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When Kodak Came to China: Photography, Amateurs, and Visual
Modernity, 1900-1937

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Introduction

Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898-1975), a painter and essayist in Republican-era Shanghai, discussed the explosive popularity of the camera: “Many of my friends owned their cameras and took photographs by themselves. Nowadays there are a number of camera shops on the street; it only costs approximately 10-20 yuan, and you can get a camera.”¹ The acquaintances of Feng Zikai, who were the new middle classes in Shanghai, took up photography not only as a tool of recording, but also as a new leisure activity. In the Republican period (1912-1949), the affordability of the easy-to-use Kodak portable camera drove an increasing number of photographic enthusiasts to access to their own cameras. Embracing a new era of photographic awareness, the urban bourgeoisie and new intellectuals in the major cities sought a new medium to capture their modern experience.

In contrast with the remarkable division of the photographic market in Europe and America in the 1910s and 1920s, Chinese amateur photographers—both ordinary hobbyists and advanced amateur photographers who can be identified as fine art photographers—emerged at almost the same time. After Eastman Kodak opened its first branch in Shanghai in 1920, the Chinese photographic market entered a new era of handy portable cameras and roll films.² As opposed to studio photography, the amateur photographers in the Republican period embraced photography as a serious art and attempted to legitimize it as fine art. They established a series of photographic societies from the 1910s to the 1930s, which not only developed a new photographic vocabulary but also offered the platforms to promote public understanding of photography as a new

¹ Feng Zikai 豐子愷, “Meishu de zhaoxiang 美術的照相 [Fine art Photography],” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan* 中國近代攝影藝術美學文選 [the essays of Chinese modern photographic aesthetics], edited by Long xizu 龍熹祖 (Tianjin, Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, 1988), 156-169.

² “Kodak LTD., Opens Here,” *The China Press*, April 2, 1921, 2.

art form. Many ordinary photographic hobbyists were also actively engaged in a number of photographic activities. For example, thousands of amateurs took part in the public photographic exhibitions held by the Light Society (*Guangshe* 光社) and Chinese Photographic Society (*Zhonghua sheying xueshe* 中華攝影學社), or more simply called the Hua Society in the 1920s and Black-and-White Photographic Society (*Heibai yingshe* 黑白影社) in the 1930s, according to news reports; the largest photographic society was the China Photographic Society (*Zhongguo sheying xuehui* 中國攝影學會), founded by Lin Zecang 林澤蒼 (1903-1961) in Shanghai, which claimed over thousand members to include both ordinary hobbyists and serious art photographers. In my research, amateur photography refers to not only the artistic practice of serious amateur photographers, but also to quotidian activities in modern cultural life by ordinary photographic hobbyists. How the great enthusiasm for the photographic exhibitions emerged and developed is still an untold story.

The history of colonial photography in treaty-port China and art photography in the Republican period have received the most scholarly attention. Monographs on the history of Chinese photography by scholars such as Terry Bennett, Claire Roberts, Wu Hung, Ma Yunzeng, Chen Shen, Gu Zheng, and Tong Bingxue focus on the contributions made by a group of art photographers.³ Some articles and catalogues on the field of Chinese photography focus more on the case studies of some specific photographers or photographic societies, which laid a foundation for future research.

³ Terry Bennett, *History of Photography in China 1842-1860* (London: Bernard Quaritch Ltd; 1st edition, 2009); Claire Roberts, *Photography and China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013); Wu Hung, *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016); Ma Yunzeng 馬運增, Chen Shen 陳申, and Hu Zhichuan 胡志川, *Zhongguo sheyingshi (1840-1937)* 中國攝影史 [History of Chinese Photography 1840-1937] (Beijing: Zhongguo sheying chubanshe, 1987); Chen Shen 陳申, *Guangshe jishi* 光社紀事 [The history of Light Society] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu sheying yishu chubanshe, 2017); Gu Zheng 顧錚, *Chengshi biaoqing: ershi shiji dushi yingxiang* 城市表情: 二十世紀都市影像 [City Expression: 20th Century City Image] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2003); Tong Bingxue 全冰雪, *Zhongguo zhaoxiangguan shi* 中國照相館史 (1859-1956) [History of Chinese Photography Studio, 1859-1956] (Beijing, Zhongguo sheying chubanshe, 2016).

For example, the articles in *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China* identify the new artistic vocabulary invented during photography's first century from the late Qing period to Republican Shanghai and wartime Chongqing.⁴ The article "Early Twentieth-Century Art Photography in China: Adopting, Domesticating, and Embracing the Foreign" by Richard K. Kent examines the emergence and development of art photography in Republican China, which was the first time that Chinese fine art photographers were examined as the research subject.⁵ Several dissertations address some critical issues of the relationships between art photography, traditional style Chinese painting, and popular culture in the Republican period.⁶

Case studies of some specific amateur photographers have emerged in recent years. The book "Relics: Jin Shisheng and Modern Chinese Photography" (*Chenji: Jin Shisheng yu xiandai zhongguo sheying* 陳跡:金石聲與現代中國攝影) publishes the photographs of a talented amateur photographer, Jin Shisheng 金石聲 (1910-2000), for the first time, and a series of articles written by scholars from the US and China.⁷ Jin

⁴ Jeffrey Cody and Frances Terpak's article *Through a Foreign Glass: The Art and Science of Photography in Late Qing China* examines that how photographs circulated and commercialized in the treaty ports. Jeffrey Cody and Frances Terpak, "Through a Foreign Glass: The Art and Science of Photography in Late Qing China," in *Brush and Shutter, Early Photography in China*, Frances Terpak and Jeff Cody, eds (Los Angeles: Getty Publications; Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 33-68; Sarah Fraser's article *Chinese as subject: Photographic Genres in the Nineteenth Century* discusses how photography as a new medium shaped China's national image at an international level. Sarah E. Fraser, "Chinese as Subject: Photographic Genres in the Nineteenth Century," in *Brush and Shutter*, 90-109; and Wen-hsin Yeh's article *Beyond the Frame: The Camera in Republican Shanghai and Wartime Chongqing* investigates the key role of photography in Republican Shanghai and wartime Chongqing. Wen-hsin Yeh, "Beyond the Frame: The Camera in Republican Shanghai and Wartime Chongqing," in *Brush and Shutter*, 111-119.

⁵ Richard K. Kent, "Early Twentieth-Century Art Photography in China: Adopting, Domesticating, and Embracing the Foreign," *The Trans-Asia Photography Review*, no. 2 (Spring 2013). Accessed June 1, 2018. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/t/tap/7977573.0003.204/--early-twentieth-century-art-photography-in-china-adopting?rgn=main:view>.

⁶ Yi Gu's PhD dissertation *Scientizing Vision in China: Photography, Outdoor Sketching, and the Reinvention of Landscape Perception, 1912-1949* explores that how photography and outdoor sketching transformed the perceptual mode in traditional style paintings, which provides a new way to reconsider the relationship between photography and painting in the Republican period. Yi Gu, "Scientizing Vision in China: Photography, Outdoor Sketching, and the Reinvention of Landscape Perception, 1912-1949" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2009); Hsueh Sheng Chen's PhD dissertation *Art Photography in China before 1949: The Continuation and Transformation of an Elite Culture* addresses the shifts of art photography from an elite culture to popular art through the examination of the photographs taken by art photographers in the Republican period. Hsueh Sheng Chen, "Art Photography in China before 1949: The Continuation and Transformation of an Elite Culture" (PhD diss., Asia Institute, The University of Melbourne, 2010).

⁷ Jin Hua 金華, ed., *Chenji: Jin Shisheng yu xiandai zhongguo sheying* 陳跡: 金石聲與現代中國攝影 [Relics: Jin Shisheng and Modern Chinese Photography] (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2016).

Shisheng had the dual identities of an outstanding urban planner and a pioneering amateur photographer. He started to take photographs in 1930s Shanghai, when he studied civil engineering at Tongji University. Embracing the definition of an amateur as a serious and creative artist, Jin Shisheng contributed greatly to the popularization of art photography and promoting modernist experimentation. In 1938, with the scholarship from the Humboldt Foundation, Jin Shisheng went to Germany to study road and urban engineering. His individual wartime memories associated with private photographs and diaries provide a different perspective on the history of transnational encounters between China and Germany.

Another book “Luo Bonian” (駱伯年) edited by Three Shadows Photography Art Centre and published in 2016, Beijing, displays the private photographic works from a Hangzhou amateur photographer Luo Bonian 駱伯年 (1911-2002), a banker in Zhejiang Province. The introduction “Luo Bonian: Three Approaches” written by Stephanie H. Tung not only outlines his life and creations, but also investigates the significant context of his amateur photographic creation.⁸ The 2015 exhibition *Chinese Photography: Since the Twentieth Century* (*Zhongguo sheying: ershi shiji yilai* 中國攝影:二十世紀以來) at the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, Beijing, presents a selection of photographs with varied techniques and styles, charting the history of photography in the twentieth century China. It is worth noting that the exhibition incorporated many unpublished works from amateur photographers who embraced photography as a serious art in the Republican period.⁹

⁸ Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, ed., *Luo Bonian* 駱伯年 (Beijing: Beijing lianhe chubanshe, 2016). Two photographs by Luo Bonian were exhibited in Tate Modern, London from 2 May to 14 October 2018 as a part of the exhibition: *Shape of Light: 100 Years of Photography and Abstract Art*.

⁹ The catalog of the exhibition was published in 2016. Rong Rong 榮榮, ed., *Zhongguo sheying: ershi shiji yilai* 中國攝影:二十世紀以來 [Chinese Photography: Since the Twentieth Century] (Hangzhou: zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2016).

However, the scholarship that focuses on the ordinary photographic hobbyists in Republican China is still narrow. The major reason for neglecting the contributions made by amateur photographers is the huge difficulty in collecting and preserving private photographs. In the turbulent twentieth century, it was very hard for the descendants of amateur photographers to preserve prints, negatives, and albums. Many works by Luo Bonian and Jin Shisheng were lost during the Cultural Revolution because the subjects such as architecture on the Bund and ladies in the Republican period, which were closely related with “bourgeoise art,” were seen as taboo during the Cultural Revolution. It was not until ten years ago that the commercial photographic market in China gradually developed; however, photo collectors generally prefer to collect portraits of celebrities or fine-art photographs. The cultural value of photographs by amateur photographers in the Republican period is still neglected.¹⁰

Both serious amateur photographers and ordinary photographic hobbyists contributed to the diversity and vitality of modern Chinese photography. The introduction of Kodak and other brands of the portable camera such as Leica and Contax in Chinese market triggered a huge enthusiasm for photographic hobbyists, enabling them to create an increasingly large number of photographs that not only reflected the social and cultural history of modern China but also expresses personal sentiments in an age of political upheaval.¹¹ In an immature but continuously developing photographic market, there was no big gap between serious amateur photographers and ordinary photographic hobbyists. Both embraced the flourishing

¹⁰ Japanese photographic historian Yoshiaki kai argues that there is a lack of commercial photographic market for circulating the family photographs and private snapshots in Japan. The same argument applies to China. It was not until ten years ago that the commercial photographic market in China gradually developed which means for a long time the private snapshots or family albums would not be allowed to circulate away from their original owners. See Yoshiaki Kai, “The Shadow of Snapshots,” in *Suspending Time Life–Photography–Death*, edited by Geoffrey Batchen (Shizuoka: Izu Photo Museum, 2010), 172-191.

¹¹ Photographic historian Geoffrey Batchen argued that the snapshot should be seen as a complex social device with specifically middle-class values and sentiments rather than simply an artistic object. Geoffrey Batchen, “Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn,” *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 121-142.

Shanghai urban culture that contributed to “a cultural climax of Chinese modernity,” as Leo Ou-Fan Lee put it, and accepted the impact of modernist photography movements in Europe and the United States.¹²

The dialogue between the international modern art and indigenous culture encouraged more and more amateur photographers to develop their own photographic vocabulary. The multilayered connections among a technological novelty, an emerging modern nation, and the transformative art world gave birth to the complex conception of Chinese visual modernity in the first half of twentieth century. A type of “translingual” modernity had emerged in the dialogue of European, American, and Japanese art and culture.¹³ Before 1937, the multiple colonizers in semi-colonial Shanghai, as Shih Shu-Mei argued that, offered Chinese intellectuals varied ideological and cultural positions, the intellectuals were willing to adopt Europe-American or Japanese ideas.¹⁴ In my research, visual modernity in the early twentieth century China is situated through the examination of photographs from two interrelated perspectives, embracing the modern art landscape in the idioms of Euro-American artists while adapting it to local artistic expressions on their own terms. From printing technology to photography, the adoption of new Western technologies was central to Chinese modernization.¹⁵

In the early twentieth-century China, the new generation of intellectuals and urban bourgeoisie embraced photography as one of the achievements of “Western” modernization, treating it as a symbol of scientific modernity.¹⁶ From the photographic

¹² Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Remapping Shanghai,” in *Shanghai Modern—The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 3-42.

¹³ Lydia Liu, “Introduction,” in *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 1-42.

¹⁴ Shu-Mei Shih, “Loving the Other: May Fourth Occidentalism in the Global Context,” in *The Lure of the Modern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California University of California Press, 2001), 1-45.

¹⁵ Christopher A. Reed, “Introduction,” in *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 3-24.

¹⁶ Yi Gu, “Photography and Its Chinese Origins,” In *Photography and Its Origins* edited by Tanya Sheehan and Andrés Mario Zervigón (New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2015), 157-70.

experimentation of Zou Boqi 鄒伯奇 (1819-1869) to Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873-1929) efforts to legitimize photography as modern science, the upper class and intellectuals took advantage of photography as a symbol of modernity to transmit Western knowledge and promote reform in China.¹⁷ The capacity to represent social reality connected photography to the dynamics of the modern world. In the early twentieth century China, the desire to see and know the modern world emerged within the context of scientific enlightenment and self-awareness, encouraging more intellectuals and elites to explore the variable functions of photography in the new era of modernity.

Chinese intellectuals and artists with varied cultural positions represented the transformative modern art landscape by adapting the idioms of Euro-American artists into local artistic expressions. Between the two world wars, Chinese photographers responded creatively to the exciting movements in modernist photography in Europe and America. Collages, photomontages, and design photography offered new ways to represent the emerging metropolis. Since the 1920s, groups of amateur photographers adapted the photographic language to local contexts, attempting to develop a localized photographic art. Liu Bannong 劉半農 (1891-1934) of the Light Society wrote a long theoretical essay entitled "The Talks on Photography" (*Bannong tanying* 半農談影), interpreting photography as a genre of fine art through appropriating terms and methods from traditional painting theory;¹⁸ Lang Jingshan 郎靜山 (1892-1995) of the Hua Society employed sophisticated darkroom techniques to incorporate several literary motifs into an emulative traditional Chinese painting, developing a signature style of

¹⁷ Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshushi* 中國近三百年學術史 [Chinese intellectual history of the last three hundred years] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2004), 382.

¹⁸ Liu Bannong 劉半農, "Bannong tanying 半農談影 [The Talk on Photography]," in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 177-202.

composite photography on an international stage; Lu Shifu 盧施福 (1898-1983) and Chen Chuanling 陳傳霖 (1897-1945) of the Black-and-White Photographic Society tried various approaches to the modernist style of European and American photographers, but on their own terms. A number of fine-art photographs in the 1920s and 1930s highlighted the role of photography in a complex conception of modernity in China.

My dissertation examines how amateur photography emerged and developed in China from 1900 to 1937, and how the photographic societies, exhibitions and publications opened new avenues of photographic expression after six decades of problematic colonial photography. Through the examination of a lot of private photographs by the amateur photographers in the Republican period, I argue that photography, once a luxury hobby of the elites in the late nineteenth century was transformed into a new communicative and expressive medium for new intellectuals and bourgeoisie in Republican China. This rise of amateur photography in China and the new photographic vocabulary developed by the photographic societies, exhibitions, and publications from the 1900s to the 1930s indeed contributed to the particular aspects and eventual growth of Chinese visual modernity which is a comprised, complex conception of modernity in the first half of the twentieth century China.

The first chapter *The Ubiquitous Gaze: Photography, Subjugation, and the Leisure Life in Early Treaty Port China* explores how hand cameras were employed to represent the violence, conflicts and occupation during the social upheavals in 1900-1901, and how the expatriate photographic community in the treaty ports took up photography as a new hobby. From cumbersome photographic equipment to small boxes, the advancement of camera technology made photography ubiquitous, just as photographs were absorbed into the representation of exoticism and subjugation. The hand camera

had not only been used as a tool of recoding the historical moments, but also a new entertainment product among the expatriates who mainly lived in treaty port China. Several camera clubs held exhibitions and workshops for their members. Beyond the colonial photography, the advent of hand camera and the rise of amateur photography in treaty port China contributed to new way of documenting transformative Chinese society.

Chapter two *Revisiting the “Kodak Moment”*: *Kodak and the Rise of Amateur Photography in China* contextualizes the photographic engagements of the emerging amateur photographers, including both serious amateur photographers and ordinary photographic hobbyists in the Republican period. The novel and exciting visual experience were represented through the Kodak camera, promoting the Chinese to see the nation and the individual as an independent visual subject. Through the dissemination of photographic knowledge and abolishment of superstition, photography, which was a once esoteric practice, gradually became a new leisure activity among the new intellectuals and the urban bourgeoisie. The Kodak Company in China promoted the amateur photography with extensive marketing. The emphasis on the simplicity, affordability and portability of the camera attracted more and more amateur photographers in 1920s and 1930s China. Meanwhile, Kodak publications provided a comprehensive knowledge for self-taught photographers. A lot of photographic societies formed to develop a new photographic vocabulary from 1910s-1930s. The Kodak portable camera also encouraged the Chinese urban amateur photographers to capture everyday life; Additionally, serious amateur photographers began to represent the modern art landscape.

Chapter three *Democratization of the Images: Amateur Photography in Public Spaces* explores that how photographic exhibitions transformed the way of viewing and

appreciating pictures among the public, creating a new public space for learning and communication. A series of exhibitions held by the amateur photographic societies in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Nanjing, legitimizing photography as a genre of fine art and expanding the public understanding of modern art. The story of Kodak coming to China was interwoven with the local amateur's demand to record modern life and shape their self-identity. In the 1920s and 1930s the Eastman Kodak Company created a multitude of ways to attract the costumers and cultivate the amateurs' aesthetic tastes in line with modern life.

Building upon the second- and three-chapters' examinations, Chapter four *Portable Landscapes: Urban Spectacles, Leisure Travel and Representing the Nation* examines that how amateur photographers utilized the hand camera to represent the candid moments of urban life and leisure travel in 1930s China. Beyond the colonist legacy, many urban photographers tended to picture the growing metropolis of Shanghai in the modernist idiom of German and other European photographers. Inspired by both a flourishing Shanghai urban culture and the impact of foreign modernist photography movements such as New Objectivity and New Vision, these photographers deployed new ways of seeing the changed and changing environments. The arrival of Kodak and another brand of hand camera encouraged a growing number of amateur photographers to take snapshots when they traveled. Travel underwent a transformation from an elite pastime to a modern leisure activity in the Republican era. The mechanized travel with a hand camera fundamentally changed the way of perceiving moving landscape. The rise of the new middle classes in the cities, expanding transportation infrastructure, and relatively peaceful prewar environment boosted tourism in the Republican period. Some amateur photographers deployed the camera not only as a leisure product but also a documentary tool. Beyond leisure travel

to scenic spots, an increasing number of Chinese intellectuals promoted a trend of nationwide tours to explore the new cultural landscape of Republican China. During the leisure travel and cultural investigations in the 1930s, the amateur photographers revealed the potential of hand camera as both documental and educational tool, developing a new perspective to depict and discovery the national landscape of an emerging Republic.

The last chapter *Reconfiguring Realism: Transformative Pictorialism and New Visions* demonstrates the efforts of the 1930s Chinese amateur photographers contributed to the diversity of subjects and styles in the history of Chinese modern photography. Photography as a Western-style art form recognized and legitimized through the appropriation and adaption of traditional-style ink painting by the Chinese amateur photographers. Photomontages and design photography offered a new perspective to depict the increasingly industrialized modern world. The efforts of the amateur photographers expanded the boundary of photographic expression and enriched the vocabulary of Chinese modern art.

After six decades of problematic colonial photography, increasingly number of Chinese amateur photographers attempted to open new avenues of photographic expression. Photography was employed to record the development of the modern cities in the twentieth century. The photographs taken by the amateur photographers perform as a private archive, implying a desire to capture the fleeting moments. The Republican photographers consciously found their own way to deal with the new corporeal and sensory experience in modern life. The artistic works, travel snapshots, family photographs, and pictures of daily life in China allowed these amateurs to establish a precise association with the environment, the family, and the new nation. The invention and improvement of camera technology made it possible. The spontaneity, immediacy,

and intimacy of these snapshots provide a new perspective on Chinese amateur photographers' cultural and artistic lives in the Republican period.

Chapter 1: The Ubiquitous Gaze: Photography, Subjugation, and the Leisure Life in Early Treaty Port China

Introduction

Photography had been introduced into China with British imperial expansion during the first Opium War (1839-1842). The unequal reception of photography in 19th century China suggests that photography as a revolutionary medium not simply leads to accurate representation, but also symbolizes a gaze of controlling power relating to the hierarchy and surveillance in the context of colonialism. The initially passive, rather than strongly collaborative, reception of photography in colonial contexts should serve as an indication—from the very beginning—that photography cannot be seen simply as technology, but as an extension of the human eye, compounding the construction of power relationships. The camera gaze, as John Tagg argued, works as new strategies of power, promoting the establishment of a hierarchical system and provides a new means of surveillance.¹⁹

The photographic technology developed in tandem with the colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. From heavy equipment to small boxes, the development of the technology made photography ubiquitous. A large number of photographs were absorbed into the representation of exoticism and subjugation. Beside the documentation of occupation, both professional and amateur, enthusiastically took some everyday snapshots in the interior of the Forbidden City, shifting from the

¹⁹ Michel Foucault used the “panopticon” proposed by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century to explain the modern social system as “an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of panopticism.” John Tagg continues Foucault’s discourse on power, argues that the camera that functioned as the revolutionary modern medium promotes the establishment of a hierarchical system. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 7; John Tagg, “A Means of Surveillance: The Photographs as Evidence in Law,” in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan Education UK, 1988), 66-102.

demonstration of colonial power to observation and surveillance of everyday lives. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, European and American expatriates living in China employed Kodak cameras to document the leisure activities.

1.1 Photography and Subjugation

What happens when a modern medium encounters a changeless and static empire? The photographic history of the Forbidden City started in 1860 with Italian-British photographer Felice Beato's (1832-1909) wet collodion photographs. Beato was the one of the first photographers to represent the Forbidden City and promote the diffusion of these images around the world. After the Second Opium War (1856-1860), Beato visited the Forbidden City as a part of the military campaign. Equipped with a large box camera containing 10 x 12 plates, he departed from the Qian Gate and went through the Tian'an Gate and the Duan Gate, arriving at the Meridian Gate, the entrance of the Forbidden City. Then he climbed Jing Mountain, overlooking the Forbidden City, and took a photograph of the sweeping vista (**Fig.1.1**).²⁰ Beato's photographic practices not only manifest the significant role of the photographer in the colonial expansion, but also initiated a new way of framing historical monuments.

By the 1890s, the history of Chinese photography consists of several significant photographs which had been taken by some renown photographers. The earliest daguerreotypes in China were taken by French photographer Jules Itier in 1844 after two years of the first Opium War (1839-1842). Besides these obscure indoor photographs, Itier documented the view of Canton and Macao during his travel up the Pearl River to Canton from the end of October to December 1844. These

²⁰ Felice Beato's photos were purchased and sold by Henry Hering (1814-1873), a photographer and dealer in London. Wu Hung, "Photography's Subjugation of China: A 'Magnificent Collection' of Second Opium War Images," in *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 48-83.

daguerreotypes—in total 32 plates for the first time depict the true representations of China and Chinese people.²¹ At the same time, some amateurs were also active in some photographic experiments in the very beginning. Due to the technique limitation, the experiments of the amateurs seemed unsuccessful.²²

The photographic technology developed in tandem with the colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the third generation of photographic technology—dry plates and films almost replaced daguerreotype, calotype, and wet-glass plate—the first and two generations of photographic technology, and the rise of portable cameras offered great benefits for transmission of the images. In 1888, the Eastman Dry Plate Company in Rochester, New York began to produce the Kodak Camera with fixed focus and flexible roll film. The slogan, “You press the button, we do the rest,” invited more amateurs to capture spontaneous moments. In 1900, Kodak company launched the first mass-marketed camera, Brownie. The initially designed for children camera was portable and much easier to transport.²³ Alfred Stieglitz commented that this invention was the beginning of the “photographing by the yard” era. Although many photographers rejected the small camera, Stieglitz highly praised its portability and simplicity. In the essay, he argued that the hand camera made the instrument become “a second nature”, allowing the hands, minds, and eyes to be fully occupied with the photographic subject. And the “simplest pattern” of the hand camera helped the photographer capture the moments easily and immediately. In

²¹ Jules Itier, *Journal d'un voyage en Chine en 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846* [Diary of a trip to China in 1843, 1844, 1845] (Paris, Dauvin et Fontaine, 1848), 331.

²² Major George Malcolm and Dr. Robert Woosnam, who both served the Legation of Sir Henry Pottinger mission, set up a daguerreotype camera on the banks of Yangzi River on July 1842. Robert Bickers: “The lives and Deaths of Photographs in Early Treaty Port China,” in *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Life and Still Images in Historical Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 3-38.

²³ Christopher Green, “New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space,” in *Seizing the Light* (New York.: MC GRAW HILL, 2000), 165-182.

practice, the photographer waited several hours to grasp the desired picture, just as his 1893 photograph “Fifth Avenue, Winter”.²⁴

It was the fact that the arrival of hand camera offered more possibilities for outdoor shooting, in other words, its easy-to-use quality met the desire of capturing the motion and life in the changing world. The photographs taken by hand camera were known as “snapshots” which was adopted from the hunting term referring to shoot spontaneously.²⁵ The transformation of visibility ushered in a new era of representing and perceiving the world. Jonathan Crary discussed that the camera obscura with the fixed position was too inflexible for ever-changing cultural and political landscape since the nineteenth century. The location of vision has been transforming from a fixed position to the human body. A new “decentered observer” emerged with small portable instrument diverted the photographer’s attention from machine operation. In the early nineteenth century, a new mode of visual reproduction and perception emerged, in which the observer, as the subject of vision and perception, moved away from the fixed, closed way of seeing in the “camera obscura” mode and entered the fluid, changing world, where the observer’s bodily experience intervened in the process of visual production, reconstructing the relationship between self and world in changing time and space.²⁶

The invention of Kodak in 1888 made photography ubiquitous. Snapshotting as a way of recording immediately was paralleled with the rapidly growing colonial expansion in a global sphere, and the simple mechanism facilitated the documentation and surveying. Easy to carry and operate, Kodak could be used for sightseeing and

²⁴ Alfred Stieglitz, “The Hand Camera—Its Present Importance,” In *American Annual of Photography and Photographic Times Almanac for 1897* (New York: 1896), 18-27.

²⁵ Christopher Green, *Seizing the Light*, 173.

²⁶ Jonathan Crary, “Techniques of the Observer,” in *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 97-136.

expeditions abroad. During the expansion of colonialism, the power of photography was exploited in military, commercial and propagandistic arenas. An increasing number of photographers initiated expeditionary and travel photography in Asia, Africa, and Latin American in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Before discussing the photographic practices of the amateur photographers in treaty port China, I would examine how hand cameras were employed to represent the violence, conflicts, and occupation during the social upheavals in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century China. The instant photographs had been absorbed into the representation of the massacre, war and famine—violence perpetrated by both foreign troops and the Boxers in northern China, transforming China from a static Ancient Empire to a chaotic battle land.²⁷

Giuseppe Messerotti Benvenuti, an Italian military officer, was documented with Kodak in China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. In his memoir, he described that: “Everyone is a photographer around here, which means just about anyone can go click click with a camera, and there are a lot of them around.”²⁸ He was full of enthusiasm to capture the brutal execution on the Boxers. A photograph with caption *Teste di decapitati, maggio 1901* (Heads of decapitated, May 1901) was enclosed in a letter he sent.²⁹ The photographer outside the picture happened to have caught the military photographer who was taking shot of a decapitated body. The photograph emphasized his *presence* as a photographer and a witness of the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901) (Fig.1.2).

²⁷ Sarah E. Fraser, “Chinese as Subject: Photographic Genres in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Brush and Shutter*, 90–109.

²⁸ Paolo Battaglia and Nicola Labanca, *Giuseppe Messerotti Benvenuti. Un italiano nella Cina dei boxer. Fotografie e lettere (1900-1901)* [Giuseppe Messerotti Benvenuti. An Italian in China Boxers: Photographs and letters (1900-1901)] (Milan: Raccolte Fotogr. Moden. Panini, 2000), np.

²⁹ In the letter, he said, “I witnessed this scene in the morning just like a physician (armed with a camera). Three guilty murders were beheaded by a Chinese according to the Chinese court law. They found a skilled executioner who pulled three heads with three hits. In a few minutes the operation was finished.” Paolo Battaglia and Nicola Labanca. *Un italiano nella Cina dei boxer. Fotografie e lettere (1900-1901)*, 2.

In June 1900, the allied forces—Great Britain, the United States, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Russia, and Japan—entered China to rescue the besieged legations during the Boxer Rebellion and suppressing the uprising. After the military task was completed, they started to punish and teach lessons to the Qing government and Chinese people. As James L. Hevia argued that a “photography complex” as a network made up a new array of photographic technology, photographer and communicative agencies functioning as an apparatus of surveillance documenting “reality” and the whole process of punishing.³⁰

The year 1900 became a watershed in the history of photography of the Forbidden City. Ranging from Kodak cameras to a balloon above the sky, a variety of photographic apparatuses were utilized to record the process of punishment, transforming the Forbidden City from a sacred space of the empire to a spectacle for a global audience.³¹ All countries attached great importance to the preservation of visual records during the occupation. The visual archives of each allied forces complemented each other and referred to each other, forming an interactive system.³²

Felice Beato’s landmark bird’s view of the Forbidden City was undoubtedly a reference point for the earliest aerial photographs in China taken by French Expeditionary Engineer officers from a balloon in 1900. The balloon drifted from Tianjin to Beijing, with the French taking the views of the church, streets, and houses below. Finally, they landed near the Forbidden City. From the West to the East, they took the aerial views of Summer Palace, White Dagoba, Jing Hill, and an encompassing

³⁰ James L. Hevia, “The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900-1901), Making Civilization,” in *Empire of Vision*, eds. Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 283-314.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² The corps of the engineers, US army made a report, listing the engineering equipment among allied forces. According to the report from the US army, the engineering office stated: “in each section of a special company, there must be a certain number of men who understand thoroughly reconnaissance, the duplicating methods adopted, field photography, or whatever else requires special instruction.” Harley B. Ferguson, *Report on the engineer equipment of the allied troops: serving with the China Relief Expedition, 1900-1901* (Washington, 1901).

view of the Forbidden City running through the north-south axis (**Fig.1.3**). The 12 aerial photos, together with other snapshots taken from 1900 to 1901, a total of 272 pieces are arranged into 42 photographic plates in an album entitled “China on land and in balloon” (*La Chine à terre et en ballon*).³³ Balloons were employed into various military conflicts starting in the first half of the nineteenth century. Lots of aerial photographs could be taken from the balloons during the war.³⁴ Since 1888, Kodak with considerably faster shutter speed, brought great changes for aerial photography. British aerial photographer John Mackenzie Bacon (1846-1904) took his first flight with Kodak in 1888, the year that saw the invention of the first Kodak camera.³⁵

Through the ubiquitous gaze, the Forbidden City was extensively photographed contributing to an international image of the empire. Over hundreds of photographs taken by American military photographer Cornelius Francis O’Keefe (dates unknown) during 1900–1901 almost covered the whole process of subjugation and punishment.³⁶ O’Keefe had been a professional photographer working in Leadville, Colorado when the Spanish-American War broke out. He enlisted in the army and was sent to the Philippines.³⁷ He was constructing a complete record of the occupation per US Commander General Adna Chafee’s instructions. In 1900, combat photography was not an established genre; war ruins in the aftermath of the battle and “occupation” were the main subjects in his photographs. O’Keefe captured dead bodies lying along a canal

³³ These photographs were taken by Captain Plaisant, Captain Calmel and Captain Tissier in 1900-1901. *La Chine à terre et en ballon. – Reproduction de 272 photographies* [China on land and in balloon: Reproduction of 272 photographs] (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1902).

³⁴ The first aerial photograph was taken by Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (1820-1910) (known as “Nadar”). In 1858, he took several aerial views of the outskirts of Paris. At that time, even with excellent lighting conditions, there was still not enough time for a successful exposure. Nadar tried several times and did not succeed until 1868, when he ascended hundreds of feet in a balloon, and captured several photos of Paris. Martyn Barber, “‘Quick! The Kodak!’, Victorian and Edwardian aeronauts and aerial photographers,” in *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology* (Swindon: English heritage, 2011), 52-82.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 60.

³⁶ C. F. O’Keefe’s photographs of the expedition were collected in US National Archives in College Park, Maryland. NWDNS-77-CR. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed May 18, 2018. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/519406>.

³⁷ J. M. Mancini, “War, the Crucible of Art,” in *Art and War in the Pacific World: Making, Breaking, and Taking from Anson’s Voyage to the Philippine-American War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 147-177.

near Dongbian Gate when the allies battled with Chinese infantry. Adjacent to the western wall of Legation Quarter, Qian Gate was the most damaged site during the Boxer Rebellion. The fire ignited by the Boxers and troops successively destroyed the watchtower and tower in July and August. On August 15, the day after the besieged legations were relieved, Qian Gate, directly towards the Imperial City, was blasted open by the US artillery under the order of General Chaffee. The following day, August 26, the allied commanders agreed to occupy the Imperial City, and the city of Beijing was quickly overtaken.

O'Keefe captured the moments when the US Army invaded the city by building a ladder and blowing open the path leading up to the Hall of Supreme Harmony. He also took several photographs of the devastated houses, churches, and temples in Tartar City (**Fig.1.4**). Divorced from the picturesque style of the nineteenth century, O'Keefe demonstrated the documentary power of the camera in his depiction of war ruins. Contrasted with the pioneering nineteenth-century war photographer Felice Beato's meticulously organized staged photographs of the Second Opium War, O'Keefe's ruin photographs convey an overall impression of the deconstruction of the city, moving forward to a new era of documentary photography.

During the Boxer Rebellion, abandoned monuments and imperial residences were occupied by the allied forces and extensively photographed by army photographers, transforming the process of punishment into a performance of power.³⁸ On August 28, a triumphal march comprised of military contingents from the eight nations as well as the diplomatic corps was held as a lesson to the Chinese government. The allied forces marched up the central avenue leading through the Imperial City. A photograph even shows an army photographer taking shots for the diplomatic corps (**Fig.1.5**). The throne

³⁸ James L. Hevia, "The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900-1901), Making Civilization," in *Empire of Vision*, 283-314.

is undoubtedly a popular subject during the subjugation. O’Keefe’s empty throne in the deserted palace suggests the loss of Qing sovereignty (**Fig.1.6**). Walking through the yards and palaces reserved solely for the emperor and his mother, Empress Dowager Cixi, the photographers took the views of the entrance of the Emperor’s private rooms and the principle throne in Qianqing Palace.

Vivid, tangible and pleasurable, stereography became a perfect medium for exhibiting the exoticness for the European-American audience. The stereoscope, a visual medium which gained the greatest popularity in the nineteenth century, provided visual pleasure by creating directly signifies tangibility of the images. As Oliver Wendell Holmes, the inventor of the hand-held stereo viewer, imagined in his essay “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph”: “The time will come when a man who wishes to see any subject, natural or artificial, will go to the Imperial, National, or City Stereographic Library and call for its skin or form, as he would for a book at any common library.”³⁹ His enthusiastic prediction was written in the era of industrial modernization and colonial expansion, indicating a hierarchic knowledge system consisting of tangible and immediate images was being developed with the advancement of photographic technology.

James Ricalton (1844-1929), a peripatetic American photographer, developed a stereographic project that included images of India and China, displaying historical events and peoples in the “Far East” for a global audience. In James Ricalton’s Meridian Gate stereograph, the viewers would have an immersed visual experience, as if they had truly watched American minister to China Edwin Hurd Conger and his wife Sarah Pike Conger approaching the Meridian Gate (**Fig.1.7**).⁴⁰ The visual effects that

³⁹ Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,” *The Atlantic*, June 1859.

⁴⁰ James Ricalton: “Count Von Waldersee Escorted by Officers of Allied Armies through Lines of U.S. Infantry, toward Sacred Gate, Peking,” in *China through the Stereoscope: A Journey through the Dragon Empire at the Time of the Boxer Uprising* (New York, Underwood & Underwood, 1901), 297-299.

stereoscope provided visual pleasure immersed in the sense of illusions. The transformation of visibility ushered in a new era of representing and perceiving the world. Allan Sekula argued that the stereoscope and the viewer lost all sense of the material substrate of the image, which was liable to result in a belief in dematerialized form. Therefore, the viewing process was analogous to the capitalist exchange process, which was not only the base of a global political economy but also a new hierarchy of knowledge and power.⁴¹

The photographs from Japanese photographers are technically and aesthetically of a higher standard, and, more importantly, show a greater understanding of East Asian architecture and cultural implications.⁴² Photography was introduced to Japan in 1848, almost at the same time as China. Japan and China shared many similarities in embracing and adapting photography in a local context. Similarly, commercial photography studios in Chinese treaty ports like Canton, Shanghai, and Tianjin gradually dominated the domestic photographic market in the late nineteenth century.⁴³ The prosperity of photography in Japan benefited greatly from the Meiji government's protective measures on cultural property. For establishing a national treasure system

⁴¹ Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," in *Art Journal* 41, no. 1, (Spring, 1981), 15-25.

⁴² Japanese photographers made remarkable contributions to the international imagery of China during the Boxer Rebellion. Sanshichiro Yamamoto 山本讚七郎 (1855-1953) departed from Tokyo for Peking to take photographs during the Boxer Rebellion. He took the views of the Imperial Palace, temples, and some war ruins. A total of 106 photographs on 57 plates, with Japanese and English captions, were assembled in an album *Views of the North China Affair, 1900*. Sanshichiro Yamamoto 山本讚七郎, *Views of the North China Affair* 北清事變寫真帖 (Tokyo: Kanda Nishikicho, 1901). Sanshichiro Yamamoto owned a studio in Tokyo from 1882 to 1897. His first visit in China was in April 1897. He left for China to start a new career in Peking. In 1899, he published an album *Peking* containing the photographs of some historical sites such as Summer Palace, Lama Temple, Ming tombs and Chinese people at that time. This album was reprinted in 1906 in Peking. Sanshichiro Yamamoto 山本讚七郎, *Peking* 北京 (Peking 1906).

