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Photographers Confronted with the Turbulence Around 1970: Reflections on documents since the Meiji period through “A Century of Japanese Photography”

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Abstract

Postwar Japan reached an apotheosis of rapid economic growth around 1970, which led to numerous contradictions such as student movements, environmental pollution, and anti-security treaty struggles. In the year 1968, which marked the 100th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese Government held large-scale celebrations of its accomplishments. In the same year, the Japan Professional Photographers Society (JPS) held a photo exhibition titled “A Century of Japanese Photography” that presented the history of Japanese photographic expression from the end of the Edo period to the country’s defeat in World War II. The main organizers of the exhibition were postwar photographers including Shōmei Tōmatsu, Koji Taki, and Masatoshi Naito, who emphasized the importance of the enormous number of anonymous images represented by the documents of the pioneering of Hokkaido in the early Meiji era. The organizers also raised questions about the responsibilities of the wartime photographers who pushed pro-war propaganda in World War II.

Further, a review of prior research suggested that this exhibition was critical to the end of “Modern Photography” in Japan because it denied the use of photography as a means of self-expression. However, this interpretation has become detached from the organizers’ purpose at the time—Tōmatsu and others were attempting to learn lessons from their forerunners and express the impacts of Modern Japanese history.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe what each of the photographers who were capturing turbulent times attempted to express through “A Century of Japanese Photography” based on our original methodology of “photography in practice” (*shashin-jissen*).

In the late 1960s, Japan enjoyed a striking level of prosperity and the government applauded the Meiji period, which had carried the country to its position as the pre-eminent economic power in Asia. However, this historical perspective from above disregarded the

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innumerable casualties of the country's past, which included repeated wars and severe suppressions. In addition, the Vietnam War reminded people that the Empire of Japan had colonized its neighboring countries until the end of the Fifteen Years' War.

Against this social background, the analysis of exhibition catalogues and other materials like newspapers and magazine articles published at the time reveals that the photographers were deeply moved by the brutal way in which common people were forced to live and die on the road to nationhood. Simultaneously, this raised a serious question regarding whether earlier photographers had earnestly captured this buried history. However, traditional photo-realism, which was used to capture postwar social conditions, was no longer popular due to the achievement of a thriving domestic economy. Meanwhile, the government intensified its efforts to crack down on freedom of expression; the riot police suppressed protests and confiscated films such as in Sanriduka, Yasuda Auditorium, and Shinjuku. In conclusion, photographers around 1970 sought ways to document the ongoing movements and reflected on the absence of photographers' autonomy before and during the war.

Key words: 1968; A Century of Japanese Photography; Documents; Shadow of Modern Japan

1. Introduction

1.1. Locating the Issue

Around 1970, when Japan saw the intense effects of the student movement, pollution problems, and the amendment of the Japan-US Security Treaty, Japan achieved rapid economic growth and reached the peak of its prosperity. The Vietnam War was ravaging under the East-West Cold War in the second half of the 1960s, with the US bombing northern Vietnam and aggravating the conflict. However, Japan hosted the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 and the Osaka World Expo in 1970, making it an economic powerhouse in name and reality. Furthermore, 1968, the year in which the aftereffects of the student movement spread worldwide, marked the 100th anniversary of the 1867 Meiji Restoration in Japan. The Japanese government conducted a year-long celebration of the Meiji Centennial and the development of Japan as a modern nation.

Similarly, an important event in the history of photography that year was the exhibition “A Century of Japanese Photography: A Historical Exhibition of Photographic Expression by the Japanese” (hereafter “A Century of Japanese Photography”) held at the Seibu Department Store by the Japan Professional Photographers Society. The exhibition was the first to systematize the history of photographers of approximately 100 years who had been active in Japan. Hiroshi Hamaya (1915–1999), who reported on the climate and folk customs of northern Japan before the war, Shōmei Tōmatsu (1930–2012), Koji Taki (1928–2011), Masatoshi Naito (1938–), Takuma Nakahira (1938–2015), and others played the central role in preparation for this exhibition. They focused on the history from the end of the Edo period when photography first arrived to Japan to the end of the World War II, with the collection and compilation of photographs starting in 1966. The project was groundbreaking at the time as it was led by Tōmatsu and other photographers of the postwar generation and featured 1,640 photographs out of the 35,000 collected and copied from mainland Japan.

As Chapter 2 discusses, the history and theories of photography concerning “A Century of Japanese Photography” emphasize that the history of photographic expression has been shaped by numerous “anonymous” photographs discovered through the collection for the exhibition. This is similar to how the “discovery” of the photographs that clearly captured the pioneering scenes of Hokkaido in the early Meiji period had a strong impact on the photographers of the time. Therefore, this exhibition holds significance in the history of photography as an event that marked the collapse of the concept of “modern photography,” which had until then been characterized by “great artists, unshakeable sense of art, and great works” (Toda 2012). The reaction against conventional auteurism remains symbolic in the history of postwar photography as a radical movement through the contemporaneous magazine “Provoke” (1968–1970) published by Nakahira, Taki, and others, who were inspired by the exhibition and developed new methods of expression, such as rough, blurred, and bokeh photography. In other words, some have argued that the exhibition “A Century of Japanese Photography” encouraged the decline of realistic photography that had sharply captured social reality, as represented by the work of Ken Domon,

which had been mainstream until that point and promoted a shift toward the diversification of photographic expression from the 1970s, marked by the subsequent flourishing of advertising and contemporary photography that emphasized a private look toward everyday life.

However, the significance of this exhibition has been discussed thus far from the generally formulaic perspective of skepticism toward the expressive consciousness of the photographers themselves and the affirmation of anonymous “documents.” Thus, research has overlooked the issues the photographers of the time put into this exhibition against the backdrop of the historical conditions around the 1970s, in contrast with economic prosperity. Furthermore, the reflections on modern Japanese history captured in “A Century of Japanese Photography” certainly had a widespread effect on professional photographers and the amateurs of the same period. The exhibition’s impact on people was opening up the topic of the violence of photography and the unbalanced relationship between photographer and subject in the face of the strains of high growth becoming apparent in various parts of the islands, including Sanrizuka, Minamata, Okinawa, and Hokkaido, which was celebrating the “Kaido Centennial.” This is in addition to the search for a way to document their times (Suzuki 2005: 33–35).

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to reflect on the shifts in photographic expression throughout the 100-year history from the end of the Edo period to that of the World War II to clarify the intentions of the photographers active around 1970 for “A Century of Japanese Photography” using the original methodology of “photography in practice” proposed by the authors¹⁾. “Photography in practice” is a methodology for systematically redefining the expression of the photographers’ intentions, which are constantly deepened beyond the immediate reality through photographing. In particular, the authors used “photography in practice” and focused on the postwar works of Shōmei Tōmatsu to clarify the reality of the postwar society that he continued to express by reconstructing various media of expression along the trajectory of his photographic activities, such as photo collections, magazines, and newspaper articles, while considering the social conditions of the time (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). In other words, the analysis from this “photography in practice” approach revealed that Tōmatsu had vivid experiences of war and occupation in his youth, and he continued to photograph the lives of people struggling in the face of rapid social change after the war. Specifically, during his first visit to Nagasaki in the 1960s, Tōmatsu was shocked to learn of the harsh realities of life the survivors of the atomic bomb faced even after the war. He continued photographing the area over the next 30 years and recaptured each and every “survivor” as “ordinary people” (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021). In the late 1960s, he first visited Okinawa before its return to the mainland, where he was shocked to witness the unstable life under the rule of the US military. Additionally, he traced the history of the asymmetrical relationship between Okinawa and the mainland, from a sense of his responsibility as a person from the mainland, and opened it up as an issue for “us” (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2022c).

