turns his thickly-bearded face, as well as his gaze, towards the left side of the painting rather than looking out at the viewer.

Vigée-Lebrun’s depiction of the Indian ambassador visually aligns with contemporary images of Indian “types,” such as an engraving by J. Laroque labeled “Indons” in the Encyclopédie des voyages from 1796 (Fig. 6). Like most portrayals of “types,” the works share sparse compositions, detailed renderings of costume, and presentations of the individual as entirely “foreign.” The figures retain nearly identical
poses and each hold a long, curved sword as their single attribute. Like the character in the engraving, Khan appears against a vague and muted outdoor backdrop, allowing the imposing presence of the Ambassador to operate as the sole focus of the image. Nothing in Vigée-Lebrun’s composition would indicate that the artist painted this portrait in France, much less at the Parisian hotel where the Ambassadors were staying during their 1788 embassy. The portrait rejects any sign of a French setting or influence and focuses squarely on the conventionally conceived Indian attire, disposition, and dark complexion of the diplomat.

By depicting Prince Càngh in a hybrid manner that embraces an ambiguous identity, Maupérin’s portrait clearly departs from the images of Charles Gravier and Mohammed Davich Khan. The work upsets the ostensible function of the genre of diplomatic portraiture to illustrate the figure as a model “type” of the Kingdom of Cochinchina. Maupérin’s painting also goes beyond Aved’s portrait of Said Effendi to represent Prince Càngh as culturally ambiguous. Càngh’s extraordinary Franco-Cochinchinese dress, easily placed upon a child, cannot specify his identity in the way that Effendi’s traditional Ottoman garb with a turban and a full beard would have clearly signified his Islamic faith and Turkish nationality to the contemporary French audience. Likewise, Aved’s juxtaposition of Effendi in the foreground with the entire Turkish embassy visible in the background through an open archway underlines the Ambassador’s connection to a larger diplomatic mission that Maupérin’s portrait does not.

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32 Vigée-Lebrun mentions in her memoires that she went to the hotel where the Indian ambassadors were staying during their 1788 visit to paint their portraits. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Memoires of Madame Vigée-Lebrun, trans. Lionel Strachey (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1903).

33 The lack of specificity in Càngh’s hybrid and fantastic costume perhaps explains why Maupérin’s portrait was later labeled as “un jeune prince indien” in the Salon livret rather than as “un cochinchinois” or “Prince Càngh.”
While both portraits feature members of foreign diplomatic embassies to France assuming dignified postures in French surroundings, Prince Cạnh and Said Effendi’s differing religions, statuses, and ages are central to the charge and function of the two portraits. During a time when identity as an insider or outsider derived much more stock from religious affiliation and nobility of lineage than national or racial boundaries, I argue that Maupérin’s fantastic representation of the Prince drew upon Cạnh’s unique status as a child, Christian convert, and a royal. These aspects guided the artist away from the tropes and agendas of traditional diplomatic portraits like Callet’s, as well as less conventional ones like Aved’s. Furthermore, Cạnh’s status allowed Maupérin to muddle or “barbouillés” the Prince’s cultural or national identity and present a hybrid portrait containing “French” and “foreign” elements that did not adhere to the eighteenth-century typologies of either foreign diplomats or of “types” from “exotic” lands.

34 Effendi’s portrayal and presentation of himself seems to be bound up in the unique diplomatic relations between France and the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century that accompanied France’s shifting attitude towards the Ottomans as more “civilized” and therefore “more French” than other foreign peoples. The constructed nature of the “enlightened Turk” becomes more apparent upon comparing Aved’s portrait of Said Effendi with portraits by Ottoman artists of Ottoman sultans around the same period. While the tradition of miniature painting was shifting in Turkey to incorporate European elements of style, Ottoman artists and their patrons did not include European markers of erudition in their images and seemed unconcerned with portraying the Sultans as “enlightened.” While Effendi did speak French and embrace French customs, these aspects of his identity are foregrounded and overemphasized in Aved’s portrait in a manner they would not have been in Ottoman depictions. Selmin Kangal, ed., The Sultan’s Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman, trans. Priscilla Mary Isin (Istanbul: Isbank, 2000).

35 This aligns with French notions of “Otherness” prior to the Revolution, which focused on religion and class as more important markers for inclusion or exclusion than race or ethnicity. Race originally entered the French consciousness in relation to animals and breeding, but would eventually be applied to humans to refer to the inherited qualities and lineage of the monarch and his descendents and later the nobility and old families of Europe. One’s noblesse de race distinguished him or her from the newly knighted or vulgar nobility, titles that could be awarded by the king at any time. In 1678, La Roque published the Traité de nobles, which argued that the old and new nobilities were different species. The idea of race as characterized by physical characteristics such as skin color would not take off until the eighteenth century. For more on the origins of the modern concept of race in France, see Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
Cānh’s age as a boy of only seven years likely influenced Maupèrin’s unusual portrayal of the Prince. Like most depictions of children during the period, works that include diplomatic children, such as the sons of ambassadors or dignitaries, often show them as miniature versions of their adult counterparts. Jean-Baptiste Vanmour’s (1671-1737) painting of the reception of the Marquis de Bonnac’s children by the Ottoman vizier (Fig. 7) pictures the two small boys near the center of the canvas at the feet of the grand vizier. Notably, both children wear the same red coats, stockings, and tri-corn hats as several of the adult diplomats who gather in the foreground of the image. Two engraved porthole portraits of Said Effendi (Fig. 8) and his son Mehemet Meshoud Bey (Fig. 9) from around the time of the 1741 Turkish embassy to Versailles further demonstrate the consistent portrayal of diplomatic figures and their progeny. Both Effendi and his son are shown according to the conventions of porthole portraits, which present sitters as busts in oval frames against a blank background. Although Mehemet does not yet have the beard of his father, they wear nearly identical turbans and fur-trimmed overcoats and gaze out at the viewer like mirror images representing Effendi’s youthful past and Mehemet’s distinguished future.

Pierre d’Ulin’s (1669-1748) painting depicting the reception of Mehemet Effendi at Les Invalides in 1721 (Fig. 10) includes the single known instance in which a Turk appears in French attire. It is important to note that this cross-dressing occurs in the person of a small child holding the hand of Said Effendi, who accompanied his father on the 1721 Ottoman embassy to Versailles. Surrounded by adult Turks in traditional

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Turkish garb and Frenchmen in typical French attire, the young boy is without a turban and wears a brocade jacket, tights, and black clogs that echo the dress of the French. Likewise, a portrait from the mid-eighteenth century of one of the Indian Vizier Shuja-ud-Daulah’s (1732-1775) young sons (Fig. 11) portrays the boy in an amalgamation of Mughal and European dress. He wears a collared overcoat with gold buttons and a delicate white chemise that extends from under his coat at the sleeves and collar to form elaborate cuffs and an elegantly tied cravat.

Portraits of children of wealthy and powerful European patrons pictured in “exotic” dress reverse these instances of foreign children dressed as Europeans. They also echo the genre of the fancy dress portrait popular with European adult sitters. German artist Johann Zoffany’s (1733-1810) portrait of Queen Charlotte and her two eldest sons (Fig. 12) from 1764-65 provides a clear example of this. The children in the image, who are dressed-up in elaborate garb as Telemachus and a Turk, are able to embrace the “Other” within at the bequest of their mother who sits at her toilette. Note that while George and Frederick are wearing non-British and non-European costumes, Queen Charlotte dons formal European dress. This suggests childhood as a time when identity’s fluidity can be embraced without posing the same threat. Rather than portraying a childhood game of dress-up, the image reflects the manipulation of children’s clothing by adults. In this sense, Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cánh could


38Though her dress is European, Charlotte has chosen to decorate the room with many imported items from Flanders, Turkey, France, Germany, and China.

39Pointon argues that the presence of the costumes in the conversation piece suggests an alignment between the taming and containing of children and the civilizing of colonial peoples. Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 162.
permit a few flourishes of Frenchness, and French-constructed exotica in the case of the makeshift turban, to enhance the spectacular effect of the foreign child on adult French audiences.

Prince Cánh’s early conversion to Christianity, though he remained unbaptized, may provide further explanation regarding Maupérin’s unique portrayal. Many members of the non-European embassies discussed—those from Persia, Turkey, and India—were practitioners of Islam, and lived in regions without any notable level of Christian conversion. In the eighteenth century, specific dress could signify the wearer’s religion or faith. The turban in particular served as a marker of Islam, and for a diplomat such as Said Effendi to remove his turban to masquerade in French dress would have signaled an irreversible rejection of his identity as a Muslim. While Effendi could be presented as the “Enlightened Turk” in Aved’s portrait through his stance, gesture, and the objects surrounding him, he would forever be a “Turk” in dress and faith and therefore categorically not French.

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40Pigneaux de Béhaine writes in a letter that “the Prince, who is ‘not yet even six years old,’ is already saying his prayers, and is ‘full of the spirit and of the great fire for all that has to do with religion.’” Cited in Wilcox, “Allegories of Vietnam,” 158. Cánh’s cousin, Prince Pascal, who accompanied him to France in 1787, was Christian and baptized. This demonstrates Christianity’s influence on the Nguyễn royal family, though Nguyễn Ánh and his successor Minh Mang did not convert and were at times hostile to missionary presence in the region.

41This was not so for French and other European diplomats and expatriates in the Ottoman Empire who dressed in Turkish garb. Their cultural cross-dressing was not seen as a rejection of Christianity or conversion to Islam. See Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., Ottoman Costume: From Textile to Identity (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 116-117. Doubt was only cast over their French or Catholic identity if they combined this crossing with growing a beard or undergoing circumcision, as in the case of the Comte de Bonneval or Comte Pasha.

