

斯里兰卡影像日记·化相重合的瞬间

钟维兴 作品



中国摄影出版社



SRI LANKA

PHOTOGRAPHIC TRAVELOGUE

A MOMENTARY REINCARNATION



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序 Preface

视觉语言与阅读的轮回式同构 ——读钟维兴的南斯里兰卡系列摄影作品

韦源

对于一个印度村民来说，不了解母牛在他的生活和崇拜中具有什么样意义，我们怎么能够理解印度人的诗歌和文学中的比喻呢？

——《理想与偶像》，第一章：价值在历史中的地位，
恩斯特·贡布里希（英）

斯里兰卡是一个多宗教的地域。印度教、伊斯兰教和上座部佛教同时存在，人们大致相安无事地生活在海岛上，以渔业和资源产业为生。

最开始在斯里兰卡的海边行走和捕捉素材时，摄影师被海边尚存留在原地的火车残骸的形式感所吸引。正在进行拍摄，一位当地的老妇人上前打招呼，请摄影师一行去她家中小坐。在这位大海啸幸存者的家中，摄影师看到了摆放在储物柜上大大小小的照片，多数照片的主角，是一位帅气的年轻军官。

“那是我的儿子。”给客人倒着茶水的老妇人解释道，“他和我的丈夫、小女儿在大海啸中遇难了。”她把茶水一一分给客人，满是皱纹的手却没有一丝颤抖。她在客人的对面盘腿坐下，做了一个“请喝茶”的手势。

令摄影师感到震动的倒不是海啸本身给当地人带来的苦难——一路走来，这片尚未从灾难中完全恢复的土地上这样的故事太多了——而是老妇人不可思议的平静。这种平静并非为了掩饰内心悲苦而撑出来的冷漠，而是一种面对命运的摔摆时能够自然处之的镇定。

幸存者向来自远方的摄影师解释了事情的经过：

遇难的铁路段正好在海滩附近，她的家则位于铁路靠内陆这一边。海啸发生时，正值照片上这位帅气军官回家探访的假期，所以当时全家人都在，未能幸免于难。唯独她因为去了屋后的上坡上捡拾柴火逃过一劫。当巨大的海浪向自己的房子扑去的时候，向回跑的她已经来不及警告自己的家人了——到了山脚，所有家人都已被海浪卷走，曾经的家只剩下残破的地基。

“我当然哭过，像是忘记了自己一样。但除了继续生活，还有别的可能吗？他们不会被哭回来的。”幸存者抚摸着儿子的照片，“这可能就是佛祖说过的生命无常吧。”

摄影师也看着照片上的年轻军官——画面上的年轻人一身海军制服，笑容几乎可以融化一切苦难。彼时，大海是他的背景。摄影师不禁说：“他真帅。”

老妇人笑了：“是的。这让我觉得，即使我现在是一个人在这里，生活也是美好的。”

——若说世间人生正是出自般若大智慧所述的连绵不断的因果循环，斯里兰卡当下正在进行的大众生活的从容似乎就是对轮回的最好注

脚，甚至不屑于掩饰曾经的苦难，不刻意于未来的发展，只投入地专注于现在的生活。

这应该正是打动摄影师，让他决定深入到南斯里兰卡各地进行摄影创作的源动力。

快餐时代的浮躁和过度城市化的生活让我们总是习惯于概括、抽取而不是深入、发散地去认识某种传统。譬如我们总是会想当然地以为西方造型艺术的传统就是简单的“写实”，不愿去仔细辨认“古典主义——现实主义——浪漫主义”的审美历史变化脉络和各自较为鲜明的图式特征；也正如我们一以贯之地以为中国绘画就是没有形体准确性的写意为先——这样的习惯让我们选择性地忘记波提切利或者荷尔拜因对线条勾勒技法的研究的图像价值，或者元代小写意兼工带写的方式中所具有的对大自然真实形态的描摹态度。这样的习惯也会使人对“美”的误会加大。这方面最明显的事例就是永远笼罩在柔光效果当中，毫无表现层次可言的婚纱摄影——图像本来是一种认识世界的捷径，但它现在离世界越来越远了。如果说图像在行为上是一定会滞后于时代生活的艺术方式，那么它至少应该是有效于人的视觉感受的。

