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Author(s)	Yoshinari, Teppei; Miyoshi, Emako
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Preserving Memories of the Asia-Pacific War for Future Generations through Reflective Photography: Reexamining “postwar” Japan through “photography in practice (*shashin-jissen*)”

Teppei YOSHINARI¹ and Emako MIYOSHI¹

Abstract

Today, about 80 years after the end of the Asia-Pacific War, we are entering the “post-experiential era,” which means people who experienced the War will no longer be around to give us direct testimonies; therefore, there is an urgent need to preserve wartime and postwar experiences for the future generations.

In the context of these social circumstances, the authors retraced the footsteps of Shōmei Tōmatsu’s photography to depict how people lived through the postwar period, based on “photography in practice (*shashin-jissen*),” which is an original methodology for systematically redefining the expression of photographers’ intentions. This was achieved by reconstructing various photographic media such as photo collections, magazines, and newspaper articles, while considering the social conditions of the time. Notably, by placing themselves in the paths walked by Tōmatsu and continuing to take photographs there, in places such as Nagasaki and Okinawa, the authors learned to link the overlooked reality of the postwar era that he captured with a re-examination of how history continues to the present day.

On the other hand, recent studies in the field of sociology, history, and anthropology, have pointed out that empathizing with the anguish and trauma of survivors through interviews enables us to communicate their experiences to future generations. In addition, filmic sociology and visual ethnography are characterized by interpreting video footage from the present perspective, which involves recording interactions with people recalling memories of World War II.

However, “photography in practice” confirms the difference in research stance from these research trends; that is, it focuses on each moment of the photographers’ experiences, paying close attention to the social conditions in their time and place, along with the authors’ reflective descriptions of the actual locations visited by the photographers in their analysis.

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¹ Graduate School of Human Sciences, The University of Osaka, 1-2, Yamadaoka, Suita, Osaka 565-0871, Japan

Therefore, this study aimed to clarify the meaning of the experiences and thoughts of common people in the “Postwar” period that photographers sought to express, for the passing-on of memories. Especially, in this study, the authors reinterpreted Tōmatsu’s deepening understanding in Nagasaki, retracing the footsteps of his photography since 2020.

In the previous study, the authors showed that Tōmatsu came to perceive individuals in their everyday lives while he also primarily focused on the lives of the survivors of the atomic bomb, living in the misery that it caused. Based on the above findings, the authors, in the course of their return visits, became aware of the layered history after the atomic bombing in Nagasaki, where survivors and their supporters mutually strived to pass on the unforgettable memories to the next generation in everyday life. Furthermore, it is clarified that each photograph recording their suffering, ambivalence, or expectations at the very moment encourages us to re-accept the history that continues to the present day and further convey it to the future.

Key words: “photography in practice (*shashin-jissen*)”; Postwar; passing on memories; Nagasaki; reflexivity

1. Introduction

1.1. Locating the Issue

With the approaching 80th anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, and as the experiences and memories of the war are fading away, Japan is entering a “post-experiential era,” where the direct testimonies of war survivors can no longer be heard. Today, the passing-on of these memories to future generations has become an urgent issue. Against this social backdrop, scholars in the fields of sociology and history have been discussing the need to reconsider the “postwar” period as a layered historical space. These discussions take into account the current geopolitical situation in East Asia, while also addressing the overlooked connections to wars in the region, such as those on the Korean Peninsula and in Vietnam during the Cold War (e.g., Ishihara 2022; Nakano 2005; Narita & Yoshimi 2005; Nishikawa, Ōno & Banshō, eds. 2014; Michiba [2005] 2021). Furthermore, in the post-experiential era, generational tensions are rising, along with growing difficulties for survivors in recounting their harrowing experiences. In addition, war-related memories are at risk of being passed down merely as standardized narratives from the current position, as the large body of records accumulated over the years are being overlooked (Fukuma 2011, 2020).

Based on the crucial question of how the present society can inherit the diverse memories of those who experienced the war, this study focuses on and seeks to concretize the potential for the “passing-on of memory” through repeated photographic engagement with the scenes of postwar lives that photographers have continued to produce over the years. So far, we have proposed an original methodological framework called “photography in practice” (*shashin-jissen*) (Yoshinari 2021), grounded in the embodied experiences of photographers through photographic experiences. In other words, this methodology systematically reexamines the realities that photographers sought to capture through their photographic practices, by surveying the diverse expressive media they continuously produced, with close attention to the historical contexts in which they worked. A key feature of this methodology is that it does not simply reflect on the past but seeks to inhabit the perspectives of photographers who continued to photograph while facing an uncertain future. Additionally, although this point was not fully explored in our previous publication (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2024), this study also emphasizes the importance of visiting the very sites these photographers once observed and carried out reflexive photographic practices, to provide a complementary line of inquiry. As such, the process of attempting to systematize this methodology allowed us to spend sufficient time revisiting the locations once observed by the photographers and to cultivate a deeper embodied understanding of those spaces through our own photographic engagement.

In our previous work (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2024), we aimed to refine the concept of photography in practice as a methodology for exploring the thoughts of postwar individuals, clarifying its differing perspective from related research using photographic materials and examining its theoretical foundation. In general, photography research, distinct from author studies in aesthetics and art history, has shown a

trend of expanding into various disciplines, such as sociology, folklore studies, and history. In the field of history, in particular, photographs have been increasingly valued as sources that reveal the everyday lives of common people not captured in written records or oral accounts. As such, expectations have grown for their use in reconstructing postwar history. However, photographic historical materials are hardly being fully utilized. Previous studies have tended to treat photographs primarily as objective data for reconstructing social or historical images of the era. Taking this into account, photography in practice emphasizes the importance of attending to the photographer's deepening experience through the act of photographing and of depicting the thoughts of common people. The present study also draws on theories developed by scholars who sought to elucidate the reality of lives across disciplinary boundaries, such as "feelings theory" of Yanagita folkloristics (*shin'iron*), which aimed to interpret the "hearts and minds" of people living under harsh conditions from the perspective of everyday life (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2024: 193–199).

Building on the methodology of photography in practice, we have retraced the footsteps of photographer Shōmei Tōmatsu (1930–2012), who continued to photograph postwar Japanese society for decades. We have also clarified the trajectory through which he confronted and expressed the drastic social transformation that followed the defeat of Japan, symbolized by "Americanization" (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023b). Among the subjects that left a lasting impact on Tōmatsu and became the focus of his lifelong work were Nagasaki in the aftermath of the atomic bombing and the everyday lives of people in Okinawa, who were affected by the reversion to Japan. As demonstrated in previous work (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021, 2022b), Tōmatsu's first visit to Nagasaki in the early 1960s left a profound impact on him, as he came face-to-face with the realities of atomic bomb survivors, who had been overlooked amid the city's postwar reconstruction. As Tōmatsu grappled with the question of what he could do as a photographer, he built enduring relationships with individual survivors. In his later years, while living in Nagasaki, Tōmatsu came to engage with the city's layered history spanning multiple centuries. Similarly, Tōmatsu's first trip to Okinawa in 1969, prior to its reversion to Japan, shocked him with the instability of life under U.S. military rule. At the same time, he wrestled with the situation on the Japanese mainland, where the peace constitution strongly desired by the people of Okinawa was being emptied of meaning. This internal conflict prompted him to address the reality of "Okinawa within the bases" as a question for those living on the mainland (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2022c). Around the 1970s, as Japan emerged as an economic superpower and daily life appeared increasingly peaceful, Tōmatsu began to question how photographers could remain critically engaged in capturing the realities hidden beneath the peaceful surface. During this period, he conducted interviews with Okinawan residents, listening to their life stories. Through these interviews, Tōmatsu sensed and gave expression to the depth of lives that had endured, even as they were continually shaped by the forces of the country. The trajectory of his efforts became visible through the lens of photography in practice (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2023b). Ultimately, this approach represents an ongoing search to bridge the distance between the photographer and the realities faced by people in the postwar period through the continued act of photographing (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2023a). Through our own photographic activities

at the very sites Tōmatsu once captured, such as Nagasaki and Okinawa, we gradually came to perceive a sense of continuity between the realities of life he had been expressing back then and the present.

