The beginnings and development of early photography in Japan is a complex theme that demands a huge amount of time and effort in order to be studied and researched in its entirety. This essay will not have such a wide approach. In this work I will concentrate on the early photography in Japan and the ways in which it relates to and prolongs the diverse and powerful visual culture that was operative in Japan, since before the arrival of the photographic technology to Nagasaki in 1848, and its spread over Japan and its fast development in areas like the cities of Yokohama and Edo/Tokyo. In these cities the photographic production suffered a dramatic increase in the last half of the decade of the 1860’s, through the infamous Yokohama photographs or Yokohama Shashin, which will provide key visual material for this essay. The amount of research and analysis about this period’s photographic research is vast and rich, however, in many cases these studies have neglected the fact that, although a piece of western technology, Photography, when it arrived to Japan, it disembarked into a country with a long prosperous and homologous visual and pictorial culture, which, as I will later argue in more detail, will guide and

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1 Kinoshita Naoyuki in his Essay about photography and Painting as well as Himeno Junichi in his paper “Encounter with Foreign Photographers” state that 1843 is generally the year considered the first camera arrived to Japan, however this was sent back to Dutch merchants, later in 1848 Ueno Shunnojō, the father of Ueno Hikoma, got a camera kit, which is considered the year of introduction of photography into Japan.

2 Not limited to this cities we can find photographic activity in other places such as Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Osaka. For more information about photographic activity in Japan please refer to Terry Bennett’s Photography in Japan.

3 The “Yokohama photography” is the name that receives the photographic production in the port of Yokohama, said photography targets international customers, and during its beginnings in the 1860’s and 70’s it was mostly produced by foreigners living in this city.
define an important amount of the photographic production in this country, including the Yokohama photographic business⁴.

The main point I will be defending in this paper is that early Japanese Photographic production is in many ways determined by the visual and pictorial culture that had been present in the country since, at least, the Edo period, and that this relationship will be continued at least until the early years of the twentieth century, with what is called Art photography or *Geijutsu Shashin* (芸術写真). The presence of foreign western discourse and ideas through this time cannot be denied, but I will argue that they won’t be the defining factors guiding the Japanese and foreigner visual production of the Yokohama Photographs and other images produced in Japan about Japan.

This work is guided by and inspired by a key theoretical proposal and approach to the world of visual production, the notion that Painting, Photography, Engraving, etc. although different visual media (support, technology, technique) their purpose is to act as a medium (a bridge, a middle point) that gives visual form to individual, public, political, either objective or subjective sociocultural needs, desires, aspirations, etcetera⁵. The presence of a new medium in Japan, like photography, does not eliminate the original cultural milieu from which the needs articulated in visual productions generates. However it does requires a readjustment between the source and the output (in this case the photographic production). In other words, the introduction of photography

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⁴ The influence of Japanese culture upon photography and other imported cultural goods and practices from the west, like oil painting, can also be found in the specific ideograms, and their linked concepts, that were used to refer to this new technology. This point will be more broadly discussed in the next section of this essay.

⁵ These ideas are based on Jacques Ranciere essay *What the medium can mean* and Laura Gonzales Flores ideas on *Fotografía y Pintura ¿Dos Medios Diferentes?* (Photography and Painting, two different Media?)
into Japan does not eliminates the zeitgeist present in this country, however it demands a renegotiation between the cultural environment and the visual production relation to it.

With this I wish to refer, once more, to the continuation of Japanese visual and pictorial culture within photographic creation.

**Beginnings and before beginnings, introduction of Photography in Japan.**

Specialized language, popular visual culture and pictorial tradition in Japan are three spheres I want to take into account when approaching the study of the evolution of photography in Japan⁶. These three areas provide the main guidelines that will dictate the different ways in which Japanese and foreigner photographers approach production.

**Specialized Language**

With this term I am referring to the specific terms used by the Japanese to approach and name photographic related technology and processes. Some of these terms are related to the pictorial tradition in Japan, giving as a result an overlapping of visual tradition and photographic production. In her essay “Toward a Synthesized History of Photography: A conceptual Genealogy of

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⁶ Popular visual culture, the reproducible ukiyo-e images of the Edo period, and the pictorial tradition, namely the single images produced by the hand of an artist or a group of artists. Since the ukiyo-e will depart from the pictorial tradition, but will drift away from it due to its particular technical possibilities these two will eventually merge theoretically in this essay, so when the concept of “pictorial tradition” is used it will refer to this mixture between the images created by hand and the images created by woodblock printing.
Shashin” 7 Maki Fukuoka establishes a relationship between the term shashin (写真)8 and the adoption of this term to refer to photography in the late 1870’s. Fukuoka mentions that during the first years of photography in Japan other terms such as ruieikyou (留影鏡) literally “lens or mirror that stops shadows” or ineikyou (印影鏡) meaning “lens or mirror that prints shadows” were also used. In her essay Fukuoka explains that the use of the term shashin (写真) can be found as early as 1828 in Japan, in the particular endeavor of 本草 (Honzō)9. Fukuoka states: “Historicizing the concept of shashin using an interdisciplinary approach intercalates the history of this concept into contemporary writing on the history of photography, as well as received narrative of the history of Japanese visual culture.” 10 For me the call of attention towards the relationship between the historicity of this term is fundamental, because by doing so one needs to understand the photographic production necessarily as a part of a larger Japanese visual culture.

Returning to Honzō (本草), in this occupation the use of the term shashin (写真) referred to drawn images that were produced while having the object of representation in front of the artists at the moment of creation. In other words this term is a concept that talks about the existence and reality, as well as the presence of the represented object during its phase of representation. Fukuoka states that during the 1820’s Honzō tradition: “The term functions in this context as both verb (“doing

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7 Maki Fukuoka, Toward a Synthesized History of Photography: A conceptual Genealogy of Shashin in Positions 18:3, Winter issue of 2010
8 The ideograms mean “reproduction” and “truth”
9 Honzō (本草) a medical field of study that had been imported from China in which researchers studied plants in order to understand them better and use them more effectively in order to heal patients.
shashin") and noun, referring to the act of making a pictorial representation while directly observing the object or picture; both uses also occur in the contemporary context of sketching.”

During those times, Fukuoka notes, the term of 写真 was commonly interchangeable with the term of Shasei (写生) which has the meaning of “drawing from nature”. Again this concept has the implication of the existence of the object being represented. The author also cites the use of Shinei (真影) within the Honzō activities. This term was particularly used to refer to images that were created through contact printing of the studied plants. Previously been covered in ink, the figure and details of the plant are transferred to paper though contact and pressure. This method, and its concept, also imply the existence of the depicted plant and its direct contact of the author of the image. Up until this point we can see that these concepts imply the existence and presence of the depicted object. It can be understood that in this sense the adoption of the word shashin (写真) to refer to photography has a strong degree of objectivist charge into it, following the strong relation between objective truth and photography that was strong within western societies during the beginnings of the history of Photography. However, unlike the west, the semantic charge of shashin (写真) did not refer only nor as heavily to science and modernist objectivity as it did in Europe and America the word “Photography”

One more important point that Fukuoka notes is that in the Western world the nomenclature used to refer to the new process and technology were all neologisms, and were created specifically to designate the new process while in Japan an old term was, and is still used to name it.

11 Ibid, p. 582
12 Although the relationship between a specific ideology and the term used to designate the new photographic process is of course always present in Japan as well as in the rest of the world.
13 We only need to remember the heavily capitalistic semantic charge in the naming of the Daguerreotype process after its inventor, while other less narcissistic terms as calotype or heliography were also used.
Not only Maki Fukuoka notices this previous presence of the word before photography, also Kinoshita Naoyuki (木下直之) in his splendid essay about the relationship between photography and Painting, his *Shashingaron* (写真画論)\(^{14}\), talks about this relationship. However Kinoshita will explain about the relationship between the term and the Japanese pictorial tradition.

