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Brazil, 1833: the Discovery of Photography Revisited
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In science and technology, new ideas are often reported in similar form by two or more researchers working independently and simultaneously. Such events are known as 'multiple discoveries', or 'multiples'.

In this paper, we explore a particular case of multiple in technology photography. The objective of the analysis is to identify the factors that made possible to a Frenchman to develop a photographic process in the first half of the 19th century in Brazil, close in time, but independent to those ones of Daguerre and Talbot in Europe. For that we reconstruct historically this process created by Hercule Florence according to his manuscripts and other original documents of the period.

Multiple discoveries have been originally used to deny the idea of genius inventor. The existence of multiples was held as evidence that at a certain point, when the socio-cultural system has sufficiently 'matured', specific discoveries are 'in the air', and therefore become inevitable. This scheme supposes that discoveries happen only where contexts are favorable.

We will argue that this conceptual framework is not appropriate to explain the invention of a photographic process in Brazil. Despite the diffused idea that Brazil was an exotic point of the Earth in the 19th century, not favorable to the progress and to technological innovations, we will argue that the final form of Florence's process embodies the local circumstances in which it was constituted. We intend to show that the diffusion of scientific ideas, when they pass from the center to periphery, do not occur in a cultural emptiness.

We conclude that the construction of photography in Brazil was part of a context created by a cultural exchange involving the translation of international articles published in Brazilian journals, the importation of books, the presence of scientific expeditions, the immigration of artists, scientists and travelers, and the local scientific community.