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Photographies East: The Camera And Its Histories In East And Southeast Asia (Objects/Histories)



Synopsis

Introducing *Photographies East*, Rosalind C. Morris notes that although the camera is now a taken-for-granted element of everyday life in most parts of the world, it is difficult to appreciate “the shock and sense of utter improbability that accompanied the new technology” as it was introduced in Asia (and elsewhere). In this collection, scholars of Asia, most of whom are anthropologists, describe frequent attribution of spectral powers to the camera, first brought to Asia by colonialists, as they examine the transformations precipitated or accelerated by the spread of photography across East and Southeast Asia. In essays resonating across theoretical, historical, and geopolitical lines, they engage with photography in China, Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand, and on the islands of Aru, Aceh, and Java in what is now Indonesia. The contributors analyze how in specific cultural and historical contexts, the camera has affected experiences of time and subjectivity, practices of ritual and tradition, and understandings of death. They highlight the links between photography and power, looking at how the camera has figured in the operations of colonialism, the development of nationalism, the transformation of monarchy, and the militarization of violence. Moving beyond a consideration of historical function or effect, the contributors also explore the forms of illumination and revelation for which the camera has offered itself as instrument and symbol. And they trace the emergent forms of alienation and spectralization, as well as the new kinds of fetishism, that photography has brought in its wake. Taken together, the essays chart a bravely interdisciplinary path to visual studies, one that places the particular knowledge of a historicized anthropology in a comparative frame and in conversation with aesthetics and art history. Contributors. James L. Hevia, Marilyn Ivy, Thomas LaMarre, Rosalind C. Morris, Nickola Pazderic, John Pemberton, Carlos Rojas, James T. Siegel, Patricia Spyer

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Customer Reviews

“Highly recommended.” - P. C. Bunnell, *Choice* “Photographies East is a brilliant and densely written elaboration of the potency of photographs in a range of cultural contexts and historical settings. This outstanding book illustrates that there is much more and new to be said about the entanglement of the camera and photographs with a history of ruptures. Its significance stems less from the regional focus than from the way in which highly sensitive narrations of empirical detail are used to address broad questions of photography, power and modernity.” - Ursula Rao, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* “I found *Photographies East* to be a gripping, marvelously varied, trawl through the photographic worlds of East and Southeast Asia. Like photographs, the material contained in this volume will undoubtedly exceed its initial essay-frames, and stimulate interest and debate for years to come.” - Liana Chua, *Anthropological Forum* “*Photographies East* provides an engaging and often provocative collection of nine essays, marked by their theoretical and analytical rigour, which examine the diverse social and historical applications of photography in various regional contexts in Indonesia, Thailand, China, Taiwan and Japan. . . . [T]his volume is an essential contribution to an ever-expanding field of investigation. . . . *Photographies East* is a compelling and thought-provoking volume of detailed case studies, which succeeds in its multidisciplinary aims to further the critical debate on photography’s histories and legacies in Southeast and East Asia. With its astute and wide-ranging use of theoretical and empirical approaches to materials on the periphery of academic attention, it will help foster dialogues between visual anthropologists, cultural historians, area specialists, and historians of photography both in local and transnational contexts, inside and outside Asia.” - Luke Gartlan, *History of Photography* “[T]his is a stimulating and cogent addition to the growing body of studies of photography in historical contexts. This volume should help erode any lingering notions that universalizing statements by some professional photographers are sufficient for understanding the multitude of meanings generated by the practices, images and readings in specific settings. . . . [T]he wealth of ideas contained in this collection of articles will stimulate the exploration of new directions in the study of photography.” - Hyung-Gu Lynn, *Pacific Affairs* “[T]his is without question an

important collection that greatly expands our knowledge about the history of photography and photographic practice in Asia. This book will surely inspire valuable new projects in the years to come.

— David Odo, *International Journal of Asian Studies*

“Photographies East is remarkable in many ways. As the first systematic consideration of photography in East and Southeast Asia, it offers some of the most acute reflections on the different workings and effects of photography in non-Western contexts. It will also stir fresh thinking about the relationship between history and anthropology in the wake of the camera.”

— Vicente L. Rafael, author of *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines*

“Through its radical attention to the unexpected, this bold and provocative collection asks vital questions about the disturbance created by photography. The sweep and intensity of this stellar ensemble make an essential contribution to our understanding of the photographic world-system.”

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