# Article information:

Photographing the Invisible: Immortal Spirit Photography and China's En(light)enment | Trans Asia Photography | Duke University Press  
<https://read.dukeupress.edu/trans-asia-photography/article/doi/10.1215/21582025-9710562/313448/Photographing-the-Invisible-Immortal-Spirit>

# Article summary:

1. The article examines Chinese spirit photography practiced by a spiritualist group during China's enlightenment movement in the late 1910s, which claimed to have "photographed" immortal spirits using shadow to render their spectral likeness.

2. The article argues that Chinese spirit photography offers a provocative take on the nature of photographic likeness and encapsulates a turn-of-the-century, visual-epistemic shift in the relationship between seeing and imaging.

3. The SLS's spirit photography took shadow as its formal language, shifting attention from the decisive moment of exposure of an essence to the recognition of that essence through tonal difference, challenging the necessary connection between indexicality and likeness.

# Article rating:

May be slightly imbalanced: The article presents the information in a generally reliable way, but there are minor points of consideration that could be explored further or claims that are not fully backed by appropriate evidence. Some perspectives may also be omitted, and you are encouraged to use the research topics section to explore the topic further.

# Article analysis:

The article "Photographing the Invisible: Immortal Spirit Photography and China's En(light)enment" provides a detailed analysis of Chinese spirit photography during China's enlightenment movement in the late 1910s. The author examines the SLS's practice of integrating Daoist divinatory rituals with photography to capture immortal spirits, using shadow to render their spectral likeness. The article argues that Chinese spirit photography was not simply superstition nor a local appropriation of modern visual technology but offers a provocative take on the nature of photographic likeness.

The article is well-researched and provides valuable insights into the historical context and cultural significance of Chinese spirit photography. However, there are some potential biases and limitations in the article that need to be considered.

One potential bias is that the author focuses primarily on the SLS's perspective and does not provide much insight into how other groups or individuals viewed Chinese spirit photography at the time. This could lead to a one-sided reporting of events and limit our understanding of how different groups interacted with this phenomenon.

Another limitation is that the article does not provide much evidence for some of its claims, such as when it suggests that Chinese spirit photography challenged the necessary connection between indexicality and likeness. While this may be true, more evidence would be needed to support this claim fully.

Additionally, while the article acknowledges some of the dualistic categories present in historical actors' thinking, it does not explore these categories' complexities fully. For example, while it notes that traditional lyrical sensibility and aesthetic ideas were involved in adopting and refashioning technical media like photography, it does not delve deeply into how these ideas interacted with modernist aesthetics or Western influences.

Overall, "Photographing the Invisible" provides an insightful analysis of Chinese spirit photography during China's enlightenment movement. However, readers should be aware of its potential biases and limitations when interpreting its findings.

# Topics for further research:

* Other perspectives on Chinese spirit photography during China's enlightenment movement
* Critiques of the SLS's integration of Daoist divinatory rituals with photography
* The role of Western influences in Chinese spirit photography
* The complexities of traditional lyrical sensibility and aesthetic ideas in relation to modernist aesthetics
* The connection between indexicality and likeness in photography
* The cultural significance of shadow in Chinese spirit photography

# Report location:

<https://www.fullpicture.app/item/6c464418458a910d7325920e5a54809e>