

Review

Rephotography of the Photo Album “Kaho Shōkyō”

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Abstract: Rephotography is the process of repeatedly photographing the same location with a time lag between the photographs. During the Meiji era, when photographs were rare, they were left as a record of extraordinary events such as large-scale construction projects, disasters, and visits by the emperor and empress. These few photographs captured the “old days” of the region. Photographic archives are truly imprints of various aspects of the modern era. In 1911 (Meiji 44), Gonshiro Shiraishi published a photo album of Hofu Town (the future Hofu City), Yamaguchi Prefecture, entitled “Kaho Shōkyō”. This paper introduces the changes in Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture, from 1911 to the present day (2023) through rephotographing Hofu Tenmangu Shrine, Amida-ji Temple, Eiunso, etc., as recorded in “Kaho Shōkyō”.

Key words: Rephotography, Photographic History, Old Photograph, Photo Album, Hofu in Yamaguchi Prefecture

1. Introduction

Rephotography, also known as repeat photography, is a fascinating technique for capturing contemporary images of places that were photographed in the past. The purpose of rephotography is to compare two images and observe changes over time.¹⁾ Rephotography continues to be used in science to record gradual or periodic events (e.g., erosion, land rehabilitation, or glacier flow), measure the extent of sand banks in a river, and gather evidence of climate change. Rephotography is also a useful diachronic visual method by which sociology and communication researchers can understand social changes.

Recently, old photographs have attracted considerable interest in Japan. Exhibitions of photographs from the Meiji and Taishō eras were held, and nostalgic photo albums were published. Libraries are seeing increased demand for visual materials such as photographs. In 1987, Murakami published “Sanko Shoshi Kenkyu (Reference Service and Bibliography),” which summarized the Meiji- and Taishō-era photo albums in the collection of the National Diet Library.²⁾ This paper was presented in two parts: a regional section and a matter section. Five photo albums from Yamaguchi Prefecture were introduced: “Kaho Shōkyō” (Figure 1),³⁾ “Kanmon Nishikien”, “Gyōkō Kinen Shashinchō”, “Chōmonkyō Shashinchō”, and “Bōchō Meiseiki”. Among them, “Kaho Shōkyō” was reported in the overview report of the 2013 exhibition, “Discover! Industrial Adventure” by Isari et al.⁴⁾ In addition, Hatori recently introduced a single photograph

from “Kaho Shōkyō” in “Saba no Sato”.⁵⁾

“Kaho Shōkyō” was published in November 1911 (Meiji 44). It is a collection of photographs of Hofu Town (now Hofu City), Yamaguchi Prefecture, authored and published by Gonshiro Shiraishi. Emperor Meiji visited Hofu to supervise army exercises in Kurume. “Kaho Shōkyō” is a dedication album that compiles photographs of Hofu’s historic sites, scenic spots, and modern structures (Figure 2). Collotype printing was used. This method is well suited to photographs due to its high reproducibility, and the photographs are still in good condition. The title, as shown in Figure 1, was drawn by Nomura Motosuke. He was the director of a domain school (Meirinkan) in Yamaguchi Prefecture, a councilor of the senate, and a member of the House of Peers. He was also a well-known calligra-



Figure 1. The photo album “Kaho Shōkyō”.