Thus, Tōmatsu was driven to continue photographing the postwar society for half a century due to the complex conflict of “Americanization,” which rapidly progressed since the defeat in the war,

especially with Japan and the US toying with peoples' lives since the 1960s onward. Simultaneously, he ruminated on his original experience of the deaths of countless people during the Fifteen Years' War (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2022a). As mentioned above, the shock he felt in Okinawa at the end of the 1960s, around the same time that the "A Century of Japanese Photography" exhibition was held, led him to continue focusing on the region until the end of his life. Therefore, it has been suggested that Tōmatsu's photographic activities, including the exhibition, were backed by his self-questioning about how photographic records ought to be conducted around 1970, as he set out to "photograph for the subject, visiting Okinawa for Okinawa" (Kaneko 2013a: 14–15). Hence, clarifying the importance of the exhibition held around 1970 by conducting "photography in practice" is critical to illustrate how Tōmatsu continued to deal with the changes in postwar society after its rapid economic growth.

Chapter 2 closely examines previous research and issues related to "A Century of Japanese Photography" and takes up the trend of photographic expression around the 1970s. Chapter 3 discusses the historical circumstances when this exhibition was held, especially when modernization since the Meiji Restoration was hailed based on the consciousness of Japan as an economic superpower, while sharply questioning the past colonization of Japan as an "empire" and its continuity to the present. Furthermore, considering the different assessments of the history of Japan as a modern nation at the time, Chapter 4 embodies the sentiments of the photographers from the history of "A Century of Japanese Photography" and clarifies how they faced the reality of around 1970 through their reflection on the history. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses how the history of "A Century of Japanese Photography," which clearly depicts the activities of the "anonymous" people who lived under the Japanese Empire, corresponds fundamentally to the shaky reality of the 1970s. This was the period when Japan achieved economic prosperity but was shaken regardless and increased the apprehensions of the people of the time in connection to the state, once again driving people's lives toward war.

2. Previous Research and Issues Related to "A Century of Japanese Photography" Based on the Shifts in Photographic Expression

2.1. Trends of Photographic Expression Around the 1970s

The next section examines the previous research and the issues surrounding the exhibition "A Century of Japanese Photography." However, this section provides an overview of the trends in photographic expression from the late 1960s to the early 1970s as a backdrop for the exhibition. As the previous paper summarized (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021), first, there were two major trends—"photo-realism" proposed by photographer Ken Domon in the early 1950s and "photojournalism (assembled pictures)" promoted by editor-photographer Yōnosuke Natori from before the war. Subsequently, a new generation of photographers emerged in the 1960s, the "image school," which emphasized the visual effects of photography, as symbolized by the VIVO group of photographers that comprised Shōmei Tōmatsu, Ikko Nakahara, Eikoh Hosoe, and others. Nevertheless, from the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s, when "A Century of Japanese Photography" was held, it became difficult for

the specific “principles” and “styles” of photographic expression to emerge in light of the diversification of social values that accompanied economic growth after the Tokyo Olympics (Iizawa 1999: 87). For instance, photography historian Kotaro Iizawa cites the increase in advertising photography, the enormous influence of Vietnam War documentation on society, and the growing interest in travel experiences and folklore as characteristics of the diversification of photographic expression since the late 1960s (Op. cit.: 87–96).

Notably, as the student movement that flourished during this period symbolized, radical challenges to the postwar system were made in several political, economic, and cultural fields, “raising radical issues” in the field of photography (Op. cit.: 89). In other words, it involved questioning the traditional connection between the photographer as an “individual” and the “world” while actively raising the idea of “a group of fragmented images that thoroughly disrupted the aesthetics and grammar of conventional photography” characterized by techniques of expression such as rough, blurred, and bokeh photography (Op. cit.: 90). As mentioned above, this converged with the activities of *Provoke* magazine, which was published in the late 1960s, led by photographers Takuma Nakahira and Koji Taki.

According to Iizawa, the attitudes of the photographers of “*Provoke*” were contrasted by the rise of contemporary photography. Younger Japanese photographers shared the same characteristics as those observed in the exhibition “*Contemporary Photographers: Towards a Social Landscape*” held in the US in 1966, which involved a private look through candid photography of everyday scenes and events (Op. cit.: 91). According to Iizawa, similar to the photographers of “*Provoke*,” “contemporary” photographers also had “a sense of anxiety and crisis about established values” while capturing the relationship between the self and others more coolly (Op. cit.: 92). Against this diversification of values around 1970, young photographers showed “life-size sympathy for the rebellion” from the student perspective, especially at the sites of university conflicts (Torihara 2013: 193). That is, due to the skepticism about the “public nature,” there was a general shift in photographic expression from straightforwardly capturing social issues to emphasizing the “private nature” of the “private sphere and the inner life of the individual” (Toda 2012: 78)².

2.2. *Previous Research on “A Century of Japanese Photography” and Issues*

Considering the trends in photographic expression from the 1970s, this section organizes previous research on “*A Century of Japanese Photography*.” As the previous chapter stated, the exhibition covered a period of 100 years—from the end of the Edo period (when photography first arrived in Nagasaki) to the end of the war. Approximately 35,000 photographs were collected and copied during a one-year period (1966–1967) that covered “the whole of Japan”—from Hokkaido in the north to Kagoshima in the south. The exhibition aimed to “reflect on the hundred years of history of photographic expression from the contemporary perspective and project it into the next era” (Watanabe 1968).

A detailed historical development of the exhibition and photographic expression of the time are presented in the previous discussions (Toriumi 2010; Tsuchiya 2009, 2013). However, a brief summary of the shift of photographic expression over the past century is summarized herein, and the pamphlet



Picture 1.

“Scenery of a Village (Present-day Sapporo) Artist Unknown, circa 1871”
(Japan Professional Photographers Society eds. 1971: 26)

from that time summarizes the flow of “A Century of Japanese Photography” up to the end of the “war period and the atomic bomb.”

“First was the light period, which involved the simple wonder of being able to place the shadows of objects by shining the right light on photosensitive materials. This was followed by the first period of proliferation, full of the spirit of documentation, as represented by Kenzo Tamoto, to the heyday of commercial photo studios during the Meiji and Taisho eras, until mass society was finally established, and photojournalism developed in response to its historical demands. Based on the aforementioned, photography entered its second period of historic proliferation, which witnessed the development of schools, such as abstract, surrealism, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, natural realism, and others, that settled at some times and stagnated at others but grew and developed at a steady pace.” (Watanabe eds. 1968).