摄影师显然对这些问题有着深入的认知，并有着自己的创作态度。可能是斯里兰卡丰富的生活情态触动了这位以观察为根本工作的创作者，在图像的素材上，摄影师开始尽量回避所谓“唯美”的图像，或者说，开始扩大审美的基本涵义范畴。作品所涉及的人物和场景对于并不完美的形态毫不避讳。在这一系列的很多幅作品当中，人物蹙紧的眉头以及生活艰辛作用于个人的无奈神情既没有被遮掩，也没有被刻意夸大，而是自然地存在着。冷漠的戏谑被取消了，代之以充满关怀的观察甚或出于同理性的体察；简单化的判断被怀疑了，代之以对图像叙事可能性的深入探索。

人世种种，呈现的是因果循环；有情众生所处的每一处每一刻即是因果的缘起、经过和报受的世间法相的重叠显示。摄影师显然在不断的深入观察中受到了这样的世间生活情态的感染，手中的相机不再是冰冷的机器，而是和自己灵性相连的眼睛。作品以捕捉到的感受为元件，努力挣脱一般图像叙事意义层面上的对“完整的视觉元素”的定义，关注人物和场景的气场甚于关注作为视觉元素的人和事物的形色，将“有



情”的涵义和想象延伸同时铺陈于母题和视觉语言的结构形式，反而在对于这种偶然性的努力控制行为（就像是随着缘法的起起落落去寻找生活的真相）当中靠近了形色互构的真义——相比刻意经营的图像，这样的具有饱满情感的形象可能在随性情游走的过程中会失掉些微细节的层次，却在色彩与形状的情感表现张力上获得了可能有的最大化。

甚至，作为色彩元素骨架的明度关系已经不是真正的形式重点，真正的核心态度是“观察”的价值建立，而形色的互动也开始在视觉感受的惯性的边缘派生出更多义的阅读——如前所言，这也是源于核心审美涵义的扩张。

摄影师对语言组织的“延续”形态有着明显的表达倾向。

虽然在这些图像的大构架上依旧能够看出摄影师所具有的深厚的摄影技术经验和图像构成修养——譬如充分利用对透视规律的调整来制造戏剧感或者渲染场景的情节感，但更大的特征却是某种意犹未尽的叙事性：几乎所有的图像都具备开放的边界和对背景局部富有情感的裁切。这给人以充分的想象延伸，就像读着一个个回味无穷的小故事，而这些故事的时代和生活背景显然是关联在一起的。对于当地生活在时间历程上的想象触发同时面向过去和未来，正如佛之如来境地在十方显现不同的法相。奇妙的是，这样的多线程阅读可能在多向度上的延伸让语言更加纯净了。这显然不是简单化和概念化的构成，而是在变化中不断增殖的体验和感受层面的现象集合的视觉形式递归。在现象上，多种不同向度的阅读体验实际上存在核心精神的交集，可能是之前所言之具有饱满情感的形象，也可能是多种形象通过这种叙述使图像的总体气场呈现出来的精神所指的趋同性。

不难看出，摄影师在被表达的“素材——主题”和表达层面的“态度——形式”这两个一般来说在创作活动中被分开的部分之间找到了沟通的可能。身为东方人，内心本身就具足对生命变化特性的感应，摄影师有意无意地进行着的图像语汇构织方式，是一种多维度的因缘。以内心受到的震动为基本单元，向着时间轴的两个方向同时展开图像的联想和回溯，使作品的整体面貌和当地的生活情态形成了形式上的共振效应——至此，是生活本身为因摄影表达为果，还是反之，都已经通畅无碍。观者可以从生活出发去进行作品的阅读，也可以通过作品来思考生活。这些图像在共时性的推动下，随着视觉阅读行为的深入，其意义会