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pher and served as secretary general of the Japan Calligraphy Association and president of the “Shodō Shōrei-kai”. He is said to be one of the three most famous calligraphers in Chōshū (the future Yamaguchi Prefecture) along with Sugi Magoshichiro and Chō Sanshū. The calligraphies shown in Figure 3 were done by Yamagata Aritomo, Inoue Kaoru, and Katsura Tarō. Yamagata Aritomo was born in Hagi, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in 1838, studied at the Shōkasonjuku Academy, and served as a military inspector of the “Kiheitai”. He was a Japanese statesman and military commander who was twice-elected prime minister of Japan. He was also a leading member of the “Genrō” (elder statesmen), an elite group of senior statesmen who dominated Japanese politics after the Meiji Restoration. Inoue Kaoru was a politician born in Yamaguchi, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in 1836. He was sent to Europe by the Chōshū Domain and mainly studied at the University College London. He was known as one of the “Chōshū Five”. He served as the minister of foreign affairs, minister of agriculture and commerce, minister of home affairs, and minister of finance. Katsura Tarō was born in Hagi, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in 1848. He was a general of the Imperial Japanese Army and a Japanese politician who served as the prime minister of Japan from 1901 to 1906, from 1908 to 1911, and from 1912 to 1913. “Kaho Shōkyō” is an extremely valuable photo album as it contains calligraphies by three of the nine “Genrō” from the Meiji era. In this review, we present rephotographs of the photographs in “Kaho Shōkyō” and highlight the changes in Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture.

2. Changing Landscapes in “Kaho Shōkyō”

“Kaho”, the setting of the photo album “Kaho Shōkyō”, was the

former village of Mitajiri, located in the center of Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Mitajiri Village merged with Saba Village in 1902 to become Hofu Town. In 1936, Hofu Town became Hofu City that merged with Nakanoseki Town, Hanagi Village, and Mure Village. “Shōkyō” refers to places with excellent scenery. Therefore, “Kaho Shōkyō”, published in 1911, is a view of Hofu Town. As shown in Figure 4, this photo album contains 30 photographs. It uses a two-page spread with photographs on the left and explanations on the right. This section introduces the representative shrines, temples, and so on in Hofu.

Hofu is a historic area that has flourished as the capital of the Suō region (the future Eastern Yamaguchi Prefecture) since ancient times. During the Asuka era, the Suō and Nagato regions were established in Yamaguchi Prefecture under the Ritsuryō state system. At this time, the national government of the Suō region was established in what is now Kokuga, Hofu City, which prospered for many years as the center of the Suō region. It was designated as a Nation-

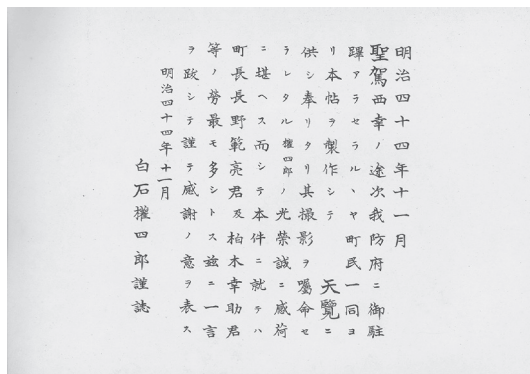


Figure 2. Acknowledgements by Gonshiro Shiraishi.

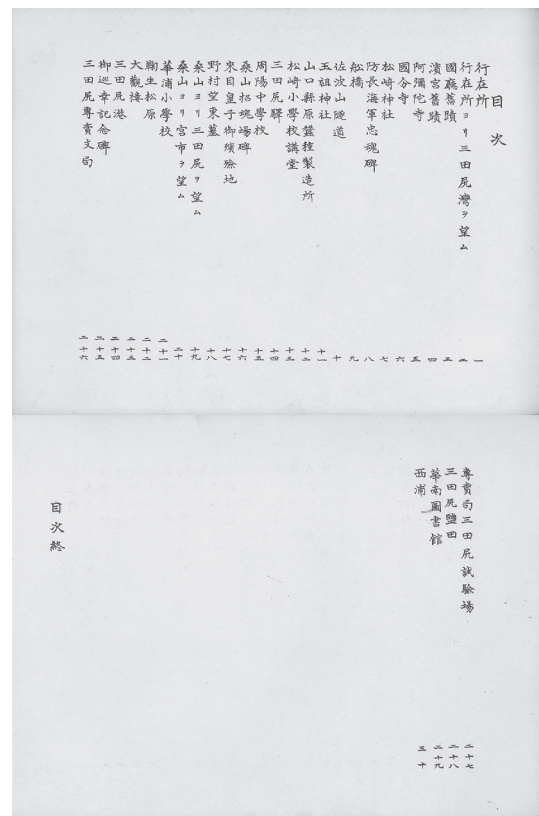


Figure 4. Contents of the photo album “Kaho Shōkyō”.

