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INTRODUCTION

NEW LENSES ON CHINA: A SYMPOSIUM ON

FOREIGN INFLUENCES AND CHINA'S PHOTOGRAPHIC FRONTIERS

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Photography was from its beginnings not only a global medium, but a medium of globalisation. On 19 August 1839, when the Académie des Sciences in Paris announced the details of Louis Daguerre's photographic process to the public, François Arago proclaimed: 'France has adopted this discovery. From the first moment, she has shown herself to be proud to to be able to give it [photography] freely to the whole world'.[2] Daguerre's process was associated with a particular vision of Europe's global expansion, and France was urged to 'endow the whole world with a discovery that may contribute so much to the progress of the arts and sciences'.[3] Also in August 1839, Lin Zexu was redrafting his letter to Queen Victoria,[4] chiding her for another European innovation: a globalised opium trade.[5] After destroying a thousand tons of opium at Humen, the imperial commissioner charged with the drug's suppression famously complained that 'our heavenly dynasty most freely permits you to take off her [China's] tea, silk, and other commodities, and convey them for consumption everywhere… where a profit exists, we wish that it be diffused abroad for the benefit of all the earth!... How can you possibly consent to… [selling] a drug that is hurtful to men, and an unbridled craving after gain that seems to know no bounds!'[6]

2 François Arago, *Rapport de M. Arago Sur Le Daguerréotype, Lu à La Séance de La Chambre Des Députés, Le 3 Juillet 1839, et à l'Académie Des Sciences, Séance Du 19 Août* (Paris: Bachelier, 1839), p. 52. The exception was England and Wales, where daguerreotypes were patented. R. Derek Wood, 'The Daguerreotype Patent, the British Government, and the Royal Society', *History of Photography*, 4.1 (1980), 53–59.
3 'Séance du lundi 7 janvier 1839', *Comptes rendus hebdomadaires des séances de l'Académie des sciences*, 8.1 (1839), 6.
4 Xinbao Zhang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).
5 Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950* (Routledge, 1999), pp. xii–xiv.
6 Lin Zexu, 'Letter to the Queen of England, from the High Commissioner Lin, and His Colleagues', *The Chinese Repository*, 8.10 (1840), 500.

The chronological alignment of foreign imperialism in China and of photography's global expansion ensured that Westerners connected to expansion were 'the first actors in the modern production of Chinese images in the world'.[7] Indeed, the first photograph taken in China may have been produced when British forces were delayed at Jiaoshan near Zhenjiang on their advance up the Yangtze to Nanjing in 1842 at the close of First Opium War.[8] Photography of the treaty ports in the decades that followed has, naturally, attracted significant scholarly interest.[9] Yet beyond those most prominent sites of Sino-Western interaction, photography at the limits of the Chinese state has received comparatively little attention.[10]

This issue brings together work by early-career scholars siting themselves in political and cultural borderlands and frontiers to explore how China saw itself, and how it was seen, in the light of foreign influence, and of global pressures and interconnections. Photography has been, as the following essays are aware, a profoundly asymmetric medium through much of its history. It has captured subjects at will, though often only certain individuals and groups had access to the camera's shutter.[11] Behind these asymmetries are what Deborah Poole calls 'visual economies', in which 'the domain of vision is organized around the continual production and circulation of interchangeable or serialized image objects and visual experiences'.[12] Even as the technology of photography became more accessible in China in the twentieth century, businesses - both foreign and Chinese - as well as governments and media were creating new photographic asymmetries, in which certain photographic visions were enlarged and reproduced so as to become inescapable.

The essays in this issue, which emerge from the colloquium 'New Lenses on China' held at

7 *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, ed. by Christian Henriot and Yeh Wen-hsin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. vii.

8 Terry Bennett, *History of Photography in China, 1842-1860* (London: Bernard Quaritch Ltd, 2009), pp. 1–2.

9 Significant work on treaty port photography includes Robert Bickers, 'The Lives and Deaths of Photographs in Early Treaty Port China', in *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives* (Brill, 2012), pp. 3–38; Robert Bickers and others, *Picturing China, 1870-1950: Photographs from British Collections*, Chinese Maritime Customs Project Occasional Papers, 1 (Bristol: Chinese Maritime Customs Project Occasional Papers, 2007); *Portraiture and Early Studio Photography in China and Japan*, ed. by Luke Gartlan and Roberta Wue (Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

10 An important recent article on China and the world is Roberta Wue, 'China in the World: On Photography, Montages, and the Magic Lantern', *History of Photography*, 41.2 (2017), 171–87.

