

## **Photography as Revolution**

### **Projecting the Republic of China through the Periodical Press (1904-1914)**

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My research rethinks the importance of visual material in the early twentieth-century Chinese periodical press. The dissertation takes the form of a qualitative research: I choose specific images to exhibit the transcultural process photography undertook to fit into the Chinese social framework, becoming, in illustrated magazines, a platform for the spreading of nationalism, revolutionary thought, and art inquiry. Focusing both on what objects are and what they perform, I analyze the adaptation of photography and illustrated magazines within the local political agenda following two mutually constitutive clues.

The first clue lies in the author, audience, and purpose. At the end of the 19th century, the role of the photographer in China gradually shifted from the figure of a foreigner aiming to sell their work to other westerners as souvenirs or as demonstrations of national power, to the hands of the Chinese cultured man, artist, and politician, for a domestic informative and propagandistic purpose. Thanks to illustrated magazines, photographs broke out of albums, postcards, or 3D stereoscope viewers, passing from the private into the public sphere, allowing a wider public to access the images, albeit in a lower quality, and shaping the habit of understanding photographs as visual documents and testimonies of truth.

The second direction focuses on the technology and iconography of photography. Following the development of improved lenses, the introduction of factory-made glass plates at the beginning of the 1880s, and the introduction of Eastman Kodak's invention of flexible celluloid film and hand-held cameras, a wide range of activities could be captured. Before, subjects in action could only be represented through lithography or staged photography. The introduction of mechanized letterpress printing in China in 1902 allowed illustrated magazines to publish photographs on a large scale.

From being seen as a foreign magic weapon when it arrived in China, photography's aim progressively became more educative and political. My dissertation will investigate how it was then used as a powerful medium to inform the public about important news, comment on the social and political situation, convince the reader of the urgency of reading the revolutionary ideas in both fields of politics and art, and "represent the truth."