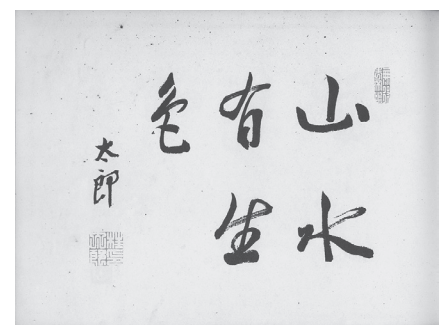
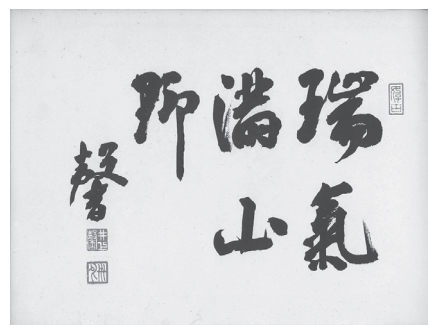
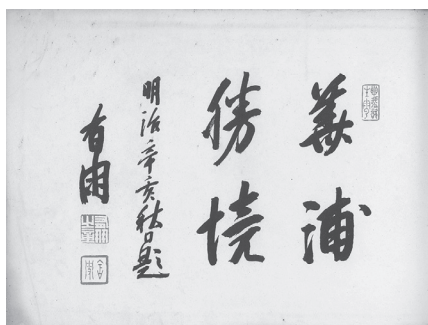


Figure 3. Calligraphy by Yamagata Aritomo (left), Inoue Kaoru (center), and Katsura Tarō (right).

al Historic Site in 1937 as the “Remains of Suō Kokuga”, the earliest of all the provincial governor’s offices in Japan. The inscription on the monument shown in Figure 5 reads as follows: “This is the only place in Japan where the provincial governor’s office still exists. We erected this monument to pass it on to future generations.” This gives us a sense of the long history. In Figure 5, the left photograph was taken in 1911 and the right photograph was taken in 2023. The two photographs appear to be almost identical except for the slightly different stone pedestal areas and tree planting.

As shown in Figure 6, the Hofu Tenmangu Shrine is dedicated to Sugawara no Michizane, who is revered as the god of learning. Sugawara no Michizane was stopped by Katsuma-no-ura in Hofu on his way to Dazaifu in 901 and died in Dazaifu in 903. The Hofu Tenmangu Shrine was built in 904, the year after his death, and is said to be the first Tenmangu Shrine built in Japan. It was once called the Matsuzaki Tenmangu Shrine or Miyaichi Tenmangu Shrine. In 1953, the name was changed to the Hofu Tenmangu

Shrine, which remains to this day. The Hofu Tenmangu Shrine including the main shrine was destroyed by fire three times in the past. The present one was rebuilt in 1963 after it burned down in 1952. The reconstructed main shrine and hall of worship were made of white wood with Irimoya-zukuri (a hip-and-gable roof construction style) and copper-roofing. In 2009, the Hofu Tenmangu Shrine became the first shrine building in Yamaguchi Prefecture to be registered as a Tangible Cultural Property of Japan. In Figure 6, the left photograph was taken in 1911 and the right photograph was taken in 2023. The shape of the building before and after reconstruction is different, but its face retains its original appearance.

Figure 7 shows the Amida-ji Temple as the annex of the Tōdai-ji Temple. The Amida-ji Temple was built in 1187 by Chōgen, who served as the chief priest for the reconstruction of the Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara after it was destroyed by a fire in 1180. Amida-ji Temple holds the Cast Iron Treasure Pagoda as the National Treasure, “Niō-mon, Kongō Rikishi” as the Important Cultural Property and so on.