**Specialized language and Painting.**

In the first pages of his essay Kinoshita notes that the notion “Before Photography” (written in English in the Japanese original) poses a problem if translated to Japanese, since the concept used to name photography, that is to say *shashin* (写真), existed before photography. The term *shashin* (写真) was used, the same as with the visual research in *Honzō* (本草), within the realm of painting, or *kaiga* (絵画), prior to the introduction of the photographic technology and technique into Japan. The tradition of the concept of *shashin* (写真) within painting continues even after the introduction of Photography in Japan. In relation to this Kinoshita gives the example of a painting by *Shima Kakō* (島霞谷) of 1860 in which the signature of the artists includes the ideograms of 写真. Kinoshita notes that this is a custom that stems from the Edo period and that by signing in this way Kakō is prolonging this pictorial tradition. The use of kanji in the signature of the artist refer to the artist will when he produced the image. In this case it is similar to the meaning attributed to the term in the previous example of *Honzō* (本草), in this painting 写真 has the nuance of the painter having in

\(^{14}\)Which can be translated as “Essay on painting and photography, the union of painting and photography”. 木下直之, 写真画論, 写真と絵画の結婚
front the actual thing that is being depicted in the painting. This meaning is also present the case of previously presented terms 留影鏡 and 印影鏡, through the use of the ideogram of kagami (鏡) (which can mean looking glass, or mirror) and which meaning also refers to the direct interaction between the artist and the depicted object or subject.

Kinoshita also notes that in case of painting the use of the ideogram shin (真)-reality- has both the implication of the rendering of a real place (an objective implication) and the apprehension of the “spirit” or “energy” ki (気) of the depiction (a subjective implication). In relation to this Kinoshita explains that in the tradition of Japanese painting, even the one referred to as shashin (写真)\textsuperscript{15}, despite the semantic possibilities of this term, between the painting and the reality depicted in it, it was always expected a degree of subjective interpretation and representation of the spirit or nature of the real places being painted. Kinoshita later on explains that the term 写真 suffered “adaptations” and that in the end the term rather than prolonging the nuance of subjective interpretation it ended implying “truth” or “reality”, dimensions that Photography could perfectly represent.

Although Kinoshita’s conclusions positions the general modern use of 写真 in Japan towards an objective notion I still wonder if most Japanese photographers during the end of the Bakufu could shake off so easily this semantic charge. Before we continue it is important to establish that most of the first representative Japanese photographers had a deep connection with Painting, or Kaiga (絵画)\textsuperscript{16} and most of them received formal instruction or engaged in other forms of apprenticeship of painting, in some cases western oil painting and in some others traditional Japanese painting. For example the famous Shimooka Renjō (下岡蓮杖) considered by many to be one of the Japanese

\textsuperscript{15} We could call this “shashin painting”

\textsuperscript{16} Another term that, according to Kinoshita was adopted during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century to denotate the field of painting
founders of Photography in Japan, received instruction on both painting traditions before entering the field of Photography.\textsuperscript{17} His Japanese training took place in the famous Kanō school (狩野派). After dealing with photography Renjō engaged actively on painting\textsuperscript{18} a huge amount of pictorial work remains from this artist. Yokoyama Matsusaburō (横山松三郎) is another example of a Japanese that worked with photography and painting\textsuperscript{19}. I would also like to add to this names that of Kusakabe Kinbei (日下部金兵衛)\textsuperscript{20}, according to Nakamura Hirotoshi (中村啓信) in his book “Kusakabe Kinbei, Giant of Photography” there is a huge chance that Kinbei had received training in painting during his youth. Hirotoshi recalls the fact that during his youth, Kinbei had escaped his hometown in Koufu (甲府) and headed to Edo (old name for Tokyo) to supposedly study painting, adding that before engaging with Photography Kinbei worked adorning pottery. Hirotoshi also notes that when Kinbei retired he engaged in Painting\textsuperscript{21}. Kinbei is also known to have worked as colorist for photographs for F. Beato and Baron Raimund Von Stillfried-Ratenicz\textsuperscript{22}. Furthermore, according to Nakamura, Kinbei took a self-portrait in which he photographs himself, not as a photographer, surrounded by the tools of this profession, but as a painter, with a painting, a hanging scroll and painting tools around him. After giving a detailed visual analysis of the elements of the image Nakamura proceeds

\textsuperscript{17} Kinoshita makes reference to Renjō’s oil paintings, this relation with painting is also this is mentioned in Morishige Kazuo in “The life and times of Shimooka Renjō” in \textit{Shimooka Renjō: A pioneer of Japanese Photography}

\textsuperscript{18} There are a great amount of his painting works in Shimooka Renjō: A pioneer of Japanese Photography, Edited by the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, 2014.

\textsuperscript{19} In relation to this topic the “Tokyo Edo Museum” organized an exhibition named “From Ukiyo-e to Photography” and a catalogue with the same name in 2015. Matsusaburō’s work was featured in it

\textsuperscript{20} Further ahead in this essay I will give more information about Kinbei, however, for those interested in this photographer’s life I recommend reviewing Terry Bennett’s “Photography in Japan” as well as the Boston Museum of Fine Arts MFA publications book entitled “Art and Artifice, Japanese Photographs of the Meiji Era”

\textsuperscript{21} 中村啓信、日下部金兵衛、写真の巨人

\textsuperscript{22} Terry Bennett, Nakamura and Sebastian Dobson all mention the relation between Kinbei and F. Beato as well as with Stillfried.
to link this image to the interest in painting that was present not only in Kinbei, but in others like Yokoyama Matsusaburou, and Shimooka Renjō, to name some examples\textsuperscript{23}.

### Specialized language and photography

Returning to the mentioned mixture of subjectivity and objectivity that intersects in the ideograms of *shashin* (写真), we may very well mark a strong relation between this and related terms with the particular approach to the genre of “Types and Customs” ubiquitous in the Yokohama Shashin production, in particular, and in Japanese photographers images in general. Is it possible that for these early Japanese photographers, especially the ones with strong ties to painting, the notion and implications of terms such as *shashin* (写真) allowed them to conceive the photographic act as a mixture of registry and personal interpretation? This particular notion would not by very present in the western photographic ethnographic production\textsuperscript{24}: meaning a general and sociocultural approach to photography as a “real” document. The distinction between the real, reality and the perception and representation of these elements by the painter of *写真* painting seems very

\textsuperscript{23} For reference to the numerous crossings between photography and painting in the Japan from the end of the Baku Fu and the early Meiji period please refer to Kinoshita’s essay: 写真画論、写真と絵画の結婚

\textsuperscript{24} This of course does not mean there was a lack of ideology behind this particular, or any other photographic productions
dynamic and appears to operate different than, for example, the dualistic logic present generally in the western modern comprehension of these terms.

Examples of this mixture of objectivity and subjectivity in the “Types” genre could be seen in some of Kusakabe Kinbei photographs. Nakamura Hirotoshi, in his book about Kinbei gives a very entertaining example about this (fig. 1). In this photographs Kinbei is mixing in a very playful manner the notion of the “type”, an genre which makes reference to a visual archetype and stereotype which possess the notion of study through objective observation, direct contact with the object or subject photographed, as well as it conveys the idea of objectiveness, these points can be confirmed with the first albums of types created and sold by Felice Beato. In these albums we can find photographic representation of different social classes and professions of Japan, alongside, and written in English, there is a description of the profession or social class depicted, the same is true for some of his “views” or landscape albums. (Fig. 2) is a reproduction of the original Album Beato sold, which is part of the documents of the Yokohama Archives of History 横浜開港資料館, this reproduction is targeted to Japanese readers, and therefore has been translated to Japanese.

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25 F. Beato had worked previously for the British military, and had extensive experience as a journalistic war reporter and as such we can assume from his part a particular photographic focus on reportage and production of images good for the standard of news information. For a more detailed account of F. Beato work Terry Bennet “Photography in Japan” and Sebastian Dobson’s work found in “Reflecting truth, Japanese photography of the nineteenth century” and “Art and Artifice, Japanese photographers of the Meiji Era” are useful texts.
However Kinbei’s “type” photograph (fig. 1), titled “Jinrikisha” (人力車) or “Rikisha Car Puller”, functions in a different way. While making reference to a profession, presents a staged moment of highly improbable misfortune, product of Kinbei’s imagination. There are other examples that emulate this particular type of photography within Kinbei’s albums, following the trend of the “type”, however in this case it is a “type” photograph that feeds both on the presence of real objects in front of the camera as well as the imagination and staging of Kinbei, a product that reminds us of the relation of real object and subjective interpretation of the “写真 painting”.

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26 For example a variation of Figure 1 can is included in the album AC1-146, number 25 of the 横浜開港資料館 collection.6
Visual Culture and photography; the influence of ukiyo-e and painting in the photographic production.

