

Current Status of Japanese Old Photographic Materials in the United States and the United Kingdom, and the Archiving of the multiple “Gazes”

Norio, TOGIYA*

Abstract

This study explains the contents of the archived, old Japanese photographs taken during the pre-war period, preserved in libraries, museums, and in the United Kingdom and the United States. The study also compares and contrasts the two kinds of photographs: commercial photographs taken by professional photographers, which give foreigners a sense of exoticism, and photographs taken by amateur photographers that show various aspects of Japan during that time. Based on this comparison, the study reveals the multiple 'gazes' directed at Japan in the pre-war period, and in particular, the possibility that the latter group of photographs, which are expected to gain more recognition in the future, due to the progress of digitalization, will revise the fixed image of the Bakumatsu-Meiji period (1853-1868). The context in which these historical materials were established is also reviewed, and the possibility of exhibitions and archives of photographic materials in the digital age with a new “gaze” are examined.

Keywords: Old Photograph, Archive, Gaze, Orientalism

1. Research Background

Old photographs taken in Japan before World War II have become an important resource for study on customs, landscapes, architecture, and people of pre-war Japanese society. There has been a great deal of research on photographic materials in recent years. Historical and cultural research originally involved the use of written materials, but in recent years there has been a growing interest in reading and understanding of history and social culture through “non-literary materials” such as photographs. Moreover, since photographic materials are less dependent on linguistic information, they often provide opportunities for people overseas to become interested in the history and culture of Japan. Therefore, these photographic materials also promote academic exchange with foreign countries.

Although many of these materials were lost and scattered in Japan, due to the overlap of war

* ntogiya@kansai-u.ac.jp Professor, Kansai University

disasters and earthquakes, there are many important photographic materials preserved in Europe and the United States (US), the contents of which have not been digitized. Most of these photographs were taken and acquired by diplomats, as well as by various delegations and traders who were relatively wealthy and of high social status and had visited Japan between the Meiji era and the pre-war period. They include many cases of valuable photographic material, such as natural landscapes and portrait photographs of major Japanese people. For this reason, in this research, which has been supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, the author has conducted a survey on the location of old Japanese photographic materials, which have been held by major institutions in the US and the United Kingdom (UK), and has compiled a comprehensive catalog. In this research, about 1,500 organizations have already been surveyed, and the inventory of about 150 organizations whose possessions have been confirmed has been catalogued.

Many photographs have survived in materials such as photo albums and postcards for travelers, which were purchased by foreigners who visited Japan at that time. The period from the end of the 19th century to the 20th century was the one in which Western countries embarked on the expansion of their territories and colonies under their imperialist policies. Therefore, many of these photographs put emphasis on the exotic atmosphere of Japan, which people in developed countries like Europe and the US are interested in. Therefore, these photographs can be regarded as materials that represent the 'gaze' from Britain and the US, which had great power during that time, on Japan, which was a developing country. In recent years, under the influence of postcolonialism, the construction of photographic archives and the analysis of visual materials has been progressing, in order to clarify the various realities of the imperial period. The following section summarizes the current status of such research.

2. Overview of Photo Archives and Photo History Research

Among the aforementioned recent studies of photos and archives, influenced by post-colonial research and other factors which reconsider the socio-cultural conditions of the Imperial Period, what stands out in particular is the focus on photographic archives of minorities and the traumatic memories which have not been exposed to the light of day. For example, Lorenzo (2004) discusses the photographic archives of the OASENIAN region detained by the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France) and the Photo Library (Photothèque) of the Museum of human (Musée de l'Homme). It also discusses the content of the photographs and examines how images of indigenous peoples have been visualized. Baronian discusses an attempt that was made to pass on the memory of the Armenian genocide, by supplementing the images, since the photographic material is very little for the same. (Baronian, 2010). Lydon also discusses attempts to digitize and archive pictures of the indigenous aborigines, taking into account the wishes of the present-day Aboriginal

population, with a view of inheriting their cultures and memories (Lydon, 2010). Finally, Baylis summarizes the ideal photographic archives in the digital age based on a case study in Ireland (Baylis, 2010).