Figure 5. Remains of Suō Kokuga (the left and right photographs were taken in 1911 and in 2023, respectively).



Figure 6. Hofu Tenmangu Shrine (the left and right photographs were taken in 1911 and in 2023, respectively).



Figure 7. Amida-ji Temple (the left and right photographs were taken in 1911 and in 2023, respectively).

This temple is also famous as the “Hydrangea Temple”, having approximately 4,000 hydrangea plants of 80 varieties on the temple grounds. Except for the newly added lanterns, the photograph from 2023 (Figure 7, right) looks very similar to the one from 1911 (Figure 7, left).

Figure 8 shows the Tamanoya-jinja Shrine. The Tamanoya-jinja Shrine is the Ichi-no-Miya (highest-ranked shrine) in the Suō region. Its precise year of establishment is unknown, but it is said that Emperor Keiko stopped at this place on his way to southern Kyushu to conquer the Kumaso (ancient residents in southern Kyushu who disobeyed the emperor), thus the Tamanoya-jinja Shrine has a long and distinguished history of 2000 years. Kurokashiwa chickens, a National Natural Monument, are raised in the precincts of the shrine as the birthplace of this chicken species. In 1977, the roofs of the main shrine and hall of worship were completely replaced; therefore, a comparison of the 1911 photograph (Figure 8, left) and the 2023 photograph (Figure 8, right) shows a different roof shape.

Figure 9 shows the Eiuonso, also known as the Mitajiri Ochaya (Mitajiri Teahouse). This building was established in 1654 by Mohri Tsunahiro, the second lord of the Chōshū Domain, and was used for rest during visits to the official attendance service (by a daimyo in the Edo era) or when patrolling the territory. The 7th lord of the Chōshū Domain, Mohri Shigenari, lived there after his retirement, so it was named Eiuonso after Shigenari's Buddhist name. It became a historical location where patriots came and went at the end of the Edo era. In 1989, it was designated a National Historic Site. Restoration and conservation work began in 1996. Each building was restored to its original appearance and then opened to the public in 2011.⁵⁾ The left photograph in Figure 9 was taken for the “Kaho Shōkyō” in 1911, and the center photograph in Figure 9 was repho-

tographed by Gonshiro Shiraishi for the “Gyōkei Kinen Shashinchō”⁶⁾ in 1922. As of 2023, copies of both photographs were displayed at Eiuonso. By comparing the earlier photographs with that taken in 2023 (Figure 9, right), the restoration of the building to its original appearance can be seen.

The buildings shown in Figures 5–9 have been designated as National Historic Sites or Important Cultural Properties. Cultural properties make people aware of the history and culture of an area, create an attractive area, and revitalize the community. Based on the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties enacted in 1950, the designation and protection measures for cultural properties became systematic. A comparison of the rephotographs confirms that the restored buildings are almost exactly the same as they were in the past even 100 years later. Owners, preservation organizations, local residents, and others have made successful efforts to protect the cultural properties.

3. Changed Landscapes in “Kaho Shōkyō”

In the previous section, we showed the changing landscapes in “Kaho Shōkyō”, while in this section, we introduce the landscapes that have significantly changed. Figure 10 (left) is a wide-angle photograph of the main setting for this photo album, entitled “Mt. Kuwanoyama yori Miyaichi wo Nozomu” (“Looking toward the View of Hofu from Mt. Kuwanoyama”). This photograph was taken in the north-northeast direction from Mt. Kuwanoyama, roughly located in the center of the Hofu Plain. The center of the photograph shows the Hagi Ōkan Highway, stretching straight south from the Hofu Tenmangu Shrine. The Hagi Ōkan Highway was constructed in 1607 after the Hagi Castle was built to connect Mi-



Figure 8. Tamanoya-jinja Shrine (the left and right photographs were taken in 1911 and in 2023, respectively).