I have mentioned before that the main thesis in this essay is that the Japanese photographic production during the end of the Bakufu and the early Meiji cannot be isolated from the pictorial and visual tradition developed in Japan that dates way before the invention of Photography. In this section I will explore, more precisely, the influence that ukiyo-e (浮世絵) had within the realm of
Photography. This influence, I will argue, is not only limited to Japanese photographers, but is also present in foreign photographers, for example Felice Beato, a central figure of the Yokohama Shashin world. By defending this point I am also advocating for a comprehension of the Yokohama Shashin as a visual production that is mainly regulated by Japanese cultural visual standards. In this case it means that it is on Japanese terms that these highly codified and stereotyped images are built upon, despite the two facts that they are targeted for international audiences and in the early stages they were produced mainly by foreigners, these images are the direct product of a Japanese cultural milieu. This approach and comprehension of the photography in Japan is useful because it allows to understand the development of Japanese photography and its History as the product of a series of linked changes within Japan's visual culture, rather than an imposition from abroad. With this I am not imply the existence of a “pure Japanese photography” but rather that it is Japan’s cultural tradition the one that regulates, in general terms, photographic production.

I will like to start with the production of F. Beato, since he was a famous and respected photographer in his times, even before his work in Japan, he was also one of the most important pioneers within the realm of Yokohama Photography, and even until now he is one of the most representative photographers of the end of the Bakufu and early Meiji. By studying the relation between Beato’s production and ukiyo-e we may establish an eloquent example.

In his essay “I been to keep up my position’: Felice Beato in Japan, 1863-1877” Sebastian Dobson brings attention to the fact that there is an evident shift in Beato’s visual approach to his

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27 This relation is acknowledged by Kinoshita, who states in his 写真画論 that there is a relation between ukiyo-e and photography, this relation is also present in early examples of oil paintings by Japanese artists. However he only gives a brief mention of this in his essay. In the same line the already mentioned exhibition of the Edo Museum in Tokyo “From Ukiyo-e to Photography” presents a line of thought similar to the one presented in this essay.
photographic production within Japan. Dobson begins analyzing the difference between Beato’s war photographs in China and the ones he produced during the Shimonoseki Campaign. Dobson calls attention to the fact that Beato approaches his photographs of Shimonoseki in a more reserved manner. In contrast to his China and Crimea production, he doesn’t photograph the corpses of dead Japanese soldiers. Later on in his essay Dobson continues to give some examples of the difference between the passive alienated roles the locals of China or Crimea have in Beato’s photos, and how in his Japanese photos of landscapes the local Japanese people are portrayed in a more active relation with the camera and their surroundings. In relationship to this, and to the implication of autonomy of Japan from the west Dobson states the following:

“One important factor which is often ignored in studies of Beato is that the situation he encountered in Japan was different to that he had previously experienced in India and China, for, whereas the presence of westerners in those countries was taken for granted- the former being a British colony, and the latter a patchwork of European colonies and spheres of influence- Japan was an independent nation which was seeking to open up to the west on her own terms.”

In other words, Beato could not aboard the Japanese subjects the same way he approached previous ones in China, for example. Here I would like to present a quick comparison of Beato’s production in Japan with a later production in Burma (Figures 3 to 6).

28 Allied forces from France and England, Holland and the United States retaliated against the Choushu Clan in Shimonoseki. An attack in direct opposition to the decree of the Shogunate to open the country to some foreign countries.
29 Dobson, Sebastian “I been to keep up my position” p. 33, 34.
In Figures 3 and 4 we find an interesting phenomenon. When we compare the Photo of the Japanese type with the one of the Burmese type the contrast in composition and complexity of the staging of the two scenes is evident. The much earlier photograph of the Japanese “type” presents a much more elaborate production in the staging: the creation of winter atmosphere, the painted background, the illusion of the photograph being a frozen section of a moving, ongoing reality, when compared against the Burmese photo, in which the models are just standing in a pose, static in a undetermined studio, at the same time with the Japanese type there is a much more dynamic and elaborate use of the model; in his body language and the way he interacts with the props. We find that an image produced almost thirty years before has a much more refined use of the visual tools like the props and the model, and a more dynamic general execution that the Burmese photograph. I believe that the difference in the execution of the two photos is the product of the vast Japanese visual tradition and the strong influence it exercised on all photographers who aimed their lenses
towards this culture. When Beato came to Japan there already existed a rich and vibrant visual tradition on a great amount of everyday life Japanese themes. In Japan, during the Edo period, the *ukiyo-e* world presented a huge amount and diversity of visual representations of the inhabitants and everyday activities of the “floating world” that was Edo, the capital city of the Bakufu. These images, although in most cases idealized version of reality, made reference to daily events and lifestyle of the inhabitants of the city. In this sense *ukiyo-e* produced a visual tradition of “types” as well of themes which will be later exported to Europe. One example are the woodblock works from Hokusai, with his views on scenery, professions, which were available since 1860’s in Europe. These prints would definitely shape the idealized Japan most western tourist would expect to find if they were to travel to the country\(^\text{30}\). Therefore there was already present in Japan a visual tradition that Beato could use as reference when staging his photos of Japanese types.

Another example in this line can be observe in Figures 5 and 6.

\(^{30}\) Frederic A. Sharif and Anne Nishimura Morse essays in “Art and artifice” also articulate thesis in this line
This example is very representative because in both images were captured under similar circumstances, however the visual result is very different. In these two photographs we can observe a controlled staging: both possess a painted background, female models with traditional props and clothes, in this sense they both refer to the “type” genre. However, despite being produced almost thirty years before, the way in which the Japanese model is directed, and how her body is displayed, and the way in which the props and garments are used give as a result an image much more complex and dynamic in its staging and execution. There are a huge amount of examples in *ukiyo-e* that represent a scene similar to the one photographed by Beato, at the same time, the type and theme of the “woman in winter clothes” was a famous one that was also reproduced other times by Beato and other photographers (Figures 7 and 8).
It is worth noting that within the *ukiyo-e* tradition many of the visual representations were derived from famous stories, which is one of the reasons why many of them transmit the sensation of a frozen moment within an ongoing reality. In the case of the image of fig. 7, this one corresponds to the story of *The heroes of the Suikoden*, a piece of Chinese Literature famous during the Edo period and that Kuniyoshi represent in the form of a beautiful courtesan, practice common in the world of *Ukiyo-e*\(^{31}\). It is very interesting to note how *ukiyo-e*, which is linked to a literary tradition transforms into part of an “ethnographic” tradition of a country’s types. We can also find that *ukiyo-e* with a more social, as oppose to literary, tradition influenced greatly the work of Beato\(^{32}\). In this case we are talking about the images of beautiful woman, or *bijin-ga* 美人画. These images are a sort of “types”, they represent highly stereotyped compositions and styles in which the ideal of beauty was

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\(^{31}\) Robert Schaap in “Heroes and Ghosts: Japanese prints by Kuniyoshi 1797-1861

\(^{32}\) Even if we were sceptic about this influence the similarity is so close there has to be some sort of relation between them
articulated. Since most of the body types and faces are highly homogeneous this ideal of beauty corresponds to a culturally codified notion of the concept, which is represented through the different ways in which the body is controlled and presented to the public, as well as the garments and adornments used by the female gender. Within this tradition woman: either normal housewives, famous beautiful woman from rest-houses or tea shops, as well as high class prostitutes and geishas are presented in intimate idealized moments: right after the bath, during the application of make-up, or preparations of their looks for later public display. In the case of figure 9, for example, this print by Hokusai from 1808 is titled “Beauty with mirror/summer morning”.

Interestingly, Beato takes this visual motif and theme and extrapolates it into the field of the “types”. In his album views and Types his interest in a sort of ethnographic approach becomes evident when he provides an explanation of the activities portrayed in his photographs with a clear intention of objective descriptive objectivity. An example of this can be found in his photograph entitled “Woman using cosmetic”, figure 11.
Under the entry of the image there is a precise description of the custom of woman’s use of cosmetics in Japan, of course with an air of extravagance and allure towards the Japanese female (please check fig. 2). Although at first hand this composition seems more natural and less staged that the Woman in winter dress (figure 5) the truth is that the composition, distribution and use of the props and tools, as well as the visual theme of the woman applying cosmetics in the intimacy of her room is a popular theme in ukiyo-e tradition (figure 12) which present a composition similar to Beato’s photograph.

Fig 12. Mimeguri, from the series Mirror of Fine Views by Utagawa Kunishida 1823, Museum of Fine Arts Boston Collection.
One more example is Beato’s photo of a woman playing the Koto, figure 13. Another theme and composition that has numerous examples in the popular visual culture of the ukiyo-e, figure 14.