逐渐大于图像本身，成为某种“现世的经变图”。在形态上来说，就像是通过六道在刹那永恒中瞬间的“化相”的重合来完成对轮回本身结构的探索。通过共时性的建立来完善一种轮回式的对现世的叙述，于人心而言大概是最有效的感动。

从视觉语言的修辞规律出发，向着不确定性表达的自由进行的飞跃，来自摄影师在创作活动中对自己身份的不断消解，就像禅修者在思定静虑中不断倒掉自己的偏见。在创作行为的整个过程中，为了丰满阅读的同步感，这样的方式甚至使观者在面对作品时会偶尔失神到忘记摄影师的创作主体身份——和一般情况下的猜测不同的是，这绝不会使观者感到无聊；相反，消解掉高高在上的主体意识，使观者在感受和思考中均获得了解放，视觉感受的阅读面被扩大了：当时间性参与到图像呈现之中，图像本来对某一场景的瞬间锁定通过观者的注视变成了多个刹那的断面场景的重叠，正如禅之意味中念念相随的感悟性认知——以此来完善视觉的因果律作用下的缘起缘灭的循环形态，在视觉上的最直观感受就是图像会在视觉阅读的过程中生出某种难以言明的连绵不绝的感受。如果一定要从接受式审美的角度来看，这种“延续”除了图像语言的文体性，同时也是被表达主题的组成部分：题材不是不重要，但题材的特性在视觉语言建构中已经由单纯的材料变成了这种文体的必然词汇——于是被扩大的审美核心价值的基本涵义也获得了词汇组织的合法性。

也许正是由于摄影师采取（或可说自然产生）了这样的态度，这批作品里的每一幅都变得意义重大又在局部映照出整体的形象。这让摄影师的工作量陡然大增，原来设定好的时间一下子变得不够用了。将整个斯里兰卡作为被表达的对象在目前的情况下已经变得不现实，这本来会是一个遗憾，不过现在以南斯里兰卡为对象的图像集合，已经像是一部精彩得不需要普通意义上的文采的复调小说，因此作为一个阶段的作品集，它们的说服力完全够了。按摄影师的理解，这依然是一种完满：缘分到这里就结束了。

摄影师并不打算就此结束他的斯里兰卡之行。目前，他正收拾行囊，前往北斯里兰卡——同在一种轮回之中，但显然那又是另一个故事了。

The Visual Language and Readings of Recurrence

—Reading Zhong Weixing's South Sri Lanka Photo Series

Wei Yuan

"How can we understand the metaphors of Indian poetry and literature without knowing what the cow means to the Indian villager in his life and in his worship?"

— Ernst Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols* (1979), Chapter 1, "The Tradition of General Knowledge"

Sri Lanka is a multi-secular region. Hinduism, Islam, and Theravada Buddhism exist simultaneously, and the people live more or less in harmony on the island, making a living from their fishing industry and their natural resources.

Early on, while walking along Sri Lanka's coast for inspiration, the photographer was attracted by what appeared to be the remains of a train, untouched in the place of their destruction. Just as he began to take photos, an elderly local woman greeted him and invited him in to her house. In this home of a tsunami survivor, the photographer saw a collection of snapshots. The subject in most of them was a handsome young officer.

"That's my son," the old woman explained as she poured a cup of tea for her guest. "He and my husband and our daughter all died in the tsunami." She passed the cup to her guest with a hand that was as steady as it was wrinkled and sat cross-legged in front of her guest, beckoning him to drink.

The photographer felt a shock—not that the tsunami had brought about so much suffering, for all along this journey, there had been many such stories from this still-recovering disaster area—but that the old woman seemed so undisturbed. This was not the kind of tranquility that comes from trying to conceal one's sorrow or that appears from detachment; it was the calm that can naturally occur in the face of fate.

The survivor explained the course of events to this photographer from a faraway land:

The section of the railway that was destroyed was right along the beach, and her house was located just inside the railroad. When the tsunami hit, this handsome officer in the photographs had just returned on holiday and so the whole family was at home. They would be unable to escape tragedy. The old woman had gone up the slope behind the house to collect firewood by herself. When the enormous wave crashed into her house, she was running back home, knowing she would be too late to warn her family. By the time she reached the foot of the hill, all of her family members had been washed away by the wave, and all that was left of the house was its dilapidated foundation.