42For the French, Turkish national identity and the Islamic religion were synonymous. “Turning Turk” had a double meaning in the eighteenth century of not only adopting Turkish dress and manner but also Islam. Therefore, Turkish nationality, dress, and Islam served as interchangeable markers of one another in the eyes of the French.
Prince Cảnh’s Christian faith did not pose the same restriction of costume. Unlike the Ottoman Empire, Cochinchina and other parts of Southeast Asia had experienced a relatively active Christian missionary presence since the mid-seventeenth century.\(^\text{43}\) The first missionaries came to Cochinchina on Portuguese merchant ships in 1615, and an Italian Jesuit, Christoforo Borri, wrote the first European account of the region. After the establishment in 1664 of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), of which Pigneaux—Prince Cảnh’s mentor and spiritual steward—was a part, the French became the dominant missionary force in Cochinchina.\(^\text{44}\) Under the tutelage of Pigneaux, Cảnh adopted Christianity, garnering French hope that he would become the first Christian king on the throne of Cochinchina and sparking the French imagining of Cochinchina as assimilable. Cảnh’s conversion, which would have appeared to the French as an example of his enlightened character, may well have tempered Maupéron’s presentation of the Prince’s foreign origins and difference as non-French and non-European.

Finally, the Prince’s status as a member of the Nguyênh royal family in Cochinchina likely contributed to Maupéron’s portrayal of his pose and gesture in a manner akin to portraits of the French king and the dauphin. Maupéron’s portrait of Prince Cảnh follows dynastic portraits that represent royal and noble children as miniature embodiments of the adult status and virtues they are preordained to hold and exemplify. Jean-Louis Tocqué’s (1696-1772) portrait (Fig. 13) of Louis Ferdinand (1729-1765), the Dauphin of France, from 1739 provides an example of the genre and


depicts the young Prince at the age of nine. He wears a red coat with gold brocade, red breeches, and a white chemise not entirely dissimilar to those of Prince Cành. Similar to Effendi in Aved’s portrait of the Ambassador, Louis gestures towards enlightenment objects, in this case symbols of royal authority, such as a large terrestrial globe and an ornate table piled with papers including a fortification treatise. The upright posture and confident gestures of Prince Cành and Louis bespeak their royal birthrights and future roles as rulers of their respective kingdoms. The European style of depicting royal and noble children as in Tocqué’s portrait of the dauphin continued throughout the eighteenth century and would have been a well-known and well-established tradition when Maupérin painted the Cochinchinese Prince in 1787. In a culture where religion and the nobility of one’s lineage or noblesse de race defined identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that a seven-year-old Cochinchinese Christian prince could appear as an “exotic” counterpart to and playmate of a French dauphin.45

Maupérin painted a second portrait (Fig. 14) related to the Cochinchinese embassy in 1787. This image depicts the other key figure among the party, Pigneaux. Nguyễn Ánh had placed his son, Prince Cành, into the care of the Bishop during the diplomatic mission to France, and Pigneaux served as the child’s tutor and mentor until his own death in 1799. Maupérin’s half-length portrait of the Bishop seated and in three-quarter view presents Pigneaux in a manner typical of clerical portraiture. The artist situates the figure against a muted dark blue background and portrays him in simple ecclesiastical attire. He wears a blue robe with small buttons down the center, a cleric’s

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45La Roque’s Traité de nobles, published in 1678, argued that the new and old nobility were different species. The Edict of Nantes was also revoked in 1685. These foci of religion and nobility, rather than nationality or ethnicity, as markers of identity were paramount throughout the ancien régime in the eighteenth century. For more on how the boundaries between “insider” and “outsider” were drawn in the eighteenth century, see Peabody and Stovall’s The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France.
collar, and a gold crucifix. Maupérin’s depiction adheres to the artists’ several other portraits of members of the MEP, thus appearing remarkably transparent and straightforward. However, the work does not reflect Pigneaux’s usual dress or presentation of himself during his almost twenty years in service to Nguyễn Ánh. While in Cochinchina, Pigneaux adopted local manners and habits, infrequently wearing his holy vestments and requesting in his last will and testament to be buried in his official mandarin costume rather than his bishop’s robes.\(^{46}\) Maupérin’s depiction of Pigneaux as a typical French Catholic Bishop, albeit one working in Asia, renders his roles as Nguyễn court mandarin, tutor to the Nguyễn crown Prince, and ambassador of Nguyễn Ánh invisible.

Pigneaux’s roles as both a missionary for the MEP and plenipotentiary or diplomatic agent with full power for Nguyễn Ánh in France were further complicated after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in November of 1787. As Pigneaux prepared to return to Cochinchina, Louis XVI awarded him a commission, the title of Comte, and named him France’s plenipotentiary representative to Cochinchina.\(^{47}\) Maupérin’s prioritization of the categorically French role of the Bishop becomes more striking in light of Pigneaux’s quite incredible status as a plenipotentiary delegate for both Louis XVI and Nguyễn Ánh. By underlining a singular view of Pigneaux that denies the coexistence of his varied and sometimes conflicting French and Cochinchinese roles and

\(^{46}\) He often spoke and wrote letters in Chinese, Vietnamese, and a number of other Asian languages. He requested permission from the papacy to read the original writings of Confucius, and he produced a Vietnamese-Latin dictionary that gained wide use. The Bishop’s actions were not dissimilar from those of the Jesuit missionaries in China, but they aided Pigneaux in gaining a highly unusual level of access to and influence over the Nguyễn court. Wilcox, “Allegories of Vietnam,” 70-72.

\(^{47}\) Taboulet. *La Geste française*, 189-90.
characteristics, Maupérin’s portrait of the Bishop casts the artist’s ambiguous portrayal of Prince Cạnh into even higher relief.

Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cạnh, while made to commemorate the Prince’s visit to the French court and the events of the 1787 Cochinchinese embassy, does not perform the traditional function of the diplomatic portrait. Rather than employing the diplomatic body to visualize an ideal model or “type” within a larger typology of nationalities and ethnicities collected by the French Crown, the portrait renders Prince Cạnh as ambiguous, neither fully French nor fully Cochinchinese. He is not the typical “indien” the French have come to expect from representations of Asian figures in travel literature, costume books, and diplomatic portraits. Instead, he shows signs of European refinement that befit his status as a Christian and a royal. His portrait combines Cochinchinese and French characteristics, as well as elements of reality and fantasy, to construct a hybrid character. This challenges the notion of the foreign diplomat’s national, ethnic, and racial identities as obviously separate and non-French.

Later portraits of diplomatic figures related to the two countries’ exchange will continue this trend of representing an ambiguous identity that blends French and Cochinchinese elements. By portraying Frenchmen adopting Cochinchinese customs and shifting allegiance to Nguyễn Ánh, the portraits in the next section suggest amplified levels of cultural, national, and racial crossings. Not only do these portraits of French mandarins no longer serve as the general and hermetic “types” of the eighteenth century, but they do not operate in the fictional realm seen in Maupérin’s hybrid fantasy of a seven-year-old Cochinchinese Christian Prince. Instead, the later portraits are private
commissions and self-representations of the figures’ culturally and nationally hybrid realities.
III. DIVIDED ALLEGIENCES AND
PORTRAITS OF FRENCH MANDARINS, 1789-1824

Several portraits of French Royal Navy deserters turned Nguyễn mandarins were produced between 1789 and 1824. The French mandarins amplify the earlier contact and exchange between France and Cochinchina that took place during the 1787 embassy to France. These French-born individuals not only cross the cultural boundaries of dress and custom, they also breach more firmly drawn national boundaries by marrying Cochinchinese Catholic women, joining the Nguyễn court, and dividing their allegiance between France and Cochinchina as both emissaries for Louis XVIII (1755-1824) and civil and military servants of the Cochinchinese Emperor. Though only Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau (1769-1832) held the official diplomatic title of French First Consul to Huế, I categorize this group of characters as diplomatic figures because they each played the role of intermediary between Nguyễn Cochinchina and various European countries. Alternatively depicted using conventionally French or Cochinchinese markers or an amalgamation of both, their portraits suggest hybrid identities that extend beyond the fantastical French-constructed mixing seen in Maupérin’s image of Prince Cánh. Not

48 See Wilcox’s “Allegories of Vietnam” for an in-depth analysis of the French-born naval officers who served Nguyễn Ánh in his battles against the Tay Son. Wilcox emphasizes these individuals as transcultural figures that can be attributed neither a characteristically “French” nor “Cochinchinese” identity. Also, see Wynn Wilcox, “Transnationalism and Multiethnicity in the Early Nguyễn Ánh Gia Long Period,” in Vietnam: Borderless Histories, eds. Nhüng Tuyet Tran and Anthony J.S. Reid (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

49 Also, they were all mandarins or scholar-bureaucrats of the Nguyễn court, which carried a diplomatic function.
produced in the official context of conventional diplomatic portraiture, these portraits were personal commissions of the individuals and served as instruments of self-representation. In other words, these images demonstrate the French mandarins’ negotiation of their conflicting and sometimes simultaneous official, unofficial, and honorary diplomatic roles on behalf of the Nguyễn Cochin chine se and the French.