Figure 9. Eiuonso (Mitajiri Ochaya) (the left, center, and right photographs were taken in 1911, 1922, and 2023, respectively).

tajiri and the castle foot in the shortest distance as a Sankin-kōtai road; a 52.7 km-long highway between San'yō and San'in. The present-day Kurumazuka-cho, where the Hofu Town Hall and the police station were situated, was located at the intersection of the Hagi Ōkan Highway and Sanyo Railways. In Figure 10 (left), the Hofu Tenmangu Shrine can be seen at the foot of the mountain on the left. Miyaichi, a post town on the old Sanyo Road, is located around the Hofu Tenmangu Shrine. This place was the largest post town in the Suō and Nagato regions, other than Akamagasaki (the future Shimonoseki City, Yamaguchi Prefecture). The Suō Kokubunji Temple is located to the right of the Hofu Tenmangu Shrine, and its large Kondō Hall can be seen in Figure 10 (left). Most of the plains were farmlands with rice paddy fields. Figure 10 (right) was taken in 2023. Many buildings were erected in what used to be rice paddies, and the town significantly developed. Another difference between the two photographs is the mountainous landscape. The shape of the mountain has not changed; however, in the 1911 photograph (Figure 10, left), the surface of the mountain has a white cast. The whit-

ish areas are granite, a geological feature of the Hofu mountains. Yoshise stated that the salt industry was one of the reasons for the devastation of the mountains.⁷⁾ In fact, as described below, Hofu developed as a salt pan from the Edo era.

Mitajiri Station is located at the left end of the photograph in Figure 10 (left). Figure 11 (left) shows a photograph of the surroundings of Mitajiri Station. In 1898, the Sanyo Railway extended from the Tokuyama Station to the Mitajiri Station, which opened at its terminus. In 1906, the station became a government railroad station when the Sanyo Railway was nationalized. The Mitajiri Station was renamed Hofu Station in 1962 and was rebuilt with a concrete station building in 1963. In 1994, it was rebuilt as an overpass structure. Figure 11 (right) shows a photograph of Hofu Station in 2012 during which time the average number of daily passengers was 4,073.

Figure 12 (left) shows a pontoon bridge over the Saba River. From the Middle Ages to the early Edo era, the Saba River was crossed by boat. From the late 15th century, wooden bridges were built, but

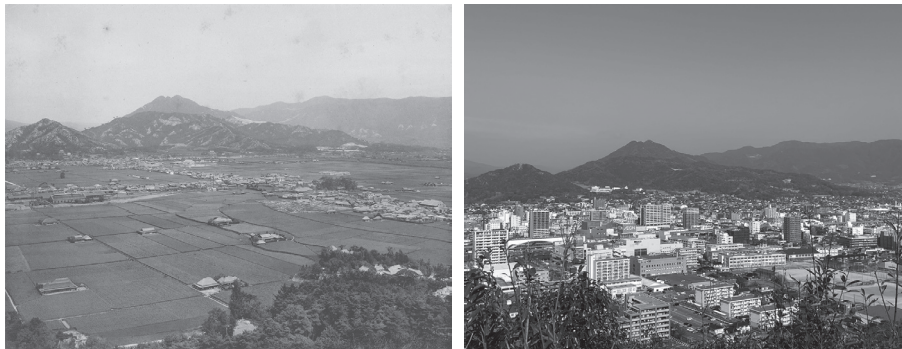


Figure 10. The view of Hofu from Kuwanoyama (the left and right photographs were taken in 1911 and in 2023, respectively).

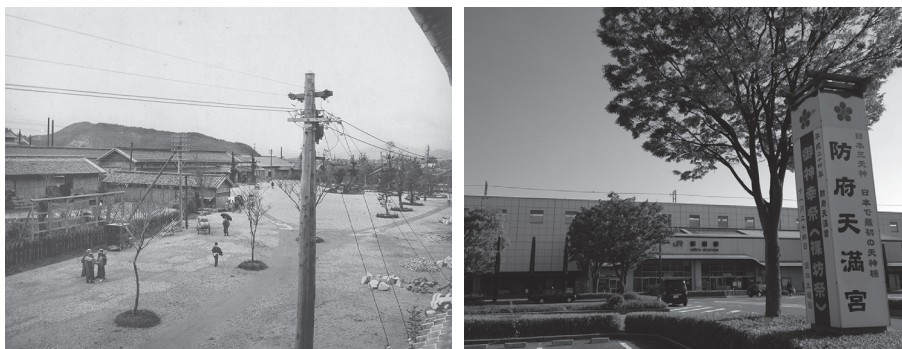


Figure 11. The Mitajiri Station (taken in 1911) and the Hofu Station (taken in 2012).



