

Photograph Album "China": RECA.MS.8.

The album is large, measuring 69 cm, in a fairly elaborate embossed and gilt-tooled leather binding, with 'China' tooled in gilt on the front; it contains 59 mounted images on 56 leaves; at least thirteen leaves are missing.

The subject matter includes: studio portraits of Chinese people; images of China recording Lord Elgin's military campaign of 1860 in the Second Opium War; views of Hong Kong, Shanghai, Macao, including a number of multi-plate panoramas, one of them hand-tinted. The photographs are captioned, neatly, by hand, on the album leaves. The pictures of Lord Elgin's campaign are accurately dated, August – October 1860, but of the rest only one is dated (Fol. 10 "Consular Church, Canton", 1863) Very few are in any way signed: those which are have 'S. Dutton' or 'Dutton and Michaels' written on the negatives, often in such a way that it is not particularly obvious on the print.

However, many of the photographs can be attributed from external sources: those of Elgin's campaign are the work of Felice Beato, who travelled with the army, probably on a semi-official basis, and who was given access to the sites of battles immediately afterwards (he photographed many of the sites before the bodies had been removed, although none of those images are included in this collection.)<sup>1</sup> Most of the portraits of Chinese people are the work of "Mr. M. Miller", who ran a photographic studio in Hong Kong between 1861 and 1864. He may also be responsible for some of the landscape views, particularly the multi-plate panoramas.<sup>2</sup> However, he was taught this technique by Beato himself, and C. Worswick observes that the two photographers' images of this type are often indistinguishable.

Beato worked with an artist, Charles Wirgman, in Japan between 1864 and 1867, to produce very high quality tinted versions of his prints.<sup>3</sup> He also worked with other, less skilled, colourists.

On the basis of the presence of a combination of Beato and Miller's work it can be concluded that the album probably dates from the mid-1860s.

Some of the photographs are probably the work of others, notably the image on fols. 1 and 2, of "Governor Yeh", who was captured by the British in 1858, and died in captivity in India in 1859, and is thus unlikely to have come into contact with either Beato or Miller. There were other photographers at work in the region at the time, notably William Nassau Jocelyn, a member of Lord Elgin's staff, who was official photographer to the expedition and provided with government equipment. Little of his work appears to survive: the Victoria and Albert Museum have a few pictures, taken in Japan in 1858.<sup>4</sup> There is little information, beyond their names and varying numbers of surviving images, for many of the photographers working in China at the time: almost nothing seems to be known about 'Dutton and Michaels'. A further source of confusion is the

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<sup>1</sup> D. Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty: Felice Beato's Photographs of China*, (Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1999)

<sup>2</sup> C. Worswick "Photography in Imperial China", in C. Worswick and J. Spence (eds.) *Imperial China Photographs 1850-1912*, (Pennwick, 1978) p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> J.W. Cody and F. Terpak (eds.), *With Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China*, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011) p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> In: Wingfield album, Guy Little Bequest, 1953. No. 3814-1953. See: Terry Bennett & Sebastian Dobson "The first British photographer in Japan: William Nassau Jocelyn and the Elgin Mission of 1858", *The Photo Historian*, 120, February 1998.

existence in Hong Kong of what C. Worswick describes as 'The Firm': an increasing body of photographic negatives passed from one photographer there to his successors, as each stayed in the east for a relatively short time before moving on and selling his stock and business to another. Each photographer continued to print and sell the photographs produced by his predecessors. M. Miller was among these photographers, and his stock included copy negatives of many of Beato's views of Peking.<sup>5</sup> Beato's photographs of China and India were offered for sale in sets, by subscription, in London in 1862, shortly after his return.<sup>6</sup>

Photographs of this sort were typically bought by members of the army or foreign service, to take or send home as mementos of their service, and seem generally to have been mounted into albums only when they got home. More albums survive than might be expected: David Harris, looking specifically for Beato's work, lists sixteen in public collections in North America, Australia and Britain, many containing prints by both Beato and others. The National Army Museum has two more albums than are listed by Harris, Terry Bennett has at least one more, and there are undoubtedly more to be found.<sup>7</sup> Seven of the albums in Harris's list have known provenance, mostly of army officers or members of Lord Elgin's staff.

The majority of the albums are much smaller than the Edinburgh College of Art example: the only other album found which is of similar size is held by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and is believed to be a presentation copy to Lord Elgin, having been sold by his descendants in 1974.<sup>8</sup>

## Bibliography

D. Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty: Felice Beato's Photographs of China*, (Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1999)

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*Letters and journals of James, eighth Earl of Elgin*, (London: J. Murray, 1872)

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<sup>5</sup> C. Worswick "Photography in Imperial China", p.139.

<sup>6</sup> D. Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty*, p. 132.

<sup>7</sup> D. Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty*, p. 132-134; [www.oldchinaphotography.com](http://www.oldchinaphotography.com)

<sup>8</sup> D. Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty*, p. 133.

Henry Brougham Loch *Personal narrative of occurrences during Lord Elgin's second embassy to China, 1860*, (London: J. Murray, 1869)

Mann, Michael, *China, 1860*, (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1989)

<http://visualisingchina.net/>

A JISC-funded project, bringing together digital access to collections of photographs of China from Bristol, Belfast and elsewhere.

[www.oldchinaphotography.com](http://www.oldchinaphotography.com)