![Figure 13 F. Beato. Nagasaki University library collection](image1)

![Figure 14 by Suzuki Harunobu 1767](image2)

However, it is important to highlight and give importance the particular form and creativity with which Beato produces his images, my intention here is not to undermine the creativity and eye of this fine photographer, but to establish the power and influence that the Japanese visual culture hold, even over foreigners. Consciously or not Beato is prolonging a Japanese visual tradition of a world of desires and imagination proper to the ukiyo-e into another visual tradition that somehow aspires to be objective., giving as a result images that do feed and are articulated from the realm of phantasy and idealization, at the same time they are also produced and commercialized with a sense of ethnographic will, mixing once more, like in the notion of 写真 painting a composition that feeds both on objectivity and subjectivity

Another example of the influence of the visual influence the world of the ukiyo-e prints had on the photographers of the early Meiji period “types” photographs can be observed in figures 14 and 15. Fig. 14 is an ukiyo-e presenting a scene from a famous Kabuki play from 1862, the play contains a famous character, a handsome young man that used to impersonate a woman in order to blackmail
his victims. Figure 15 is part of the book *La photographie japonaise sous l’ère Meiji (1868-1912)* the author is still unknown, therefore we cannot determine the cultural background of this photographer, however the fact that the composition between the two images (bare shoulder, use of a cup, head band, tattoo, exposed breast) resembles in a visual level is undeniable. The woodblock images presents a figure that although a male, possess many female traits which are underlined by the line of work of the character as well as his youth. For a foreigner that ignores the theme of the kabuki play as well as the semantic possibilities of garments within the *ukiyo-e* tradition in this scene “him” could easily be mistaken for a “she”. This image very well could have been used as a base for the photographic production. Although this idea will remain a very vague hypothesis the visual similarity of the two images is remarkable.
View and landscapes, the Tōkaido (東海道) and the Meisho (名所) tradition.

One of the first very big and important works that Beato produced was a photographic album from different views related to the Tōkaido. This highway’s importance is highlighted in Allen Hockley’s Essay “Packaged Tours”33. Appropriately, Hockley describes the importance the highway had for foreigners, both as an important piece of Japan’s history and as a road they would commonly transit since it connected Yokohama and Edo. However, Hockley’s arguments in relation to the reason why Beato concentrated on Tōkaido are a little bit loose, as I will explain, in his essay he states:

“A small section of this historically important highway lay within Yokohama’s treaty limits. For the foreign residents of the port, the Tōkaido was part of their lived experience. Beato frequently included Tōkaido views on his album for this reasons.”34

According to this line of thinking Beato’s use of Tōkaido would spring purely from the experience of the foreigner in Japan, and since Beato’s photos were aimed at foreigner this could make sense, but if we just think that the reason of those photos is because “it was part of the lived experience” of the foreigners we would be implying that this particular theme of the “views” genre was practically invented and introduced by Beato. However the truth is that Tōkaido’s importance goes well beyond the experience of foreigners in Japan, this fact is recognized further by Hockley further in his essay, where he adds:

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33 Hockley, Allen, “Packaged Tours” in “Reflecting truth, Japanese photography of the nineteenth century”
34 Ibid p.80
“The Tōkaido became a necessary element in traveler’s accounts, in part because it remained within the scope of their lived experiences, but clearly, its significance also lay in its historical associations with the daimyo and samurai of Japan’s feudal past”\textsuperscript{35}.

In the end Hockley makes reference to the historical charge that the highway possess, which in turn shapes the imaginary and expectations of the tourist traveling to Japan. And although I acknowledge this is a correct argument I would add that it is an incomplete one. In his acknowledgment of the importance of the History of Tōkaido, Hockley completely ignores the existence of a visual tradition, or forgets to mention it in his essay. The truth being that the same way there is a Historical tradition of Tōkaido there is also a strong, mature and representative visual tradition of the road within the \textit{ukiyo-e} production. These images are even presented in series named as “Tōkaido Views”, these series were created by many artists like Utagawa Hiroshige, Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Kunisada just to name a few. The theme of Tōkaido’s fifty three stations was a very popular one, and the views were so well known that they were represented through images or stories associated with each one of the post-stations along the road. This play a play of semantics that was part of popular entertainment, for example Utagawa Kuniyoshi’s work in the publication series named 東海道五十三対 (Fifty-three pairings along the Tōkaido Road) figure 16. In this particular example the image depict a woman in the post-station of Yui, the text mentions the best restaurants and the view of Mount Fuji one could enjoy eating from there\textsuperscript{36}. The use of Mount Fuji is also an important part of the Japanese pictorial tradition of the Edo period. Rather than using the theme of Tōkaido, as the product of solely transiting it, it is much more probable that Beato was influenced by the

\textsuperscript{35} Hockley, Allen, “Packaged Tours” P. 82
\textsuperscript{36} CITAR
previous ukiyo-e productions, as well as the historical and social importance that Tōkaidō had not only for foreigners, but also for the Japanese.

Figure 16, Yui, from the series The Tōkaidō in Fifty-Three Pairs, Edo, 1843-1845 Utagawa Kuniyoshi

In her essay “Souvenirs of Old Japan, Meiji-era Photography and the Meisho Tradition”, Anne Nishimura talks about the purposes landscape photography served the foreigner customers that bought them. As it is normally assumed, these foreigners searched for views that would fit their idealizations of a “romanticized notion of “Old Japan”” like Nishimura writes, however, she later on adds in her text:

“an examination of the indigenous Japanese pictorial tradition of famous places, called meisho, makes it clear that the selection of the individual sites and the iconography of these nineteenth-century photographs showed places that had been celebrated in Japanese art and literature for centuries; others were of locations whose reputations were more recently established. 37"

Within these places with a long pictorial reputation is of course Mount Fuji. I would confidently state that the presence of Mount Fuji in most of the photographic productions of the late nineteenth century is the direct result of the influence of the Japanese pictorial tradition, especially considering how fast this theme was incorporated into photographic production. For example, Beato’s *The executioner*, is an image that Allen Hockley also mentions in his essay, however in his analysis of it he again fails to acknowledge the importance of previous cultural and visual tradition of Mount Fuji. According to Hockley the image is a staging of the execution of Shimizu Seiji, which was charged for the execution of two British officers while traveling through Tōkaido. Hockley’s account of the image is as follows:

“Beato later recreated the execution in his studio. Knowing the relation of this historical event with the execution grounds, Beato acquired a few props- including a painted background of Mount Fuji- a sight frequently encountered by westerners who travelled the Tōkaido”.

As it is expressed in his essay, it is being implied that Beato is using the visual motif of Mount Fuji because it was “frequently encountered by westerners”, ignoring completely the existence of numerous images that make reference to Mount Fuji prior to the “frequent encounter of westerners” with the volcano. Rather than Hockley’s westernizing view, it is much more plausible, and useful for future studies, the idea of Nishimura that these sites are used as a result of their long visual tradition and popularity.

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38 Nishimura has a small section about this in her essay p.45-48
39 Hockley Allan, “Packaged tours”
40 Nishimura notes that, for example, Hokusai’s images were available in Europe since the 1860’s including of course his popular “Views of Mount Fuji” which were produced around 1830.
In relation to the issue of the circumstances surrounding Beato’s acquisition of such a knowledge and experience of *ukiyo-e* images, it would be helpful to have a look at the relationship he established with Japanese photographers and locals. In his book “Photography in Japan 1853-1912” Terry Bennett notes that Beato was friends with Ueno Hikoma, the photography pioneer of Nagasaki. In his accounts of the relationship between these two Bennet informs that Ueno Hikoma even lent F. Beato his studio and his family members for some photos. This means that Beato must have had a very close relationship with Hikoma, and that communication was possible between the two somehow. Another relationship worth mentioning is the one F. Beato had with Kusakabe Kinbei, which eventually will become a photographer on his own. I will deal with Kinbei as a photographer in more detail in the next section. Kusakabe Kinbei worked with Beato very early, according to Nakamura Hirotoshi, and he seems to have remained with him until Beato sold his negatives to Baron V. Stillfried. Kinbei had a very good relationship with F. Beato, and in turn, Beato had a good relation with Stillfried, teaching the Baron about photography, as it is stated in Terry Bennet’s “Japanese Photography” section on Stillfried. It would makes sense, according to Nakamura, for Kinbei to have worked for Stillfried since the moment Beato sold his negatives to the Baron, since all of the photographic related assets of Beato’s business passed to Stillfried’s hands. Adding to this the portrait of Stillfried in which the figure of Kinbei appears. Sebastian Dobson also makes reference to this photograph although with him it is only a possibility that it is Kinbei who is sitting by Stillfried’s side.

