



Luke Gartlan, Roberta Wue, eds.. *Portraiture and Early Studio Photography in China and Japan*. London: Routledge, 2017. xv + 252 pp. \$150.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4724-8438-3.

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Published on H-Japan (December, 2017)

Commissioned by Martha Chaiklin

Portraiture provides a window into the society that produces it. The nineteenth century was a time of great change in East Asia as a result of its opening to the West and because of new technologies like photography. In this volume, which covers portraiture and the early history of China and Japan, the range of pursuits of photographic studios, and the nature of the engagement or collaboration between photographer and sitter, and what we can learn from the commercial aspects of the photographic industry—what choices consumer made, what this tells us about society (technology, gender roles, the relationship of photography to traditional arts, to mention only a few) contribute to our understanding of this change. Photographic studios are described as sites of everyday sociality and diverse cultural activities critical to “the formation of modern, regional, and cultural identities” (p. 8). According to the editors, “while histories of East Asian photography often remain stubbornly framed by problematic notions of self-evident nationhood, this collection demonstrates that it is possible for specific investigations of Asian photography to contribute to and inform a transnational, indeed global history of photography and its practices” (p. 1).

Luke Gartlan, author of *A Career of Japan: Baron Raimund von Stillfried and Early Yokohama Photography* (2016), and Roberta Wue, au-

thor of *Art Worlds: Artists, Images, and Audiences in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai* (2015), have assembled (and edited) a volume of ten scholarly essays together with an introduction on the theme of the early history of photography in Japan and China. The editors themselves contribute one essay apiece to the collection. Each essay approaches a different facet of the subject, with a nice progression from studios and photographers to the consumer and society.

The genesis of this publication was a conference titled “Facing Asia” organized in conjunction with the National Gallery of Australia in 2010. The editors note that their volume is the product of “critical shifts in photographic scholarship and methodologies, but also ... the important disintering of new materials.... [N]ew hagiographic models, a move away from the expected national narratives and international frameworks, a glimpse into the anonymous consumer preferences for photographic products, the crafting of modern identities both private and public, and the merging of photography with new forms of popular media, are all entryways permitting a much more concentrated examination of the regional adaptations of photographic practices in China and Japan” (p. 3).

The book is divided into three parts. In part 1, “Studios and Photographers,” we are introduced

to Shimizu Tokoku, Milton M. Miller, and the Powkee Studio. In his essay, Gartlan argues for a new assessment of Tokoku based on his former renown and a disparate collection of cartes-de-visite photographs—four images created between 1868 and 1872 from the Freer Gallery and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery archives, three from the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography previously attributed to Shimooka Renjo, and two from a private collection. The suggestion that Tokoku is a “quintessentially ‘domestic’ photographer” seems to, on the one hand, reinforce the idea of his work not being part of what is codified as Yokohama photography, yet his participation with Uchida Kuichi in the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and others, and his ever-expanding business along with his inclusion in English-language guide book suggests that the photographer never thought of himself as catering to a purely local market, although as noted he created “an alternative [and quite avant-garde] set of possibilities for the depiction of Japanese society” (p. 20). Certainly whether categorization is deemed necessary, Gartlan’s continued scholarship on underacknowledged artists and studios is a significant contribution to the field.

In “Group Encounters: Milton M. Miller’s Hong Kong and Canton Photographs,” Roberta Wue profiles the work of an American photographer active in China in the early 1860s. Miller’s studio, which existed before there was much competition, is credited with group portraits, paired figures, and as noted by the author, his less well-known “jarringly jingoistic stereo views representing post-Opium War China for an American viewership” (p. 9). The images serve not only as evidence of the photographer’s aptitude, but also as reflections of the social engagement inherent in studio photography, and as records of Hong Kong’s colonial history. They show how although we often consider photography as neutral, it can be as subjective as any art form, and the con-

structed environment of studio photography can enhance that.

The subject of Yi Gu’s essay—the workings of the Powkee Studio in Shanghai (1889–1934)—provides a snapshot of the history of photography after its nascence and before it became a craft accessible to and practiced by a plethora of amateurs. The history of the business (its financial success and argued creative achievements), along with the cult of personality represented by the owner of the Powkee studio, Ouyang Shizhi, is here reconstructed from newspapers, journals, letters, and diaries.

Throughout this volume there are instances in which the relationship between other art forms are discussed. The influence of traditional portrait painting on photography and vice versa, the inclusion and impact of inscriptions, and the role of intermediality are largely addressed in part 2, “Sitters and Domestic Markets.” This section addresses the sitter as subject and active consumer, but also looks at the relationship of photography to traditional visual modes of expression. Sebastian Dobson’s essay, “Guiding the Sitter,” references Matsuzaki’s 1886 “Dos and Don’ts for the Photographic Customer” (newly translated and included in the appendix) “on the social and protocols and procedures to be followed in preparation for a studio sitting” (p. 10).

Claire Roberts’s themes in “Chinese Ideas of Likeness” include the nature of intermediality, or the relationship of photography to traditional (painted) portraiture; how artists borrowed and merged one medium into another, and what this tells us about society at the time—their desire for commemorative and ritual images spurred much of this interest. Roberts uses specific examples in a variety of mediums to show the diversity of portraiture in China in the photographic era. Likenesses for memorials sometimes started with a photograph and ended as a larger-scale painting, which provides evidence that photography became the newest tool in the artist’s arsenal in the

effort to respond to consumer demands. A further example of the combining of the arts is found in Richard Kent's analysis of the lengthy inscriptions written on many Chinese portrait photographs, which contribute to personalizing each image while adding an artistic element found in Chinese painting.