⁴³ The first generations of both Japanese and Chinese photographers learned the techniques and knowledge from Western photographers such as William Saunders (1832-1892), who opened the studios in both China and Japan. Chinese studio photographers such as Lai Afong 賴阿芳 (1839-1890) and Liang Shitai 梁時泰 (dates unknown) depended heavily on the photographic legacy that Western photographers left and had been lack of the ability to resisting the colonial visions. However, some Japanese photographers, such as Kusakabe Kimbei 日下部金兵衛 (1841-1932), Ogawa Kazumasa 小川一真 (1860-1929), and Tamamura Kōzaburō 玉村康三郎 (1856-?) all of whom ran studios, in the 1890s had expertise in establishing an independent style of Japanese souvenir photography, which not only satisfied the imagination and curiosity of the European-American audience, but also contributed to a new Japanese style in relation to national identity. Naoyuki Kinoshita, "The early years of Japanese photography," in *The History of Japanese Photography*, ed. Anne Wilkes Tucker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 14-99.

beyond imperial property, the government initiated the investigations of the Buddhist shrines and temples and developed national art museums and arts education. Ogawa Kazumasa 小川一真 (1860-1929), as the official photographer, participated in the photographic project, taking about 800 photographs of Buddhist temples and statues in Japan, which were published in art magazines over several years. As an editor of *Shashin Shinpō* 写真新報 and *Kokka* magazine 国華, he had rich experience in observing and depicting cultural heritage, which had a great impact on his photographic practices in China.⁴⁴

In 1901, the Imperial University of Tokyo dispatched a team consisting of several experts with different backgrounds for carrying out a cultural investigation of the construction and decoration of the Palace buildings in the Forbidden City. Architectural scholar Itō Chuta 伊東忠太 (1867-1954), engineer Tsuchiya Junichi 土屋淳一 (dates unknown) and Okuyama Tsunegorō 奥山恒五郎 (dates unknown) of Technology University of Tokyo, and photographer Ogawa Kazumasa collaboratively launched a meticulous documentary project. A total of 170 photographs with text in Japanese, Chinese and English were published in 1906. As the preface of the album suggests, the project provided materials for architectural study, representing parts of the Palace that “are jealously kept from the public sight”.⁴⁵

Itō Chuta, who established the modern study of architecture in Japan by analyzing Horyuji Temple in Nara, the earliest surviving timber structure in the world, visited the

⁴⁴ Julie Christ Oakes, “Japan’s National Treasure System and the Commodification of Art,” in *Looking Modern: East Asian visual culture from treaty ports to World War II*, eds. Jennifer Purtle and Hans Bjarne Thomsen (Chicago: Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago, 2009), 220-242.

⁴⁵ Ogawa Kazumasa published an album *Gengzi shibian Tuji/Yuan Ming Hokushin Jihen Sashincho* [Souvenir Picture Album of the Allies in North China] (Tokyo, Ogawa Kazume Shuppanhu 1902). The album contains an aerial view of Peking taken from a French balloon. The reports of Itō’s and Tsuchiya’s appeared in 1903 in the scientific journal of the School of Engineering, Imperial University of Tokyo, separately. Ogawa’s photographs were edited in 1906 at the expense of the Imperial Museum of Tokyo titled Photographs of Palace Buildings of Peking, with a brief introduction by Itō and captions in Japanese, Chinese and English. *Shinoku Peking koje shashincho* [Photographs of the Palace Buildings of Peking] (Tokyo: Ogawa Kazume Shuppanhu, 1906), n.p.

Forbidden City eager to investigate. Although Itō probably acted as an architectural consultant on the team, the actual performer of this ambitious investigative project was Ogawa Kazumasa. He deployed a pioneering photographic technique in the representation of the Forbidden City, transforming views of the Imperial Palace into aesthetic objects.

Intended for a worldwide audience, the album, with its orientalist-style cover, functioned as a visual guide to an exhibition of the monumental architecture in the Forbidden City and other palaces. The first panorama in the album highlights a grandeur and monumentality. Taken from a high vantage point, Ogawa effectively conveyed the vastness and magnificence of the Gate of Supreme Harmony, located at the central axis, as the symbol of imperial power. The bird's eye view of the Forbidden City from Yong'an Temple echoed the 1860 panoramic view by Felice Beato from Jing Mountain, showing a more impressive and monumental vision 40 years later. Starting with the eighth plate, the photographs were organized and displayed in the order of the troops and visitors entering the city along the central north-south axis. The visual tour starts with a photo of inside the Qian Gate retouched in circle form that emulated the traditional Chinese architectural form of the "moon gate." The lively scene of the market between the Qian Gate and the Daqing Gate forms a contrast with the desolate palaces in the Imperial City (**Fig.1.8**). It is impressive that the team made such effort to represent the decoration, texture, and details of architecture; for example, Ogawa deliberately depicted the decorative pattern on *huabiao*, a kind of ceremonial column located in front of the Tian'an Gate. He also placed a native Chinese near it to indicate the scale for viewers. With Itō's guidance, Ogawa took close-ups of some architectural components: for example, the ornamental tops of the newels, the front steps, the platform, the *zaojin* 藻井 (pillars and coffers) in and around the Hall of Supreme

Harmony, and some closer views of the objects like stone lions, bronze cranes and turtles, and stone sundials. He also used some creative perspectives to show the eaves and beams of the palace, fully displaying the uniqueness of Chinese architecture. The album ends with the photographs of Japanese military forces' private house, the soldiers standing solemnly at the door. Their Western-style military uniforms are in sharp contrast to the traditional Chinese buildings (**Fig.1.9**).

Employed as a treasure photographer for the government, Ogawa Kazumasa had expertise on decontextualizing religious treasures for serving national interests by transforming them into artistic objects.⁴⁶ In China, his photographic practices on the one hand completed the task of providing a visual record for examining “the arrangement, construction, and decoration” of the Forbidden City and other palace grounds, and on the other hand, successfully decontextualized the significance and imperial authority of the Forbidden City which was penetrated by the allied forces in 1900.

Despite the stable and imperial settings in the album, these photographs did not evoke the “aura” of the Forbidden City. The documentary of a “dying tradition” was for constructing “whole new realities in the form a ‘traditionalist’ East Asian architecture.”⁴⁷ Itō Chuta and Ogawa Kazumasa made great efforts to form a new East Asian monumentality. After fourteen months in China, Itō visited Burma, India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Europe, and the United States. In one article in 1909, he applied social Darwinism to architecture, claiming that there was no evolution in Chinese architecture due to its “uncivilized culture”.⁴⁸ His architectural study in 1901 was essentially

⁴⁶ Julie Christ Oakes, “Japan’s National Treasure System and the Commodification of Art,” in *Looking Modern: East Asian visual culture from treaty ports to World War II*, eds. Jennifer Purtle and Hans Bjarne Thomsen (Chicago: Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago, 2009), 220-242.

⁴⁷ James L. Hevia, “The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China (1900-1901), Making Civilization,” in *Empire of Vision*, 283-314.

⁴⁸ Itō Chuta, “Kenchiku Shinka no Gensoku yori Mitaru Wagakuni Kenchiku no Zento [The Future of Our Architecture in Terms of the Evolution Theory of Architecture],” *Kenchiku Zasshi*, 265: 4-36.

anthropological research, which indicated “the cultural contradictions in Japanese colonialism.” His examination of traditional Eastern architecture was at its heart a promotion of a new Japanese-style architecture in relation to the construction of a distinct Japanese ethnic identity.⁴⁹ Monuments as aesthetic objects, as well as political tools, were constantly shaped and represented in the historical encounters with foreign powers. Ogawa Kazumasa’s photographs help trace the shifting meaning of historical monuments. The triangulation of cultural memory, power relations, and national identity reconstructed the monumentality of the Forbidden City.⁵⁰

Through an array of new photographic technology and apparatuses, the Forbidden City was under the surveillance of the allied forces. However, it is still interesting to find some contradictions and rupture in these punitive and ceremony photographs. Besides documenting the grand celebration in the Forbidden City, photographers, both professional and amateur, enthusiastically took some everyday snapshots in the interior of the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace, the Ming Tombs, the Great walls in Peking, and elsewhere, shifting from the demonstration of colonial power to observation and surveillance of everyday lives.

The ordinary snapshots in the archives are usually too unremarkable for the historian. But despite stiff frontal poses and occasional blurriness, these snapshots show a connection with the place, the site, and the objects. Here, the snapshots by army photographers immortalized the encounter between the troops and the monuments. It is interesting to see how these seemingly spontaneous shots from 1900-1901 constitute an alternative version of history and contribute to the complexity of memory. Photography at that time was not simply a tool of documenting the process of teaching lessons; it

⁴⁹ Yuko Kikuchi, “Appropriation of Orientalism,” in *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory* (London: Routledge, 2004), 88-95.

⁵⁰ Wu Hung, “Introduction: The Nine Tripods and Traditional Chinese Concepts of Monumentality,” in *Monumentality in early Chinese art and architecture* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995), 1-15.

was a popular pastime to record personal lives and defining foreigners' identities in China.

Amateur photographers witness the private memories behind conquest and violence. Assembled in a grey cloth-covered Kodak photograph album, a total of 96 photographs were part of the collection of British General Sir George de Symons Barrow (1864-1959), who served in China during the Boxer Rebellion under General Sir Alfred Gaselee (1844-1918) and left for India in December 1901.⁵¹ During his stay in China he collected many photographs that give a glimpse on the everyday lives of the British troops during this year-plus of occupation. He collected several photographs that capture the candid moments of everyday life in the Forbidden City.

One of the photographs in the album shows a relaxed scene of the wives of the British mission and other guests meeting and laughing. Interestingly, another group photograph of similar quality below this one depicts that the high-ranking British officers such as General Sir Alfred Gaselee and colonel Gerald O'Sullivan (1853-1940) of Royal Engineers (**Fig.1.10**). In contrast to O'Keefe's official photographs taken in the Forbidden City, Barrow's private album offers an insight into the personal lives of the military troops, the British legation, and even the significant political figures. In a relaxed, even merry atmosphere, the allies appear to enjoy the occupation life in the Forbidden City. The photographs taken in the yards and palaces in little groups capture the moments in everyday life, establishing a private connection between the individuals and the monuments in the palace. The private album has now been collected in British Library. Through re-interpreting and re-examining the personal archives, the new narratives that challenged the accepted history are constructing.

⁵¹ Brigadier Frank McCallum Collection, *With the China Expeditionary Force 1900-1901*. Mss Eur D1114/3: 1900-1901, British Library.
General Sir George de Symons Barrow 'The Fire of Life' Hutchison, London

Conquerors, but also tourists, their dual identity constantly shifted during the occupation period. Some photographs, like the snapshots taken by O'Keefe in the early days of the occupation, recorded the tourist experiences of the troops. An image of a stone camel along the road to the Ming tombs echoes the nineteenth-century photographer John Thomson (1837-1921)'s photograph from the 1870s in terms of subject and composition. Ming tombs as the mausoleums of the emperors of Ming Dynasty symbolized a nostalgic glory. In Thomson's photograph, a half-naked native Chinese is leaning on the huge and bizarre stone animal along the road, the desolated wasteland in the background creating an air of silence and melancholy (**Fig.1.11**).

In O'Keefe's photograph, taken nearly 30 years later, the native Chinese has been replaced a soldier from the 6th U.S. Cavalry. The photographer chose to take a back view of the soldier, who props his arm against the stone camel, and another soldier standing opposite him and holding the reins of some horses (**Fig.1.12**). Thomson's image shows an apparent ethnographic perspective by displaying a Chinese peculiarity; by contrast, O'Keefe's photograph conveys more subjective emotions. Their visit to Ming tombs probably followed the Thomson and other nineteenth-century photographers' travel routines. The troops were taken several groups of photographs in various poses around the stone animal. They were even taken a group photograph between two large stone elephants. A series of photographs exhibited the gradual disenchantment beyond the Forbidden City.

The aerial photographs, stereographic views, news photographs, and everyday snapshots of the Forbidden City reveal the multiplicity of the encounters. The invention of hand camera in 1888, and the manufacture of roll film a year later, expanded the number of images of the Boxer Rebellion and occupation of Beijing. Almost at the same time, the introduction of half-tone print process promoted the photographs into the print

media.⁵² A large amount of circulating images transmitted through European and American books, periodicals, journals, and the illustrated press removed the “unique existence at the place,” as Walter Benjamin argued.⁵³ The various methods the allies used to punish the Chinese undermined the authority of the Empire.⁵⁴ From daguerreotype to hand camera, it is not difficult to identify that the photography’s pervasive conquest of the global audience due to the ever-increasing speed of reproduction and dissemination. Within two decades of its birth, hand cameras had established a ubiquitous presence on a global scale.

1.2 Amateur Photographers in Early Treaty Port China

With photography accessible to a broader audience, more and more photographic enthusiasts used the hand camera to capture people in spontaneous moments of daily life. After the Second Opium War, an increasing number of foreign residents, who mainly consisted of missionaries, diplomats and their families, traders, and expeditioners, gathered in the treaty ports in China.⁵⁵ In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, European and American expatriates living in China used Kodak cameras to record family gatherings, short trips and cultural expeditions. Private photographs do not directly participate in the construction of socio-historical discourse

⁵² Mcquire Scott, “Promiscuous meanings,” in *Visions of Modernity* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 44-63.

⁵³ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 222–23.

⁵⁴ Arnold Henry Savage Landor, *China and the Allies* (New York: Scribner, 1901); Arthur Henderson Smith, *China in Convulsion* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co, 1901); *Harper’s Weekly* used several photographs from the photographers in Peking to depict the march on the Forbidden City. One of news photos foregrounds the Russian commander, and the Russian contingents are marching from the Meridian Gate in the background to the Hall of Supreme Harmony. Two whole pages of photographs of the triumphal march into the Forbidden City not only transmitted news of the victory but suggested a demystification of the Forbidden City parallel to the construction of authority of Western forces. See Peter C. Perdue and Ellen Sebring, “The Boxer Uprising II: War and Aftermath (1900-1901),” in *MIT Visualizing Cultures*. Accessed June 18, 2019. https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/boxer_uprising_02/index.html.

⁵⁵ Robert Bickers, “The Lives and Deaths of Photographs in Early Treaty Port China,” in *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Life/Still Images in Historical Narratives*, *Visualising China, 1845-1965* (Brill, 2013), 3-38.

but are transformed into part of collective memory by the consistent interpretation of personal narratives.

In the era of dry plate, many early amateur photographers had a scientific background since photography was first seen as a mysterious product. John Dudgeon (1837-1901), who was a Scottish missionary doctor who worked in the London Missionary Society's Peking Hospital spent nearly 40 years in China. Dr. Dudgeon and some other missionary doctors started to translate European photography manuals into the Chinese language in the 1870s. He compiled an introductory photography manual "Capturing Shadow and Spectacle" (*Tuoying qiguan* 脫影奇觀) in 1873 in three volumes referring to the European photography manual. *Tuoying*, which literally means separating the shadow from the entity, suggests a process of duplicating and copying. The manual introduces the knowledge of European optics, basic principles of capturing the images, and methods of developing; it also lists the photographic materials and equipment illustrated with pictures. The knowledge and detailed methods in this manual enabled more photography enthusiasts to be self-taught photographers.⁵⁶ In addition to photographers in the commercial studios, some local Chinese enthusiasts were actively exploring photography techniques and participating in the practice of photography by the missionaries, which will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

One of Dudgeon's friends, British amateur photographer Thomas Child (1841-1898), who worked as a gas engineer for the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs until 1889, took many views of Chinese architecture and monuments, such as the Old Summer Palace, the walls in Beijing, Ming tombs, as well as social scenes. Instead of magnificent panoramas and staged tableaux, Child's photographs deployed variable

⁵⁶ John Hepburn Dudgeon, *Tuoying qiguan* 脫影奇觀 [Capturing Shadow and Spectacle], 1873.

perspectives to represent historical monuments and real street life in Peking. In contrast with Child's dry-plate technology, Edward Guy Hillier (1857-1924), a banker and manager in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Peking, used an "instant camera"—which was probably a Kodak—for taking shots when he traveled along the Yangtze River and went deep into the mountains of south-west Yichang.⁵⁷

The greater photographic enthusiasm among the foreign residents in China was probably promoted by the advent of Kodak in 1888. As one piece of advertisement in June 1889 on *The North-China Daily News* said: "As a detective camera, it is unequalled in convenience and rapidity of adjustment for instantaneous photographs of moving objects under varying conditions, the focus and the speed of the shutter being instantly regulated without opening the camera."⁵⁸ At first Kodak was invented as the detective camera; its small size and fast speed brought a lot of benefits for instant shooting. But its ease of use eventually attracted a great number of amateur photographers who treated photography as a hobby rather than a scientific procedure.

The new cameras were first sold by foreign companies (*hong 行*) in the treaty ports. Kodak ads in nineteenth-century China mentioned that the latest products could be purchased at foreign-owned stores in Shanghai, such as J. Liewellyn & Co., Ld. Kodak products were also promoted as Christmas gifts. An 1889 ad indicates that Liewellyn & Co., Ld in Shanghai sells a "very handy" camera, which "can be carried under the coat with the lens projecting through a buttonhole, and the wearer can take several views by simply pulling a string."⁵⁹ The words highlights the advantages of Kodak: easy to operate and very handy. They could be brought into China as Christmas gifts by some of the Legation staff and other foreign residents.

⁵⁷ Andrew Hillier, "The Kodak Comes to Peking," *Visualising China*, accessed June 21, 2018, http://visualisingchina.net/blog/2017/01/26/the-kodak-comes-to-peking/#_edn5.

⁵⁸ Advertisement, *The North-China Daily News*, June 27, 1889, np.

⁵⁹ "Christmas Show at the Stores," *North China Herald*, December 13, 1889, 726.

In the late nineteenth century, photography has been regarded as a respectable hobby that brought benefits for social life in the European-American countries. The expatriate community brought the pastime to China. Photography was also employed as a tool for documenting the social life of the expatriate community in China. Alicia Bewicke Little (1845-1926), a prestigious travel writer and a feminist, arrived in Shanghai as the wife of British merchant Archibald John Little. They moved to the far west of China, at Chongqing in 1887.⁶⁰ *Intimate China. The Chinese as I have seen them*, a book Alicia wrote in the late 1880s and early 1890s, includes 120 photographic illustrations depicting the landscape, the local customs and people when she traveled to interior China in the 1890s. Beyond the exhibition of exotic scenes and life of local people, she focused on the hard labour of the boat trackers who helped the passages to cross the Yangtze Gorges (**Fig.1.13**). In the photograph of trackers, she captured the labours walking along the river in a candid moment, against the backdrop of rolling hills and rapid rivers. Alicia described the difficulty of capturing the motion of the subjects in the book. She tried to take photographs of the Buddhist priests when they prostrated themselves and burnt the joss-sticks, but “it seemed a pity to wait to set up the camera till they had gone.”⁶¹ According to her description, she probably was not using a compact camera. Her photographs were credited with helping to bring attention to the degrading conditions of the labours in the Yangtze Gorges.

Women played a limited role in photographic history in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the equipment was cumbersome and expensive. The invention of the light and the easy-to-operate Kodak camera changed this situation and stimulated the enthusiasm of female photographers. After almost two decades, German diplomat

⁶⁰ In 1890, the Sino-British Yantai Treaty was signed, and Chongqing became a port of trade. Rebecca Nield, *China's Foreign Places: The Foreign Presence in China in the Treaty Port Era, 1840-1943*, 2015, 16.

⁶¹ Alicia Bewicke Little, *Intimate China. The Chinese as I Have Seen Them* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1899), 36.

Fritz Weiss (1877-1955) and his wife Hedwig Weiss took full advantages of the portable camera during their travel from Shanghai to Sichuan along the Yangtze River in 1911.⁶² One photograph taken on the deck of their houseboat represents Fritz and Hedwig Weiss traveled along the Yangtze River between Yichang and Sichuan. They sat in a cramped houseboat that was only available transportation on the Yangtze River in the autumn and winter (**Fig.1.14**).

While visiting the Ming tomb in Nanjing, Fritz took a travel snapshot of his wife. Hedwig Weiss was holding a Kodak camera, wearing sunglasses and a bowler hat, standing at ease by the stone statue (**Fig.1.15**). Compared with the photographs taken by John Thomson and O'Keefe in the Ming tomb, Beijing, this loosely composed, private snapshot of ordinary quality did not exhibit the significance of the historical monument as a subject and instead establishes the connection between the individual and the monument, between the individual and the changing time and space. The aura of greatness and power that monumentality evoked gradually disappeared in everyday photographic practices.

After the invention of Kodak, photography also became a recreational and social event, bringing the expatriate community in early treaty port China closer together. Fuzhou became another hub where many European-American amateur photographers gathered. John Charles Oswald, a British tea merchant, living in Fuzhou in the late 1880s, held a photographic collection which contained photographs of the social lives and travel experiences of Fuzhou's expatriate community. In his private collection, a photograph in March 1895 captioned *Instantaneous pictures taken by I. Piny* could be an instant snapshot captured by Kodak. The candid composition and spontaneous framing—the typical characteristics of amateur shots—offer a private perspective on

⁶² "Travels in Southwest China," CrossAsia Thematic Portals, accessed June 16, 2017, <https://themen.crossasia.org/weiss/?lang=en>.

the social and cultural lives of the foreign community in treaty port China, which illustrates a private version of colonial narratives in the nineteenth century (**Fig.1.16**).⁶³

The hand camera, with their sensitive films and faster shutter speeds, enabled both professionals and amateurs to keep pace with and make expressive records of urban life. George Warren Swire was a London-based partner in his family firm, John Swire & Sons from 1904, a prestigious conglomerate with shipping business.⁶⁴ Between 1906 and 1940, Swire visited the subsidiaries in China regularly and took many photographs during his visits. He was understandably more interested in the booming marine industry in a port city like Shanghai. Using a Kodak Panorama camera with panoramic negatives (3½ inches x 12 inches), he took a series of panoramic views of the Bund. The Kodak Panorama allowed the operators to take a view of 142 degrees, which was suitable for shooting wide expanses of landscape and architecture.⁶⁵ Swire took several photographs to record his cruise on the Huangpu River, showing the turbulent waves and broad landscape along the embankment (**Fig.1.17**). The mobile views contribute to the dynamic and vibrant imagery of the Bund.⁶⁶

Beyond Shanghai Bund, Swire's photographic investigation had been extended into the ports in northern China. As the director of John Swire & Sons, George Warren Swire utilized the camera to record his investigation tour of each subsidiary on the north China coast. In the album *China Northern Ports B & S* (Butterfield & Swire), he took the photographs in Ningbo in Zhejiang Province, Yangjiaogou and Longkou in

⁶³ "Oswald, John Collection," Historical Photographs of China, accessed May 1 2018, <https://www.hpcbristol.net/collections/oswald-john>

⁶⁴ In 1866, John Samuel Swire, the senior partner of John Swire & Sons, opened the doors of his first China office. George Warren Swire (1883-1949), a partner in John Swire & Sons starting in 1904, became the chairman 1927-46. "SWIRE'S 200TH ANNIVERSARY," Swire's 200th Anniversary, accessed December 16, 2017, <https://www.swire.com/200anniversary/>.

⁶⁵ The No. 4 Panorama is the first Kodak panoramic camera. It was introduced in 1899 and replaced by a redesigned model in November 1900. The No. 1 Panorama appeared in April 1900. The advantage of Kodak No 4 Panorama camera was the swinging lens in a leather tube; and they had pronounced curves to the film plane, to match the movement of the lens.

⁶⁶ "Swire, G. Warren Collection," Historical Photographs of China, accessed May 2018, <https://www.hpcbristol.net/collections/swire-g-warren>.

Shandong Province where the infrastructures were still in the construction. He also visited Tongku, Qinghuangdao and Fengtian port which was built in 1905. Some photographs represent the coolies and dockers working in the ports (**Fig.1.18**). These photographs established a systematic visual archive of Chinese port cities in the early twentieth century.

Increasingly, amateurs deployed their cameras as a tool for recording their travel memory and private life. The growing popularity of hand cameras, instantaneous exposures, and commercial film processing transformed the medium of photography from an esoteric practice into a popular pastime among foreign residents. Most snapshots were family photographs. Maude Carrall (1882-1949), the daughter of James Wilcocks Carrall (1849-1902), Commissioner of Customs for the Chinese Imperial Customs in Yantai, also took several instant photographs at a family picnic in Chefoo in the spring of 1902 with her new Kodak, purchased in Shanghai in 1902. A photograph shows Carrall, wearing a beautiful dress and hat, taking photos at the “blossoms” by her Kodak and turning her head to the photographer (**Fig.1.19**).⁶⁷ Private social life, family gatherings, the performance of modern women, and the urban landscape: these new subjects in photographs challenged the old visual representations of colonialist photography.

The clubs, which originated from seventeenth-century Britain, offered a private and privileged venue for interaction amongst the emerging bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. The clubs in semi-colonial Shanghai essentially transplanted the social hierarchy from their home countries and reconstructed an emulative social

⁶⁷ “Carrall Family Collection,” Carrall Family Collection, Historical Photographs of China, accessed June 2, 2018, <https://www.hpcbristol.net/collections/carrall-family>.

environment.⁶⁸ By the early 1860s, a group of upper-class photographic enthusiasts in the U.S. established the amateur camera clubs as forums for debating artistic standards and disseminating latest information, contributing to the first wave of serious amateur photography. The advent of Kodak increased the popularity of amateur photography.⁶⁹ Beyond the European-American countries, the amateur photographers in China also developed the camera clubs which continued the conventions of the clubs and societies in their home countries.

Camera clubs emerged in the treaty ports starting the late nineteenth century. In 1889, the China Camera Club (Chinese name: *Yingxiang hui* 影相會) was the first camera club in China, established by a group of amateur European-American photographers on Jiangxi Road, Shanghai.⁷⁰ The club members consisted of physicians, engineers, businessmen and legation staffs in Shanghai, who aimed to treat photography not only as a science but also a genre of fine art.⁷¹ Alicia Bewicke Little was also one of the members of China Camera Club. She left ten silver plates of the Yangtze Gorges, exhibiting the grand view “which escaped Mr Thomson’s omnivorous camera”.⁷² The photographic enthusiasts in Shanghai kept the pace with European-American pictorialism in the late nineteenth century, attempting to legitimize photography as fine art through a series of exhibitions, lectures and discussions related to photography. The club provided darkrooms and served as a social platform for their members. In June 1889, they held the first photographic exhibition in Shanghai, with

⁶⁸ Yunnan Ding, “Reviving Transnational Elite Sociality: Social Clubs in Shanghai,” in *Cities and the Super-Rich: Real Estate, Elite Practices and Urban Political Economies*, edited by Ray Forrest, Sin Yee Koh and Bart Wissink (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017), 127-146.

⁶⁹ Pamela J. Inglesby, “Button-pressers versus Picture-makers: The Social Reconstruction of Amateur Photography in the Late 19th Century U.S.,” *Visual Sociology* 5, no. 1 (1990): 18-25.

⁷⁰ Morrison, J. K., President. Perkins, Dr., Vice-Predt. Milles, Dr., Hon. Sec. *The North China Desk Hong List* 1889 January, 14.

⁷¹ Some members had a scientific background: for example, William B. Bonnell (1847-1912), a professor in Department of Science at Wesleyan College, accepted the chair of natural sciences in the Anglo-Chinese college of Shanghai, China in 1884; Dr. W.J. Milles was a Fellow of the British Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the College of Physicians, practising in Shanghai. *North China Herald*, May 27, 1887, 10.

⁷² “The China Camera Club Exhibition,” *The North-China Daily News*, June 22, 1889, 575.

60 pieces works by members. According to an introduction in *The North-China Daily News*, many scenery photographs taken in and around Shanghai were exhibited. The amateur photographers in the club used the bromide process instead of the old-fashioned silver printing, displaying an exquisite softness and tone in the photographs. The essay also mentioned “we regret to see, no example of the popular detective camera pictures shown,” which suggests that pictorialism and darkroom manipulation gained the greatest popularity among the amateurs in the club.⁷³ The photographic exhibition was held regularly at the Masonic Hall, and the committee would award prizes.⁷⁴ Besides that, the club invited some photographic specialists to give lectures. Mr. W. S. Percival, a photographic specialist, was invited to give a presentation on how to develop photograph on bromide paper.⁷⁵ The club included the use of their drawing room and darkroom with membership, which was undoubtedly a great benefit for amateur photographers.

Camera clubs offered a glimpse into the leisure life of foreign residents in Shanghai. Their leisure time centred on the clubs of expatriate communities in Shanghai. The most exclusive club, the “Shanghai Club,” attracted the prominent British and American *taipans*; at the same time, there were many small clubs devoted to boxing, yachting, and even cricket. These clubs had been developed into a public space where they would communicate and amuse themselves.⁷⁶ The China Camera Club was engaged in Shanghai cultural activities until 1895 when the president of the club left, and its successor, the Shanghai Photographic Amateur Society, was founded in Shanghai in 1902.⁷⁷ The new society continued to hold lectures, meetings and

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Latest Intelligence,” *The North-China Daily News*, October 28, 1891, 411.

⁷⁵ “Latest Intelligence,” *The North-China Daily News*, May 6, 1891, 407.

⁷⁶ Marie-Claire Bergère, “The Kaleidoscope of Shanghai Society,” in *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009), 84-108.

⁷⁷ The registration information of China Camera Club on *The North China Desk Hong List* published until 1895.

exhibitions on a regular basis for members, and it developed a closer relationship with the city and the turbulent social situation. The annual exhibitions of the society displayed the members' works featuring a comprehensive view of the city, and one of the lectures exhibited the stereographic images of the Forbidden City during the occupation of the allied forces.⁷⁸

The power of photography made expatriates in China more engaged in the changing environment. Charles Ewart Darwent (1858-1924), who was in charge of the Union Church and the founding member of the society, considered Shanghai an ideal place for amateur photographers to take photographs. The dynamic urban environment offered ample subjects and inspired photographic enthusiasts to capture the changes in the rapidly modernizing city. He claimed, "If one can't find subjects here, one doesn't deserve to own a five-shilling camera."⁷⁹

Darwent captured many excellent views of the Shanghai cityscape in his guidebook *Shanghai: a handbook for travellers and residents to the chief objects of interest in and around the foreign settlement and native city*.⁸⁰ Accompanied by introductory writings for travelers, Darwent included views of famous sites like the Custom House, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Tower Hall. He also introduced that the Union Church where he worked was exactly the meeting place of Shanghai Photographic Amateur Society. In the guidebook, he also mentioned some entertainment areas, like the race club. He took many portraits of street peddlers, rickshaw drivers, and ordinary Chinese people (**Fig.1.20**). He made a portrait of a street peddler against the busy commercial district Nanjing Road, a Buddhist priest standing on a jetty, and a group of local women at a New Year festival gathering in Foochow

⁷⁸ "The China Camera Club," *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette*, May 18, 1906, 5.

⁷⁹ *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette*, March 26, 1902, 5.

⁸⁰ Charles Ewart Darwent, *Shanghai: a handbook for travellers and residents to the chief objects of interest in and around the foreign settlements and native city* (Publisher Shanghai; Hong Kong: Kelly & Walsh, 1904), np.

Road.⁸¹ In contrast with the stereotypical colonial imagery in the nineteenth century, he sought to combine the local people with the transforming urban environment at the turn of the twentieth century.

Tea merchants, employees in the Customs, and some travelers made up the community of amateur photographers in Fuzhou. In 1892, a camera club similar to the China Camera Club was established by amateur photographers.⁸² The founder, Juan Mencarini (1860-1939), who served the Chinese Maritime Customs between 1881 and 1912, delivered a lecture on “Lantern-Slide Making” at the first meeting of the club, introducing the educational significance of lantern slides and the process of making slides from the negatives. Mencarini had been engaged in the activities of Shanghai Amateur Photographic Society starting in 1903 when he took a post in Shanghai. In 1907, he became the president of the society. The society experienced ups and downs over the next two decades. Until 1923, meetings were held at a gathering in the Royal Asiatic Society’s Hall. Juan Mencarini was elected as chair again.⁸³

The Shanghai Amateur Photographic Society expanded its membership in the 1910s and kept pace with the latest trends in the field. Lectures covered such subjects as hand cameras and cinematography; during World War I, the club showed slides of “Glimpses of Japan”.⁸⁴ Juan Mencarini’s photographs were well received by the amateur photographers in the society due to his discovery of the local historical knowledge behinds the works. The photographs of Juan Mencarini were shown at the 1893 Fuzhou club exhibition. One month later, they were exhibited at the Japan

⁸¹ The photographs were collected in the book *Shanghai: a handbook for travelers and residents to the chief objects of interest in and around the foreign settlements and native city*, and the Historical Photographs of China published an album of his own photographs. Christian Henriot, Charles Ewart Darwent’s Photographs. Virtual Shanghai, accessed April 16, 2018, <https://www.virtualshanghai.net/references/biography?ID=38>.

⁸² “Latest Intelligence,” *The North-China Daily News*, April 1, 1892, 295.

⁸³ “The Shanghai Photographic Society,” *North China Herald*, April 13, 1923.

⁸⁴ *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette* December 2, 1914; *The North-China Daily News* January 22, 1915; *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette*, December 2, 1916.

Photographic Society.⁸⁵ The scenery of Fuzhou and local people were the main subjects of Mencarini's photographs. Some photographs seem to imitate the style of Scottish photographer John Thomson, who traveled around Fuzhou in the 1860s and 1870s. In a photograph of three local women, two are facing the viewer while the other is standing with her back to the audience. He intentionally designed the poses to fully display the local women's hairstyles and dresses (**Fig.1.21**).

From China Camera Club to Shanghai Amateur Photographic Society, the camera was also deployed as an interactive tool for communicating with the local Chinese photographic enthusiasts. Although most camera clubs were exclusive for the expatriate community in the treaty ports, some upper class Chinese photographic enthusiasts were accessible to some club exhibitions and lectures. In the first China Camera Club Exhibition, Chinese photographic amateur Chan Chin-tung, a relative of the eminent Chinese statesman Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823-1901), also displayed his photographic work garnered specially mention in a report in *The North-China Daily News*, 1889.⁸⁶ Alicia Bewicke Little, a member of China camera Club, published a biography of Li Hongzhang in 1903 that contained the photographs and interviews.⁸⁷ The frontispiece of the book was a formal portrait of Li Hongzhang taken by Alicia in 1896 (**Fig.1.22**). The participation of the elite Chinese hobbyists shows the dynamics of copresence and the interactions in a hybrid cultural environment. Shanghai Amateur Photographic Society remained active until the 1920s. The pioneering Chinese amateur photographer Lang Jingshan exhibited his work in the society. These camera clubs also emphasized that photography as a fine-art medium, separating their work from commercial photography. The rules and aims of what they established also imparted

⁸⁵ Xavier Ortells-Nicolau, "Juan Mencarini and Amateur Photography in Fin-de-siècle China," in *Kritika Kultura*, February 2018, 49-87.

⁸⁶ "The China Camera Club," *The North-China Daily News*, June 22, 1889.

⁸⁷ Alicia Bewicke Little, *Li Hung-chang, His Life and Times* (London: Cassell & Co., 1903), frontispiece.

the development of local Chinese photographic societies in the 1920s and 1930s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

As one of the greatest technological innovations in the nineteenth century, photography disrupted the fantasy of China that developed since the eighteenth century through a series of visual representations in porcelain, export paintings, and prints for foreign consumption. Instead, it launched a new period of representing China and Chinese people. From Daguerreotype to hand camera, the increasingly developing technology not only satisfied the desire and imperative of the Europe-American audience to see and explore the East Asian world but enhanced stereotypes through the categorization, control, and transmission of photography.

However, the arrival of Kodak made photography accessible to a broader population, simultaneously created the potential for more and more photographic hobbyists to employ photography for self-expression. Photography accompanied the global expansion of colonization, and amateur photographers witnessed the private moments behind conquest and violence. The use of Kodak within the hybrid photographic milieu marked the beginning of a new era in the visual representation of China.

Chapter 2: Revisiting the “Kodak Moment”: Kodak and the Rise of Amateur Photography in China

Introduction

The slogan of Eastman Kodak Company, “You press the button, we do the rest,” invited more amateur photographers to capture spontaneous moments. The customer-friendly photo-finishing business triggered the enthusiasm of both amateurs and professionals. Alfred Stieglitz commented that the introduction of Kodak was the beginning of the “photographing by the yard” era.⁸⁸ Despite the fact that most camera clubs in the treaty ports were comprised of expatriate amateur photographers, an increasing number of Chinese photographic enthusiasts emerged in the late nineteenth century as well.

Two decades after the Boxer Rebellion, some Chinese amateur photographers began to make a dynamic response to the pictorial records made by European-American photographers in China. The gentry elites were the earliest local photographic enthusiasts and amateur photographers.⁸⁹ Through the dissemination of photographic knowledge, photography, which was an esoteric practice, gradually became a new leisure activity and hobby among the intellectuals, elites, and wealthy merchants. After the 1911 revolution, the society of Chinese rural gentry disintegrated and the gentry groups shifted to the cities to form an urban elite.⁹⁰ The new intellectuals and the emerging bourgeoisie group, the new urban middle class, were the first amateur photographic groups. In the 1920s and 1930s, several Chinese photographic societies

⁸⁸ Alfred Stieglitz, “The Hand Camera—Its Present Importance,” *The American Annual of Photography*, 1897, 18-27.

⁸⁹ Catherine Yeh identifies that early photographic enthusiasts who were also the readers of lithographed pictorials. See Catherine Yeh, “Beyond the Frame: The Camera in Republican Shanghai and Wartime Chongqing,” in *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China*, 111-119.

⁹⁰ Marie-Claire Bergère: “the Golden Age of Shanghai Capitalism (1912-1937),” in *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009), 147-176.

and camera clubs, which shared some similarities with the camera clubs of European-American amateur photographers in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Shanghai, emerged and developed as a site of learning, appreciating, and socializing for Chinese amateur photographers.

2.1 The Arrival of the “New Camera”

On March 10 1889, *Shenbao* (申報) published a piece of advertisement in Chinese to promote the “new camera” (xinshi zhaoxiangjing 新式照相鏡) (**Fig.2.1**). The picture shows a new camera was held by a woman in a Western-style dress. “Recently a very simple method of photographing has been invented, which even novices can learn easily. This camera can be held in the hands, photographing the trees along the road, farmlands, landscape, and residential areas in a clear way...If you want to purchase it and know the method, please visit Oxford Street, 88, London, UK, or the British Dispensary, Shanghai.”⁹¹ The camera in the picture was probably the Kodak original box camera produced in 1888, Rochester, New York. Although the Eastman Kodak Company was American manufacture of photographic materials, its British branch, which was founded in 1885, London, controlled the emerging local photographic market because Britain was the dominant foreign power in China before

⁹¹ It was probably the Kodak (original) produced in 1888, because the No. 2 Kodak was produced starting October 1889. Advertisement, *Shenbao*, March 10, 1889, 6. The original Chinese text is: “啟者今有照相鏡，其法極易，雖未經學習者亦能影照。其鏡以手捧持，能照沿路樹木，田地船隻，山水人物房屋一切等類毫髮無差。重只九兩，收攏時長六寸，闊四寸七分五，高一寸七分五，所照之相能闊至四寸二分五，高三寸二分五。辦此鏡及知照法者，可至英國倫敦鈕猛街第八十八號門牌西，和行內面議。上海則問大英醫院可也。” The full translation is: “Recently we have a new kind of camera, the method of using is very simple, which even novices can learn easily. This camera can be held in the hands, photographing the trees along the roads, farmlands, landscape and residential areas in a clear way. It weighs only 9 liang (450g), it is 6 cun long, 4.75 cun wide and 1.75 cun tall when folded. The picture is 4.25 cun wide and 3.25 cun tall. If you want to purchase it and know the method, please visit Oxford Street, 88, London, UK, or the British Dispensary, Shanghai.”

the first World War (1914-1918).⁹² The camera advertisement in *Shenbao* does not even show the name of “Kodak”; instead, it indicates that it was a “new camera” with the illustrations of a Western woman holding the camera. Since the late-mid nineteenth century, the society at large became venerating the West and worshipping the new.⁹³ Promoting and emphasizing the “newness” functioned as a marketing strategy for selling products. The potential and target customers, who were largely made up of studio photographers and upper-class photographic enthusiasts has been looking for the excitement that something new and “Western” brought to them.