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41 Dobson Sebastian, Yokohama Shashin, in Art and Artifice p. 28-32
42 Ibid p.134
43 Shashin no Kyoujin P.59
44 Ibid p.58-67
45 Dobson, Sebastian “Art and artifice” p. 30, 31
The figure of Kinbei will be addressed with more detail in the next section of this essay, however it is important to precociously state here that Kinbei’s visual production clearly echoes the previous pictorial tradition of ukiyo-e, at the same time he also repeats a lot themes and compositions from the works and styles of his previous teachers, Beato and Stillfried. In the Japanese customs it would only be natural to continue the style of your masters. Here I wonder if there is a probability that Kinbei would have introduced his employers the same visual material he would later on consider appropriate for his own production. For a foreigner seeking ways of taking photos of important views and “types” ukiyo-e prints seems a proper source, and the chances for locals to present them to Beato were high, but due to the lack of documents by the own Beato this is hard to confirm.

In conclusion, we should consider the photographic production of the Bakumatsu and early Meiji period as a continuation of a Japanese visual culture. The creation of images that although targeted at foreigners, and fed from romantic ideas and stereotypes of a pure, traditional Japan, are constructed following Japanese visual tradition, with stereotypical themes, motifs and compositions. Following Japanese tradition this foreign technology and market were implemented and developed in this country under Japanese terms, so when we look at Yokohama Photography we can see there a phenomenon that can tell us a lot about Japanese culture. This continuation is present not only in the early foreigner photographers of the 1840’s but also in 1880’s years, dominated by Japanese photographers in which production we can see a great amount of points in which pictorial tradition and photographic endeavor cross with each other.

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46 However many of the images that Kinbei used in his albums were negatives originally produced by F. Beato, Stillfried and other photographers. Despite this, and due to the constant damage, loss or destruction of negatives it was common to take new photographs of old views and types.

47 According to Terry Bennet, two short letters addressed and published by local Japanese newspapers are the only Beato’s written documents discovered so far, “Japanese Photography” p. 94.
Kusakabe Kinbei and the ukiyo-e visual tradition

We have covered to some degree the subject of Kusakabe Kinbei in the previous sections, however a small and more unified summary would be in order to share with more detail the information of this Japanese Photographer. According to Nakamura Kinbei in his book “Kusakabe Kinbei, Giant of Japanese Photography” Kinbei was born into a merchant family, however Kusakabe ran away from his home in 1857, when he was 17 years old. His original place of escape was, according to this historian, was the capital of the country, Edo, where he worked in the household of a Samurai, decorating pottery until 1859. After this, lured in by the promotion that the state made for Yokohama as a place of great opportunity, due to its position as one of the newly authorized trading ports and residence for foreigners in Japan, Kinbei moved to this city in 1859. According to Sebastian Dobson Kinbei appears in an 1868 payroll of F. Beato, however Dobson also states that as early as 1865 Kinbei helped Beato in photographic trips overseas Japan. There is also speculated by Dobson as well as by Nakamura that Kinbei helped not only as an assistant for photography, but as a colorist of photographs, at the same time when Beato started to sell colored photographs Kinbei was already working with him in 1868. In 1877 F. Beato sells his studio and negatives to Baron V. Stillfried, and according to Nakamura, Kinbei started to work for Stillfried right away. In Dobson’s essay “Yokohama Shashin” he states that it is not very clear Kinebei’s activities from 1877 until 1881, year in which Kinbei opened his own studio, stating that there was a possibility that Kinbei had left Stillfried in 1877. According to Nakamura during that time Kinbei worked for Stillfried, coloring photographs, and during the nights he kept on working in different types of jobs, for example a

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48 Dobson Sebastian in “Yokohama Shashin” included in “Art and Artifice, Japanese photography of the Meiji Era
49 According to Nakamura the whole business, building, negatives, changed hands from Beato to Stillfried, therefore it is very plausible that Kinbei, understood as an assistant of the studio, was also part of this transaction 写真の巨人 p. 61
noodle cart vendor, in order to save money for his own equipment, and that in 1881 he opened his studio. Nakamura’s account seems more plausible, since according to him Kinbei started to work at 1877 with Stillfried. Dobson’s reason to believe Kinbei left Stillfried in 1877 is an interview Stillfried gave in that same year, in which he complains of a Japanese assistant to which he taught the different photographic manipulations necessary to all sort of techniques, however said assistant “soon left and set up on his own account." If Kinbei’s first studio was stablished in 1881 it is very unlikely that Stillfried is referring to him if the interview was in 1877.

The same way Stillfried bought negatives from Beato, Kinbei acquired negatives from Beato as well from Stillfried, when one has a look at the various photographic albums of Kinbei stored in the Yokohama Archives of History (横浜開港資料館) one finds a huge amount of photographic themes and compositions that are very similar to Beato’s and Stillfried’s. As stated above, the same way Beato has compositions that make direct reference to an older ukiyo-e tradition, Kinbei also has ones that make direct reference to his previous employers, and in a sense masters. Like it was mentioned before in this essay, sometimes the negatives would be damaged, or the photographer just felt the need to retake certain view or type, so from time to time the photographers considered necessary to actualize the photographic selection they had at disposition for the costumers. Therefore sometimes variations of the same theme or “type” exists, with only very small discrepancies between each other, respecting the general visual composition.

50 Dobson Sebastian in “Yokohama Shashin” included in “Art and Artifice, Japanese photography of the Meiji Era p.30
51 This is mentioned by Bennet, Dobson and Nakamura in their cited works
52 Dobson states this, however the nature of the acquisition is shady. He also mentions that Beato based a lot of his early portfolio on the work of Uchida Kuichi, “Yokohama Shashin” included in “Art and Artifice, Japanese photography of the Meiji Era p.32
Here I will only address four different themes that related to *ukiyo-e* and that are found in Kinbei’s photographs as well as in photographs of unidentified authors during the last half of the 19th century. These four themes I will very freely name: “Woman and letter”, “Woman and umbrella”, “Woman doing make-up” and “Woman and hair dress”.

**Woman and Letter**

In the first photograph here, attributed to Kinbei we can observe a young woman in the act of writing a letter. The composition of the image shows the traditional tools required for writing and reading, and a very particular placement and display of the written letter, in this case in the form of a scroll. The general posture of the girl, the way in which the letter is showed, as well as the use of the kimono and hair pieces reminds of old *ukiyo-e* compositions of pretty young woman. Of course, between the *ukiyo-e* images and the photographs there are variations. The lady on the photograph is just a young woman, unlike the beauties in fig. 19 and 20, who are prostitutes, or fig.18 that within
the scene from a narrative the main character has been portrayed in the style of Harunobu’s times prostitutes. This type of themes in *ukiyo-e* belong to the genre of *bijin-ga* and they refer to idealized moments of peace and tranquility in which these beautiful woman (almost always prostitutes from Yoshiwara or high rank geishas) engage in an intimate activity such as reading letters addressed to them (fig.23), or in other cases writing them. Generally this correspondence was with their lovers or from men infatuated with these woman. Within these prints we can also observe the allusions, commonly present in *ukiyo-e*, to the flowing of time represented through the different seasons, like in fig. 19. During Edo period these images served the function of locating the viewer in a position of power (of the one who gazes at) and at the same time in a situation of intimacy with these feminine figures of desire.

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53 We can deduce this by the way the obi is tied at the front, a traditional custom for woman in this line of work  
54 Literally images of beautiful woman  
55 For a very rich study of the *ukiyo-e* in this line of analysis please refer to Julie Nelson Davis, "Utamaro and the spectacle of beauty".
In the next two photographs, Fig. 21 and 22 we can appreciate how the theme of a beautiful woman writing a letter, alone or in the company of other young women. The activity serves as a pretext to also display everyday tools and house items. However, the majority of the visual elements reproduced in these photographs of unidentified photographers makes echo of Kinbei’s image, following a theme and visual stereotype from the ukiyo-e. There are two points I would like to underline at this point, the first one be the use of these famous motifs and compositions from a pictorial tradition are not limited to Kinbei, but are also used by other photographers. The second point is that although he does so, Kinbei’s work is not a direct blatant copy of ukiyo-e. He definitely departs from this, and other visual traditions, but the result is a synthesis of different visual sources. In this case in fig. 17 we can see how Kinbei mixes a particular composition style to display the scroll letter with other compositional elements such as the lamp with paper screen, and the general use of a young beautiful woman in an intimate atmosphere and space.