As will be discussed in detail in Section 2, existing studies on the passing-on of war experiences and memories in the post-experiential era related to photography in practice have accumulated substantial research, particularly through interviews with survivors. However, recent years have also seen a growing body of qualitative research using video materials, such as video-based investigations and visual ethnography. Nevertheless, much of the research remains constrained by predetermined frameworks that dichotomize “experiencers” and “non-experiencers.” In particular, visual ethnography, which has recently gained increasing attention, often interprets war memories and the interpersonal dynamics surrounding them through visual media from a present-day perspective. Accordingly, the present study focuses on a critical but frequently overlooked aspect: that photographers were not only recorders of historical events but also played the role of “companions (*Bansō-sha*),” living alongside the people they photographed during the turbulent postwar period. In doing so, they entrusted their photographic expression to the future.

1.2. Study objectives

This study aims to concretize the significance of the process by which we, through reflexive photographic practices conducted on site, re-engage with and carry forward into the future the thoughts of postwar individuals that photographers sought to express through their work. In doing so, it also seeks to further refine photography in practice as a methodological framework. This study focuses on a deepened exploration of our evolving experiences in Nagasaki, where we have continued photographic fieldwork as part of our ongoing effort to retrace the footsteps of Shōmei Tōmatsu since 2020.

In this context, we highlight the position of Tōmatsu, who continued to photograph Nagasaki after the atomic bombing. While Ken Domon, known for his “photorealism” that vividly captured the devastation of postwar Japan, unflinchingly documented the scars of Hiroshima’s atomic bomb survivors, Tōmatsu, with Domon in mind, said, “I simply cannot shout in Nagasaki” (Tōmatsu 1984). This remark symbolizes the fundamental difference in their approaches: rather than using photography to denounce reality, Tōmatsu sought to understand the conditions people faced in their everyday lives, and to express, together with them, the contradictions he, too, struggled with. This aspect of Tōmatsu’s work has gradually come into clearer view through the lens of photography in practice. Notably, rather than entering Nagasaki with a fixed theme, Tōmatsu engaged in “city walking” (*machi-aruki*)—walking aimlessly around the city with a camera in hand, capturing the lives of its people moment by moment¹. As will be discussed later, we have also engaged in city walking in the same spirit as Tōmatsu, not as “researchers” but as fellow photographers, through which we have gradually come to understand the layered history of the city, which includes the efforts of those who have lived as “companions” to atomic bomb victims in their attempt to pass on the victims’ experiences.

Building on the above, this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews recent trends in studies concerning the passing-on of war experiences and memories, with particular attention to the differences

in research positioning between qualitative research using visual materials or visual ethnography and the approach of photography in practice. Section 3 outlines the theoretical foundations that underpin our reflexive photographic engagement in the field. It also examines how photography in practice captures people's experiences from the lived perspectives of photographers at the time. In Section 4, we reflect on our photographic experiences in Nagasaki as we retraced the footsteps of Shōmei Tōmatsu, and describe, through the methodology of photography in practice, how we came to embody and respond to the layered passage of time that has flowed from the moment of the atomic bombing on August 9, 1945, to the present. Finally, Section 5 discusses the potential for the “passing-on of memory” that is opened up through such reflexive photographic practices. We consider the significance of reexamining the postwar period as expressed by photographers through the lens of photography in practice.

2. Summary of Existing Research on the Passing-on of War Experiences and Memories, and the Characteristics of its Concepts

In the current post-experiential era, war-related research by postwar and non-war generations has become particularly active (Ueno 2022)²⁾. One notable trend in recent studies on the passing-on of war experiences and memory is the growing number of attempts by members of the non-war generation to represent war memories, especially as previously untold recollections have gradually surfaced over the seventy-plus years since the end of the war (Ōkawa ed. 2021, Ueno 2022: 38). However, a critical issue concerning the boundary between experiencers and non-experiencers remains, exemplified by the often-heard remark during interviews with atomic bomb survivors: “You can’t understand unless you’ve experienced it” (Yagi 2008). This points to the persistent challenge of confronting the “non-shared nature of experience” that exists between those who lived through major social and historical events and those who did not. Particularly in this regard, a growing body of work has sought to explore how non-experiencers might engage with survivors’ experiences by interrogating the relationship between researchers and subjects, as well as the positionality of the researchers themselves (Ogura 2013). Efforts have emerged that attempt to express this engagement through the research process itself (e.g., Ogura 2017, 2021; Yakabi 2009). For instance, historian Yakabi emphasizes the significance of a process through which non-experiencers repeatedly listen to the stories of survivors of the Battle of Okinawa and the subsequent U.S. occupation, and then reinterpret and retell those narratives beyond the immediate context. Through such a process, Yakabi argues, it becomes possible for those who did not experience the war to cultivate a sense of “participation” in relation to it³⁾ (Yakabi 2009: iv). Similarly, sociologist Takayama highlights the potential for the passing-on of memory through a collaborative process. Through repeated life-story interviews with Nagasaki atomic bomb survivors serving as storytellers, Takayama engages with their pain by overlapping the survivors’ narratives with his own life experiences, thus illustrating a shared process of passing on of memory (Takayama 2016).

Thus, within the body of existing research that focuses on the introspective and exploratory processes of non-experiencers during interviews with survivors, a noteworthy recent development is the

growing interest in how traumatic memories are passed on from survivors to non-survivors. In this context, the concept of “secondary trauma” (or “trauma contagion”) has been identified as one possible pathway for the passing-on of experience (Arraragi 2021; Konno 2021). Specifically, this refers to the act of receiving and internalizing the pain and suffering of others, including the dead, through one’s own body (Konno 2021: 421). Studies suggest that the process of the passing-on of war-related experiences and memories is not limited to the acquisition of historical knowledge. Rather, it is also underpinned by the “physical and emotional practices” of non-experiencers (Tanaka 2021: 130).

As discussed in Section 4, in addition to analyzing the expressive media left behind by photographers, photography in practice, which involves gradually re-evaluating the experiences of people at the time through reflexive photography on site, also calls for attention to the physicality and emotional engagement of inheritors of war experiences and memories. However, rather than examining these issues within a predetermined framework of “experiencer/non-experiencer,” or focusing on trauma and suffering, photography in practice seeks to reinterpret the thoughts of everyday people, continually expressed by photographers in their role as “companions,” as being continuous to the present. In this way, it stands in contrast to the existing body of research⁴). This approach entails not only analyzing photographic works from multiple perspectives but also, importantly, deliberately stepping outside the conventional position of the “researcher,” physically visiting the sites where the photographers once stood, and dynamically expressing the experience through one’s own act of photography.

