

## Review

# The 100<sup>th</sup> (1922–2022) Anniversary Chronicle as Seen in the Photo Album “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho” from Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture

Yukihide SHIRAISHI<sup>a\*</sup>, Koki SHIRAISHI<sup>b</sup>, Hideki SHIRAISHI<sup>b</sup>, Takayuki SHIRAISHI<sup>b</sup>,  
and Gonshiro SHIRAISHI<sup>c</sup>

**Abstract:** In recent years, interest in the preservation and restoration of photographs has increased. One reason is the rise in the number of museums and other institutions that collect and preserve photographs as works of art. Old photographs are valued as academic and research materials in a variety of fields, including history, and tend to be cherished as cultural assets. Attention is being given to old photographs that have not been in the spotlight much in the past. This paper underscores the importance of photographs as cultural assets and contrasts the changes in Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture that have taken place over the past century using the photo album “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho” created in 1922 (Taisho 11).

**Key words:** Photographic history, Old photograph, Century, Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, a series of photo albums taken in the Meiji era has been published, and the exhibitions of old photographs have been actively planned and held. This indicates that photographs are becoming increasingly valued as treasured historical documents. Photographs of landscapes from more than a hundred years ago, events that changed history, and people's lives have much to tell us. These old photographs are extremely valuable as academic materials in diverse fields, including history.<sup>1–3)</sup> Hence, photographs have vital significance for leaving behind accounts for the next generation.

Photographs are increasingly valued as cultural assets. In 1999 (Heisei 11), the statue of Shimadzu Nariakira, owned by the Shoko Shuseikan Museum in Kagoshima City, was designated as a National Important Cultural Property (NICP) for the first time as a photograph. In 2000 (Heisei 12), the “Photo album of the former Edo Castle”, by Yokoyama Shozaburo received the same designation. In addition, the glass wet plate image “Glass plate: The former Edo Castle Photograph” was named a NICP. The production of these photographs is valuable not only in the history of photography, but also as a starting point for the preservation of modern cultural properties. It is anticipated that an increasing number of photographs will be designated as important cultural properties in the future.

The release of images via the Internet has dramatically increased the value of photographs held by museums, art galleries, libraries, universities, and other institutions. The Tokyo National Museum has

approximately 27,000 photographs and glass plates on display, taken from the late Edo era to the early Showa era. Nagasaki University has digitized around 7,700 photographs taken between the end of the Edo and Meiji eras for its database of old Japanese photographs from the Bakumatsu–Meiji era. There are also many photographs of cultural assets such as Buddhist statues, ancient architecture, old books and paintings, and historical materials. These archiving efforts have been conducted independently by local governments and research institutions. This review thus presents old photographs and archives in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

## 2. Old photographs in Yamaguchi Prefecture

The Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives, which opened in 1959 (Showa 34), was the “first archive in Japan” and is perceived as the starting point of visual record-keeping in the country. The archival system has primarily been studied by Suzuki Kensuke, Director of the Yamaguchi Prefectural Library, which received high praise for its transformation from a register for historical research to a records system rooted in archival philosophy.

Currently, the documents that the Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives collects and provides for browsing can be roughly divided into the following five categories: (1) domain administrative documents, (2) administrative documents, (3) administrative materials, (4) documents of various families, and (5) special collections. Domain administrative documents consist of the Mohri family collection deposited by the Mohri family of the former Choshu Domain lord, as

Received 31st August, 2022; Accepted 31st August, 2022; Published 5th October, 2022

<sup>a)</sup> Department of Applied Chemistry, Sanyo-Onoda City University, Daigakudori, Sanyo-Onoda, Yamaguchi 756-0884, Japan.

<sup>b)</sup> The Society of Photography and Imaging of Japan.

<sup>c)</sup> Photographer.

\* shiraishi@rs.socu.ac.jp

well as the Tokuyama Mohri family collection. Administrative documents are the official documents of Yamaguchi Prefecture since the Meiji era. Administrative materials include administrative publications, photographs, pamphlets, and leaflets published by the prefecture since the Meiji era. Documents of various families comprise a group of documents related to the history of Yamaguchi Prefecture donated and deposited by individuals, families, and organizations in and outside of the prefecture; it currently holds over 300 documents from the medieval period to the present day. The special collection consists of newspapers, magazines, and other collections up to the early Showa era, as well as materials from the Yamaguchi Prefectural History Compilation Office from the pre-Showa era. The digital archives of the Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives can be easily accessed from the home screen to the search screen. In the digital portion of the Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives, nine photo albums<sup>4)</sup> are kept, including “Bocho Meiseki”<sup>5)</sup> published in 1908 (Meiji 41), “Yamaguchi Kenchosya oyobi Kengikai Gijido Rakusei Kinencho”<sup>6)</sup> published in 1916 (Taisho 5), “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho”<sup>7)</sup> published in 1922 (Taisho 11), and so on.