Figure 12. The pontoon bridge (the left, center and right photographs were taken in 1911, 1922, and 2023, respectively).

they were frequently destroyed by flooding. A pontoon bridge was built between Migita and Miyaichi on the Saba River in 1742 by order of the aforementioned Mohri Shigenari. At that time, it was called “the strange bridge on the Saba River” because of its unusual shape. In 1918, a typhoon passed through Kagoshima and Ōita Prefectures and hit Yamaguchi Prefecture.⁸⁾ The typhoon caused the Saba River to rise by 4 m, destroying 40 bridges. However, it was reported that the pontoon bridge could be dismantled and quickly moved when the water level rose.⁹⁾ In fact, the pontoon bridge can be seen in the rephotograph (Figure 12, center) by Gonshiro Shiraiishi from the “Gyōkei Kinen Shashinchō”⁶⁾ published in 1922. Interestingly, a new steel truss bridge (Shinbashi Bridge), which was constructed in 1921, can be seen in the small image on the far left of Figure 12 (center). The chronology of the Hofu City History states that the pontoon bridge was abolished in 1941. Thus, this bridge survived for approximately 200 years. Later, a wooden bridge was built, and it was later replaced by a concrete bridge in 1954. The present bridge (Motobashi Bridge) was replaced in 1988. Currently, the photographs in Figure 12 (left and center) are used on a sign explaining the history of the bridge at the side of the bridge (Figure 12, right). The photographs in this section are related to the infrastructure which has dramatically changed over time.

4. Vanished Landscapes in “Kaho Shōkyō”

Over the past 100 years, some landscapes have disappeared. In this section, we discuss photographs of vanished landscapes in “Kaho Shōkyō”. Figure 13 shows a photograph of the Mitajiri Salt Pan. Hofu is located on the coast of the Seto Inland Sea, where the waves are calm. Before modern times, salt was produced using two old-fashioned methods: i.e., the Agehama and Irihama salt pans. Mohri Shigenari conducted land reclamation along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea, and an Irihama-style salt pan was created in 1699. The Kohama, Nakahama, Tsuruhama, Ōhama, Edomarihama, and Nishiurahama were known as “Mitajiri-Rokkasho Hama”. During this period, there were 201 salt dealers and the salt pans occupied half of the area in both the Suō and Nagato regions. The salt manufacturing industry flourished to the extent that salt became known as Akō in Eastern Japan and Mitajiri in Western Japan. The salt from Mitajiri was mainly shipped out on “Kitamae-bune” to the San'in, Hokuriku and Tōhoku regions. It is said that salt was called “Mitajiri” in the Tōhoku region. In 1800, the sale of salt began in Hokkaido. With the enforcement of the Salt Monopoly Law in 1905, the Mitajiri Salt Office was established in the southeastern part of Tsuruhama, and the Mitajiri Experiment Station of the Monopoly Bureau was established in Nakahama in 1909. In 1918, the Mitajiri Monopoly Branch Office Directly Controlled Plant was established on Mukōshima Island, which became a major center for the salt industry. However, after 1945, imports of foreign salt and advances in the “flow-through salt manufacturing method” led to the disappearance of the salt pans in Hofu in 1959. The curtain fell on the brilliant history of Mitajiri, which had supported Japan's salt industry for 260 years since the Edo era. Today, the Mitajiri Salt Pan Memorial Park is located on the site of the former salt pan.¹⁰⁾