At least several dozen French-born Royal Navy officers traveled to Cochinchina after 1789 to serve Nguyễn Ánh in his battles against the Tay Son. These men were responding to French Bishop Pigneaux’s recruitment campaign for European mercenaries that took place in Pondicherry, a French enclave in India, after the failure of the 1787 Treaty of Versailles. Therefore, the volunteers came to Cochinchina as independent agents rather than representatives of the French government, and their new allegiance to Nguyễn Ánh categorized many of them as deserters. Most of these French individuals arrived in Cochinchina between 1789 and 1792. Several were appointed as commanders and in charge of teaching European military tactics to the Nguyễn army. The former French marines also served as intermediaries for Nguyễn Ánh in purchasing European

50 There are arguments over the exact number of French naval officers who came to Cochinchina by scholars of Vietnamese history. Sources such as Alexis Faure count 359 European-born workers for the Nguyễn, but this number counts all individuals discharged from the navy or who deserted around Vietnam. Wilcox points out that some of these men may have been lost at sea or ended up somewhere other than Cochinchina. An undated letter by Pigneaux, published in the Revue Indochinoise on April 7, 1902, states that there were forty Frenchmen in the Nguyễn army, not counting the large number of volunteers who worked as carpenters or in non-military roles. Nguyễn Ánh’s entourage during this period was particularly cosmopolitan, though most scholarly interest has focused on the French, and included individuals from China, Cambodia, Siam, Spain, and Portugal.

51 Mantienne, Mgr. Pierre Pigneaux, 93. The treaty signed by Montmorin and Pigneaux contained restrictive conditions that entrusted the French military aid to Cochinchina to Thomas Conway, the French Governor in Pondicherry. After Conway refused to send French aid to Cochinchina with Pigneaux, invalidating the Treaty of Versailles, the Bishop began his own campaign to recruit mercenaries.

52 Several of the marines who volunteered had also been discharged or deserted in preceding years. It is also notable that this shift in allegiance took place around the time of the French Revolution.
uniforms, guns, and ammunition. Beyond employing French-born commanders, the Nguyễn army and navy wore European-style clothing, used European weapons, and navigated with European instruments and maps in European warships. In other words, Nguyễn Ánh received his “French” aid and expertise through unofficial means, without having to cede Cochinchenese territory as called for in the Treaty with Versailles.

In this section, I examine the portraits of three French naval officers—Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau, Jean-Marie Dayot, and Philippe Vannier—who came to Cochinchina during this period and had sustained contact with the Cochinchenese. While many of the French marines left Cochinchina in 1792 or after the Nguyễn victory over the Tay Son and establishment of the Nguyễn Dynasty in 1802, these Frenchmen remained in the country and became part of the Nguyễn court. They adopted mandarin courtly dress, married Cochinchenese Catholic women, and were given high-ranking titles and land. The French mandarins’ crossing of cultural and national boundaries and behavior of seemingly “going native” were balanced by letters home to France and requests for French fare, retention of a Catholic identity, and often an eventual return to France. Moreover, Louis XVIII called on Chaigneau and Vannier in 1817 for aid in reviving the 1787 Treaty of Versailles with Nguyễn Ánh, awarding both men the Legion of Honor and naming Chaigneau his First Consul to Cochinchina.

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54 Most of the officers who had served during the civil war appear to have left soon after its termination; but two, Chaigneau and Vannier, settled down in the land. “After the coronation, Gia Long endowed Despiau, and the other Europeans who remained at court, with rank in the Vietnamese court hierarchy, a stipend, and an honor guard, and, as a special mark of favor, they were permitted to dispense with the five prostrations usually required when approaching the royal presence.” Wilcox, Vietnam and the West, 42-43.

55 Here, I use the shorthand “going native” to refer to the adoption of indigenous costumes by Europeans living in Cochinchina. Chaigneau and Vannier both returned permanently to France in 1824. Wilcox, “Allegories of Vietnam.”
With these competing national and cultural identities and allegiances in mind, I examine several images commissioned by these three French mandarins during their time in Cochinchina and place these works in dialogue with portraits of the same individuals made either before or after their service to Nguyễn Ánh.\footnote{Dayot and Vannier were two of the first French officers that came to Cochinchina in 1789. Dayot remained until 1795 and Vannier until 1824. Chaigneau arrived later than most former French naval officers in 1794 and remained at the Nguyễn court until 1824.} The former group of portraits emphasizes the sitters’ mixed or composite “French” and “Cochinchinese” identities. By presenting the Frenchmen crossing the cultural boundary of dress, these images suggest the figures’ deeper crossing of the boundary of national allegiance. In other words, the Nguyễn military jacket, mandarin robe, and civilian ao dai that the three Frenchmen wear in these portraits signal their larger shift in allegiance from the French King to the Nguyễn Emperor. The latter group of portraits clearly departs from the former, denying the sitters’ previous or future crossing of boundaries or ambiguous identities. These images maintain a European aesthetic and include attire, regalia, and trappings of status and character that comply with conventions of French diplomatic portraiture. The disparities between the portraits, all of which were personal commissions, produced before, during, and after the French mandarin’s service to Nguyễn Ánh suggests a conscious self-fashioning of “French,” “Cochinchinese,” or “hybrid” identities on the part of the sitters.

A full-length portrait (Fig. 15) of Chaigneau collapses the first and second group of portraits into a single image.\footnote{The image here is a copy by Paul Sarrut executed in the early twentieth century and now residing in the Musée Quai Branly. The original remains in the private collection of Chaigneau’s descendants. In 1922, it was brought by the owner Gaston Chaigneau, the grandson of the French mandarin, for inspection and restoration in Paris.} The painting, owned by his family and produced by a
local artist in Hué between 1802 and 1818, was repainted in France around 1820. The original painting matches the formula of the first group of portraits, while the later repainting seems to align with the agenda of the second. Chaigneau arrived in Saigon sometime in 1794 after the English assailed a ship he was commanding for the French in Macao.\footnote{Wilcox, « Allegories of Vietnam, » 85-86.} He sought refuge ashore and became a commercial agent for European, particularly British, vessels trading with Saigon. After several years, he joined the Nguyễn navy and was appointed as an officer and commander of a ship in 1798. After the Nguyễn victory against the Tay Son in 1802, Chaigneau settled at the Nguyễn court in Hué, where he became an honorary member of the royal family and married a Cochinhisen Catholic woman, Ho Thi Hué. Between 1802 and 1820, Chaigneau served Nguyễn Ánh at court by receiving foreign, particularly European, diplomatic and commercial missions that traveled to Cochinchina.\footnote{Ibid., 87-88.} However, during a return trip to France in 1820, after almost twenty-five years of absence, French King Louis XVIII named Chaigneau his First Consul to Hué and enlisted him to revive the 1787 Treaty of Versailles and setup French trade agreements with Nguyễn Ánh.\footnote{Ibid., 89. Original letters reprinted in Henri Cordier, “Bordeaux et la Cochinchine sous la Restauration,” Tuong Pao II:5 (1904) : 504-560.} It was likely during this trip that the portrait of Chaigneau discussed above underwent a repainting that included several notable adjustments that suggest an attempt to offset its Asian aesthetic and follow European conventions of painting.\footnote{For a full account of the repainting, see André Salles, “J.B. Chaigneau et sa famille,” Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué 1 (Jan-Mar 1923) : 61-65. When the painting underwent restoration and conservation in 1922, it was owned by Chaigneau’s grandson Gaston Chaigneau.}
The portrait depicts Chaigneau wearing garments associated with both French and Cochininese officials, including a dark blue military jacket, red silk pants, and a dark turban, that recall the eccentric outfit of Prince Cạnh in Maupérin’s portrait (Fig. 1) from 1787. The shape, gold brandebourgs, and decorative tassels of Chaigneau’s jacket closely resemble those of the red coat worn by Prince Cạnh. The gold epaulette on the shoulder was introduced to the French army’s costume in 1779 and the marines’ in 1786, and the decoration of Chaigneau’s uniform reflects the contemporary reality of dressing the Nguyễn army in military garments purchased from European producers.62 As an honorary member of the Nguyễn imperial family, the red silk pants worn by Chaigneau are the same as those worn by Prince Cạnh. Nguyễn Ánh likely extended this honor to the marine around the same time the Emperor awarded him the ranks of Marquis and regiment General in 1802.63 Unlike Cạnh’s fantastical turban designed by Léonard, Chaigneau dons a tho-riu, a head wrap commonly worn by Nguyễn military personnel while on campaigns.64 Chaigneau’s status as a Nguyễn military commander and court mandarin are further indicated by a dagger tucked into the blue sash tied around the waist of his jacket and a roller held in his right hand that bears the official seal of the Nguyễn King.65 Chaigneau’s costume, which amalgamates elements associated with European and Cochininese, civic and military, and courtly and royal dress, signals a larger

62Salles, “J.B. Chaigneau,” 64.

63Chuong co or the title of regiment General was awarded to Chaigneau by Nguyễn Ánh in 1802. Wilcox, “Allegories of Vietnam,” 87.

64Salles, “J.B. Chaigneau,” 64.