Having reviewed recent research trends on the passing-on of memories centered on war experiences, to clarify the distinct position of photography in practice, we reexamine the features of related studies in the fields of visual sociology and visual anthropology, which also employ visual methodologies⁵). In light of the growing interest in visual materials, which have historically seen limited use compared with textual materials and oral testimonies (Kimura 2020; Yasuoka 2020), we note a recent surge in qualitative studies using video materials that reinterpret the experiences of those who lived through wartime and postwar societies through testimonial footage (e.g., Satō 2021; Takeda 2013; Mizushima 2020). This trend is supported by the development of video archives, such as the Trial Project on Academic Use of the NHK Archives and the NHK War Testimony Archives, which have made it easier to access past recorded footage and verify research (Ishida 2015). Studies have built up analyses that reposition footage within the social and historical contexts of its original production, while being mindful of the risks of “footage repurposing,” whereby the media detaches “tragic footage” from its original contexts and disseminates it as a standardized representation of past events (Yamada 2015).

In addition, we also note the growing number of practical attempts to record sites associated with war memories. In other words, amid the rising interest in social research employing visual expression methods (Matsuo 2017), we observe an increase in reflexive visual expression studies anticipating the arrival of the post-experiential era, such as visual ethnographies that document people praying at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park on August 6 every year (Gotō 2017; Matsuo, Nemoto, & Ogura eds. 2018), as well as research on how war survivors have come to relativize their traumatic experiences by revisiting former battlefields and producing videos (Nishimura 2020). In particular, when filming scenes

of various people praying in the park, which are often overlooked due to the foregrounding of the August 6th peace ceremony at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park (Gotō 2017), Gotō highlights the strength of video for its ability to capture and analyze the interaction between the “light” of various objects recorded in long-duration footage and the “sound” of subjects, including their speech and responses to researchers (Gotō 2017: 66). Moreover, Gotō notes that video can visualize not only the subjects but also the voice and image of the cameraman ⁶⁾ (ibid.: 117). By contrast, unlike long-duration video recordings that include ambient sound, photographs are silent still images that capture only a single moment of a scene, which may be considered a limitation. However, as will be described in detail in Section 4 based on our photographing experiences in Nagasaki, we emphasize that, paradoxically, it is precisely because photographers are constantly confronted with the complexities of reality—which exceed the camera frame—that photography enables deeper reflection on the present reality and its history.

In light of recent trends in research employing visual methods, photographic materials documenting the experiences of people living in the postwar era have been underutilized and insufficiently analyzed. This is largely because studies have predominantly approached photographers’ works as objects of aesthetic critique within the disciplines of aesthetics and art studies, often neglecting the historical and social contexts surrounding the time when the photographs were taken (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2024). Furthermore, although photographs possess rich expressive capabilities, their inherent ambiguity has contributed to their long-standing exclusion as unsuitable media for scientific papers, particularly within the field of sociology (Matsuo 2017). On this basis, we emphasize a key difference in perspective between existing studies and photography in practice—particularly in visual ethnography, the analytical focus lies on how people living today interpret and respond to past war-related events through visual media. In contrast, as discussed in the next section, photography in practice is grounded in the analysis of the thoughts of postwar individuals confronting their realities from the perspective of the photographers who lived at the time. Building on this foundation, photography in practice then engages in reflective photography of present-day landscapes, thereby re-examining the continuity between past social and historical events and the present, marking a distinct difference in perspective.

3. Photography in Practice and the Layered History of Postwar Lives

3.1. Importance of Historically Intrinsic Perspective on the Realities Perceived by People at the Time

Taking into account the differing perspectives from existing research centered on the passing-on of war experiences as outlined above, this section aims to clarify how photography in practice captures the realities of life expressed by photographers of that era. This is because our reflexive photographic practice in the field is conducted complementarily alongside analyses of the diverse expressive media left by those photographers at the time. In other words, the perspectives through which photographers documented past events can be understood as mutually shaping how we, in the present, photograph landscapes that continue from that past. This approach (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2024: 204–207) resonates

with the concept of “implications” (*renrui*) (Morris-Suzuki [2002] 2013), which asks how the people of today can respond to past events that cannot be directly experienced. It is also closely connected to the importance of “historical truthfulness” (Morris-Suzuki [2004] 2014), a stance of continuously reflecting on people’s attitudes and behaviors toward the past by attentively listening to the diverse voices of history.

As outlined in the previous section, adopting a retrospective perspective—from the present looking back to the past, which is common in existing research—runs the risk of stereotyping or oversimplification of the lived realities of people at the time, with all their contradictions and conflicts. Therefore, revisiting Yamada’s (2015) important critique concerning “appropriation of images,” a fundamental premise of photography in practice is to reposition diverse expressive media, including photographs, within the specific social and historical contexts in which they were originally created.

In addition, when depicting everyday life from the perspective of photographers through photography in practice, the focus on the various possibilities embedded within individuals’ thoughts at the time, such as the hopes and frustrations they harbored, holds particular significance. In this regard, the insights of sociologist Kazuko Tsurumi and philosopher Shunsuke Tsurumi are especially instructive. Both emphasized the importance of attending to people’s “individual historicity” while describing the “hopes” they held at the time when interpreting history (Harada 2001). In other words, Shunsuke Tsurumi approached history as inclusive of the people’s dreams and hopes that were often difficult to realize in actual historical processes, thereby highlighting the importance of depicting history from the “dimension of hope (prospective)” held by people at the time (Harada 2001: 172–173). Specifically, Shunsuke Tsurumi, who wrote and partially edited *Nihon no Hyakunen (A Hundred Years of Japan)*, a social history of modern Japan since its opening to the world, notes of the book’s historical narrative: “we sought to understand the grounds (*ikigai*, ‘purpose of life’) upon which common people of each era lived, and to view each era from the inner perspectives of those individuals” (Tsurumi [1961] 2008: 498). In connection with photography in practice, it is particularly important to bear in mind what Tsurumi states immediately following this remark:

I believe the advancement of historical writing lies not in the pursuit of newly identified villains, but rather in a broader and deeper effort toward the restoration of human dignity. I hope to see the Japanese of the past emerge onto the horizon of the future as a composite of “small people,” each possessing their own purpose in life and authentic voice, without their facts being distorted or them being unjustly harmed. (Tsurumi [1961] 2008: 498–499)

Such an approach to historical writing, which aims to portray in a “historically immanent” manner (Satō 2001: 172) how these “small people of each era,” often overlooked from later perspectives, came to terms with and lived through the realities of their times, is fundamentally aligned with the task of reinterpreting past events that photographers sought to express through photography in practice.

Considering the perspective on history from the “dimension of hope,” we note that the history of

the common people, depicted by Yanagita as the “hidden” (yū) history of decentralized modern Japanese history, stands in contrast to the “visible” (ken) history of centralized modern Japan. Put differently, Kazuko Tsurumi explains this as an accumulation of past endeavors that the deceased hoped for but could not accomplish (Tsurumi 1998: 111–112). In other words, it is a “history as potential possibility” that might be realized through the “emotional or behavioral energy transmitted to the living as the sentiments or intentions of the dead”⁷⁾ (ibid.: 112). As will be discussed in the next section with the example of post-atomic Nagasaki, in photography in practice as well, photographers, through their ongoing process of capturing people’s everyday lives, gradually come to perceive the “invisible elements” that exceed the photographic frame, such as the suffering and struggles of those who once lived on the land, embedded within the present-day landscape. Therefore, instead of treating the past and present as separate, fixed entities, we seek to describe history as a dynamic process in which the deceased and those living today remain interconnected.