Photography was not a native invention for Chinese. In a long time, it was a symbol of the West and imported culture. Since when did Chinese have the “culture imperative” and desire to represent the rapidly changing time and space and express themselves? The “desire to photograph”, Geoffrey Batchen argued that is essentially a demand to arrest the time and still its fleeting nature; the feelings of longing for apprehension the time and space have been transformed into a collective imperative to represent the fugitive nature rapidly and massively.⁹⁴

The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the influx of Western knowledge in China in various disciplines. A nineteenth-century introductory book on optics named “Optics Updates” (*Geshu bu* 格術補), written by Zou Boqi (1819-1869)—a Chinese intellectual and a member of Guangdong gentry, explained the basic knowledge of optics and lens based on the optical works translated and compiled by

⁹² China imported more than one-third of its photographic products from Britain before the first World War (1914-1918). By 1917 and 1918, however, British imports had declined, while imports from Japan had roughly doubled and imports from the United States had roughly tripled, with Japan being the largest source. See “Zhongguo jinkou zhaoxiang yongping 中國進口照相用品[Import of Photographic Products from China],” in *Zhongwai jingji zhoukan* 中外經濟週刊 [Sino-Foreign Economic Weekly], no.43 (1924): 36.

⁹³ Luo Zhitian. *Shifts of Power*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), xxii.

⁹⁴ Geoffrey Batchen, “Origin Stories,” in *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1997), 17-24.

Jesuits in seventeenth-century China.⁹⁵ Traditional Mohist optics in ancient China failed to be evolved into geometrical optics that contributed to the concept of camera obscura in seventeenth-century Europe.⁹⁶ Zou's book *Geshu bu*, which literally means a supplement to the ancient Chinese optics, actually challenged the Mohist optics and explained the fundamental geometrical optics. His experimentation on photography and scientific interest suggests that the Chinese educated class had become aware of new technology and that China needed to make efforts to modernize.⁹⁷ A series of photography manuals explained not only fundamental optical knowledge and the laws of the camera but also offered photographic enthusiasts a new perspective for seeing the natural world.

The Self-Strengthening Movement (*Ziqiang yundong* 自強運動), initiated in the early 1860s and supported by Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠 (1812-1885), Li Hongzhang, and Prince Gong Yixin 奕訢 (1833-1898), attempted to adopt Western technology and military innovations. Feng Guifen 馮桂芬 (1809-1874), an intellectual in the nineteenth century, formulated a concept “Chinese learning as essence, Western learning as function” (*Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong* 中學為體, 西學為用) that was widely accepted by Chinese intellectuals and top officials.⁹⁸ The upper-class elites and

⁹⁵ Zou was not the first group of transmitting geometric optics in China. The Jesuits in seventeenth-century China circulated the knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and physics to the Chinese audience through the cooperation with the local academies of science. The German Jesuit priest and astronomer Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592 - 1666) and Chinese scientist Li Zubai 李祖白 (?-1665) in the Imperial Astronomical Bureau (Qiantianjian 欽天監) compiled the book “Speaking of the Telescope” (*Yuanjing shuo* 遠鏡說) by translating Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)'s articles. Adam Schall von Bell 湯若望, *Yuanjing shuo* 遠鏡說 (Speaking of the telescope), 1626, reprint of Jiaqing-era (1796 - 1820) Yihai zhuchen edition (Beijing: Beijing Erudition Digital Research Center, 2001 - 15), 5b - 6b, 11a, b.

⁹⁶ Helmut Gernsheim, *History of Photography from the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the Eleventh Century up to 1914*. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

⁹⁷ On 19 October 1839, the news of the invention of photography reached China—only two months after the public announcement of the invention of the daguerreotype process. Although Zou Boqi could barely read English, he still had the chance to know this news. Oliver Moore, “Zou Boqi on vision and photography in 19th century China,” in *The Human Tradition in Modern China* edited by Kenneth James Hammond, Kristin Eileen Stapleton (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 33-54. Also see Jennifer Purtle, “Double Take: Chinese Optics and Their Media in Postglobal Perspective,” *Ars Orientalis* 48, no. 20191029 (August 2018).

⁹⁸ Feng Guifen 馮桂芬, “Caixue xiyi 採學西議 [On the adoption of Western learning] (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1994), 77, 84.

intellectuals regarded photography as a symbol of modernity, a medium that could be seized to transmit Western knowledge and promote reform in China.⁹⁹ In 1872, British amateur photographer Thomas Child mentioned a Chinese amateur photographer named Chang How in a letter to his wife.¹⁰⁰ Child probably taught photography to the mandarins and rich merchants as a way of networking. In other letters, he talked about another amateur, Yang Fang, a mandarin and a pawnbroker. Child hired him to install gas lighting and work on a water pump at Yang's residence.¹⁰¹ Child's friend, the renowned photographer John Thomson, recalled that he, Dr. Dudgeon, and Yang Fang made excursions to the ruins of the old Summer Place, he also recorded that Yang was full of enthusiasm for chemistry and photography, and even had a laboratory in which "the walls were garnished with enlarged photographs of Yang's family and friends".¹⁰² One of Thomson's photographs provided a glimpse to see how the upper class in China embraced photography (**Fig.2.2**).

Chinese elites and intellectuals had started to embrace photography as a part of advanced Western technology and a symbol of modernity. Before the birth of Kodak, cumbersome photographic equipment and complex shooting and processing processes made photography exclusive to specific professional populations and upper-class society. Even though photography was a complex technical practice, the elite members in the mid to late nineteenth century started to regard photography as a way of recreation. Since the 1870s, some foreign companies, photography studios, and suppliers in the treaty ports became the main agents to sell photographic equipment in China. Some of them even established private courses for their customers as a commercial strategy to

⁹⁹ Sarah E. Fraser: "Chinese as Subject: Nineteenth Century Photographic Genres," in *Brush and Shutter*, 91-106.

¹⁰⁰ Jeffrey W. Cody and Frances Terpak, "Through a Foreign Glass: The Art and Science of Photography in Late Qing China," in *Brush and Shutter*, 33-68.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² John Thomson, *The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China and China; or, Ten Years' Travels, Adventures, and Residence Abroad* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1875), 519-21.

promote their photographic equipment. And their target customers were not exclusive to Chinese. For example, an advertisement of Shanghai foreign company *Way de le* (會地理洋行) published on *Shenbao* in 1873 suggests that if Chinese customers wanted to learn photography, the manager would teach them personally.¹⁰³ Since the 1860s, taking photographs was more profitable than making the portraits, so many studios were established in the treaty ports, and the new photographers became the target customers of the foreign photographic suppliers. However, an advertisement of *Way de le* in 1883 indicates that not only the studio photographers wanted to learn photography, but also some “gentry and merchants” wanted to take photographs for self-entertaining:

We have now opened a photography class, which provides skills of taking portraits, developing photos, and using chemical materials. (Our class is open to) those who want to open a photographic studio for gaining the benefits, and some gentry and merchants (紳商) who want to take photographs for self-entertaining (自愉悅者); both kinds of people can study here.

Fourth Avenue, *Way de le*¹⁰⁴

The photography courses were not only offered by foreign companies but also local photographic studios. Taking photographs for self-entertainment had become a new leisure activity for the “gentry and merchants” in China. The “gentry and merchants” who were an elite class benefited from the economic changes brought by the intervention of the colonialism since the First Opium War.¹⁰⁵ In a dynamic

¹⁰³ Advertisement, *Shenbao*, October 1, 1873, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Advertisement, *Shenbao*, October 17, 1883, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Marie-Claire Bergère, “the Golden Age of Shanghai Capitalism (1912-1937),” in *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009), 147-176.

photographic environment in the treaty ports, local intellectuals, elites, and rich merchants who made up the majority of early Chinese amateur photographers acquired necessary photographic skills through self-study or from the studios and developed close relationships with foreign photographers.

The introduction of Kodak transformed photography from a privileged practice to a leisure activity. In March 1889, less than a year after the invention of the Kodak camera. Both the English paper in Shanghai and the local Chinese newspaper *Shenbao* ran advertisements for Kodak. *Shenbao* plays a significant role in disseminating new forms of knowledge for an expanding readership.¹⁰⁶ After the Republic of China replaced the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the pursuit of the new took on greater social significance. Fanatical worship of the new and a disdain for the old prevailed during the May Fourth Movement. As Leo Ou-Fan Lee argued that the intellectuals in the May Fourth Movement tended to highlight the new historical consciousness and declared China had entered a “new epoch” of world history, suggesting China had no longer been isolated from the civilized world. The notion and value of “newness” are defined in a context of unilinear time and a unilinear sense of history that is characteristically untraditional and Western, which means, in this context, newness and “western” were equated with “modernity”.¹⁰⁷

“Newness” became a substitute for Western-style modernity.¹⁰⁸ The enthusiasm on new technological devices could be regarded as the attempts to approach to the modern world and make a break with old and tradition. One photograph taken by American photographer John Zimbrun (1875-1949) in the early 1920s captured the moment when

¹⁰⁶ Weipin Tsai, “Introduction: Consumers, Communities, Individuals: A New Readership for A New China,” in *Reading Shenbao: Nationalism, Consumerism and Individuality in China 1919–37* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-17.

¹⁰⁷ Leo Ou-Fan Lee, “Modernity and its discontents: the cultural agenda of the May Fourth Movement”, Kenneth Lieberthal et al., *Perspectives on Modern China: Four Anniversaries* (Routledge, 2016). 159.

¹⁰⁸ Luo Zhitian. *Shifts of Power*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 108.

the last Emperor Puyi Aisin Gioro 愛新覺羅·溥儀 (1906-1967) explored the “new camera” in the Forbidden City (**Fig.2.3**). In the center of the photograph, Puyi stood at the gate of the palace, accompanied by a eunuch holding two different modes of Kodak camera: a folding vintage camera and a box camera. He seemed to have just realized that John Zumbun was photographing him. British teacher Reginald Johnston (1874-1938) was discussing the use of cameras with members of the royal family. This photograph was taken no earlier than 1922, when Puyi cut off his queue on Johnston’s suggestion. Most of Puyi’s private photographs were taken after cutting off the queue, which became a significant turning point in his life at which he began to consciously identify himself as a modern man and embrace the Western culture.¹⁰⁹

Since 1912, Puyi, as an abdicated Emperor, stayed in the northern half of the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace until Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882-1948) expelled him in 1924. In his autobiography, he recalled life in the Forbidden City from 1911 to 1924. Melancholy and remorseful, he wrote, “When China was called a republic and mankind had advanced into the twentieth century, I was still living the life of an emperor, breathing the dust of the nineteenth century.”¹¹⁰ Life in the Forbidden City brought him great contradictions and confusion. Puyi exemplified the rupture in the turn of the twentieth century between the imperial era and newborn Republic, utilizing photography as a medium to convey the sense of absurdity and struggle.

Puyi’s interest in photography might emerge with the visual shock that news photographs brought him when he started to follow the political news since the death of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1850–1916) in June 1916.¹¹¹ The political turmoil in early

¹⁰⁹ Wu Hung, “Birth of the Self and the Nation: Cutting the Queue,” in *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China*, 85-123.

¹¹⁰ Puyi wrote the autobiography in the 1950s in Fushun, China at the request of the PRC. See Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen: Autobiography of Aisin-Gioro Puyi* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1964), 131.

¹¹¹ Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen: Autobiography of Aisin-Gioro Puyi* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1964),

twentieth-century China increased the demands of the public for true visual representations of the historical events, and the concept of visual accuracy of photography was illustrated by a series of portraits and news images in the newspapers and pictorials.¹¹² Puyi subscribed to more than twenty kinds of newspapers and magazines during his youth in the Forbidden City.¹¹³ The image-oriented newspapers and magazines introduced a new experience of reading to Puyi. After World War I (1914–1918), various newspapers scrambled to cover the world situation in the form of pictures. *Dongfang Magazine* (東方雜誌) to which Puyi subscribed featured a highly image-sensitive and visually charged style. A 1920 news story, which states that the German Kaiser Wilhelm II was exiled to the Netherlands and lived in a manor house, was entirely narrated in pictorial form. Two photographs showing the leisure life of Wilhelm II occupied the entire page.¹¹⁴ The readers were invited to participate in the narration on the basis of visual imagery. Wilhelm's experience in exile might resonate with Puyi, who was forced to abdicate in 1911. The photographs evoked the pain of his loss of power and his desire to regain it.

Puyi was one of many photographic enthusiasts who benefited from the prosperity of the photographic environment in the early twentieth century. After his first meeting with Puyi in 1919, Johnston wrote a memorandum to the British authorities describing Puyi's eagerness to learn. Under the guidance of his teacher

¹¹² Yi Gu, "What's in a Name? Photography and the Reinvention of Visual Truth in China, 1840–1911," *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 1 (2013): 120-138.

¹¹³ The General Affairs Section of the Imperial Household Office of the Manchu court set up a "Newspaper Delivery File" for the newspaper subscribed by Puyi, which kept a detailed record of the name and number of copies of newspapers delivered each day. If a certain newspaper was not available that day, the reasons were required to be listed and the newspaper needed to be replenished later. For example, on July 29, 1924, *Shanghai Daily* (上海日報) failed to arrive in time because of late trains and asked to be delivered in the next day; on August 21, *Fubao* (複報) stopped publication because of the war, and *Shibao* (時報) was detained by the Police Department. See Xie Xiaohua 謝小華, "Huangdi ai kanbao 皇帝愛看報 [The Emperor Loved Reading Newspaper]," *Forbidden City Magazine* 紫禁城, no.5 (May 2006): 74–79.

¹¹⁴ "Deguo huangdi niju helan yamo longqin gubao zuijin zhi sheying 德國皇帝匿居荷蘭亞墨龍琴古堡最近之攝影 [Photographs of the German emperor's recent residence in the Dutch castle of Huis Doorn]," *Dongfang Magazine* 東方雜誌 17, no.2 (1920): 1.

Johnston, he developed many new hobbies like playing golf, bicycling and photography. He probably picked up photography from the studio photographers in Beijing who had close ties to the aristocracy. Japanese photographer Yamamoto Sanshichiro, who opened a photographic studio in Beijing after the Boxer Rebellion; American photographer John Zumbun, who opened the photographic studio named *Camera Craft* in Legation Quarter, were frequently invited to take photographs for the royal family.

In the vortex of political struggle between the Manchu court, the government of Peking and the forces of various foreign countries, Puyi expressed his strong desire to break from the tradition through the pursuit of new culture. Swedish art historian Osvald Sirén (1879-1966), who had expertise on Chinese city gates and city walls, emphasized Puyi's great enthusiasm and curiosity on photography when he visited Puyi in the Forbidden City, 1922. Puyi at first showed distrust and shyness towards Osvald, but immediately changed his attitude when he found Osvald's camera. He even took out his broken Kodak cameras and asked if they could be fixed. In Osvald's essay that was published in *New York Times* in 1923, Puyi's desire for new culture and knowledge was vividly recorded, which evoked public sympathy for the young emperor who was captive in the Forbidden City.¹¹⁵

Two decades after the Boxer Rebellion, a photograph of Puyi standing on the roof of the Forbidden City was seemingly a dynamic response to the six decades of colonial photography in China (**Fig.2.4**). The photograph was probably taken in 1924 — the same year he was expelled from the Forbidden City. In the photograph, he wore the long gown and mandarin jacket—the civil costume in the Republican period—and a pair of sunglasses, posing as a modern gentleman. Jing Mountain, in the background,

¹¹⁵ Osvald Sirén, "A Chinese Emperor Plays Photographer's Assistant," *New York Times Magazine*, April 4, 1923.

where many European-American and Japanese photographers took the panoramic view of the Palace, became an allegory for the ubiquitous and controlling gaze from foreign powers. Despite Puyi's relaxed manner, he was stranded in the towering palace walls, confronting the dilemma between foreign forces and the old relics of the Qing Dynasty.¹¹⁶

From this perspective, the photographic practices of the last Emperor in the Palace can be understood as a manifest performance of the new self. As the viewing subject rather than the object of being seen, Puyi would see a new self through a variety of visual apparatus.¹¹⁷ The image of *Double me* (*erwo tu* 二我圖) is likely a metaphor for Puyi's dual identities: a captive emperor and a modern individual embracing Western culture. With a stiff expression, he sat on an exquisite chair against the background of a screen in the Forbidden City. The photograph exhibits a reflective self-portrait in two slightly different postures (**Fig.2.5**). Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) used to argue that the novel exposure technique was popular in China because it enabled people to gain pleasure by performing two identities.¹¹⁸ Puyi wished to manipulate and reframe his self-representation, and through the camera, he could perform as a modern man like his teacher Johnston. A similar self-reflective portrait was taken in Zhang Garden in Tianjin, where he stayed from 1924 to 1929. In the photograph, Puyi holds a terrestrial globe and kaleidoscope, with a comical expression on his face, and another portrait

¹¹⁶ This photograph was first uncovered to the public in the book of Johnston *Twilight in the Forbidden City* that was published in London in 1934. See Reginald F. Johnston, *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (New York: Appleton & Company, 1934). In July 1946, the Palace Museum in Peking made an inventory of Pu Yi's property in Tianjin. Among his 222 boxes of household goods, there were 4 boxes of photographs, 2 boxes of negatives and one box of glass negatives. Since 2013, the Palace Museum, Beijing and the National Palace Museum, Taipei promoted a collaborative project that categorized and organized the old photographs of Pu Yi. In May 2015, the Palace Museum in Beijing held an exhibition *A Century of Light and Shadow: The Palace Museum's Collection of Old Photos*. The same exhibition was open at the National Palace Museum in Taipei in January 2016.

¹¹⁷ Laikwan Pang, "Introduction," in *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 1-29.

¹¹⁸ Lu Xun 魯迅, "lun zhaoxiang zhilei 論照相之類 [In the essay on photography]," in *luxun quanji diyijuan* 魯迅全集第一卷 [The Complete Works of Lu Xun, volume 1] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1973), 167-176.

hidden in this photograph shows Puyi in a full suit looking every inch the genteel modern gentleman (**Fig.2.6**). Both photographs included double layers of representing the self.¹¹⁹ He embraced modern culture passionately, but in a passive way. His exploration of modernity must have been instructed by Johnston; the western suit indicates a controlling gaze that he could not be rid of his entire life.¹²⁰

Puyi's photographs and negatives were carried with him from the Forbidden City to Tianjin. Until he left for Manchuria in 1931, most of his photographs were kept in Tianjin. From the Palace, Tianjin to Manchuria, Puyi's private images reveal a personal world beyond public view. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the emergence of a large number of private photographic records that made the writing of photographic history richer and more diverse. The popularity of compact cameras, such as Kodak, has made photography less of a ritual and more of a "reflection"; photographs are not only evidence of history, but also a souvenir of everyday life.¹²¹ The availability of the easy-to-use Kodak portable camera also changed the ability of amateur photographers to capture quotidian events. Within two years of Kodak's introduction in the Forbidden City, Puyi, Empress Wanrong 婉容(1906-1946), concubine Wenxiu 文繡 (1909-1953), and Puyi's siblings all left a number of snapshots of reading, smoking, watering flowers, riding bicycles, and practicing Chinese boxing in the Forbidden City. The portable and compact Kodak made instant outdoor shooting possible. The Imperial Garden and the courtyard of the Hall of Mental Cultivation became a playground for photographic enthusiasts. Among these snapshots, the picture of Wanrong riding a bicycle along the palace wall attracted great attention. Despite the

¹¹⁹ Wu Hung, "Birth of the Self and the Nation: Cutting the Queue," in *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China*, 85-123.

¹²⁰ Laikwan Pang, "Introduction," in *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China*, 1-29.

¹²¹ John Peter Berger, "Use of Photography," in *Understanding a Photograph*, 100-118. (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

amateur quality, the photograph shows an effort to capture the subject in the motion with a portable camera, which manifested the tension between mobility and stillness in the Forbidden City (Fig.2.7).

The novel and exciting visual experience were represented through the Kodak camera, promoting the Chinese to see the nation and the individual as an independent visual subject. The photographic enthusiasts in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century consciously discovered and affirmed their subjectivity and established their connection with the modern world. Kodak's portability and simplicity facilitated outdoor photography, allowing modern Chinese photographic enthusiasts to see the world and express themselves. The hand camera provides an ever-changing, personal view in the midst of the shot, a fluid perspective that fits in with the emerging modern landscape of the early twentieth century.

2.2 Between Intellectual and Amateur: The Emergence of Chinese Amateur Photographers

The abolishment of the imperial examination in 1905 and the opening of new-style schools changed the avenues for social mobility. The four-class (scholar, peasants, artisans, merchants) society experienced a disintegration. The scholar class that led the four-class society disappeared and a new group of "intellectual" (*zhishifenzi* 知識份子) emerged.¹²² The late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century saw the local community of scholars and merchants gradually shifted to the cities to develop into a group of urban elites. Some of them became new intellectuals under the new-style schools, with a plurality of professions and identities, mostly active in academia,

¹²² Luo Zhitian, *Shifts of Power*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 138-139.

publishing, and the art world; others flocked to other new fields, becoming businessmen, buyers, soldiers, lawyers, doctors, etc.¹²³ In contrast with the scholars, modern intellectuals remained marginal in the political life.¹²⁴ But they attempted to seek a new level of integration into the modern world.¹²⁵

With the prosperity of the publishing culture in the 1920s and 1930s, modern intellectuals participated in the construction of public discourse in a variety of forms. Writers, publishers and media professionals took advantages of the emerging power of the mass media to construct their new identity. Photography, as a significant medium, provided a variety of approaches to engaging in and with social reality. The capacity to represent reality connected photography to the dynamics of the modern world. From lithography to photoengraving (Chinese name: *Zhaoxiang tongziban* 照相桐梓版), printing technologies from Europe and America had been introduced in Shanghai since the middle of the nineteenth century, which promoted the cultural prosperity of the printing industry in Shanghai.¹²⁶ *News Pictorial* (*Shishi huabao* 時事畫報) and *Truth Pictorial* (*Zhenxiang huabao* 真相畫報) in the 1900s and 1910s provided immediate news photographs of the *Huanghuagang Uprising* (*huanghuagang qiyi* 黃花崗起義) and the Revolution of 1911. In 1913, *Ta Kung Pao* revealed the truth of founder of the Kuomintang Song Jiaoren 宋教仁 (1882-1913)'s being assassinated, identifying the

¹²³ Xu Jilin 許紀霖, "Chongjian shehui zhongxin-xiandai zhongguo de zhishiren shehui 重建社會重心——現代中國的“知識人社會” [Rebuilding the Center of Social Focus: The “Intellectual Society” in Modern China],” in Wang Fansen 王汎森, “Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi de zhuanxingshidai 中國近代思想史的轉型時代 [The Transitional Era of Chinese Modern Intellectual History],” (Xinbei: Lianjing chubanshe, 2007), 137-168.

¹²⁴ Luo Zhitian, *Shifts of Power*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 160.

¹²⁵ They also had different divisions within them, As Edmund Fund argued, cultural radicalism that idealized Western culture, cultural conservatism that defended the national heritage through a confluence of Chinese and Western ideas, and New Confucians that emphasized either “returning to the roots in order to be creative and new” (*fanben kaixin* 返本開新) or “creating something new in order to strengthen the core” (*chuangxin guben* 創新固本). The group of new intellectuals appropriated Western ideas, adapted them to local discourse and constructed a new vision of Chinese modernity. Edmund S. K. Fung, “Introduction,” in *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-26.

¹²⁶ Christopher A. Reed, “Introduction,” in *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 3-24.

murder through a series of photographs.¹²⁷ Despite the fact that the majority of the Chinese people could not afford a camera until the late twentieth century, photography offers direct access to the truth or the reproduction of the truth in the early twentieth century.

In the 1920s and 1930s, photography was democratic and egalitarian that mediated between the intellectuals and the public. The great vitality of photography depended on the great efforts of the modern intellectuals to establish the new venues for bringing the pictures to the public. Photography was the medium through which intellectuals construct their public social life and was an integral part of their own cultural life. In addition to the intellectuals, the urban bourgeoisie was another important part of the amateur photographers. Between the two World Wars, which was the golden age of native Chinese capitalism, a new bourgeoisie of entrepreneurs, who distanced themselves from the old regime, flourished within the developing economic environment. In addition to the emerging group of entrepreneurs, the number of employees working in financial institutions, shops, and factories has grown substantially. However, the urban bourgeoisie that emerged within the development of native capitalism remained marginal: not throughout China but in several representative cities like Shanghai and Tianjin. Shanghai has become the capital of a new bourgeoisie of business.¹²⁸

Embracing a new era of photographic awareness, the modern intellectuals and urban bourgeoisie in the major Chinese cities desired a new medium to express their modern experience. They had a certain economic base and spare time, could afford to provide their own photographic equipment, regularly bought photographic magazines

¹²⁷ Zhu Huaiyuan 朱懷遠, "Song Jiaoren beici zhenxiang kaobia 宋教仁被刺真相考辯 [Study on the Truth of Song Jiaoren's Being Assassinated]," *Minguo dang'an* 民國檔案 [Republican China Archive], no.3 (2010): 78-86.

¹²⁸ Marie-Claire Bergère, "the Golden Age of Shanghai Capitalism (1912-1937)," in *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009), 147-176.

and yearbooks, visited photographic exhibitions, were enthusiastic about photographic competitions, and some of them formed loosely organized societies and clubs where skilled amateur photographers exhibited their work, acted as judges in photographic competitions, and gave technical and aesthetic guidance to novices. The number of amateur photographers had increased dramatically in the 1920 and 1930s, especially the number of photographic hobbyists in the cities. Bankers, doctors, engineers, teachers, journalists, writers, and lawyers were major potential customers in the emerging photographic market.¹²⁹ The members Of National City Bank Clubs in China held regular photographic exhibitions as a social entertainment activity.¹³⁰

The invention of Kodak and inexpensive roll film increased the affordability of materials and contributed to the rapid growth of the number of amateur photographers, which happened almost three decades ago in the U.S. and Europe. Amateur photographers became a more diverse group. In 1910s and 1920s, Europe and America, the serious amateur photographers who regarded photography as serious art and ordinary hobby photographer or new “snapshot friends” had split up.¹³¹ In contrast with the remarkable division of the photographic market in Europe and America, Chinese photographers—both hobbyists and advanced photographers—emerged and developed at almost the same time. The invention of Kodak triggered the fear and anxiety of many art photographers in Europe and America; however, many Chinese photographers began their careers with a portable and easy-to-operate Kodak. Lang Jingshan, one of the greatest art photographers in China, got his first camera, a Kodak, in 1906 when he learned photography from his painting teacher in middle school; Wu Yinxian 吳印咸

¹²⁹ Marie-Claire Bergere, “The Chinese bourgeoisie, 1911-1937,” *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 12 (1983) : 721-825.

¹³⁰ “Huaqi yinhang zhi sheying zhanlanhui 花旗銀行之攝影展覽會 [The Photo Exhibition of National City Bank],” *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 5, no.201 (1929): 7.

¹³¹ Pamela J. Inglesby, “Button-pressers versus Picture-makers: The Social Reconstruction of Amateur Photography in the Late 19th Century U.S.,” *Visual Sociology* 5, no. 1 (1990): 18-25.

(1900-1994) bought a Kodak Brownie in 1920 when he studied at Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts (*Shanghai meizhun* 上海美專), and Jin Shisheng taught himself photography in 1923 when he received his first Kodak camera at the age of thirteen. In contrast to commercial and popular photography, these local photographic enthusiasts claimed to be amateur photographers.

“Amateur” (*aimeizhe* 愛美者) was firstly used with “drama” to describe a new and modern Chinese drama genre, “amateur drama” (*aimeiju* 愛美劇), by drama theorist Chen Dabei 陳大悲 (1887–1944) in his 1921 book, proposing an amateur theatre with a highlight of the script and literary aspects of theatre in contrast to commercial theatre.¹³² Amateur photographers were the opposite of commercial photographers, who earned a living by taking pictures. The early 1920s photographer and critic Liu Bannong first talked about the definition of “amateur” photography in the preface of “Peking Light Society Photographic Year Book” (*Beiping guangshe nianjian*, 北平光社年鑒) in 1927, he argued that amateur photographers must have a great interest in photography, as they took photographs out of interest, instead of making a living.¹³³

Compared with the serious amateur photographers who embraced photography as a creative art, the increasing number of hobby photographers employed their camera to represent everyday life and participated in the exhibitions and photographic societies, which contributed to the persistent photographic enthusiasm in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1936, Chen Chuanling wrote an English article to British magazine *Photograms of the*

¹³² Ge Yihong 葛一虹, “Aimeiju de tichu jiqi shijian 愛美劇的提出及其實踐 [The Emergence of Amateur Drama and Artistic Practices],” *Zhongguo huaaju tongshi* 中國話劇通史 [The general history of Chinese Drama] (Beijing: Wenhua xiju chubanshe, 2015), 51-69.

¹³³ Liu Bannong 劉半農, “Beiping guangshe nianjian xuyan 北平光社年鑒 [Preface of Yearbook of Peking Light Society],” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 203-206.

Year that was an annual record of international photographic work. He described the emergence and development of amateur photography in China:

Despite of economic depression of this country, in common with all parts of the world, is at present passing through, and in spite of the political upheavals, amateur photography is becoming more popular in all ranks of life, and interest in its affairs is surprisingly keen. In Shanghai, camera enthusiasts have been able to make considerable headway, as evidenced by the holding of more than ten open exhibitions between August 1934, and July 1935. It is gratifying to note that all these salons have been crowned with success. ... There are camera clubs in existence in most of the big cities like Shanghai, Peiping, Nanjing, Tientsin, Canton, etc., while the formation of more societies and camera clubs in the smaller cities is a necessity. ... In the interest of economy and for the sake of convenience, miniature cameras have come into prominence. The most popular and favorable one is the cheap and handy 2 1/4 in. × 3 1/4 in. size, with eight or sixteen exposures. For those who can afford to pay for the more expansive cameras, the Leica type is, of course, in the front rank. With the exception of Pressmen, one seldom sees nowadays a camera enthusiast carrying even the quarter-size apparatus.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Chen Chuanlin 陳傳霖, "China," in *Photograms of the year: The annual review of the worlds pictorial photographic work*, edited by F.J.Mortimer, London: Iliffe & Sons, 1936, 24.

Chen's article in *Photograms of the year* aims to outline the history of Chinese photography for the readers in the European-American countries. Instead of introducing some specific art photographers or masterpieces, he described the increasing number of amateur photographers, photographic exhibitions, camera clubs, and the expanding "miniature cameras" market in Shanghai. In the 1930s, some serious amateur photographers like Chen Chuanglin had realized the significance of a prosperous photographic market to cultural life.

The Chinese photographic market began to prosper around 1920. Recognizing the increasing numbers of Chinese amateur photographers, the Eastman Kodak company opened its first branch in Shanghai in 1920.¹³⁵ C. E. Barham, who occupied a similar position in South Africa for many years, acted as the manager for China.¹³⁶ The first wholesale store was established on Jiangxi Road, and a retail store opened on Nanjing Road and later moved to Yuanmingyuan Road in 1928. Four years later, another branch opened in Tianjin.¹³⁷ With the support of the postal service, Kodak's products were accessible throughout mainland China. In an advertisement published in *Shenbao* 1926 says: "Would you like to take a photograph by yourself? If you are living in interior China and cannot find a shop, you just go to the local post office and write to us, and then you can buy the Kodak camera. (Fig.2.8)."¹³⁸ In addition to Kodak, other camera brands rushed into the Chinese market. Ilford from Britain, Agfa, Leica, Zeiss,

¹³⁵ The Eastman Kodak company opened a wholesale office in London, England, 1885. In 1891, Kodak opened the first oversea factory in Harrow, England. George Eastman established Kodak Limited in 1898 by merging the Eastman Photographic Materials Company in London and American Eastman Kodak Company. Reese V. Jenkins, "Technology and the Market: George Eastman and the Origins of Mass Amateur Photography," *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January 1975): 1-19.

¹³⁶ "Kodak LTD., Opens Here," *The China Press*, April 2, 1921, 2.

¹³⁷ In 1924, E. P. Root from the Eastman Kodak Company in the U.S. was sent to Shanghai to be the manager. Besides the manager, there were also many Chinese assistants in the store. Wang Wenhao, who used to work in local studios, acted as an agent for Kodak products in Shanghai, communicated frequently with the manager of Kodak Shanghai branch. Fei Kailing 費開林, "Wang Wenhao tan Keda zai shanghai 王文浩談柯達在上海 [The Talks of Wang Wenhao: Kodak in Shanghai]," *Echo Magazine* 漢聲雜誌, January 1977, 64-65.

¹³⁸ Advertisement, *Shenbao*, March 3, 1926, 12.

Rolleiflex, and Contax from Germany, and Fuji Film from Japan all opened branches in Shanghai.¹³⁹

The group of amateur photographers in China became diverse in the 1920s and 1930s when the camera brands such as Kodak, Contax, Rolleiflex expanded their business in the Chinese market, and simultaneously many photographic societies, clubs, and exhibitions developed. Within the emergence of an expanding photographic market, not only the Kodak camera, but Ilford from Britain, Agfa, Leica, Zeiss, Rolleiflex, and Contax from Germany, and Fuji Film from Japan, all opened branches in Republican China.¹⁴⁰ The Contax Company even sponsored photographic exhibitions in Shanghai and Tianjin for increasing brand awareness.¹⁴¹ A large number of hobby photographers who were the major contributors in mass photography markets and had the potential to increase.¹⁴²

It has been a long time that the scholarship paid attention to art photography, which was marked by several dedicated amateur photographers. In my research, amateur photography suggests not only the artistic practices by serious amateur photographers but also the capture of quotidian activities in modern cultural lives by ordinary hobbyists. “Simultaneously popular and elite,” is how Lawrence W. Levine described the art institutions and productions of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century America, which attracted heterogeneous audiences that had differing orientations

¹³⁹ Tong Bingxue, *Zhongguo zhaoxiangguan shi*, 55.

¹⁴⁰ Zhao Junyi 赵俊毅, *Zhongguo sheyingshi shizhu* 中國攝影史拾珠 [the Forgotten History of Chinese Photography] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu sheying chubanshe, 2013), 22-25.

¹⁴¹ “Kangtaishi sheying zhanlanhui chupin yiban 康泰時攝影展覽會出品一斑 [the photographs in Contax photographic exhibition],” *Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報 [The Eastern Times Photo Supplement], no.174 (1935): 5; “Kangtaishi mingzuo yingzhan 康泰時名作影展 [the masterpieces in Contax photographic exhibition],” *Tianjin shangbao meiri huakan* 天津商報每日畫刊, vol.20, no.29 (1936): 2.

¹⁴² Pierre Bourdieu identified two types of amateur photographers, one is occasional photographers, who take photographs occasionally—recording family events, social gatherings, or travels. For this group of photographers, “photographic practice only exists and subsists for most of the time by virtue of its family function or rather by the function conferred upon it by the family group, namely that of solemnizing and immortalizing the high points in family life.” In contrast to occasional photography, Bourdieu argues that the “dedicated” photographers were on a quest for technical and aesthetic perfection.” Pierre Bourdieu, “the Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences,” in *Photography, A Middle-Brow Art*, translated by Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), 13-72.

toward art.”¹⁴³ It is also perfect for describing amateur photography in the Republican period.

The number of amateur photographers increased dramatically in the 1920 and 1930s, especially the number of photographic hobbyists in the cities. A review of the photographic societies, exhibitions and magazines reveals that both serious amateur photographers and photographic hobbyists were actively engaged in photographic activities. In 1925, China Photographic Society was founded by Lin Zecang in Shanghai, claiming that there were over one thousand members, including both ordinary hobbyists and serious art photographers;¹⁴⁴ thousands of amateurs had participated in the public photographic exhibitions held by Light Society in Beijing, Hua Society in Shanghai. The great enthusiasm for the exhibitions reflected the thriving market in the Republican period.

The key factors in the success of the Kodak camera market were affordability, accessibility and simplicity. Starting in 1920, the Kodak Company promoted a series of marketing strategies for attracting more customers in China, making great efforts to embed the camera in the lives of urban dwellers. In the 1920s, the price of a Kodak Brownie—an inexpensive and simple camera—was between 3.4 yuan to 29 yuan, and various other models were between 11 yuan to 210 yuan.¹⁴⁵ A 1926 ad in *Shenbao* shows a Vest Pocket Kodak with lens and films that cost 30 yuan, which the new middle classes in the major cities—doctors, engineers, teachers, journalists, writers and lawyers with a monthly salary 100 to 200 yuan—could easily afford with a bit of planning. The Brownie was intensively promoted in the 1930s. At 12 yuan, almost half

¹⁴³ Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow, Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 86, 100, 149.

¹⁴⁴ “China Camera Club Formed to Develop Photographic Art,” *The China Press*, August 16, 1925, 16.

¹⁴⁵ Advertisement, *Shenbao*, February 9, 1923, 17.

the cost of a Vest Pocket Kodak, it was quite affordable for city dwellers.¹⁴⁶ And the Hawkeye, one of the cheapest models in Kodak series, was sold for 9 yuan with lots of complementary products.¹⁴⁷

Beyond affordability, Kodak company promoted its customer-friendly service, emphasizing the simplicity of the camera for the purpose of attracting more amateur photographers. A 1926 Chinese ad stated: “The photography method is very simple; you would know the rules even though you use it for the first time. Load the film into the camera, pull out the camera, press the button, all done... The film can be sent to our company for developing...”¹⁴⁸ The three simple, easily explained steps in the ad were the same as the three steps in English ads, essentially a Chinese version of the slogan “you press the button, we do the rest.” At that time, Shanghai's tourism industry was booming. When the tourist ferry pulled into shore, tourists would find a film-developing service immediately, then load a new roll and go sightseeing. Their photographs would be ready just before they came back the ferry.

Kodak's “You press the button, we do the rest” slogan also applied to the Chinese market. In 1921, Kodak company established a school in Shanghai to train the technicians in stores and photographic enthusiasts in Shanghai: “Three weeks to graduate, free of charge.”¹⁴⁹ They were required to learn how to enlarge, develop and mount photographs. These local professional technicians in the Kodak shops and photographic suppliers guaranteed the quality and efficiency of the customer-friendly service in China. *The Kodak Magazine*, which was a journal published by Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y. for the amateurs, published a special introduction of

¹⁴⁶ Advertisement, *Chinese Kodakery*, 1931, vol 2, no.12, np.

¹⁴⁷ Advertisement, *Chinese Kodakery*, 1931, vol.2 no.8, np.

¹⁴⁸ Advertisement, *Shenbao*, September 19, 1926, 3.

¹⁴⁹ “Keda gongsi chuangan zhaoxiang xuexiao 柯達公司創辦照相學校 [Kodak Company Established Photography School],” *Shenbao*, December 23, 1921, 4.

Kodak's Shanghai branch accompanied by a photograph of Shanghai's Kodak school.¹⁵⁰ The photograph depicts Thomas Crellin, who was sent from Kodak, teaching his Chinese students (**Fig.2.9**). All male students in this photograph also suggest an interesting gender differentiation. Male photographers tended to be regarded as professional ones, yet the women photographers—basically appeared as “Kodak girl”—were seen as amateurs.

Simultaneously, the Kodak Photographic Society had been established to attract more potential consumers. In 1929, the company's Shanghai branch published an ad with an appealing title: “Only costs 4.5 yuan, everyone can take photographs by themselves (**Fig.2.10**).” If customers paid a 4.5-yuan membership fee, they could get a Kodak Hawkeye camera with several 120 films free of charge.¹⁵¹ In 1930, Kodak company promoted *Chinese Kodakery* (*Keda zazhi* 柯達雜誌), launched in 1930 and suspended in 1937, provided a glimpse of the international popular photographic culture to Chinese amateur photographers, stimulating their photographic interest and cultivating their dependence on Kodak products.

Influenced by the popular photographic culture, photography competitions became an effective way of attracting more customers. In 1929, the Eastman Kodak Company held a nationwide photography competition, which later became an international competition. The international competition was spreading in China and triggered enthusiasm among Chinese amateurs. It was the first time for Chinese amateurs to participate in an international photography competition. The participants had been required to submit their photographs to the designated themes, such as “snow,” “summer vacation,” “children,” etc., which encouraged amateurs to document domestic

¹⁵⁰ “Kodak Limited. Shanghai, China,” *The Kodak Magazine* IV, no.2 (July 1923): 3.