In the midst of this trend, various surveys and research have been conducted on Japanese photographic materials located outside Japan. For example, Hight summarizes the status and overview of Japanese photographic materials in the New England region centering Boston and the US (Hight, 2004) (Hight, 2017). Newman outlines J. W. Henderson's Collection, which preserves old Japanese photographs from the end of the Edo period (1603-1868) to the early Meiji period (1868-1912) (Newman, 2000). Many photographs of Japan were collected in the pre-war period by stock photo agencies such as Getty Images and Togiya to analyze the metadata of the photographs stored in these sites, and to verify whether they can be used as historical materials (Togiya, 2019).

Tucker et al. summarized the history of Japanese photography from the pre-war to the post-war period (Tucker, Frs-Hansen II, 2003), and Fraser discussed the changes in Japanese photography based on its relationship with society over its 150-year history (Fraser, 2011). Rousmaniere et al. provide an overview of Japanese photography in the 19th century (Rousmaniere & Hirayama, 2005), Dobson examines the activities of German photographers in Japan during the Prussian expansion into Asia (Dobson, 2009), and Odo analyzes photographs of the Ogasawara Islands, taken by Shinji Matsuzaki during the Meiji period (Odo, 2009). Wakita discusses the activities of Kusakabe Kinbei(1841-1932), a photographer in the Meiji period, and how women were depicted in his works (Wakita, 2009). Gartlan summarizes the relationship between the activities of a trader, Samuel Cocking, born in England and raised in Australia, in Yokohama, and the development of the photography industry in the Meiji period (Gartlan, 2009). In addition, Gartlan summarizes the activities of the Austrian Stillfried and Japanese photographers in the early Meiji period (Gartlan, 2015). He also discusses the history of portrait photography studios in Japan and China (Luke Gartlan, Roberta Wue, 2020). Behdad et al. reflect on the influence of orientation on photographs taken mainly in the 19th century (Behdad, 2013).

Moreover, photographic research on Japan and World War II are also underway. Miles has examined the activities of Japanese photographers living in Australia. He discusses the characteristics of their expressions, and considers the changes in the position of Japanese photographers in Australia prior to World War II (Miles, 2014). In addition, Gerster examines photographs of Japanese soldiers during the Asia-Pacific War (1941-1945), which have been preserved in archives and have not received much attention. He considers how photographs should be used as records to convey various aspects of warfare (Robin Gerster, 2016). Matheson summarizes the outline of the photographs of the victims after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima-Nagasaki (1945) (Matheson, 2018), and Low discusses the content of the photographs of street prostitution and associated officers in post-war occupations, stored in Ohio State University Libraries (Low, 2015). Thus, in recent years, the construction and research of

photo archives have been conducted on traumatic memories, such as minorities and wars which had not been revealed in the past. In addition, in the midst of the progress of orientalism and post-colonial research, many studies that have been published, question the visualization of Japan's climate, parallel to the advancement of Western powers into Asia, and examine the power structure of the "gaze" in the Imperial Period, with regard to research on photography in Asia and Japan.

3. The Image of Japan in Photo Archives

Among the trends described in the preceding section, the author's aim is to investigate the general situation of Japanese old photographic materials preserved in the UK and the US to widen their recognition and promote social and cultural research using photographic materials. As noted above, many of the photographs for which metadata was collected in this project were those that allowed us to visually examine the relationship among the UK, the US, and Japan during the imperial era of the late 19th century.

As a result of the research conducted by this project, the old photographic materials related to Japan that have been preserved at various institutions can be roughly be divided into four types. These include "<1>Photographs of Japanese scenery and customs captured by professional photographers, for photo books and picture postcards," "<2>Photographs taken by visitors to Japan who are not professional photographers, using their own photographic equipment," "<3>Portraits and group photographs taken in photo studios," "<4>Others." The portraits in <3> are taken inside studios, so they do not depict the situation in a city at that time. "Others" in <4> includes media photographs and family photographs of Japanese immigrants traveling to the US, but these are mostly photographs from the Taisho period (1912-1926) to the Showa period (1926-1989), and the majority of photographs taken during the Meiji period are included in <1> and <2>.

This paper will focus on <1> and <2>. Of these, <1> are most commonly seen in institutions in the UK and the US, and generally depict an exotic Japan with traditional Japanese scenery and people in traditional Japanese costumes. In particular, many of the photographs from the early Meiji period were exported from Japan for the purpose of viewing and enjoying, or were purchased as souvenirs by tourists visiting Japan.