3.2. Insights from Yanagita’s “feelings theory” (*shin’iron*) as “Theory of Expression”

Building upon the importance of continuously engaging with the thoughts of people at the time (i.e., activities often overlooked from the present perspective) within the reciprocal and cyclical relation between life and death, this section aims to further explore the insights that photography in practice draws from Yanagita’s “feelings theory” (*shin’i-ron*) (as discussed in Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2024). Specifically, we have employed Yanagita’s feelings theory as one of the theoretical foundations underpinning photography in practice, interpreting people’s “facts perceived through the heart and mind” by means of the wisdom and historical individuality inherent in their everyday lives (Ibid.: 193–195). Here, we confirm that this orientation aligns with the perspective introduced in the previous section, which views people’s life histories as a continuum stretching from the past through the present and into the future. Furthermore, in considering how photographers, grounded in such a layered history, express it toward the future, we recognize, following folklorist Yama’s (2017) observation, that Yanagita’s feelings theory is not only an “epistemology” but also a “theory of expression.”

In other words, Yama, who has been conceptualizing environmental folklore by focusing on the narratives and stories expressed by people in their living environments (as spaces shaped by the interaction between people and nature), argues that when one traces this line of thought back to Norinaga’s “knowing empathy toward things (*Mono no aware*)” theory⁸⁾, which influenced Yanagita’s feelings theory, it becomes clear that Yanagita emphasizes “a question of how to express in words the movements and emotions of the heart” (Yama 2017: 55). Put differently, Yanagita’s feelings theory, which follows in Norinaga’s intellectual lineage, is “an ‘epistemology’ that does not allow the separation of knowledge and emotion, but rather sees them as unified, and at the same time, a ‘theory of expression’ that naturally incorporates the subject’s interpretation as an essential component” (ibid.: 55). A noteworthy element here is the aspect that unites the author of a story, its characters, and its readers through “the heart that knows the poignancy of things” (ibid.: 60). That is to say, with the presence of the audience always in mind, the storyteller who listens to the narratives of others is compelled to write

stories because “the heart is stirred by what one sees and hears, and cannot help but express it, [following] the urge to share it with others” (ibid.: 64). According to Norinaga, stories are intimately connected with the real lives of the readers themselves.

By extending Norinaga’s theory of narrative, Yama emphasizes the importance of folklorists themselves taking time to receive and internalize the emotional outpourings expressed through people’s stories in the field, and depicting their ethnographies as those of “ordinary people who know empathy toward things.” Drawing on Yanagita’s feelings theory as a “theory of expression” in this context, our process of expression, inspired by the urgent realities of everyday life that photographers sought to convey because of the shock they experienced, is also crucial in analyses based on photography in practice. As will be detailed in the next section, this reflexive photographic engagement in the field, unfolding in the process of retracing the photographers’ footsteps, opens up the potential for the “passing-on of memory.”

4. Possibility of “Passing-on of Memory” Through Reflexive Photographic Practice

4.1. Re-examining the Connection Between Past and Present Through Photography

As mentioned earlier, we have retraced the footsteps of Tōmatsu by repeatedly visiting the sites in Nagasaki and Okinawa where he continued his photographic practice. Here we summarize what we have elucidated about Tōmatsu’s work in Nagasaki through our approach of photography in practice: Tōmatsu, who vividly experienced Japan’s defeat and occupation during his youth and began his photographic career in the 1950s, encountered the harsh realities of atomic bomb survivors for the first time during his visit to Nagasaki in the early 1960s, a moment that held “decisive significance” for him (Tōmatsu 1965). Driven by the shock of the overlooked realities of the atomic bombing, Tōmatsu was compelled to continue photographing the area, eventually producing a body of work on Nagasaki’s atomic bombing that spanned several decades⁹). He notes that “photographs are also alive” (Tōmatsu 1995). Throughout his ongoing photographic practice, he continuously replaced and rearranged the photographs within each work, persistently revisiting and recapturing the evolving realities of atomic bomb survivors. The significance of this trajectory has emerged clearly through our photography in practice analysis¹⁰) (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021). Tōmatsu’s first visit to Nagasaki in 1961 came at the invitation of the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (*Gensuikyo*). While initially hesitant to photograph the scars of the survivors, he gradually built relationships with individuals by empathetically engaging with their suffering, enabling him to continue his work in Nagasaki over time. In his later years, after relocating to Nagasaki, Tōmatsu deepened his understanding of the city’s layered history, from its opening to foreign trade in the early modern period onward, through city walking. This broadened perspective led him to reinterpret the survivors he had been photographing not simply as victims but as “people living their everyday lives” (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021). In other words, as he aged and faced his own illness, Tōmatsu’s photographic journey can be seen as that of a “companion” walking alongside the survivors, continuously documenting their lives.

As previously detailed (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2022b), Tōmatsu's so-called city walking (*machi-aruki*) formed the foundational basis of his photographic practice, through which he observed postwar Japan for over half a century. This approach was clearly distinct from the attitude of deciding on a subject in advance and then proceeding to photograph it⁽¹⁾. In particular, as Tōmatsu wandered aimlessly with his camera in hand, traversing the steep slopes and narrow, winding alleys of Nagasaki, he gradually came to grasp the “Champon culture” alive in the city, a culture shaped by the mingling of countless footsteps of diverse people over the course of several centuries.

While collecting and analyzing the diverse expressive media left by Tōmatsu that conveyed the realities of post-atomic bomb life, we have also been conducting complementary, reflexive photographic activities in the field, gradually giving concrete shape to the points discussed above. In what follows, we examine the possibilities for the “passing-on of memory” that emerge through such reflexive photographic practice by reflecting on the perspective we have developed toward the landscapes of Nagasaki shaped by the atomic bombing. This perspective deepened as we, like Tōmatsu, took cameras in hand and engaged in city walking over the course of approximately four and a half years, beginning in March 2020. As will be elaborated later, our photographic activities in Nagasaki, deepened through encounters and learning from practitioners who have lived as “companions” alongside survivors and supported them, constituted a process that led us to reflect deeply on the significance of photographic expression borne from everyday life.

To begin describing our experiences in Nagasaki through the act of photography, we first want to address the unique sensation that the medium of photography imparts to the photographer. Through over a decade of engagement with photographic expression, we have come to realize that the scene framed in a camera's viewfinder is always a fleeting moment of “now” and “here,” a constantly changing view that will never present itself exactly the same way again. For this reason, compared with video, which allows for extended, continuous recording, photography, which captures a single instant with the click of a shutter, is an expressive medium that tends to make the photographer keenly aware of the time that has passed through the scene before them, as well as the temporal breaks it entails. With this sense in mind, as we retraced Tōmatsu's footsteps, we discovered that he, too, shared this feeling, which gradually strengthened our conviction that the act of photographing holds the potential to question the continuity of time extending from the past. Indeed, Tōmatsu wrote the following:

A photograph is always of the present. A camera can only capture the now. While a photograph may evoke memories or stir the imagination, neither memory nor imagination can itself be captured in a photograph. In other words, the past cannot be turned into a photograph. No matter how many centuries the subject may have endured, the camera captures the object as it exists now, shaped by those centuries. That is why a photograph is always a reflection of the present. (Tōmatsu 1983: 98–99)

When we first visited Nagasaki's Peace Park in March 2020 and photographed the cityscape unfolding



Photograph 1.