"Of course I cried," the survivor said, caressing a photo of her son. "Maybe this is what Buddhists call the impermanence of life."

The photographer also looked at the shots of the young officer. The smile of the young person in the picture, dressed in a navy officer's uniform, looked like it could melt at any moment into tragedy, the ocean behind him. The photographer couldn't help but remark, "He was really handsome." The old woman smiled. "Yes. This lets me feel, even though I'm by myself here, life is



still beautiful."

It seems that the worldly life we know comes from the great wisdom of Sanskrit understanding, with its unrelenting circles of karma. The calm course of life the Sri Lankans are currently upholding seems to epitomize reincarnation—even though the suffering has not been glossed over and concealed, they are not consciously working to bring on tomorrow but single-mindedly throwing themselves into life today.

The fickleness of the fast-food era and excessive urbanized lifestyle has accustomed us to brief summaries; taking and never putting back; knowing traditions only superficially. We always take for granted that the mandate of the West's visual arts is to simply show the truth, and nobody bothers to more carefully examine the tenets of classicalism, realism, romanticism, their history and intersections, or the relatively clear-cut distinctions between them. This thinking also leads us to believe that Chinese paintings are formless and lack accuracy. We selectively forget the value of advances in drawing technique by Renaissance painters like Sandro Botticelli or Hans Holbein or the how the Yuan Dynasty brush painters influenced our views of nature. This thinking can also cause even greater misunderstanding of the concept of beauty; the most obvious example is found in studio portraiture with its subject always centered and enshrouded in soft light with no thought to composition whatsoever. Images were once a means with which to understand the world, but now they grow ever farther from the reality of the world. If it is true that the creation of images inherently lags behind the equivalent creation of art, then images should at least bear the outcome of the human visual perspective.

Clearly, photographers must acknowledge these questions as well as their own attitude toward the creative process. Perhaps it was the abundant spirit of Sri Lankan life that inspired this photographer to engage in the fundamental task of observation. With his subjects, the photographer tries as much as possible to evade these "aesthetic" images—that is to say, the fundamental meaning of aestheticism has expanded; the people and places depicted in these artworks hardly evade forms of imperfection.

Within this abundant series, the furrowed brows and the arduousness of life as shown in the subjects' helpless expressions are left untouched, in their natural existence. By the same token, idle chatter has been stopped and replaced by concerned observation. Simple declarations have become suspect and replaced by the narrative of images and the possibility of deeper meaning.

From human life, there has emerged a karmic circle, a never-ending cycle of cause and effect. All sentient beings, in all place and time, are rooted in this cycle, passing through and being subjected to this natural phenomenon

of overlapping existence. The photographer cannot help but unceasingly and deeply observe the effect of this worldly spirit, his camera not simply a cold machine but the eye to his soul. His artworks capture the element of emotion, striving to discard the notion of “complete visual elements” usually fixed upon the ordinary narrative of images. His focus is on people and scenes and moods such that these subjects of attention become the visual elements of form and color, thus extending and elaborating upon the meaning of perception and imagination in relation to composition, motif, and visual language. On the other hand, with this effort to control chance (just as fate ebbs and flows as it coincides with the reality of life) comes a nearness to the truth of form, color, and composition. Compared to painstakingly created images, with their the micro-arrangement of multi-layered composition and figures ripe with emotion, perhaps these images lose something along the way, but what is lost is more than made up for in the tension and emotion displayed in color and form.

To that extent, clarifying the relationships of composition and color is no longer the primary formal concern. Now this concern is establishing the value of observation. The interaction of form and color also starts at the edges of inert visual perception, yielding multiple readings and, as was said before, broadening the core meaning of aesthetics.

Photographers have a clear inclination to convey the continuity of this language.

