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00448

Tata, Sam  
Photographs

**Extent:**

5 boxes (2.5 metres)

**Biographical sketch:**

Sam Tata was born in Shanghai, China, on September 30th, 1911, to father Bejan, and mother, Naja, of the wealthy, mercantile Tata family. He died July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005 at the age of 93 at Sooke, British Columbia, Canada, on Vancouver Island.

He took up photography after studying at the University of Hong Kong in the 1930s and was one of the founding members of the Shanghai Camera Club. He learned studio portraiture with Oscar Seepol, later studying with well-known photographers, Chin San Long and Liu Shu Chong. His photographs began to be accepted for publication by British and American magazines. In the 1940s he had his own photography exhibition in Bombay (Mumbai). He lived in India for part of the 1940s where he met future mentor and friend, famed French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson. With Cartier-Bresson, Tata learned the art of street photography. The two documented the Indian Independence movement from 1946-1948, including the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1949, Tata returned to Shanghai, where he documented the rise of Communism in China following the Chinese Civil War. Tata immigrated to Canada in 1956 with his wife, Marketa (Rita) Langer and settled in Montreal, developing his photography career as a portraitist, and raising his daughter, Toni. Photographs of Toni as a small child appeared frequently in Canadian magazines-- she was clearly one of her father's favourite subjects. Tata also became known for his portraits of celebrities such as Leonard Cohen, Irving Layton, Buster Keaton, Elizabeth Smart, Christopher Plummer, Donald Sutherland to name a few.

Tata is survived by daughter Antonia (Toni), in Canada, sister Aloo Daver, of Hong Kong, brothers Phiroze Tata of London, England, Jangoo Tata, of San Francisco, and two grandsons. One brother died before him.

Tata's work has appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers, including *Macleans*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Time*, *The Globe Magazine*, *Star Weekly*, *Perspectives*, *French Chateleine* and many others, especially during the 1940s-1960s. His work has also appeared in numerous books and photography shows. In 1982 he received an honorary degree from Concordia University, Montreal. He was awarded the lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Association of Photographers and Illustrators in Communication (CAPIC). In 1991, forty of his photographs appeared in the National Library of Canada exhibition, Canadian Writers at the National Library of Canada.

**Scope and Content:**

Collection contains large black and white photographic prints and scrapbooks related to the life and work of Sam Tata.

**Custodial History:**

Purchased from John Metcalf, 2006.

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**Notes:**

Photograph titles are taken directly from titles/captions given by Sam Tata. John Metcalf has provided descriptions for uncaptioned photographs.

In a few instances, creator-supplied file titles include a historical and derogatory term for racialized, low-wage workers. Edits have been made to the file titles of these descriptions. The word has been replaced with [offensive term]. The original titles remain on the physical item.

Box 1	Contains 47 photographs: 46 black and white photographic prints 1 colour photographic print. 8 x 10 prints mostly.
1	Title: 'Journey to Amarnath, Kashmir 1953'
2	Title: 'Brahmin couple, Chandni Chowk, Delhi '84'
3	Title: 'Papier Maché elephant, Delhi 1984'
4	Title: 'Sikh flower seller, Chandni Chowk, Delhi '84'
5	Title: 'Merchant, Mohammed Ali Rd., Bombay '83'
6	Title: R. Caouette [Réal Caouette]
7	Title: 'Marketplace, Udaipur '84'
8	Title: 'Bookstall, Mohammed Ali Rd, Bombay '83'
9	Title: Parsi function, Montreal
10	Title: Buster Keaton, CN film
11	Title: 'Clothier, Udaipur '84'
12	Title: 'B'bay 1948'
13	Title: 'Two guitars, Montreal, 1962, Sam Tata' 5 x 8 colour photograph. Note from J.M.: The only colour of Sam's I saw. He loathed colour, saying "it betrayed form."
14	Title: 'Homage to Kertesz, McGill University, Montreal, 1982'
15	Title: 'Conversation, Shivajinagar, Bangalore '83'
16	Title: 'Family, Hong Kong, 1984'
17	Title: 'Roof Tops, Tokyo, 1973'
18	Title: 'Toy Shop, Udaipur '84'
19	Title: 'Latrine, Market place, Udaipur '84'