Considering this flow of “A Century of Japanese Photography,” the important article focusing on the exhibition is that of Toriumi (2010), which discusses the exhibition from the perspective of a history of photography. Toriumi (2010) organized the characteristics of the exhibition from an investigation of the exhibition panels of the time and interviews with Norihiko Matsumoto—a member of the editorial committee. Thus, according to Toriumi, “A Century of Japanese Photography” was particularly influential in the following ways: photographs of the pioneering period of Hokkaido, represented by Kenzo Tamoto (1832–1912) in the early Meiji period (Picture 1, etc.); “fine-art photography,” which had flourished since the late Meiji period, and Nagasaki after the atomic bomb by an Army Press member, Yosuke Yamahata (1917–1966); photographs of national propaganda during the war (Toriumi 2010: 13–15); appeal for the discovery, collection, and preservation of photographs that had remained buried at the time, regardless of whether they were professional or amateur; publication of the photo

collection “History of Japanese Photography 1840–1945” (1971; hereafter “History of Japanese Photography”); conception and compilation by young photographers such as Tōmatsu; effect on making the photographers of the time question what photography entailed (Op. cit.: 15–17).

In addition to these points from Toriumi, essays by the art critic Seiichi Tsuchiya (2009, 2013) based on interviews with leading committee members of the time are valuable. In particular, from Tsuchiya’s discussions, the emphasis on the issue of the photographer’s responsibility regarding war during the Fifteen Years’ War, as an “implicit” theme of the exhibition, cannot be ignored. In other words, what emerged from the exhibition was a “negative history” of prewar photographers using photography as a means of self-expression without “consciously reflecting” on the nature of photography as a record, due to which they were mobilized to fictional war reporting by the state (Tsuchiya 2009: 247–249). Tsuchiya also noted a limitation of the exhibition—it was inadequate in pursuing individual responsibility for the war of “authoritative” photographers who were alive and active before the war³).

Furthermore, in light of this “negative history,” Tsuchiya paid attention to the fact that contrary to the exhibition’s theme of the history of photographic “expression” as the subject, the photographs of the pioneering of Hokkaido by Tamoto and others and those of Nagasaki after the atomic bomb taken by Yamahata, which were recorded beyond the photographers’ “expressive intentions,” were highly appreciated at the time. In other words, Taki and Nakahira, who went on to publish the *Provoke* magazine, implicitly criticized the modern way of “expression” before the war. Tsuchiya emphasizes the importance of “anonymous” photographs left as documents of history beyond the intentions of their photographers, such as Tamoto and Yamahata, to “sever the simple conventional understanding that photography = expression” in the history of photography (Op. cit.: 246–247).

Thus, “A Century of Japanese Photography” and its summary, “History of Japanese Photography,” were positioned as decisive turning points in the history of photography. This encouraged new trends in photographic expressions, such as “rough, blurred, and bokeh,” by photographers around 1970 and “disrupted” the “philosophy of modern photography” represented by realism—the idea that “photography is an accurate record of events and the photographer is a faithful reporter” (Toda 2012: 49). This expanded the photographers in the history of photography beyond just professionals to include “forgotten old photographers,” “unknown photographers,” “business and newspaper photographers of the early and mid-Meiji period,” and “amateur artistic photographers” (Toda 2012: 84; Torihara 2013: 196–197) and led to the discovery of various “subjects” captured in such photographs⁴) (Toda 2012: 84).

Therefore, a scrutiny of the previous research centered on the history of photography and photographic theory revealed that discussions around “A Century of Japanese Photography” generally focused on how photographers involved in the compilation of the exhibition viewed the traditional state of photographic expression as “self-expression” in a negative light while valuing the gravity of anonymous photographic “documents.” The history that emerges from these “anonymous” documents exposes the immaturity of photographers’ “sense of modern subjectivity” and leads to the fictional nature of photographers’ external propaganda during the war. Existing research (e.g., Kohara 2013; Takashima 2010; Toda 2012) has focused on the evaluation of new photographic expressions of the

1970s, such as Nakahira and Taki's "Provoke," which was born out of this reaction.

However, from the perspective of the authors' original research on "photography in practice" mentioned in the previous chapter, we would like to point out that in the case of such previous studies, the photographers involved in the exhibition inherited the will of the previous photographers (Tōmatsu et al. 1968: 223–224). Nevertheless, the discussion deviated from that of the time, which was to convey the weight of the history that emerged around these anonymous photographs to the postwar society around 1970. For example, Kugo (2022) argues that the idea inherited from the wartime to the postwar generation of photographers is the "photographer's subject based on humanism," as seen in the "photo-realism" advocated by the former. It is important because it captures the continuity between the two generations while emphasizing the intergenerational conflict over war responsibility (Kugo 2022). Meanwhile, we cannot overlook the importance of the fact that when the exhibition was held around 1970, the strains of rapid economic growth at its peak erupted in many areas; each photographer sought ways to deal with the complexities of the period. In other words, to comprehend the significance of the impact of "A Century of Japanese Photography" on these photographers and the realities of their respective positions as having faced those troubled times and established themselves "independently" through their reflection, it is necessary to understand the reality of the "prosperity" in postwar Japan, which had become an economic superpower.

Previous research of this time raised a question about the positive perception of "A Century of Japanese Photography" in photography criticism and research regarding the linking together of the "modernization of photography" after the introduction of photographic technology in the late Edo and Meiji periods and the simultaneous "modernization of Japan." For example, Tsuchiya questioned the lack of discussion regarding the issue of photography's "collusion" with the development of Hokkaido in the Meiji period, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4⁵) (Kuraishi et al. 2014: 17). Nonetheless, when considering the previous studies, it is necessary to reexamine whether the photographers of the time originally had a positive view of "A Century of Japanese Photography" in connection with the development of modern Japan⁶). Therefore, this study aimed to clarify the contents of their appeal to people from the history of photographic expression over the past century, from the end of the Edo period to the end of the World War II, by depicting the sentiments of the photographers of the time who faced the unsteady conditions around 1970, through the "photography in practice" framework that we have proposed as an original methodology, and by drawing out what was included in the "A Century of Japanese Photography" exhibition.

3. Imperial-Colonial Experience and Scars Emerging in the Postwar Society around 1970

3.1. Celebration of Modernization and Forgetting the War in the "Meiji Centennial Festival"

The next chapter will cover how photographers around 1970 saw the history of the "A Century of Japanese Photography" exhibition. In this chapter, we will first note, as the circumstances of the time, that the history of modernization since the Meiji Restoration was being reevaluated on a national scale

in postwar Japan around 1970, after achieving high economic growth. For example, historian Masanao Kano noted that as Ryotaro Shiba's "Clouds above the Hill" (1968–72), which depicted Japan's narrow victory in the Russo-Japanese War alongside Western powers, was widely read at that time, with the rise of economic power after the 1960s, a historical view emerged that highly valued the Meiji era as the source of postwar prosperity, denying the "fanaticism" of the prewar Showa era. It was also a "historical view emphasizing the differences from China and Korea" by "extolling the vitality of the Japanese people bringing about change" after the Meiji period (Kano 2008: 54–55).