65Ibid., 65.
tension in and division of Chaigneau’s roles, allegiances, and character as a French-born individual living permanently in Cochin.\textsuperscript{66}

The visual connections between Maupérin’s portrait of Cánh and the anonymous portrait of Chaigneau stop with the two individuals’ mixed Franco-Cochinchinese costumes that indicate a crossing of the cultural boundary of dress. Chaigneau as a Royal Navy deserter turned mandarin at the Nguyên court crosses national boundaries not breached by the seven-year-old Prince and not considered in Maupérin’s earlier portrait. While Maupérin executed the portrait of Prince Cánh according to a French aesthetic and adopted the conventions of French diplomatic portraiture, Chaigneau’s portrait clearly departs from both. The portrait of Chaigneau eschews the naturalism seen in Maupérin’s portrait, and the costume of the marine in particular appears rather flat. Chaigneau’s posture, gesturing with his left arm towards the water in the background, reads as static or stiff in comparison to Prince Cánh’s dynamic pose, suggestive of the child’s Christian conversion and royal authority. Likewise, the composition of the portrait of Chaigneau does not follow the well-established tropes of portraits of French diplomats, such as Callet’s \textit{Portrait of Charles Gravier}, which typically portray the figure in an elaborate interior. Instead, this portrait positions the French mandarin standing in the foreground on a rocky terrain with a large body of water immediately behind him. This setting with boats in the background, along with Chaigneau’s military garments, alludes to his occupation as a high-ranking officer in the Nguyên navy. However, aside from the dagger in his belt and roller in his hand, Chaigneau is not shown with the objects and

\textsuperscript{66}For a more thorough biography of Chaigneau and his family see André Salles work. Wilcox also has a brief biography of Chaigneau during his service to Nguyên Ánh in his dissertation. Wilcox, “Allegories of Vietnam,” 84-90.
trappings of station and wealth that typically overwhelm diplomatic portraits and signify
the sitter’s specific cultural and national identity.

André Salles’s inspection of the portrait of Chaigneau in 1922 revealed that
several parts of the image were repainted after its initial production. These changes
likely occurred in France after Chaigneau’s return to the country in 1820 and were
executed by a different hand than that of the original artist.67  The second artist added
tonal variation and shading to Chaigneau’s pants, ostensibly in an effort to increase the
work’s three-dimensionality. He or she also eliminated the long red tie of the imperial
pants that originally protruded from below the hemline of the jacket, as well as the blue
sash tied around the jacket at the waist.68  It seems that the artist (or perhaps Chaigneau)
sought to enhance the level of naturalism, previously limited by the flatness and lack of
spatial depth in the painting, as well as to erase several distinctly Cochinchinese elements
of the uniform. Given Louis XVIII’s appointment of Chaigneau as the First French
Consul to Cochinchina during the French mandarin’s 1820 trip to France, these changes
bear particular relevance. One wonders whether these modifications were an attempt to
distance Chaigneau from his roles as a Nguyễn military officer and mandarin of the court
in Huế and recast him in his newly gained position as a French diplomat.

Like Chaigneau’s original portrait, a miniature painting (Fig. 16) of Jean-Marie
Dayot (1760-1809) from c. 1789-1809 and a painting on glass (Fig. 17) of Philippe
Vannier (1762-1842) and his family from c. 1815 emphasize the hybrid identities of the
French mandarins. Both images were owned by the families of Dayot and Vannier,

67 This is the conclusion drawn by Salles and seems likely given that Chaigneau did not leave Asia between
1794 and 1819.

indicating their status as personal commissions, and were executed during the period of
the individuals’ service to Nguyễn Ánh.\textsuperscript{69} In both portraits, the French-born naval
officers cum Nguyễn mandarins appear in Cochinchinese dress, suggesting their
allegiance to Nguyễn Ánh, and traditional markers of French identity are omitted.\textsuperscript{70} The
miniature provides a bust-length portrait of Dayot in three-quarters view wearing a black
turban and an extensively embroidered sapphire-colored mandarin robe with patterns of
birds and vegetal forms.\textsuperscript{71} Dayot’s European physiognomy clearly contrasts with his
“exotic” dress typical of members of the Nguyễn court, and the meticulous and
naturalistic rendering of the figure follows an aesthetic commonly seen in French portrait
miniatures. The portrait of French mandarin Philippe Vannier and his family by an
anonymous Chinese or Cochinchinese artist depicts Vannier, his Cochinchinese wife, and

\textsuperscript{69}The Archives photographiques des MEP 084 notes that the double portrait of Jean-Marie Dayot and Felix
Dayot is conserved in the Dayot family’s collection.

\textsuperscript{70}Dayot served several distinct agents in many military and diplomatic roles: French naval lieutenant,
Nguyễn commander, Spanish emissary to Vietnam, and cartographer for the French Ministry of Foreign
Affairs. This continual shifting of allegiance perhaps accounts for the disparate representation of Dayot in
two known portraits of the naval officer cum diplomate. Dayot was in Pondicherry around the time
Pigneaux was recruiting European mercenaries to aid Nguyễn Ánh’s army. Like Chaigneau, Dayot served
as a marine in the French Royal Navy before going to Cochinchina, and based on his previous military
experience. Dayot was quickly named special commander of two Nguyễn ships. While Dayot only
remained at the Nguyễn court until 1795, though he would return as an emissary for the Spanish in 1804, he
was awarded many honors by Nguyễn Ánh and seems to have married a Cochinchinese woman. Vannier
was recruited by Pigneaux in Pondicherry and was one of the first French volunteers to arrive in
Cochinchina in 1789. He had served in the French Royal Navy and fought for the French in the American
Revolution the decade before. Nguyễn Ánh named Vannier the Marquis or cai doi of Chan Thanh and
gave him command of one of the Nguyễn warships. Vannier served as second in command under Dayot
but would rise in rank after the departure of the latter. Like Chaigneau, Vannier remained at the Nguyễn
court in Huế after the defeat of the Tay Son in 1802. He became a mandarin of the court, translator, and
advisor to the Emperor on matters concerning Europe. Befitting this status, Vannier wore mandarin’s garb,
kept an official’s mansion in Huế, and married a Vietnamese Catholic woman, Magdeleine Sen, in 1811.

\textsuperscript{71}Mandarin robes were typical attire for civil and military servants to the Nguyễn court, which was based
on the Chinese model. For more information on the Chinese influence at the Nguyễn court, see Alexander
in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard
University, 1988).
their eldest son as a vignette at the center of the composition. They appear on the bank of a winding river surrounded by a landscape with rocks and trees, with Vannier on the left, his wife, Magdeleine, in the center, and their son, Michel, on the right. All three of the figures wear unornamented Cochinchinese dress. Unlike the portraits of Chaigneau and Dayot, Vannier’s identity as French-born is unperceivable, aside from the slightly larger rendering of his facial features in relation to those of his wife and son. The painting on glass also touts a conventionally Asian medium rather than a French one and lacks attention to three-dimensional modeling or linear perspective.

These portraits depicting Dayot and Vannier as mandarins made during their time in service to Nguyễn Ánh drastically differ from portraits the men commissioned during their official service to France. A full-length double portrait (Fig. 18) made prior to the miniature of Dayot discussed above depicts Jean-Marie with his brother, Felix Dayot, and adheres to conventions of French portraiture, recalling traditional portraits of French diplomats, such as Callet’s painting of Charles Gravier. Here, the brothers are portrayed within a decorative European interior wearing European-style naval uniforms and holding rolled pieces of parchment, perhaps signifying plans of naval tactics. Also maintaining French conventions of portraiture, a half-length portrait of Vannier (Fig. 19), commissioned after his return to France in 1824, depicts the former mandarin seated in a high-backed chair against a draped background in a dark interior. Vannier sits upright wearing a white shirt and tie, black waistcoat, and dark jacket. The cross of the Legion of

72-This image was published in André Salles, “Documents A. Salles” *Bulletin des Amis de Vieux Hué* 22 (Avril-Juin 1935): Plate XII.

73-The original is in a private collection, but a photograph of the double portrait is retained in the MEP archives.

74-A copy of the original also was made and is kept in the Quai Branly.
Honor awarded to him in 1818 by Louis XVIII appears on his breast. The composition, costume and regalia, and naturalistic rendering recall diplomatic portraits such as Callet’s image and clearly illustrate Vannier as a servant of the French King. The departure of these portraits of Dayot and Vannier from the miniature and painting on glass discussed above demonstrate a conscious self-fashioning of “French,” “Cochinchinese,” and “hybrid” identities on the part of the sitters.

Unlike French and foreign diplomats who crossed cultural boundaries and dressed à la étrangère or adopted local customs while abroad, French mandarins such as Chaigneau, Dayot, and Vannier crossed national boundaries by marrying Cochinichinese women and serving Nguyễn Ánh. However, they maintained their Catholic faith and remained allied with the French government in some way, as seen in Chaigneau’s appointment as French First Consul to Huế, Dayot’s surveys for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Vannie’s award of the Legion of Honor by Louis XVIII. The figures’ shifting allegiance from France to Cochinchina and back again affects and is reflected in their commissioned portraits, complicating a linear narrative of French-born individuals “going native” in Cochinchina. Portraits of these individuals illustrate the tension between various cultural and national identities and provide a platform for the sitters to negotiate these identities. The stripping of Cochinichinese markers in favor of a return to the vestiges of a French identity, as seen in the repainting of Chaigneau’s portrait and the later portrait of Vannier, mirrors the sitters’ movement back and forth across geographical borders, as well as cultural and national boundaries.

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75 Salles, “Documents A. Salles,” 145-146.

76 Records of these marriages exist primarily because they were Catholic. Wilcox, *Borderless Histories*, 208-209.
Though the paintings and repaintings completed after Chaigneau and Vannier’s return to France may attempt to deny the sitters’ earlier crossings and mixtures, their marriages to Cochinichinese Catholic women and the mixed-race progeny of these unions, as seen in the family portrait of Vannier, cannot be erased. Mixed-race individuals born within the marriages that took place between the French mandarins and Cochinichinese Catholics from 1789 and 1824 amplify the contact and mixture between France and Cochinchina to the level of race and biology. Three of the mixed-race children of Chaigneau and Vannier would participate in the 1863 Cochinichinese embassy to France, serving as diplomatic figures in their own right, and appear in a collection of French photographic portraits of the embassy that are the subject of the next section.

