

A Complicity between Formal Analysis and Torture

A Cut-by-Cut Account of *Lingchi* Photographs

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Looking at *lingchi* images:
Not what we're looking at, or why, but how we are looking

1. Bataille's interest:
immersive but discontinuous

2. The interest taken by art history (Linda Schele, etc.):
depends on importation of generic concepts

3. Artistic interventions:
aesthetic of shock and transgression

All these depend on quick glances, flinching, "looking awry"
Motives for looking can be very confused, but *phenomenology* is consistent

An experiment in slow looking:

What happens when the images are looked at slowly?

Structure of this lecture:

- general remarks on formal analysis
- example from science
- example from fine art
- the *lingchi* images
- conclusions

Valuative and affective nature of formal analysis

1. Formal analysis is taken to be relatively neutral in relation to further meanings (it does not distort them)
2. Formal analysis is relatively unproblematic as a starting-point, even in elementary pedagogy (“art appreciation”)
3. Formal analysis is bureaucratic (proceeds by inventory; is systematic and thorough; labels and classifies)
4. Formal analysis is *affectively* uninvasive: calm, slow, methodical

First example of formal analysis:
above-ground atomic tests

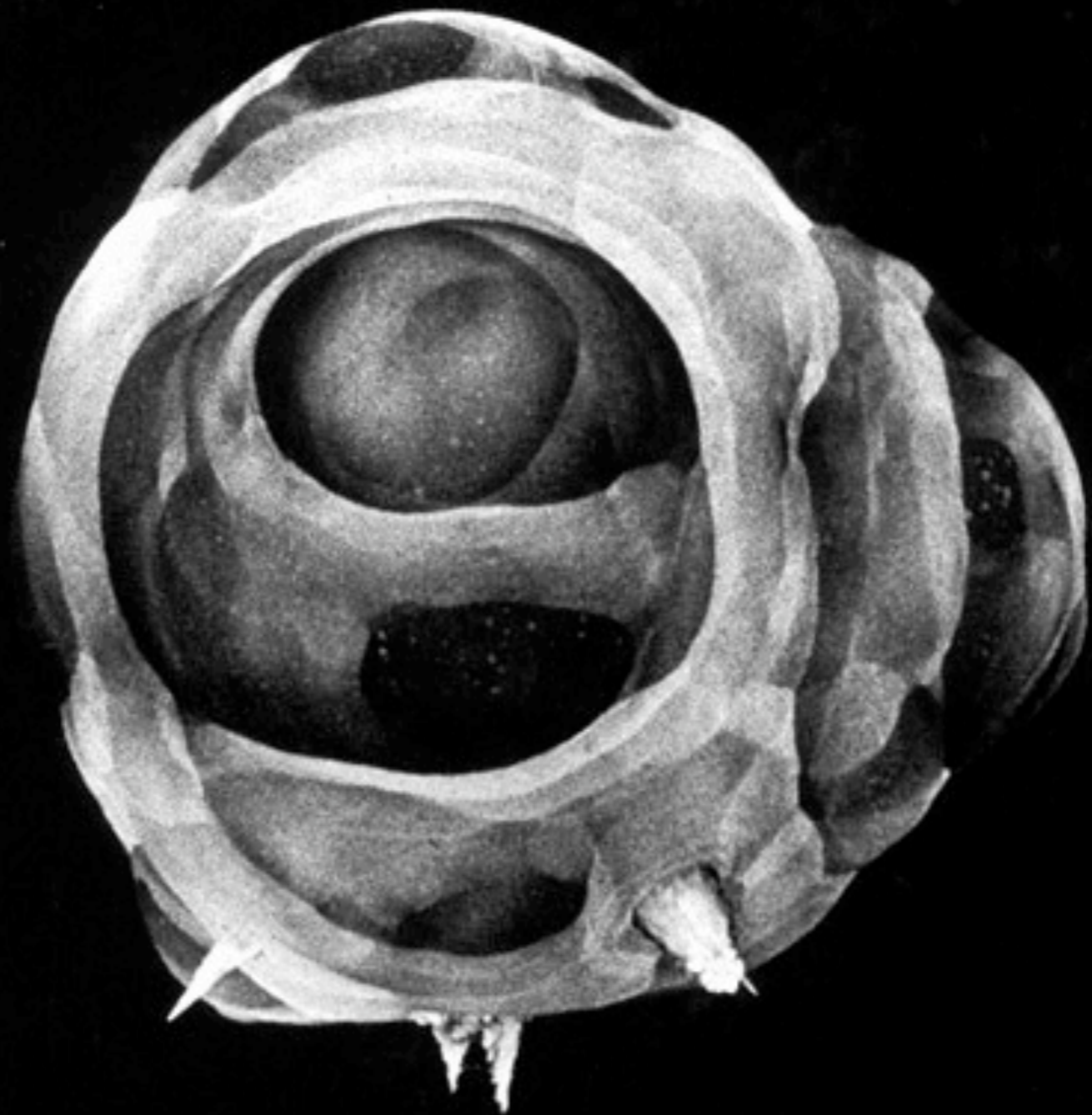
The phenomenology of atomic explosions:

1. "Fireball": lasts about one second, and grows rapidly into the sky
2. Mushroom cloud

The physics of atomic explosions:

0. Shockwave expansion: first $1/1000$ of a second
1. Fireball
2. Mushroom cloud

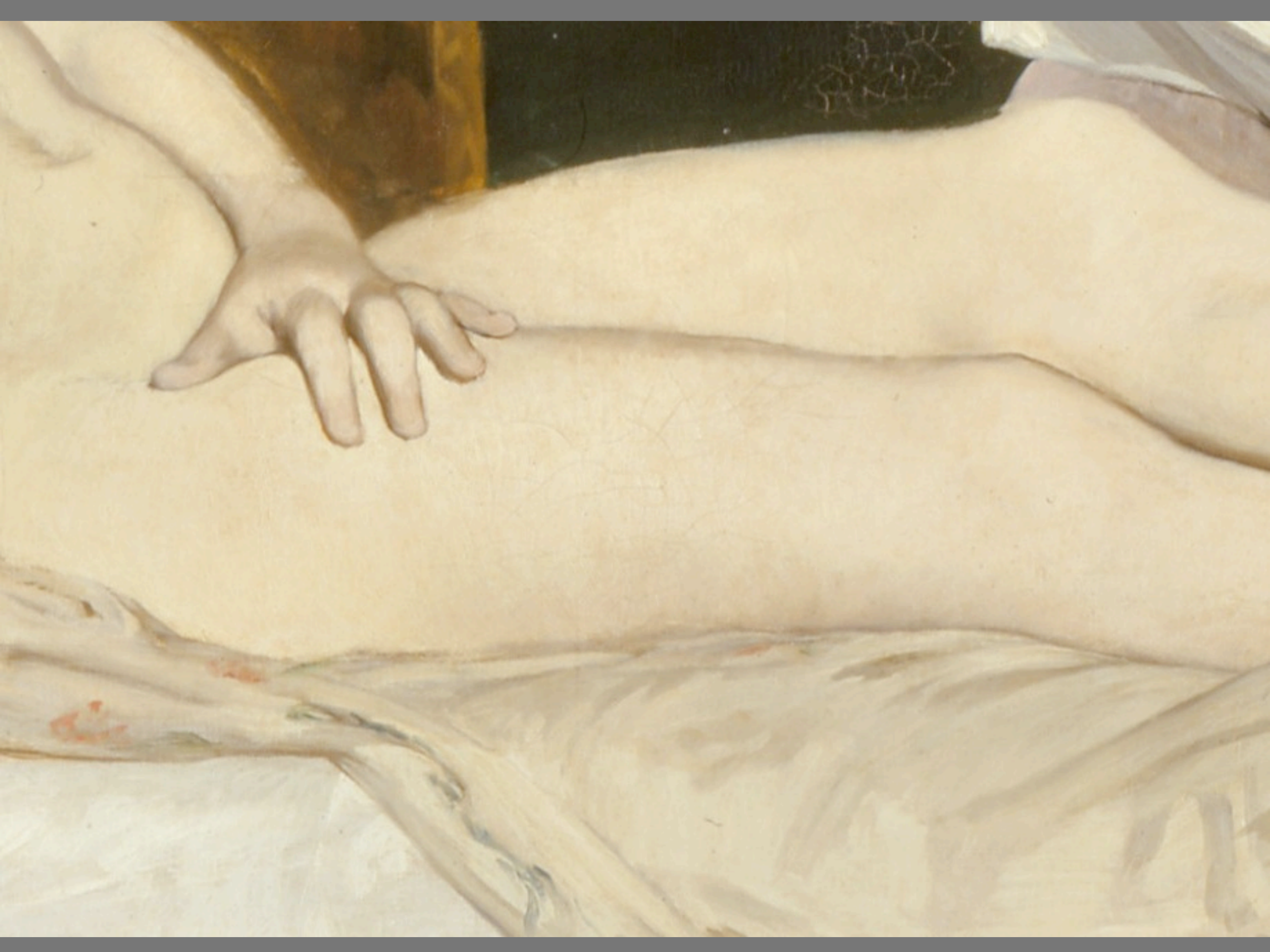






Second example of formal analysis:
painting







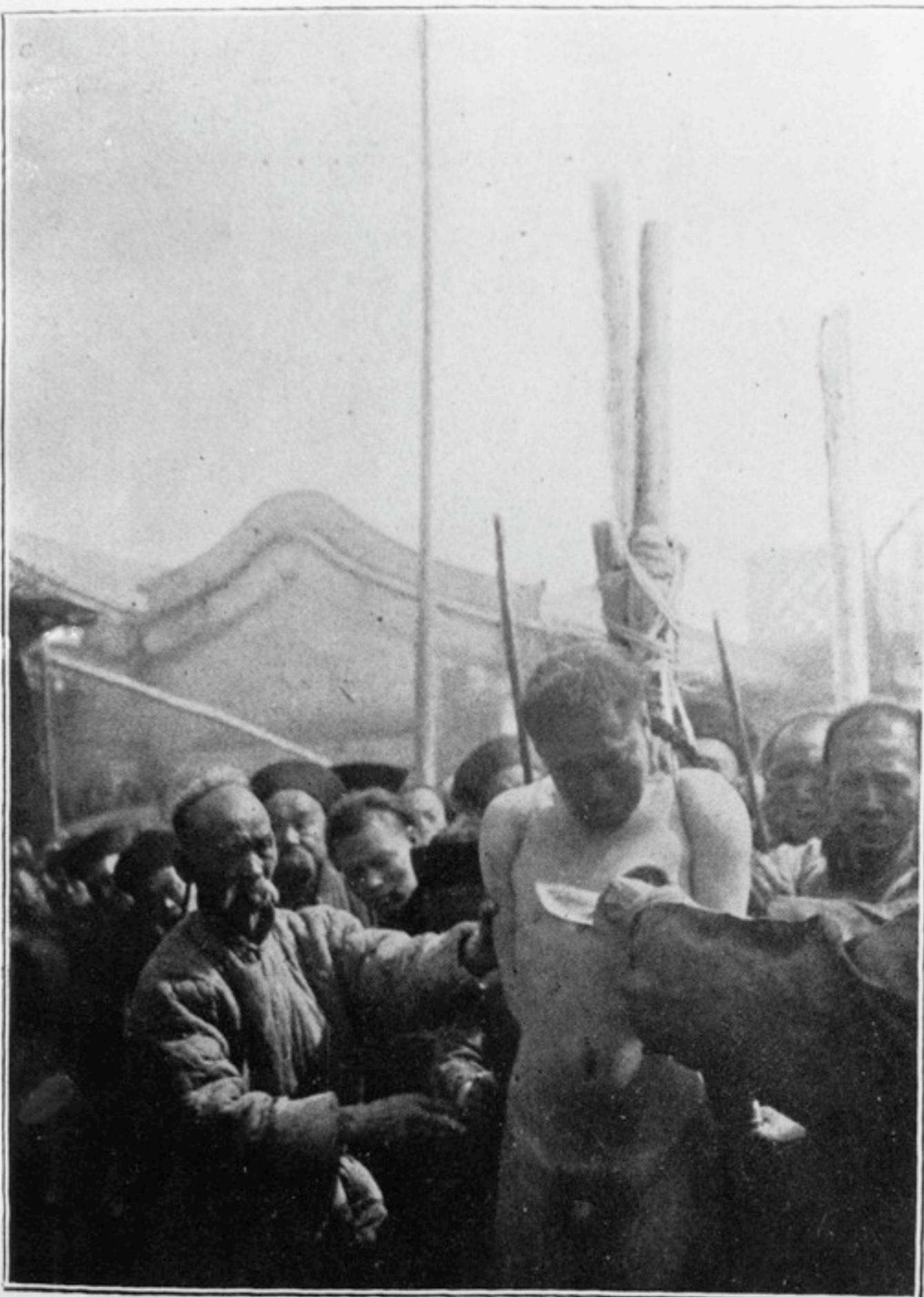
Third example of formal analysis:
3 sequences of *lingchi*

First sequence:
Lingchi C

This took place April 10, 1905. It is preserved in a number of different sources.

The accused man is bound to a tripod of stakes, which are steadied throughout the procedure by several men. There are thin ropes around his armpits, wrists, and ankles. The ropes under the armpits would be especially painful, and they may have been placed with that in mind.





Here the man watches as the first cut is made.

A long cleaver (the kind used for slicing) with a sharp blade is used to cut down through the breast.

The executioner holds the nipple with one hand and cuts with the other, producing a characteristic incision with a sharp half-circle above.



A moment later the executioner points with the knife at the wound.

He may be pointing at a place he will later dissect, or he may be cleaning the intercostal spaces. (More on this later.)