“Bocho Meiseki” was printed by Aso Ryo (under the pen name Aso Unen) using calotype printing. It is a 2-page spread with photographs on the left and explanations on the right. It is a condensed version of the various images of Yamaguchi Prefecture taken at the end of the Meiji era, including Kintai Bridge, Shoin Shrine, and Dannoura. In addition, it features photographs of facilities that symbolize modern industry in the prefecture, such as Onoda Cement and Naval Briquette Works. Onoda Cement was founded as the first private cement company in the former town of Onoda (the modern city of Sanyo-Onoda) in Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1881 (Meiji 14) by Kasai Junpachi, a samurai from the Choshu Domain. The photographs highlight the prefecture's growing population, along with its venerable history.

“Yamaguchi Kenchosya oyobi Kengikai Gijido Rakusei Kinencho” summarizes the Yamaguchi Prefectural Office Building and the Prefectural Assembly Building, completed in 1916 (Taisho 5). These buildings were designed by Takeda Goichi and Okuma Yoshikuni, who later became the design staff for the National Diet Building under the guidance of Tsumaki Yorinaka. Their exterior is reminiscent of romantic buildings from the Western Early Modern period. These buildings emphasize symmetry and horizontal lines in both wings, centering on the raised central roof, and they have overall stability and elegance. Their detailed design boldly incorporates Japanese and Oriental traditions, as well as the latest Western trends. These buildings were designated a NICP in 1984 (Showa 59) that blend modern Western architecture with traditional Japanese style.

During the Meiji era, when photographs were a rarity, they were left as a record of extraordinary events, such as large-scale construction projects, disasters, and Emperor's and Empress's visit. These few photographs captured the “old days” of the region.

### 3. The photo album “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho” from Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture

The visit of the emperor is called “Gyoko”, and the visit of the

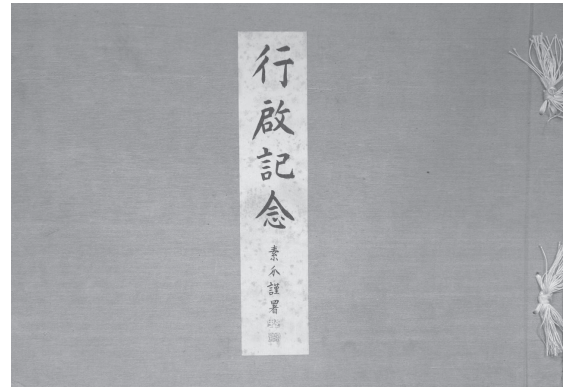


Figure 1. The photo album “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho”.

empress, crown prince, and crown princess is called “Gyokei”. In Yamaguchi Prefecture, there were “Gyoko” by Emperor Meiji in 1872 (Meiji 5) and 1885 (Meiji 18). The crown prince (the future Emperor Taisho) in 1908 (Meiji 41), Empress Teimei in 1922 (Taisho 11), and the crown prince (the future Emperor Showa) in 1925 (Taisho 14) went to Yamaguchi Prefecture for a “Gyokei”. “Gyoko and Gyokei” were documented through diverse means, including text, diagrams, maps, and photographs. One of the better-known Gyokei's photo albums was published a century ago by Shiraishi Gonshiro (under the pen name Shiraishi Fuyo) in 1922 (Taisho 11), titled “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho”<sup>7)</sup> as seen in Figure 1.

Empress Teimei was the wife of Emperor Taisho. In March 1922 (Taisho 11), Empress Teimei went to Kashii-gu Shrine, Hakozaaki Hachiman Shrine, and Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine in Fukuoka Prefecture to “pray for the healing of Emperor Taisho's illness” and to “thank the future Emperor Showa for his visit to Europe”. The imperial train departed from Hayama in Kanagawa Prefecture on March 9<sup>th</sup>, passed through Shizuoka Prefecture (March 10<sup>th</sup>), and Hyogo Prefecture (March 13<sup>th</sup>), and arrived at Mitajiri Station in Yamaguchi Prefecture (March 13<sup>th</sup>), as presented in Figure 2. Empress Teimei stayed at the residence of Duke Mohri Motoakira. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, she departed from Mitajiri Station and passed through Shimonoseki Station, then crossed the Kanmon Straits on the ferry “Hozan Maru”. From there she went to Moji, then to Hakata, and stayed at the residence of Duke Kuroda Nagashige. On the way back, she stayed on the imperial ship, the Japanese battleship Settsu, anchored in Agenosyo Bay. Enthusiastic welcome and send-off ceremonies were held along the route.