Cityscape viewed from Nagasaki Peace Park (Photographed by the first author in March 2020)

before us at sunset, what we experienced through the camera lens was a certain frustration, a sense that a photograph can only capture the scenery that exists “here” and “now” within the camera’s limited frame, and nothing beyond that (Photograph 1). The feeling we had at that moment was described as follows:

Flanked by mountains on both sides, the houses stand densely packed together. 75 years have passed since the end of the war, and if I hadn’t been told, if I hadn’t known about the unspeakable experiences that took place here, I might have simply seen [Nagasaki] as nothing more than a bustling city. (From the first author’s field notes, March 2020)

At 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945, an atomic bomb detonated approximately 500 meters above Matsuyama Town, the location of today’s Peace Park in Nagasaki, resulting in the deaths of over 70,000 people by the end of that year. However, as noted above, when we first visited the site roughly 75 years after the bombing, we experienced a sense of disorientation while photographing the bustling city of Nagasaki, which had been a scorched wasteland immediately following the bombing. This disorientation stemmed from the temporal distance between the overwhelming “numbers” of casualties that represent the atomic bombing’s devastation and the question of how to truly comprehend and approach such a tragic historical event. Put differently, through the act of photographing on site, we were confronted with the question of how those living in the present can imagine the continuity of time from an invisible past, when, 75 years ago, individual people with names lived in this very place before us.

While carrying these inner conflicts, as we continued city walking through Nagasaki with a camera in hand, our attention was naturally drawn to the subtle traces of the atomic bombing that quietly remain in various parts of the city’s residential and commercial areas. For example, Photograph 2 was taken after we were inspired by the voices of children singing along to piano music coming from a nursery near Sannō Shrine⁽²⁾, which is known for its atomic-bombed camphor trees. This moment evoked a



Photograph 2.

View of Nagasaki cityscape from the atomic-bombed camphor tree at Sannō Shrine (Photographed by the first author in March 2020)

sense that the devastation of August 9, 1945, conveyed through the surviving remnants of the bombing, coexists and blends with the ordinary everyday scenery of present-day Nagasaki. Thus, beginning from the shock experienced at Peace Park, our process of city walking, accompanied by questions about the continuity of time from the bombing to the present, involved an embodied effort to apprehend the flow of time that has passed through Nagasaki. Immediately following our first visit to Nagasaki, the first author recorded the following reflection on city walking:

Walking through the city with a map in hand, I want to cherish the experience of feeling the scenery that often appears before me by chance as I raise my camera. Each and every scene I see appears only at that moment and in that place, and no scenery will ever be the same again. (From the first author's field notes, April 2020)

4.2. Learning and Reflection through “City Walking” with Practitioners Dedicated to Peace Activities

In our engagement with Nagasaki's layered history through photography, encounters with local practitioners who have long dedicated themselves to peace activism alongside atomic bomb survivors proved indispensable. In particular, during our walk through Nagasaki's surviving atomic bomb sites, we happened upon Mr. Masanori Yamaguchi of the Shiroyama Elementary School Peace Memorial Hall¹³⁾ (Photograph 3), which continues to preserve and convey the atomic bombing experience through the surviving school building. Through Mr. Yamaguchi, we learned about the hardships people faced immediately after the bombing and how, amid the city's reconstruction, they lived their lives while seeking peace. The many invaluable insights gained from our meeting with Mr. Yamaguchi at the Shiroyama Peace Memorial Hall in March 2020 are compiled in a separate publication (Miyoshi & Yoshinari, eds., 2024)¹⁴⁾.

Since his youth, Mr. Yamaguchi has been committed to “peace-oriented activities” as a civic responsibility of a Nagasaki native. Since his retirement, he has engaged in various volunteer efforts,



Photograph 3.

Shiroyama Elementary School Peace Memorial Hall (Photographed by the first author in March 2021)

including serving as a guide for the Shiroyama Elementary School A-bombed School Building Peace Outreach Council (hereafter, the Shiroyama Peace Outreach Council), which manages the Peace Memorial Hall. Notably, Mr. Yamaguchi carries on the legacy of Mr. Tsukasa Uchida (deceased April 2020), former president of the Shiroyama Peace Outreach Council, who devoted many years to preserving the bombed school building. Uchida's words are deeply embodied in Yamaguchi's work: "What disappears from the eyes also disappears from the heart. The remains of the atomic bombing hold meaning in being preserved, seen, felt, and passed on." Embracing this legacy, Mr. Yamaguchi diligently conveys the history and realities of the atomic bombing to each visitor to the bombed school building. What follows is an account of how, guided by Mr. Yamaguchi through Nagasaki's cityscape, including its atomic bomb relics, our own perspectives on the city's post-bombing landscape gradually deepened.

In November 2020, we revisited Nagasaki and were fortunate to be guided by Mr. Yamaguchi around the surviving atomic bomb sites near the hypocenter. Among these, our visit to Sannō Shrine, known for its "Second Torii Gate," of which only the right half of the pillar remains owing to the atomic blast, was especially significant. It was here that Mr. Yamaguchi spoke about the wishes he entrusted to the atomic-bombed camphor tree, offering us a vital insight at a time when we were struggling to come to terms with the reality of the atomic bombing 75 years earlier. After passing through the gateposts of the former Nagasaki Medical College, which had been tilted by the blast, we arrived at the camphor tree at Sannō Shrine and took a moment to rest. Mr. Yamaguchi recounted how, with the arborist's permission during a previous inspection, he had the opportunity to look inside the hollow of the tree. He then told us, "Someday, even after the last survivor has passed away, this camphor tree will remain and continue to live on."

This experience allowed us to sense not only the passage of time since the bombing, flowing equally through both the people living in Nagasaki, including Mr. Yamaguchi, and nature rooted in that land, but also the individual lives and deaths that have been woven into that time. In other words, as we

approach an “era without atomic bomb survivors,” what we have come to grasp through Mr. Yamaguchi and the stories of each survivor conveyed by him is the profound depth of time stretching from the bombing to the present day. We would like to emphasize that by learning about the life experiences of each person we encountered during our city walking in Nagasaki, we gradually came to reinterpret the scenery before us, while feeling the present moment that rests upon the layered history of the atomic bombing.