\footnote{Catholic priest Henri-Baptiste Grégoire (1750-1831) gained prominence in the 1780s for his opposition to racial prejudice and defense of French Jews. Grégoire argued that members of the Catholic faith should intermarry with non-Catholics as a means to culturally assimilate and convert the latter by forming intimate connections between the two. He prescribed this mixing for Catholics with Jews, blacks, Haitians, and Indians as a means of bringing all mankind to the Catholic Church. Similarly French colonizers intermarried with North American First Nations who converted to Christianity in order to “make them French.” The Cochinichinese wives of Chaigneau and Vannier were likewise naturalized as French citizens after their return to France and their children were considered French in a way that illegitimate, unrecognized, and usually non-Catholic mixed-race children would not be. For more on Grégoire, see Peabody and Stoval, \textit{The Color of Liberty}, 28-41.}

\footnote{Chaigneau’s first marriage to Hô-Thi-Huê bore thirteen children between 1802 and 1815, and a second marriage to Hélène Barisy yielded more children. Philippe Vannier and Magdaleine Sen-Dong, married in 1811, had six children: Michel, Elizabeth, Magdeleine, Marie, Adèle Louise, and Eugène Auguste.}
IV. THE 1863 COCHINCHINESE EMBASSY, MIXED REALITY, AND
POTTEAU’S COLLECTION ANTHROPOLOGIQUE

In 1863, Jacques-Philippe Potteau (1807-1876) produced at least seventy-five photographs of more than thirty members of the Cochinchinese embassy that traveled to France that year. These images were part of a larger series of over one thousand plates titled the *Collection Anthropologique* that Potteau gave to the Muséum d’Histoire naturelle in Paris in 1871 or 1872.\(^7\) The *Collection* includes photographs of members of the Siamese, Japanese, Cochinchinese, and Chinese embassies that traveled to France between 1861 and 1869 to meet with Emperor Napoléon III (1808-1873).\(^8\) Potteau combines the aesthetic conventions of portraiture and race photography to capture the Cochinchinese diplomats, and most of the images demonstrate a return to the goal of presenting a clear and hermetic “type” seen previously in diplomatic portraiture and illustrations for travel and costume books. However, five photographs of mixed-race individuals reveal the crossing of racial as well as cultural and national boundaries.

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\(^8\)Individuals from the Algerian military and Bohemians also appear in the larger *Collection*. The negatives were taken by Potteau between 1860 and 1869 and given to the Muséum d’Histoire naturelle between 1871 and 1872. Positives printed before 1871 were likely done so by Potteau and bear the title *Collection Anthropologique* and those printed after are sets made by the Muséum and labeled as the *Collection Potteau*. Sheptytsky-Zall, “Collection Anthropologique,” 3-4.
between France and Cochinchina. These figures destabilize and thereby reinscribe the need for the system of classification and distinguishable categories of “French” and “foreign” or “white” and “non-white” that race theory and the Collection sought to construct.

The 1863 embassy was the first Cochinchinese diplomatic mission to travel to France since that of Prince Cành in 1787, and the dynamic between France and Cochinchina, as well as the circumstances for the visit, were markedly different from what they had been almost seventy-five years prior. The Cochinchinese diplomats came one year after Nguyễn Emperor Tu Duc (1829-1883) signed the Treaty of Saigon, which ceded several Vietnamese territories to the French. The purpose of the embassy was to negotiate a return of these territories to Cochinchina and avoid a French take-over of the region. Neither of these goals would succeed.

The decorum typically afforded to foreign diplomats, combined with the emerging medium of photography and interest in racial inquiry in France at the time, resulted in Potteau’s hybrid photographs that collapse the genres of diplomatic and ethnographic or anthropological portraiture. Like previous portraits of foreign ambassadors, such as those by Aved and Vigée-Lebrun discussed earlier, Potteau executed these images in his studio during the dignitaries’ missions to France rather than

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81 After the final departure of the French mandarins from Cochinchina in 1824, Louis XVIII continued to try to reestablish the legitimacy of the 1787 Treaty of Versailles, which would implement a trade agreement between France and Cochinchina and cede several Cochinchinese islands to the French. After decades of failed attempts in negotiating with the Cochinchinese, the French sent several military expeditions to Cochinchina in the 1840s and 50s. In 1858, Napoléon III ordered an attack on Vietnam and the French captured Saigon. Territories were officially ceded to France under the 1862 Treaty of Saigon and the 1863 Treaty of Hué.

82 Jehel also terms Potteau’s images “hybrid photographs” that mix tropes of portraiture and anthropological photography. Jehel, “Photographie et anthropologie,” 39. The decorum afforded to the diplomats is based not on a racial hierarchy but a social one that is concerned with rank and noble or royal lineage and connection.
abroad. Potteau invited foreign embassies touring Paris to pose in his studio and presented some of the portraits as gifts to the sitters, further tying the images to the tradition of diplomatic portraiture and gift exchange between diplomats.\(^{83}\)

Painting, sculpture, and photography were often employed in service of the pseudo-scientific approaches of the period, such as early ethnography, anthropology, and race theory. Much like artists in the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, who traveled abroad and created so-called empirical and scientific renderings of foreign landscapes and peoples, artists under the Second Empire were a common fixture of scientific survey missions to various regions. To further scientific studies, the government and independent organizations employed artists such as Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) and Charles Cordier (1827-1905), whose aesthetics continually moved towards a greater appearance of scientific verisimilitude.\(^{84}\)

Photography in particular aligned with the broader movement away from fanciful depictions of non-Europeans towards seemingly documentary renderings providing a detailed presentation of costume and surroundings. Contemporaries lauded the medium as more “accurate” or “empirical” than painting and sculpture, and it became a form of “scientific” documentation, much like the drawings and engravings in earlier travel and description.

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\(^{83}\)Sheptytsky-Zall, “Collection Anthropologique,” 35. This is verified in a letter by Potteau following the Japanese Embassy to Paris in 1862 in which he asks for reimbursement of costs incurred in developing and framing these printed gifts.

\(^{84}\)Gérôme would travel to places such as Egypt, Syria, and Algeria in an attempt to accurately capture the cultures there. In an 1868 article in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts titled “M. Gérôme, peintre ethnographe,” Emile Galichon champions Gérôme as both ethnographer and painter. \(^{84}\) Galichon praises Gérôme for his “exactitude méticuleuse,” “vérité,” and “aptitudes remarquables pour saisir et rendre les caractères typiques des divers peuples.” Emile Galichon, “M. Gérôme, peintre ethnographe,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts (1868): 147-151. Likewise, Théodore Valerio’s (1819-1879) ethnographic types at the Universal Exposition of 1855 and Charles Cordier’s (1827-1905) presentation of fifty sculptures titled “Ethnological and Anthropological Gallery” at the Palais de l’Industrie in 1860 provide examples of the products of such a combination of art and science.
costume books of cultural “types.” The Society of Photography and the Assembly of Professors of Anthropology applauded Potteau’s photographs as “valuable scientific documents” and “beautiful portraits.” By the time he completed the Collection in 1869, photography had become the preferred evidentiary tool of anthropologists and ethnographers in documenting physical differences between the races. Furthermore, the ethnographic portraits of the Collection Anthropologique would become a model for later scientific photography, which would adopt Potteau’s methods of posing figures.

While typically employing disparate aesthetics, diplomatic portraiture and race photography are united in their common goal of presenting the sitter with a clearly readable cultural, national, and racial identity. Therefore, the hybridity of Potteau’s images—both diplomatic portraits and race photographs—does not extend beyond their amalgamation of the two genres. Unlike Prince Când or the French mandarins, the Cochinchinese diplomats in Potteau’s Collection do not appear to be crossing any cultural or national boundaries between France and Cochinchina. In fact, almost seventy of the seventy-five images offer no sign of the previous contact and mixing between the two countries. Potteau’s figures appear in distinctly foreign costume and regalia that varies according to their rank and station. Perhaps the adult diplomats had more control over their presentation than the seven-year-old Prince, who Maupérin presented wearing a shortened coat embellished with gold trim and tassels and a splendid turban contrived by Marie Antoinette’s hairdresser. Unlike Când, the poses of Potteau’s figures are not

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86 Ibid. The Cahier des sorties for the anthropology laboratory at the Muséum records several instances in which the images were lent to serve as examples of appropriate posing and format for ethnographical photography such as that of Dr. Savatier in 1876 on the frigate La Magicienne’s journey around the world and Desire Charnay’s 1888 mission to Java.
reminiscent of the French king or dauphin, and the setting in which they appear does not mimic the lavish surroundings seen in French royal portraiture. Instead, the sitters sometimes hold fans, stone tablets, and appear beside tables covered with objects that reinforce their foreign identity.