The residence of Duke Mohri Motoakira (Figure 3, left) was decided to be built here in 1892 (Meiji 25) by an elder statesman in the days of the Meiji Restoration, Inoue Kaoru. However, the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War delayed the start of construction of the residence. Construction began in September 1912 (Taisho 1) and was completed in 1916 (Taisho 5), less than six years later. In addition to the main building, which houses the residence, there is also a picture hall with images of Mohri Motonari and others. The main residence has an area of 1,002 m<sup>2</sup> and consists of 10 buildings with 60 rooms, all built with Japanese cypress wood and tiled roofs. The Japanese-style architecture follows the Shoin-zukuri style, but also includes a carpeted reception room with chandelier

electric lights and chairs and tables. Figure 4 depicts the imperial audience hall. All electricity in the residence was supplied via private power generation, and hot water was supplied facilities in the bathroom. Each room was connected to the other rooms by intercom, and the architecture was a fusion of traditional Japanese style and the latest technology. Even after 100 years, the building retains almost all of its original appearance (Figure 3, right).

The purpose of the “Gyoko and Gyokei” was also to understand the actual state of industry and education in the region. Figure 5 portrays the donated articles and the inspection articles by the empress. The photographs display the products of Yamaguchi Prefec-

ture at that time. The donated articles included Ouchi lacquerware, Unshu mandarin oranges, bronze vases, inkstones, a sea urchin, a boxwood comb, and a Hagi incense burner. In particular, Hofu Town (the future Hofu City) donated a photo album, *yokan* (bean jelly), and refined table salt. The inspection articles by the empress included Bocho rice, Tokuji paper, Akamaseki inkstone, cement, mosquito nets, and a Kashiwagi thermometer. The Kashiwagi thermometer was the first mercury thermometer created in Japan in 1883 (Meiji 16) by Kashiwagi Kosuke, a pharmacist in Hofu Town.<sup>8)</sup> The items prepared for the event reflect Taisho-era society. The “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho” includes other photographs of Hofu at the time. The



Figure 2. The imperial train and Mitajiri station (the future Hofu station).



Figure 3. The Mohri House (taken in 1922) and the Mohri Museum (taken in 2022).



Figure 4. The imperial audience hall.



Figure 5. The donated articles and the inspection articles by the empress.



following sections and beyond will introduce Hofu's history, education, and industry.

### 3.1 Historic monuments of Hofu

Hofu is a historic area that has flourished as the capital of the Suo region (the future Eastern Yamaguchi Prefecture) since ancient times. During the Asuka era, the Suo and Nagato regions were established in Yamaguchi Prefecture under the Ritsuryo state system. At this time, the national government of the Suo region was established in what is now Kokuga, Hofu City, and Hofu prospered for many years as the center of the Suo region. In 741 (Tenpyo 13), under the decree of Emperor Shomu, Kokubunji temples were built in about 60 locations to pray for the protection of the nation and the blessings of the people; Suo Kokubunji Temple was also built in Hofu.<sup>9)</sup> The exact date of Suo Kokubunji's construction is unknown, but it is believed to have been completed around this time, as it appears in a description in the "Shoku Nihongi" in 756 (Tenpyo-shoho 8). In 1417 (Oei 24), the main hall of temple was destroyed by a fire, but four years later, in 1421 (Oei 28), Ouchi Moriharu, who ruled Hofu at the time, rebuilt the main hall. In 1503 (Bunki 3), Ouchi Yoshioki restored the "Niomon" gate and other structures. During the Mohri family period, the "Niomon" gate was rebuilt by Mohri Terumoto in 1596 (Bunroku 5), and the main hall of temple was rebuilt by Mohri Shigenari in 1779 (Anei 8). Mohri Shigenari was the eighth generation of the lord of the country before Duke Mohri Motoakira, the owner of the house where Empress Teimei stayed.

Thus, the history of Suo Kokubunji Temple has been passed down through the protection of successive lords who ruled over Hofu. More recently, the main hall of the temple was repaired between 1997 (Heisei 9) and 2005 (Heisei 17). Excavations from that period indicate that the main hall has existed in the same location and at approximately the same scale since its foundation, as shown in Figure 6. This is an extremely rare example, as many Kokubunji temples were abandoned or moved to other locations. The fact that it still possesses numerous cultural assets makes Suo Kokubunji Temple very valuable.