11 Christopher. Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, *Photography's Other Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 14.

12 Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 9.

Queen's University Belfast in June 2017, select unexpected vantage points from which to frame their stories. Taken as a whole, these essays can be seen within the wider context of globalisation alongside nation in modern Chinese historiography.[13] Just as infrastructure 'facilitated the physical incorporation of China into wider networks and circuits as well as its alignment with developing international norms' (as Robert Bickers argues), so too did the camera.[14] Alongside the globalising gravity of the photographic gaze, with its pretensions to objectivity and to the erasure of distance, the authors in this issue explore the power of photography to shape national or regional visualities and identities. The essays in this collection highlight the specificities of visual and cultural standardisation from advertising to scientific research and cartography, as well as the contribution of the camera to governmental information and strategic intelligence as well as to narratives of identity and propaganda.

At the same time, several of the essays focus closely on individuals.[15] The borderland between the private and the public is an unstable one in these essays, in which a photograph may constitute both a captured personal moment and a valuable official or scientific resource, but in which the radical solipsism of the snapshot is also subverted by its capacity to generate surprising empathies. From its start, photography was often personal, frequently presenting what Batchen calls 'a different version of the same basic narcissistic story (me at the beach with my friends, me at my birthday party, me on holiday in Paris, my friends looking at me as I take their photograph)'.[16] The engagement at Jiaoshan was trivial in the context of the First Opium War, but for the British officers it had multiple political and personal significance, as they compared themselves to 'the early navigators' and considered their journey towards Nanjing 'interesting in the extreme - not an instance of a *single individual*, much less of an European, out of our whole force, ever having been

13 Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999); Lydia He Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Rudolf Wagner, *Joining the Global Public Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).
14 Robert Bickers, 'Infrastructural Globalization: Lighting the China Coast, 1860s–1930s', *The Historical Journal*, 56.2 (2013), 433.
15 On the concept of 'global microhistories', see Tonio Andrade, 'A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory', *Journal of World History*, 21.4 (2010), 573–91; and Hans Medick, 'Turning Global? Microhistory in Extension', *Historische Anthropologie*, 24.2 (2016) .
16 Geoffrey Batchen, 'Snapshots', *Photographies*, 1.2 (2008), 135.

within this unknown region'.[17]

The production of a daguerreotype at Jiaoshan in 1842 was overdetermined in ways which echo through the history of photography and the foreign presence in China. It would have recorded not only the aftermath of a skirmish, but also the famous *shufa shan*, the 'hill of calligraphy', with its pagoda and monastery, the 'golden ball of the Emperor's pavilion just rising above the trees',[18] making this the first of many occasions on which 'battle and beauty' were combined in foreign photography of China.[19] Nor can it be a coincidence that the location of that first photograph was one in which the Britons present said the landscape 'resembled the richest and finest spots in the lowlands of our own, much beloved, far distant home'.[20] Foreign vernacular photography can be considered as a kind of para-imperial archive, in which what James Hevia called the 'photography complex' - the power valences of photographic production and reproduction - intersected with the private preoccupations of administrators, missionaries, traders and scientists documenting their own lives.[21]

In her paper on Charles Nouette's photography of the French archaeological expedition to the great Asian desert crossroads at Dunhuang,[22] Marine Cabos argues that alongside 'the irrefutable role of the camera as a technology of colonial expansion', photography had a role 'in promoting a dialogue and in sharing interest across cultures', though the two were not necessarily contradictory. The foreign technical photography produced at Dunhuang at the start of the twentieth century shaped the depiction of archaeology in the Chinese press and 'laid the foundation for a specific visual grammar', Cabos argues, 'transmitting and transforming perceptions of China's landmarks',

17 Arthur Augustus Thurlow Cunynghame, *The Opium War; Being Recollections of Service in China* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber & co., 1845), p. 76.
18 The photographic attempt is famously described in Stanley Lane-Poole and Frederick Victor Dickins, *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes, K. C. B., G. C. M. G., Sometime Her Majesty's Minister to China & Japan*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), vol. 1 pp. 31–32. Harry Parkes calls the conical hill 'Tsien shan' 尖山.
19 C.f. David Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty: Felice Beato's Photographs of China* (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
20 Granville Gower Loch, *The Closing Events of the Campaign in China: The Operations in the Yang-Tze-Kiang and Treaty of Nanking* (London: J. Murray, 1843), p. 76. Loch calls the hill 'Se-shan', probably 寺山 'temple hill', after the Dinghui Monastery on Jiaoshan.
21 James Hevia, 'The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900/1901), Making Civilization', in *Photographies East: The Camera and Its Histories in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. by Rosalind C Morris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 79–119.
22 James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (Hurst Publishers, 2010), p. 55.

and ensuring Nouette's images cast a long shadow on Chinese self-perception.