In the early days, these photographs were taken by foreigner photographers, such as Wilhelm Burger (1840-1920), an Austrian photographer; his student Michael Moser (1853-1912); an Italian-born British photographer, Felice Beato (1832-1809); a Beato pupil, Raimund Freiherr von Stillfried (1839-1911); and an Italian photographer, Adolfo Farsari (1848-1898), using advanced photographic technology. In addition to the beautiful nature and the landscapes lined with harmonious buildings, they photographed traditional Japanese architecture and Buddhist statues, Japanese women and samurai wearing kimonos,

historical locations, and antique objects. There were photographs taken not only by foreigners, but also by Japanese people such as Kinbei Kusakabe, who became a follower of Beato's Stillfried, and Renjō Shimooka (1823-1914), who learned from American photographers John Wilson (1816-1868) and others.

In addition to taking photographs by themselves, Japanese people also took negatives of the photographs from the foreigner photographers mentioned above. They applied beautiful colors to photographs taken of their Japanese culture, bound in maki-e lacquer, and sold them as souvenirs to foreigners as 'Yokohama Photography' or exported them overseas.

In the late Edo and early Meiji periods, this production of images, such as the Yokohama Photographs, was conducted on photographs captured from a foreign perspective, but when Japanese photographers learned the skills, the Japanese themselves took pictures of such "foreigner preferences" and tailored them. From 1887, Kazumasa Ogawa (1860-1929), who learned the techniques of photographing and collotype in the US, took pictures of scenic places in Nikko Toshogu Shrine, Hakone, Kyoto, and many other places in Japan, as well as Japanese traditional cultures, finished pictures with precise colorotyping, sold them to foreign nationals visiting Japan, exported them abroad, and spread Japan's traditional image to the world. These photographs are now preserved at institutions around the world, such as Harvard University, the British Museum, and the Library of Congress.

A number of books containing photographs taken by these professional photographers have been published in recent years. As can be seen from the fact that some of these books contain photograph titles such as "Lost Japan", it can be said that their underlying purpose was to capture scenes of good old Japan that have been lost due to modernization. Publishing these photographs is a kind of media-based nostalgic presentation as defined by sociologist Davis (Davis, 1979). Although nostalgia has been studied in sociology as well as in the advertising and marketing fields, Havlena and Holak suggest there are four types of nostalgias: A: Personal Nostalgia, which individuals feel directly, B: Interpersonal Nostalgia, which is based on indirect experiences evoked by the stories of relatives, C: Cultural Nostalgia, which is directly perceived by the person and shared by the society to which the person belongs, and D: Virtual Nostalgia, which is directly experienced by someone and shared by them or other cultures (Havlena & Holak, 1996). In this case, the nostalgia perceived by Japanese and foreign nationals, belonging to different cultures who do not directly know the Meiji period is similar to 'D'. Not all foreigners feel nostalgic of pre-modern Japanese culture; some people from other cultures feel a kind of "innocence" or "purity" and feel nostalgic in Japan's pre-modern state, just as some Japanese experience a kind of nostalgia for the Western-style attractions and Victorian-era arcades in Disneyland.

However, as per Said's theory of Orientalism, for the production of these images, the gaze was directed to evoke the exoticism of Japan from the perspective of Westerners, (Said, 1978). As stated by

Behded (2013) in his study of photographs of the Middle East, Orientalist photographers are not taking photographs from the perspective of real travelers, but rather from the perspective of what Europeans want the Orient to look like.

Another British sociologist, Urry (1990), cited the problems of tourists' gaze in his book "The Tourist Gaze", arguing that tourism and photography are closely intertwined. After the invention of photographic technology in the 1820s, and the development of dry plate photography in the 1830s, photographers specializing in photographing appeared and traveled to various parts of the world, and were able to photograph and convey overseas pictures that had previously been conveyed only through painting. Through this, it became possible for people in western countries to experience virtual travel as mentioned by Schwartz (Schwartz, 1996). "These photographs become more beautified, and more picturesque landscapes are selected, and eventually a "myth of place" is formed," as described by Shields. Such scenic places become the subject of picture postcards, are increasingly staged, and excessively exotic and nostalgic photographs are taken (Shields, 1990). In order to promote the consumption of images and the consumption of places by tourism, the "ideal" is first imagined, and then the reality is changed to conform to the image.