While we gradually came to understand the lived histories embedded in the scenery of Nagasaki over time, we also had moments when the “silent” landscape vividly evoked the brutal deaths caused by the atomic bombing, making it impossible for us to take photographs. One such moment occurred in March 2021, when we retraced the paths along which people fled immediately after the bombing. Together with Mr. Yamaguchi, we walked from the hypocenter in Urakami toward the Sumiyoshi area, where the Ohashi Plant of Nagasaki Mitsubishi Arms Factory once stood. During this walk, we visited the site of the former Mitsubishi Sumiyoshi Tunnel Arms Factory, located about two kilometers from the hypocenter. This tunnel factory, used as an evacuation site in the final stages of the Pacific War to manufacture torpedo parts, is known as a place where many evacuees lost their lives after the bombing. Among them were people from the Korean Peninsula. As we looked into the darkness spreading within the tunnel, guided by Mr. Yamaguchi’s detailed explanation, the unspeakable pain and suffering of those who died there came vividly to mind, causing us to hesitate to raise a camera. In other words, if accepting the past events that took place there meant capturing them with the camera shutter, then this hesitation reflected the difficulty we still faced in fully confronting the invisible, massive scale of death caused by the atomic bombing, even as we sought to gradually bridge the distance to Nagasaki’s atomic bomb experience.

4.3. Perceiving Nagasaki’s Layered History Through the Experiences of the Atomic Bomb Survivors’ “Companions (Bansō-sha)”

As we continued our city walking in Nagasaki, even while grappling with the emotional complexities of sites marked by the atomic bombing, we found ourselves reflecting on how Tōmatsu, during his time living in Nagasaki, had gradually broadened his perspective to include the city’s layered history, shaped by trade with countries such as China and the Netherlands. In the process, we began to feel a sense of our own footsteps overlapping with those of Tōmatsu. One particular moment that embodied this sensation occurred while we were walking through Higashiyamate, a district that once formed part of the foreign settlement. As shown in Photograph 4, we were descending the narrow alleyways that run like a mesh through the steep slopes, now densely lined with residential buildings. As we made our way down, we heard the sound of dishes clinking and a chopping board at work through the window of a nearby house. Listening to these everyday sounds while descending the stairs, we were suddenly and vividly reminded of Tōmatsu’s reflections on the intimacy and closeness between people passing each other in the streets of Nagasaki.



Photograph 4.

Higashiyamate, Nagasaki (Photographed by the first author in March 2021)

The paths you can actually walk on are only about two meters wide. You go back and forth along them, right? And when you pass by someone, you're so close you can even catch their body odor. That makes me feel really good. There's a kind of comfort in it. I just love that raw sense of humanity. (Tōmatsu & Ichihara 2001: 229–230)

In other words, through our city walking, we gradually came to realize, as Tōmatsu suggests, that Nagasaki is not solely a “city of the atomic bombing.” Nagasaki was also a city where the everyday lives of individuals, each bearing diverse personal histories, including those of atomic bomb survivors, have taken root and unfolded.

On August 9, 2021, we were given the opportunity to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony held at Shiroyama Elementary School for the first time. What was particularly meaningful for us was the time we spent afterward at the Shiroyama Elementary School Peace Memorial Hall, where, thanks to Mr. Yamaguchi's introduction, we were able to meet and engage with survivors and others involved in peace efforts. In learning about the depth and continuity of the efforts made by those who, like Mr. Yamaguchi, have accompanied survivors as “companions (*Bansō-sha*)” through the postwar years, we came to understand that their hopes—for preserving and passing on the experiences of the atomic bombing while bearing witness to the pain of those who died and the physical and emotional scars borne by the survivors—are deeply embedded in every scene we had encountered in Nagasaki up to that point.

For example, Photograph 5 shows the “Kayoko's Cherry Trees (*Kayoko zakura*),”¹⁵⁾ which continues to be carefully preserved at Shiroyama Elementary School. It was taken on August 9, 2021, the same day the aforementioned Peace Memorial Ceremony was held. As the image suggests, more than 70 years have passed since the tree was planted in 1949, and it now stands supported by several pillars. This scene speaks not only to the importance of remembering each individual life lost to the atomic bomb but also to the anguish and inner conflicts that survivors have carried with them throughout the postwar years. It also speaks to the sense of purpose they have infused into their efforts to pass on



Photograph 5.

Kayoko's Cherry Trees (*Kayoko zakura*) at Shiroyama Elementary School
(Photographed by the first author in August 2021)

the experience of the bombing. The reflections the authors internalized during those interactions at the Peace Memorial Hall are recorded as follows:

The “atomic bombing” may not have been a central part of their lives, and yet, through some turning point, or perhaps a shared sense of purpose, they have gathered, one by one, at Shiroyama Elementary School. I was deeply moved by this fact (although I cannot put it into words lightly). With each visit to Nagasaki, and each new thing I gradually come to understand, I find myself turning my attention not only to the survivors themselves but also to those who were not directly affected by the bombing yet have walked alongside the survivors. And within all of this, there is the city of Nagasaki. (From the field notes of the first author, August 2021)

Thus, the sense of distance we felt between “August 9, 1945” and the present moment during our first visit to Nagasaki gradually began to close through our encounters with Mr. Yamaguchi during city walking, as we learned about the experiences of each person living in the city and continued to take photographs over time. Notably, Mr. Yamaguchi's narratives often feature survivors who are no longer alive, individuals who once passed on their experiences of the bombing to him. In other words, as we attempted to engage with the histories embedded in the Nagasaki landscapes while retracing the footsteps of Tōmatsu, we were not only learning from those we met in person. More profoundly, we were also absorbing the presence of the time lived after the bombing by those now deceased, those who had once shared their lives with the living. As discussed in the previous section with reference to Kazuko Tsurumi's notion of “hidden,” this process can be seen as a reengagement with Nagasaki as a city shaped by the collective desire to make it “the last atomic-bombed site,” a city lived in and carried forward not only by the living but also by those who have passed on.

5. Significance of Reexamining the Postwar That Photographers Continued to Express Through “Photography in Practice”

When reflecting on our experiences in Nagasaki—experiences that deepened through our acts of reflexive photography—what emerges is not a faithful retracing of Tōmatsu’s footsteps but rather the significance of our own process. Through city walking and learning from the peace-seeking efforts of people like Mr. Yamaguchi, we gradually bridged our own distance from the experience of the atomic bombing and came to engage with Nagasaki’s layered history in our own way. At the same time, we came to realize that the questions we encountered on the ground in Nagasaki unexpectedly echoed those that Tōmatsu himself had once faced. In particular, he experienced an inner conflict regarding the flow of time that had passed in Nagasaki since the atomic bombing, when he first visited the city in the early 1960s:

There, long years had passed during which both expectations for politics and hopes for medicine had been lost. There is no future, and yet time continues to move forward. As long as time exists, people must go on living. What kind of life, then, does that entail? Within a sightseeing route, there exists a reality that has been assigned a place as the past, and a reality that is ongoing. I realized that I had to clearly come to terms, in my own way, with these two faces of a contradiction-filled reality. (“The Atomic Bomb and the Christians,” *Mainichi Shimbun*, August 7, 1962)

As Tōmatsu also stated, “In Nagasaki, there is the time that stopped at 11:02, and the ongoing time that began at 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945. We must never forget these two times” (Tōmatsu, 1966). In our case, the starting point of our engagement with Nagasaki lies in our vivid experience at the site, an experience marked by the powerful question of how to grasp these “two times”: the past of the atomic bombing and the present that has continued from it.