Figure 14 shows a photograph of the Yamaguchi Prefecture Silkworm Seed Factory. Yamaguchi Prefecture established a prefectural mulberry farm in 1906 followed by the Yamaguchi Prefecture Silkworm Seed Factory in 1908. The main operations of this factory were the production of silkworm seeds, distribution of excellent mulberry seedlings, and holding of sericultural technology workshops. In 1922, it was renamed the Prefectural Sericultural Experiment Station. The sericulture industry developed as a key industry that supported Japan's economy from the Meiji era, and the foreign currency obtained from exports supported Japan's development. In the early Showa era, 2.2 million households, or about 40% of all farm households in Japan, were engaged in sericulture, and mulberry was cultivated on 620,000 hectares, or about 10% of all arable land. Raw silk and silk fabrics accounted for 44% of the total exports, and sericulture was the largest export industry. However, raw silk production has declined since the 1950s due to the reduced demand for Japanese clothing and increased imports of raw silk and silk products. In 1944, the Yamaguchi Prefecture Silkworm Seed Factory moved to Kuga Town, Yamaguchi Prefecture, leaving no vestiges of the factory behind. The manufacturing environment drastically changed from the 20th to 21st century. Photographs will play an important role in conveying a record of these changes to future generations.



Figure 13. The Mitajiri Salt Pan (taken in 1911).



Figure 14. The Yamaguchi Prefecture Silkworm Seed Factory (taken in 1911).

5. Conclusions

This review introduced Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture, from a re-photographic perspective, using some of the photographs in “Kaho Shōkyō”. Finally, the life of Gonshiro Shiraishi, the photographer who published this photo album, will be described based on the references.¹¹⁻¹³⁾ He was born in Yamaguchi Town, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in 1876. He started his career in photography at the invitation of his brother, Tokusaburo Shiraishi, and opened the Shiraishi Photo Studio in Miyaichi, Hofu Town, in 1896.¹⁴⁾ In addition to “Kaho Shōkyō”, he published photo albums, including “Yamaguchi Prefecture, Hofu-chō Anzaisho”, “Duke Mohri's Hofu Residence Photo Album”, “Saba River Flood Photo Album”, and “Gyōkei Kinen Shashinchō”, to document Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture. These photo albums also include several rephotographs, which are still cited in many books.¹⁵⁻¹⁷⁾ After the publication of “Gyōkei Kinen Shashinchō” in 1922, there was no confirmed publication of any more photo albums. The photography business was taken over by his three sons (Kyoji, the eldest son, took over the Shiraishi Photo Studio;¹⁸⁾ Yukio, the second son, opened the Shiraishi Photo Shop (the future Shiraishi Shōkai) in Ube City, Yamaguchi Prefecture; and Shuzo, the third son, worked in the photography department of the Kawasaki Dockyard Company). On the other hand, Gonshiro Shiraishi became a charter member of the Mitajiri High School for Girls (the future Seiei High School) in 1926 at the turning point of the Taishō 15 into the Showa era.¹⁹⁾ He served on the board of directors of the Mitajiri High School for Girls for 20 years. From 1947, he served as the president of the school's administration for 13 years. For his contribution to the development of the school, he was honored in 1954 as a person of merit for private schools in Yamaguchi Prefecture.²⁰⁾ In the book “An Outline of the Theory of Civilization” by Fukuzawa Yukichi, there is the phrase, “One body, two lives”. It means “living two lifetimes in one body”. Gonshiro Shiraishi was an outstanding person who practiced “One body, two lives” as a photographer in the Meiji and Taishō eras and as an educator in the early Showa era.

Ryuichi Kaneko recently published a book titled “Japan Is a Land of Photo Albums”.²¹⁾ He noted that, unlike in the West, photo albums remained the ideal form of photographic expression in Japan. There are many fascinating photo albums hidden throughout Japan. We hope that through rephotography, we can give them a new lease of life and help to convey the changes in the region to future generations.

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