Around the same time as Nouette's photographs were disseminating a vision of East Asia's past, the streets of Shanghai were presenting new visions of urban affluence and of China's future. Cécile Armand emphasises the 'multilayered texture of advertisements… [as] not only visual but primarily material artifacts, interwoven with urban spaces and municipal policies, closely tied to the social life of commodities and the companies' commercial strategies'. The article explores how the aspirations of an emerging Chinese consumer culture were posted onto the physical space of Republican-era Shanghai, blending advertisers' understandings of the emerging Chinese consumer market with the tropes and methods of foreign advertising to create a distinctive vision of urban modernity in a 'transcolonial city like Shanghai'.

Emma Reisz considers how photography was employed on the southwestern frontier to redefine not only the physical limits of China but also how the frontier should be understood. Photography contributed to a narrative, vectored understanding of space in which a location was less a dot on a map than a 'link in the chain' and a 'stage on the journey'. This approach to the southwestern borderland evoked both Chinese cartography and foreign-mediated globalisation, and was central to the Chinese Maritime Customs, itself a liminal institution between Chinese and foreign state power. Behind the juxtaposed blank spaces and documented journeys of imperial mapping lay a wider debate about state power, imperialism and control of borderlands.

On the other side of the country, Aglaia De Angeli considers a set of photographs which were sent to both Chinese and American authorities, and which document the shifting balance of Russian and other foreign influence in northeastern Zhili in the years after the Boxer Uprising. Simultaneously personal and geostrategic, classifiable neither as pure tourism nor as sophisticated espionage, the collection reveals the destabilising power of the snapshot camera and the multivalency of photography.

Another multivalent personal collection from a half-century later is the focus of Briony Widdis, who notes that the 'post-imperial landscape must be stitched with pockets of "everyday"

photographic collections like these. The colonial ordinary is… a useful, if sometimes painful, destination.' Widdis shows how Chinese stories leaked around the edges of a British colonial story in Hong Kong, defying the attempt of the colonial state to create a wholly British narrative, and showing how photographic sources 'denote networks and attitudes' and can expose 'a multiplicity of lives that were both supported, and marginalized, by colonial governments.'

Finally, Yi Gu in her examination of photographic affect in Chinese propaganda during the Korean War examines the creation and reception of the ubiquitous image 'We Love Peace', part of an emerging scholarly approach which finds propaganda to be a rich source for social and emotional historiography.[23] Her analysis serves as a reminder that alongside the 'pathos of the photographic medium as the remains of a lost past', photography served as a vehicle for both national and individual imagination. Gu concludes that soldiers 'affective responses could not be easily celebrated as popular resistance because the CPVF soldiers ultimately embraced the ideal supplied by the state. [But] neither should their affective responses be belittled as results of the deceiving and corruptive power of propaganda, because the CPVF soldiers' embrace of We Love Peace was beyond the plan or control of the state.'

Photography is sometimes perceived as a slippery source, or even to have 'a distinctive treachery', arising from its spurious claim to objectivity.[24] Historians must grapple with the fact that photographs 'have a life of their own which often resists the efforts of photographers and viewers (or readers) to hold them down as fixed meanings'.[25] The contributors to this issue, however, have drawn inspiration from what Edwards and Morton call the 'visual excess' of photographs, which possess 'inherent uncontainability… they constantly refer beyond their framed boundaries'.[26] Inescapable as foreign influence - and resistance to it - were in the making of modern China, the photography which emerged resists simple categorisations of 'imperial' and 'anti-colonial'. The

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23 See for example Jin Yongquan, *Hong qi zhao xiang guan: 1956-1959 nian Zhongguo she ying zheng bian = Red flag studio: debates on China's photography 1956-1959* (Beijing: Jincheng chubanshe, 2014).
24 Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 131.
25 Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York, N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1989), p. xv.
26 'Introduction', in *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame*, ed. by Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton (Routledge, 2016), pp. 8, 5.

subject overfills the frame, alternative narratives and interpretations spilling over at the edges, unbounded by any single perspective, and generating unexpected stories and connections.