

From Pictorialism to Propaganda: the Photography of Hamaya Hiroshi in Manchuria

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ABSTRACT

My presentation will focus on the photographer Hamaya Hiroshi, who photographed Manchuria with various commissions and published in the magazines *Manchuria Graph (Manshu Gurafu)* and *FRONT* when he travelled to Manchuria in 1940. In this research, I would like to illustrate how Japanese photography was transplanted to Manchuria in the first half of the twentieth century. As 'modern Japanese art' was fully reconceptualized in Japanese art history while revealing the historicity of Western and non-Western art history, the development of Japanese modern photography in Manchuria also follows a similar pattern. After Japan started to colonize Manchuria from 1905, this new conceptual reflexivity exposed the politics through which words, categories, and values were 'transplanted' to other Asian nations as being the same as those Japan had earlier been forced to absorb from the art notions of Europe.

This presentation will explore the various 'transplantations', in the way Fuchikami Hakuyō organized the Manchuria Photographic Artists Association (*Manshū Shashin Sakka Kyōkai*) and in the way Hamaya Hiroshi photographed Manchuria for commissions from propaganda magazines. This paper will probe the developing situation of photography in Manchuria in the 1930s, to examine how the Japanese photographers established their own photographic visual expression in the 'continental' region, and what the function of their works was in local society.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1906, after the triumph in the Russo-Japanese War and the fulfillment of the policy of continental advancement, Japan established South Manchurian Railroad (SMR) company and launched a new means of colonial management. For transmitting the existence and significance of Manchuria to the 'inland' nation (Japan), an enlightenment campaign with SMR was developed. In the 'public relations' activities aimed toward 'inland', the representation of the continent by Japanese photographers began with visual 'material' which emphasized its role as advertising.

Hamaya Hiroshi visited a foreign country for the first time on the invitation of SMR in 1940. Hamaya was curiously intrigued by the reality of foreign countries when he arrived Mukden station and saw Manchurian people gathered there. The roar of both the old and new in Mukden vehemently echoed while Japan's "Five Races under One Union, the Realm of Peace and Tranquility" was regarded as the guiding principle of this country. In the Soviet graphic magazine *USSR in Construction* the central theme of the propaganda also was tremendous developed both inside and outside the country at the time when Hamaya stayed in Mukden.

2. MANCHURIA PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTISTS ASSOCIATION

Imagined as a new utopia built from 1932 to 1945, Manchuria was a modernist experiment site for the Japanese Imperial Empire who schemed continental advancement. Not only projects such as mining exploitation, heavy industrialization, and consolidation of transportation network were systematically promoted, but also the domains of education and culture were ambitiously fostered. The idealistic appearance of Manchuria inspired a remarkable romanticism amongst Japanese youth at the time. For Fuchikami Hakuyō, the organizer of ‘constructive’ photography magazine *Hakuyō*, Manchuria has become a literal new world.

Fuchikami moved to Dalian in 1928, due to the invitation of SMR, and expanded his fruitful activities in this Manchurian setting. He never ceased to pursue his dream of “photographic art” in the *Hakuyō* era, and formed the Manchuria Photographic Artists Association in 1932. In September 1933, Fuchikami revealed his talent as a substantial executive editor for the graphic magazine *Manchuria Graph* which was launched for the purpose of widely reporting the current state of the recently founded Japan puppet state of Manchukuo.

The first great stage for Manchuria Photographic Artists Association was the “Manchurian Scenery Photography Exhibition” in the 1933 Chicago World Exposition. After that, the exhibition visited 23 cities across the country. Their work represented the landscape of the continent focusing on the Japanese ‘justice’ which had pacified the foundation of ‘Manchuria’ instead of depicting the lives and ‘emotions’ of other ethnic groups.¹ The image of the phantom country of Manchuria was drawn with intense contrasts of light and shadow and was endowed with a capacity to directly shake the viewer’s mind beyond simple nostalgia.

3. THE DEMISE OF TRANSPLANTED PICTORIALISM

In October 1939, the propaganda graphic magazine *NIPPON* presided over by Natori Yōnosuke, published ‘special issue Manchoukuo’ and the ‘inland’ photographic magazine *Photo Times* also published ‘special issue Continental’ in 1940. It was the first opportunity to address the diversity of photography institutes, organizations, and photographic expression in Manchuria. In addition to the successive release and print of graphic magazines and albums due to a number of visiting photographers from Japan reporting various aspects of Manchuria, the Manchurian government began to consider the pictures they should provide themselves. For this reason, Mutō Tomio, the director of Public Relations Office under the General Affairs State Council of Manchuria, established a ‘registration photography system’ in 1940. Registration of cameras and concomitant regulation of technology and expression was aimed at photographers via the ‘priority distribution system’ to address the material shortage situation. Furthermore, criticism against these works also exemplified a pictorialist expression, embodying a certain of nostalgia, that Fuchikami had transplanted to the continent.

