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**TRADITIONAL BOATS OF MACAO
BY FRANÇOIS-EDMOND PÂRIS
(1832)**

Born in Paris in 1806, there died in 1893, François-Edmond Pâris was educated at the Naval Academy in Brest. At the age of twenty, between 1826 and 1829, he participated in the voyage around the world of the corvette *Astrolabe*, commanded by Dumont d'Urville in Oceania, searching traces of the fateful expedition of La Pérouse vanished in 1788.¹ Pâris has not time to rest on his return to France, leaving quickly on the grand universal mission of the *Favorite* led by Cyrille Pierre Théodore Laplace (1793-1875), between 1830 and 1832.² He returns a few years later to serve under the same Laplace, already consecrated navigator, in the long journey of *Artémise* around the world, between 1837 and 1840.³ Unfortunately, in the course of this adventure Pâris would lose part of the left arm on a very unlucky visit to a foundry in Pondicherry. Despite some other shorter sea expeditions, promoted to captain, he begins to work mainly in the deposits of maps

¹ MARCEL, Gabriel. *La Pérouse: récit de son voyage, expédition envoyée à sa recherche, le capitaine Dillon, Dumont d'Urville, reliques de l'expédition (Edition du centenaire)*. Paris: Librairie Illustré, 1888.

² LAPLACE, Cyrille Pierre Théodore. *Voyage autour du monde par les mers de l'Inde et de la Chine, exécuté sur la corvette de l'État "La Favorite", pendant les années 1830, 1831 et 1832*. Paris; Imprimerie Royale, 1833.

³ HENRICY, Casimir & PÂRIS, François-Edmond. *Album Pittoresque d'un Voyage Autour du Monde*. Paris: Ch. Noblet, [1865].

and plans of the Navy. In 1856 he was promoted to Commander, two years later, in 1858, he became a Rear Admiral, and finally, in 1864, he reached the high position of Vice Admiral. He then devoted much of his effort to transform the old Naval Museum of the Louvre into which became the Paris National Maritime Museum that received most of his immense collection of thousands of drawings, engravings, and notes made and remade throughout his maritime adventures in the four corners of the world. His refined drawing art, his observation qualities, technical knowledge and the abundant production of studies on the most various vessels of the most diverse cultures and geographies turned Pâris into an acclaimed founding father of modern maritime ethnography.⁴

The National Maritime Museum in Paris proudly holds and displays a marvelous manuscript made by our Vice Admiral during the world voyage of the *Astrolabe*.⁵ Published in 1992 with excellent graphics care, it offers 111 watercolors and three pen drawings, genuinely made in the local expedition places, including 27 technical geometric studies of boats offering in this case, with only two exceptions, a scale in feet (10, 20 and 40). All of the full-page sketches, assembled in an album, are organized in the same way: at the top, in a central position, appears the name of the country or region, in the right side the number of the drawing and below a descriptive legend. The collection has a section with the general title “China”, containing 27 drawings, and except for the last one with the subtitle “Northern Province”, all the others received in capital letters the subtitle “Canton Province”.

Six of these drawings have a specific caption for a vessel observed in Macao or of transport between the enclave and Guangzhou during the 1832 Pâris extended visit to the city and riverine travel to Whampoa and Canton. These six extraordinary draftsmanship pictures deserve much more attention from researchers and interested public: they merely must

⁴ NIDERLINDER, Alain. “L’œuvre artistique de l’amiral Pâris”, in: *La Revue Maritime*, n° 488, (avril 2010), pp. 22-27; RIETH, Eric. “La collection de maquettes du fonds amiral Pâris (1806-1893) au Musée national de la Marine: l'exemple des bateaux de l'Inde et du Sri-Lanka”, in: *Outre-mers*, tome 88, n°332-333 (2^e semestre 2001), pp. 231-244.

⁵ Pâris, François-Edmond. *Voyage de la corvette La Favorite en 1830, 1831 et 1832. Collection de bateaux. Dessin d'après nature para E. Pâris lieut. de vais.* [Musée National de la Marine, Paris – Ms. B 178, s.d.]. Paris: Anthèse, 1992, pp. 122-146.

be known and shared. Although the drawings are preceded by small introductory narrative text, usually brief and sometimes incomplete, the reading of this work can only be visual. Therefore, after transcribing the textual presentation, it is these boats through Macau that are offered for further study or pure enjoyment. It is not necessary to explain at length that these are craft watercolors made by an experienced sailor, competent officer, excellent designer and more than a brilliant observer of vessels' cultural and material diversity. Therefore, some of the human types that appear on the drawings are fundamentally topical, while the landscape is no more than a general scenery: the vessels drawn neatly on the banks of Macao do not allow us to envision or even to guess, albeit remotely, the city.