Fig. 21 and 22 Unidentified author, Nagasaki University Library Collection

Fig. 23 Suzuki Harunobu 1767, Kamuro Dozing and Courtesan Reading a Letter. Boston Museum of Fine Arts
Woman and umbrella

In the next theme woman wind and umbrella are elements presented together in the photographic examples as well as in the *ukiyo-e* images. I argue that these images, same as with the previous photographs, are the product of a visual synthesis of elements previously present in *ukiyo-e*, said synthesis is exercised by Kinbei and his contemporaries in a great number of examples.

Fig. 24 Kusakabe Kinbei circa 1880, Girl in Heavy Storm, Old Japan Picture library

Fig. 25 Unidentified author Nagasaki University Library Collection

Fig. 26 Suzuki Harunobu 1767, Wind, Boston Museum of Art

Fig. 27 Suzuki Harunobu 1766 Two Women Returning from the Bath in Snow, Boston Museum of Art.
Figures 24 and 25 both show staged photographs produced in a studio, with props and painted background, fig.24 even includes some plants within the set as part of the staging. In both images we see a young woman dressing in kimono, acting as if fighting against strong winds. In case of fig.24 we even find some white lines that convey the impression of rain drops falling down. This is a Kinbei’s photograph entitled “Girl in Heavy storm”. It is important to notice that this image is nothing like the “types” executed by F. Beato, in which even with some staging, there were intentions of some sort of anthropological activity, and even in our previous example the title of fig.5 “girl in winter costume” is making reference to the traditional winter garments, which could be an element of interest to foreigners. In the case of fig.24 Kinbei is mainly proposing a visual theme, one that is constructed with uttermost detail, an image that “feels completely photographic“ in the sense of the capture of a very quick moment in time: observe how one of the lower ends of the kimono is suspended in the air, similar to the kimono of the woman in Beato’s woman in winter costume. When one compares this image from Kinbei, and fig.25 (from a yet unidentified photographer) with the stamps created by Suzuki Harunobu (figures 26 and 27) there is a striking resemblance between them. The representation of young woman, the way the kimonos fly due the effect of strong winds, the use of the umbrella and the diagonal lines that convey the sense of movement of the wind, or the fall of rain. These ukiyo-e, present, yet again, a very intimate and playful scene, in which young beauties or courtesans enjoy a moment for themselves (like the title of fig.27 “two woman returning from the bath\textsuperscript{56}”), there is a degree of intimacy that is articulated at the same time as there is an

\textsuperscript{56} The theme of a beauty coming back from the bath, or just exiting the bath was considered a sensual one during the Edo period, as the idea of the moments after the bath would link, in the mind of the observer, with the moment of the bath, a moment of intimacy and exposure. This tension between the idea of nakedness and exposure and the visual denial of itself goes hand in hand with the Aesthetic sensibility of the Edoites as explained by Shuzo Kuki in his “The structure of Ikki”
ephemeral sense, conveyed through the always marked presence of the seasons. These two elements reunited helped to show the sensibility of the Edoites, which enjoyed the ephemerality of pleasure as well as beauty. I doubt, however that this sense could at all be transmitted through photography, especially to foreigners. This impossibility of translation of Japanese aesthetics into the photographic realm leaves us with a big gap between intention and execution.\textsuperscript{57}

**Woman doing make-up and Woman and hair dress**

Within the tradition of the ukiyo-e there are themes that give perfect pretext for an intimate scenes, these being moments in which the woman is not naked, but in a situation in time in which she just came out of that state, for example the theme of “after the bath” is a popular one. Another sensual moment close to nudity can be found in the theme of woman applying make-up. This type of scene, which was a moment by no means public\textsuperscript{58}, positions our gaze in a situation of sensual privacy and intimacy. In the examples provided we can observe that in order to apply the make up the depicted women take off the upper part of their attires, exposing the upper part of their bodies. When we compare the photographs with the ukiyo-e images we find a clear resemblance in the use of visual devices: the presence of the mirrors, the general composition and relation between the

\textsuperscript{57} I believe that slowly, the relation between these beautiful bodies and the literary and aesthetical tradition of the seasons and in general what Kuki Shuzo calls the “iki” aesthetics will be lost, leaving only the bodies, which will be deal with in different forms. I believe in the photos of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century from the ブロマイド (posters of famous social figures), as well as Postcards of famous or beautiful woman and geishas, will be the result of this process, however about this I will argue later on in the section of “Japanese photography for a Japanese Market”.

\textsuperscript{58} Even nowadays there are campaigns in Japan in which train lines exhort their users to avoid applying make-up in the train, alongside with other calls for decent behavior, like avoiding using the cellphone, and talking in loud voice during the journey.
model and the objects, the display of the tools through the open drawers and the visual game of the reflection of faces, or body parts, all of these visual strategies are often used in ukiyo-e.

Fig. 28 Kusakabe Kinbei, Woman applying make up
Fig. 29 Utagawa Kunisida, Eight picturesque sights of women, Ritsumeikan University Digital Collection

Fig. 30 Suzuki Shin-ichi, Make-up Nagasaki University Library Collection
Fig. 31 Utagawa Kunisada Modern style make-up mirror, Edo era, Ritsumeikan University Digital Catalogue
More than a perfect knowledge of the private female customs (the act of make-up or the hair dressing), what these photographs present is a perfect understanding of a visual archetype and its common visual strategies used for the display of the female body and articulation of the fantasy of intimacy and desire. In the case of the *ukiyo-e* there is also a direct relation with time, constructed through the reference to the seasons of the year and the particular Japanese seasonal festivals. In these examples fig.29 title and garments make reference to autumn, a huge amount of *ukiyo-e* images follow this pattern, another example is fig.34. In the photographs this literary device is not present, leaving us only with a visual archetype of the “intimate” nude of the female body. This again is an interesting phenomena because it seems that the images of female bodies are emptied of the literary and previously aesthetical implications leaving us with mere bodies for display.

In the next examples (figs.32-34) we are presented with yet another visual theme that alludes to an intimate moment of preparation of the female body to be displayed in the public space, in this case it is the hairdressing. Although this practice could be of anthropological interest for foreigners,
understood as a social practice, the tradition of its use in Japan is in the same line as the previously seen examples: a highly codified image engaging the spectator with a female body (mostly prostitutes) in scenarios that create the illusion of intimacy. Once again we can observe a close similarity between the print design and the photographic composition.

An important element to be considered within the photographic production of Kinbei is that in most cases the photographs of types that belong to woman preserve the pictorial tradition of images of beautiful woman or *Bijin-ga* (美人画), all of the ukiyo-e images referenced here belong to this *ukiyo-e* genre. This genre addressed the theme of beautiful woman, and as can be appreciated from the images, this notion of beauty is not articulated through physiognomy (since all of the body and face styles are homogenous and do not make reference to a particular human face) rather they are constructed through a particular style or a social convention. The idea of beauty is conveyed through the pose, the garments, through a reference to literary character or to a prostitute, geisha or tea house clerk famous for her beauty, it could also be articulated merely with the allusion to the genre of *bijin-ga* (美人画) in itself. All of these options refer to social conventions rather than personal judgements. In this social line there are also examples of ukiyo-e productions that address proper and improper social behavior for woman. However this images do not operate only at this social level of convention, but they also seek to deploy in a personal level through a “subjective function” of desire. This function that I am referring to is the particular atmosphere that this images summon and the air of intimacy and ephemerality that clearly belongs

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59 F. Beato includes it in his album about “types”, including, like with all his other images in this album, an explanation of the image as a registry of a cultural custom.

60 It is very interesting to note that the reference to real woman is articulated through the title, or visual hints of the name rather than a rendering that refers to the likeness of the represented woman.

61 For a detailed analysis in this line refer to Julie Nelson Davis’s “Utamaro and the spectacle of beauty”.
to the aesthetic regime of individual enjoyment. It is of importance here that the pictorial female body is highly codified, reified, and regulated to be articulated and exposed as part of a male fantasy of beauty and intimacy that is enjoyed within its ephemerality\(^{62}\). This particularity seems, indeed, to be absent in the photographic production, giving as a result images that are pure body, regulated and codified and reified by the Japanese pictorial tradition. At the same time this bodies are, via the notion of the exotic, erotized by the foreigners. Within the modern visual tradition (both the Japanese and within the rest of the world) the Japanese female body has been the object of a high degree of sexualization through the pictorial enterprise. During the first decade of the twentieth century photograph in Japan this phenomenon will continue, drifting away from the interests of a foreign market and focusing more on the local one, but it will preserve many treats of the visual tradition that we have seen here. For the rest of the development of photography in Japan, until today, the use of the female body will be part of the photographic discourse, at times prolonging the reifying tradition, at times drifting away from it, and at times directly opposing it\(^{63}\).