Particularly noteworthy in the context of "the perspective to emphasize the 'vitality' of the Meiji era that emerged around 1970," with the peak of the rapid growth, was the Meiji Centennial Celebration that the government held at the Nippon Budokan in October 1968. At the time, several people had misgivings about the government-created view of history presented amid this economic prosperity. This "Meiji Centennial Celebration" was undertaken as a national project to honor the glorious Meiji era, which was the solid foundation that engendered rapid reconstruction and prosperity after the defeat of the war, against the backdrop of the government's sense of crisis over the fading patriotic spirit common to the younger generation of the time (Ishii 2018: 38–39). Evidently, from the commemoration ceremony mentioned above, glorifying the history of Japan as a nation-state after the Meiji Restoration as a success story of modernization risked overshadowing the sacrifices of the people who had been forced to live in harsh conditions for almost a century in the shadow of that history. For example, in his note on the Meiji Centennial Celebration, historian Daikichi Irokawa strongly opposed the celebration of the success of the Meiji Restoration by the government and journalists of the time, "marking the development in Japanese modernization rarely seen in the world" and highlighting the prosperity of Japan then as "the largest and only successful industrialized country in Asia" (Irokawa 1968: 82). In other words, looking back to the time before the war, even excluding the Sino-Japanese, Russo-Japanese, and Pacific wars, "Japan had 11 foreign military engagements," and its death toll reached approximately "five million." Irokawa emphasized that during "the 100 years of the Meiji era," "the duration when Japan was not at war was smaller," and the "development of industrialization in Japan" was "promoted ruthlessly at the expense of numerous Asians, including Japanese people." Thus, we can see a sense of crisis in Irokawa that the Meiji Centennial Celebration of 1968 would blow away history and color the recollection of the Meiji era as a festive incident (Op. cit.: 83).

Furthermore, in retrospect, the preparation for the Meiji Centennial Celebration stretched from 1966 to 1968, overlapping with the process of the government's clarification of its support for the Vietnam War, which had divided national opinion, and played a role in the Eisaku Sato cabinet, which was promoting economic expansion into Southeast Asia under the umbrella of the US, gathering public support⁷⁾ (Ishii et al. 2018: 221). In other words, the Meiji Centennial Celebration of 1968 was intended to raise patriotic energy to form a foothold for postwar Japan to expand once again into Asia as an economic power in anticipation of the revision of the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1970. In the 1970s, as the influence of Japan rose in the international community, there was an unprecedented boom in Japanese theory (Oguma 1995: 360). This was supported by a narcissistic consciousness as an economic

superpower: whether praising the Japanese for their “diligence, unity, nature, and simplicity” or criticizing them for their “lack of publicness and closed-mindedness,” both were rooted in the “mono-ethnic myth” that had existed in the 1960s, which appealed to the ancient homogeneity of the Japanese people (Op. cit.: 357–361).

However, while there were shifts in the postwar consciousness and the national identity in the 1960s and 70s—as symbolized by the activities of “*Beheiren*” (The Citizen’s League for Peace in Vietnam!), for instance—in the latter part of the high-growth period, there was increased awareness of Japan’s complicity through the US in the Vietnam war, which was becoming a quagmire, and there were growing concerns to face Japan’s past aggression and violence in the Asia-Pacific war (Yoshida 2005: 144–145). In other words, in the context of the perception of wars in Japan around 1970, while there was an attempt to reimagine the war as an act to liberate Asia, which was supported by the confidence generated by economic growth, this resulted in the reexamination of the “imperial-colonial” experience embedded in the minds of the Japanese people. In particular, historian Ryuichi Narita noted that from the mid-1960s to the 70s, there was a shift from the era of “experiences” of war, which involved people recounting their experiences to others who had also participated in the war, to “testimonies” of war, where the emphasis was on those who had not experienced war (Narita 2020: 166). Against this background, especially during this period, discussions about “air-raids, the home front, the takeover of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, and forced internment” began, and new testimonies about “repatriation” and “internment” appeared (Op. cit.: 167), sharply questioning the conditions of the “Japan” of the present, which was “concealing” events that had taken place during the Japanese Empire (Op. cit.: 242).

3.2. *Flipside of High Economic Growth and the “We” Abandoned by the State*

However, one cannot overlook that the “Imperial-Colonial” experience under scrutiny around 1970 was a problem of the outer territories Japan lost in the war and an “internal” issue that continued after the war ended. Although we will address Hokkaido in further detail later, to discuss it here, in addition to its settlement during the Meiji era, it was inseparably linked to the history of the new “colonization” caused due to the collapse of the Japanese Empire, following the defeat of Japan.

Put differently, Japan lost the Sakhalin and Kuril Islands after its defeat in 1945 and established Hokkaido as a new settlement for its immigrants due to the food shortage that already occurred before the war ended and the migration of people mainly from the outer territories (Kasai 2017: 18). Subsequently, in the 1950s, the creation of the Kosen Pilot Farm aimed at large-scale dairy management represented the promotion of government-led development with a substantial national budget (Op. cit.: 19), and settlers were placed from all over Japan, including those for migrants and demobilized veterans (Bansho 2014: 192). Nevertheless, due to the outbreak of the dairy cattle epidemic and the large amounts of debts incurred for the settlements, in the 1960s, several farmers abandoned the ideal of mechanized modern dairy farming (Op. cit.: 191–192).

For example, sociologist Kenichi Bansho noted that the film “*Kazoku*” (1970) directed by Yoji Yamada, which depicted a family’s journey from Nagasaki, where they were engaged in coal mining

labor, to Hokkaido, where they sought a new life during the period of high growth, highlighted the realities of “prosperity” around the 1970s from the perspective of those who were left out of the share of the material goods of the rapid economic growth. In other words, the Hokkaido to which they emigrated in “Kazoku” was a land rediscovered as an object of development in postwar Japan. It implied the appearance of people as “immigrants” who could not live comfortably in their homeland, given the “unequal benefits of high economic growth” (Op. cit.: 192).

Therefore, when considering this period, we cannot overlook that based on their experiences during and after the war, people questioned whether the state, which had brought economic prosperity, could protect their lives. For example, Hiroataka Kasai, a scholar of the history of thought, argued that Yasuji Hanamori, the editor of “Kurashi no Techo”, which was first published after the defeat of the war, contemporaneously wrote about Hokkaido, casting a fundamental skepticism on the legitimacy of the nation, which was usually considered self-evident. According to Kasai, in an essay on Hokkaido written in the 1960s, Hanamori spoke of the current situation of the “pioneer spirit” flourishing in the “efforts of unknown people” who had carved out the place before the war against the background of Hokkaido being cut off by the central government in the early Meiji period and lost through central government-led development after the war⁸⁾ (Kasai 2018a: 21). Notably, underlying this assertion was Hanamori’s bitter experience of the past when the government was useless in the face of disorder during the war and hunger caused due to the defeat. Thus, he sought to realize democratic politics in accordance with the concreteness of daily life, such as food, clothing, and shelter (Op. cit.: 24–27).

Therefore, Hanamori was already questioning the “we” who were abandoned in the face of the political and economic system of the 1960s and 1970s, in which attaining “prosperity” through high economic growth led to the loss of social imagination, political conservatism, and widespread apathy among the people (Op. cit.: 27–28). At that time, they were acutely aware of the “homogeneity” of the wartime period, when the state sent people to death with “one and a half sen (*issengorin*)” or the postage charge of sending draft papers, which caused fundamental skepticism about the role of the state and a will to rebuild democracy (Kasai 2018b: 56–59).