20	Title: 'Drugstore, Mohammed Ali Rd., Bombay '83'
21	Uncaptioned
22	Title: 'Race Club, Bombay '83'
23	Title: 'Destitutes, Shanghai, April 1949'
24	Title: 'Sisters, Wan Chai, Hong Kong 1973'
25	John Metcalf, [1985]
26	John Metcalf with Al Purdy 1989, 5x8
27	John Metcalf 1978, Delta, ON
28	Title: 'Quick lunch, Des Voeux Rd, Hong Kong 1973'
29	Title: Montreal [Jewish men studying]
30	Title: Montreal [Jewish men and boys praying]
31	Title: Montreal [Jewish man studying]
32	Buster Keaton during the making of CN movie
33	Uncaptioned [Interior. Seated man.]
34	Title: 'Overheard in a barbershop.' [Kashmir?]
35	Title: 'Pupils for Parsi priesthood, Dadar, Bombay '84'
36	Title: 'Pedicab [offensive term], Ernakulam, Cochin '83'
37	Title: 'Muslim merchants, Mohammed Ali Rd., B'bay '83'
38	Title: 'Market, Panaji, Goa '83'
39	Title: 'Shopper, Southall, London, 1983'
40	Note: London (Probably 1983) [supplied by J.M.]
41	Note: One of the Shanghai photos [supplied by J.M.]

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42	Note: [Henri Cartier-Bresson] - "I have a suspicion this is Cartier-Bresson" [supplied by J.M.]
43	John Metcalf, October 1987 [signed by Tata]
44	John Metcalf by Sam Tata, October 1987
45	Elizabeth Smart, Toronto, 1983
46	Yoshi Toshi Mori, Artist, Tokyo 1984
47	Leon Rooke, Victoria, 1988-89
Box 2	Contains 29 photographs [folded] 11 x 14 inch black and white photographs (predominantly)
Folder 1	Title: 'Pilgrims at Panchtarni enroute to Amarnath, Kashmir 1955'
Folder 2	Title: 'Family, Nantao, Shanghai 1949'
Folder 3	Title: 'Beggar Boys, Shanghai, 1949'
Folder 4	Uncaptioned [Shanghai, 1949?]
Folder 5	Title: 'Street conversation, Shanghai, 1938'
Folder 6	Title: 'Mourners, Millionaire Aw Boon Haw's Funeral, Hong Kong, 1954'
Folder 7	Title: 'Baby-Sitter, Shanghai, China, 1949'
Folder 8	Title: 'Parade Participants on Stilts, Shanghai, 1949'
Folder 9	Title: 'Actress Diana Van Der Vlis, New York, 1959' 2 prints
Folder 10	Title: 'Priest With Hindu Women and Child, Galta, India, 1955'
Folder 11	Title: Trevor Payne, Musician, Montreal, 1974 2 prints
Folder 12	Title: 'Probably Montreal' [note by J.M.]
Folder 13	Title: 'Market Place, Udaipur, 1984'

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Folder 14	Title: 'Chuvalo-Cleroux, copyright 1960' [Photograph of boxers George Chuvalo and Bob Cleroux in action]
Folder 15	Title: 'Family on the move: boy in the basket awaits his parents amidst goods and chattels. Shanghai. 1949.' [note by J.M.]
Folder 16	Title: 'Craig St. (now St. Antoine), Montreal. 1962'
Folder 17	Title: 'Hampton Court, 1978'
Folder 18	Title: 'Blind Beggars, Darjeeling, India, 1946'
Folder 19	Title: 'Children's Clothes over door with antique carving, Shanghai, 1949'
Folder 20	Title: 'Peasant Women, Delhi, 1955'
Folder 21	Title: 'Donald Sutherland, actor, London, 1976'
Folder 22	Uncaptioned
Folder 23	Title: 'Street Market, Hong Kong, 1973'
Folder 24	Title: 'Jumma Masjid, Delhi, 1955'
Folder 25	Uncaptioned [Shanghai, 1940s?]
Folder 26	Title: 'Comedian Arthur Treacher, Montreal, 1958'
Folder 27	Title: 'Sacred Cow, Bombay, 1947'
Folder 28	Title: 'Pilgrims to Amarnath, Pisu Ghati, Kashmir, 1955'
Folder 29	Uncaptioned
Box 3	Contains: 52 photographs/folders 55 11 x 14 black and white photographic prints
Folder 1	Uncaptioned [mounted print of nuns ascending church steps]  Note from J.M.: "Used as front cover of Ovo Magazine (Montreal)"