However, more than 60 years have passed since Tōmatsu first photographed the realities of life in Nagasaki after the atomic bombing. Today, it has become all the more difficult for us to imagine the immediate devastation of the bombing or the everyday lives of those who lived through the subsequent decades, simply by looking at the present-day landscape. During Tōmatsu’s time, when he himself was a war survivor who had personally experienced Japan’s defeat and occupation in his youth, many survivors were still alive. Furthermore, as suggested by his photographs from the 1960s, such as those capturing the bomb-damaged sacred statues of the former Urakami Cathedral, visible traces of the atomic bombing may have been more readily apparent in the everyday landscape of Nagasaki back then than they are today. In this respect, engaging in reflexive photographic practice in present-day Nagasaki, over 70 years after the bombing, has made us keenly aware that we are entering a post-experiential era, in which the direct testimonies of survivors are increasingly beyond our reach.

Therefore, what was especially significant for us was our connection with Mr. Yamaguchi, who has lived in Nagasaki as a “companion,” a role often overlooked in existing studies that tend to frame the

discussion strictly within the binary of “experiencer” and “non-experiencer.” This connection also became a key to retracing the footsteps of Tōmatsu, who himself was a “companion” in his time. In particular, when reflecting on the process through which we gradually came to learn about the many encounters and farewells Mr. Yamaguchi experienced with each survivor, a passage from the afterword of *Nagasaki <11:02> August 9, 1945* (1995), where Tōmatsu conveyed the lives of Nagasaki survivors, such as Sumako Fukuda (1922–1974) and Senji Yamaguchi (1930–2013), came back to our minds:

These survivors featured in this photo collection are limited to the small number of individuals I was able to meet. They do not represent the atomic bomb survivors of Nagasaki as a whole; rather, they are individual beings facing their own irreplaceable lives. (Tōmatsu 1995)

In other words, although Tomatsu was a photographer and Mr. Yamaguchi a narrator of atomic bomb experiences, and thus their positions differed, we sensed, through their input, a fragment of history gradually emerging from the experiences of each individual who lived together in Nagasaki during the same era. This is especially significant because, as mentioned earlier, what struck us most vividly during our first photographic visit to the Peace Park was the internal struggle with the reality of the atomic bombing and the life that followed, not as mere “numbers” of victims but as irreducible, individual existences.

In the same sense that we hesitated to photograph the deep darkness of the tunnel factory where many people perished in the atomic bombing, we gradually came to recognize the profound “silence” embedded in Nagasaki’s various bomb-related landscapes—silences surrounding what the deceased and the wounded could not speak of, found difficult to express, or were unable to articulate. In particular, compared with video, which more easily captures the “polyphony” of voices and scenes through continuous recording, photography, which freezes a single moment in the “now,” naturally directs the photographer’s attention toward the individual subject before them. From this perspective, the “silence” present in the landscapes before us was not only about what was visible but also about the many unseen and unspoken matters that might prompt the photographer to a deep introspection. These bomb-related landscapes contain such layered histories and remind us of the countless “unknowable” aspects that remain hidden. As such, we continue to feel compelled to keep photographing in Nagasaki. Reflecting on what we encountered and understood in Nagasaki through these reflexive photographic practices, the importance of concretizing the thoughts of postwar individuals through photography in practice became apparent.

As examined in detail in Section 2, research on the passing-on of war experiences and memories, particularly regarding the post-experiential era, has increasingly focused on how non-experiencers may attain a sense of participation by sharing the often-harrowing traumatic memories of experiencers. While we pay due respect to and draw on these substantial studies, we wish to emphasize the significance of reflexive photographic practice. Through this practice, as we gradually learn about the contradictions, struggles, and everyday conflicts faced by individuals living in the same era, expressed by photographers

who earnestly confronted these realities in the field, we come to viscerally sense that the present we live in is a continuation of the various pasts captured in the photographs. In other words, the potential for the “passing-on of memory” through photography in practice may lie in the dynamic continuity by which we, living in the present, receive and carry forward the expressions of photographers, often overlooked in prior studies, who, as “companions” and “common people,” supported survivors and bore witness to their inner struggles. Tōmatsu, who lived in Nagasaki, looked toward the “future” in which people would one day view his photographs. Regarding the significance of continuing to photograph atomic bomb survivors on the cusp of the new era, the 21st century, Tōmatsu expressed the following:

I do not raise slogans such as “No to the atomic bomb” or “Abolish nuclear weapons,” but I hope that by continuing to photograph the ordinary and extraordinary lives of atomic bomb survivors, I might fulfill that role. If even just a single photograph lingers in someone’s heart and becomes a catalyst for reflection on the atomic bomb issue... As we approach the 21st century, I feel personally compelled to consider what kind of message I can leave through my photography. (“Entrusting Hope to the Wisdom of the 21st Century: Photographer Shōmei Tōmatsu [Part 2],” *Nagasaki Shimbun*, July 31, 1999)

Photographs may be reduced to mere expressions that capture isolated moments of the past, or they may be interpreted from the perspective of present-day viewers in ways that become detached from the social and historical contexts in which the photographer lived. However, photographs are constantly brought into being through the photographer’s ongoing expression within everyday life. As we engage with these expressions, we can recognize the multilayered temporality extending from past to present, which prompts us to reflect on what we can do in response to the realities shaped by this history. Thus, our study has shown that photography in practice is fundamentally open to the future.

In unraveling the weight of the photographic expression Tōmatsu entrusted to the future we live in, we cannot overlook his work and presence in Okinawa, where, as in Nagasaki, he continued to document until his later years. In this regard, we have also made multiple visits to Okinawa and engaged in reflexive photographic practices, particularly in Naha and Koza. As we noted in a previous publication (Yoshinari 2024a), coming from a background where war and military bases had not been close realities, we were struck upon first encountering Okinawa by the profound question: “When does the ‘postwar’ period begin?” This question connects deeply with the shock and introspection that Tōmatsu articulated nearly half a century ago during Okinawa’s reversion movement, when he wrote, “It is not that there are bases in Okinawa, but that Okinawa exists within the bases” (Tōmatsu 1969). Through these reflexive photographic endeavors in Okinawa, which he pursued alongside Nagasaki throughout his life, we hope to continue exploring and articulating what we have come to understand. A more detailed discussion will be reserved for another paper.

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Masanori Yamaguchi of the Shiroyama Elementary School A-bombed School Building Peace Outreach Council, who has always offered invaluable support throughout our photography in practice in Nagasaki and who has kindly given us permission to include his name in this paper.