4. Hearts of the Photographers Included in “A Century of Japanese Photography”

4.1. Target and Methodology of Analysis

Against the backdrop of the social conditions around 1970 described above, this section examines the subject and methods for analyzing the materials used to illustrate the sentiments of the photographers involved in “A Century of Japanese Photography.” First, the focus of analysis from the next section will be the “History of Japanese Photography 1840–1945,” which was published in 1971 as a summary of “A Century of Japanese Photography.” This photobook contains nearly 700 photographs taken from the end of the Edo period and the Meiji era to that of World War II based on the exhibition of 1968, as well as 11 chapters of commentary on the evolution of photographic expression, as summarized in TABLE 1. Therefore, based on the authors’ unique methodology of “photography in practice”, as described in

TABLE 1.

Explanatory Items in the “History of Japanese Photography 1840–1945” and Their Authors
(Compiled by the first author from the Japan Professional Photographers Society eds., 1971)

Item	Author
“Preface”	Koji Taki (Photographer)
“Dawn”	Masatoshi Naito (Photographer)
“Bloom”	Masatoshi Naito
“Record of War I”	Shōmei Tōmatsu (Photographer)
“Art Photography”	Shōmei Tōmatsu
“Expansion”	Koji Taki
“Eye of the Camera”	Motoi Tamaki (Critic)
“Advertising and Propaganda”	Koji Taki
“Record of War II”	Koji Taki
“History of the Freedom and Regulation of Photographic Expression”	Yasuhiro Okudaira (Constitutional Scholar)
“Development of Cameras and Photosensitive Materials”	Masatoshi Naito

the introduction, and the History of Japanese photography, this paper focused on analyzing how the photographers of around 1970 perceived the significance of these groups of photographs taken from the end of the Edo and Meiji periods.

Furthermore, the analysis will include magazine and newspaper articles published from the late 1960s to the early 1970s to help grasp the sentiment toward the changing postwar society held by the photographers involved in the exhibition. In particular, the authors focused on the “Japan Professional Photographers Society Bulletin” and “Asahi Camera” (Asahi Shimbunsha). Japan Professional Photographers Society was responsible for organizing “A Century of Japanese Photography”. This is because, first, the former contains transcripts of roundtable discussions between photographers of the prewar and postwar generations on the history of postwar photography, including “A Century of Japanese Photography.” In the latter, through “On Topical Photography (*Wadai no Shashin wo Megutte*),” which featured monthly discussions regarding photographs that were the topic of conversation in various media at the time, Nobuo Ina and Tsutomu Watanabe, who were leading photo critics in postwar photography history, facilitated the discussions with guests from different fields, including photographers, writers, and scholars in each month. Specifically, concerning the latter, their responses at the time can be considered valuable testimonies in shedding light on the challenges faced by photographers of the time, as they experienced “A Century of Japanese Photography,” and when the “History of Japanese Photography” was published. Therefore, the next section and beyond present an attempt to use “photography in practice” to portray a concrete picture of the sentiments of photographers confronted with the unstable social conditions around 1970 based on the history of the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition. Discussions in previous research, such as the history of photography and

photographic theory, have overlooked this aspect.

4.2. *Impact of the History of “A Century of Japanese Photography” on Photographers*

First, notably, “A Century of Japanese Photography” was distinct from the one-note praise of the history of modernization in the Meiji Centennial Celebration held during the same time⁹⁾. For example, Masatoshi Naito—a member of the editorial committee—described the harsh realities of the Hokkaido pioneer photography of the Meiji period, taken actively by Kenzo Tamoto and others, which made the photographers of the time “confront” the scene before their eyes with a sense of tension:

“The development of Hokkaido began in 1869 with the settlement of beggars, vagrants, and surrendered Aizu who fought for the Shogunate and were later defeated in the Boshin War. Subsequently, the Tohoku warriors defeated in the Boshin War settled from 1870–71, and many of them received little protection due to the rebel army and had to continue a life of harsh pioneering on the verge of starvation. Further, from 1874 to 1903, *Tondenhei* or the military settler colonists settled in the area. Starting from 1881–82 to the development of Hokkaido, road construction and coal mining were conducted with forced labor of ruthless prisoners. From around 1897, many railroads were constructed under the labor camp system, where laborers were confined and forced to work like oxen and horses. The development of the glorious Hokkaido was a history of blood-stained lamentations of weak and poor people.” (Naito 1971: 366–367)

In other words, the exhibition focused on the history of lamentation behind the splendor of the pioneering of Hokkaido, which had started with the settlement of samurai families defeated in the Boshin War and was symbolized by the overuse of *Tondenhei* and prisoners, as well the photographers confronting that reality. As summarized in Chapter 2, while previous research on the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition has generally emphasized the “anonymity” of Hokkaido’s pioneering photographs, Naito read the harshness inherent in the construction of the modern state by the Meiji government based on the shock felt by the photographers of the time. Moreover, these “first buds of flowering of the documentary” that prewar photographers subsequently lost sight of by shifting to “escaping from reality” and focusing on “peripheral techniques” were also “the creation of the documentary linked to today” (Watanabe ed. 1968). In other words, this showed that pioneer photography appealed to the importance of capturing the immediate reality around 1970 in history.

When considering these aspects, we cannot overlook the fact that the exhibition inspired students belonging to the All Japan Students Photo Association—an amateur organization at the time—to develop the “Hokkaido 101” campaign, which attempted to express the situation during the 101st year of Hokkaido’s development. For example, the All Japan Student Photo Association bulletin at that time expressed the determination to photograph in Hokkaido, which was celebrating its centennial:

“The photographic works of Tamoto Kenzo, a photographer from the early Meiji period, confront

the state of Hokkaido's pioneering during the harsh situation of the time. [...] When the centennial of Hokkaido's opening to the world is being seen as just a festival and a catchphrase for tourism, we feel skeptical and angry, and we have to consider what we should be doing with photography.” (All Japan Students Photo Association 1968)

Thus, the photographs of the pioneering of Hokkaido were not taken as a part of the distant history of the Meiji era but as an issue of 1970 covered up with the “prosperity” of postwar Japan and perceived vividly by professionals and amateurs alike. This is because such a series of photographs acted as a sharp reminder to the people of the time that “today exists because of the accumulation of things lost” (Fukushima [1974] 2012: 317, 320) in the course of modern Japan. In particular, Tatsuo Fukushima, a photography critic, led the All Japan Students Photo Association and played a crucial role in the formation of the photographers' group “VIVO” with Shōmei Tōmatsu and others around 1960, when the country was rocked by the struggle around the Security Treaty. Fukushima saw the situation of Hokkaido around 1970, which was beyond the history of hardships since its development in the Meiji period:

“And now... Muroran continues to breathe the coal smoke since Japan gambled on iron and coal, with coal mines that have been collapsing and closing one by one; there was Wakkanai, where people who had evacuated but could not move live; there is Norio Nagayama and an elderly father with a large scar on his arm from the cave-in, working in a construction camp on the coast of Okhotsk, hoping for the success of his son whom he sent to Tokyo; there is the teenage girl working in Sapporo with three fathers and twenty-something siblings, who diligently buys groceries for her mother and siblings when she gets paid and sends it on their way, the unimaginable life of her mother on Rebun Island; leaving all this to one side, there is Hokkaido, quickly changing with the rapid economic growth, with the self-defense forces everywhere. What of the people?” (Fukushima 1971: 140–141)

In other words, when the photographers looked back on the history of “A Century of Japanese Photography” from the vast collection of photographs they had gathered, it was shocking to contrast how postwar Japan was standing at the peak of prosperity through rapid growth. The hardships and deaths of countless people on whose backs the construction of the modern nation was conducted since the end of the Edo period and Meiji period continued to be overlooked. In this regard, for example, Nakahira, who was involved in organizing the exhibition, wrote that a friend of his who saw the photographs in the “documents” in the process of being edited said that “Japan's modernity has been built on so many dead bodies, and none of them got honorable deaths.” Moreover, Nakahira (1968: 129) said, “In fact, there is probably no other country in the history of the world where there has been so little or no resistance to power from the side of the citizens or the people.”

However, the shocking impact of these “documents” of modern Japan also challenged the

photographers in terms of the weakness of the gaze of their predecessors toward the people. For example, in a roundtable discussion held immediately after the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition with Hamaya, Tōmatsu, and other members of the editorial committee, photography critic Tomomi Ito touched on the problems that led the photographers to the Fifteen Years’ War. He pointed out that the exhibition “is a poignant indictment and presentation of the weakness of the eyes on the people, and this needs further consideration.” He also appealed that “we must focus our cameras more” on “photographs of Communist Party defendants tied together” and “photographs of women and juvenile workers in the mines crawling and carrying rocks”¹⁰⁾ (Ito et al. 1968: 23).

Retracing the discussions reveals how the arguments on the responsibility of photographers during the war, which existing research notes as one of the reasons for holding the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition, have been talked about based on reflecting on the failure of photographers to engage proactively with the reality before them through the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition and converging on the issue of the weakness of the people’s gaze mentioned above. In other words, rather than focusing on the internal criticism of the postwar generation of photographers who collaborated in the war, which has been noted in the past, the discussion of the time focused on how to face the realities of the period around 1970 while reflecting on the fact that the previous photographers did not have an “independent base of thought.” Hiroshi Hamaya (1915–1999), who was temporarily involved in war reporting at Tohosha, the army’s wartime foreign propaganda organization, and served as the chairman of the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition in 1968, expressed that he also felt responsible for the war and “went to Takata after the war and tried to get through it somehow.”¹¹⁾ (Ito et al. 1968: 24). Notably, in Hamaya’s (1971) memoir, which was published at the same time as this remark, he mentioned his responsibility for contributing to the war and his pain about the fact that the generation born during the Taisho era, who were sent to the front lines in the war, also lost many of their own to the war. In the memoir, Hamaya wrote that we must not forget that “of the 2.121 million Japanese casualties of war after the Second Sino-Japanese War, 70%, or nearly 1.5 million, were born in the Taisho era” and that this is “a cruel history that contemporaries must seize every opportunity to report to the next generation in various ways” (Op. cit.: 254). He also looked back on his own course after the war and expressed a strong sense of crisis about the situation of the time around 1970.

“When the war was lost, survivors who had been born during the Taisho era were between 18 and 33 years old. They had to live through a tumultuous time of loss, disorder, trial and error, and self-hatred. What was the birth, raising, and experience of this generation? Today, 25 years after the war, we are in a situation where we must reaffirm and speak out.” (Hamaya 1971: 254)

When considering Hamaya’s regret over his former role in the war and his sense of connection with the casualties of the war of the generation, notably, 25 years after the war, Hamaya was keenly aware that those born during the Taisho era, including himself, were being reintegrated into the Meiji system. In other words, in 1970, the “cunning and treacherous people of the Meiji era,” who had

“skillfully navigated the postwar stupor,” were once again in power, and Japan was alarmed by the “resurgence of militarism” both at home and abroad. The challenge of “economic aggression” was provoking the anger of countries worldwide, and in Japan, “man-made disasters in the name of pollution” were destroying the country (Op. cit.: 254–255). Photography critic Koen Shigemori (1926–92), who was also born in Taisho, reflected on his experiences of the war from the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition. He wrote that he could never sing war songs “for the sake of [his] generation who died and [his] heavy heart that coincidentally got to live” (Shigemori 1968: 84). Thus, he clarified that the photographers’ responsibility for the war, as raised by the exhibition, was perceived as a complex mixture of violence and damage, seen in the confusing realities of the period around 1970. As mentioned above, it was considered groundbreaking that photographers active after the war, such as Tōmatsu, led the photography exhibition project. Nonetheless, in the background were the photographers of the prewar and wartime generations, who, while harboring a sense of regret for their cooperation in the war, felt a complex conflict as they continued to mourn the deaths of many of their colleagues who had experienced the war and were determined to entrust the future to the postwar generation.

4.3. *Difficulties and Conflicts in Photographing the Peaceful Mid-Showa Era*

However, while “A Century of Japanese Photography” strongly inspired bitter memories of the Fifteen Years’ War in the minds of the prewar and wartime generations, as Hamaya’s comments above suggest, photographers of this time were faced with a situation around 1970, over 20 years after the war ended, with the experience of war fading away. For example, during the “On Topical Photography” roundtable published in “Asahi Camera” in 1966, the following exchange occurred between Tomomi Ito and the sociologist Hidetoshi Kato. These remarks are regarding a photo contribution on the “21st Anniversary of the End of the War” topic published in the “Camera Mainichi” magazine during this period.

Ito: “As Nagano (Author’s notes: Photographer Shigeichi Nagano) notes, I understand the matters to deal with have become even more difficult to photograph... [...] Whether looking at Fukushima’s works or those of Konishi, I think photography has become difficult to capture after the war.”

[...]

Kato: “That is because the generations are changing so fast. Up to our generation, we could find meaning in ‘21st Anniversary of the End of the War’, but 15–16-year-old children today cannot understand its significance. As long as the author and the reader are over 30 years old, there is a way to understand the war like this, fortunately. However, how this will be passed over to the next generation is a big question.” (Ito et al. 1966: 218)

These statements show that, by the late 1960s, signs of war were disappearing from everyday landscapes, making it increasingly difficult to photograph them. Even if it was possible to photograph



Picture 2.

‘Russo-Japanese War Honorary War Casualties from the battle of Dashiqiao in the eastern highlands of Punhankow (photo by Kenji Ogura, Land Survey Department Member July 25, 1904).’ (Japan Professional Photographers Society eds. 1971: 113)

them, it was becoming increasingly difficult to share their significance with the postwar generations who lacked first-hand knowledge about the wars.

Thus, the image of war held by the generation that experienced World War II and that born thereafter was beginning to diverge by the late 1960s, as the Vietnam War intensified, and this could be seen in the reactions of visitors to the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition at the time. For example, Tōmatsu described an episode when two women wearing “dazzling psychedelic designs” were chatting “relaxed, like a picnic” before a photograph (Picture 2) taken during the Russo-Japanese War that was displayed at the exhibition, depicting soldiers who died on the slope of a small hill, with a horse and a soldier standing at the top of the hill.