¹⁵¹ Advertisement, *Shenbao*, May 16, 1929, 1.

and leisure-time activities. The winning photographs would be published on *Chinese Kodakery*, which played a key role in the circulation of amateur photographs.

Kodak publications provided a comprehensive knowledge for self-taught photographers through their instructional essays. *Kodak Monthly* (*Keda huabao* 柯達畫報) and *Chinese Kodakery* published many how-to essays written by relatively sophisticated photographers or translated from foreign photographic journals. From the choices of photographic products to printing out photographs, these how-to essays provided step-by-step instructions for both beginners and old hands. For the beginners, the authors of instructional essays state three simple principles: accurate light, moderate exposure, and appropriate framing; correspondingly, they introduced very detailed measures of photo developing for the sophisticated amateurs. Besides that, some tips for taking moving photographs, landscape photographs, and portrait photographs were practical for all readers.

“Photo analysis” (*Zhaopian fenxi* 照片分析), a special column in *Chinese Kodakery*, offered very practical advice for amateur photographers. From the choices of the subject to composition, the writer would make a concrete analysis of the chosen photographs. For example, the 1936 “Photo analysis” in *Chinese Kodakery* selected the photograph of Yu Zemin 余則民 as an example. The critic made a sketch of the photograph, signaling the composition and subjects in the photograph for the readers (**Fig.2.11**). “The sky and lake surfaces are too empty,” reads one note. The critic also pointed out the shortcomings in the composition for the reader’s reference.¹⁵² The *point of fun* (*Quwei dian* 趣味點), a concept that was frequently mentioned in these technical essays, shared the similarities with the *punctum* in Roland Barthes’s theory

¹⁵² “Zhaoxiang fenxi 照片分析 [Photo Analysis],” *Chinese Kodakery* 7, no.8 (1936): 12.

referring to a detail that attracts you to an image.¹⁵³ The highlight of *point of fun* made the photographs livelier and more dynamic, remarking a break with fuzzy pictorialism. The technical essays also emphasized the employment of light and shadow.

These technical instructions encouraged advanced amateurs to be deeply involved in photographic activities, not to mention the fact that the technical guidelines promoted the consumption of many photographic products. For example, an ad entitled “Kodak Photographic Treasury” (*Keda sheying baoku* 柯達攝影寶庫) promotes a whole set of photographic products, including cameras, film, developing solutions, darkroom safelights, photographic papers, developing tanks, and fixing solutions (Fig.2.12).¹⁵⁴ This packaging sales mode is obviously aimed at dedicated amateur photographers. Behind the simplicity of operation, the technical essays essentially led the amateurs to a way of self-study and exploration.

The story of Kodak coming to China was interwoven with the local amateur’s demand to record modern life and shape their self-identity. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Kodak Company created a multitude of ways to attract the costumers and cultivate the amateurs’ aesthetic tastes in line with modern life. Travel, vacation, and domestic life as the main subjects in Kodak publications constituted the hobby photography that was a popular pastime for the new middle classes in the Republican period. The artistic works, travel snapshots, family photography, and capture of daily life in China allowed these amateurs to establish a precise association with their environment, their families, and a new nation.

In the Republican period, most photographic societies provided the locus for the photographic activities of amateur photographers. Local photographic societies in the

¹⁵³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 115.

¹⁵⁴ “Keda sheying baoku 柯達攝影寶庫 [Kodak Photographic Treasury],” *Chinese Kodakery* 2, no.8 (1931): 1.

1920s and 1930s, which shared some similarities with the camera clubs of European-American amateur photographers in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Shanghai, primarily functioned as a site of learning, appreciating, and socializing for Chinese amateur photographers. The examination of the photographic societies, including both art societies and hobby clubs, would provide a glimpse of the photographic culture and the emerging modern art world in the 1920s and 1930s.

The growth of photographic societies, arguably the most effective institution in popularizing photography, shaped the development of Chinese amateur photography. In the 1920s, photographic societies sprang up in large numbers. The Jing Society (*Jingshe* 景社) in Guangzhou, the Light Society in Beijing, the Pei-Yang Photographic Society (*Beiyang sheying hui* 北洋攝影會) in Tianjin, the Mei Society (*Meishe* 美社) in Nanjing, and the Hua Society in Shanghai emerged as the formation of the early Republican era modern art world. A generation of amateur photographers made efforts to establish a modern organizational structure and hold exhibitions on a regular basis, making a remarkable contribution to advocating art photography and expanding the public interest in photography. Simultaneously, student camera clubs sprang up within the advent of “aesthetic education” in the universities in the 1920s and 1930s. This rise of amateur photography in China and the new photographic vocabulary developed by the clubs, exhibitions, and publications from the 1900s to the 1930s contributed significantly to the particular and unique aspects and eventual growth of Chinese visual modernity.

In contrast to the casual photographers and ordinary hobbyists, a group of amateur photographers embraced photography as serious art, attempting to promote the legitimation and popularization of art photography and create institutional structures that expanded greater public understanding of modern art and the impact of the modern

artists. At the operational level, they wrote not only the instructional technical essays in photographic publications but a series of theoretical works about photographic aesthetics, establishing a legitimate boundary between ordinary hobbyists and dedicated amateur photographers.

The 1920s photographic societies, like the Jing Society in Guangzhou, the Light Society in Beijing, the Hua Society in Shanghai, and the Mei Society in Nanjing, still insisted on limiting membership. Even the Black and White Photographic Society in Shanghai, with the largest number of members, had only 74 members.¹⁵⁵ These photographic societies attracted local amateur photographers from Beijing to Guangzhou. They were organized loosely without strict rules or regular meetings. Basically, their annual exhibitions and various pictorials were the only platforms for amateur photographers to display and appreciate their works.

Liu Bannong, in his long classical essay “The talk on photography” mentioned that he took photographs for self-entertainment rather than making profits. Although his statements carried the tone of self-abasement commonly used by Chinese scholars, Liu embraced photography as serious fine art, emphasized that the purpose of the photographers was to “create beauty” (*zaomei* 造美) rather than reproduction.¹⁵⁶ A Liu’s attitude on photography echoed the “amateur” spirit of Chinese literati painters like Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101). Literati painters sometimes claimed to be amateurs, emphasizing that they painted for self-expression.¹⁵⁷

From Ouyang Huiqiang’s 歐陽慧蹕 “Photography Companion” (*Sheying zhinan*, 攝影指南) to Liu Bannong’s essay, the photographic critics appropriated the terms and

¹⁵⁵ Zhao Junyi. *Zhongguo sheyingshi shizhu*, 86-91.

¹⁵⁶ Liu Bannong, “Bannong tanying,” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 177-202.

methods from traditional painting theory such as “sketch conceptualism” (*xieyi* 寫意), “depict the truth” (*xiezhen* 寫真) and “aesthetic circumstances” (*yijing* 意境) to interpret art photography, making great efforts to legitimize photography as a genre of fine art. Chen Wanli 陳萬里 (1892-1969) published the first album of art photography in China “Wind” (*Dafengji* 大風集), which appropriated and adopted the subjects from literati landscape paintings, using soft-focus and darkroom skills to create an aesthetic atmosphere that counteracted the mechanical effects.

Many early photographic societies started with group outdoor shooting activities. Portable, compact, and convenient, hand cameras provided a lot of advantages for outdoor shooting. The founder of the Photographic Society of the Jingwu Martial Arts Association (*Jingwu tiyu shexuebu* 精武體育攝學部) Chen Gongzhe 陳公哲 (1890-1961) frequently organized outdoor shoots during excursions to Suzhou and Hangzhou in the 1910s; the Light Society in Beijing, which consisted of seven faculties and staff at Peking University began with a loosely organized art society to appreciate the photographs taken during their travels.¹⁵⁸ In the 1930s, Sanyou Photographic Society (*Sanyou yinghui* 三友影會), which was made up of Lang Jingshan, Huang Zhongchang 黃仲長 (1900-1988) and Xu Zuyin 徐祖蔭, visited Huang Mountain several times, and even the traditional style painter Zhang Daqian 張大千 (1899-1983) participated in their outdoor photographic practices. The photographic societies in the 1920s offered the

¹⁵⁸ The founding members of Light Society included seven faculties and staff at Peking University. Chen Wanli, a lecturer in the department of history, Wu Yuzhou 吳郁周, a professor in the department of physics and foreign language, Qian Jinghua 錢景華 (1935-), an engineer, Wang Mengshu 汪孟舒, a musician playing zither, Huang Zhenyu 黃振玉, the lecture in the Department of National Studies, and Wang Qinxi 王琴希 and Wu Jixi 吳輯熙, who were both professors in the Department of National Studies. Chen Hsueh Sheng 陳學聖, *Xunhui shiluo de minguo sheying* 尋回失落的民國攝影 [Forgotten Art Photography of Republican China] (Taipei, Fukui Yishu Press, 2015), 76.

members a place to gather as artistic equals to explore the technical and aesthetic aspects of photography.

The new cultural dynamics in cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin gave rise to a group of amateur photographers and photographic societies. They emerged and developed as a new force to be engaged in the transformative modern art world, reshaping the public's understanding of photography as a new genre of art. Due to the power of the photographic medium, a series of new photographic activities extended the influence beyond the circle of elite intellectuals, indicating the transfer of power from a relatively small group of advanced photographers and professionals to a large group of amateur photographers.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the photographic exhibition had been developing as the main venue to show the works by the societies' membership. From 1924 to 1928, the Light Society had held five annual exhibitions, developing a reputation around the Beijing area and even in Shanghai. The second annual exhibition attracted more than ten thousand visitors. The public enthusiasm for photography was the strongest motivating force for the success of Light Society exhibitions. The Light Society published two yearbooks in 1928 and 1929, collecting the artworks from the members, with text written by Chen Wanli and Liu Bannong that examined some significant issues about photography, art and technology. Liu Bannong not only gave the definition of "amateur," but also emphasized that the photographers need to express the unique "Chinese taste and sentiment" (*zhongguoren teyoude qingqu yu yundiao* 中國人特有的情趣與韻調).¹⁵⁹ Although a distinctly national sentiment appeared, art

¹⁵⁹ Liu Bannong, *Beiping Guangshe nianjian xuyan*, in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 207-209. After the fourth annual exhibition, the 16 members of the Light Society picked up in total of 56 pieces of photographs, published them as a yearbook on January 1, 1928. The second yearbook was published after the fifth annual exhibition.

photographers of the early 1920s successfully represented the aesthetic sensibility of an intellectual world.

The Photographic Society of China, known as the Hua Society, emerged in a thriving cultural environment. It drew together artists, intellectuals and even journalists in the Shanghai art world, aiming to expand the impact of art photography and constructing the reputation of amateur photographers. Lang Jingshan, a sophisticated advertiser in *Shenbao* and *The Eastern Times* (*Shibao* 時報), organized a group of amateur photographers and established the first Chinese art photographic society in Shanghai, 1928. The members of the Hua Society basically were closely associated with the metropolitan modern art world. For example, Hu Boxiang 胡伯翔 (1896-1989) was a well-known commercial artist who painted the monthly calendar for a tobacco company in Shanghai; Wang Dafo 王大佛, the editor of photographic magazine *The China Focus* (*Tianpeng* 天鵬), promoted a special issue of the second exhibition of the Hua Society in 1928;¹⁶⁰ Ding Song 丁悚 (1891-1972), one of the most famous Shanghai cartoonists of the time, founded the magazine *Shanghai Sketch* (*Shanghai manhua* 上海漫畫) which published a special issue of the third exhibitions of the Hua Society in 1929;¹⁶¹ Zhu Shouren 朱壽仁 was the chief editor of *Chinese Journal of Photography* (*Zhonghua sheying zazhi* 中華攝影雜誌) which was one of the most influential photographic magazines, running from October 1931 to June 1936; Guo Xiqi 郭錫麒 (1896-1976), an productive amateur photographer in the 1920s, published many photographs in *The Eastern Times Photo Supplement* (*Shibao tuhua zhoukan* 時

¹⁶⁰ “Huashe yingzhan zhuanhao 華社影展專號 [Special Issue of the Hua Society],” *The China Focus* 3, no.6 (December 1928).

¹⁶¹ “Huashe disanci sheyingzhanlanhui chupin yiban 華社第三次攝影展覽出品之一斑 [A Glimpse of the Works of the Third Photographic Exhibition of the Hua Society],” *Shanghai manhua* 上海漫畫, no.85 (April 1929): 1-2.

報圖畫週刊) and *Pictorial Weekly* (*Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報); the cartoonists Zhang Guangyu 張光宇 (1900-1965) and Ye Qianyu 葉淺予 (1907-1995), though not official members, also contributed many works to the exhibitions, and further took advantage of their influence to expand the reputation of the society in mass media.

The photographic circle in Nanjing, the capital of Republican China, was slightly different from Shanghai's. Several political figures from the Nationalist government such as He Yingqin 何應欽 (1890-1987) who was the senior general of the Kuomintang, and Chu Minyi 褚民誼 (1884-1946) who was a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, joined in the society when they visited the exhibitions of the Mei Society in 1928.¹⁶² The members were distributed in Nanjing and Shanghai. The founder, Zhang Pengzhou 張蓬舟 (1904-1991) emphasized that the aim of the society was to appreciate art photography, "we have no strict rules, and are loosely organized...we would keep the network of amateur photographers connected, and expand the influence of art photography."¹⁶³ Photography as a new form of art, its artistic quality, and more importantly, the cultural power, was recognized by an expanding circle in the upper middle classes.

The 1930s saw photographic culture had been flourishing with the development of the Black and White Photographic Society. Embracing the diversity of art photography, the photographers in Black and White Photographic Society such as Chen Chuanling, Lu Shifu, Nie Guangdi 聶光地, Wu Zhongxing 吳中行 (1899-1976), Ao Enhong 敖恩洪 (1909-11989) and Sha Fei 沙飛 (1912-1950) brought a variety of subjects into their photographs. From 1932 to 1937, four exhibitions attracted great attention from the

¹⁶² Chu Minyi wrote an article in *the China Focus*, arguing that photography can promote aesthetic education. Chu Minyi 褚民誼, "Meide zhenquan 美的真詮 [The True Meaning of Beauty]," *The China Focus* 3, no.8 (May 1929): 16.

¹⁶³ "Meishe zibai 美社自白 [Declaration of Mei Society]," *The China Focus* 3, no.8 (May 1929): 17.

public. The members of the Black and White Photographic Society developed their sensitivity to represent various subjects for the audience in response to the appeal for national salvation in the 1930s. The works by members integrated the aesthetic value with social content, attempting to respond to the role of photography played in the turbulent social changes. The Black and White Photographic Society successfully expanded the boundaries of art photography, and its exploration of new perspectives of photography went hand in hand with the rise of a left-wing cultural movement in the 1930s. Correspondingly, the yearbooks with collected photographs from the exhibitions had been published and were widely available. The turmoil of more than half a century in China has made it impossible to preserve all the photographs. These yearbooks of each society became a crucial clue to trace their achievements in the photographic world. Photographs played a significant role in mass media, although photographic magazines and pictorials accounted for only a small part of the publications in the Republican period.

The flourishing press industry promoted the development of amateur photographic societies in the urban environment, and the members of the societies, in turn contributed their works to magazines and pictorials. Photographic yearbooks, magazines, and pictorials kept the association of the amateurs connected and provided aesthetically high-quality works and criticism, as well as some practical technical information for ordinary amateur photographers. *Peking Light Society Photographic Year Book* fully displayed the pictorialist works from the members; *The China Focus, Chinese Journal of Photography* frequently published the works of the Hua Society members (**Fig.2.13**); The *Pei-Yang Pictorial News* (*Beiyang huabao* 北洋畫報) cultivated a group of photographers who later developed a new society, the Beiyang Photographic Society

(*Beiyang sheyinghui* 北洋攝影會), which suggests a close relationship between mass media and amateur photography.

The 1930s photographic magazines such as *The China Focus*, *Changhong* (長虹), *Chenfeng* (晨風), *Zhonghua* (中華) financially supported by the photographic suppliers published lots of amateurs' photographic works. However, these photographic magazines often had been suspended only after two or three years of publication. *The China Focus*, which launched from July 1928 to December 1929, suspended due to the lack of long-term and stable sponsorship. *Chenfeng*, which launched from December 1933 to November 1935, stopped publication for the same economic reason. Professional photographic magazines were very popular among photographic enthusiasts, but the ordinary readers were also more willing to buy some comprehensive pictorials. Therefore, photographic magazines must seek sponsorship from suppliers of photographic materials. In 1936, Jin Shisheng and some amateurs associated with him launched an important photographic magazine *Flying Eagle* (*Feiying* 飛鷹) that was financed by the Guanlong Photographic Supply Company (*Guanlong qicaihang* 冠龍器材行) in Shanghai. As one of the most sophisticated photographic magazines in the Republican period, *Flying Eagle* embraced pictorialist photography as well as modernist works. Besides the specific photographic magazines, *the Young Companion* and *The Modern Miscellany* (*Shidai huabao* 時代畫報) which were the most pioneering pictorials in the Republican period specially opened the photographic section for satisfying the enthusiasm from the viewing public.

Besides the photographic societies developed by serious amateur photographers, it is interesting to notice that the emergence of student camera clubs was accompanied by the aesthetic education in the Republican period. In 1916, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-

1940) took up the present of Peking University and the post of Minister of Education in the newly established Republican China and advocated for “aesthetic education” (*meiyu* 美育) by emphasizing aesthetic merit rather than functional skill.¹⁶⁴ Chu Minyi, a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, was also an amateur photographer in Mei Society in Nanjing. In a 1929 article entitled “The True Meaning of Beauty” (*Meide zhenquan* 美的真詮), he believed that aesthetic education was very significant to the cultural life in a country, so there should be more photographic societies like the Mei Society.¹⁶⁵ His argument directly connects aesthetic education with the promotion of photographic societies and clubs.

The camera clubs on campuses were established to cultivate an interest in photography and offer technical guidance to young students. Compared with the serious art groups like the Light Society and the Hua Society, the camera clubs in the campus emphasized sociability, keeping the amateurs closely connected with a mutual goal to improve the art. The first batch of hobby clubs in the Republican period appeared in colleges and middle schools in the cities as the extracurricular interest groups. Many photographers first contacted or trained in photography when they studied it in middle school or college. Lang Jingshan learned photography in Shanghai Nanyang Middle school at the age of 12 in 1904. He learned some basic photographic skills and darkroom techniques from his painting teacher; Chen Gongzhe, the founder of the Photographic Society of Jingwu Martial Arts Association, which was the earliest photographic society in China, contacted photography when he studied in Fudan

¹⁶⁴ Cai Yuanpei encouraged professors and students to establish interest groups for developing a “whole education”. Photographic groups were one of the many clubs that were formed in response. He also talked about photography as an independent and legitimized art form: “Photography used to be a scientific tool, but now it can represent landscape and express feelings. It is a part of artist production and performs the same role as painting. Photography has enjoyed increasing popularity in Europe; now this trend is appearing in China.” Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, “*ershiwunian lai zhongguo zhi meiyu* 二十五年來中國之美育 [25 years of aesthetic education in China],” in *Jingshen yu renga: caiyuanpei meixue wenxuan* 精神與人格:蔡元培美學文選 [Spirit and Personality: Selected Works of Cai Yuanpei's Aesthetics] (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 2015), 242.

¹⁶⁵ Chu Minyi, “Meide zhenquan,” *The China Focus*, May 1929, vol 3, no.8, 16.

University around 1910; Lin Zecang was the leader of the photographic group at Saint John's University when he studied there in 1924 and later he established China Photographic Society in 1925; Jin Shisheng he learned photography in Shanghai Pudong Middle School, where he met his schoolmate Jiang Bingnan 蔣炳南. Jin started his photographic career in Shanghai in the 1930s, when he studied civil engineering at Tongji University.

Like the Light Society and the Hua Society, the main activities of the camera clubs included outdoor shoots, regular discussions about photographs, and participation in the exhibitions. The Shanghai College Photo Club (*Hujiang daxue sheyingshe* 滬江大學攝影社) was founded in 1925 as an extracurricular activity for students at Shanghai College. According to a 1925 group photo in front of Yates Hall published in 1925 *The Shanghai* (*Hujiang niankan* 滬江年刊), there were twenty-three members (including one woman) in the first year; one year later, the number had more than doubled to fifty.¹⁶⁶ In the 1929 photograph in *The Shanghai*, it is obvious that more women had joined the club (**Fig.2.14**). The members organized outdoor shoots and read and communicated with photographs on a regular basis; they were encouraged to submit their photographs to the exhibitions and magazines. In one essay written by the Secretary of the club, Sidney D. Wang, he praised the club's achievements: "the beautiful pictures and snapshots compiled in the present volume of the Shanghai Annual. Besides, in the local and national photo-exhibitions, the artistic works of the members win no little appreciation and praise, thus making our Alma Mater known in society with another good name."¹⁶⁷ Chen Chunbo 陳春波, chairman of the club in 1929 and the chief editor of *The Shanghai*, published a great number of photographs in

¹⁶⁶ *The Shanghai* 滬江年刊 11, (1926): 245.

¹⁶⁷ Sidney D. Wang, *The Shanghai* 14, (1929): 185.

Pictorial Weekly and *The China Focus*. Sometimes the members of Photo Club also acted as journalists on many occasions, such as sports events.

Sometimes the well-known photographers would write for the photographic annuals of the student camera clubs, which to some extent, legitimated their photographic activities and brought their works into the aesthetic system set by advanced art photographers. Lang Jingshan, Hu Boxiang from the Hua Society wrote the prefaces for *the Fudan Photography Annual* (*Fudan sheying nianjian* 復旦攝影年鑒) created by the Fudan University Photographic Society (*Fudan daxue sheyinghui* 復旦大學攝影會) in May 1931, praising their achievements in and contributions to art photography.¹⁶⁸ The photographs in the annual explore a wide range of subjects from nude to the street scene. Chen Bingde 陳昺德 (1907-1950), who specialized in sport photography and female portraits, contributed eight photographs to the annual. Among them, there was an outdoor nude photograph, which was rarely seen in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the Fudan University Middle School Photographic Society (*Fudan daxue fushuzhongxue sheying xuehui* 復旦大學附屬中學攝影學會) also published the *Fudan University Middle School Photography Album* (*Fuzhong yingji* 復中影集) in December 1930. As a middle-school camera club, it received support from the university in terms of the equipment and funds. Besides that, the Yin-O Photo Club of Shanghai College Middle School (*Hujiang daxue fushuzhongxue yin'ou sheying xuehui* 滬江大學附屬中學銀鷗攝影學會) also published an album in 1935.

Advanced amateur photographers played an important role in legitimizing the amateur activities of the student camera club, and it common for then to be invited as

¹⁶⁸ Lang Jingshan, Hu Boxiang, "Preface," in *Fudan sheying nianjian* 復旦攝影年鑒 [Fudan Photography Annual], edited by Zhao Yun 趙雲, Zhang Minguang 張敏光, Cao Zuguang 曹祖光 and Xu Pei 徐霽, Shanghai, 1931.

an advisor. The Chih Tze College Photographic Study Society (*Chizhi daxue sheying yanjiuhui* 持誌大學攝影研究會) was established around 1928. Lang Jingshan and Hu Boxiang acted as advisers.¹⁶⁹ Tu Zheyin 屠哲隱, one of the founders of the Nanjing Mei Society, became the advisor of the Mei Society of Jinling University (*Jinling daxue meishe* 金陵大學鎂社) which consisted of students from Jinling University. Besides that, serious amateurs also gave commentary and critiques at the student camera clubs' exhibitions and publications to approve the aesthetic values of their works.

Embracing diversity and openness on the subjects and styles, the young students showed more sensibility to the changes in the urban environment. The Shanghai Fine Art Academy established a photographic society around 1930. The members of the society were trained as professional painters. Therefore, they had well-honed artistic instincts.¹⁷⁰ The photographic magazines *Chenfeng* and *Zhonghua* published photographs from the fifth exhibition of Shanghai Meizhuan Photographic Society (*Shanghai meizhuan sheyinghui* 上海美專攝影會) in January 1934. As will be discussed in next section, the photographic exhibition was the main venue for showing the works of the members in various categories like metropolitan nightlife and the war situation.¹⁷¹ The engagements of student societies on the campus provided a glimpse of the flourishing photographic culture in the 1920s and 1930s. The members' photographic level is variable, but their fresh and expressive works contribute to the diversity and vitality of modern Chinese photography.

Photography, an once luxury pastime only available to China's upper classes, gradually reached these new intellectuals and urban bourgeoisie. They participated in

¹⁶⁹ *The Chih Tze* 持誌年刊, 1929, no.3, 1.

¹⁷⁰ Gu Zheng 顧錚, "Tamen ruhe jiena sheying: shanghai meishu zhuanxiao yu sheying 他們如何接納攝影: 上海美術專業學校與攝影 [How Did They Accept Photography: Shanghai Fine Art Academy and Photography]," *Chinese Photography* 中國攝影, 2015, no.12, 62-67.

¹⁷¹ *Chenfeng*, 1934, no.3, 1; *Zhonghua*, 1934, no.25, 11.

public spaces in ways that produced, disseminated and consumed images. Beyond taking photographs, the amateur photographers bought the photographic equipment, photographic magazines and yearbooks, visited the exhibitions on a regular base, and formed a series of societies and clubs. The amateur photographers connected with the wider public through a series of photographic practices. The turbulent political situation and the deepening national crisis forced them to think about the relationship between the individual and the nation.

2.3 “Kodak Girl” in China: Female Photographers in the 1920s and 1930s

The light and easy-to-operate Kodak camera stimulated the enthusiasm of female photographers. Women played a limited role in photographic history in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the equipment was cumbersome and expensive. By the 1880s, the invention of dry plates and portable cameras encouraged more and more women to take up the hobby. With the requirements for the photographers to have complicated developing techniques and heavy equipment was eliminated, photography was accessible to everyone.¹⁷² Besides the male amateur photographers, the Kodak Company was the first to notice the value of female photographic enthusiasts. In 1893, the Eastman Kodak Company promoted “Kodak Girl.” The Kodak advertisements began featuring a modern and vibrant woman in a blue and white striped dress with a Kodak camera in hand (**Fig.2.15**). “Kodak Girl,” a pretty and modern girl in Kodak’s advertising campaigns, became a global icon to promote its easy-to-handle cameras, “Even the women can do it,” proclaimed the ad, which suggests the simplicity of

¹⁷² January Parkos Arnall, “‘Adventures into Camera-Land’: Women, Image-Making, and the Social Environment of Chicago Camera Clubs at the Turn of the Century” (Ph.D. thesis, Claremont, California, 2009), 31-63.

operation.¹⁷³ The fashionable “Kodak Girl” in the ads also suggests the significant role women played in recording the family gathering and domestic celebrations in the early twentieth century.¹⁷⁴

“Kodak girl” even took pictures all over the world. In Chinese Kodak ads, the modern and romantic Kodak girl not only indicates that the products were friendly to the amateurs but also symbolized a “new woman” (*xin nüxing* 新女性) who was well educated and sophisticated. For example, in 1926 *The Ladies’ Journal* (*Funü zazhi* 婦女雜誌), the ad of Kodak shows a female photographer shooting athletes with a Kodak ((**Fig.2.16**)).¹⁷⁵ Another ad creates a romantic outdoor scene in which the woman with the camera was taking pictures of the landscape and the man snuggled against her, which catered to the audience looking for a romantic story (**Fig.2.17**).¹⁷⁶ Armed with their cameras, the new women could take their own shots rather than be viewed and exhibited. The women magazines in the Republican period such as *The Ladies’ Journal* and *Elegance* (*Linglong* 玲瓏), all promoted the imagery of modern woman with the camera as a trend; they even designed various scenes for female photographers.¹⁷⁷

“New woman” in Republican China, which were first placed in a subject position in the May Fourth era, had been depicted as a modern subject searching for female subjectivity in modern Chinese literary works. The depictions of new women by some leftist writers such as Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904-1986) and Mao Dun 茅盾 (1891-

¹⁷³ Kerry Ross, “Women, Hobbyists, and Marketing Photography,” in *Photography for everyone: The Cultural Lives of Cameras and Consumers in Early Twentieth-Century Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 41-68.

¹⁷⁴ Nancy Martha West, “Vacation Days are Kodak Days: Modern Leisure and New Amateur Photographer in Advertising,” in *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 36-73.

¹⁷⁵ “It is the best to use Kodak cameras and films to shoot sports photography,” *Funü zazhi* 婦女雜誌 [The Ladies’ Journal], no. 006 (May 1926): 96.

¹⁷⁶ Kodak ad, *Funü zazhi*, no.10. (1926): 31.

¹⁷⁷ Joan Judge, Barbara Mittler, and Michel Hockx, “Introduction: Women’s Journals as Multigeneric Artefacts,” in *Women and the Periodical Press in China’s Long Twentieth Century: A Space of their Own*, edited by Michel Hockx, Joan Judge and Barbara Mittler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1-18.

1981) stood for the quest for modernity and expressed the struggle of modern Chinese women to find their voices in a new and changing world. Meanwhile, the writers like the “New Perceptionists” (*Xinganjue pai* 新感覺派) objectified the modern urban women as a dangerous femme fatale who enticed the urban male. Both of two representations of modern women show deep anxieties over alienation and modernity.¹⁷⁸

The image of Kodak girl in Chinese ads not only embodies the spirit of adventure and fashion but also suggests the needs of independence associated with their pursuit of personal progress. The idealized Chinese Kodak girl in the ads was associated with the positive aspects of modernity. The cover picture of in 1914 *The Ladies' Journal* features a well-dressed female photographer in mid-heels is taking a photograph of a deer with Kodak camera. Painted in quietly elegant turquoise by Xu Yongqing 徐詠青(1880-1953), who specialized in drawing landscape and calendar picture, the picture illustrates a woman was enjoying the outdoor leisure travel alone (**Fig.2.18**).¹⁷⁹ In this context, the camera was employed as both a fashionable accessory that became a part of the bodily performance and a modern medium for defining her own identity. The ownership of Kodak cameras in the 1910s was still limited to a small number of photography enthusiasts, and very few women had tried photography. The picture shows an idealized subject in a poetic atmosphere, and also suggests that urban women from upper-middle-class families were seeking their aspirations through new media.

Playing with the camera became a trend among modern urban women, and it simultaneously created the potential for some Chinese women to participate in the

¹⁷⁸ Sarah.E. Stevens, “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China,” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): 82-103.

¹⁷⁹ Xu Yongqing 徐詠青 (1880-1953), cover picture, *Funv shibao*, no.14 (July 1914).

construction of self-image, that is, for women to play a more significant role in the shaping of their own portrayal. The cover of the fifth issue of *The China Focus* depicted a female photographer is operating the apparatus in the studio, which subverted the stereotype that studio photographers had always been men (**Fig.2.19**).¹⁸⁰ It has been a past era when the women were depicted by men as a product of male erotic.¹⁸¹ More importantly, the camera entrusted the women photographers more power to manipulate their own image; the “self” was gradually developing into a crucial theme in the representation of Chinese women in the early twentieth century. The Chinese women have undergone a transformation, from being objects on view to subjects possessing their own desires, viewing the self through the world around them.

Through reading the group photographs of these clubs, it is interesting to note that more and more female amateur photographers participated in the clubs. The emergence of female amateur photographers and even women’s camera clubs were closely associated with the prevalence of photographic education in the early twentieth century. In the 1920s, the Sunikang Girl School in Shanghai (*Shanghai songjiang nüzi xuetang* 上海松江女子學堂) offered a class in photography; Lang Jingshan was employed as the teacher. Nankai Middle School for Girls (*Nankai nüzi zhongxue* 南開女子中學) in Tianjin offered photographic courses as a crucial part of aesthetic education, promoting photography as a new way of cultivating the virtues of the women born to open-minded families in cities.¹⁸²

Modern women in the Republican period embarked on a photographic career, which also a new way of socializing. Like the male photographic hobbyists, women

¹⁸⁰ Cover, *The China Focus* 3, no.5, (Nov. 1928).

¹⁸¹ John Judge, “Portraits of Republican Ladies: Materiality and Representation in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Photographs,” in *Visualizing China, 1845-1965: Life and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, 131-170.

¹⁸² Zhao Junyi, *Zhongguo sheyingshi shizhu*, 92-94.

also chose to develop their own camera clubs for communicating and socializing with each other. The women's camera club "Kodak Club" was established at the Shanghai McTyeire School for Girls (Chinese name: *Zhongxi nüshu* 中西女塾) in 1923 (Fig.2.20).¹⁸³ McTyeire School, a private school for girls from Shanghai's well-to-do families, set up several interest groups such as music and poetry clubs for enriching school life. The Kodak Club, consisting of fifteen students, was established a bit later than the music and poetry clubs and aimed to provide some technical guidance and cultivate an interest in photography. Lin Zecang, the founder of the Chinese Photographic Society, noticed the Kodak Club, and wrote an essay to introduce it in *Pictorial Weekly*, 1927. But he criticized the name "Kodak Club," because it sounded like an advertisement for the Kodak company.¹⁸⁴

Camera clubs provided a new way for the women to bond with each other and connect with the changing world. The aim of the Kodak club was "good fellowship, good fun, and good photography."¹⁸⁵ Compared with the elite photographic societies and student camera clubs primarily for men, the women's camera club explicitly highlighted the sociability and entertainment of the club. The female amateur photographers in McTyeire School, who lived in wealthy Chinese families, were expected to bring the connections made in the clubs to their own family. Meanwhile, the bond of female amateurs highlighted the image of the modern woman. A portrait of Qian Lianlian 錢蓮蓮 in McTyeire School, which was published in the popular women magazine *Linglong*, shows her holding a hand camera, with the caption: "Ms. Qian Lianlian graduates from McTyeire School for Girls and loves photography

¹⁸³ "The Kodak Club," in *Moti* 墨梯, no.6 (1923): 283-284.

¹⁸⁴ Lin Zecang, "Sheyingjie jinwen 攝影界近聞 [The Latest News in Photography]," *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 3, no.112 (1927): 95.

¹⁸⁵ "The Kodak Club," in *Moti*, no.6 (1923): 283-284.

(Fig.2.21).¹⁸⁶ Chen Bingde's photograph "A Successful Photographer Emerges from Practices Like This," which was published in *Linglong*, captures a moment when two female photographic hobbyists were practicing taking photographs (Fig.2.22).¹⁸⁷ The camera had been embedded into the cultural and artistic life of the female students. Female photographic hobbyists not only used the camera as a tool of documentation but also a way of displaying themselves.

In contrast with male amateur photographers who insisted on taking photos for self-entertainment, more and more female hobby photographers advocated that women should take up cameras not only for fun but also as a profession. An increasing number of women amateur photographers transformed into professionalism, or somewhere in between. In a December 1925 issue of *The Ladies' Journal* published an essay entitled "The benefits of learning photography skills" (*Xue sheyingshu de liyi* 學攝影術的利益), which encourages more women to become professional photographers so as to lead independent lives:

Chinese women have been confined by etiquette for thousands of years, hiding in our rooms all day long...what kind of art shall I introduce to female readers now? I learn photography in order to understand fine arts (better). we are accustomed to the scenery of Dongting Lake, but it looks different when I take a photograph...In addition to understanding art, I learned photography for the sake of life...In the United States, college students can earn money from photography to pay tuition fees. Women

¹⁸⁶ "Qian Lianlian nvshi biye yu zhongxi nvshu aihao sheying 錢蓮蓮女士畢業於中西女墅愛好攝影 [Ms. Qian Lianlian graduates from McTyeire School for Girls and loves photography]," *Linglong* 1, no.23 (1931): 822.

¹⁸⁷ Chen Bingde 陳昺德, "A successful photographer emerges from practices like this," *Linglong* 玲瓏 [Elegance], no.52 (June 1932): 2.

are the most suitable photographers. Some women who are very reluctant to see male photographers, so female photographers can do big business.¹⁸⁸

Although the author seemed to be too optimistic about the career prospects of the photographers, she still provided the female readers with a new career choice besides becoming a teacher or a secretary. Sheng Heyin 盛和音, a member of Fudan University Photographic Society, acted as a news photographer at a university ceremony with Cheng Bingde. The front-page photograph in 1930 *Pictorial Weekly* shows photographer Sheng Heyin holding her camera surrounded by her male classmates (**Fig.2.23**).¹⁸⁹ Jin Naixian 金耐先, a women artist and amateur photographer in the Republican period, exhibited her work in the first National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1929 (*Diyijie quanguo meizhan* 第一屆全國美展) with other well-known male amateur photographers.¹⁹⁰ She also acted as a sport photographer when the national sport games was held in Hangzhou in April, 1930, taking many photographs for the female athletes (**Fig.2.24**)¹⁹¹. In 1931, Jin Naixian came to Beijing and taught Western painting in Kongde School. Liu Bannong, a member of the Light Society, invited her to join in the society. As the first and only female member, she displayed twenty of her photographs in Light Society exhibition. Gu Shuxing 顧淑型 (1897-1968) employed photography as a way of engaging with the social events. She took several photographs of representing March 18 Massacre in 1926 which 47 protesters were killed and more

¹⁸⁸ Zhen Zhi 振之, "Xue sheyingshu de liyi 學攝影術的利益 [The benefits of learning photography]," *Funü zazhi*, no.1 (1925), 124.

¹⁸⁹ "Yundonghui kaimushi 運動會開幕式 [opening ceremony of the sports meeting]," *Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報 [The Eastern Times Photo Supplement], 1930, no.708, 0.

¹⁹⁰ "Nü qingnian yishujia jin naixian nüshi 女青年藝術家金耐先女士 [Young female artists Mrs. Jin Naixian]," *Funü Zazhi*, 1929, 30 June, no.7, 76.

¹⁹¹ Jin Naixian 金耐先, "Nüzi paiqiu jinbiaosai (guangdong) 女子排球錦標賽 [Canton team won the girl volley ball championship]," *Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報 [The Eastern Times Photo Supplement], no.654 (1930): 3.

than 200 injured (**Fig.2.25**). In contrast with the records of entertainment, sports and landscape, the documentations by Gu Shuxing manifest the strong humanistic concerns as a progressive woman.

The establishment of women's camera clubs broke the monopoly of photography as a male hobby, encouraging more modern women to record their cultural lives. Although the most amateur photographic societies had limited membership for women, camera clubs in schools allowed female amateurs to join together, developing an expanding social network of amateurs connected for pursuing photography. A new generation of women started experimenting with photography. The Camera had been embedded in their cultural life not only as a fashionable accessory but also as a new medium to define their own identity.

Chapter 3: Democratization of the Images: Amateur Photography in Public Spaces

Introduction:

The *exhibition* (*zhanlanhui* 展覽會), which was a new cultural and artistic practice in China, emerged within the flourishing modern-art world in the early Republican period. An increasing number of exhibitions played a crucial part in promoting the notion of modern art in China.¹⁹² Art exhibitions not only provided a space of displaying the artworks but also created a new channel to exchange the ideas between the artists and the audience. Art exhibitions in the Republican period essentially transformed the way of viewing and appreciating art among the general public, creating a new public space for learning and communication.

Within the deteriorating situation in mid-1930s China, an ongoing realism movement in the 1930s modern Chinese art world remarked a break with pictorialism and modernist exploration. Many photographers leveraged photography to express the sentiments of national salvation, using the camera as a “weapon” to mobilize the public. In the 1930s, photography played a crucial role as a tool of documentation on the one hand, on the other, of propaganda to shape national imagination.

3.1 From Department Store to Art Museum: Photographic Exhibitions in the 1920s and 1930s

Since the nineteenth century, the prosperity of pictorial media fostered a large number of new audiences who would be actively engaged in twentieth-century public

¹⁹² Pedith Pui Chan: “The Appropriation of New Cultural Capital: Art Exhibitions,” in *The Making of a Modern Art World: Institutionalisation and Legitimation of Guohua in Republican Shanghai* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 119-185.

exhibitions. Visiting the artistic exhibitions became a modern cultural event for the new middle classes. Wang Jiyuan 王濟遠 (1893-1975), a modern Shanghai artist, mentioned that tens of thousands of visitors rushed to the exhibitions and would “leave a joyful expression and get rid of the sense of depression.”¹⁹³ Artistic societies and exhibitions were central to creating the institutional structures such that expanded greater public understanding of modern art and the impact of the modern artists. Through the flourishing 1920s photographic culture, comprised of amateur societies, exhibitions, and the criticism of the exhibitions, a dynamic discourse on modern Chinese photographic was developing.