Many of Potteau’s photographs of diplomats in the Collection Anthropologique maintain elements of portraiture found in traditional diplomatic portrait painting. In fifteen of the seventy-five photographs of the Cochinchinese embassy, Potteau presents the sitters wearing splendid “exotic” costumes and holding or sitting nearby objects signifying their status or rank. He situates these figures in the center of the composition against a draped background. The negative of Ho-van-huan (Fig. 20), Military Commander and Second Degree Mandarin, provides an example of several of the photographs’ compositional similarity to diplomatic portraits. Ho-van-huan appears in the center of the picture plane within an interior that includes a decorative rug spread over the floor and curtains hanging in the background. The military commander’s spectacular gilded and jeweled mandarin’s hat resembles the distinctly non-French items seen in Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cândh. Ho-van-huan rests his right arm on a table covered with an array of objects, recalling the pose and markers of status seen in Callet and Aved’s diplomatic portraits of Gravier and Effendi.

Potteau’s photographs of the Siamese embassy two years prior provide an even stronger connection between the Collection Anthropologique’s photographs of diplomats and contemporary diplomatic portraits. Upon comparison, Potteau’s photograph of Huang Indrmontry (Fig. 21) from the 1861 Siamese embassy and Adolph Diedrich Kindermann’s (1823-1892) Portrait of Antoine Édouard Thounenel, the French
Ambassador to Istanbul and Minister of Foreign Affairs (Fig. 22) from 1854 bear obvious compositional similarities. Both feature knee-length portraits of diplomats seated beside a table and presented against a draped background. Each of the figures is elaborately dressed in the regalia befitting their respective high-level Siamese and French stations. Huang Indrmontry wears a richly patterned button-down shirt with a metal belt, silk jacket, and elaborate gold-trimmed hat. Likewise, Thouvenel dons a navy military jacket with large brass buttons and intricate embroidery at the collar and cuffs, as well as a rich silk sash and many medals of honor. Both men carry a sword, though Huang Indrmontry’s is more obvious, held in his right hand resting across his lap, than Thouvenel’s, which is sheathed and cropped out of the image. Finally, the diplomats both rest one arm on the tables beside them, which support a box in the case of Huang’s portrait and a book and military hat in the case of Thouvenel’s.

Photographs of the Napoléon III during this period also recalled his official portraits by Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805-1873) and Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889). A photograph of the Emperor (Fig. 23) by André-Adophe Éugène Disdéri (1819-1889) from 1859, which would be circulated as a carte de visite and serve to popularize the genre, maintains a compositional similarity with Winterhalter’s official portrait of the Napoléon III (Fig. 24) exhibited at the Salon four years prior. The standing full-length figure of the Emperor himself, a table placed behind him, and a large drape in the background appear in both the painted and photographed portraits. However, the photograph contains less formal elements than the painting, exchanging the Emperor’s military and imperial costume and regalia for a common suit and coat, the decorated table with his crown and sword for a bare desk with a single book, and a heavily draped
background revealing a view of the palace gardens for a piece of cloth pulled aside to present a blank wall. The informal costume and setting seen in the carte de visite are echoed in Cabanel’s later painting (Fig. 25) commissioned by Napoléon III. However, this painting retains the imperial crown, scepter, and red mantle seen in the Winterhalter. Disdéri’s Portraits of French Ministers in Medallions from 1860 (Fig. 26) also presents photographed portraits of French dignitaries in civilian fashion rather than military or official uniform, demonstrating a larger trend towards informality in photography.

Some of the practices used to align photography with “science” disrupted Potteau’s photographs’ similarity to the genre of portraiture. Among the fifteen of Potteau’s seventy-five negatives of the Cochinchinese embassy that include objects or furniture besides the chair in which the figures sit, most of the printed versions were closely cropped to disrupt the effect of the setting. The prints exclude and obscure these contextualizing details in favor of a blank background that encourages a focus on the bodies and physiognomies of the figures. Comparing Potteau’s negative of Ta Hué Ké (Fig. 27), Secretary of the Minister of Finances and Sixth Degree Mandarin, with the positive of the image (Fig. 28) in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France’s (BNF) printed album of the Collection Anthropologique, one understands the severe cropping the second image underwent after printing. Like the negative of Ho-van-huan discussed

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87Napoléon III’s decision to be shown in a black dinner jacket with a white shirt and black trousers apparently caused a stir among critics upon Cabanel’s completion of the painting. It is acknowledged that Napoléon III likely chose to have himself depicted in such a manner to align himself with the civilian rather than an imperial ruler.

88The lack of a standard procedure for creating anthropological photographs during this time is likely part of the reason for the images’ adoption of some of the conventions of commercial portraiture. For an overview of the employment of photography for anthropological and ethnographic studies, see Elizabeth Edwards’s work. Particularly useful is Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographic ‘types’: The Pursuit of Method,” Visual Anthropology 3 (1990): 235-258.
above, the negative of Ta Hué Ké situates the figure near the center of the composition within an interior including a decorative rug, curtain, and table with small objects. The printed image in the BNF album, however, excludes almost the entire space surrounding the diplomat. The borders barely extend beyond the head, feet, and sides of the sitter, emphasizing race photography’s interest in the raced body over cultural objects.

The sixty images of Cochinchinese diplomats that do not include the table with objects demonstrate a closer association with race photography. These works anticipate the anthropometric photographs of the next decade that entirely decontextualized and quantified their subjects by stripping them of all clothing and material objects and positioning them beside measuring instruments. Like other “scientific” photographers, Potteau rendered many of the Cochinchinese diplomats in multiple views and positioned them fully frontal or in strong profile. Besides the chair in which the figures sit, Potteau removed all contextual markers and furniture from these compositions. Additionally, the clothing worn by the sitters in these images is much less ornate than the heavily brocaded mandarins’ robes and ornamental headdresses seen in the previous photographs. Ta Hué Ké appears again in two of these images (Fig. 29 and Fig. 30). Here, Potteau shows him stripped of his mandarin robes and bonnet in a simple garment known as an ao dai.

Potteau erases the markers of Ta Hué Ké’s rank as a civil mandarin by removing his mandarin robes, hat, and stone tablet, as well as the decorative desk and assortment of studio objects seen earlier. Unlike most diplomatic portraits, Ta Hué Ké’s splendid wealth, high status, and enlightened character, are not emphasized here, and any

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89 Anthropometric photographs served to capture “types” of foreign peoples that could then serve as studies for comparative anatomy. British scientist Huxley’s project to record the races of the British Empire in 1869 is perhaps the most famous example. For more on that specific project and anthropometric photography, see Elizabeth Edwards, Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology, and Museums (Oxford: Berg, 2006).
references to his special status or individuality are hidden in favor of a homogenous presentation of the diplomats. In fact, almost all of the figures positioned in this way wear the *ao dai* or a similar costume with wide sleeves. Several of the sitters hold a fan, and in one instance, the individual portrayed holds a scroll. Otherwise, these figures are shown without anything and appear interchangeable. Finally, an extensive labeling system that classifies and quantifies the qualities of the sitter accompanies each image of the Cochinchinese embassy.\(^\text{90}\) While some of the individuals in the more strikingly anthropological images are labeled as students or infantry soldiers, others, such as Ta Hué Ké, are high-ranking diplomats whose official garments, headdresses, and regalia have been removed.\(^\text{91}\)

While most of the images of the Cochinchinese embassy offer no sign of the previous mixing between France and Cochinchina, photographs of three individuals—Sam-Diam (1791-1878), Marie Vannier (1822-1882), and Michel Vannier (1812-1889)—visualize the aftereffects of the earlier exchange. As products of the prior contact between France and Cochinchina, mixed-race individuals embody a crossing of racial boundaries between “white” and “non-white” in addition to a blurring of cultural and national lines between France and Cochinchina.\(^\text{92}\) Marie and Michel Vannier, the progeny of the interracial marriage of French Philippe Vannier and Cochinchinese Magdeleine Sen-Dong (Sam-Diam), appear in five photographs by Potteau of the

\(^\text{90}\) These labels typically include the name, age, title or rank, and birthplace of the sitter.

\(^\text{91}\) This removal or erasure of some Cochinchinese diplomats high-level rank is also seen in Potteau’s photographs of Nguyễn Him Thanh, Han Tế, Ho-van-Luong, and Phun-hun-do, who are Captain of the Imperial Guard and secretaries to the Minister of the Interior and other important bureaus.

\(^\text{92}\) Interracial marriage took place between several French mandarins at Nguyễn Ánh’s court and Cochinchinese Catholic women. These marriages were officiated by French bishops in Cochinchina and were recognized by the Church. Under French colonial rule of Cochinchina, intermarriage between the races and miscegenation would become illegal.
Cochinchinese embassy. Notably, they are not labeled as “métis” or categorized as a specific mixture such as “mulâtre,” classifications placed on mixed-race individuals within the casta system in New Spain or mixtures in North America prior to the nineteenth century. Rather than mixed “types,” they are labeled as individuals having a particular mother and father. Their presence in Potteau’s series disrupts the otherwise coherent collection of portraits that presents the Cochinchinese as obviously and entirely foreign. By complicating a clear definition of Cochinchinese and a distinct separation between “French” and “non-French,” these mixed-race individuals challenge the typological system of classification used by anthropology, ethnology, and race studies, which the Collection Anthropologique is ostensibly intended to reinforce. However, the challenge that mixed-race individuals and their images issued to the established hierarchy of races only further drove the European desire for a strict system of classification, and Potteau’s presentation of these individuals in a nearly identical “scientific” manner as their Cochinchinese counterparts suggests an attempt to situate mixed-race individuals within the larger “self”-“Other” schema.  

The hierarchical classification of humans according to skin color in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century extends earlier frameworks of categorization and typology, such as those focused on the nobility of an individual’s lineage and distinctions of their environment or upbringing. However, the nineteenth-century discourse had also shifted and was concerned primarily with race and separating

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93 Armand de Quatrefage, an employee of the Muséum d’Histoire naturelle and key monogenesist and defender of métissage, requested funds from the Muséum to purchase some of Potteau’s images from the Collection Anthropologique. Sheptytsky-Zall, “Collection Anthropologique,” 10.