“1904 must be considered a far distant record of a battle. This is the postwar generation that does not even remember World War II. The interval between the war of my grandfather and the Vietnam War, which is close today, is evaluated by the universal measure of photography.” (‘The Weight of a Hundred Years of Documents: Prologue to A Century of Japanese Photography Exhibition’ Mainichi Shimbun, June 8, 1968, evening edition).

When discussing this photograph, Tōmatsu said, “It may be because I’m a photographer, but I think it is incredibly moving.” While on the Chinese poem on the desolate battlefield by Maresuke Nogi, who commanded the invasion of Lushun when this photograph was taken, he said, “Even if I hummed it, it would not make us feel anything” (Ito et al. 1968: 20). Put differently, the younger generation born after World War II considered the Vietnam War, not World War II, as “the War” in 1968, while for the generation born during the war, including Tōmatsu, it was not the Russo-Japanese War but

the vivid memories of World War II. “A Century of Japanese Photography” evoked the memories of wars that repeatedly occurred throughout history, from the Meiji era to the Showa era, in a layered manner. Therefore, when considering the impact of the fading of the war experience around 1970 on the photographic expression of the time, Nakahira said the following at a roundtable discussion for Asahi Camera in 1969, titled “Contemporary or Realism.”

“Until the time of Domon and Shōmei Tōmatsu, for example, I think the experience of war was universal. Thus, inevitably, people turned to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to confront it. What we have now is no longer as dramatic, and the places have become uncertain and unclear. Both Hiroshima and Nagasaki have started to feel like a phase of history with the same value as other phases of history. [...] Young people have no memory of the war now nor have they actually felt it on their skin. So I feel that there is no other way than to capture everyday life where nothing happens, or ‘peace’.” (Kuwabara et al. 1969: 234)

In other words, Nakahira suggested that unlike in the past, when Ken Domon visited Hiroshima in the late 1950s and when Tōmatsu was shaken by the realities of the nuclear survivors living in Nagasaki in the early 1960s, young people no longer have a real sense of war, and they tend to turn their attention to “the daily life where nothing happens,” or “peace,” symbolized by the popularity of “contemporary photography.” As mentioned above, one of the important things that Tōmatsu, Nakahira, and other photographers of the time reflected on in “A Century of Japanese Photography” was the “lack of subjectivity” of the photographers who were swept away to the war, as well as their low focus on the harsh experiences of the people forced to live in compliance with the state. However, while reflecting on these issues, photographers living around 1970 appeared to be struggling to convey the “realities” of society, as postwar Japan superficially enjoyed flourishing growth and peace despite the student movement, the Security Treaty of 1970, the reversion of Okinawa, pollution problems, and other issues¹².

For example, Shisei Kuwabara (1936–), a well-known news photographer who continues to photograph patients with Minamata disease, responded to Nakahira’s comment, saying Domon’s Hiroshima and Tōmatsu’s Nagasaki “seem to be reportage of a certain marginal situation in history” and noted the similar aspects that can be identified in the coverage of the Vietnam War of the time.

“In such marginal situations—a state of political and social chaos and turmoil—you can quickly find an inevitable methodology. Conversely, I feel that many photographers, including myself, are having considerable trouble coming up with a methodology for peaceful daily life. One of them is the methodology of Mr. Niikura, and I think there is the one of Mr. Takanashi and that of Mr. Nakahira.” (Kuwabara et al. 1969: 234)

In other words, when considering the social situation around 1970, the question of the photographer’s

autonomy was asked starkly, which was introspective from the history of the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition. As described later, this was backed by their sense of crisis that their photographs would be used by the state, the “establishment,” or consumed by corporations.

To this point, we would like to highlight, in particular, the Sanrizuka struggle against the decision to build the New Tokyo International Airport (now Narita International Airport) in 1966 and the difficulties surrounding photographing the University of Tokyo Yasuda Auditorium incident of 1969. We bring these up because these two movements symbolically reveal the dilemmas surrounding photographing the scene that photographers were facing at that time. For example, well-known photojournalist Tatsuo Kurihara (1937–) described his conflict over photographing Sanrizuka in a roundtable discussion in a magazine in 1970, in which he participated with Naito and Nakahira, as follows:

“For example, when I went to Sanrizuka during this time, I took a photo next to the Unity Hut (*Danketsu Goya*). When I did that, I was spat on by farmers. If I had been a staff cameraman with an armband, I would have said a word or two, out of a foolish sense of authority, but I took the spitting as a matter of course, and I did not feel like protesting against it. I have recently come to realize that news photography is an inconvenience.” (Kurihara et al. 1970: 94)

Notably, Kurihara’s remarks here were in the form of a response to Nakahira’s questions over the filming of the University of Tokyo’s 1969 Yasuda Auditorium incident. The previous year, Nakahira had noted, regarding the University of Tokyo Yasuda Auditorium incident, that “there was not a single completely truthful report.” This was because the students were all in the auditorium, and the reporters were outside; thus, it was filmed from “the perspective of the authority, the riot police” (Kuwabara et al. 1969: 234). Nakahira’s question was about how photographers should accept their “complicity,” just as there was a risk of “removing our complicity” (Ibid.: 234) in reporting on the Vietnam War during the same period without considering the Japanese themselves as “complicit” along with the Americans. While demonstrating his understanding of the issues Nakahira raised, Kurihara continued, “Both Nakahira and I had our sense of mission in the situation of taking pictures outside and presenting them.”

“There was a staff photographer who said that he felt a sense of solidarity as a military reporter when he entered the Yasuda Auditorium with the riot police, shared his lunch box, and walked through the flaming firebombs. Can I criticize them? I felt bitter... So, it is not as if I do not have to take pictures. That is why I have to take them.” (Kurihara et al. 1970: 95)

In this regard, Nakahira himself said about the Vietnam War, “But shouldn’t we film it? I feel like if we don’t record it, it will be nothing,” “I won’t know Vietnam if I don’t take pictures” (Ibid.: 95), and he asked, “How can I faithfully link the act of photography to the time when I’m alive?” (Ibid.: 95). Similarly, critic Yasunao Tone pointed out in response to this roundtable discussion, the “thought” that

supports their work “itself exists in the self-development of the photographer—in the process of ‘taking a picture’” (Ibid.: 97); the statements of the photographer above show how they were trying to solve the questions and contradictions arising constantly in the face of the reality they were confronting by continuing to take photographs.