"One and the Same: The Photographic Double in Republican China" by H. Tiffany Lee is an excellent example of not only one of the unique themes explored in this volume, but also a trend in photography that goes beyond the standard photo shoot. While the art (and popularity) of "double," "polypose," or "Siamese" pictures came late to China, around the turn of the last century, with most surviving examples dating to the Republican period (1912–49), there are two aspects to this type of photography—the technical and the psychological, both of which are discussed. Created by melding two images through double exposure, or using two negatives to create a single print, the history of images of the "second self," or *erwo tu*, in China begins with the Japanese photographer Ueno Hikoma (1838–1904) and includes examples by the American Luther Knight (1879–1913), along with several unidentified photographers. Despite the lack of surviving examples, the author, using extant images and contemporaneous sources, showcases this chapter in the medium's history. Historical precedent and patrons from the most high-ranking (Aisin-Gioro Puyi, the last emperor of the Qing dynasty) to the most entertaining (the courtesan Shi Fengyi) and those who will never be identified are tell-tale aspects of this ultra-creative and self-referential form of art.

The final section, "Citizens and Subjects," deals directly with the public reception of studio photographs. Here, more than elsewhere in this volume, we learn the most about historical shifts in society as reflected in what was a relatively new medium. Photography went from being the sole domain (and production) of professionals to being accessible to the broader population (male

and female), a point that was recently made explicit in Kerry Ross's *Photography for Everyone: The Cultural Lives of Cameras and Consumers in Early Twentieth-Century Japan* (2015). As made evident in these essays, photographs also became increasingly ubiquitous and influential. In a case study, Maki Fukuoka shows us that a photograph can be multi-referential and fluid in its relation to the visual arts. For example, Uchida Kuichi's 1872 photograph of the kabuki actor Sawamura Tanosuke III conveys facets of a story featuring numerous players, both real and fictional. These new photographic images can be interpreted in several ways, wherein lies their inherent power over other mediums, but, as Fukuoka argues, such power arose not "from 'modern' and/or 'Western' aspirations, nor ... from an alliance between producers and the Meiji political ideology," but from tradition (p. 170).

An important contribution of this volume is the focus Karen M. Fraser and Joan Judge place on the depiction and dissemination of photographic images. In "From Private to Public: Shifting Conceptions of Women's Portrait Photography in Late Meiji Japan," they show how the use of photography shifted as social norms change and gendered taboos disappeared, though a degree of objectification remained, or simply was extended to a larger portion of the female population as women went from "rarely seen" to "on display," as noted by an astute reviewer. As is duly stated, this owed in large part to innovations in print technology and the increasing accessibility of the camera. Images of a professional entertainer—geisha or courtesan—were commonplace, arguably part of business, but as demonstrated by Fraser, the shift occurred during 1907–08 with the "unprecedented publication of portraits of young women as *bi-jin*, or beauties, in the *Jiji Shinpo* (Current Events, or The Times) newspaper" (p. 174). Thus, shifts in social structure played out in visual culture.

In Joan Judge's "The Republican Lady, the Courtesan, and the Photograph: Visibility and Sex-

uality in Early Twentieth-Century China,” the author examines two collections of archival photographs—the Republican women featured in the journal *Funü shibao* (Women’s eastern times, Shanghai, 1911-17) and images of courtesans from three albums: *Haishang jinghong ying* (Photographs of graces of Shanghai, not dated [c. 1910]), *Yanlian huaying* (Photographs of beauties from the flower world, not dated [c. 1911]), and *Xin jinghong ying* (New photographs of graces, 1914), all published by Youzheng shuju (Principled Book Company). While technical and editorial choices played a role, the increasingly visible presence of women in society and in print (also the theme of Karen M. Fraser’s essay) created acute social anxieties. The blurring of distinctions between essentially young (new-style) females and prostitutes continued the objectification of gender within an otherwise modernizing context, which is the proliferation of images made possible by the camera and new print technology.

As is often the case with a compilation of essays, there are subtle differences of style. The essays that emphasize preexisting scholarly categorizations and epistemological positions are less accessible than those that are more straightforward case studies, in this reviewer’s opinion, but the overall organization and the progression of topics is well thought out by the editors. Since early photographic studios and portrait photography in China and Japan have not received the attention they deserve, this volume is a positive and important addition to the field, especially by providing scholarly reflections on diverse aspects of the medium in question.

A challenge with any art book is what to do with the illustrations. In this case, a collection of full-color plates follows the introduction. For ease of understanding each author’s argument, in this reader’s opinion, all of the photographs should have been incorporated into the chapters in which they are discussed. This would alleviate the need to flip back continually to the plate section

while engaged with each text. There are, otherwise, several nice instances of cross-referencing in the book. Fraser’s mention that Matsuzaki’s manual on how to be photographed, also discussed by Sebastian Dobson, further supports “the idea that the additional step of publishing portraits of ‘ordinary’ women was an even more usual occurrence” is an excellent example (p. 178).

The book itself is beautifully designed, well edited, and the text and images professionally presented. People interested in the history of photography, photography in Asia, technology and the modernization of society (women and photography), the interaction of artists and their subjects, the artistic milieu of the portrait studio, photography as it related to traditional and cultural art forms and values, and the rise and demise of studio photography, will want to read this book and to have it part of their library.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-japan>

Citation: Annemarie Sawkins. Review of Gartlan, Luke; Wue, Roberta, eds. *Portraiture and Early Studio Photography in China and Japan*. H-Japan, H-Net Reviews. December, 2017.

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