Notes

- 1) To be more specific, Tōmatsu described “city walking” (*machi-aruki*) as follows: “When I started taking photographs, I would just grab my camera and wander around the city, without any particular purpose. I’d just head out aimlessly, press the shutter when something caught my eye, and then keep on wandering. I didn’t even decide in advance which street to walk down.” (Tōmatsu & Imafuku 2009: 7)
- 2) Sociologist Ueno Chizuko, in discussing the subjects and approaches of recent war studies, has identified the following issues: (1) the question of whether we are referring to “that war” or to ongoing wars, given “postwar peace” can only be situated in a local Japanese context; (2) the issue of whether it is “modern war or postmodern war” in relation to the time period of war in question; (3) the distinction between “experience” and “memory,” in light of the “mnemological turn” in historical studies; (4) the question of whether only military power should be defined as “violence,” and thus whether we are dealing with “peacetime” or a “state of emergency”; and (5) the possibility of comparative war studies, framed by the tension between “privileging and de-privileging war” as a subject of inquiry (Ueno 2022).
- 3) “It is precisely in the continuous re-examination of the Battle of Okinawa from one’s own standpoint that there is the possibility of ‘passing on’ memory through a collaborative effort between survivors and the next generation. To ‘inherit’ memory means to ‘relearn’ it. I am convinced that it is through the accumulation of such difficult and steady work that non-experiencers of the postwar generation can come to see the Battle of Okinawa and ‘group suicides’ as their own matters and to extend their own sense of ‘participation’.” (Yakabi 2009: 54)
- 4) Regarding the question of how non-experiencers may acquire a sense of participation in relation to atomic bomb experiences, sociologist Naono, while keeping in mind the existence of “listeners who listen to the pain of survivors” at the starting point of the atomic bombing movement, emphasizes the importance of the “companions (*Dōhan-sha*),” who have continued to create the memory of the atomic bombing experience together with survivors while linking them to ideals of nuclear abolition and anti-war sentiments (Naono 2020). Referring to this point with due respect, the “companions (*Bansō-sha*)” that we propose in this paper as people who bridge the gap between experiencers and non-experiencers take a slightly different position from the “companions” Naono refers to. For example, Tomatsu, rather than being “anti-atomic bomb” ideologically, continued to take photographs as one of the “common people” who had lived through the war and postwar eras, sharing the pain and joy of each atomic bombing survivor, gradually closing the distance between

them. Although the details are reserved for a separate paper, Tōmatsu's stance can be seen from the following words he said in his later years when recalling his encounter with the survivor Yamaguchi Senji: "Mr. Yamaguchi and I were both born in 1930. Mobilized for labor, he worked in Nagasaki and I worked in Nagoya. Had our positions been switched, I would have been the atomic bomb survivor." (Tōmatsu Shōmei, "Photographing Nagasaki with a Blink," *Nagasaki Shimbun*, July 30, 2009)

- 5) Recent research trends include the special issue "Eizō ākaibuzu wo riyō shita shitsuteki chōsa no tankyū [Exploring Qualitative Research Using Visual Archives]" in *Japanese Sociological Review* (2015); the special issue "Towards a New Age of Anthropology with Visual Practice" in *Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology* (2015); and the special issue "The Present and Future of Visual Oral History" in *Japan oral history review* (2020).
- 6) Gotō proposes the concept of "reflexive relation-image," which incorporates the actions of the cameraman in addition to Gilles Deleuze's concept of the "image-relation," which examines the dynamics between the subject and the camera (Gotō 2017: 97).
- 7) "The history of the common people, when seen from the perspective of the individual, is a history of frustration, for one's personal aspirations are never fully realized. In this sense, it is a history of frustration, and indeed, a history of shadows (*yū*). Yet, a project once hoped for by the dead but left unfulfilled may be passed down through generations and eventually brought to completion. In such a case, history, once a latent possibility, emerges into full view through the long passage of time." (Tsurumi 1998: 112)
- 8) According to Norinaga, "poignancy" (*aware*) encompasses not only emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure, or a sense of pathos, but more broadly refers to "a deep emotional sensitivity of the heart." This capacity to feel deeply arises precisely because people possess a shared understanding of the "social and cultural conventions" that frame a given situation (Yama 2017: 57). Accordingly, in his interpretation of "knowing empathy toward things," Yama emphasizes that "cognition and emotion are inseparable" (Yama 2017: 57).
- 9) Specifically, from the 1960s through the 1990s, Tōmatsu focused on the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, publishing three major photo collections: *[11:02] NAGASAKI* (1966), *Fūka suru toki [Weathering Time]* (1981), and *Nagasaki [11:02] August 9, 1945* (1995). Each of these centers on photographs that capture both atomic bomb relics and the lives of individual *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors), who continued to live on despite the hardships they faced after the bombing. Additionally, after relocating to Nagasaki in 1998 and before spending his final years in Okinawa, Tōmatsu released two more collections: *Artists with Ties to Nagasaki: Tōmatsu Shomei "Nagasaki Mandala"* (2000) and *Shomei Tomatsu: hues and textures of Nagasaki* (2009). These later works are notable for weaving together decades of photographs of survivors and atomic bomb relics, some taken long before, others more recent, with images of Nagasaki's townscape, seen through the lens of his everyday life there.
- 10) As exemplified in the well-known "Natori-Tōmatsu Debate" (1960) with editor and photographer

Yōnosuke Natori, Tōmatsu set himself apart from conventional “photojournalism” (assembled pictures), which had been closely tied to wartime propaganda and emphasized constructing social events into linear narratives. Tōmatsu proposed a distinctive method known as “group-photographs” (*gun-shashin*) as a way to represent postwar society. As clarified in previous research (Yoshinari & Miyoshi, 2021), this approach allowed Tōmatsu to continuously reconfigure the arrangement of his photographs over time, enabling him to convey the complexity of postwar society as understood through the lens of his own wartime experiences.

- 11) For instance, Tōmatsu, reflecting on the time when he first began photographing Nagasaki, remarked, “There are several perspectives from which atomic bomb survivors make their appeals. For example, they raise four main points: anxiety about their health; demands for compensation for the damages they have suffered; calls for peace; and appeals for guarantees that such an event will never be repeated. Peace activists approach survivors’ relief efforts from the abstract concept of ‘peace.’ In contrast, as a photographer, I begin by making contact, descending to the very bottom, so to speak, and then gathering and stitching together those four elements.” (“I Saw ‘Nagasaki’—The Science Behind the Atomic Bomb and the Camera Are Directly Linked: Interview with Tōmatsu Shōmei, Author of the Photo Collection *11:02 NAGASAKI*,” *Nihon Dokusho Shimibun*, September 5, 1966)
- 12) In Nagasaki, the hypocenter, the former Shiroyama National School building, the former belfry of Urakami Cathedral, the gatepost of the former Nagasaki Medical College, and the second torii gate of Sannō Shrine have been designated as nationally designated historic site, the “Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Historic Ruins,” which convey the damage caused by the atomic bomb to the present day.
- 13) A part of the bombed school building of the former Shiroyama National School, which was located on a hill about 500 meters from the hypocenter, has been preserved and opened in 1999. While mourning the approximately 1,400 people, including students and teachers who died in the atomic bombing, the museum conveys the scars caused by the bombing and the desire for peace to both domestic and overseas visitors.
- 14) As mentioned in the previous report, we have been working with practitioners in the field who are working hard in Nagasaki, Okinawa, Fukushima, Minamata, and other places to pass on memories in the “post-experiential era” to question the meaning of war and postwar experiences and to draw a vision for the future through exchanges with them. We have launched and are continuing to work on the “Global Dialog to Pray for the Relaying of Memories (Memory Relay Lab),” an Impact Open Project of the Center for Collaborative Future Creation in the Graduate School of Human Sciences (<https://relay-memories.hus.osaka-u.ac.jp/>). This booklet summarizes the symposium “Global Dialog to Pray for the Relaying of Memories,” which was held online in October 2023 and welcomed practitioners from the Shiroyama Elementary School Peace Memorial Hall, including Mr. Yamaguchi, who is also participating in the Memory Relay Lab (<https://hdl.handle.net/11094/94661>).
- 15) At the time of the atomic bombing, this tree was planted by Kayoko Hayashi’s mother, Tsue

Hayashi, who worked as a member of the Student Patriotic Labor Service Corps (*Gakuto hōkokutai*) in the Mitsubishi Arms Factory office located at Shiroyama National School.

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