94 This refers to the French notion of noblesse de race which divided the new and old nobility.
“white” from “non-white.” Race theory greatly expanded in the mid-nineteenth century after the publication of Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau’s (1816-1882) *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* in 1853. Scientists debated whether European, African, and Asian races were of the same species, examining their ability to produce offspring, the fertility of their mixed progeny, and if the products of the relationships retained the best or worst traits of each race. In regards to the last aspect, mixed-race individuals embodied French fears of devolution or a sullying of “whiteness” that could not be reversed. Some believed that white Europeans, who were positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy, would become devalued if they mixed with other races and that Asians and Africans could be regenerated if they mixed with Europeans. These beliefs led to an ambivalent and shifting French policy and practice abroad in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, the French married some non-Europeans or non-whites, such as high-ranking Cochinchinese who converted to Christianity, and

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96 For an English translation of several of Gobineau’s most important writings see Geoffrey Nash ed., *Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism: Selected Eastern Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

97 Theories surrounding métissage or racial mixing were central in the debates between nineteenth-century monogenists and polygenists, who initially defined species by their ability to reproduce and create fertile offspring. For more on the connection between race theory and miscegenation, see Claude Blanckaert, “Of Monstrous Métis? Hybridity, Fear of Miscegenation, and Patriotism from Buffon to Paul Broca,” in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 42-70.

98 Scholars such as Gobineau maintained that racially “pure” groups were superior to mixed ones and that the crossing of “unequal” races resulted in elevation of the “lesser” race but a degradation of the “greater” race. Quatrefages, on the other hand, suggested that racial mixing could produce a progeny that was superior to both of the parent races. He also supported the idea of regeneration through racial mixture, which stated that darker races could achieve “civilization” through mixing with whites and that degraded races could be “rehabilitated” through mixing. Blanckaert, “Of Monstrous Métis?,” 47.

99 This depended not only on the specific decade, as practices shifted over time, but on the “desirability” of the native peoples for assimilation.
typically not others, such as Africans.\textsuperscript{100} The French-Cochinchinese marriages, such as that of Philippe Vannier and Magdeleine Sen-Dong (Sam-Diam), which took place in the early nineteenth century, were outlawed after Cochinina became a colony in 1864.

Potteau’s three photographs of Sam-Diam (Fig. 31) label her as a seventy-five year old Cochininese female born in Huế. Her likeness, clothing, and the white fan she holds conform to the conventional markers of such a figure, as seen in the image \textit{Jeune fille Cochinchinoise} (Fig. 32) from the 1843-44 \textit{Illustrations de Moeurs, usages et costumes de tous les peuples du monde}. However, Potteau’s label also notes that Sam-Diam was the widow of M. Vannier, “ancien officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi Gia-Long.” This identification ties the figure to the earlier crossings of cultural and national boundaries between France and Cochinina, when a number of French deserters of the Royal Navy went to Cochinina, severed as mandarins at the Nguyễn court, and married Cochininese Catholic women between 1789 and 1824.

While Sam-Diam’s visual presentation coheres with other images in the Collection, the labels of her portraits do not allow for the denial of prior mixing between France and Cochinina.

The photographs of Marie Vannier and Michel Vannier reveal a level of mixing that extends beyond the marital union alluded to in the labels of the portraits of Sam-Diam. These individuals represent two of the six mixed-race progeny of the French Philippe Vannier and Cochininese Sam-Diam, and their portraits visualize the crossing of racial boundaries between France and Cochinina or “white” and “non-white.” The

\textsuperscript{100} Though marriages between French men and African women were less common than among the French and other races, there are many instances of whites procreating with Africans, hence the “tragic mulatto” figure popular in literature of the period. Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, “Eliminating Race, Eliminating Difference: Blacks, Jews, and the Abbé Grégoire,” in \textit{The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France} (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 33-37.
labels of the three photographs of Marie (Fig. 33-35) and two of Michel (Fig. 36-37) identify them by their French names and birthplace in Cochinchina. Furthermore, they attribute their parentage to the French mandarin M. Vannier and the Cochinchinese Sam-Diam.101

For the most part, Marie and Michel are presented in a nearly identical manner to their Cochinchinese counterparts. Potteau places them in compositions without contextualizing elements such as an identifiable setting, backdrop, or ethnographic objects. Likewise, he shows them in multiple positions, sitting or standing, and captured from various viewpoints, frontal and profile, a hallmark of “scientific” photography seen previously in the series. Marie, in particular, is presented in each of the three photographs in Cochinchinese dress quite similar to that of her mother. Both women wear a wide-sleeved garment akin to the ao dai. They hold painted fans and wear shoes with upturned points at the ends, and each covers her hair with a wrapped cloth in two of the photographs.

However, several elements of Marie and Michel’s appearance in the portraits reinforce and visualize their mixed-race heritage noted in the labels. Unlike Sam-Diam, Marie wears earrings and ties her hair into a chignon at the nape of her neck. Additionally, her physiognomy, namely her larger eyes and high-bridged nose, stands out from other members of the embassy and suggests her European heritage. On the other hand, Michel Vannier is the only figure in the Cochinchinese embassy not shown in

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101 The labels of Marie’s photographs name her mother as a Cochinchinese named Seu-Dong. Sam-Diam had the family name Dong, and this discrepancy may simply be an alternate spelling, as Philippe Vannier is only documented as having married once to Sam-Diam and Marie is listed in various materials as their child. Wilcox mentions that the marriage certificate signed by the Bishop of Veren notes that Vannier’s wife was the daughter of Mr. Dong who was grand catechist and his spouse. Additionally, Vannier’s wife is commonly referred to in other literature by her Christian name Magdaleine Sen-Dong.
conventional military or civic mandarin dress or in the traditional Cochinchnese *ao dai*. Instead, he wears a European-style suit with a long jacket, vest, cravat, and metal timepiece. His ambiguous physiognomy further suggests his mixed heritage, and he plays the part of European gentleman quite convincingly, standing out visually from the Cochinchnese figures in the series.

Although portrayed as part of the 1863 Cochinchnese embassy to France, Sam-Diam, Michel, and Marie had lived in France since 1824, when Philippe Vannier retired from the Nguyễn court. The family returned to France the same year and settled in Lorient, a city in Vannier’s native Brittany. Magdeleine Sen-Dong (Sam-Diam) remained in France after Vannier’s death in 1842 and would live out the rest of her life in the country. Michel, Marie, and the other Vannier children married French citizens and had children of their own in France, and Michel gained a position as a preceptor for the French navy. Marie and Michel’s participation in the 1863 Cochinchnese embassy to France suggests the family’s sustained connection with Cochinchna after their move, complicating their categorization as “French” or “Cochinchnese” and underlining their racially hybrid identities.

By simultaneously wearing both French and Cochinchnese costume, living in France, and participating in the Cochinchnese embassy, these mixed race individuals

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103 If furthering a Cochinchnese agenda while living in France as French citizens, Marie and Michel’s allegiance is divided and confused in a manner similar to their fathers’, who deserted the French Royal Navy, became mandarins of Nguyễn Anh’s court, and then began working with the government of Louis XVIII to establish trade between France and Cochinchna. Michel Chaigneau, the son of Vannier’s comrade and fellow French mandarin Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau, reportedly accompanied the Cochinchnese embassy during their 1863 audience with the French as well. Like Said Effendi’s masquerade as an “enlightened Turk” in 1742, the participation of these mixed-race individuals as diplomatic and racial intermediaries between France and Cochinchna may have served as a diplomatic tool of the Cochinchnese, who traveled to France in an attempt to regain territory from the French.
blur the boundaries between what is culturally, nationally, and racially French or Cochinchinese. Moreover, they had the potential to defy anthropological, ethnographic, and racial categorization. It is perhaps for this reason that Potteau represented these mixed-race individuals in a similar manner to the almost seventy other images of the Cochinchinese embassy that deny any previous exchange between France and Cochinchina or a slippage between French and Cochinchinese identities. Aside from Michel’s suit, Marie’s earrings and hairstyle, and both of their ambiguous physiognomies, Potteau does not obviously distinguish them from the rest of the embassy as part-French. Instead, he displays both Michel and Marie according to the conventions of early race photography followed by other images in the Collection. Potteau’s images of Michel and Marie Vannier may allow for their mixed-race status, but they attempt to situate the individuals as more “Other” than “self,” denying any indication of their French residence, spouses, and positions.

Potteau’s inclusion and manipulation of Michel and Marie’s portraits in the Collection Anthropologique suggests a larger preoccupation with defining and classifying the mixed-race body within the European-constructed racial hierarchy and clearly separating it from the “pure” French body. Particularly as miscegenation between the French and non-Europeans increased in the second half of the nineteenth century due to imperial expansion, mixed-race individuals became signs of sexual contact that confounded a coherent identity and gave rise to French fears of a devalued Frenchness sullied by mixing. The aesthetic consistency of Michel and Marie Vannier’s

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104 Charles Cordier also included mixed-race individuals as “types” in his series of ethnographic sculptures.