Before I give a small jump in time and address the Bromaido (posters of famous social talents) and the postcard photography in Japan I believe it is important to notice that despite my argument of the influence of the preexisting pictorial tradition the previously presented photographers do propose and execute images that are the result of their own particular vision, knowledge, tradition and wittiness. Taking for example the first image of Kinbei exposed in this essay, or the beautiful yet documentary approach F. Beato has in many of his types images, to the use of three intertwined

\(^{62}\) To have a closer understanding of the relation between aesthetics, time and desire in Japanese sensibility of the Edo period “The structure of Iki” by Shuzo Kuki is a helpful text. In a less logocentric approach we can also find a beautiful explanation in Christine Buci-Glucksman’s “The aesthetic of the ephemeral”.

\(^{63}\) Briefly we could mention the photographs of Sawada Tomoko and Yanagi Miwa and examples of photographic endeavor that engage dialectically with this tradition.
woman that Stillfried uses, so similar to the three graces of the western pictorial tradition (and that up until nowadays it presents a visual composition foreign and alien to the Japanese\textsuperscript{64} taste) these photographers give us visual productions that are worth looking at, are worth discussing about and are worth being studied.

Fig. 35 and 36 Baron Raimund von Stillfried: Nagasaki Library Digital Collection

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{stillfried.jpg}
\caption{Fig. 35 and 36 Baron Raimund von Stillfried: Nagasaki Library Digital Collection}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{canova.jpg}
\caption{Fig. 37 Antonio Canova, 1817, "The three graces" Victoria and Albert Museum, London}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{64} For example most of the explanations that accompany this particular type of image refer to the awkward or particular way the models are holding hands, which is a particularity of the three graces western pictorial tradition, which main attribute is the interlocking of the three female figures through holding hands or arms. A small book on the theme of photography, from the end of the Bakufu and early Meiji, published in 2014, uses the term \textit{gikochinai} ぎこちない (clumsy, unrefined, awkward) and \textit{uiuishii} 初々しい (artless, unsophisticated) to describe this type of composition. The Nagasaki University Collection uses the term “unique way” 独特 (doku toku) to describe the way the hold hands.

In this section I wish to show two examples of photographic images that were produced from within the Japanese market with a clearly delimited Japanese target. These productions, in the same line as the *Yokohama shashin* follow a visual and social tradition that makes echo of the *ukiyo-e* created during the Edo period. I will be analyzing the Ryouunkaku Beauty contest and the Japanese postcards of the early 20th century. This two examples are very eloquent due to their modern qualities: with this I mean that both productions are the result of socio-economical dynamics product of a modern logic of market, as well as a product of the *Meiji Ishin* (the process of modernization of Japan during the Meiji period).

**Ryouunkaku Beauty Contest**

The first example is the *Ryouunkaku (凌雲閣)* beauty contest, held in 1908. The Ryouunkaku was a twelve floors skyscraper, build in western style, with red bricks and wooden frame that hosted stores from floors second to eight, it had an observation deck, electric lights as well as electric elevators, in sum the Ryouunkaku building was an expression of the modern Japan. The previously mentioned elevators were shut down by the metropolitan Tokyo police, for safety reasons, only half a year after the opening of the building. As a result the sales decreased and the manager of the Ryouunkaku thought of a way to incite people to ascend to the upper floors using the stairs. His idea was to hold a beauty contest of the one hundred most beautiful geishas from Tokyo’s red district. The photographers commissioned for this contest was Ogawa Kazumasa (小川一真). Kazumasa was a successful photographer that indeed dealt with photographs for the foreign market. However he acquired his photographic training in the U.S.A. and was a huge promotor of the development of photography in his own country, publishing and printing his own magazine: *Shashin Shimpō*. He
introducing and developed many different printing techniques and photographic gadgets. He is considered pioneer of the collotype in Japan, and his champion during his productive year. Ogawa ultimately established a successful printing business. He was a man knowledgeable in both western and eastern visual culture. In his own production we can observe indeed that although he dealt with traditional themes and motifs, the way he sometimes approached his subjects was indeed much less traditional than, for example, Kusakabe Kinbei. In Fig.38 we can observe the frequent theme of the Japanese beauty, however in this case the use and display of the body, although alluding to an intimate moment (due to the long, untied, and slightly wet hair, which of course was never worn as such outside,) that presents a young lady in a moment of self-absorption (僻離). This use of the female body, and the look, are more in tune with the wester notions of the romantic than the Japanese notions of Iki and detachment. This composition contrasts with others by Ogawa in which he follows a visual tradition like in fig.39 where the theme of a woman playing the Koto is observed.

Fig.38 Ogawa Kazumasa, Nagasaki University Library Collection  Fig.39 Ogawa Kazumasa, Nagasaki University Library Collection

65 For a more detailed account on Ogawa’s life please refer to Terry Bennett’s “Photography in Japan”. In general terms Ogawa was a professional photographer as well as an amateur, in the sense of his love and appreciation for photography.
Returning to the Ryuunkaku exhibition, the composition of each one of the one hundred photographs was kept basically the same for each one of them. The geishas were given the freedom to choose posture and way of holding the *uchiwa* (団扇) or fan. However all of them had to hold the fan (with the name of Ryuunkaku written on it) and pose in the same set. The composition of the set alludes to a visual tradition of stereotypical Japanese imaginary (figs 41-43). The sliding door, the lanterns, the hanging scroll, the small props on the floor, the round window, and the general theme of the beautiful geisha are anchored in a visual tradition that matches the exotic view western built for itself about Japan. However, the main target and audience of these images was Japanese, and the impact that the contest had on the Japanese society still echoes until now with, for example, the popularity contests held nowadays between members of music groups, such as the pop group AKB48, usually called *Senbatsu* (選抜) which literal meaning is “selection”. Ogawa had the experience of studying and living abroad, his formation as a photographer was outside Japan. However he was highly appreciated by the own Japanese: he was commissioned to create a registry of some of Japan’s national treasures, and was a royal employee for the Japanese Emperor.

Figs. 41, 42 and 43 Ogawa Kazumasa, “One hundred geishas of Tokyo”
Despite his impressive background, and even when targeting a mainly Japanese audience\textsuperscript{66}, the visual strategy employed is not far away from the one used in photographs for foreign customers. I believe that this is a strong example of the influence the pictorial tradition had over photographic production during the end of the \textit{bakufu} and early Meiji era. The contest seems to have been so popular that Ogawa took the theme and visual strategies and applied them to a production that was then targeted at a foreign market\textsuperscript{67}. The name of the publication was “Types of Japan. Celebrated Geisha (sic) of Tokyo”. The title is very representative since it is taking images that originally were intended for pure aesthetical appreciation and presents them as “Types” with the objective anthropological connotations this word has. This book is also representative of a strong practice within the Japanese photographic production, namely the use of traditional motifs and themes “remarketed” for an alien audience. If this argument holds true then there is a strong relationship between the exoticism that the western world approaches to Japan in general, and the Japanese female body in particular, and the ways in which the Japanese visual tradition regulates and re-prents the female figure in its pictorial tradition. Following this thought, one thing to remember here is that photography, as well as painting, belongs to a visual activity that has been used to channel different social interests and objectives. This tradition shifts and adapts, takes new forms under new media, but the essence of its existence, namely the necessity to materialize social and human needs, remains.

\textsuperscript{66} The Ryuunkaku’s stores offered goods from all around the world. And it was quite an attraction for inhabitants of Tokyo. It could also had been appealing for foreigners, but this modern building would not match the expectations of a “pure” exotic Japan, so I highly doubt the foreign tourists would be considered when thinking about this promotional strategy.