In 1889, the first photographic exhibition was held by China Camera Club with sixty works, including one from Chinese amateur Chan Chin-tung; since 1902, the Shanghai Amateur Photographic Society held had annual exhibitions of works from the membership in the Union Church Lecture Hall, which offered an opportunity for the Euro-American photographic hobbyists in Shanghai to meet and learn the new trend in the field of photography.¹⁹⁴ Until the 1920s, the Shanghai Amateur Society still held exhibitions for its members’ work in order to demonstrate the photographs’ influence on the local Chinese societies. In the late 1920s, Lang Jingshan even joined the Shanghai amateur photographic exhibition.

The Light Society’s exhibitions enhanced the public understanding of photography as fine art, laying a foundation for the profusion of photographic exhibitions in the 1930s. From 1924 to 1932, Light Society had held approximately eight public exhibitions in Beijing. The first public exhibition of Light Society was held on June 14-15, 1924, in the teahouse at Central Park, which was close to Peking

¹⁹³ Wang Jiyuan 王濟遠, “Wode meishu tan 我的美術談 [On fine-art],” *Shenbao*, August 3, 1923, 8.

¹⁹⁴ “The China Camera Club Exhibition,” *The North-China Daily News*, June 22, 1889; *The North-China Daily News*, April 7, 1908, 7.

University. It consisted of over three hundred photographs from the membership and was free of admission.¹⁹⁵ The attendance of the first exhibition was more than five thousand, and the duration was extended to five days.¹⁹⁶ After the fourth annual exhibition, the first *Peking Light Society Photographic Year Book* was published in 1928, including 56 pieces of works from 16 members. And the second annual was published after the fifth annual exhibition. These two annuals not only showed the photographs in the exhibitions but also defined the boundary of art photography and discussed some theoretical issues such as the relationship between art and technology.

However, photography did not enter the Chinese modern art world until a series of exhibitions held by amateur photographic societies in Shanghai. In the 1920s, together with Western painting and sculpture, photography as a Western-style art form had gradually been recognized and legitimized through the efforts of many amateur photographers. The Pegasus Society (*Tianmahui* 天馬會), the earliest artistic society to promote Western-style art in China for the public, was the first artistic group that brought the photographic works into the mainstream art circle. Organized by The Pegasus Society, a personal exhibition of the founding member of Light Society Chen Wanli was held in 1926, Shanghai, displaying his photographs taken in the Forbidden City in 1924, and the caves of Dunhuang and Shanxi Province when he participated a scientific investigation with American explorers and conducted his archeological research on the caves.¹⁹⁷ The historical and artistic value of these photographs during the investigation were inextricably entwined, but the photographic works exhibited at the 8th and 9th Pegasus Society Exhibition showed the great aesthetic value that

¹⁹⁵ “Guangshe kai zhanlanhui 光社開展覽會 [Light Society opened photographic exhibition],” *Shuntian shibao* 順天時報, June 11, 1924, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Chen Shen, *Guangshe jishi*, 61-82.

¹⁹⁷ “Chen Wanli geren sheying zhanlanhui zhi yiban 陳萬里個人攝影展覽會之一斑 [One Glimpse of Chen Wanli Personal Photography Exhibition],” *Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報 [The Eastern Times Photo Supplement], no.316, 2-4.

reshaped the artistic discourse of Chinese modern art. In 1927 and 1928, the works from Chen Wanli, Lang Jingshan, Ding Song and several amateur photographers in Hua Society were exhibited in the 8th and 9th Pegasus Society Exhibition, suggesting that photography as a Western-style art form was accepted and recognized by the art world. *Shanghai Sketch* made a special issue of the 9th Pegasus Society Exhibition in which photography almost covered two pages as same as the Western painting.¹⁹⁸ The first National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1929 in Shanghai also included 227 photographs from the serious amateur photographer.¹⁹⁹ A series of art exhibitions demonstrated how the mainstream art circle in Shanghai recognized and legitimized photography as a new art form, which heralded a new era of photography.

It was the exhibitions held four times a year by the Hua Society in Shanghai that attracted more public attention, promoting photography as a popular art form in the Republican period. From 1928 to 1930, the Hua Society held four exhibitions a year in the offices of the *Eastern Times newspaper*, Shanghai. Nearly fifty participants offered 190 works for this exhibition. Participating photographers, besides the members of Hua Society, included amateur photographers who were businessmen, bankers, media workers, artists, and writers. The exhibitions of the Hua Society welcomed the works from other societies and non-members. The first exhibition displayed the photographs from Japanese amateur photographic society in Shanghai; the second exhibition included the photographs from the Light Society's members such as Liu Bannong and Li Song 李崧 from Hong Kong; Chen Chuanling and Lu Shifu whom both came from Black and White Photographic Society, also exhibited their works in the third and

¹⁹⁸ Photographic works by Lang Jingshan, Zhang Guangyu, Chen Wanli, Ding Song, Wang Dafo were elected in the special issue of *Shanghai Sketch*. *Shanghai Sketch*, no.8, June 9, 1928.

¹⁹⁹ Kris Imants Ercums, "Exhibiting modernity: National art exhibitions in China During the Early Republican Period, 1911-1937" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2014), 109-112.

fourth Exhibition of Hua Society. The photographs with the painterly subjects and soft-focus techniques continued the pictorialism that prevailed in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Europe and America. Hua Society called the exhibition *Shanghai Salon*, which showed the influence of French salon culture. However, photographers still incorporated Chinese aesthetic vocabulary into the new medium. For example, Lang Jingshan photograph *Before the race* (Chinese name: *Shima* 試馬) with Chen Wanli's calligraphy uniquely demonstrates an enduring subject in traditional Chinese painting *horse race* through a new medium (**Fig.3.1**). It received a lot of favorable comments from the visitors.²⁰⁰ The 1928 issue of the second Hua Society Exhibition in *Liangyou* published *Before the race* from Lang Jingshan.

Benefiting from the increased media publicity, the exhibitions of the Hua Society attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors; meanwhile, the exhibitions received recognition by the Shanghai art world. *The China Focus*, the artistic photography magazine, established a special issue for the second exhibition of the Hua Society;²⁰¹ the *Eastern Times newspaper* also specifically introduced significant Hua photographers like Lang Jingshan, Hu Boxiang, and several celebrities related to the exhibitions. According to the statistics in *Shenbao*, more than 10,000 people visited the exhibitions.²⁰² Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵑 (1895-1968), the writer and the editor of *Shenbao*, took charge of an influential column called *Random Talk* (*Ziyoutan* 自由談) in *Shenbao* that offered a free and discursive space for Republican intellectuals to express the opinions and sentiments about politics, culture and art. It is interesting to

²⁰⁰ Qi 旗, "Guan huashe sheyingzhanlanhui ji 觀華社攝影展覽會記 [The notes on visiting Hua Society Exhibition]," *Haiguan huayuan lianhehui yuekan* 海關華員聯合會月刊 [Chinese Customs Officers Union Monthly], 1928, vol.1,no.9, 56-57.

²⁰¹ "Huashe yingzhan zhuanhao 華社影展專號 [Special Issue of the Hua Society]." *The China Focus* 3, no.6 (December 1928).

²⁰² Around 15,000 viewers showed up during the first three days. The figure rose to 30,000 after one more day. "Huashe sheying zhanlanhui zhanqi 華社攝影展覽會展期 [The Duration of Hua Society's Exhibition]," *Shenbao*, March 12, 1928, 4.

note that some reviews of the Hua Society's exhibitions appeared in *Random Talk*. After the first exhibition opened, Zhou wrote a review of it. He selected some representative photographs with an intuitive artist's eye, giving praise to Hu Boxiang's depiction of laborers smelting iron, which was similar to the Russian realist painting *Barge Haulers on the Volga*. He also tried to apply photographic terms to make comments on the photographs like *good composition* (*jiagou* 佳構), *framing* (*qujing* 取景), and *lighting* (*yongguang* 用光).²⁰³ In another article entitled "The First Photographic Lesson" (*Sheying diyike* 攝影第一課), he showed strong interest in taking photographs with his the members of the Hua Society.²⁰⁴ As a well-known literary critic, Zhou's support was crucial to the popularization of art photography in the Republican period.

Some reviews were written by the critics with a fine-arts background, for example, Zheng Manqing 鄭曼青 (1902-1975), who applied his painting knowledge to commenting the photographs in detail, praising Lang Jingshan's *Before The Race* since it "combines the advantages of Chinese and western painting," and the works from Japanese photographer Taketa show the "charm" (*yunwei* 韻味) of art photography.²⁰⁵ Meanwhile, some reviews written by ordinary photographic hobbyists gave readers a glimpse of the prosperous photographic culture. All these reviews basically gave positive evaluations on photographic exhibitions, photographic exhibition as a new form aroused great interest among the public.

²⁰³ Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵬, "Miaoying zhenshang lu 妙影真賞錄 [The records of appreciating art photography]," *Shenbao*, March 11, 1928, 17.

²⁰⁴ Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵬, "Sheying diyike 攝影第一課 [The First Photographic Lesson]," *The China Focus* 3, no.6 (December 1928): 36-37.

²⁰⁵ "Canguan huashe sheying zhanlan zhi ganxiang 參觀華社攝影展覽之感想 [Review of Visiting Hua Society's Exhibition]," *Shenbao*, March 18, 1928, 5.

At almost the same time as the first exhibition of the Hua Society, the China Photographic Society, founded by Lin Zecang, also held the First National Photographic Exhibition (*Quanguo sheying zhanlan dahui* 全國攝影展覽大會) from March 23 to 26, 1928 in Shanghai. With over 800 members, the China Photographic Society's exhibition attracted submissions from all over the country. The Society also held a National Photographic Contest in conjunction with the exhibition. Over 8,000 photographic hobbyists visited the exhibitions, which even the records of previous photographic exhibitions.²⁰⁶ The Second Photographic Exhibition showed 280 works, including the prize-winning photographs of the accompanying contest, and these works were also exhibited in the 1929 Westlake exposition.²⁰⁷

Through the history of photography exhibitions in the Republican period, it is interesting to find that the locations of these exhibitions vary a lot. In general, the venue requirements for a photographic exhibition are not as high as those for a painting exhibition. A rare photograph taken during the First Light Society Exhibition gives us a glimpse of what the exhibition environment looked like. The simply framed photographic works in various sizes were displayed on the walls and temporary showcase, with labels arranged in front (**Fig.3.2**).

Over 300 photographs were exhibited in the three-room teahouse, which means these photos were displayed relatively densely, and the size of the photographs was also limited accordingly.²⁰⁸ The simplicity of the exhibition space and design suggests that the amateur photographic society did not intend to seek commercial sponsorship, as photographic exhibitions performed as an artistic and communicative space for the

²⁰⁶ "China Photo Exhibit," *The China Press* 3, (March 1928): 11.

²⁰⁷ "Photo Exhibit," *The China Press*, May 26, 1929, 5.

²⁰⁸ According to Chen Shen's research, the teahouse *laijing yuxuan* 來今雨軒 consisted of three rooms was built by the board of Central Park in 1915. In 1926, the teahouse extended into seven rooms. Chen Shen, *Guangshe jishi*, 61-82.

photographic hobbyists. The exhibitions of the Light Society began with a campus demonstration of the photographs, then later developed into a large exhibition in a teahouse at Central Park with free admission. Central Park, which was transformed from imperial architecture to a public park in the early Republican period, developed into a public space for holding political assemblies and processions during the May Fourth Movement, and also displaying artworks since the 1910s. The Institute of Antiquity Exhibition (*Guwu chenlie suo* 古物陳列所) that collected antiquities from the Palace often held exhibitions at Central Park.²⁰⁹ Since the 1920s, some painting exhibitions, like The Third Sino-Japanese Joint Painting Exhibition (*Zhongri huihua disanjie lianhe zhanlanhui* 中日繪畫第三屆聯合展覽會) and some private painting exhibitions like Situ Qiao's 司徒喬 (1902-1958) private exhibition had been held at Central Park, which attracted many visitors from the art world.²¹⁰ Central Park as the venue of the Light Society's exhibitions suggests that photography was recognized by the public as a genre of fine art.

The exhibitions of the Hua Society and the first exhibition of the Black and White Photographic Society were all held in the office of the *Eastern Times newspaper*, which shows a close affinity with media. As discussed before, the amateur photographers who were actively engaged in intellectual and artistic circles offered a lot of benefits in terms of the organization and publicity, which enabled the exhibitions to remain as far away from commerce as possible. The combined efforts from amateur photographers and intellectuals in media circles not only legitimated photography as a new art form but also popularized art photography among the general public.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ “Zhongri huihua disanjie lianhe zhanlanhui 中日繪畫第三屆聯合展覽會 [The Third Sino-Japanese Joint Painting Exhibition],” *Shenbao*, April 25, 1924; “Situqiao huazhan 司徒喬畫展 [Painting Exhibition of Situ Qiao],” *Chenbao fukan* 晨報副刊 [The Morning Post Supplement], June 5, 1926, 12.

In contrast with the painting exhibition, the photography exhibition showed a relatively friendly attitude from the very beginning. As we can see from the photograph of the Second Exhibition of the Hua Society, the photographs, mounted on board with labels at the bottom, hung on a large exhibition board (**Fig. 3.3; 3.4**). Mounting onboard offers a simple and lightweight way to replace the glass or wooden frames. The photographs can be attached to the exhibition board easily and densely, which saves the organizers a lot of exhibition space and framing expenses. The simple and inexpensive framing style became a reference for future exhibitions. The China Photographic Society explicitly stated that works displayed at the National Photographic Exhibition would not be framed by the glass.²¹¹

Developing within the growing mature photographic market, photographic exhibitions straddled the line between art and commerce. Some photographic suppliers, studios, or foreign companies that sold photographic equipment were willing to sponsor the exhibitions. The China Photographic Society's National Photographic Exhibitions were held in the Sassoon House where Sassoon & Co. was located.²¹² Sassoon House, built by Sir Victor Sassoon, featured Art Deco and granite facing as part of the Peace Hotel.

According to the news photos, the exhibition ground was designed like a maze, or "Eight-Diagram tactics" (*Baguashi* 八卦式) as the reporter wrote, which means the spaces had been fully utilized for displaying the photographic works (**Fig.3.5**).²¹³ Exhibited in one of the most well-known architecture on Bund, the National

²¹¹ "Disanjie quanguo sheying zhanlanhui 第三屆全國攝影展覽會 [The Third National Photography Exhibition]," *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 5, no.245 (1930): 6.

²¹² "Benhui juxing zhi quanguo sheying zhanlanhui 本會舉行之全國攝影展覽會 [Our Society Held National Photographic Exhibition]," *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 4, no.192 (1929): 6.

²¹³ "Dierjie quanguo sheying zhanlanhui 第二屆全國攝影展覽會 [The Second National Photography Exhibition]," *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 4, no.190 (1929): 1.

Photographic Exhibition naturally attracted the attention of people from all walks of life. The First National Photographic Exhibition attracted 8000 visitors, including prestigious artistic groups such as of the Dawn Art Association (*Chenguang meishuhui* 晨光美術會) and the Shanghai Cartoon Society (*Shanghai manhuashe* 上海漫畫社), college students from local universities, and some Euro-American photographic hobbyists. The First National Photographic Exhibition was more tolerant of commercial sponsorship. Kodak and the photographic supplies companies Chiyo Yoko and Carlowitz & Co. exhibited their products on the exhibition. However, the Second National Photographic Exhibition emphasized that the photographic works on display had no connection with commercial sponsorship, so camera products were not allowed to be displayed at the exhibition. Only the National Photographic Contest was still available for commercial support, for which the photographic suppliers Chiyo Yoko and Kobza Studio in Shanghai also provided framing services, and Kodak and Agfa companies offered prizes for the winners in the contests accompanying by the exhibitions.²¹⁴

With the expansion of photographic exhibitions in the 1930s, the department store became a new site for exhibitions. Pei-Yang Photographic Society opened the photographic exhibition in the photographic section of Chung Yuen Department Store (中原公司) in Tianjin, 1928 (**Fig.3.6**).²¹⁵ The Second and Third Exhibition of the Black and White Photographic Society moved to Dalu Mall (大陸百貨) on Nanking Road,

²¹⁴ “China Photo Exhibit,” *The China Press*, March 12, 1928, 11; “Photo Exhibit,” *The China Press*, May 26, 1929, 5; “Disanjie quanguo sheying zhanlanhui 第三屆全國攝影展覽會 [The Third National Photography Exhibition],” *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 5, no.245 (1930): 6.

²¹⁵ “Beiyang sheyinghui di’erci meishu sheying zhanlan dahui zai zhongyuangongsi guangxuebu zhanlan zhi jingkuang 北洋攝影會第二次美術攝影展覽大會在中原公司光學部展覽之景況 [Pei-Yang Photographic Society opened the photographic exhibition in photographic section of Chung Yuen Department Store],” *Pei-Yang Pictorial* 5, no.204 (1928): 1.

and the Forth Exhibition was held in The Sun Mall (大新公司). Photographic exhibitions in commercial spaces expanded the traditional exhibition practice and reached broader audiences. The shopping mall and art exhibition, both new in the Republican period, were connected within the growing flourishing commercial environment. Modern artists in Shanghai had also been encouraged to explore the possibilities of artistic spaces as a setting for interaction and communication.

In the 1930s, some photographic exhibitions were held in the newly established art museums in the major cities. The Tianjin Municipal Art Museum (*Tianjin shili meishuguan* 天津市立美術館) was founded in 1930, and the first director Yan Zhikai 嚴智開 (1894-1943) who had great interest on photography when he studied in Japan. From 1930 to 1937, the museum held art photography exhibitions each year except 1932, attracting thousands of visitors to learn and communicate about art photography. Besides the annual exhibition, the museum also hosted exhibitions of the Light Society and B&W Photographic Society in 1930 and 1935 respectively.²¹⁶ In 1936, the museum held a private exhibition of Tianjin art photographer Liu Weiyi 劉維義, an exhibition of Japan Guangyang Society, and the Contax Exhibition.²¹⁷ In 1937, the Second National Art Exhibition (Dierjie quanguo meizhan 第二屆全國美展) which included a photographic section, was held in National Art Museum (*Guoli meishu chenlieguan* 國立美術陳列館), Nanjing (**Fig.3.7**).²¹⁸

²¹⁶ “Benshi meishuguan zhuban shanghai heibai yingshe sheying zhanlanhui chupin 本市美術館主辦上海黑白影社攝影展覽會出品[Shanghai Black and White Photographic Society Exhibition in Tianjin Municipal Art Museum],” *The Pei-yang Pictorial News*, December 3, 1935, vol.27, no.1330, 2.

²¹⁷ Ai Shu 艾殊, “Minguo chuqi tianjinshi meishuguan de meishu yingzhan yu meishu sheying wenhua de jiangou 民國初期天津市美術館的美術影展與美術攝影文化的早期建構 [Early Republican Art Photography Exhibition in Tianjin Municipal Art Museum and the early construction of art photographic culture],” *Sichuan daxue xuebao* 四川大學學報 [Journal of Sichuan University], no.2 (2014): 152-160.

²¹⁸ “Jiaoyubu zhubanzhi dierci quanguo meishu zhanlanhui 教育部主辦之第二次全國美術展覽會 [The Second National Art Exhibition Sponsored by the Ministry of Education],” *Libailiu* 禮拜六 [Saturday], no.685 (March-April 1937): 23.

Photography's entry into museums encouraged more audiences to consider the pedagogical functions of photography beyond its aesthetic significance. Museums in the 1930s functioned as not only artistic and cultural spaces but also as educational platforms. The launch of photography exhibitions in museums promoted the legitimation of photography as fine art, and simultaneously, stimulated lively debates on the subjects and intentions of art photography. The critic in *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報) said approvingly that the photographic works from Black and White Photographic Society demonstrated the documentary power of photography, representing the social reality and proletarian life.²¹⁹

3.2 Photography and Mobilization: “Photography Was a Powerful Weapon”

Consistent political events in the Republican era and cultural forces greatly impacted photography, expanding the desire of seeing oneself and the world in the larger frame of expressing the self and developing the nation. As Richard Kent argued, photography was developing into a larger political and cultural quest to forge and assert a national identity during a period of intense upheaval.²²⁰ In the 1930s both serious amateur photographers and photographic hobbyists attempted to reveal the documentary and propaganda potential of photography to depict the turbulent social reality. As an effective and practical medium, photography had been embedded in the cultural and political life of the public.²²¹

²¹⁹ *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報, 1935, December 1, 7-9.

²²⁰ Richard K. Kent, “Early Twentieth-Century Art Photography in China: Adopting, Domesticating, and Embracing the Foreign,” *The Trans-Asia Photography Review*, no. 2 (Spring 2013). Accessed June 1, 2018. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0003.204>

²²¹ Mary Warner Marien, “Art and the age of Mass Media,” in *Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011), 233-259.

Since the mid-1930s, urban Chinese photographers—mostly in Shanghai—initiated the depiction of lower-class people, showing a pro-proletariat attitude under the influence of left-wing culture in the 1930s. Shanghai attracted a number of left-wing writers and artists to engage with the world in a realistic and radical way. 1930s Shanghai became a cradle of left-wing literature, drama, and cinema. In the late 1920s, especially after the schism between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party in 1927, a number of left-wing intellectuals moved to Shanghai. As Laikwan Pang points out, both the first organizing meetings of the Left-wing Writers' League and the Left-wing Dramatists League were held in Gongfei Cafe, and Lu Xun took the lead in many of these steering meetings that shaped the development of left-wing culture at large.²²²

In the 1930s Shanghai, left-wing literature became mainstream, taking the opposite view of modernism and popular fiction like “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies” (*Xin yuanyanghudie pai* 新鴛鴦蝴蝶派). A group of leftist writers criticized the fetishism of capitalism, the huge gap between rich and poor, and the pretentiousness of the bohemian-bourgeois, emphasizing the necessity of revolution and leading the way to revolution. As Mu Shiyong 穆時英 (1912-1940) wrote, “Shanghai. A heaven built on hell!” The blooming metropolitan culture on one hand contributed to the prosperity of urban life; but on the other hand, brought inequality and high crime rates. Some significant writers like Mao Dun, who was not really engaged with the left-wing League, depict the social upheaval in the 1920s and 1930s China.

The left-wing cinema movement of the 1930s offered glimpses of the trends in local visual culture, suggesting a “proletarian cinema movement” in the future. Left-wing filmmakers attempted to deal with issues like romantic relationships, nationalist

²²² Laikwan Pang, “The Collective Subjectivity of Chinese Intellectuals and Their Café Culture in Republican Shanghai,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 24–42.

sentiments, the urban experience, and modernity under the influence of left-wing ideologies of the 1930s. Laikwan Pang argued that “their youth [were] fighting for a utopia, a utopia that they never clearly identified for themselves but that required their most fervent belief and passion to construct.”²²³ *The Highway* (1934), *Scenes of City Life* (1935) and *Street Angel* (1937) all expressed an optimistic view of the nation and called for wider public participation in national salvation.

The left-wing culture of 1930s impacted the development of modern Chinese photography. In the early 1930s, while lots of intellectuals and artists ambiguously straddled a pro-proletariat attitude and aesthetic autonomy, they showed the humanist commitment to a variety of subjects such as refugees fleeing to the major cities, street children, peddlers, rickshaw divers and beggars, all of which were new subjects in Chinese modern art, thus developing a humanist vision. A 1934 photo of Jin Shisheng taken along the Bund shows two refugees standing on the bank, staring at the ships on the Huangpu River (**Fig.3.8**). It foregrounds the helpless figures, dressed shabbily and carrying baskets, against the background of modern factories and buildings on the other side of the river. The stark contrast of destitution vs. prosperity evokes deep sympathy for the refugees. Zhang Guangyu’s photograph “the Humble Urban Dwells and Skyscrapers” (*Ruru shizhongren, weiwei baichilou* 蠕蠕市中人, 巍巍百尺樓) exhibits a direct contrast between the urban lower-class people and the luxurious skyscrapers Shanghai Club building, which was published in 1928 August *The China Focus* (**Fig.3.9**).²²⁴

The street view gradually became a frequent subject. Many street photographs in the 1930s were distinguished by the growing gap between rich and poor, old and new,

²²³ Laikwan Pang, “Introduction,” in *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 1-15.

²²⁴ Zhang Guangyu 張光宇, “Ruru shizhongren, weiwei baichilou 蠕蠕市中人, 巍巍百尺樓 [Humble Urban Dwells and the Skyscrapers],” *The China Focus* 3, no.2 (1928): 15.

tradition and modern, suggesting that China was moving towards a modern era. Zhao Dingming's 趙定明 photograph of Shanghai race course was distinguished by the contrast between the shanty town and high-rise buildings (**Fig.3.10**).²²⁵ Factory workers, machine operators and rickshaw drivers appeared more and more frequently in the lens of urban photographers. Lu Shifu's photograph "Blacksmith" (*Bailian gangtie* 百煉鋼鐵), which was exhibited in the second exhibition of Black and White Photographic Exhibition in 1934, captures the moment when sparks were flying during steel smelting (**Fig.3.11**). The concern about the fate of the working people and urban poor was shown in more and more photographs taken in the 1930s.

Wu Yinxian emphasized more the individuality of photographic subjects. He was the photographer of the left-wing film *Children of Troubled Times*, took several photographs with left-wing influence. Left-wing cinema of the 1930s greatly impacted the composition and subjects of Wu's photographic practices. Wu display a male nude photograph in the first Black and White photographic exhibition, 1930 (**Fig.3.12**). The photograph, with its emphasis on muscle and bodylines, was influenced by Greek art and Renaissance art. Beyond the masculine beauty, the photographer also highlights the strength and power of his male subject. *Power*, the title of this photograph, indicates a relatively ambivalent attitude. But the 1935 photograph named *Roar*, the same as Lu Xun's novel, shows a clearer political tendency (**Fig.3.13**). A half-nude man is roaring, his head slightly raised, and his eyes turned 45 degrees above. The photographer breaks with classical aesthetics through the depiction of the sweat on his chest, and his anxious and painful eyes. This photograph was a reference point for the woodcut artist Li Hua's

²²⁵ Zhang Dingming 趙定明, "Weilai de shanghai paomachang dasha yu pengji demgliangqiguan 未來的上海跑馬場 大廈與棚戶等量齊觀 [Shanghai Future: The Juxtaposition of Shanty Town and High-rise Buildings]," *Modern Sketch*, no. 38 (1937): 11.

李樺 (1907-1995) work *Roar! China* which depicts the struggling body in a more direct way (**Fig.3.14**).

The second and third Black and White Photographic Exhibition in 1934 and 1935 showcased many works of working people, clearly expressing the fact that amateur photographers were no longer content to depict their inner world but utilized their lenses to express the realities of life in all sectors of society. Ye Qianyu's photograph *Sweet Seventeen* has two titles; the Chinese title is *Fisherwoman* (*Yujianu* 漁家女). The photo depicts a young fisherwoman, a proletariat job. The tricky bilingual strategy was applied in many photographs. Shi Zhenhuai's 史震懷 photograph featuring a group of rock carriers also had a bilingual title: *Rock Carriers* in English and *Working Hard For Whom?* (*lulu weishuimang* 碌碌為誰忙) in Chinese, which expresses sympathy for lower-class people; Wu Yinxian's photograph *The Water Girl* (*Jishui Zhinv* 汲水之女) appropriated a classical subject from Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867)'s *The Source*, placing a headscarf on what appears to be a proletarian woman (**Fig.3.15**). A series of ideologically loaded photographs on display pushed art photography into a new field. After Shanghai, these works were also exhibited in Beijing, Tianjin, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Qingdao.

The fourth and the last exhibition of Black and White Photographic Society showed a clearer trend: art photography had declined and photos documenting the social reality increased. The fourth exhibition was held in April 1937, just before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Within the deteriorating situation in China, many amateur photographers leveraged photography to express the sentiments of national salvation. At this moment, members of the society such as Chen Chuanling and Nie Guangdi emphasized photography as a powerful medium of representing social reality and arousing the public sentiment. In the essay "The eight years of Black and

White Photographic Society” (*Banian lai de heibaiyingshe* 八年來的黑白影社), Chen Chuanling argues that photography was closely related with national salvation:

If we do not forget, 24 days after the closing of the first photographic exhibition in 1932, the bloody atrocities on the Huangpu River lasted for more than 40 days (Shanghai Incident). With the deteriorating crisis, September 18 Incident in 1931 and Shanghai Incident in 1932 led to the fall of four provinces and the Songhu Armistice Agreement also lapsed. The second Black and White Photographic Exhibition was aborted in the midst of unrest and turmoil... This is a bloody lesson that has taught us the close relationship between photography at this stage and the fate of the entire nation... Art is a reflection of reality, and real art is realism, which is the highest law of all arts... Our photography society is qualitatively different from the society in 1935 and 1934... We know our responsibility in Chinese photography is to make this black and white art (photography) be Chinese national art. Therefore, we must make photography quite successful in both quality and quantity and has prestige in the international stage.²²⁶

The appeal of reflecting reality was rising in the mid-1930s among artists and intellectuals. The photographic critic Xu Xu 徐訏 argued that the camera was the best medium for depicting reality. He also suggested that news photographers in China

²²⁶ Chen Chuanling 陳傳霖, “Banianlai de heibaiyingshe 八年來的黑白影社 [Eight Years of Black and White Photographic Society],” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 464-469.

should be divided according to their ideology, left- and right-wing.²²⁷ The photographer who best reflects the proletarian tendency is undoubtedly Sha Fei 沙飛 (1912-1950). Before he became the most prestigious war photographer of the Sino-Japanese War, he was a telegraph operator and a member of the Black and White Photographic Society. Sha Fei had been obsessed with photography since the 1920s, buying his first camera for his honeymoon.

Like most amateur photographers, Sha Fei began with mainstream pictorialism. In the third Black and White Exhibition, 1935, Sha Fei showed his famous pictorial photography: *The Song of Two Fishermen* (Chinese title: *Yuguangqu* 漁光曲), depicting the tranquility of the river landscape in Southern China. Between 1935 to 1937, he became an outstanding urban street photographer and took many photos of railroad workers, waggoneers, and beggars in Shanghai. The images of lower-class people highlight the hardships of poor city dwellers, indicating the inequality of society that was closely related to left-wing thoughts and emerging proletarian revolutionary ideas. In his photo of a rickshaw driver, he used an overlooked perspective to show the scene of a humble driver squatting on the street eating his lunch (**Fig.3.16**). The same perspective was also applied to the depiction of a barefoot street vendor. A photo called *Crying for Life* (*Shengming de nahan* 生命的吶喊) portrays a blind beggar with a slim walking stick squatting alone on the road (**Fig.3.17**). The frontal view of his blind eyes is shocking, which shows the sympathy and pity for people living in misery. The photo *Begging Not Permitted* directly criticizes the degenerate bureaucracy by representing a policeman in the Republican government driving a beggar away (**Fig.3.18**). In the fourth Black and White exhibition, 1937, he exhibited *Diligent and thrifty granny*

²²⁷ Xu Xu 徐訐, "Zhaoxiang de meiyuzhen 照相的美与真 [The Beauty and Truth of Photography]," *Shaying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 12, no.43 (November 1936): 4-6.

(Chinese name: *Qinjian* 勤儉), depicting an ordinary village woman mending old clothes (**Fig.3.19**). He praised the good qualities of diligence and thriftiness among ordinary people, a clear manifestation of his pro-proletariat attitude. These ideologically loaded photographs with an obvious left-wing stance lead the audiences to understand the photographic works in a critical way rather than treat them as amateur art. Photography was closely related to the turbulent society. The generation of artists and photographers had to make a choice: art for art or art for life.

Sha Fei's choice was made in 1936, the crucial watershed year of his life and the nation. He became famous for taking Lu Xun's photographs in the second National Woodcut Art Exhibition and Lu Xun's funeral just 11 days after the exhibition.²²⁸ In the series of news reports about Lu Xun, he acted as a professional news photographer. He captured the moment when Lu Xun was talking with the young woodcut artists in a friendly atmosphere, even taking a photograph of Lu Xun laughing, which was rarely seen. After the exhibition, he did not send these photographs to Lu Xun as a gift; instead, he asked for a copyright fee as a professional news photographer, although he was not employed by any news agency.²²⁹ At the funeral of Lu Xun, he took a series of demonstration photographs, displaying his strong news sensibility on the political events within the turbulent environment. The successful news report caused a sensation and his lasting enthusiasm for photography encouraged him to pursue it as a lifelong career.

Sha Fei's shift from an amateur to a professional news photographer suggests that a prevalent turn occurred in the middle of the 1930s. Photography had been given

²²⁸ Cai Tao 蔡濤, "Luxun zangli zhong de shafei yu situqiao—jianlun zhanqian zhongguo xiandai yishu de meijie jingzheng xianxiang 魯迅葬禮中的沙飛和司徒喬—兼論戰前中國現代藝術的媒介競爭現象 [Sha Fei and Situ Qiao in Lu Xun's Funeral-The Media Competition of Chinese Modern Art Before the Sino-Japanese War]," *Wenyi lilun yu piping* 文藝理論與批評 [Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art], no.9 (September 2017), 126-143.

²²⁹ Ibid.

too many social implications. Sha Fei undoubtedly made the boldest effort in revolutionizing the form and style of photography. In December 1936, Sha Fei wrote an introduction “Before the Exhibition” (*Xiezai zhanchu zhiqian* 寫在展出之前) for his exhibition in Guangzhou, arguing that photography was a “one of the most powerful weapons to reveal reality (暴露現實的一種最有力的武器)”:

I have been thinking that photography is a powerful weapon to reveal the reality and I have always desired to take advantage of that to depict the real world...Photography is one of the fine-art forms, but many people still treat it as a pastime. Essentially, they ignore the social meanings of this medium, allowing photography to be used by the pretentious bourgeoisie for representing beauty and ignoring reality, what a terrible thing! In reality, lots of people are suffering from massacres, rape, slavery. The inequality of society is the shame of humankind, and the responsibility of art is to help human beings to understand themselves, reform society, and restore themselves. Therefore, artists, especially photographers, should not be captive in utopia and carried away with a sense of self, but must investigate every class of society and search for the real materials.²³⁰

The exhibition of 114 pieces works identifies the transformation of Sha Fei’s photographic career. In his early career during the 1920s and early 1930s, he depicted the poetic landscape of Nan’ao island in Guangdong with pictorialist skills. Since the mid-1930s, he switched his pictorialist vocabulary to that of the city and its crises. The

²³⁰ Sha Fei 沙飛, “Xiezai zhanchu zhiqian 寫在展出之前 [Before the Exhibition],” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 400-401.

poor living in Shanghai taken from 1935 to 1936 show his ambitions to discover the documentary function of photography. After his exhibitions in Guangzhou and Guilin in 1936, some critics spoke highly of his works. Ma Zongrong 馬宗融 argued that we should no longer evaluate his works with old standards, “His works have value beyond art itself...His choice is of great significance: on the one hand, he depicted the everyday life during the social turmoil, and express the sufferings of the masses; on the other hand, he raised the national sentiment among the people.”²³¹

In the book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag argues, “Just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder—a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time.” The Camera has been seen as a metaphorical weapon in documentary photography and photojournalism, however, beyond semiotic violence that “turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed”, Sha Fei intended to employ photography as a tool to mobilize the masses.²³² The argument “photography as a weapon” had a profound influence on left-wing photography, leading a new direction of representing proletarian life and social reality. Undoubtedly, Sha Fei used a radical way to reveal the documentary side of photography and arose public sentiment by criticizing the inequality of society and degeneracy of the Nationalist government.

Photography magazines in the Republican period had always been a dynamic and experimental space for amateur photographers. Despite the high dependence on commercial sponsorship, many photographic magazines published works with nationalist sentiments.²³³ *Pictorial Weekly* was in a transition in the mid-1930s. The

²³¹ Ma Zongrong 馬宗融, “Mianqiang jiju hua 勉強幾句話 [Barely a few words],” in *zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue wenxuan*, 418-419.

²³² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2005), 10.

²³³ It is not hard to see photographic culture in the Republican era was highly dependent on the commercial advertisements by photographic suppliers. *Chenfeng* and *Huachang Photographic Monthly* were sponsored by the

cover photograph of the 1935 issue featured a view of modern western-style architecture taken from a tourist ship; in 1936, the magazine launched a special issue of travel in Northern China. The cover photographs taken by Lin Zecang, show a soldier standing in the Great Wall and a view of the wall from the beacon tower. The Great Wall, which originally built as a means of preventing incursions from barbarian nomads, now became a national symbol of strength and independence. The editorial remark of *Flying Eagle* expressed the hope that China could produce its own equipment and supplies. *Flying Eagle* had never published any advertisements for Japanese products. Instead, they strongly promoted Chinese photographic products in magazines. The ads of Chinese products like *Sanjiaopai* (三角牌) film, and Qian Jinghua's panoramic cameras were frequently published in *Flying Eagle*. The first issue of the editor's remarks conveyed strong concern on the development of the photographic industry in China:

Improving photographic equipment was still a long way off in industrially backward China. But the development of the photographic industry depends on everyone's research and efforts. The prosperity of the European and American photographic industry is not accidental. Photography is an art form associated with emerging science, which was developed only in these decades. Ten years ago, Japanese photographic materials still needed to be supplied by European and American countries. In recent years, not only some simple equipment can be produced by itself, but also film can be produced by itself, and it has been circulated in the

photographic supply *Huachang Camera Shop* (華昌照相材料行) in 1933 and 1935 respectively. *Changhong* was published by *Yichang Camera Shop* (宜昌照相材料行) in 1935. One of the most sophisticated photographic magazines *Feiyang* was under the financial support of *Guanglong Camera Shop* (冠龍照相材料行).

market. The quality of the products is still not mentioned, but the spirit of this endeavor is expected to be studied by domestic researchers and manufacturers.²³⁴

Increasingly, the photographers consciously took advantage of cameras to arouse the patriotic enthusiasm in the 1930s. The promotion of “art” that related to aesthetic enlightenment” and “Chinese-ness” in terms of photography was consistent with the “Dual Variation of Enlightenment and Nationalism” proposed by Li Zehou in 1987.²³⁵ In the 1930s, photography remains significant by its historical role as a tool of documentation, one the one hand, on the other, of propaganda to create imagined communities. The great impact of photography on social reality and political moments made unification possible.²³⁶ The 1930s witnessed the birth of photojournalism. Photography became the most effective art form and propaganda tool with the rise of social realism in the 1930s.²³⁷ Within the deteriorating situation in mid-1930s China, many amateur photographers leveraged photography to express the sentiments of national salvation. Through a series of photographic practices in the 1930s, some new subjects such as pain, death, and suffering of ordinary people and working-class extended the boundaries of photographic expression and enriched the artistic vocabulary of modern Chinese art.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a series of photographic exhibitions were held in major cities, which not only displayed the works of amateur photographers but also expanded

²³⁴ Jin Shisheng 金石聲, “Fakanci 發刊詞 [foreword to a new periodical],” *Feiyang*, no.1 (January 1936): 5.

²³⁵ Li Zehou, “The Dual Variation of Enlightenment and Nationalism: (Excerpt),” *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, vol. 31, 1999, issue 2, 40-43.

²³⁶ Benedict Anderson, “Patriotism and Racism,” in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 141-154.