105 Legitimate children such as Marie and Michel were relatively rare in French contacts with foreigners, which often produced illegitimate and unrecognized children unknown to or abandoned by their French
photographs with the rest of the Cochinchinese embassy minimizes the readability of their mixed-race and relocates it as a qualifiable position within the larger hierarchy of race. In other words, the *Collection Anthropologique* situates Michel and Marie as scientific specimens, albeit part-French ones. This mitigates the mixed-race individual’s upset of scientific classification and disruption of the separation between “French” and “foreign.”

fathers. As recognized children of Philippe Vannier, Marie and Michel would have been considered legally French. Moreover, their Vietnamese mother, the legal wife of Vannier, would also be a naturalized French citizen. For more on the legal status of mixed-race children of French-Cochinchinese unions, see Emmanuelle Saada, *Empire’s Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
V. CONCLUSION

Portraits of diplomatic figures involved in the French-Cochinchinese exchange between 1787 and 1863 offer a unique lens through which to view France’s official and unofficial interactions with Asia. In this thesis, I have argued that these portraits’ slippage between “French” and “foreign,” in terms of both their sitters and their style, foregrounds the figures’ hybridity and departs from established French representations of foreigners. Rather than presenting the stable and hermetic identities seen in official diplomatic portraiture and pseudo-scientific “types,” the portraits of a Cochinchinese Christian Prince, French mandarins, and mixed-race individuals disrupt divisions between “self” and “Other” on progressively deeper cultural, national, and racial levels. While representing diplomatic figures, the portraits demonstrate an amplification of mixing that surpasses any diplomatic goal of cultural mediation. Notably, the hybridity and evolving form and function of the portraits of diplomats reveal the French government’s own ambivalent attitudes towards its increasing contact and exchange with Cochinchina, as well as the shifting focus of frameworks of difference in France from nobility of lineage, environment, and climate to so-called biological imperatives of race.

Cochinchina’s geographical distance from and unfamiliarity to France relative to the Ottoman Empire, China, or even Siam distinguished it from nearby and more familiar “Others” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Cochinchina’s perceived and actual distance from France made it a less physically threatening location, as well as a place not yet demystified by intellectual inquiry, around which the French could weave a fictional
narrative of a romanticized and exoticized “Other.” The portraits discussed reveal an unsteady narrative of France’s simultaneous and alternative embrace and assimilation of or distancing and separation from Cochinchina that vacillated and shifted over the period between 1787 and 1863.

The unusual strength and relative monopoly of the French missionary presence in the region and eventual colonization of the territory introduced notions of Cochinchina’s assimilation into the imagined French Empire. Maupérin’s portrait of Prince Cânh exemplifies the French fantasy of a geographically distant, intellectually unfamiliar, and above all assimilable “Other.” The foreign Prince’s depiction at Versailles with European attributes of dress represents and reinforces the French hope of challenging Britain in the race to capture Asia. Cânh’s portrayal akin to the French king or dauphin signals the figure’s conversion to Christianity under the auspices of the Missions Étrangères de Paris and the French desire for a Christian leader of Cochinchina who would be sympathetic to and perhaps driven by French interests. So, while the portrait does not cohere to images of easily recognizable and distinctly foreign “types,” Maupérin’s seven-year-old Christian Prince does present the French romanticization of a distant land ripe for French involvement.

However, French-Cochinchinese interactions in the nineteenth century also challenged France’s hegemony and control over the narrative by creating a hybrid reality that called into question who was “French,” who was “foreign,” and who had control over the classification of each. Portraits of French mandarins by unknown Asian artists reveal a threat of the French-Cochinchinese exchange by picturing Frenchmen shifting their national allegiance from France to Cochinchina. Likewise, Potteau’s photographs
of the mixed-race progeny of French-Cochinchinese unions challenge systems of cultural and racial classification and categorization that nineteenth-century French discourses of colonization deemed essential.

The collapse of “French” and “foreign” seen in the three groups of portraits discussed complicates the established narratives of cultural contact. The static and uneven power dynamic of the colonizer-colonized binary has often overwhelmed current scholarly discourses regarding France’s cultural exchanges and French Empire. By revealing a more nuanced and ambivalent relationship between France and the area that would later become the colony of Cochinchina within French-controlled Indochina, the hybridized portraits of diplomats expose alternative avenues of interpretation. These images call for future scholarship that reexamines France’s exchanges with Asia in the modern pre-colonial period and rethinks how we approach cultural exchange.
Fig. 1 Maupérin (active ca. 1774-1800), *Portrait of Prince Nguyễn Phúc Cạnh*, 1787, oil on canvas, Séminaire des Missions Étrangères, Paris
Fig. 2 Antoine-François Callet (1741-1823), *Portrait of Charles Gravier*, c. 1781, oil on canvas, Private Collection
Fig. 3 Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), *Louis XIV of France*, 1701, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre
Fig. 4 Jacques-André-Joseph Aved (1702-1766), *Portrait of Said Effendi, Ottoman Ambassador to France*, 1742, oil on canvas, Versailles
Fig. 5 Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), *Mohammed Dervish Khan*, 1787, oil on canvas, Private Collection
Fig. 6 J. Laroque (engraver), *Indons*, from the *Encyclopédie des voyages*, 1796, colored engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF)
Fig. 7 Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737), *Reception of the Children of Marquis de Bonnac by the Ottoman Vizier*, c. 1713-24, oil on canvas, Private Collection
Fig. 8 Claude Seraucourt (engraver), *Portrait of Said Mehemet Pacha Begler*, 1741, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 9 Petit, *Portrait of Mehemet Meshoud Bey, son of Said Mehemet Pacha*, 1742, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 10 Pierre d'Ulin (1669-1748), *Reception of Mehemet Effendi at the Hotel des Invalides, 25 mars 1721*, oil on canvas, Private Collection
Fig. 11 Unknown (likely English), *Portrait of son of Shuja-ud-Daula, Grand Vizier of Indian Sultan Oudh*, c. 1753-75
Fig. 12 Johann Zoffany (1733-1810), *Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons*, 1764-65, oil on canvas, Royal Collection, London
Fig. 13 Jean-Louis Tocqué (1696-1772), *Le Dauphin, fils de Louis XV*, 1739, oil on canvas, Versailles
Fig. 14 Maupérin, Pigneaux de Béhaine, Bishop of Adran, 1787, oil on canvas, Séminaire des Missions Étrangères de Paris
Fig. 15 Paul Sarrut after unknown artist, *Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau in mixed Franco-Vietnamese uniform*, c. 1805, Musée Quai Branly, Paris
Fig. 16 Unknown artist, *Jean-Marie Dayot en mandarin*, miniature, owned by Mme Dayot
Fig. 17 Unknown artist, *Philippe Vannier and his Family*, c. 1815, painting on glass
Fig. 18 Unknown artist, Jean-Marie Dayot and his brother Felix, c. 1788-1809, Private Collection
Fig. 19 Unknown artist, *Philippe Vannier*, c. 1825-42, copy of the original, Musée Quai Branly
Fig. 20 Jacques-Philippe Potteau (1807-1876), Ho-vân-huân.- 53 ans.- Annamite né à Hué (Annam).- Commandant militaire, mandarin de 2ème degré, 2ème Classe, from Collection Potteau, 1863, negative plate, Musée Quai Branly
Fig. 21 Potteau, *Huang Indrmontry, 46 ans*, 1861, Muséum d'histoire naturelle
Fig. 22 Adolph Diedrich Kindermann (1823-1892), Portrait of Antoine Édouard Thouvenel, French Ambassador to Istanbul, 1854, oil on canvas, Pera Museum
Fig. 23 André-Adolphe-Éugène Disdéri (1819-1889), *Napoléon III*, 1859, carte de visite
Fig. 24 Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805-1873), *Portrait of Napoléon III*, 1855, oil on canvas, Museo Napoleonico, Rome
Fig. 25 Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889), *Napoléon III*, c. 1865, oil on canvas, Musée du Second Empire, Compiègne
Fig. 26 Disdéri, *Portraits of French Ministers in medallions*, 1860, Musée d'Orsay
Fig. 27 Potteau, Ta Hué Ké, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué (Annam)
Secrétaire du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère Classe, from Collection Potteau, 1863, negative plate, Musée Quai Branly
Fig. 28 Potteau, Ta Hué Ké, 50 ans, Annamite né à Hué (Annam) Secrétaire du Ministère des finances, mandarin de 6ème degré, 1ère Classe, 1863, Collection Anthropologique, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Figs. 29-30 Potteau , Ta-Huê-Ké, 50 ans. Annamite né à Hué (Annam), secrétaire du ministère des finances, mandarin du 6ème degré, 1er Classe, 1863, from Collection Anthropologique, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 31 Potteau, *Sam-Diam, 75 ans, Cochin chinoise née à Hué, fille de Mandarin et Vve de Mr. Vannier, ancien officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi Gia-Long; face, 1863, Collection Anthropologique, Bibliothèque Nationale de France*
Fig. 32 Adolphe François Pannemaker, *Jeune fille cochinchoise*, from *Illustrations de Moeurs, usages et costumes de tous les peuples du monde*, 1843, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 33 Potteau, Marie Vannier, 40 ans, née à Hué de Seu-Dong cochinchoise, et de Mr Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia Long en pied, 1863, from the Collection Anthropologique, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 34-35 Potteau, Marie Vannier, 40 ans, née à Hué de Seu-Dong cochinchinoise, et de Mr Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia Long, 1863, from Collection Anthropologique, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
Fig. 36-37 Potteau, Michel Vannier, 51 ans, né à Hué de Sam-Diam cochinchinoise, et de Mr. Vannier, officier de la Marine Française, et grand Mandarin du roi d'Annam Gia-Long., 1863, from Collection Anthropologique, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
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