The framing of these images reveals the photographer’s profound skill and experience and his training in composition—for instance, he makes full use of the rules of perspective to create an atmosphere of drama or render the feeling of a scene. But the more important characteristic of these works is the sense that they are unfinished narratives. Nearly all of the images have cropping or open edges that reveal a background rich in feeling. This gives viewers the full extent of the image, just as if they were reading a rich and memorable story. And the lives and times of these stories are inextricably linked together. The course of history stimulates these locals to simultaneously face the past and present much in the same way Tathagata is he who at once has both thus come and thus gone, he who is beyond all. Multifaceted readings like these can also to some extent purify the language. To be sure, this is not a simplification or conceptualization of composition but a visual recurrence of multiple and ever-changing levels of experience and feeling. Numerous and distinct viewing experiences exist at the intersection of the mental and spiritual, and perhaps these emotion-laden images are before language, and perhaps many images have passed through these narratives to form a convergence of spirit from which emerges a complete scene.

It’s not difficult to see that while the photographer conveys layers of approach and form, his expression is shaped by the limitations and interconnections of material and topic. There is thus a possibility of finding a link between these two components which are usually separated in the act of creating. The photographer’s reaction as an Easterner to the changing nature of life has created, whether intentionally or not, a lexicon of images that is also a multidimensional chain of causes and effects. If this profound outcome is the starting point, these images’ associations and recollections expand simultaneously in the two directions of axis of time making the complete set of features and local spirit of life the resonating effect of the works. Thus, life itself becomes the origin of photography’s outcome of expression, or to say it in reverse, all obstacles have been removed. The viewer can enter the works by observing life and at the same time can ponder life through the works. Taken as a whole, these images demand a deeper visual reading, and their meanings gradually will surpass the images themselves to become an image of worldly change. A kshana is an instant in the middle of eternity, and that moment coincides with others to complete the cycle of reincarnation itself. Passing through a shared moment in time yields a perfect cyclical narrative of the



world, and, to human sense, that is perhaps the greatest outcome.

and leap toward the uncertainty of freedom of expression, from photographers creative activities in the continuous dissolution of their identity

With the rhetorical laws of the visual language behind him, the photographer leaps into the unknown, that ultimate expression of freedom arising from the constant dispersion of his identity as a result of the process of creation, much like the contemplation of continuously shedding bias by those who meditate. When viewers examine the works, their conception of the photographer-as-creator will mostly mysteriously vanish. This is not to say they are bored; on the contrary, this evaporation of a higher awareness allows the viewer to undergo a deeper understanding through their feelings and thoughts. Thus the surface area for the visual experience of image-reading has broadened at the same time as the participants emerge from within the images. What were originally images of scenes frozen at one moment in time have, under the viewer’s gaze, become an overlapping progression of numerous and truncated instants, just as one who meditates in the process of meditation realizes appreciation. From this point the originate-extinguish cycle is made visually perfect under the laws of cause and effect. The most intuitive visual impression that can be noted here is that the process of image-viewing gives rise to a continuous, uninterrupted, and hard-to-explain sensory experience. If we take a purely aesthetic point of view, this continuity is expressed through not only the language of images but also through the components of its subject; not that the subject matter is unimportant, but the nature of the subject matter on the construction of visual language has essential material which has formed this genre’s essential lexicon—and its core aesthetic value has broadened while the vocabulary of its fundamental meanings has been legitimized.

Perhaps too because the photographer adopts (or naturally has) such a point of view, among these works, the significance of every single work is its ability to create a complete image out of a partial reflection. This allows the photographer’s output to suddenly increase, and the originally set timeframe has suddenly become insufficient. To make the whole of Sri Lanka in its current state the subject of images would have been unrealistic, but now southern Sri Lanka has been portrayed in a collection of images that reveal its splendor without the need for a common fictional narrative. That is to say, their persuasion as one part in a collection of works is completely adequate. As far as the photographer understands, this is entirely satisfactory: Destiny ends here.

But the photographer does not intend to end his Sri Lankan travels here. At the moment his bags are packed and ready to go to northern Sri Lanka—and once more the wheel goes around. But clearly that is a story for another day.