Hofu Tenmangu Shrine, as displayed in Figure 7, is dedicated to Sugawara no Michizane, who is revered as the god of learning. Hofu Tenmangu Shrine is known as one of the three Tenmangu shrines in Japan, along with Kitano Tenmangu Shrine in Kyoto Prefecture and Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine in Fukuoka Prefecture. In 901 (Shotai 4), on his way to Dazaifu, Sugawara no Michizane stopped by Katsumaura in Hofu. Sugawara no Michizane died in Dazaifu in 903 (Engi 3). Hofu Tenmangu Shrine was built in 904 (Engi 4), the year after his death, and is said to be the first Tenmangu shrine built in Japan. It was once called "Matsuzaki Tenmangu Shrine" or "Miyachi Tenmangu Shrine". In 1953 (Showa 28), the name was changed to "Hofu Tenmangu Shrine" which remains to this day. The city of Hofu has flourished around this Tenmangu shrine. Many visitors come from outside the city, and on the three days of the New Year, the festival attracts approximately 300,000 people. One of the most famous festivals is the "Gojinko Festival" held in November. Hofu



Figure 6. Suo Kokubunji Temple (the left and right photographs were taken in 1922 and in 2022, respectively).



Figure 7. Hofu Tenmangu Shrine (the left and right photographs were taken in 1922 and in 2022, respectively).

Tenmangu Shrine was destroyed by a fire three times in the past, including the main shrine. The present one was rebuilt in 1963 (Showa 38) after burning down in 1952 (Showa 27). Figure 7 depicts the left photo taken in 1922 (Taisho 11) and the right photo taken in 2022 (Reiwa 4). The shape of the storied gate is different before the damage and after the reconstruction. In 2009 (Heisei 21), Hofu Tenmangu Shrine became the first shrine building in Yamaguchi Prefecture to be registered as a Tangible Cultural Property (TCP) of Japan.

### 3.2 Education in Hofu

Because Sugawara no Michizane is the god of learning, the city of Hofu is dedicated to education. Kaho Elementary School was founded in 1686 (Jokyo 3) as “Esshijuku” by Kawano Yotetsu. According to the national memory, Ojiya Elementary School in Ojiya, Niigata Prefecture, founded in 1868 (Meiji 1), is the oldest in Japan. On the other hand, Kaho Elementary School is said to be the second oldest elementary school in Japan if private schools are included. The school has a history of more than 330 years and is the starting point of education in Yamaguchi Prefecture. Kaho Elementary School was also introduced as “the center of Shunan (the future Eastern Yamaguchi Prefecture) for culture and education” in the photo album “Kaho Shokyo”, published by Shiraishi Gonshiro in 1911 (Meiji 44).<sup>10)</sup> Figure 8 depicts a contrasting photograph of Kaho Elementary School in 1922 (Taisho 11) and 2022 (Reiwa 4). Although the shape is completely different from the wooden school building of those days, the arbor still retains the faint scent from 100 years ago.

The “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho” also includes Matsuzaki Elementary School, Shuyo Junior High School, Saba High School for Girls in Yamaguchi Prefecture, and so on. Shuyo Junior High School was founded as “Shuyo Gakusha” in 1877 (Meiji 10). On the other hand, it was established as Saba High School for Girls in 1909 (Meiji 42) and became Hofu-kita High School in 1949 (Showa 24). Hofu-kita High School was integrated with Hofu-minami High School, which was renamed from Shuyo Junior High School that same year. Later, in 1950 (Showa 25), the school became the current Yamaguchi Prefectural Hofu High School. It is one of the oldest and most traditional high schools in Yamaguchi Prefecture, celebrating its 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022 (Reiwa 4). The tradition of education,

aimed at nurturing individuals who will lead the future, has been carried on, and approximately 50,000 graduates are widely active in various fields both in Japan and abroad.

### 3.3 Industry in Hofu

“Bocho Sanpaku” refers to rice, salt, and paper, the production of which was encouraged by the Choshu Domain during the Edo era. It was so called because the rice, salt, and paper were white. After the defeat at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 (Keicho 5), the Mohri family was reduced from approximately 1,205,000 *koku* in the Chugoku region to 369,000 *koku* in the Suo and Nagato regions. As a result, the domain's finances were in a very difficult situation. The Choshu Domain focused on rice, salt, and paper as specialty products that could be used as a source of income.