²³⁷ Zhou Dengyan 周鄧燕, “xinwensheying: cong wenhua shangpin dao zhanshi dongyuan gongju (1931-1945) 新聞攝影: 從文化商品到戰時動員工具(1931-1945) [News Photography: From Cultural Commodities to War Mobilization Tools],” *Wenyi lilun yu piping* 文藝理論與批評 [Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art], no.3 (March 2018): 151-160.

public understanding of photography as a new art form. The amateur photographers who were new intellectuals in the cities promoted the democratization of the images by establishing the connection between the consumer market and the art world. In the mid to late 1930s, under the impact of the national crisis, amateur photographers used their culture and social influence for extensive social mobilization, transforming the amateur activities into social practices in public spaces. The tension between aesthetics and nationalism allowed amateur photography to gradually come under the system of the nationalist narrative.

Chapter 4: Portable Landscapes: Urban Spectacles, Leisure Travel and Representing the Nation

Introduction

Sightseeing and photography were naturally connected when portable cameras came to China. The rush of hand camera and the “effortlessness” of photo-making allowed more hobbyists and amateurs to take snapshots during their short excursions and long-distance journeys. The rise of the new middle classes, a fast-growing transportation, and relatively peaceful prewar environment boosted tourism in the Republican period. Travel underwent a transformation from an elite pastime to a modern leisure activity in the Republican period. The popularity of hand cameras exactly met the demands of producing a great number of images in any places and time. Beyond leisure travel to scenic spots, an increasing number of Chinese intellectuals and artists promoted a trend of nationwide tours to explore the new cultural landscape of Republican China. The simplicity and portability of the Kodak camera also benefited greatly for the ethnographic research. A lot of photographs featuring everyday lived experience of the indigenous people were recorded.

In modern era, photography essentially offered a new “way of seeing” and traveling with a camera in hand had the potential to alter one’s view and understanding of the travel experience. The great popularity of the portable camera stimulated the desire to preserve private moments during trips. In contrast to the canon of travel photographs, vernacular tourist photographs have attracted limited attention from scholarship. Through a review of private travel photographs, it is interesting to find a different version to tell the story of tourism in the Republican period.

4.1 Snapshot and the Moments of Urban Life

The photographs taken by hand camera were known as “snapshots” which was adopted from the hunting term referring to shoot spontaneously.²³⁸ The unpretentious images, which was called as “boring pictures” by Geoffrey Batchen, show a direct and specific response to the environment.²³⁹ Hand cameras with roll film greatly enhanced photographers’ mobility. They occupied less space, so photographers could easily carry them outdoors, and roll film eliminated the need to insert plates after clicking the shutter every time. Additionally, the fast focus of hand cameras and the many lenses available for the users made getting the perfect shot easier. All these advantages contributed to the popularity of instant photographs or snapshots. Alfred Horsley Hinton wrote in 1893 about hand cameras: “If used intelligently and with proper motive with definite aim and purpose, then should be a future for hand camera work not yet imagined.”²⁴⁰

Hand cameras become the favorite among both serious amateurs and ordinary hobbyists in the Republican period. Since the 1930s, amateur photographers such as Chen Chuanlin, Wang Laosheng and Lu Shifu have been writing about the superiority of hand cameras and advocating the capture of the moments in the real world. A series of instructive essays written by advanced photographers about using a *small box camera* (*xiao jingxiang* 小鏡箱) appeared in photographic publications. Chen Chuanling, the founding member of the Black and White Photographic Society and one of the earliest Leica photographers in China, introduced and promoted the use of hand cameras such as Agfa Ansco Memo, Leica, Zeise Contax, Kodak Pupille, and Rodenstock. He declared that the portability of the camera and affordability of the film

²³⁸ Christopher Green, *Seizing the Light*, 173.

²³⁹ Geoffrey Batchen, “Snapshots,” *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 121-42.

²⁴⁰ Alfred Horsley Hinton, “The Status of Hand-Camera Work. Part II,” *American Photography*, (April 1893): 279-280.

were the main advantages. Hand cameras using roll film are suitable for taking instant photographs, and the inexpensive film allows the photographers to take many shots and choose the best one.²⁴¹ Wang Laosheng 王勞生 (1908-1961) wrote a series of articles in the magazine *Flying Eagle* which were characterized by strong technicality, aiming to offer practical knowledge to amateur photographers.²⁴²

Lu Shifu's article focused on the technical perspectives of different brands of hand cameras, such as body design, shutter speed, and operability.²⁴³ He criticized the old-fashioned and conventional expressions in fine art photography, arguing that the photographer should not be obsessed with pleasing the connoisseur and neglect the real-world subjects. In his article entitled "My Opinion on Art Photography" (*wode yishu sheying guan* 我的藝術攝影觀), he criticized that some pictorialist photographers who tended to borrow some motifs from traditional paintings and depict landscape with painterly effect:

The subject of the landscape was the favorite subject among the audience, but it is not good as the depiction of lively emotions in life. For example, the photographer juxtaposed an old tree surrounded by clouds and haze with several cottages, which is indeed commendable, but if the photographer placed an elderly person by the tree, or the

²⁴¹ Chen Chuanling, "Xiaojingxiang shiyan tan 小鏡箱實驗談 [Talk on hand camera]," *Heibai yingji* 黑白影集 [Black and White Photo Album], no.1 (1934): 96-99.

²⁴² Wang Laosheng 王勞生, "Xiaojingxiang de texing yu xiaoyong 小鏡箱的特性與效用 [The characters and functions of the hand camera]," *Feiyang* 飛鷹 [Flying Eagle], no.5 (1936), 36-39; no.6, 33-34; no.7, 38; no.8, 23-24.

²⁴³ Lu Shifu 盧施福, "Lun laika yu kangtaishi de xiaojingxiang 論徠卡與康泰時的小鏡箱 [Comparison between Leica and Contax]," *Heibai yingji* 黑白影集 [Black and White Photo Album], no.1 (1934): 102-107.

cooking smoke around the cottage curls up, the audience would feel touching with the lively scene.²⁴⁴

The immediacy and simplicity that hand cameras brought fundamentally changed how photographers view and approach the photographic subjects. The ever-changing, individual perspective fits with the emerging urban space of the early twentieth century. Portable hand cameras with sensitive film and faster shutter speeds enable photographers, both professional and amateur, to make expressive records of urban life. Architectural historian M. Christine Boyer identifies the transformation of urban life in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century from a model interpreted through the logic of the picture frame to “a series of fleeting impressions and momentary encounters.”²⁴⁵ By the 1930s, Chinese city dwells experienced a great shock triggered by a strong sense that these “impressions and encounters” conditioned by the technological spectacle in the cities.

The early twentieth century witnessed Shanghai’s development into a bustling metropolis, as well as the great revolution of the photographic technology. Photography was employed to participate in the growth and development of modern cities in the twentieth century. The Republican photographers performed much like the modern writers and poets, finding their own way to deal with the new corporeal/sensory experience in modern life.²⁴⁶ Compared with the urban modernist writings in the 1930s,

²⁴⁴ Lu Shifu 盧施福, “Wode yishu sheying guan 我的藝術攝影觀 [The understanding of art photography],” *Sheying zhoukan* 攝影週刊 [Photographic Weekly], no.3 (1936): 17-18.

²⁴⁵ M. Christine Boyer, “City Images and Representation Forms,” in *The City of Collective Memory Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 31-70.

²⁴⁶ Yingjin Zhang’s article *The Texture of the Metropolis: Modernist Inscriptions of Shanghai in the 1930s* focuses on the new corporeal/sensory experience in Shanghai through the examination of the texts of Liu Na’ou 刘呐鸥 (1900-1940), Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905-2003), Mu Shiying and Hei Ying 黑嬰 (1915-1992). He explored how Shanghai, as an emerging metropolis, is “produced” through imaginative writings and narrative devices. See Yingjin Zhang, “The Texture of the Metropolis: Modernist Inscriptions of Shanghai in the 1930s,” *Modern Chinese Literature* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 11-30.

urban photographers not only explored the hustle of metropolitan life but also showed a deep humanistic concern on urban development. Meanwhile, the modernist photographic movement in Europe and America between the wars also encouraged the Chinese urban photographers to represent the metropolis by reinventing the modernist vocabulary.

Shanghai was a metropolis where multiple modernities co-existed within a diverse context. Before 1937, the semi-colonial Shanghai offered Chinese intellectuals a diverse and dynamic cultural environment, the intellectuals were willing to adopt Europe-American or Japanese ideas. So did the amateur urban photographers who mainly consisted of new middle classes in Shanghai. They embraced and adapted certain elements from European and American photographic modernism to represent their changing urban environment.²⁴⁷ Shanghai became a center where new ideas and technologies converged at an international level, and meanwhile it also developed an alternative version of modernity that negotiated between tradition and “modern”.

Some writers in Shanghai such as Mao Dun, Liu Na’ou 劉呐鷗 (1900-1940), Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905-2003), Mu Shiying, and Hei Ying 黑嬰 (1915-1992), started to describe the bustling metropolitan environment, making the response to the emerging new urban culture. In 1926, Liu Na’ou wrote a letter to Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905-1950):

To us moderns, Romance cannot but be distant.... The street cars are too noisy, the sky that was once blue is blackened by factory soot, and the songs of the skylarks are mute. Muses, their harp strings broken, have

²⁴⁷ Shu-Mei Shih, “Introduction: The Global and Local Terms of Chinese Modernism,” in *The Lure of the Modern*, 1-45.

flown away to who knows where. Does this mean that there is no beauty in modern life? No, there is, except its form has changed. We don't have Romance, no trumpets sounding from castles, but we have thrill and carnal intoxication. This is what I mean by modernism (*jindaizhuyi* 近代主義).²⁴⁸

The modernist movement in the field of literature led by the group “New Perceptionists” that consisted of Liu Na’ou, Shi Zhecun and Mu Shiying. Mu Shiying showed a remarkable visual sensibility in his novel “Shanghai fox-trot” (*shanghai hubuwu* 上海狐步舞), depicting the glittering lights of the skyline, the sounds and colors on the street, and the big parties in the dancing halls:

Shanghai. A heaven built on hell!

West Shanghai, bright moon climbing the sky, illuminating the wasted sprawl. Ashen sprawl, blanketed with silver-gray moonlight, then inlaid with deep gray tree shadows and heaps of village shadows.

NEON LIGHT reaches colored fingers writing large words in the blue ink of night's void. An English gentleman stands there, wearing coattails, carrying a cane under his arm, walking with a lively stride. Written underneath his feet: “JOHNNY WALKER STILL GOING STRONG.” At the roadside the real-estate utopia of a small grass lot, above it a Chesterfield-smoking American looks on as if to say, “What

²⁴⁸ Liu Na’ou, letter to Dai Wangshu, November 10, 1926, collected in Kong Lingjing, ed., *Letters of Modern Chinese Writers (Xiandai Zhongguo zuojia shuxin)* (Hong Kong: Yixin shudian, 1971), 266–267. See Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*, 262.

a shame this lilliputian utopia; is that big lot too small for me to put my foot down in?"²⁴⁹

The new sensations of the city life that was closely associated with sounds, lights, colors, and motion, inspired the writers to explore vitality and diversity of the city. A visual turn, which had been inscribed by modernist writings in the 1930s, continued to be represented by several local urban photographers who took advantage of hand camera's innovations in an attempt to capture the rapidly changing spectacle of Shanghai.²⁵⁰ Beyond the sounds of traffic, various street scenes and the hustle of metropolitan life, urban photographers explored a variety of subjects ranging from the architecture of the Bund to the bombed ruins after the Battle of Shanghai in 1932.

A group of local urban photographers responded creatively to the exciting movements in modernist photography in Europe between the wars by deploying a new perspective on Shanghai's architecture. The Bund was not only a site where colonial power was exercised and various colonizers' architectural styles were exhibited, but also a space where diverse cultures mingled and tension between the motion and stillness, old and new, tradition and modern was in full view.²⁵¹ The numerous construction projects of the time inspired urban photographers to reveal the complexity, establishing a visual history of urban expansion. Through Jin Shisheng's camera, the Customs House with its huge clock became an allegory for the fast-moving modern age and changing consciousness in a growing metropolis (**Fig.4.1**); he took several

²⁴⁹ Sean Macdonald, "The Shanghai Foxtrot (a Fragment) by Mu Shiyong: Introduction," *Modernism/Modernity* 11, no. 4, (January 5, 2005): 797–807.

²⁵⁰ Barbara Mittler, "Imagined Communities Divided: Reading Visual Regimes in Shanghai's Newspaper Advertising (1860s-1910s)," in *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Life and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, 267-377.

²⁵¹ Edward Denison, "Shanghai: multiple modernities' exemplar," in *Architecture and the Landscape of Modernity in China before 1949* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 257-291. Also see A. F. Jones, "Portable Monuments: Architectural Photography and the 'Forms' of Empire in Modern China," *Positions: Asia Critique* 18, no. 3 (2010): 599-631.

photographs of the Broadway Mansions in the 1930s. Except for 1934 photograph, he also took photos in 1935, 1936 and later 1947. He may have climbed the bridge or even lain prone on the flatbed of a truck, capturing the fleeting images from the distorted perspective (**Fig.4.2**). Deploying various perspectives to represent the building, Jin exhibited a dynamic metropolitan environment where the ever-changing Chinese modernity emerged and developed.²⁵² Artists cultivated a “new vision” that offered perspectives for seeing the world anew and reshaped the perception of photography. Their disorienting dramatic viewpoints communicated the dynamism of the modern world and characterized a modernist imagery for a technologically developed Europe during that time.²⁵³

Chen Chuanling, who drew much influence from Euro-American straight photography, highlighted the precision of the HSBC Building (also called the Municipal Government Building) in Neoclassical style, and the lines and structure of Park Hotel that was designed by Czech architect László Hudec (1893-1958). The photographs representing the high-rise buildings in Shanghai shared the similarity with Alfred Stieglitz’s New York City imagery in the 1930s (**Fig.4.3**). The Western-style architecture and growing skyscrapers symbolized an increasingly mechanical and industrialized metropolis before the Sino-Japanese war. Urban photographers brought entirely new experiences to their audiences in the 1930s.

Photography, the essence of arresting the fleeting moment in modern time, played a significant role in imaging Shanghai in the motion. Photographs of the Grand Theatre, department stores, the shimmering neon lights, motion, color, sound, all the sensory visual spectacles contribute to the “shock experience” proposed by Walter

²⁵² Sarah E. Fraser, “The Importance of Home: Shanghai and Darmstadt,” in *Chenji: Jin Shisheng yu xiandai zhongguo sheying*, 525–539.

²⁵³ Andrés Mario Zervigón, “The Weimar Era and Photo-consciousness, 1919–1932,” in *Photography and Germany* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 83–119.

Benjamin in his study of Charles Baudelaire.²⁵⁴ Ao Enhong specialized in capturing the sensory experiences in a metropolitan cultural environment. He represented the Grand Theatre with an emphasis on the lines of the architecture from a dramatic diagonal (**Fig.4.4**). In the 1930s, the growing number of theaters in the city had developed into colorful symbols of urban life. Going to the cinema became a new pastime for urbanities. In 1931, *The Young Companion* devoted a full-page spread to photographs of cinemas in Shanghai taken by the film maker Hu Jinkang 胡晉康.²⁵⁵ The Grand Theatre, designed by Czech architect László Hudec and opened in 1933, became a new favorite subject of urban photographers. Jin Shisheng also took a night scene photograph showing *The World Moves On*—a movie title announced on the façade of Grand Theatre.²⁵⁶

The new technologies of lighting illuminated nightlife like never before. Consumption, together with leisure activities, had been absorbed into the texture of the everyday lives of urban people. Jin Shisheng took some photos representing how urban people were playing the lottery, displaying the unique urban culture in Shanghai (**Fig.4.5.1;4.5.2**). Under the shimmering neon light, the crowd moves back and forth. Some people's faces show anxiety or excitement. One slogan read: "If you play the lottery today, maybe tomorrow you will become a man of means." Together these places of leisure and entertainment that sprang up in the foreign concessions became

²⁵⁴ The modern experience was described by Benjamin using the German word *Erlebnis*, which is translated as "shock experience". Baudelaire's poetry not only recorded the fleeting, transient, ephemeral images but also attempted to respond to the changes. See Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Selected Writings, iv: 1935-1938*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), 313-355. Also see Scott McCracken, "Imagining the Modernist City," in *the Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, edited by Peter Brooker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 644.

²⁵⁵ Hu Jinkang 胡晉康, "Shanghai de yingxiyuan: Hongkou daxiyuan 上海的影戲院: 虹口大戲院 [Shanghai Cinema: Hongkou Cinema]," *Liangyou*, no.62 (1931): 33.

²⁵⁶ As Robert Silberman analyzes Jin Shisheng's 1934 image Grand Theatre, *The World Moves On*—a movie title announced on the façade of the movie theater—was the best summary of Shanghai in the 1930s. Robert Silberman, "Introduction," in *Chenji: Jin Shisheng yu xiandai zhongguo sheying*, 20-30.

central sites of Shanghai's urban culture, and they in turn served the frequent subjects to image production and literary works.

Some new subjects, such as city ruins and death appeared in the photographs taken by local urban photographers. Jin Shisheng had taken several shots of the rubble brought about by an airstrike during the Battle of Shanghai in 1932. Employing the techniques of pictorialism, Jin depicted the vastness of destruction within a traditionally structured frame (**Fig.4.6**). Melancholy and poetic, the dramatic view of clouds of smoke that partly obscured the buildings emphasizes the devastating power of bombing. The apocalyptic vision presages the breakout of a full-scale war between China and Japan five years later.

Almost in the same period, a growing number of photographs of metropolises such as Paris, Berlin and New York were taken by European and American photographers. In the US, Alfred Stieglitz's New York photographs exhibit the complexity of a growing metropolis, conveying the tensions and energies in American society early in the Great Depression.²⁵⁷ The modernist movements in Europe, such as *New Objectivity* (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) and *New Vision* (*Neue Vision*), essentially represent a new way of seeing the increasingly technologically developed metropolis between the two World Wars.²⁵⁸ The pioneer of New Objectivity movement German photographer Albert Renger Patzsch (1897-1966) published the book *Die Welt ist schön* (*The world is beautiful*) in 1928. The one hundred photographs in the book embody an objective and modernized way of looking the industrialized and mechanic world, indicating the tendencies of rationalization and alienation. German artist Karl

²⁵⁷ Maria Morris Hambourg, "From 291 to the Museum of Modern Art: Photography in New York, 1910-1937," in *The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 3-63.

²⁵⁸ Christopher Phillips, "Resurrecting Vision: European Photography Between the World Wars," in *The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 65-108.

Blossfeld's (1865-1932) photographs, like *Adiantum Pedatum*, display the tactile qualities and intricate forms of the plants. These black-and-white close-ups show the great strength of the natural world (**Fig.4.7**). The Hungarian artist and Bauhaus school member László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) claimed that photography and other modern technology offered new and unfamiliar experiences, which produced completely new relationships in the world beyond simple reproduction.²⁵⁹ His 1928 photograph of Berlin Radio Tower achieves an abstract quality with his experimental perspective, which encourages the audience to view the city in a completely new way (**Fig.4.8**). Besides the movements of New Objectivity and New Vision, Russian Constructivists such as Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956), who employed the bold formalistic visual language to change the human perception of the world, inspired Chinese artists to reveal the aesthetic of the ordinary objects.²⁶⁰

Despite the pursuit of formal aesthetics, photographic modernism in Europe-American showed a critical attitude toward the tumultuous social and political upheavals between the world wars. Alfred Stieglitz's urban imagery portrays the alienation of modern life, showing ambivalence about the ever-growing metropolis. He recognized the way cities brought confusion and disorder to people and encouraged audiences to rethink urbanization.²⁶¹ The European photographers criticized more about the social issues. "A cracking age," as Ernst Bloch described the period of Germany's Weimar Republic, "in decay and in labor at the same time".²⁶²

²⁵⁹ László Moholy-Nagy, "Produktion-Reproduktion," *De Stijl*, no. 5 (1922), 98–100.

²⁶⁰ Paul W. Ricketts, "Kaleidoscopic Modernisms: Montage Aesthetics in Shanghai and Tokyo Pictorials of the 1920s and 1930s," in *Liangyou, Kaleidoscopic Modernity and the Shanghai Global Metropolis, 1926-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 17-44.

²⁶¹ Celeste Connor, "The City," in *Democratic Visions: Art and Theory of the Stieglitz Circle, 1924-1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 141-194.

²⁶² Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 1–3.

The Euro-American photographers in the 1920s and 1930s recorded the ambivalence about the city. They recognized that cities stripped people of their individuality and identity, emphasizing the alienation and detachment in urban life. Meanwhile, Chinese urban photographers were enthusiastic about celebrating the blossoming of the metropolitan culture, inviting viewers to enjoy the urban spectacle.²⁶³ The growing metropolis in fact, became the symbol of an increasingly modernized nation. The celebration of modernization could also be found in the photographs of showing the industrial advancement in other Chinese cities. For example, Jin Shisheng's photographs in Qingdao in the early 1930s captured the railroad, power station, and shipyard in the harbor, exhibiting the flourishing industry and ongoing modernization (Fig.4.9).

Although Shanghai became a bustling metropolitan city that compared favorably with Paris, Berlin, New York in the 1920s and 1930s, could it be called a modernist city? Scott McCracken argues that the way of imagining the city defines the essence of the city. The distinction between a modern city and a modernist city lies in the difference between the historical city of the industrial age and the ways in which that city was imagined.²⁶⁴

There is no standard for the definition of “modernist.” What are the standards of a modernist city, besides the modernized infrastructure? Urban photographers attempted to use a new approach beyond colonial discourse and pictorialist expression, representing the texture of bustling metropolitan city life and the inevitable tension between motion and stillness, new and old, modernity and tradition. Despite their admiration of and adaptation to European modernism in urban imagery, urban photographers took a distinctive approach to modernism. European-American

²⁶³ Robert Silberman, “Introduction,” in *Chenji: Jin Shisheng yu xiandai zhongguo sheying*, 20-30.

²⁶⁴ Scott McCracken, “Imagining the Modernist City,” in *the Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, 637-654.

modernism emphasized the alienation and detachment in urban life, but Chinese modernism embraced the energy of the city.

4.2 Hand Camera and the Rise of Leisure Travel

The hand camera met the natural desire to record what we have seen. Eastman referred to the Kodak as a photographic notebook as a record of fugitive experiences in a lifetime.²⁶⁵ The snapshots of everyday travel experience can be seen as a cultural artifact, and seemingly ordinary photographs of the private histories of amateur photographers essentially became a crucial part of modern photographic practice. Beyond the documentation of the historical events, hand cameras and leisure travel brought everyday images into the history of photography. Taking outdoor shooting became more prevalent among the middle classes. In early twentieth-century Europe and America, the popularity of hand cameras and roll film was rising within the fascination with outdoor leisure activities.²⁶⁶ Travel provides encounters with authentic experience deemed absent in the middle-class life. Therefore, more and more European-American tourists were keen to look for a civilization that was not ruined by industrialization and modernization. The remnants of the ruins had been turned into objects for nostalgic visitors to take photographs.²⁶⁷ A 1931 Kodak advertisement juxtaposed a photograph of the Heaven Temple in Beijing that became a tourist attraction in Republican period and a Kodak Brownie, suggesting the close relationship between cameras and sightseeing (**Fig.4.10**). The popularity of the camera met with the

²⁶⁵ George Eastman, "The Kodak Manual," manuscript, George Eastman House Library, Rochester, N.Y.

²⁶⁶ Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 37.

²⁶⁷ Peter D. Osborne, "Paradox Amusements: tourism and the Modern Image," in *Traveling Light: Photography, Travel, and Visual Culture* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), 70-78.

craze for travel in Republican China. As Susan Sontag noted: “It seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along...Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs...Most tourists feel compelled to put a camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable they encounter.”²⁶⁸ The invention of hand camera affected the ways of seeing and further altered society’s sense of how time and space were visually represented.²⁶⁹

With the introduction of hand cameras, leisure travel enjoyed great popularity among the new middle class in the 1930s. It is not difficult to find that traveling with hand cameras had become a new way of seeing the new nation and modern world. The privilege of traveling was also transferred from the elite and intellectual circle to more urbanites who had more leisure time than ever before. Travel in the Republican period was transforming from the privileges of the elite to a common leisure activity hobby.

The rise of the new middle classes in the cities, expanding transportation infrastructure, and relatively peaceful prewar environment boosted tourism in the Republican period. A new mode of public transportation was constructed in the plan of Nanjing government that aimed to “reconstruct” China to make it modern.²⁷⁰ The expanding transportation system provided more possibilities for leisure travel. By 1911, there was around 9,000 km of railroads in China. In the Republican period, the new government realized the importance of railroads for the purpose of strengthening national control.²⁷¹ The new railways connected the hinterland to the Yangtze River

²⁶⁸ Susan Sontag, “In Plato’s caves,” in *On Photography*, 1-19.

²⁶⁹ Christopher Green, “New Ways of Visualizing Time and Space,” in *Seizing the Light* (New York: MC GRAW HILL, 2000), 165-182.

²⁷⁰ On road construction in Zhejiang Province, see Noel R. Miner, “Chekiang: The Nationalists’ Effort in Agrarian Reform and Construction, 1927–1937” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1973), 233–43.

²⁷¹ From 1928 to 1937, the Republican government in Nanjing built 3,600 km of railway. The Guangzhou–Hankou Railway (粵漢鐵路) was completed in 1936, connecting the north and south; the Longhai railway was extended in Xi’an in 1934, to Baoji in 1936; Zhejiang-Jiangxi line (浙贛鐵路) was linked the Shanghai-Hangzhou Railway with one of the country’s main lines, the Hankou-Guangzhou line. Mi Lucheng 宓汝成, “Guomin zhengfu de tielu zhengce jihua he dui yixie shewai lishi wenti de chuli 國民政府的鐵路政策計劃和對一些涉外歷史問題的處理

Delta and economic center, bringing many visitors to Zhejiang and Jiangsu. In 1921, it took six hours by train from Shanghai to Hangzhou, and only four by express.²⁷² The Shanghai-Hangzhou line enabled many amateur photographers in Shanghai to visit West Lake on short holidays; the completion of Hangzhou-Huizhou highway allowed travel enthusiasts in the Yangtze River Delta to visit Mount Huang as a day trip.

An ordinary travel photograph that was taken in Lanxi, where a village nearly 120 miles from Hangzhou, shows a group of tourists sitting and standing on the rocks in the streams (Fig.4.11.1; 4.11.2).²⁷³ “We enjoyed the landscape” was written on the back by Luo Bonian, who was a banker and an amateur photographer based in Hangzhou and Shanghai. Travel with one’s camera became a new trend among amateur photographers. As discussed before, outdoor shooting was one of the main photographic activities among amateur photographic societies and camera clubs, which gave birth to travel photography or tourist photography among the amateurs.

The camera embedded in the private travel experience functioned as a visual memory aid, approaching the essence of photography—a metaphor of the passage of time. Because photography preserved the appearance of the photographic subject, it has always been connected with historical moments and memory.²⁷⁴ From the oft-quoted terms “that-has-been” in *Camera Lucida* of Roland Barthes to the theory of

[The National Government's Railway Policy Plan and the Solutions of Some Historical Issues Concerning Foreign Affairs],” in *Zhonghuaminguo tielushi ziliao* (1921-1949) 中華民國鐵路史資料 (1921-1949) [Information on Railway History of the Republican China] (Beijing: Shehuikexuewenxian chubanshe, 2002), 730-841.

²⁷² Li Wenhui 李文輝, “Huhangyong tielu yu jindai zhejiang jingji fazhan 滬杭甬鐵路與近代浙江經濟發展 [Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway and economic development of Zhejiang in modern times],” in *Huhangyong tielu yu jindai Zhejiang shehui* (1897-1937) 滬杭甬鐵路與近代浙江社會 (1897-1937) [Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway and Modern Zhejiang Society (1897-1937)] (Ningbo: Ningbo University, master thesis, 2017), 66-72.

²⁷³ The photographs of Luo Bonian come from the privation collection organized by Luo’s grandson Jin Youming. Luo purchased his first camera in 1932 after graduating from Hangzhou Commercial School, and the same year, he became a banker at Zhejiang Commercial Bank in Hangzhou. Two years later, he transferred to the Bank of China’s Lanxi Branch. Luo Bonian lived in Hong Kong from 1938 to 1941. He lived on Nathan Road in Kowloon. He photographed various places in Hong Kong during that time, such as Repulse Bay, Kowloon Tong, the ports, and Castle Peak. Jin Youming, “Yi wode zengzufu luobonian 憶我的曾祖父駱伯年 [Recollections of my grandfather Luo Bonian],” in *Luo Bonian* 駱伯年 edited by Three Shadows Photography Art Centre (Beijing: Beijing lianhe chubanshe, 2016), np.

²⁷⁴ John Berger, “Paul Strand,” in *About Looking* (New York, Vintage International, 1992), 51.

photography historian Geoffrey Batchen, photographs always capture a moment in the past, which we subsequently view in the present. To look at a photograph is, therefore to experience a temporal movement between past and present, i.e., to witness the passing of time.²⁷⁵

Looking at the travel photographs in Luo Bonian's private collection, it is not hard to find the intertextuality between the travel photographs and accompanying words. The words reveal their destinations: West Lake, Lan River, Yandang Mountain and Lanke Mountain. Most of these attractions were located within Zhejiang Province, which suggests these amateur photographers preferred to choose short journeys with close friends. The photographs from these trips formed a private and intimate visual narrative of the amateur photographic community. Luo Bonian preferred to capture some everyday subjects during travel. A 1935 close-up photograph of plum blossoms was taken by Luo Bonian during his travel to Chao Mountain, a scenic site 18 miles from Hangzhou. He depicted the detail of the plum blossoms, displaying a mild and peaceful atmosphere isolated from the social turmoil of the 1930s China (**Fig.4.12**). Flowers, trees, and boats on the water: all these motifs in traditional literati paintings were reframed by Luo. He deployed a close-up perspective to represent the withered grass in the snow, bristly green grass against the sky, and wildflowers (**Fig.4.13.1**). He also used a worm's eye perspective to represent the pagoda, juxtaposing it with the branches full of blossoms (**Fig.4.13.2**). The trees became an enduring subject in his photographs. In 1938, he was reassigned to a position with the Bank of China in Hong Kong. He took several photographs of the tropical trees there.

Depicting ordinary subjects in a poetic and romantic atmosphere, Luo Bonian used pioneering techniques to elevate the ordinary landscape and convey subtle

²⁷⁵ Nancy Shawcross, "Time: The Photographic Punctum," in *Roland Barthes on Photography* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1997), 86-106.

emotions which was connected with his own cultural memory. In one photograph, he depicted the shapes and lines of the clouds and lights which were deployed with the idioms of international pictorialism in the early twentieth century, juxtaposed with traditional calligraphic notes (**Fig.4.14**). By focusing on the patterning of light and shade, blurring detail and compressing space, Luo depicted the rural landscape in a distinctive way from the pictorialist works that emulated traditional painting. He emphasized photography's evocative and interpretive qualities and depicted common scenes in ways that suggested psychological and spiritual meanings. In several photographs of deserted villages, he created an immersive experience for the audience. The highlight of shade, light, and composition, and the romantic and sentimental atmosphere he created undoubtedly evoke emotional sensations and states of mind.

Leisure travel with portable cameras manifested the prerogative of a privileged minority, and the photographic images from these trips contributed to the formation of the identities of the new middle classes in the Republican period. In these travel photographs, the travelers—both men and women—seemed to consider the camera a fashion accessory. In Luo Bonian's collection, we can find several photographs showing travelers taking views, a man in long robe taking shots, and a woman in profile holding the camera and pretending to take photographs (**Fig.4.15**). Whether they posed for the picture or not, operating the camera was a modern behavior, suggesting a modern identity was established by means of photography.

Photography as the apparatus that industrializes visual memory has served as an interactive tool of communicating and makes visible the association with the community by means of celebrating memorable moments together. Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Un art moyen* (translated as *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*) discussed that

photography as a memory device for preserving family memory and common past.²⁷⁶

David Bate extended the domestic use of photography to a variety of types of photographs which developed “a unifying factor, as monuments of and to the past”.²⁷⁷

Leisure travel, a collective event and social ritual for the bourgeoisie in Republican China was captured by the portable camera. Through photographic practice, the community embraced a time for playing with cameras and celebrating amateurism and the instantaneous. During travel, the community of amateur photographers would take shots for each other, through which the associations of the photographic community became more visible. Travel photography or outdoor shooting in a group visualized as a collective event, a social and cultural ritual, shares some similarities with holiday photography and family photography. Travel and photography symbolized a new ritual that enhanced the bonding in the community. Beyond the approach to a close bonding, they also attempted to develop a self-identity through photography and leisure travel.

For the amateur photographers themselves, travel photographs were taken to preserve and celebrate the disjunct moments with normal place and time. Departing from familiar places, amateurs employed their hand cameras to record and celebrate the moments anytime. The desire of seeing the emerging new Republic and the landscape and people by means of photography drove the amateurs to explore beyond their homes.

From private travel with the intimate community to commercial group travel arranged by tourist agency or company, leisure travel was rising among the new middle classes in the Republican period. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British tourism company, Thomas Cook & Sons Co., opened offices in China, while the

²⁷⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “the Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences,” in *Photography, A Middle-Brow Art*, translated by Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), 19-31.

²⁷⁷ David Bate, “The Memory of Photography,” *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (2010): 243-57.

American Express Travel Department and Japan Tourist Bureau provided tourist and banking services for international travelers from major treaty ports and Manchuria. In 1923, banker Chen Guangfu 陳光甫 (1881-1976) established the earliest Chinese travel agency in Shanghai. It was initially set up as a Travel Department under the Shanghai Commercial and Savings Bank, then later separated from the bank and renamed China Travel Service (Zhongguo lüxing she 中國旅行社). From 1923 to 1937, China Travel Service broke the monopoly of foreign tourist agencies in China, developing 66 branches ranging from Beijing to Hongkong. It mainly offered the booking the transportation and hotel, tour guide services for both Chinese and foreigner customers.²⁷⁸

Some non-governmental tourist agencies like the Unison Travel Group (*Yousheng lüxing tuan* 友聲旅行團) was spontaneously organized by several travel enthusiasts in 1915. The founders, Sun Zongyuan 孫宗源 and Yao Yuangan 姚元幹, were typical of the new middle class in Shanghai: Sun was a customs clerk, and Yao worked for an insurance company (**Fig.4.16**). Compared with CTS, the Unison Travel Party offered travel services for the new urban middle class. The 1920s saw the rapid growth of the Unison Travel Group as more travel enthusiasts made journeys all over China. In the 1920s, the Unison Travel Group developed trips to scenic sites in the Yangtze River Delta. The routes from Shanghai to Suzhou, Wuxi, Jiaxing, Huzhou, and Mount Mogan became very popular.²⁷⁹ In August 1929, Unison organized a trip to the Capital Nanjing by air, which was the first group air travel in China.²⁸⁰ In the same year, Unison also organized over 800 tourists to visit Hangzhou West Lake Exposition by

²⁷⁸ Yajun Mo, "Itineraries for a Republic: Tourism and Travel Culture in Modern China, 1886-1954" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2011), 176-264.

²⁷⁹ "Yousheng lüxing tuan fu dongtingshan lüxing 友聲旅行團赴洞庭山旅行 [The Unison Travel Group traveled to Dongting Mount]," *Shenbao*, Dec.25, 1922, 5.

²⁸⁰ *Shenbao*, Aug.30, 1929, np.

tour bus.²⁸¹ In the 1930s, a trip to North China, passing through Shandong Province to Beijing, attracted over sixty members. Before the Sino-Japanese war, Unison organized approximately eight trips to Northern China in total. In 1934, Unison established a new routine to South China and rented a new tourist ship from China Merchants Steam Navigation Company. The Unison also promoted overseas tourism in the 1930s.²⁸²

Some amateur photographers, who were mostly based in and around Shanghai, were actively engaged in publishing travel-related images and texts. The popular tourist magazines and pictorials such as *Tourist Magazine* (*Lüxing zazhi* 旅行雜誌) of China Travel Service and *Monthly Tourist Magazine of the Unison* (*Yousheng luxing yuekan* 友聲旅行月刊) produced by Unison, frequently featured travel photographs taken by renowned photographers.²⁸³ In the 1930s, many members of the Hua Society, such as Chen Wanli, Lang Jingshan, Zhang Zhenhou, and Guo Xiqi offered a large number of photographs they had taken in the scenic sites to travel agencies (**Fig.4.17**).

The Unison Travel Party developed a specific photography division in 1927. One 1927 photograph taken at Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou shows a group of approximately twenty-five male tourists (**Fig.4.18**). The man in the center in the western suit sits on a stone, looking directly at the camera; most members in the group wear long gowns, and some older members are carrying walking sticks. Compared with the group photograph by Luo Bonian of his small intellectual community, this all-male tourist group shows a more unified appearance. This photograph was selected from an album named *Beautiful Hangzhou* (*Meili de hangzhou* 美麗的杭州). Most of

²⁸¹ “Xihu bolanhui bibingqian xiaoxi 西湖博覽會閉幕前消息. [News before the closing of West Lake Expo],” *Shenbao*, Sep.13, 1929, 4.

²⁸² Piao Jingshi 樸敬石, “Minguo shiqi shanghai de yousheng lvyou tuan he xiuxian lvxing 民國時期上海的友聲旅行團和休閒旅行 [The Unison Travel Group and Leisure Travel in Republican Shanghai],” *Minguo yanjiu* 民國研究 [Republican China Studies], no.1 (2010): 246-261.

²⁸³ Guo Xiqi 郭錫麒, “Yousheng lvxing tuan lvxing fuchunjiang zhiyibu 友聲旅行團旅行富春江之一部 [A Part of Fuchun River Journey of the Unison Travel Group],” *Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報 [The Eastern Times Photo Supplement], no.553 (April 1929): 1.

photographs were taken by Shao Woyun 邵臥雲 from the Hua Society, as well as Jin Xingchu 金性初 and Dong Hancha 董漢槎.

In 1931, the first travel photography exhibition of the members in the Unison was held in a shopping mall in Nanjing Road, Shanghai. Besides Yao Yuangan, the organizer of the travel group, two amateur photographers from the Hua Society: Shao Woyun, and Guo Xiqi also took an active part in the exhibition. Over 200 photographs were exhibited, including photographs taken in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Shandong provinces, and even in India, Japan and Thailand. The 1931 *China Pictorial* (*Zhonghua tuhua zazhi* 中華圖畫雜誌) published several selective photographs from Zhang Zhenhou, Guo Xiqi, Chen Chuanling, and Zhou Shoujuan. The grotesque stone in Tianping Mount, Suzhou, the overlook from Tai Mount, and the unique perspective of Longhua pagoda were all captured during the trip, making a contrast with the misty landscape and “fuzzy” pictorial effects that characterized traditional pictorialism.²⁸⁴

In the 1930s, some amateur photographers were actively engaged in the artistic societies, exhibitions, publications on the one hand, while also participating in vernacular photographic practices on the other hand, for example, making photo album of the scenic sites for the tourists. Guo Xiqi, a founding member of the Hua Society, deployed his pioneering technique to made exquisite photographic albums for the Unison Travel Party. His album *Nanjing Photo Album* (*Nanjing yingji* 南京影集) contains a series of photographs taken at the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, Ming tombs, the presidential palace and several other historical sites (**Fig.4.19.1; 4.19.2**). Covered with yellow silk and printed in Britain using the photogravure technique, the Nanjing Photo Album also was used as a diplomatic present by Nanjing government. Commissioned

²⁸⁴ “Yousheng luxingtuan luxing sheyingchengji zhanlanhui chupin 友聲旅行團旅行攝影成績展覽會出品 [The Exhibition of Travel Photographs of the Unison Travel Group],” *Zhonghua tuhua zazhi* 中華圖畫雜誌 [China Pictorial], no.4 (1931): 13-14.

by Unison, Guo Xiqi took a series of photographs in Mount Putuo. His photographs displayed the monumentality of the Buddhist architecture against the magnificent landscape, highlighting the timeless quality and intrinsic intellectual spirit (**Fig.4.20**).