Manchurian scenery expressing ‘the beauty of picture construction and the prodigality of introspection’² relied on realistic landscape, although it overlapped with

¹ “Fuchikami Hakuyo and the Photographers in Manchuria”, Ngano Shigeichi, Iizawa Kōtarō, Kinoshita Naoyuki eds. (Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1998), p.5

² Fuchikami, Kodama, ‘Editorial Note,’ in “Manchuria Graph” No.1, Vol.7, 1939.01: colophon page

‘longing’ and ‘imagination’. The realism that Manchuria photographic artists tried to emphasize was only the aspects of poverty and suffering of ‘the other’. The reality of Manchuria had never been presented toward the ‘inland’ and even was denied and annihilated in Manchuria.³ Because Fuchikami left Dalian in 1941, bureaucrats rather than photographers dominated the development of photography in Manchuria and oversaw ‘pictorial photography’ being completely collapsed into and converged with ‘photojournalism’. In 1943, according to the promotion of Mutō to the ‘inland’, the ‘Manchoukuo photography’ created and controlled by him stopped inviting and publishing any public participation. Finally, the ‘Manchurian photography’ by Japanese photographers came to an end.

4. MANCHURIA GRAPH

When Natori Yōnosuke launched inaugural issue of graphic magazine *MANCHOUKUO* in 1940, Hamaya Joint ‘industrial development’ group of “Eight Photographic Magazines Recommended the Manchuria Photographic Unit”. After about a one month stayed in Manchuria, he published works in *Manchuria Graph* and participated in a “Field Report by the Manchuria Photographic Unit Exhibition” which was held at Shirokiya Department Store in Nihonbashi, to introduce photojournalism in Manchuria to the public. Hamaya had traveled to Manchuria again for a commission from the magazine *Front* in 1942 to cover the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Japan’s puppet state in Manchuria.

4.1 Railway Protection Movement

The Railway Protection Movement photographed by Hamaya was a railroad welfare activity on the initiative of the Kwantung Army for ‘seven million people along the railroad line’. Under the slogan ‘the Realm of Peace and Tranquility is from railroad’ it introduced ‘railway protection work’ in order to maintain security after Mukden Incident. The Railroad Vigilance Village (later the Society for Railroad Welfare), established in September 1933, guarded the resident ‘Manchu people’ around the railroad tracks, while preferentially obtained the distribution of welfare facilities and goods. As the mainstay organization of the railway protection movement, the railroad welfare youth corps fundamentally understood railroad security and also received education such as modern agricultural management. The railway protection work positioned as “a means unwittingly leading people to realize their dependence mentally and materially, on the railroad” and was intended to inspire love beyond any profitable perspective.⁴ It was a more advanced piece of propaganda work with the purpose of mobilizing spontaneity.

4.2 White Émigré

The white émigré, not originally included under the slogan “Five Races” of Manchuria, acquired a new position at this time because they were photographed not only in Romanovka village after 1940, but also on the street corners of Harbin. The portrait of ‘white émigré’ photographed by Hamaya as a newly generated icon in

³ “The Development of Japanese Modern Photography in Manchoukuo”, Takeba Joe eds. (Kokushokankokai Inc., 2017), p.59

⁴ Shirato Kenichiro, ‘The Prologue on the Research of Media Cultural Policy by Japan in North-Eastern China,’ in “Journals of Lifelong education and libraries” (2010) 9: 132

'registration photography', differed in appearance from innocent adults already stereotyped to represent the ideal of "Under One Union". The emigrants, pictured as *déraciné*, revealed a moderate melancholy and lived a self-sufficient life in the desolated northern Manchurian village due to their exile after the Russian Revolution. According to the Japanese national policy of "the Building of the New East-Asian Order", they were represented not as immigrants but as "a part of the new construction", which was not attributed to the ideal of Manchuria but instead strongly reflected the concept of Japan's 'Greater East Asia'.⁵

4.3 Fushun Colliery

The laborer (coolie) in Fushun colliery was repeatedly photographed as a representation of Manchuria-Mongolia. A photograph by Fuchikami showed a laborer engaged in an open-pit coal mine, and was endowed with a sort of romanticism as an "indication of a serious affliction of life"⁶ seen in their gesture. The composition of the labor force of the Fushun coal mine was complicated because of the management staff being made up entirely of Japanese, while Manchurian people could never attain these positions. Although a photographer's own viewpoint was supposed to show the officially sanctioned image of the cultivation and pacification of Manchuria to the 'inland', when Hamaya photographed Manchurian employees loading an explosive and blowing up with electricity, he tried to focus on the lives of ordinary Manchurian people and concerned himself with the ambience and 'intimacy' of everyday life.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research hopes to emphasize the personal relationships and public intersection between domestic and continental Japanese photographers, which has been largely obscured within official histories of these two areas. Photographic expression in Manchuria underwent upheavals in the ephemeral history of the nation. From the pictorialism transplanted by Fuchikami to the propaganda conveyed Hamaya, Manchurian photography coincided with the formation of an 'East Asian' image in Japan, even as the Manchurian photography developed later than it did in the 'inland'. Nostalgia fed into militarism due to the national ideology and political changes and the absence of avant-garde photography in Manchuria. Although Hamaya photographed for propaganda magazines, he still kept an affinity with his object and revealed peaceful moments in a turbulent age.

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⁵ "The Development of Japanese Modern Photography in Manchoukuo", Takeba Joe eds. (Kokushokankokai Inc., 2017), p.147

⁶ Fuchikami Hakuyō, 'Thoughts, Sunset,' in "Manchuria Photographic Annual" 1930.05: 77