Among the photographs related to Japan, detained by overseas institutions, photographs belonging to the <1> category are the photographs that are more aestheticized images of Japanese customs in the tourist gaze, as pointed out by Urry. In the first place, as mentioned above, it was the Western photographers who brought photographic technology to Japan and took pictures of the country. Their status and objectives varied, but very few settled in Japan for life, and many returned to their countries or emigrated to other countries and were engaged in commercial activities related to photography. They consistently had an externality and played a role in communicating the image of Japan's "individuality" to Westerners. Therefore, these images were the ones that could be used to realize "virtual travel." As a result, many of the photographs taken in Japan from the beginning were exotic and scenic in nature. Soon after the photographers left Japan, their Japanese disciples adopted the 'gaze' in reverse and created images that considered foreigners as exotic. Currently, most of the photographs of Japan during the Meiji period that have been published in Europe and the US are similar to <1>. Therefore, the collective nostalgia for the Meiji period in Europe and the US can be considered as an image created by tourism or a gaze that emphasized the exotic atmosphere of Japan.

In addition, books published with photographs of the Meiji period have many images related to <1>, not just in Europe and America but also in Japan. Needless to say, as photographic technology was introduced into Japan, various people took to photography. Hence, the photographs are not only full of aesthetic nostalgia, but they also show beautiful and shadowy aspects of society, such as obscene alleys, crumbling houses, flood damage, and common people wearing coarse kimonos. However, as Davis cites in his book, nostalgia is memories with pain removed, and photographs of the

shadow side of society do not evoke sweet nostalgia (Davis, 1979). In addition, when a book is published and sold as a product, it is obvious that a photo book with more beautiful scenes is more valuable than a photo book with more recordable images of reality. Therefore, the majority of the books published to date have been photo collections with beautiful photographs. In this sense, not only are the Westerners creating stereotyped versions of non-Western areas, but Japanese people are also creating stereotyped images. In addition, a collective nostalgia based on such an image has been formed among Japanese people, and the beautified landscapes of the end of Edo period and Meiji period have taken root in the Japanese people themselves.

4. Another Gaze in the Photo Archive

In addition to photographs classified as <1>, photographs in foreign collections taken in the second half of the nineteenth century often include photographs classified as <2>. In 1888, Kodak launched a camera that used reel-to-reel films, making it easier to shoot (Dominici, 2018). Further, in the 1900s, compact cameras became cheaper, and the tourists not only in Japan but also overseas began to take cameras to explore tourist attractions, relive the experience of historic sites, and take pictures of them. Individuals also took pictures of subjects they were interested in, enabling them to leave behind images of things that were not famous or not beautiful, negative aspects of society, or scenes totally opposing the 'created images' of the tourist spots they visited.

Photographs of Japan taken by ordinary foreign travelers who were not professional photographers are stored in many institutions overseas, but the actual status has not always been clarified. Table 1 shows the main institutions that preserved photographic materials belonging to <2> in the UK and the US, identified in the author's research project¹⁾. These photographs are simpler and have a lower quality of image, so they are rarely subject to publication, with some exceptions. However, it is not in the form of paper books, but via publication in digitized archives, which has made these photographs accessible to a wider audience.

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Table 1: Major institutions confirmed to preserve photographs of Japan before World War II taken by British and American travelers.

Country	Organization
US	<p>American Museum of Natural History Brick Store Museum Briscoe Center for American History Brown University Library Case Western Reserve University Libraries Coos History Museum Denver Museum of Nature & Science Georgia Institute of Technology Library Harvard University Libraries Heinz History Center Indiana Historical Society Library of Congress Maryhill Museum of Art Mills College Library Minnesota Historical Society MOHAI Resource Center Museum of Performance and Design Performing Arts Library Museum of Ventura County New Mexico History Museum Oakland Museum of California Rice University, Fondren Library San José State University, Special Collections and Archive Santa Barbara Historical Museum Tacoma Historical Society The American Museum of Natural History University of California, Los Angeles Fowler Museum University of California, Berkeley Library University of California, Riverside California Museum of Photograph University of California, Davis Library University of Colorado, Boulder Libraries University of Southern California, International Mission Photography Archive White River Valley Museum & Mary Olson Farm</p>
UK	<p>Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution Cambridge University Library Kresen Kernow Maidstone Museum Middlesex University, Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture (MoDA) Mount Stuart Trust National Library Of Scotland Record Office for Leicester and Rutland Russell Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Stokeon Trent Archives Surrey History Center Tyne & Wear Archives University of Glasgow, Archives & Special Collection</p>