\textsuperscript{67} Although he did this with almost all of his work, even documentary images of natural disasters.
The case of the Japanese postcards

The Japanese postal service introduced the use of postcards in 1873, twenty seven years later, in 1900, the production of non-governmental postcards became legal. During the times of the Russo-Japanese war (1904) these commercially produced postcards became a very popular item for war-mail. The type of postcards I will talk about could also be purchased by foreigners, and in many cases this were used to send mail from Japan to foreign countries. However there is a clear origin and popular use within the Japanese market. The woman used for the photographs generally were not models, rather almost all them were famous geishas, recognized by the Japanese society as particularly gifted or beautiful woman. It is interesting to note that when talking about the postcard phenomenon the Japanese texts make a comparison between these type of images and the latter Talento Bromaido (タレントブロマイド): posters of stars of the popular culture, such as movie stars, singers and even sumo wrestlers. This posters, as well as the postcards, targeted a national Japanese audience, and operated between a government and a society that in general terms was seeking for modern State and modern lifestyle.
In these postcards we can observe famous Japanese Geishas, most of them young, in traditional Japanese wardrobe, either Kimono or the summer Yukata. Most of the portrayed females evade direct visual confrontation with the camera.

The origin of this gesture is a complex one. According to the scholar Mariko Takeuchi, there is a strong relation between this form of looking and the geisha’s manners and dancing tradition. In addition to this, according to Helen Merrit and Nanako Yamada, in their book *Woodblock Kuchi-e Prints, reflections of Meiji Culture* this type of look was the result of the popularity of Rafael Sanzio in Meji culture, according to the authors Rafael’s Madonna\(^68\) with bent heads and downcast eyes, imported from the western sensibility helped created during the Meiji years this modern sensibility. This general visual attitude echoes properly with the previous geisha’s manner tradition, and at the

\(^68\) Helen Merrit & Nanako Yamada, *Woodblock Kuchi-e Prints*, p.23
same time it also matches the modern sensibility that was also starting to be displayed in modern Japanese writing, which started to talk about “individual’s feelings with a new type of intimacy and psychological depth”\(^6^9\). This mixture seems to prolong the traditional relation between the literary and the visual realms in Japan. I believe this visual strategy of the look has to be the result of the mixture of Japanese tradition with western ideas and images. However I will like to add a note about the implications of such a way of looking. In her book “Threshold of the visible world” Kaja Silverman gives an explanation of the relationship between the observer and images that present this type of look. Basically the relation between bodies is articulated through the act of looking. The act of looking is regulated, in its own, by the look in itself; whenever we look at someone without being looked at we are able to exercise power over the observed body (the panoptic eye is another example of this). This visual resource of misdirecting the look of the spectrum\(^7^0\) (in Barthes terms) gives power to the spectator to freely gaze at the represented body. If the eyes of the model would look back at us we would be more prone to become aware of our own voyeuristic activity and then become uneasy about it, similarly to what happens to the peeping tom when he is discovered observing others. I explain this point to show that besides the cultural origin of the practice of misdirecting the look of the observed body, this strategy has connotations of reification and control over the female body that may operate regardless of cultural specificity.

Some of the examples of these postcards, published by the POLA Culture Research\(^7^1\) offer a very interesting situation: these type of postcards were used to send messages to the war front. This mixture of a traditional Japanese beauty and military activity, an activity that was held in order

\(^7^0\) That which is photographed
\(^7^1\) (Book of Beautiful woman from the end of Bakufu and Meiji) 幕末明治美人帖，2009
to show the word Japan was part of the developed colonizer world, and not the other way around, is a very fine example of the forms in which Japan has dealt with the interchange and adoption of western culture and ideals into its own dynamics. At the same time there also operates a very interesting dynamic in which we see female bodies, regulated by a gaze product of many years of visual control serving the purpose of embodying messages for a military campaign for geopolitical control. Within these postcards we can find themes and motifs that make echo of the previous visual tradition of the Edo period as well as of the photographic images of the Yokohama Shashin and the production targeted at foreigners. However differences will be found: the general tone of the composition is less narrative and more descriptive, meaning with this that this images do not intend to transfer specific information about the meaning of the elements we are observing, but rather just present them. The figures appearing in the cards, in general terms, are not generic females, but part of an elite of geishas that have been able to obtain a better lifestyle through their fame and relationship with members of the upper classes. The visual composition is also much more focused on the body and face, and doesn’t worry so much about the background or the introduction of traditional Japanese elements. Despite this differences the geishas engage in their traditional activities, like playing the koto (a theme present in Ukiyo-e and the photographs for the foreign market) and are presented in closed environments that produce an aura of intimacy. The visual composition tends to more closed and intimate shots, leaving less space around the model and focusing on her personal traits and looks.
In the case of example fig. 50 the writing on the postcard seems to be written by someone during a trip within Japan, so it’s not war mail. The theme follows some elements from the pictorial tradition: the use of light kimono or Yukata signs towards summer, the motif of a young beautiful woman refreshing herself during the hot summer. The theme is present in various examples of ukiyo-e, the representative Kitagawa Utamaro has a triptych called “On top and beneath Ryogoku Bridge” where he presents this same theme. The difference is in the number of woman presented, however this representation of Utamaro also alludes to a moment of intimacy and relaxation, enjoyed mainly
between the courtesans of Edo, away from the workplace, Yoshiwara.

On top and beneath Ryogoku Bridge (Ryogokubashi no ue, shita), c. 1795/96. Property of the Art Institute of Chicago.

However in the photographic version we can also observe a different trend in the Yukata pattern, as well as the t hairstyle. If we pay attention to the upper part of the postcard the inscription ハイカラ百種 or hundred types of HAIKARA (High Collar) an expression used to talk about fashionable items, hairstyle, clothes and such this expression is also deeply related to western fashion and taste.

In fig. 45 we can observe our beauty reading a book in wester binding fashion, and in fig.49 she is playing not a koto nor a shamisen, but a violin: a western instrument.

Within these images we can observe the International exchange and negotiation of foreign culture that was introduced and adopted in Japan. This are truly Japanese images, I would argue, because they represents very clearly the constant state of negotiation and adoption of foreign influence applied under Japanese terms; the beauty presented in the image operates under a traditional japaenese visual regime and aesthetics, with the adoption and implementation of western
elements that do not enter in conflict at all with the general theme and composition. At the same
time the nature of the photographic production in its reproduction of likeness positions the
photographs targeted at the market of desire in a new realm; drifting away from the phisionomic
similarity articulated of the community in the pictorial tradition we enter into the world of individual
specificity and beauty of the individuals. However this notion of beauty, although much more
subjective is still regulated by traditional and social standards.

Conclusions

The idea that the photographic production is linked to previous pictorial tradition is a general
phenomenon that applies to Japan as well as it applies to the West. Keeping this idea in mind helps
to open new forms of analyzing, reading and studying the photographic images, specially the
infamous Yokohama Shashin. In many cases the different analysis forget about the fact that Japan
was not a colony, hardly experienced influence from other cultures during almost 300 years, and had
a strong cultural and pictorial tradition of its own, so strong it was it left a mark on all Japan related
image and image producers, even the foreign ones. However, the fact that Japan opened to the
West and its cultural influence cannot be denied, and the fact that there are also western cultural
elements within the photographic production in Japan is an important one. The examples provided
in this essay are just a small fraction of all the possibilities that the photographic production in Japan
has to offer. The idea that the photographic production is related to pictorial tradition is an
important point that will remain valid and relevant for later representative photographic production
in Japan, specifically the world of “Art photography” or *geijutsu shashin* 芸術写真. In the same way
the Western Pictorialist photographic movement marked a shift from the academist pictorial past,
the Japanese photographic world will also suffer a re-structuration of itself parting away from (but based on) the pictorial tradition of the past and the new pictorial and art proposals articulated in the West. In order to have a wider understanding of these movements the cases presented in this essay can be of help to shape a general understanding of the milieu from which photographers like Fukuhara Shinzou and Shiotani Teikou had confronted with and departed from. These two photographer will serve as a strong influence for later representative Japanese photographers\textsuperscript{72} and were keystone for the grow and development of Photography\textsuperscript{73} at a philosophical level so important for Photography nowadays\textsuperscript{74}. And so the presence of tradition remains, either by its continuation or by its redefinition created through confrontation and re-structuration.

\textsuperscript{72} Shoji Ueda had a great admiration for Shiotani Teikou
\textsuperscript{73} Fukuhara Shinzou engaged in numerous public appearances and presentations in which he discussed the notion, essence and future of the photographic activity in Japan
\textsuperscript{74} The discussion of “the nature of photography” or “what is photography” is akin to the philosophical gesture found within modern western painting. By questioning the essence, nature and limits of painting the impressionists, cubists, and similar engage in a Philosophical activity of solving fundamental questions of the being.
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Other resources

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