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Folder 2	John Metcalf, 1969 or 1970. Inscribed 'For John, to celebrate "auld acquaintances, affectionately, Sam'. Signed and mounted on board.
Folder 3	Title: 'H.W. Jones, Painter, Montreal, 1977' 2 prints
Folder 4	John and Myra Metcalf (1985?)
Folder 5	Title: 'Escaping Nationalist Soldier, Shanghai, 1949. Ironically flags in background celebrate some previous Nationalist Victory Day.'
Folder 6	Title: 'Crowds Seeking Entry into the China Travel Service for Railway Tickets Early May, Shanghai, 1949.' Signed 'Tata' 2 prints [1 original?]
Folder 7	Title: 'Roof Tops, Tokyo, 1972'. Signed 'Tata.'
Folder 8	Title: 'Parade of Soldiers of the Peoples' Liberation Army, Shanghai, 1949'
Folder 9	Caption: Hong Kong
Folder 10	Uncaptioned [dancer, Southeast Asia?]
Folder 11	Title: 'Graffiti, Amsterdam, 1981'
Folder 12	Emile Belcourt, Singer, Wimbledon, 1976
Folder 13	Uncaptioned [musicians?]
Folder 14	Uncaptioned. Note from J.M.: 'I think this is Edward Steichen' [photographer]
Folder 15	Mulk Raj Anand. Author of 'Coolie'. [reading 'Coolie']
Folder 16	Title: 'Fakir, Pakistan, 1955'
Folder 17	Uncaptioned
Folder 18	Title: 'Trial by a Nationalist Court of man accused of being a Communist and Blackmarketeer. Shanghai, China, 1949.'

Folder 19	Uncaptioned [trial, Shanghai, 1949]
Folder 20	Title: 'Nationalist trial of a man accused of being a Communist, Shanghai, China, 1949.' [signed by Tata]
Folder 21	Title: 'Trial of man accused of being a Communist.' His "crimes" are inscribed on paper-covered stick of wood.' Shanghai, 1949.
Folder 22	Caption: '... after which he is hustled off to be shot.'
Folder 23	Montreal sculptor [Stanley Lewis?] Note by J.M.
Folder 24	Title: 'Pauline Julien, Montreal. 1972' [singer, actress, songwriter, 1928-1998]. Signed by Tata.
Folder 25	Title: '[Offensive slur] woman, Monsoon, Bombay, 1948.' Signed.
Folder 26	Title: 'Salvation Army Band, St. Ives, Cornwall, 1978.' Note from John Metcalf: 'I used this as cover for Norman Levine's <i>From a Seaside Town</i> (Porcupine's Quill).' Signed by Tata.
Folder 27	Yoshi Toshi Mori, Artist, Tokyo, 1984. [note by J.M.]
Folder 28	John Colicos [Actor, played first Klingon in Star Trek]
Folder 29	Title: 'House-moving, Shanghai, 1949'
Folder 30	Uncaptioned [China]
Folder 31	London, UK
Folder 32	Uncaptioned [cellist]
Folder 33	Title: 'Papier-maché Horse, Jaipur, 1955'
Folder 34	Title: 'Petticoat Lane, London, 1959
Folder 35	Title: 'Concert, Public Square, Panaji, Goa, 1983'
Folder 36	Uncaptioned [India?]
Folder 37	Title: 'Fountain, Trafalgar Square, London, 1983.'
Folder 38	Title: 'Uniforms and Musical Instruments, Udaipur, 1984.' Signed



	Tata.
Folder 39	Title: 'Lubavitcher Bride, Montreal, 1972'
Folder 40	Uncaptioned [cat and statue, China?]
Folder 41	Title: 'A Lubavitcher Bridegroom, Montreal, 1972.'
Folder 42	[Lion dancers in parade]
Folder 43	Title: 'Muslim Woman outside the Zakaria Mosque, Bombay, 1948'
Folder 44	Title: 'Hikers, Luxembourg, 1976'
Folder 45	Caption: 'Young foreign refugee waiting to embark on the <i>Wooster Victory</i> . Shanghai, 1949.' [note by J.M.]
Folder 46	Uncaptioned [India?]
Folder 47	Caption: 'A View from a window, Wembley, London, 1976'. Holograph, signed. Ada and Frenny Tata – 'Tata's brother and wife at home in London' [note by J.M.]
Folder 48	Réal Caouette. 1962. Atwater Market. Provincial campaign. [note by J.M.]
Folder 49	Title: 'Worshippers, Hazrat Bal Mosque, Srinagar, Kashmir, 1955'
Folder 50	[Christopher Plummer]
Folder 51	Montreal. Ritz. [note by J.M.]
Folder 52	Title: '[Offensive term] resting, Jaipur, 1955.'
Box 4	<p>4 scrapbooks</p> <p>Folder 1: Blank notecards in folder depicting Tata photos</p> <p>Folder 2: Sam Tata Exhibition Catalogue: 'A One-Man Show of Photographs' (Bombay Art Society, 1947). This was Tata's first solo exhibition.</p> <p>Booklet is 12 pages long (including the numbered covers). It</p>

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	contains a foreword by the photographer Jehangir N. Unwalla and illustrates eight portraits, and also lists all 60 photographs that were in the exhibition. Donated by: Walter James Burton, 2023.
Box 5	Scrapbook, large with 'T' on cover.