



Books and Manuscripts (1706)

May 20, 2021 EST, Freeman's

Lot 48

Estimate: \$800 - \$1200 (plus Buyer's Premium)

[Photography] Views & Costumes of Japan

Yokohama: A. Farsari & Co., no date (ca. 1890s). Oblong 4to; 11 1/2 x 14 x 2 1/2 in. (292 x 356 x 63 mm). Illustrated with albumen title-page and 50 hand-colored albumen prints (each approximately 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.; 190 x 241 mm), mounted to board (10 3/4 x 13 1/2 in.; 273 x 343 mm); tissue guards (many creased and torn, some missing). Original inlaid black lacquer binding, front and rear boards detached (including endpapers), spine perished, scattered chips and wear to extremities, four inlays perished, chip at top left of front board; all edges gilt; scattered toning and spotting to board edges.

Adolfo Farsari (1841-98) was an Italian photographer based in Yokohama, Japan, and operated the last Western photography studio of note in Japan at the turn of the century.

This album features the famous irezumi *Betto* (groom) photograph, often attributed to Kusakabe Kimbei. Irezumi, refers to the distinctive Japanese tattooing style as seen in the *Betto* photograph in this volume, an often painful and multi-year process that transforms the body into a living and symbolically rich work of art. At the time this photo was taken tattoos were outlawed by the Meiji government, and as a result were often connotated with the criminal underworld (in previous centuries, tattoos were meted out as punitive measures against criminals). Even so, tattooing at this time was a popular form of expression not confined to criminals, with many working class people adorning their bodies with partial and full body work.