However, there is a curious exception in this general pattern: the boat with the number 51, entitled "Passenger Ship from Macau to Canton", really represents Pâris real trip from the peninsula to the great Chinese metropolis. In the deck of the boat, a figure seated with a board on the knees in which he seems to draw can only be a suggestion of a symbolic self-portrait of our ethnographic navigator. The other characters, three in official navy uniforms, but one more distinct than the others, plus a civilian dressed in Western clothes seem to imply the figures of Laplace and his closest officers. A "photographic" touch recalling a historical journey that displays documented singular boats observed through Macao privileged maritime situation. Drawings, legends and textual presentations are clear enough. Any comments and erudite analysis are superfluous: we see, enjoy and feel the singularity of traditional Chinese boats sketched alive through Macao in 1832.

Let's follow and enjoy the representations, keeping its original titles, introductory narrative descriptions, mostly with textual gaps or unfinished, thus stressing that Pâris work in this case as well as in other manuscript albums was mainly visual research in-between nautic ethnography and maritime art.

48: "Macau Guard Ship seen from the front.
Length 50 to 60 feet; Width 10 to 14 feet".

“The other vessels that also survey the Europeans are specially assigned to the customs service in the vicinity of Macao. They seem [...] [quite] as junks, although they are only 15 to 20 meters long [...]. The hull is painted in white, the top of the body in black with large red bands studded with white balls, and the scaffolding in the bow is red”.



49: "Macao Guard Ship seen from behind".



51: Passage boat from Macao to Canton.
Length 50 to 65 feet; Width 10 to 12 feet; Hull 7 to 8 feet.

“The Europeans often employ these large canoes to realize the only two residences allowed to them in China, and then pass through the narrower branches of the Tiger, which are more direct than those used by the great ships navigating to Whampoa anchorage through Bocca Tigris [...]. The boats doing this ascent are, in fact, Chinese; but the Europeans themselves would not be able to make them more comfortable: the accommodation is vast, high, well ventilated, with extremely wide benches-alike, covered with mats, and serving as beds, if necessary, placed along a large table. The interior, always very clean, is made of varnished wood, carefully crafted and the sides are lined with screens to give air [...]. Although more elongated than the others, these boats retain their rounded forms, namely behind a platform supported by a transom placed above the rudder as in the warships. The wing, similar to that of the pilot boats, also has a crosspiece to hold the ropes of the ratchet. The normal length is 18 m, the width of 4 m and the depth of 3.5 m. Very large oars composed of two pieces of wood of equal length are used on board, one is the shovel and the other the lever; very strong moorings in wicker, next to each other bring together the two pieces that are so closed by the corners that never yield.”



P. 63: Several Chinese boats seen in Macau.

“The rudder of these boats, the crudest that can be seen, is no more than a plank which rises between two separate plates in the middle of the open stern, and whose sides, at an obtuse angle, are obliquely secured without anything binding them. The incoming water is kept in an insulated, well-caulked inner chamber, which occupies a fifth of the length of the ship; it is also wide enough so the rudder can be turned left and right, like a paddle, which is necessary because it has no angle on the slide in which it runs. A similar provision carries the vessel from a considerable body of water [...], and this inconvenience is even more significant for junks sometimes 25m long and 6m wide.

The shapes are relatively flat, and all sections of the hull are more or less semicircles; the maximum width is in the fifth from behind. The planks of connections go from side to side, curving in the front that is flat, quite broad, almost vertical and often submerged in the inferior part; they are sometimes somewhat rounded and apply outwardly to the front and back, and those of the upper part, placed obliquely, are supported by vertical beams. The keel, glued under the hull and with several holes, follows the curvature of the bottom but does not extend to the ends [...]



P. 65: Small boats of Canton and Macao.

“These two modest boats show that, beyond a certain general morphological kinship, there is in fact a great variety of models of Chinese sea and river boats whose differences are emphasized in their dimensions, proportions, structures [...]”.



P. 72: "small boats of Guangzhou and Macau".

“These houses seem to be transporting boats used as soon as they get old [...]. It is the asylum of the mob of the population and the numerous maneuvers of those who, having no other resource than the strength of their arms, are transported with their families and find work in them. These boats, in great numbers, are tied up among them, and when they cease to serve, they are thrown to the land where supported by stones or stakes and almost unrecognizable, they still harbor poor people”.