Some photographs in the travel albums and brochures not only promoted tourist attractions but also highlighted the modern lifestyle. Leisure and vacation as the main subjects in travel photography constitute the hobby photography that was a popular pastime for the new middle class in the Republican period. Mount Putuo (*Putuo shan* 普陀山), the so-called Buddhist Kingdom in the Sea (*Haitian fogue* 海天佛國) in Zhejiang Province, one of the four sacred mountains in Chinese Buddhism, became a tourist destination and allowed visitors to enjoy the beautiful mountains, Buddhist history, and bathing beaches. In contrast with the monumental landscape representations, many vernacular travel snapshots in the popular media offered a chance to see how a historic site had been transformed into a tourist attraction in the Republican era. In 1929, *The Unison* promoted a special issue of Putuo, fully displaying the majestic mountains, elegant Buddhist architecture and long beaches. In an introductory essay, Shen Xingchu 沈杏初 described the grandness and smoothness of the Long Bathing Beach (*Qianbusha yuchang* 千步沙浴場), accompanied by an overlook photograph from a distance.²⁸⁵ Lang Jingshan also took a photograph to show the tranquility at the seaside of Putuo where a few tourists were walking and lying on the beach.²⁸⁶ In the late 1920s, sunbathing was only popular among western tourists. In 1929, the English newspaper *The China Press* described the bathing beach at Mount Putuo in more detail and highly recommended it as a vacation resort.²⁸⁷ Until the 1930s,

²⁸⁵ Shen Xingchu 沈杏初, "Putuo mingsheng zhilve 普陀名勝志略 [The tourist attractions of Putuo]," *Yousheng*, Putuo special issue (1929): 7-18.

²⁸⁶ Lang Jingshan 郎靜山, "Putuo haibian 普陀海邊 [Putuo Seaside]," *Hongmeigui* 紅玫瑰 [Red Rose] 5, no.35 (1929): 2.

²⁸⁷ *The China Press*, August 11.1929, 3.

the popular Chinese media started to promote sunbathing at the seaside as a modern leisure activity.

In the 1930s, the beaches as leisure resources in Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Qingdao were exploited. Just as the Kodak advertisements proclaimed: “A holiday without a Kodak is a holiday wasted.” Seaside holiday became a popular subject in amateur photography. *Going to the Beach*, a photograph published in 1933 *Liangyou*, depicts several women in swimsuits and *qipao* walking along the beach in Qingdao. The column “Kodak Travel” (*Keda youji* 柯達遊記) in *Chinese Kodakery* ran a number of travel photographs taken in seaside. A 1932 issue of *Chinese Kodakery* promoted the Brownie for seaside snapshot photograph.²⁸⁸ When the introduction of portable cameras coincided with the rise of modern leisure activities among the new middle class, they flocked to the seaside to record their memories and celebrate the gathering moments. The popularity of seaside photography was also closely related to body representation in the Republican era. Chen Bingde successfully captured how the modern Chinese women—including some female students and film stars—enjoyed the sunbathing and beautiful scenery on the beach (**Fig.4.21**).

The popularity of hand cameras went hand in hand with leisure travel in Republican China. The emphasis on flexibility, portability, and fast focus prompted more travelers to include hand cameras during their outdoor activities. Travel photographs were taken to preserve and celebrate the disjunct moments with normal place and time. Departing from familiar spots, amateurs employed hand cameras to record and celebrate the moments anytime. The desire of seeing the emerging new Republic and the landscape and people by means of photography drove the amateurs to explore the unseen and unknown lands.

²⁸⁸ “Putuo,” *Chinese Kodakery* 3, no.8 (1932): 7-9.

4.3 Grand Travel and Education to the Public

Beyond leisure travel to scenic spots, an increasing number of Chinese intellectuals promoted a trend of nationwide tours to explore the cultural landscape of Republican China. Chen Wanli, a pioneering Chinese photographer who had a strong interest in investigating the cultural heritage. He took a series of photographs displaying how the specialists and students in Peking University examined and organized the treasures in the Palace in 1925(**Fig.4.22**). The last Emperor Puyi was forced to leave the palace on November 5, 1924, and one year later, the Forbidden City became a public museum.²⁸⁹ During this period, Deploying a sophisticated photographic technique, Chen exhibited a dying but not dead world from the perspective of a local intellectual, marking a significant transition of the Forbidden City from an imperial Palace to a public museum. The 1924 photographs in the Forbidden City were collected in an album “The Palace in the thirteenth year of Republican China” (*Min shisan gugong* 民十三故宮) and eventually published in 1928.²⁹⁰ In 1926, Chen’s photographs taken in the Forbidden City were exhibited in Shanghai, and then published in *The Eastern Times Photo Supplement* (*Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報).²⁹¹ Several photographs of the Empress’ bedroom, palace maids and old eunuchs in the Palace were firstly viewed by the audience in an unprecedented way (**Fig.4.23**). Despite the unstable fate under Nationalist and Communist rule, once the most mystifying spaces in history continue to open up.

²⁸⁹ Rubie Watson, “Palaces, Museums, and Squares: Chinese National Spaces,” in *Museum Anthropology*, vol.19, issue 2, September 1995, 7-19.

²⁹⁰ Chen Wanli 陳萬里, *Min shisan gugong* 民十三故宮 [The Palace in the Thirteenth Year of Republican China] (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1928), np.

²⁹¹ “Chen Wanli geren sheying zhanlanhui zhi yiban 陳萬里個人攝影展覽會之一斑 [One Glimpse of Chen Wanli Personal Photography Exhibition],” *Tuhua shibao* 圖畫時報 [The Eastern Times Photo Supplement], no.316, 3.

Photography was widely used by the Europeans in the process of colonial expansion for categorizing and redefining the “other.” The photographs became a form of “cultural and legal power.”²⁹² In the early twentieth century, the expedition teams led by the British Aurel Stein (1862-1943), French Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) Germans Albert Grünwedel (1856-1935), Albert Von Le Coq (1860-1930), Swedish Sven Hedin (1865-1952), Japanese Itō Chuta (1867-1954), and others made great discoveries during their expeditions to China’s northwestern frontiers, Tibet, and other central Asian lands. A series of journeys to China in the early twentieth century contributed to the global transformation of China’s image on the world stage.²⁹³ Beyond the ethnographic gaze and the pressures of the Sino-Japanese War, from the mid-1920s to the 1940s, many Chinese intellectual travelers and scholars embarked on expeditions akin to the Grand Tour undertaken by European nobility in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. By focusing on travel writings, sketches, illustrated travelogues, and some inscribed photographs made by explorers, scholars and amateur photographers from Europe-America, Japan and China. The texts and images in travel literature were not only interwoven with nation-building projects but also developed a new way of framing China in various transcultural encounters from 1925 to 1945.

Chines intellectuals’ *Grand Travel* (*Zhuangyou* 壯游) to the frontier began with the Chinese-foreign joint scientific expedition. In 1925, Chen Wanli, who had dual identity as a photographer and an archeologist, participated in a scientific investigation with a team led by the American Langdon Warner (1881-1955). Besides translation, he also conducted his own research on the caves of Dunhuang and made some observations

²⁹² Noelle Goldman and Stuart Hall, *Pictures of Everyday Life: The People, Places, and Cultures of the Commonwealth* (London: Comedia, 1987), 148.

²⁹³ Aurel Stein, “On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and North-Western China,” *Nature* 131, no. 3308 (1933): 415-417; Frances Wood, “An End to Excavation: Pelliot, von Le Coq and Warner,” in *The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 208-222.

on the local customs and practices in the Northwestern China. The flyleaf of Chen's travelogue, *Diary of the Journey to the Northwest*, shows a photograph captioned with “the writer on the way to Dunhuang” (*Dunhuang tuzhong zhi zhuzhe* 敦煌途中之著者) taken by his colleague. In the photograph, Chen Wanli's intellectual looks—glasses, Yat-Sen suit, and the portable camera—formed a contrast with the shabby carriage and rural environment; only the boots he wears suggest the hardship of the journey (**Fig.4.24**). Chen put this photograph in the first page of his travelogue, indicating a new start to grand travel. Departing from Beijing, the expedition team passed through Taiyuan, Xi'an, Lanzhou, and entered Dunhuang via Gansu Province. Chen made a cultural survey of the treasures from a local perspective. In Taiyuan, he took the photograph of the Stele forest and Maitreya in the library; he also took the views of Thousand Buddha's Caves in Dunhuang. These travel photographs were exhibited in the department of National Studies in Peking University in 1925, some of them were exhibited in Suzhou and Shanghai, which initiated a new way of observing and representing cultural relics in China.²⁹⁴ Responded to the National Studies Movement (*Guoxue yundong* 國學運動) which was getting under way in post-May Fourth Beijing, intellectuals determined to pursue a new understanding of the artifacts and cultural relics in the process of nation-building.

Chen Wanli's academic endeavor in the Northwest was commended by Liu Bannong, who had just graduated from the University of Paris-Sorbonne in 1925. During his studies in London and Paris from 1921 to 1925, Liu encountered the Stein collection of Dunhuang in London and the Pelliot collection in Paris. He even copied the manuscript of Dunhuang in the National Library of France in hand and brought

²⁹⁴ “Chen Wanli xiansheng xixing suoshe yingpian 陳萬里先生西行所攝影片 [The photographs of Chen Wanli taken in the Northwest],” *Beijingdaxue rikan* 北京大學日刊 [Peking University Daily], no.1792 (1925): 1.

them to China. These copies were published in 1925 as a three-volume book titled “Miscellany from Dunhuang” (*Dunhuang duosuo* 敦煌掇瑣).²⁹⁵

The historical encounter with the Dunhuang collections promoted Liu Bannong to preserve the artifacts, and the concern on the frontier landscape was transformed into an assertion of China's sovereignty. In 1927, Swedish traveler Sven Hedin led a team of explorers to revisit China after three journeys crossing the Gobi Desert in Xinjiang and the Himalayan range in Tibet at the turn of the 20th century. With the financial support of Lufthansa German Airlines, he hoped to investigate the prospect of opening an air route for Lufthansa between Berlin and Beijing via Urumqi. Hedin's intentions and plans were questioned by Beijing academics. Liu Bannong as the leader of this committee negotiated with Hedin on many aspects. After forty days of detailed negotiations, the Chinese committee and Hedin signed the final contract, and five Chinese scholars and five students joined the expeditions.²⁹⁶ It was stipulated that the artifacts they collected in China must remain in China, and the photographs and scientific data could be published only after the permission of the Chinese committee.

From 1927 to 1935, Sino-Swedish Scientific Expedition Team to Northwest China (*Zhongrui xibei kexue kaochatuan* 中瑞西北科學考察團) led by Hedin and Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 (1888-1976), the Chinese director in the expedition team, conducted scientific research in north and northwest China. Xu Xusheng wrote a travelogue, *Xu Xusheng's Diary of the Northwestern Journey* (*Xu Xusheng xiyou riji* 徐旭生西游日記), with the travel photographs on the way. The diary described Xu's discoveries and observations in Mongolia, the Gobi Desert and Xinjiang. Xu Xusheng and his team

²⁹⁵ Liu Bannong, *Dunhuang duosuo* 敦煌掇瑣 [Miscellany from Dunhuang] (Beijing: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1925), 12.

²⁹⁶ Mo Yajun, “Itineraries for a Republic: Tourism and Travel Culture in Modern China, 1886-1954” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2011), 335-411.

recorded his observations during the expedition extensively thanks to the documentary powers of photography. The photographer captured the images of weather experiments with balloons in Mongolia, camels marching in the desert and the doctors in their expedition team treating the Mongolian patients (**Fig.4.25**). These photographs explored the possibilities and pushed the boundaries of photography as a scientific tool.

The idea of Grand Travel across China was aligned with the Nationalist government's frontier policy. After consolidating the national power, the government paid increasing attention to the Northwestern China, especially the threats of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria and Mongolia as well as British operations in Tibet and along China's southwest borders. The northwestern, including Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang, and Mongolia, was the least developed area in China. Dai Jitao 戴季陶 (1891-1949), the politician and journalist in the Kuomintang, contended the Northwestern provinces could be no war and construction must be sped up.²⁹⁷ A series of societies and organizations were established in Beijing, Nanjing and Shanghai in order to investigate the Northwest. For example, *Northwest Association* (*Xibei xieshe* 西北協社), *Society for the Northwest Public Studies* (*Xibei Gongxueshe* 西北公學社) in Peking, *the Developing the Northwest Association* (*Kaifa Xibei Xiehui* 開發西北協會) in Nanjing, and *the Northwest Public Forum Association* (*Xibei Gonglunshu* 西北公論社) in Shanghai.²⁹⁸ "Develop the Northwest" (*Kaifa xibei* 開發西北) was a strong call from the Nationalist government, urging the patriotic personage to go into these areas and start business and homesteads.

²⁹⁷ Dai Jitao 戴季陶, "Jiuji xibei yu kaifa xibei 救濟西北與開發西北 [Reliving and Developing Northwest China]," *New Asia* 1, no.1 (1930): 41-44.

²⁹⁸ Hsiao-ting Lin, "In search of a new territorial base," in *Modern China's Ethnic Frontiers: A Journey to the West* (London: Routledge, 2010), 34-53.

Photographs have been integral in revealing the national identity in twentieth-century China. Photography played a significant role of depicting and visualizing the borders of the new nation with the enthusiasm of developing the frontiers.²⁹⁹ In 1934, Zhuang Xueben 莊學本 (1909-1984) went to Chengdu with the Nationalist mission to offer condolences for the thirteenth Dalai Lama's death. He hoped to join the Nationalist government's mission to Lhasa, but the request was denied. After this setback, Zhuang did not return to Shanghai. Instead, he decided to explore the Golog (果洛) in May 1934, a so-called "white land" (baidi 白地) located at the junction of Qinghai and Sichuan. He went to Guanxian (灌縣), Wenchuan (汶川), Maoxian (茂縣), Lifan (理番), A'ba (阿坝), then entered to Golog.³⁰⁰ This six-month Golog journey also marked the beginning of Zhuang Xueben's ten-year exploration of the western frontier. Linking this project with the Nationalist campaign of developing the Northwest, Zhuang claimed that Golog was "the hinterland of the Northwest," and therefore it needed to be understood first "in order to develop the whole northwest."³⁰¹

Zhuang Xueben was a self-taught photographer since the late 1920s when he worked in a foreign company in Shanghai. Later he became a journalist for *Shenbao* and *The Young Companion*. Zhuang Xueben started with art photography: lots of his Shanghai-period photographs represent his achievements in that field, then he transitioned into documentary imbued with humanist sentiments, constructing a magnificent humanist vision. Equipped with two hand cameras, a Rollei and a Zeiss Super Ikont, he recorded the details of the journey from Nanjing towards Chengdu

²⁹⁹ Sarah E. Fraser, "Approaching the Boundaries of a National Landscape: Picturing the Frontier 1927–1948," In *Studies on 20th Century Shanshuihua*, 371–86. Lu Fusheng, ed. *Conference Proceedings, 20th century Chinese Landscape Painting. June 9–11, 2006*. Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publisher, 2006.

³⁰⁰ Zhuang Xueben 莊學本, "Preface," *Qiangrong kaochaji* 羌戎考察記 [The Record of the Investigation of Qiang and Rong] (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 2007), 4-5.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

along the Yangtze River, then westwards to Golog. In addition to travel photography, he also took a series of ethnographic portraits of the indigenous Qiang people, further contributing to constructing a new image of the frontier.

If we consider daguerreotypes and calotypes the first generation of photographic technology, and the wet-glass (collodion) plates that John Thomson employed was the second generation of photographic technology, the third generation was the advent of dry plates and film in the late 1860s, which fully developed around 1890s when modern celluloid film was invented by Kodak in 1889.³⁰² The hand cameras Zhuang Xueben used had the advantages of capturing and snap-shooting. If we compare the photographs taken by Zhuang Xueben in 1934 with the picturesque monumental landscapes and ethnographic portraits that John Thomson and other nineteenth-century European and American photographers made in the 1860s, it is not difficult to find that the advancement of photographic technology transformed the still photographs to the images closer to the life and better acknowledging the subjectivity of the indigenous people.

Hand cameras helped photographers capture instants of motion on the journey. The immediacy, serendipity, and spontaneity that hand cameras brought fundamentally changed how photographers view and approach the photographic subjects. Zhuang Xueben traveled along the Min River, a tributary of the upper Yangtze River. The transportation in China's western frontier regions was undeveloped in the 1930s.³⁰³ One close-up captures a moment when a young man of Qiang nationality was crossing the river with rope, the waves behind him rolling on and white spray flying (**Fig.4.26**). Deploying a variety of perspectives, Zhuang took a series of shots depicting how the

³⁰² Joseph R. Allen, "Picturing Gentlemen: Japanese Portrait Photography in Colonial Taiwan" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no.4 (November 2014): 1009-1042.

³⁰³ Zhuang Xueben, "Guanxian jingxiang, 灌縣景象 [Guanxian Landscape]," in *Qiangrong kaochaji*, 3-8.

indigenous people crossed the river with ropes or on suspension bridges above the rapids.

Beyond the rapid succession of photographs, Zhuang Xueben also took a number of spectacular landscape photographs along the river. He depicted the *Feishaguan* in Wenchuan country with great boldness and vision. He also used his pioneering technique to capture the monumental landscape in Weizhou, a town located in the northeast of Wenchuan. Employing a bird's-eye view, he depicts the viewer the magnificence of the Min River, including the Qiang villages scattered in the hills along the river (**Fig.4.27**). Zhuang Xueben attempted to create a magnificent frontier landscape with a grand manner and rich details, showing the contrast between pictorialist landscape and literati style.

Meanwhile, the hand camera was also a valuable tool in ethnographic work. Since the invention of photography in 1839, ethnic sightseeing became a significant voyeuristic experience, and many explorers and photographers took photographs of the ethnic subjects for satisfying their curiosity of seeing “strangers” in distant lands. Monumental landscapes and the ethnographic portraits were the main subjects in nineteenth-century travel photography. In the nineteenth century, Chinese people were ethnic subjects for European and American photographers. John Thomson (1837-1921), a Scottish photographer, traveled extensively throughout China, from the southern trading ports of Hong Kong and Canton to the cities of Peking and Shanghai, to the Great Wall in the north, and deep into central China. From 1870 to 1871 he visited the Fukien region, traveling up the Min River, and then visited Amoy and Swatow. The photographs taken during the travels were collected in the album *Illustrations of China and Its People: A Series of Two Hundred Photographs, with Letterpress Descriptive of the Places and People Represented* that was published in four volumes between 1873

and 1874. John Thomson's photographs not only captured the scenic sites of China from the treaty ports to interior China along the Yangtze River but also established the "types" of Chinese people according to the characteristics of age, gender, ethnicity, and occupation. The photographs he took reflect a timeless quality that was closely associated with stagnancy and isolation.

The invention of the Kodak camera brought new possibilities for ethnographic research. The simplicity of operation, fast focus and inexpensive roll film supported the hand camera in capturing the multiple images when the indigenous people might be in unaware situations, recording the sequences in their daily life.³⁰⁴ A lot of photographs featuring the everyday experience of Qiang people were captured by Zhuang Xueben when he traveled to Golog. For example, he showed how they transported tea and medicine, plowed their fields, conducted business in the market; he also took shots when they "sipped" wine (*zajiu* 咂酒) with the bamboo that was the tradition of Qiang people (**Fig.4.28; Fig.4.29**), and when they wore traditional costumes to held religious ceremony. He displayed scenes like working, living, ceremony and ritual in an unobtrusive way, attempting to represent everyday situations in which indigenous people could ignore the photographer's presence. Compared with the anthropometric photographs with standard poses and format, the photographs made by hand cameras were closer to the life being lived by the subject.³⁰⁵

Zhuang Xueben's photographic practices open a new chapter of ethnographic photography in China. In these photographs, they have undergone a transformation, from being objects on view to subjects possessing their own desires, viewing the self through the world around them. His travel photographs in the 1930s not only display

³⁰⁴ Phyllis La Farge, "On the Frontier of Photography: Carl Lumholtz and the Kodak Snapshot Camera," in *Journal of the Southwest* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2013), 473-494.

³⁰⁵ Ibid

the landscape in the motion along the river but also exhibits a humanist vision through the depiction of the everyday lives of indigenous people.

Travel photographs not only formulate what the travelers see, but also shape the ways of seeing and understanding. In general, travel photography has been regarded as a combination of sight and knowledge.³⁰⁶ Many essays instructed the hobbyist on how to employ the hand camera to take photographs during travel. A sustainable column, “Kodak Travel” in *Chinese Kodakery* exhibits a number of travel photographs from amateur photographers. Sightseeing and photography were naturally closely connected when portable cameras gained popularity. A number of camera advertisements juxtaposed the photographs of historical sites with the camera, indicating a new concept of travel, traveling with a camera that was emerging with the rise of the new middle class. Ranging from scenic spots to historic sites, these travel photographs were pronounced by *Chinese Kodakery* as a necessary backdrop for developing an association between the amateurs and the location.

In January 1932, *Chinese Kodakery* published a group of travel photographs taken by Jin Shisheng in Qingdao. As a college student in Civil Engineering Department of Tongji University, he made a field trip to the factory in Qingdao. The photographs depicted famous tourist attractions like the Qingdao Handover Memorial Pavilion, Tianhou Palace, the seaside park, and the aquarium (**Fig.4.30**).³⁰⁷ In his travelogue titled “A Glimpse into Qingdao” (*Qingdao yipie* 青島一瞥) which accompanied the photographs, he introduced the history of the seaside architecture and knowledge of the urban layout. While praising the German legacy of urban planning

³⁰⁶ Patricia C. Albers, William R. James, “Travel photography: A methodological approach,” in *Annals of Tourism Research* 15, no.1 (1988): 134-158.

³⁰⁷ Jin Shisheng 金石聲, “Qingdao yipie 青島一瞥 [A glimpse of Qingdao],” *Chinese Kodakery* 3, no.9 (1932): 6.

and infrastructure, also expressed his dismay at the Japanese occupation after World War I.

Travel photographs and essays offered a clue on how tourism in the Republican period was developing. The Great Wall, The West Lake, Mt. Tai and Yellow Mountains were the most popular tourist attractions in the early Republican period. In 1914, Huang Yanpei 黃炎培(1878-1965), an educator and politician, took many photographs of Yellow Mountains which were partly collected in an album named *Scenic China: Series at Yellow Mountains (Zhongguo mingsheng diyizhong Huangshan 中國名勝第一種：黃山)*. Since 1914, the series of *Scenic China* published in a sequence: Yellow Mountains, Mt. Lu, Mt. Putuo, West Lake, and Mt. Wuyi. In 1915, the *Scenic China* series was given to the US as a gift in Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.

Travel photographs, souvenir photographs, and tourist brochures were all means of disseminating knowledge of Republican China to a wider audience. Some albums with specific themes were published for promoting local tourism. *In search of the Southeast (Dongnan lansheng 東南攬勝)* in 1935 and *Scenic Beauties in Southwest China (Xinan lansheng 西南攬勝)* in 1939 are two examples. *In search of the Southeast* contains the photographs and texts contributed by several renowned intellectuals, painters, and photographers. In the travelogue of Yellow Mountains, Huang Binghong 黃賓虹(1865-1955), an accomplished traditional painter, wrote a long essay describing the journey to Yellow Mountains, and Chen Wanli, Jiang Bingnan contributed to a photograph depicting the mountain streams in pictorialist language.

In search of the Southeast was edited by the Southeastern Transportation Tour Propaganda Committee, which suggests the guidebook was intended not only to introduce the scenic sites in the Southeast, but also to promote the Nanjing

government's achievements in transportation.³⁰⁸ *Scenic Beauties in Southwest China* was published in 1939. Lang Jingshan contributed lots of photographs taken in Sichuan when he went into exile after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. He held two exhibitions in Shanghai in 1939 and 1941, showing the photographs taken in Southwest China when he fled to Sichuan after the bombings on the coast in 1937 (**Fig.4.31**). These photographs taken in the frontier not only represent the landscape, but also convey the patriotic enthusiasm prevalent before and during the war.

Running from September 1932 to May 1933, *Liangyou* magazine carried out the first nationwide photographic expedition *Liangyou Nationwide Tour* (*Liangyou quanguo kaocha tuan* 良友全國考察團), making a photographic survey of the history, culture and people's livelihood from the Yellow River to the Yangtze River basin and southwest provinces under extremely difficult conditions of unrest and transportation. The tour team consisted of Liang Desuo 梁得所 (1905-1938), the chief editor of *the Young Companion*, and several photographers such as Ouyang Pu 歐陽璞, Situ Rong 司徒榮. From Nanjing, Shandong to Northwestern China, they used their cameras to record and document the whole journey, then sent the photographs back to Shanghai. Photography became a central part of the tour. After the tour, *The Young Companion* Publishing Company held photographic exhibitions in Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Hankou and several cities, displaying the photographs that had been selected from thousands.³⁰⁹

The production of images of Chinese landscapes and historical monuments undoubtedly have political or ideological significance. Besides the exhibitions,

³⁰⁸ Juliane Noth, "Landscape Photography, Infrastructure, and Armed Conflict in a Chinese Travel Anthology from 1935: The Case of Dongnan Lansheng," *The Trans-Asia Photography Review*, April 16, 2018, accessed July 18, 2018, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7977573.0008.206>.

³⁰⁹ "Liangyou quanguo sheyingtuan 良友全國攝影團 [Liangyou Nationwide Tour]," *Liangyou*, 1933, no.80, 24-25.

Liangyou's publishing company put out a comprehensive album called *China as She Is: A Comprehensive Album* (*Zhonghua jingxiang* 中華景象) in 1934 (**Fig.4.32.1**). The tendency of nationalistic interpretations shows in the Chinese foreword: "China is at a critical moment of national survival, but few Chinese know actual national conditions and people's livelihood." The editors hoped the album could make up for the deficiency of local records and travelogues, making the contributions to the goal of national rejuvenation.

Despite the nationalist sentiments, in the English foreword of the album, the editor still emphasized that the album is "exposition and interpretation—not propaganda."³¹⁰ The album consisted of thousands of photographs cover the landscape and significant monuments twenty-eight provinces of Republican China during the nationwide tour. The photographs cover the landscape and monuments in twenty-eight provinces, including Manchuria, which the Japanese occupied since 1931, showing how Chinese photographers represented the new nation through the new medium photography.

The photographic practice was central to this album. The editors intentionally selected twenty photographs to enlarge and color, highlighting a series of tourist sites, including Pei Hai Park, the White Pagoda, the Qiantang River, and Guilin (**Fig.4.32.2**). The first color photograph in this album is a group photograph showing the four photographers in the team with the flag of the team (which seems to have been added by hand), all standing in front of the Giant Stone Buddhas in Gansu Province. The photographs of the tourist attractions in various provinces were accompanied by both Chinese and English introduction. This album displayed a unique perspective to depict

³¹⁰ Liangyou, "Preface," in *Zhonghua jingxiang* 中華景象 [China as She Is: A Comprehensive Album] (Shanghai: Liangyou publishing company), 1934, 9-12.

and discover the national landscape, initiating a new era of cultural investigation in the Republican period.

After the broke of the Second Sino Japanese War, the cultural investigation still continued. Wang Ziyun 王子雲 (1897-1990) organized several art scholars and students in Chongqing—who were forced to move into interior China, developed a team to investigate the artifacts and cultural relics in the Northwestern China with the support from Education Ministry of Nationalist government. From 1940 to 1945, The team intensively used photography to establish a systematic photographic archive of the historical monuments and artifacts in Sichuan, Shaanxi, Henan, Gansu and Qinghai Provinces. The photographs were collected into a ten-volume album “The Northwest Photographic Album of the team of Education Ministry’s Northwest Art and Relics” (教育部藝術文物考察團西北攝影集).³¹¹ The photographs in the album systematically show a series of single objects with rich details and information (Fig.4.33). The team of Education Ministry’s Northwest Art and Relics also held several exhibitions in Xi’an, Chongqing and Lan Zhou that displayed the artifacts in the Northwestern China and Dunhuang copies, which stimulated the desire of the public to rejuvenate “national art” (*minzu yishu* 民族藝術) during the wartime.³¹²

The invention of photography offered a new means of making national landscape images. The amateur photographers in the Republican period employed photography to depict the boundaries of a new nation state, which was informed by a

³¹¹ Xibei daxue wenhua yichan xueyuan 西北大學文化遺產學院, *Jiaoyubu yishu wenwu kaochatuan xibei sheyingji* 教育部藝術文物考察團西北攝影集 [The Northwest Photographic Album of the team of Education Ministry’s Northwest Art and Relics] (Xi’an: Xibei daxue chubanshe, 2016).

³¹² Huang Zongxian 黃宗憲, *Dayouhuan shidai de jueze-kangzhan shiqi dahoufang meishu yanjiu* 大憂患時代的抉擇--抗戰時期大後方美術研究 [The Choice in Times of National Crisis: A Study of Fine Arts in the Rear Front during the Anti-Japanese War] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000), 91.

desire of defining the identity of China.³¹³ By representing the politically charged landscape in the 1930s and 1940s, photography made a great contribution to constructing and enhancing national discourse. Beyond aesthetic developments in the perception of landscape, the photographs also show political or ideological implications.

The prosperity of the portable camera market had paralleled the rise of leisure travel, cultural investigation and national tour in the Republican period. The different genres of records—art photography, travel snapshots, and ethnographic photographs jointly produce a moving photographic archive of the amateur photographers and a portable landscape of modern China.

³¹³ Sarah E. Fraser, “Approaching the Boundaries of a National Landscape: Picturing the Frontier 1927–1948,” In *Studies on 20th Century Shanshuihua*, 371–86. Lu Fusheng, ed. *Conference Proceedings, 20th century Chinese Landscape Painting. June 9–11, 2006*. Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publisher, 2006.

Chapter 5: Reconfiguring Realism: Transformative Pictorialism and New Visions

Introduction

Beyond the hobby and leisure activities, some amateur photographer embraced photography as serious art. In the 1920s and 1930s, photography as a Western-style art form had been recognized and legitimized through the appropriation and adaption of traditional-style ink painting by many Chinese amateur photographers. The efforts of the amateur photographers expanded the boundary of photographic expression and enriched the vocabulary of Chinese modern art. Beyond the appropriation of traditional painting, some serious amateur photographers exhibited the artistic quality of photography by focusing on the patterning of light and shade, composition and atmospheric effect. The examination of formalistic beauty in photography suggests a breakthrough in the understanding of photography.

Meanwhile, Collages, photomontages and design photography related to modernism offered a new perspective to represent the increasingly industrialized modern world. The photographs with sharply focused views of mechanic objects, architecture, and plants highlight a contrast with pictorialism, revealing the camera's ability to represent the world in a completely objective manner.

5.1 Transformative Pictorialism: Imaginative and Realistic Expression

Chen Wanli, in his first photographic album in 1924, enthusiastically argued that photography was not simply a mechanical production but also an artistic creation that brought together subject, composition, and lighting.³¹⁴ It was worth noting that in his

³¹⁴ Chen Wanli 陳萬里, "Dafengji zixu 大風集自序 [Preface of Dafeng Album]," in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 120-121.

essay, photography had been elevated to a status of “art” rather than the craft or technique. An article in November 1923 *The Eastern Times* declared that “Fine-art Photography” (*Meishu sheying* 美術攝影) was a new genre of fine art.³¹⁵ In the 1920s, Hu Boxiang, a member of the Hua Society, pointed out that fine art photography not only pursued true representation, but also emphasized the artistic quality.³¹⁶ As Ouyang Huiqiang stated in “Photography Companion” (*Sheying zhinan* 攝影指南) in 1923, what distinguished fine-art photography from other genres like photojournalism was “painterly effect” (*Huayi* 畫意). From the perspective of traditional painting theory, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), a famous conservative intellectual, expressed appreciation for the “painterly effect” shown in Ouyang’s photographs.³¹⁷

Since the early 1930s, photography, which was originally seen as a Western-style art form, has been localized through the adaption of traditional-style ink painting. The discussions about fine art photography attempted to develop a series of local photographic vocabulary and the efforts of the amateur photographers expanded the boundary of photographic expression and enriched the vocabulary of Chinese modern art. Liu Bannong also made great contributions to photographic theory. His long essay “The Talk on Photography” gave an insight into linking photographic techniques with Chinese traditional artistic spirit, suggesting the divorcing form the mechanism and an introduction of artistic spirit, respectively, which link the pictorialist photography with traditional style painting.³¹⁸ In the 1930s, two similar terms *pictorialism* (*huayi sheying*

³¹⁵ Chun Feng 春風, “sheying yi meishu zhiyi 攝影亦美術之一 [Photography as a Fine Art],” *the Eastern Times*, 1923, November 17, 13.

³¹⁶ Hu Boxiang 胡伯翔, “Meishu sheying tan 美術攝影談 [Talk on Fine Art Photography],” *The China Focus* 3, no.6 (1928): 37-38.

³¹⁷ Kang Youwei 康有為, “Huayi pingyu 畫意評語 [Criticism on Pictorialism],” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 88-113.

³¹⁸ Liu Bannong, “Bannong tanying,” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 207-209.

畫意攝影) and *art photography* (*yishu sheying* 藝術攝影) have been used to refer to a broader range of styles distinct from the documentary style.³¹⁹

A group of art photographers in the 1920s and 1930s successfully represent the aesthetic sensibility of an intellectual world. In respect of artistic practice, the fine-art photographs taken by the members of the Light Society and Hua Society feature soft-focus and darkroom skills, creating an aesthetic atmosphere that counteracted any mechanical effects. The most representative art photographer of this period is Liu Bannong. He became a self-taught amateur photographer when he studied phonetics in Paris in the early 1920s and dedicated himself to art photography after returning to China. Liu's 1920s works were known for them with soft-focus, limited range of tones and specific technical methods like gum bichromate and bromoil processes, which was widely embraced by many European and American photographers who attempted to elevate photograph as fine art in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

The photograph *Pond and Light of the Early Morning Sun* (池塘月色) that produced with heavy gum bichromate and bromoil processes, features a dreamy landscape with the reflections of the trees (**Fig.5.1**). The photographer draws on the dark shadows of European and American pictorial photography, and the early silver-salt process to make the image with intense tones and rich layers. The pictorial elements such as the faint morning light that converges in the clouds, the mirror representation that reflects the branches of birch trees, and the lush forest in the distance contributed to the aesthetic and sentimental atmosphere. Liu Bannong's personal signature and inscription are also marked in the bottom left corner of the picture. Liu's photograph

³¹⁹ "Sheying shang de huayi 攝影上的畫意 [Painterly effect of photography]," *Chinese Kodakery* 5, no.11 (1934): 16. Lu Shifu criticized the limited range of subjects that traditional pictorialism with reference to painting represented and less developed techniques of the pictorialist photographers mastered. Lu Shifu 盧施福, "Wode yishu sheying guan 我的藝術攝影觀 [The understanding of art photography]," *Sheying zhoukan* 攝影週刊 [Photographic Weekly], no.3 (1936): 17-18.

echoes the 1904 artwork *The Pond-Moonlight* by American pictorialist photographer Edward Steichen (1879-1973). Both photographers utilized the great skills in depicting the relationship between light and shadow and space, creating an atmosphere as beautiful and quiet as a painting. The moonlight in Steichen's work symbolizes the final stage of pictorialism in the European-American world, while the morning sunlight in Liu's work suggests the wide acceptance of photography as a new art form in China.

The work by Liu Bannong inherits the artistic quality of the European and American pictorialism movement and opens up the infinite possibilities of photography as a new art form. It also features the “fuzzy” style that was popular in Chinese photography in the 1920s. This photograph also provides a new perspective on a long-obscured question in Chinese photographic history: was Chinese pictorialism or art photography a legacy of the European and American pictorialism movement, or was it something new that emerges from the indigenous cultural context? In 1923, Liu Bannong “bought a small hand camera to play with” while studying in Paris and came into contact with a large number of modern photographic exhibitions and magazines.³²⁰ Like most Chinese artists who studied in France in the 1920s and 1930s, he did not follow the modernist movement but concerned more about the origin of art photography—pictorialism. Although pictorialism movement declined in the early twentieth century in Europe and America, it experienced the second wave in China. After returning to China, Liu joined the *Light Society* in Peking and became one of the main members who made great efforts to promote art photography. Liu Bannong connected the aestheticism of European and American pictorialism with the *yijing* of

³²⁰ Liu Bannong, “Bannong tanying,” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 176.

traditional Chinese painting theory, making it possible for pictorialism to be widely accepted in the local cultural environment.

The aesthetic quality and pioneering darkroom skills that Liu Bannong employed inspired the next generation of art photographers. Among these art photographers, Lang Jingshan's composite photography directly connected the pictorialism with the pursuit of national identity in an international stage. In fact, Lang explored diverse styles in the late 1920s, but eventually he established his signature style in the 1930s. Lang's 1929 photographic album "Jingshan photographic album" (*Jingshan sheyingji* 靜山攝影集) collected his early photographic works which explored a variety of subjects ranging from urban architecture to domestic environment. He coined the term *jinji zhaoxiang* (composite photography 集錦照相) in a 1940 booklet "A Compendium of Composite Photography" (*Jijin zhaoxiang gaiyao* 集錦照相概要), and further explained the method of making composite photography in the book "The Method of Composite Photography" (*Jingshan jijin zuofa* 靜山集錦作法) which was firstly published in 1941.³²¹ In a series of articles about the ideas and method of composite photography, he explained that the making of composite photography was based on the concept of traditional Chinese painting. Approaching an imaginative landscape, he modified the space and composition according to the *Six Canons of Chinese Paintings* proposed by Xie He 謝赫 (479-502).³²²

Characterized by misty landscapes and wandering countrymen, Lang's pictorialism employed intensive darkroom methods to assemble fragmental literati

³²¹ Lang Jingshan 郎靜山, "Jijin zhaoxiang 集錦照相 [Composite Photography]," in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 264-268.

³²² Lang Jingshan 郎靜山, *Jingshan Jijin zuofa* 靜山集錦作法 [Techniques in Composite Picture-making] (Taipei: The China Series Publishing Committee, 1958), 10.

motifs into an emulative traditional ink painting. His appropriation of traditional-style painting reframed a seemingly lost utopian landscape of China, promoting an idealized past through photography. Responding to the discourse of cultural radicalism in the May Fourth Movement, most art photographers were neither on the side of complete conservatism nor on the side of radicalism. As a neo-traditionalist, Lang Jingshan made great efforts to adapt traditional imagery into a modern medium, developing a dialogue between the past and present, art and technology. The 1934 photograph *Majestic Solitude* (*Chunshu qifeng* 春樹奇峰) was a composite of two original photographs. Lang placed a pine tree in foreground and used a chain of mountains as a distant background (**Fig.5.2.1; Fig.5.2.2; Fig.5.2.3**). The middle ground, a misty mountain view, was depicted as a reference to the blank space in traditional-style painting. Lang's friend Ma Gongyu 馬公愚 (1893-1969), the prestigious calligrapher, painter and professor in Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, wrote the calligraphic notes for *Majestic Solitude*. The inscription on the photograph praises the magnificence of Yellow Mountain and the exquisite skills of Lang Jingshan. *Majestic Solitude*, the first composite photograph created by Lang, was accepted by the British Salon Photographic Competition in 1934, which greatly enhanced his confidence in creation.³²³ Another 1934 work, *Riverside Spring* (*Qingjiang xiaoji* 清江曉汲), which shows more similarities to painting, was composed of two photographs. Lang employed even more sophisticated darkroom skills to incorporate fragmented images—branches in the foreground, a fisherman in the middle ground and misty mountains in the distant—into a complete picture with a flat perspective (**Fig.5.3**). A lot of space in two photographs

³²³ Xiao Yongsheng 蕭永盛, *Huayi jijin lang jingshan* 畫意集錦郎靜山 [Pictorialism, Composite and Lang Jingshan] (Taipei: Xiongshi tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2004), 138; Also see Juliane Noth, "Mountains and a Lot of Water: How Photography Reshaped Imaginations of the Chinese Landscape," in *Einfluss, Strömung, Quelle: Aquatische Metaphern der Kunstgeschichte* edited by Ulrich Pfisterer and Christine Tauber (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019), 139-154.

was hidden into the blank, and the light and shadow were erased, which suggests the photographer attempted to make an emulative literati painting.