In the Harvard University Library, for example, there are many photographs corresponding to <1>, but photographic collections of Ernest Goodrich Stillman (1884-1949) can be cited as photographs related to <2>. Stillman was the son of James Stillman (1850-1918), the owner of National City Bank, the predecessor of today's CitiBank. He graduated from Harvard University in 1908 and after graduating from Columbia University, he was engaged in medical research at the Rockefeller Foundation until his later years. He was known as a wealthy man and made a large donation to Harvard University. He also had many hobbies and was known as a collector of Japanese-related paintings and literary works. Currently, the Harvard University Library retains an album of photographs that Stillman may have taken when he traveled to Japan while he was in university in 1905, which is available on the library's digital system, HOLLIS. The first volume²⁾ contains photos of his trips to Kyoto, Nara, and the Sanyo region including Okayama and Yamaguchi, the second volume³⁾ contains photos of Nikko and Osaka festivals, and the third volume⁴⁾ contains photos of the Kyushu region. Here, instead of the beautified Japan seen in <1>, we see the hustle and bustle of the Gion Festival, street corners, barbershops, common children and shopkeepers, country roads and peasant children carrying balance sticks, and cars stuck in gutters in Kyushu. In the second volume, Nikko, the author photographed the Nikko Toshogu Shrine as shown in <1>, but unlike <1>, the photographs show visitors and broken stonework, and photos taken from personally unique perspectives.

The Harvard University also has photographs of Japanese trees and plants of the Taisho period, taken around 1914 by Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930), a British botanist who introduced about 2,000 Asian plants to Europe and the US⁵⁾. These photographs have recently been published in book form in Japan, and the photographs of plants taken in various parts of Japan, from Hokkaido to Yakushima, have been made available to the public. Like Stillman, these photos were not taken for personal sightseeing purposes but for academic research purposes, so it is clear that the subjects were photographed more objectively as specimens rather than for exoticism or nostalgia. Some of the subjects are traditional buildings such as five-storied pagodas, but most of them are forests and fields,

2) Photographs of a trip through Japan, vol. 1 (Ernest Goodrich Stillman Collections of the Harvard University Library)

<http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olvgroup12595/catalog> (Accessed:21-05-01)

3) Photographs of a trip through Japan, vol. 2 (Ernest Goodrich Stillman Collections of the Harvard University Library)

<http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olvgroup12596/catalog>(Accessed:21-05-01)

4) Photographs of a trip through Japan, vol. 3 (Ernest Goodrich Stillman Collections of the Harvard University Library):

<http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olvgroup12597/catalog>(Accessed:21-05-01)

5) Ernest Henry Wilson collection of Harvard University Library:

<https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/13/resources/193> (Accessed:21-05-01)

so the photographs do not necessarily show Japan, nor do they show the comparison of old and new. As a result, the images do not evoke nostalgia for the old days that can be seen in the photos in <1>.

For the late Taisho and Showa eras, International Mission Photography Archive (IMPA), has a collection of photographs of missions sent to various parts of the world by religious organizations headquartered in Europe and the US⁶⁾. These collections also include photographs collected and taken by envoys dispatched to Japan by the Baptist churches and other organizations. While this includes postcards showing famous sightseeing spots in Japan as shown in <1>, there is also a mixture of photographs of Japanese landscapes and scenes of the lives of Japanese citizens, which may have been taken by the envoys. In the picture postcards in <1>, besides pictures that depict scenic spots such as Hikone Castle and Hayama Beach in Kanagawa, there are also pictures of ordinary citizens in kimonos washing vegetables, family members making rice cakes, children, and casual farm scenes similar to <2>, with the latter being the most common. Comparing these images with <1>, we can see that the photos in <1> were formed within a framework that was prominently beautified, although there are changes with the times. Therefore, while the photos in <1> show a beautified view of Japan in the prewar period, the photos in <2> show a different view of Japanese society and people that was closer to the reality. As the digitization of the photographs in <2> has progressed and they are now widely available on the Internet, it is necessary to reconsider the image of Japan in the pre-war period with these images. In Japan, too, it is necessary to refer to more images together with records, rather than adopting stereotypes formed by the foreign gaze as our own collective nostalgia and memories. To do this, it is necessary not only to preserve and pass on domestic photographic records but also to actively investigate and refer to photographs under <2> in overseas archives to capture the reality of pre-war Japan in a more multifaceted way.