Before modern times, salt was produced in two methods: the Agehama salt pan and the Irihama salt pan of old-fashioned system. The Irihama salt pan is a method of automatically introducing seawater to the salt beach by taking advantage of the large ebb and flow difference in the tides. Hofu is located on the coast of the calm Seto Inland Sea. The aforementioned Mohri Shigenari carried out land reclamation along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea, and the Irihama-style salt pan was created in 1699 (Genroku 12). Starting with Kohama, Nakahama, Tsuruhama, Ohama, Edomarihama, and Nishiurahama were known as “Mitajiri-Rokkasho Hama”. The salt manufacturing industry flourished to the extent that it was known as Ako in the east of Japan and Mitajiri in the west of Japan. The Mitajiri Salt Office was opened in Tsuruhama in 1905 (Meiji 38), and the Monopoly Bureau Mitajiri Experiment Station (Figure 9, left) was built in Nakahama in 1909 (Meiji 42). However, in 1959 (Showa 34), it was decided to no longer use the salt pan in Hofu City, and the curtain fell on the glorious history of “Mitajiri-Rokkasho Hama”, which had supported the salt industry in Japan. Today, the Mitajiri Salt Pan Memorial Park (Figure 9, right) is located on the site of the former salt pan.

## 4. Summary

A century of change in Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture, has been presented in contrast using the photo album “Gyokei Kinen Shashincho”. Photography has become a widespread symbol of Western



Figure 8. Kaho Elementary School (the left and right photographs were taken in 1922 and in 2022, respectively).





Figure 9. The salt pan (taken in 1922) and Mitajiri Salt Pan Memorial Park (taken in 2022).

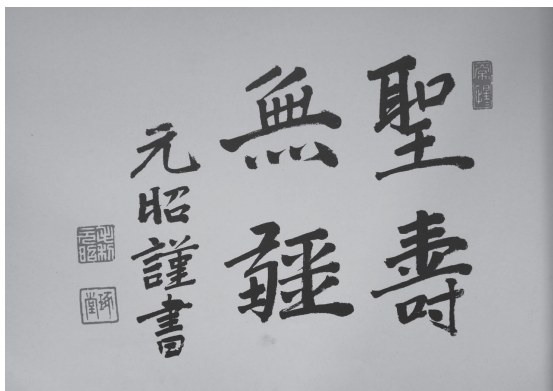


Figure 10. The calligraphy by Mohri Motoakira.

technology. In the Meiji and Taisho eras, when photography was a rare commodity, photographs were used to capture a region's past as a record of extraordinary events, such as visits from the emperor and empress, expositions, and disasters. Photographic archives are truly a decal of various aspects of the modern era. In this photo album, the calligraphy “Seiju Mukyu”, written by Duke Mohri Motoakira, is included as seen in Figure 10. The meaning of “Seiju Mukyu” is that prosperity will continue. The Society of Photography and Imaging of Japan will celebrate its centennial in 2025. We hope that the Society of Photography and Imaging of Japan will successfully celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will continue to prosper for the next 100 years.

## Acknowledgements

This work was partially supported by the Konica Minolta Science and Technology Foundation of the Society of Photography and Imaging of Japan, with funding given to Y.S. as well as a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) (No. 19K05633) from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), Japan.

## References

- 1) S. Takada, J. Soc. Photogr. Imag. Jpn., 82 (4), 289 (2019).
- 2) H. Saijo, J. Soc. Photogr. Imag. Jpn., 83 (3), 234 (2020).
- 3) K. Iwamoto, J. Soc. Photogr. Imag. Jpn., 83 (3), 244 (2020).
- 4) <http://archives.pref.yamaguchi.lg.jp/index/page/id/701>, accessed on August 31, 2022.
- 5) R. Asou, Bocho Meiseki, (1908), stored in Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives, Japan.
- 6) Yamaguchi Prefecture, Yamaguchi Kenchosya oyobi Kengikai Gijido Rakusei Kinencho, (1916), stored in Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives, Japan.
- 7) G. Shiraishi, Gyokei Kinen Shashincho, (1922), stored in Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives, Japan.
- 8) Hofu City Council, Hofu Shigikai Dayori, 53, 1 (2019), stored in Hofu City Council, Japan.
- 9) Kamiyu Rekishi Henshubu, Kokubunni wo Aruku, Ikaros Publications LTD, Tokyo, Japan (2014).
- 10) G. Shiraishi, Kaho Shokyo, (1911) stored in National Diet Library, Japan.