The moment of the fishermen's life captured by Lang Jingshan is a particular response to the drastic changes: the daily lives of most Chinese people were isolated from the modernization, and the structures of inner stability and self-sufficiency were not completely destroyed. The poetic sentiment of everyday life that was displayed through pictorialism made a great contrast with the subjects of nineteenth-century colonial photography. This contrast precisely refers to the artistic characters of the local culture that Lang Jingshan and his contemporaries pursued. The pictorialist landscape photography, isolated from the metropolitan bustle, had been seen as resistance to the industrialized cityscape since the early twentieth century. Lang's pictorialism not only manifests the stillness and subtlety of landscape but also creates a mysterious atmosphere that could be interpreted as exoticism as a continuation of colonial photography in the nineteenth century.

Lang Jingshan was adept at capturing the rhythmic and beautiful moments from everyday life. However, this realistic approach was gradually transformed in the mid-1930s into a fixed mode named "composite photography" (*jijin zhaoxiang* 集錦照相), in which a few fragments of the landscape were selected and collaged into photographic works that closely resembled literati paintings, following the composition of traditional paintings and using sophisticated darkroom techniques. The main principles of making composite photographs, as Lang Jingshan talked in his article "Composite photography", were to change European linear perspective into Chinese perspective and "arrange the positions of the subjects" (*jingying weizhi* 經營位置):

Chinese painting employs a bird's eye view perspective...It is consistent with the way human eyes observe things...Therefore, the making of composite photography is also based on the perspective of (Chinese) painting...You can arrange the foreground, middle ground and background of each photograph, creating a monumental landscape by arranging the locations of the subjects.³²⁴

The “camera’s eye,” which refers to the mechanical effect, indicates the capacity to exhibit the visual accuracy and truth of the world, but what Lang attempted to overcome was the true representation.³²⁵ The visual mode dominated by Western perspective was challenged by a non-Western way of seeing. Lang not only restored the traditional imagery of the Chinese landscape but also reconstructed an essentially Chinese way of seeing and imagining traditional Chinese painting.

The emulative landscape photography in the Republican era was essentially a modern alternative to approaching eternity and immortality that was the essence of the declined literati spirit. The way of perceiving nature rooted in literati landscape paintings was to develop a spiritual connection between subject and nature through contemplation. Despite masterful skills, representing the past through a new medium suggests an inevitable contradiction and struggle. Lang Jingshan consciously leveraged photography to develop “traditional pictorialism” in close relation with the pursuit of national identity on an international stage.³²⁶ An indistinctly national sentiment appeared in the artworks in the early 1930s. The appropriation of traditional style ink

³²⁴ Lang Jingshan, “jijin zhaoxiang,” in *Zhongguo jindai sheying yishu meixue xuan*, 264-268.

³²⁵ William Schaefer, “Montages Landscape,” in *Shadow Modernism: Photography, Writing, and Space in Shanghai, 1925–1937* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 145-179.

³²⁶ Shu-Mei Shih, “Loving the Other: May Fourth Occidentalism in the Global Context,” in *The Lure of the Modern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California University of California Press, 2001), 128-148.

paintings into a new medium suggests a dynamic response to encroaching westernization and resistance to the colonial legacy. As argued by Lothar Ledderose, the nineteenth-century revival of antiquarianism redefined China's identity, showing its advantages in the cultural and political competition in the world.³²⁷ Composite photography gave Lang a competitive edge in international salon photographic competitions. In the 1930s, his works were frequently selected for international salons and exhibitions in Japan and Europe.

The landscape photograph with stylistic references to traditional Chinese painting shaped the international imagination of China.³²⁸ Pictorialism, or fine art photography, suggests an intimate connection between painting and photography. The high dependency on painting language prevented the photographer from examining the uniqueness of the photographic language. Some pictorialist photographers in the 1930s clung to clichéd concepts and stereotypical modes of expression, following the aesthetic paradigm guided by veteran photographers and connoisseurs.

The invention of traditional pictorialist photography echoed the revolution of Chinese painting in Republican China. Similar to *nihonga*, Japanese painting, which was used in opposition to *yōga*, Western painting, “national painting” (*guohua* 國畫) was regarded as a reforming “Asian/Oriental” artistic forms against the backdrop of encroaching westernization.³²⁹ “National painting” had been developing within the context of the National Essence movement of the 1910s and 1920s, which aimed to

³²⁷ Lothar Ledderose, “Aesthetic Appropriation of Ancient Calligraphy in Modern China,” in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions* edited by Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith (New York: Dept. of Asian Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 212-45.

³²⁸ In the 1930s Lang joined the salon competition more than 300 times and nearly thousand works were exhibited in competition. In 1931, his work *Willow and Boats* (*Liuyin qingzhou* 柳蔭輕舟) was selected for the International Salon Competition in Japan; in 1934, his composite photograph *Majestic Solitude* (*Chunshu qifeng* 春樹奇峰) joined the British salon competition. See Kin-keung Lai, “The Life and Art Photography of Lang Jingshan (1892-1995)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Hong Kong, 2000), 10-69.

³²⁹ Aida Yuen Wong, “Tradition is a Foreign Country,” in *Parting the Mists* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 3-34.

differentiate Chinese culture from the non-Chinese.³³⁰ As “the foreign” was embedded in Chinese identity, some “Western-style” art forms such as photography and sculpture had been adapted into local artistic expressions.

Photographers appropriated terms and concepts from painting, elevating the level of photography and legitimizing it as a fine art; painters—both traditional-style painters like Zhang Daqian and Western-style painters like Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953)—treated photography as a symbol of scientific modernity, adopting some photographic practices like plein air sketching (drawing from nature outdoors 户外写生) to educate the students in Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, which suggests photography was transforming the way of perceiving and depicting nature among modern artists. As Yi Gu argued, the camera had been used as a teaching tool for outdoor sketching, because the viewfinder of the camera can help students to establish composition closer to Western painting.³³¹ The emphasis and use of photography show that modern artists and art educators were consciously encouraging students to change the way they observed nature, attempting to promote *realism* in the modern art world. The mutual influence of painting and photography contributed to the reform and innovation of modern Chinese art.

Beyond the appropriation of traditional painting, some serious amateur photographers exhibited the artistic quality of photography by focusing on the patterning of light and shade, composition and atmospheric effect. The examination of formalistic beauty in photography suggests a breakthrough in the understanding of photography. A increasing number of amateur photographers consciously emphasized

³³⁰ Julia F. Andrews, “Traditional Painting in New China: Guohua and the Anti-Rightist Campaign,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (Aug. 1990): 555-577.

³³¹ Yi Gu, “Scientizing Vision in China: Photography, Outdoor Sketching, and the Reinvention of Landscape Perception, 1912–1949” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 2009), 58-101.

the artistic quality of the photographs through focusing on the patterning of light and shade, atmospheric effect and spiritual meanings. In 1928, Hu Boxiang discussed that composition, light and shade played a key part in the process of photo-making.³³²

Shao Woyun, a crucial member of Hua She, published an article “Brief Talk on Fine-art Photography” (*meishu sheying lvetan* 美術攝影略談) in *Chinese Journal of Photography* (*Zhonghua sheying zazhi* 中華攝影雜誌) in 1932, arguing that the “lighting” and “composition” were the key factors in art photography: “Even some landscape shows no special character, if the photographer can consider the lighting and composition and apply the developed scientific techniques, it will be a good fine art photograph.” He used his photograph *Steamer in the sunset* (*mubo* 暮泊) to illustrate how to arrange the composition: “the steamer anchoring in the harbor is the photographic subject, this scene was captured in the sunset, the black clouds in the upper part of the photo suggests the time. All the lines in this photo are straight, the long mast of the steamer sets off the light clouds, manifesting its outstanding shape. The shorter light pole makes the composition less monotonous. The steamer is arranged in the prominent position, it is not hard to see that, which plays a significant part in photography because the reader’s attention should be paid in the subject (**Fig.5.4**).”³³³ Shao Woyun explained clearly how to arrange the subject for a better composition in art photography, linking the photographic techniques with the creation of painterly effects and aesthetic atmosphere.

The efforts of 1930s amateur photographers such as Lu Shifu, Jin Shisheng, and Chen Chuanling contributed to the diversity of subjects and styles in the history of

³³² Hu Boxiang 胡伯翔, “Meishu sheying tan 美術攝影談 [On Fine Art Photography],” *The China Focus* 3, no.6 (1928): 37-38.

³³³ Shao Woyun 邵臥云, “Meishu sheying luetan 美術攝影略談 [Brief Talk on Fine-art Photography],” *Zhonghua sheying zazhi*, no.2 (1932), 102.

modern Chinese photography. Lu Shifu was a celebrated doctor in Shanghai and the founder of the Black and White Photographic Society. One photograph taken by Lu on Mount Huang makes a good reference for the transition of the understanding of pictorialism in the 1930s. The photograph demonstrates a clear transition from the imaginative landscape to a more direct snapshot from nature. In the photograph, he captured a scene in which a handful of travelers stand in the pine forest and enjoy the scenic beauty (**Fig.5.5**). Lu depicted the towering pine trees—an enduring motif in Chinese paintings—in the foreground and mid-ground in a realistic way, which was distinct from the imaginative and generalized landscape that Lang Jingshan and another traditionalist pictorialists produced. In the background, he also used a pioneering technique to show the misty landscape, creating a poetic atmosphere resonant with literati meanings. But the depiction of the travelers in the pine forest suggests a straightforward snapshot that reflected the nature in a pure form.

The rise of leisure travel promoted the transformation of perceiving nature, and the new approach to landscape suggests a transition from pictorialist representation to straight photography in the 1930s China. Lu Shifu appealed to the photographic hobbyists for trying more subjects, which not only suggests a shift to the reality, but also a transformation of the perceptual mode of nature. As an enthusiast of both travel and photography, a great number of photographs were taken during leisure travel (**Fig.5.6**). Instead of the imaginative landscape, he preferred to employ a more realistic approach to capture the rhythms and dynamics of the natural environment.

Jin Shisheng, who has the dual achievements of being an outstanding urban planner and a pioneering amateur photographer, also made a breakthrough in artistic photographic expression. Born to a merchant family in Wuhan in 1910, Jin taught himself photography at the age of thirteen, when he received his first Kodak camera.

He started his photographic career in Shanghai in the 1930s, when he studied civil engineering at Tongji University. In 1938, with the support of the Humboldt Foundation, Jin Shisheng went to Germany to study road and urban engineering. Embracing the definition of an amateur as a serious and creative artist, Jin contributed greatly to promoting the transformation of pictorialism and even modernist experimentation in some cases.³³⁴

A photograph of Jin Shisheng from 1934 features the beauty of Slender West Lake in Yangzhou, his hometown (**Fig.5.7**). In this work, he intentionally uses the traditional Chinese “moon gate” as a device, framing the landscape of the arched bridge and weeping willows by the lakeside to create the visual effect of a Chinese circular fan. In the foreground, he captures a scene of everyday life: A little boy sitting on the gate shows his back to the audience; a young woman stands beside him, smiling and talking to him. Accompanying the photograph is a short poem he wrote: “A picturesque landscape with the lake and the reflections of clouds; the visitors are characters in this beautiful painting.”³³⁵ Although he defined the landscape in a picture, his creation goes beyond the works of contemporary pictorialist photographers. Instead of borrowing his subject matter from literati paintings, his was a pioneering technique for depicting the daily life of his subjects. The juxtaposition of a prosaic scene and the eternal beauty of the landscape mark a remarkable break with the emulative representation of landscape.

From imaginative pictorialism to realistic pictorialism, the art photographers’ emphasis was on representing nature in detail and expressing the requisite sentiment through the camera beyond darkroom skills. Jin Shisheng’s photographs of the rural landscape in the suburbs of Shanghai tended to be realistic images representing the

³³⁴ Jin Hua 金華, “Jin shisheng nianbiao 金石聲年表 [The chronology of Jin Shisheng],” in *Chenji: Jin Shisheng yu xiandai zhongguo sheying*, 675–85.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

nature of objects form and state. He was a master of constructing the composition of a photograph. A 1930s photograph of Suzhou made by constructed composition shows a seemingly deserted street and houses (**Fig.5.8**). He foregrounds a hanging lantern placed in the golden section of the photograph, placing a row of houses in the middle ground and moving clouds as the background. The spaces and depth are arranged perfectly. Further, he deployed masterful skill in representing texture and details of the object, which was rarely seen in traditional pictorialist photographs.

Jin Shisheng launched an innovative photographic magazine, *Feiyang*, in 1936. As editor-in-chief, he established an inclusive style of embracing sophisticated pictorialist photography as well as modernist exploration, representing a broad spectrum of modern Chinese photography. *Flying Eagle*, which had published a total of 19 issues in 19 months with the support of Guanlong Photographic Equipment Company, provided a platform for dedicated art photographers to demonstrate their talent. Jin Shisheng, as the chief editor, meticulously selected all the photographs, and organized them as specific themes and subjects. In issue 17 of *Flying Eagle* (1937), he selected a group of photographs featuring texture and patterns in nature, including Li Lixuan 李藜軒, Wei Nanchang's 魏南昌 reeds in the snow, and Lang Jing's autumn leaves; and some photographs displaying the tranquility of the countryside from Liu Xucang 劉旭滄 (1913-1966), Jiang Bingnan and Wu Zhongxing. He also chose photographs representing workers and laborers in the city, by Yang Yongma 楊永麻.

The deepening understanding of art photography benefited greatly from the flourishing metropolitan culture environment. The 1930s amateur photographers were open to pioneering photographic ideas and techniques from all over the world. One of Jin Shisheng's self-portraits very clearly reveals his wide artistic vision of the 1930s (**Fig.5.9**). According to Wu Hung's perceptive analysis of the various objects and

images in this compact space, two magazines—*The Young Companion* and the German Photography Annual (*Das Deutsche Lichtbild*)—symbolized his two main inspirations for photography: The former represented the flourishing Shanghai urban culture that contributed to “a cultural climax of Chinese modernity”; the latter, the foreign impact of international pictorialism and modernist photography movements in Europe and the United States. In Jin’s 1936 self-portrait, there are international photography magazines on the shelves beside him: four issues of German Photography Annual, the Japanese photography album *International Photography* (國際写真), the International Portrait Photography Catalog, and the British Journal Photographic Almanac.³³⁶ There were many shops selling international photography journals in Shanghai. The 1928 *Shanghai Sketch* (*Shanghai Manhua* 上海漫畫) introduced the cover design of the German Photography Annual.³³⁷ Luo Bonian lived in Shanghai from 1932 to 1935 and his archive includes receipts from A. S. Watson & Co, a pharmacy that also developed negatives and sold supplies. *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* was distributed by Kelly & Walsh, a Shanghai-based publisher.³³⁸

Both Lu Shifu and Jin Shisheng’s representations of ponds, rivers, villages, and rural architecture show strong inspiration from naturalism that international pictorialism emphasized and promoted. International pictorialism reached a peak of activity between 1890 and 1930 and included artists working in the USA, Europe, Asia and Australia. Pictorialist photographers not only reinforced photography’s status as an art alongside painting and drawing, but also treated photography as an interpretive and expressive medium that can evoke emotional sensations. The British

³³⁶ Wu Hung, “Self as Art: Jin Shisheng and His Interior Space,” in *Zooming In: Histories of Photography in China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 64–87.

³³⁷ *Shanghai Sketch*, no.35 (1928): 6.

³³⁸ Stephanie H. Tung, “Luo Bonian: Three Approaches,” in *Luo Bonian*, np.

photographer Peter Henry Emerson (1856-1936), in particular, sought ways to promote personal expression in camera images, and created an ‘epoch-making’ photographic album called *Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads*, emphasizing naturalism in his photographs. American photographer Edward Steichen were influenced by his training as a painter and frequently used chemicals to achieve prints that resembled soft, fuzzy mezzotints or wash drawings. His work *Pond-Moonlight* was made with the use of the gum-bichromate process in conjunction with platinum or iron-based emulsions, creating a fuzzy and romantic atmosphere effect. Photo-Secession, the active pictorialist photographic group led by Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) in the early twentieth century, expanded the artistic vocabulary of pictorialism. In addition to European-American pictorialism, Japanese art photography before World War II impacted 1930s amateur photographers. Japanese photographer and author Fukuhara Shinzō (1883-1948) proposed the theory of light, which is the aesthetic basis of *geijutsu shashin* (芸術写真 literally, art photography). Saito Tazunori's *How to Make Art Photographs* (1932) outlines four different approaches to the aesthetics of pictorialism: lyrical expression (*jojoteki hyogen* 徐々の表現), impressionistic expression (*inshoteki hyogen* 印象の表現), realistic expression (*shajitsuteki hyogen* 写実の表現) and constructivist expression (*koseiteki hyogen* 構成的表現). These four categories suggest a transforming understanding of art photography.³³⁹

Pictorialism declined in the early 1920s after the advent of Straight Photography. Straight Photography respects the camera's ability to faithfully reproduce an image of reality in sharp focus, rich detail and high contrast. Photographic critic Sadakichi Hartmann complained in “A Plea for Straight Photography” that pictorial

³³⁹ Kerry Ross, “Making Middlebrow Photography: The Aesthetics and Craft of Amateur Photography,” in *Photography for Everyone: The Cultural Lives of Cameras and Consumers in Early Twentieth-Century Japan*, 129-166.

photographers rely too much on dark room technology to produce blurred images and use special printing methods such as gum dichromate. Hartman further explained direct photography:

“Rely on your camera, on your eye, on your good taste and your knowledge of composition, consider every fluctuation of color, light, and shade, study lines and values and space division, patiently wait until the scene or object of your pictured vision reveals itself in its supremest moment of beauty.”³⁴⁰

Hartman’s query on pictorial photography coincides with Alfred Stieglitz’s transformation. In the 1910s, Stieglitz greatly appreciated the clear and rich details in Paul Strand’s works, which means rendering of abstract form and tonal variation, and a step toward modernist art. In late 1920s and early 1930s China, the transition of pictorialism from an imaginative expression to a realistic one echoed the decline of pictorialism and the advent of Straight Photography in 1920s Europe-America, albeit delayed by a few decades. However, the transition of pictorialism in China signifies a more contested turn in twentieth-century Chinese art.

In 1930s China, the transition of pictorialism from an imaginative expression to a realistic expression echoed the decline of pictorialism and the advent of Straight Photography in 1920s Europe and America. The art photographers’ emphasis was to represent the natural world in detail through the camera beyond the use of darkroom skills. However, when European-American pictorialism was gradually moving towards

³⁴⁰ Sadakichi Hartmann, “A Plea for Straight Photography,” *American Amateur Photographer*, no.16 (March 1904): 101-109.

modernist photography, an ongoing realism movement in the 1930s modern Chinese art world remarked a break with pictorialism.

“Photography is a superior realism because of its perfect *draughtsmanship*.”³⁴¹ photography had long been seen as the epitome of realism, early names for photography all suggest the idea of drawing and engraving. Don Slater categorizes photographic realism into three types: representational realism, which refers to a superior ability of representing the world; ontological or existential realism, which indicates that the ability of photography to become a witness of events, to recall the past, to record the ruined; mechanical realism, which connects photography with a modern technological vision through the good reproducibility.³⁴² As the modernization and industrialization in Republican China, photography was inevitably connected with the technological advanced world.

Lu Shifu explored the new and distinct approach to photographing. Instead of appropriating the painting subjects, Lu Shifu encouraged the photographers to take photographs on a variety of subjects in everyday life, which expanded the boundary of modern Chinese photography. Simultaneously, many new subjects of art, politics and conflicts were established through photography in the Republican period. The capacity to represent reality combined photography with the dynamics of modern world. *Xiezhēn*, the characters for photography in Japanese since the 1850s (*shashin*) also appear in Chinese as an alternative name for photography.³⁴³

Photographic realism had been filtering into the public’s minds due to mass reproducibility. In the early Republican era, the new intellectuals and emerging

³⁴¹ Don Slater, “Photography and Modern Vision,” in *Visual Culture* edited by Chris Jenks (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 218-37.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Yi Gu, “What’s in a Name? Photography and the Reinvention of Visual Truth in China, 1840–1911,” *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 1 (2013): 120-138.

bourgeoisies leveraged the photography to spread knowledge of democracy and science. In the 1920s and 1930s, realism as a way of faithful reflecting the world have been upheld by many artists and critics. The trend of realism opens for different interpretations. The style of mimeticism, which was fully exhibited in late Qing and early Republican pictorials like *Dianzhizhai Pictorial* (點石齋畫報), developed a different approach to representing reality.³⁴⁴ Progressive intellectuals appreciated realism's break with Chinese pictorial traditions, employing realism as a tool to reflect the real world. Some intellectuals, such as Kang Youwei, argued that the realist representation of the world was a more advanced type than the conceptual dynamism in traditional Chinese art, because of realism's affinity with scientific practices related to self-strengthening and independence.³⁴⁵ Xu Beihong claimed that the highest state of art, is to "represent nature as if it were real" (*weimiaoweixiao* 惟妙惟肖). In the first National Exhibition of Art in 1929, there were conflicting views of realism in the published statements of the painter Xu Beihong and the poet Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1896-1931). Xu Beihong believed the mimesis while Xu Zhimo was open to expressionistic experimentation. Both of them desired to appropriate a Western model to reconstruct Chinese realism, but they insisted on the different approaches to realism.

Realism was considered a new and progressive art style due more to ideology than aesthetic value and redefined the national identity and crisis before the Second Sino-Japanese War.³⁴⁶ For the intellectuals who acclaimed socialist realism, realism potentially revealed the historical principles of the world.³⁴⁷ In a broader context,

³⁴⁴ Laikwan Pang, "The Pictorial Turn and Realist Desire," in *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 34-68.

³⁴⁵ Eugene Wang, "Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency," in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*. ed. Maxwell Hearn & Judith Smith (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 102-161.

³⁴⁶ David Der-wei Wang, "In the Name of the Real," in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*. ed. Maxwell Hearn & Judith Smith (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 12-27.

³⁴⁷ Georg Lukacs, "The historical Novel and the Crisis of Bourgeois Realism," in *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 171-230.

photography as a realistic way of seeing has been brought into the new framework established by Chinese artists, which utilized realism as a Western model to rejuvenate Chinese art.

5.2 A Fragmented Reality: Photomontage and Modernist Exploration

The photographic modernism movement in Europe and America between the wars stimulated a lasting trend of photographic experimentation among the Chinese amateurs. As discussed in chapter 4, Jin Shisheng and Luo Bonian, urban modernist photographers in Shanghai, creatively responded to these exciting modernist movements in their work. In fact, photographic modernism in 1930s China was not limited in urban images. Design photography and photomontages provided a new perspective to understand the Chinese modern art landscape. The unique viewpoints and abstract forms in photographs reconfigured fragmented images of moving spectacles during their travels into an experimental montage.

Design Photography (*Tu'an sheying* 圖案攝影) emerged within the context of the decline of the pictorialism and the rise of photographic experimentation in the 1930s. In 1930 *The Young Companion*, Zhang Jianwen 張建文 published several photographs representing mechanical and artificial objects such as wheels and fans in the section of “A Study of Designs by Photographs”. *The Eastern Times* released a special section of *photo designs*, showcasing the close-ups with emphasis of the lines, angles and texture of the artificial objects, including feathers and paper.³⁴⁸ Zhang Guangyu was one of the earliest artists in China who drew the modernist influence from Europe-America. The two photomontages he created transformed everyday objects and materials into artistic

³⁴⁸ Zhang Jianwen 張建文, “Tu’anhua de sheying 圖案化的攝影 [Photo design],” *Liangyou*, no.48 (1930), 34; Zhang Guangyu 張光宇, “Sheying tu’an 攝影圖案 [Photo design],” *the Eastern Times* 2, no.10 (1932): 9.

subjects. He captured a door, windows, and wire poles around his house, duplicating four copies of the original photograph and then resembled them into a kaleidoscopic montage.³⁴⁹ The accompanying words with the montages argued that each everyday object could be represented as the artistic subjects in the photographs; even the advertisements and design photographs could be regarded as art.

Employing new techniques such as collage, modernist artists attempted to reshape human perception by transforming everyday subjects and materials into art, which broadened the definition of art in general. The close-ups and photomontages of the ordinary objects in the 1930s were popular among urban photographic amateurs. In the tenth issue of *Changhong* in 1935, Huang Jiezhi 黄劫之 introduced design photography or photo signs as a new subject in art photography, encouraging amateurs to explore the method of making collages of design by themselves.³⁵⁰

Some advanced amateurs were eager to demonstrate their sophisticated techniques to manipulating image. Luo Bonian made several collages in the 1930s. He transformed palm fronds and iron fences into geometric patterns, arranging palm leaves around a central point or forming a larger abstract image in a repetitive pattern (**Fig.5.10.1; Fig.5.10.2; Fig.5.10.3**). Employing collage and other modernist techniques, modernist Chinese photographers attempted to reshape human perception by transforming everyday botanical subjects into abstract art, and to broaden the definition of art in general. The promotion of everyday aesthetics inspired him to capture ordinary subjects in a domestic environment. Luo took several close-up shots of a crystal doll against a background with modern patterns, framed with beautiful flowers and plants. The collage exhibits a blend of traditional aesthetics and modernism.

³⁴⁹ Zhang Guangyu 張光宇, "Sheying tu'an xuan 攝影圖案選 [The selection of photo designs]," *the Eastern Times* 7, no.7 (1935): 17.

³⁵⁰ Huang Jiezhi 黄劫之, "Tu'an sheying tan 圖案攝影談 [Talk on design photography]," *Changhong*, no.10 (1935): 3-4.

Increasingly fragmented images of metropolitan life served as a metaphor for a rapidly mechanized modern world. Through an examination of Chinese modernist artists' montages, I will explore how the 1930s Chinese artists reconfigured fragmented images of urban spectacles into an experimental montage. A kaleidoscopic montage in which all pictorial elements were arranged in a center-periphery mode gained popularity in mass media. Photomontage, "the fragmentation of reality," as Peter Burger puts it, became a metaphor for the fragmentation of modern life.³⁵¹ Collages of multiple photographic copies of architectural forms were very popular in mass media. A collage titled "The Metropolis" perfectly reflected the shock and fragmented visual experiences of urban architecture. In *Pictorial Weekly*, Zhuang Lijian 莊禮建 made a collage of double prints of a tall ladder against a high-rise building, displaying the exquisite structure of the modern architecture in the 1930s (Fig.5.11).³⁵² In his entry for a design photography competition held by the photographic magazine *Changhong* in 1936, Gu Zhibin 顧志斌 deployed a close-up perspective to represent the steel beams and architectural components of the Garden Bridge, then duplicated the copy and made a mirror image.³⁵³ Viewers had an immersive visual experience when they looked at montages. The photomontage has been developing within a complex and rich urban experience. Qin Tailai 秦泰來 (1905-?), who specialized in photographing film stars in Shanghai, was good at juxtaposing the modern women with the modern city. In *The Young Companion*, he published his experimental photomontage titled "Photo Designs: A New Way of Assembling Photographs into Artistic Designs".³⁵⁴ The periphery of the

³⁵¹ Peter Bürger, "On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeois Society," in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 35-54.

³⁵² Zhuang Lijian 莊禮健, "Sheying tu'an 攝影圖案 [Photo design]," *Sheying huabao* 攝影畫報 [Pictorial Weekly] 11, no.18 (1935): 19.

³⁵³ Gu Zhibin 顧志斌, "Tu'an sheying jingsai 圖案攝影競賽 [Design Photography Completion]," *Changhong* 2, no.4 (1936): 14-15.

³⁵⁴ Qin Tailai 秦泰來, "Zhaopian meishu tu'an 照片美術圖案 [Photo Designs: A New Way of Assembling Photographs into Artistic Designs]," *Liangyou*, no.113 (1936): 18.

montage shows several small montages of skyscrapers, clocks, female bodies and paper-cut silhouettes; the central kaleidoscopic montage displays a woman with a big smile against pine trees with a center-periphery mode (**Fig.5.12**). The montage is an assemblage of diverse popular visual elements in the pictorials: modern woman, the Western clock, and the high-rise building was reconfigured into an allegorical montage of the metropolis.

Beyond the colonial legacy, the thriving mass media in Shanghai embraced the transformation from the panoramic view to a montage of assembled fragmented images.³⁵⁵ In the 1930s, Shanghai left-wing artists drew on the works of George Grosz (1893-1959) and John Heartfield (1891-1968), both members of Berlin Dada. Zhang Guangyu, for example, transformed earlier photomontages closely associated with the popular culture into satirical works with deep cultural and political implications, which transformed photomontage into a powerful medium to depict reality and reshape the human perception of the world.³⁵⁶ Grosz, who emigrated to the US in 1933, made a creative photomontage entitled “American Landscape.”³⁵⁷ His artwork had been well known in China since Lu Xun's translation of *Was Peterchens Freunde erzählen* (*What Peterkin's Friends Say*) which included drawings by George Grosz. In the 1930s, Shanghai artists drew a lot of influence from Grosz's work due to his reputation in left-wing circles in both China and Japan.³⁵⁸

The April 1934 issue of *Modern Sketch* published a photomontage titled “Shanghai Landscape” (*Shanghai Fengjing* 上海風景) (**Fig.5.13**).³⁵⁹ The artist intentionally

³⁵⁵ Paul W. Ricketts, “Kaleidoscopic Modernisms: Montage Aesthetics in Shanghai and Tokyo Pictorials of the 1920s and 1930s,” in *Liangyou, Kaleidoscopic Modernity and the Shanghai Global Metropolis, 1926-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 17-44.

³⁵⁶ Andrés Mario Zervigón, “The Weimar Era and Photo-consciousness, 1919–1932,” in *Photography and Germany*, 83–119.

³⁵⁷ George Grosz, “American Landscape,” *Vanity Fair* 41, no.3 (November 1933): 35.

³⁵⁸ Paul Bevan: “Part II: Adoption of Foreign Models in Art and Literature,” in *A Modern Miscellany: Shanghai Cartoon Artists, Shao Xunmei's Circle and the Travels of Jack Chen, 1926-1938* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 93-166.

³⁵⁹ Anonymous, “Shanghai Landscape,” *Modern Sketch*, no.1 (1934): 23.

reconfigured several fragmented bodily images into a composite. The photomontage is put against a neutral blank background. Several gendered images were superposed on each other: a modern man's face, a female body in swimming suit, female legs with silk stockings, high heels, breasts, a modern dress; some urban cultural symbols: mah-jong, lottery tickets, cigarette boxes, a drink bottle, and a tire are scattered around; the gun and a distorted face that appears to have been cut from film posters; an Indian appears at the bottom right of the image. The assemblage of the fragments in mass print reflects the hybridity and dynamism of Shanghai culture.

A composite named *The Typical Chinese Person* (*Biaozhun zhonguoren* 標準中國人) in *Modern Sketch* (*shidai manhua* 時代漫畫), 1936 signifies a shift from superficially entertaining representations to deep satire (**Fig.5.14**).³⁶⁰ The artist employed the cut-and-paste approach to depicting a “typical Chinese”: he wears a Western hat and Chinese dress, hugs a nude sculpture and carries a basket on his back containing the Confucian classics, Peking opera, temples and a bronze ding (ancient ceremonial cauldron), all symbolizing the heavy burden of the nation. He is suffering the airstrikes and attacks from the tanks, but his sword is a stage prop from Peking opera. The assemblage of the fragmented images is a metaphor for the weak nation, which had suffered armed invasion by foreigners, and his terrified face with sealed mouth suggests the country is unable to defend itself. The 1936 photomontage satires the policy of “nonresistance” (*bu dikang* 不抵抗) toward Japan of Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 (1887-1975), showing the strong opposition from the left-circle artists in Shanghai.

³⁶⁰ Anonymous, “The Typical Chinese Person,” *Modern Sketch*, no.25 (1936): 20.

The techniques of collage and montages in the 1930s characterized by modernist exploration went in a different direction from Lang Jingshan's composite skills, signifying a transition from traditional pictorialism to modernist exploration. Lang's composite photographs usually have a fixed theme, but the modernist photomontage encourages the viewers to explore the multiple implications by themselves. As a sophisticated photographer, Lang also used his skill in compositing to combine several photographs into a complete image. For example, in a 1933 composite, he juxtaposed a photograph of a reclining female nude with a view of troops marching that was probably cut from a newspaper, suggesting the country is suffering the military incursion after Mukden Incident in 1931 (**Fig.5.15**).³⁶¹ The depiction of femininity and its allegory with the motherland suggests a bonding that the photographer attempted to enhance. The patriotic sentiments that Lang tried to convey are obvious in this composite.

The montage of "The Typical Chinese Person" with many fragmented visions as a metaphor for the Chinese modernity contains many politicalized implications. These two kinds of the photographic composite were both developing in response to the political turmoil in the 1930s. The collage of the new sensations of the city life and the satirical montage for politics and society contributed to the modernist photographic experiments in the 1930s. The upcoming war brought the modernist photography an abrupt end. However, the 1930s photographic experimentation remains one of the richest in the history of Chinese photography.

³⁶¹ Lang Jingshan, "nude," *The Modern Miscellany* 4, no.5 (March 1933): np.

Conclusion

The dissertation discusses the ways in which Chinese amateur photographers embraced new photographic technology and invented local photographic vocabulary from 1900 to 1937. As one of the greatest technological achievements of the nineteenth century, photography simultaneously symbolized modernity and made it possible. In the context of Republican China, the dual powers of photography—to document the social turmoil and to rejuvenate Chinese art—made multilayered connections among a technological novelty, an emerging modern nation, and the transformative art world.

Chinese visual modernity in the first half of the twentieth century was particularly multilayered. In early twentieth-century China, the new generation of intellectuals saw photography as one of the achievements of “Western” modernization, treating it as a symbol of scientific modernity. Don Slater argued that photography brings modernity to a culminating point in that the means of representing the world, and the means of knowing it, are brought together within a single and unified technological vision.³⁶² Embracing and adapting new Western technologies was central to Chinese modernization. The rapid development of the modern Chinese printing industry and the great reproducibility of photography brought images to wide audiences in a fast, immediate, and inexpensive way.³⁶³ A variety of textual and visual commodities were obtainable by urban dwellers in the Republican period. China had been brought into the “single and unified technological vision” with the introduction of photography in the mid-nineteenth century.

Within the growing industrial culture, the camera became a metaphor for mechanical ways of seeing. The camera gaze connected the modern vision with power,

³⁶² Don Slater, “Photography and Modern Vision,” in *Visual Culture* edited by Chris Jenks (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 218-37.

³⁶³ John Raeburn, “The Rebirth of Photography in the Thirties,” in *A Staggering Revolution* (University of Illinois Press, 2010), 2.

promoting the establishment of a hierarchical system.³⁶⁴ Since the late nineteenth century, the Chinese confronted the gaze of demonstrating power and surveillance, but in return, the gaze aroused an emerging subjectivity. The shocking, eye-opening visual experience, as Laikwan Pang argued, was refracted through a distorting mirror, promoting Chinese to see their new but fragile selves. The Chinese, as the viewing subject rather than the object of being seen, acquired an alluring yet threatening sense of identity that was not available before.³⁶⁵

For a long time, photography was a symbol of Europe-American modernization. So, when did the Chinese had the desire to represent the rapidly changing time and space in China? In the early twentieth century, the easy-to-use portable camera greatly enhanced photographers' mobility, stimulating the desire to see and know the world. The "desire to photograph" refers to a demand to represent fugitive nature rapidly and massively.³⁶⁶ After the 1911 revolution, the modern art landscape was developing, and new intellectuals and urban bourgeoisie who distanced themselves from the old regime sought a new medium to record their modern experience. The affordability of Kodak portable cameras drove an increasing number of enthusiasts to employ photography to document their everyday life and self-expression.

In addition to viewing photography as a symbol of scientific modernity, Chinese intellectuals and artists consciously adapted the idioms of Euro-American artists into local artistic expressions. Many photographs in the 1920s and 1930s highlighted the role of photography in a composed, complex conception of modernity in China. Traditional pictorialism that was characterized by the painterly subjects elevated photography as fine art. The pursuit of "Chinese-ness" in the 1930s ran parallel to the

³⁶⁴ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 68.

³⁶⁵ Laiwan Pang, "The Pictorial Turn and the Realistic Desire," in *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China*, 33-68.

³⁶⁶ Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, 20.

rising nationalist sentiment. Meanwhile, some art photographers consciously displayed the medium's natural strength, which means rendering of abstract form, i.e., a step toward modernist art. Drawing the inspiration from European-American photographers, several serious amateur photographers based in Shanghai showed talented attempts at modernist photography, although they only actively created in a transient period, marking a distinctive style with traditional pictorialism.

Photography intersected the transformation of vision, knowledge and the modern art world in 1930s China. As a fine-art form, it manifested a diversity of styles and subjects reflecting the struggles and exploration among the 1930s Chinese artists. Within the deteriorating situation in the mid-1930s China, many Chinese photographers expressed the sentiments of national salvation in their works. Compared with the other art forms, photography had more advantages to mobilize the masses since its great reproducibility. The upcoming war encouraged more and more photographers saw the nation and themselves in a national frame.

After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, photographs were used as a significant tool for arousing public sentiment. A new genre of photography known as "red photography" (*hongse sheying* 紅色攝影) was established during the war. "Red photographs" focused on dramatic moments in the battlefield that would arouse patriotic sentiment. As Eliza Ho observes, Sha Fei's wartime photographs still show high artistic standards because he used to be a fine art photographer before the war.³⁶⁷ Sha Fei associated the sophisticated photographic skills he learned in Shanghai with the new ideology, developing photography into a visual tool to construct a collective memory of the war.

³⁶⁷ Eliza Ho, *Art, documentary, and propaganda in wartime China: the photography of Sha Fei* (Columbus, OH: East Asian Studies Center, Ohio State University, 2009), 10-11.

The Japanese invasion brought many explorations of modern art and culture to an abrupt end. However, there were still many non-official photographic exhibitions and societies in Shanghai during Shanghai's *lone islet* period (gudao shiqi 孤島時期) (1937-1941). For example, Lang Jingshan held two exhibitions in Shanghai in 1939 and 1941, showing photographs taken in Sichun, Yunnan province, when he fled to Southwest China after the bombings on the coast in 1937. He refused an invitation from his friend Chu Minyi, who was an amateur photographer in the 1930s and a high official in the Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 (1883-1944) puppet government in Nanjing, to join in his collaboration with the Japanese.³⁶⁸ The photographs in the exhibitions became a window for Shanghai to understand the interior of China. Photography offered a radical means of documenting the boundaries of the nation. During wartime, this depiction was imbued with more significant meaning. Lang's photographic exhibitions in wartime Shanghai brought new subjects such as exile, displacement, and the national landscape into the history of Chinese visual culture.

“All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air...”³⁶⁹ The assertion in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 written by Marx and Engels shows that change, rather than stasis, would become normal in modern society, and such transformations would reshape the means of production, consumption, and circulation.³⁷⁰ Four decades later, the first Kodak camera was invented in the US, and soon made its way to Europe, Asia and the rest of the world. The explosive development of photography in the late

³⁶⁸ Mia Yinxing Liu, “The Allegorical Landscape: Lang Jingshan’s Photography in Context,” *Archives of Asian Art* 65, no. 1 (2016): 1-24.

³⁶⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)*, trans. S. Moore (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 45-6.

³⁷⁰ Mcquire Scott, “The Law of Progress,” in *Visions of Modernity*, 112-118.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries bore witness to modernization and also became a driving force for modernization. The emergence and development of amateur photography gave rise to the complex conception of multiple modernities in Republican China.

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