6. Digital-Age Photo Archives and Another Variety

In the preceding paragraph, we examined the image of Japan in the pre-war period held by institutions, mainly in the UK and the US. As mentioned above, many photographic materials are now available on the Web, and the way they are made available is becoming more experiential.

As Urry points out, museums and historical heritage have long been the objects of tourism, and tourists have directed various approaches to them, but these cultural assets have been digitized so that they can be viewed via the Internet. However, many early systems and content were positioned as digitization of museum catalogs, and they did not replace the act of visiting and viewing real

6) International Mission Photography Archive (IMPA), University of Southern California Libraries, <http://digitalibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll1123>(Accessed:21-05-01)

institutions. However, since the end of 2019, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, tourism became impossible, and virtual tours, where tourists looked at various famous features on the internet, became recognized as a form of "tourism".

Within these trends, museums and art museums around the world also focused on virtual tours and explored them in various forms, and many fee-based tours have been opened by curators (Burke, 2020). As of May 2021, major travel agency in Japan, is offering online tours of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which is known for preserving many of the aforementioned Ogawa Kazumasa's photo albums and Japanese ukiyo-e prints, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which also preserves many pre-war Japanese photographs. These tours are being conducted by local guides through online conference application. For the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the tour begins at 9:00 p.m. on Saturday nights (Japan time), and the guides lead the tour in real time for one hour, starting at 8:00 a.m. local time, with a question and answer session in the last 10 minutes.

Although via these tours, one cannot individually share time with the customers, there is an increasing number of online events involving database retrieval and sessions where curators guide visitors through the works with on-demand images, browsing galleries with 360° virtual reality (VR), and using videos and other media to actively exhibit it after having a story-like exhibition. Virtual tours using VR, designed to give people the feeling of actually visiting the place in various ways, are also making progress (Cigainero, 2018). Among the photographs discussed in this paper, online exhibitions of Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), famous for her photographs of immigrants during the Great Depression and Japanese immigrants during World War II, have been held at the Oakland Museum of California⁷⁾ and the Museum of Modern Art⁸⁾.

In such a system where virtual museum tours have expanded and content has become richer and more expressive, Japanese people themselves are beginning to view images of pre-war Japan overseas in sightseeing tours using digital technology. In such an environment, although virtual, foreigners can visit Japan and look at Japan, and understand the background and context in which these images were created, such as the fact that they were exported and sold overseas at that time with English explanations, and that the original glass plates are still kept overseas. Thus, it is possible to provide information that enables them to understand the background and context of the establishment of the materials.

It also allows the experiencing of the cultures and people involved with their ancestors through the eyes of a foreigner from the past, preserved in a foreign institution. This would also make it easier for people to understand the background of the material in question, rather than viewing the same material

7) Oakland Museum of California :<https://dorothealange.museumca.org/> (Accessed:21-05-01)

8) Museum of Modern Art (MoMA): <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5079> (Accessed:21-05-01)

through a book published by a Japanese publisher with Japanese commentary.

As more materials are digitized and made public, not only photographs falling under <1> but also <2> will be viewed, leading to a real image of Japan during the pre-war period and not just its beautified image. From this point of view, it is a rediscovery of the imagery that was formed by the real tourism, in the virtual tourism. From this perspective, we can rediscover the images formed by the gaze of real tourism in the gaze of virtual tourism. By doing so, we can understand the current state of these photographs stored overseas and the background in which they were created, and we can see them from various perspectives in reality. By doing so, we will be able to unravel the fixed image of the Bakumatsu-Meiji period and explore the past from a more multifaceted perspective. In this sense, the sharing of information on Japanese photographic materials overseas and the promotion of their publication will not only make historical research on Japan more objective and empirical but also help people living in Japan to rethink their own fixed images of their country.

Although the digitization of the archives containing various photographic materials is still in its infancy, the “gaze” of the virtual space will help us to understand the context and background of the various materials and to reaffirm the past image of the society to which we belong. Experiencing such exhibitions also leads to the awareness of the various frameworks that they currently have, and remind us of the fact that the frame of a photograph has been cut and created based on the ideas of each era and photographer. In other words, an archive of the “gaze” is being created, and the viewer is experiencing that gaze. In the future, it will be necessary to actively create opportunities to examine various cultures in a multilayered manner through digitized archives from overseas.

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