However, in understanding the weight of the above remarks made by photographers around 1970, we would like to emphasize how the crisis over freedom of expression was rapidly emerging amidst the movements and conflicts over their record in various archipelagos¹³⁾. For example, in the Sanrizuka struggle, a cameraman for Ogawa Productions who was filming the clashes between riot police and the Sanrizuka-Shibayama United Opposition League against the construction of the Narita Airport was arrested in July 1968 on the grounds of “obstruction of official business” for making a documentary film. A reporter for the Asahi Shimbun who was trying to take pictures of the arrest was also beaten and injured by the shields of the riot police surrounding him (“Independent Production Cameraman Arrested in Narita Clash,” Yomiuri Shimbun, July 12, 1968, morning edition). Subsequently, the “Shinjuku Riot Incident” involved a demonstration by students at Shinjuku Station on October 21 of the same year to protest the Vietnam War on the International Anti-War Day, which turned into a riotous demonstration. The records of the Kokugakuin University Film Club that was filming the event were seized by the investigating authorities (“The Tense Film World: Film Seizure at Kokugakuin University’s Film Club” Yomiuri Shimbun, July 12, 1968 Evening Edition). In particular, film critic Tadao Sato, who was also involved in editing *Science of Thought (Shisō no Kagaku)* after the war and was one of the founders of the “Association to Protest the Film Seizure Incident” in response to the latter case, stated that the film seizure “may seem a small incident,” but “it is highly significant.” The reasons he gave cannot be overlooked because of the situation around 1970 when apathy toward democracy was spreading while the movement was growing more radical.

“If the police can freely seize films under such a provision, they can take films recorded by newspaper and television cameramen reporting on the scene for demonstrations, etc., increasingly forcibly if they want such. [...] If you do that, we do not have free press, and it is generally accepted wisdom that there can be no democracy without a free press.” (“What is Freedom of the Press?” Mainichi Shimbun, December 6, 1968, Evening Edition)

In other words, although the photographers wanted to convey the reality of the situations before them through their search, this also conflicted over their position when taking photographs¹⁴⁾. They were placed in complicated situations where their freedom to photograph and present their work could be restricted by the state. At that time, Koji Taki sounded the following alarm about the fundamental danger of the documentary nature of photography for the state and the people’s lives¹⁵⁾.

“When the photographers who documented the Sanrizuka protests were suppressed and the films of the film club of a university were confiscated, we had to rethink the political nature of the

recording. [...] The authorities want the pictures even if it means intimidating the photographers because they are the “actual report” of those who rebel against them. Even when we film it and speak out in support of their actions, there is a danger that we will be transformed into tools of the authorities. A face in a photograph may lead to the wrongful arrest of the person. The conclusion is obvious. If the recorded images are in the hands of the people, the authorities consider them a threat, and if they are in their own hands, they will use them for their purposes.” (Taki 1970: 179–180)

However, as we return to the issues raised by the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition, we must note that these issues are also connected to the past, such as the use of photography by the authorities and law enforcement under the Japanese Empire and the crackdown on photography. In particular, when comparing the explanations in the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition catalog of 1968 and the subsequent “History of Japanese Photography” of 1971, we cannot ignore that, as TABLE 1 shows, the latter includes a contribution by Yasuhiro Okudaira, a constitutional law scholar, as “A History of Freedom and Regulation of Photographic Expression.” Okudaira’s article describes the following: severe restrictions on the press from the Meiji era to the middle of the war, including the ban on photographing the Imperial Portraits (*Goshinei*); the state control of war reporting as represented by the Sino-Japanese, Russo-Japanese, World War I, and Siberian campaigns; the prohibition of photographing social movements based on the Security Law from the Taisho period; restrictions on speech and publication during the Pacific War. Here, notably, Okudaira was mindful of the aforementioned dangers of filming riot police and the circumstances around 1970 when freedom of photography and publication could be curtailed in the name of corporate secrecy (Okudaira 1971: 445).

In other words, while the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition exposed the weakness of autonomous documentation by photographers up to the wartime period, in practical terms, there were always restrictions on photographers’ freedom to photograph and publish the realities of society. This appears similar to the history of the intensive use of photographs of Hokkaido’s pioneer settlers by the Hokkaido Development Office to report to the central government during the early Meiji period. (Naito 1971: 365). Furthermore, although the exhibition does not directly mention this, the occupation forces prohibited the release of the Nagasaki atomic bomb photographs (Ina et al. 1972: 23) until the restoration of Japanese sovereignty in 1952, which shocked the photographers of the time with their vividness. Thus, the exhibition highlighted the existence of photographers and the use of photography as a medium of expression used arbitrarily by the state, an issue that was also pertinent to the crisis over freedom of expression faced by the student movement and other photographers around 1970.

4.4. Photographers’ Search for their Position Around the 1970s

Due to the conflict over capturing activities that photographers faced at that time, they sought each of their positions in the face of the difficult reality that had become difficult to see in such “peaceful” daily life. The analysis up to the previous section revealed that photographers were shaped by forms of

expression that had continued throughout the prewar, war, and postwar eras, as well as by their acceptance of the weight of the turbulent history lived by their predecessors and their response to it through the act of photography in the society of around 1970. In other words, the first is the attitude of affirming the anonymity of photography and capturing the things in front of one's eyes in an immediate manner. The second is the attitude of denouncing reality by strongly expressing one's individuality. The third is the way in which the photographer continually fills in the "distance" he feels amid contradictions and conflicts from such reality by continuing to photograph it. The following is a more specific explanation of these three different positions.

First, as previously mentioned, Takuma Nakahira and Daido Moriyama, who participated in "Provoke," actively affirmed how anonymous photography was conducted. For example, Nakahira pointed out that one of the things that strongly impressed him during the compilation of the "A Century of Japanese Photography" exhibition was the "great strength" of photographs taken during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars "in direct response to history" and of "unknown authorship" and that these anonymous photographs had survived to this day (Kuwabara et al. 1969: 231). Thus, a photograph would ultimately become "a piece of paper recording an 'object' even after the passage of time, regardless of who took it," and "with this sadness, the photograph is a document" (Ibid.: 231). Based on what the previous section revealed, we would like to emphasize that Nakahira did not abandon his "subjectivity" as a photographer at this time but emphasized how well each photographer focused on "the history he captured"—"how committed they were to this era" (Ibid.: 231). In Nakahira's case, as clearly indicated by the phrase "a single photograph recording an 'object'," we can see that he tried to capture the things immediately and physically in front of his eyes.

Contrary to this attitude, the second type of work is one that strongly asserts one's "individuality" while denouncing the reality in front of one's eyes. For example, the photojournalist Shisei Kuwabara strongly opposed Nakahira's comments about the anonymous nature of photography. Kuwabara said, "I am in direct opposition to Mr. Nakahira's idea of recording without the individual and without individuality," appealing that, "I hope that from now on, the strong individuality of each photographer will be established and emerge in the photographs" (Ibid.: 231–232). Specifically, during a roundtable discussion with other photojournalists of the same period, including Shinzou Hanabusa and Kikujiro Fukushima, Kuwabara stressed that the driving force for photojournalists was "anger" and "impulse."

"I think the work of a news photographer is meaningful when they can serve as an accuser and a voice for the real issues at hand. I do not follow the news photography phenomenon very closely. I want to work on what I can do by photographing as an accuser." (Hanabusa et al. 1967: 257)

As this statement clarified, Kuwabara's attitude of emphasizing his passion in denouncing the unforgivable reality before his eyes as a "spokesperson," was clearly different from that of the aforementioned Nakahira, who held that it did not matter if the photographs were by an unknown artist or not.

However, as we discover in this paper, the experience of war gradually faded away around 1970, and amid the seemingly peaceful daily life, the approach of traditional realism was no longer effective in capturing the realities of society. Furthermore, contemporary photographers were critical of how news reporting was preceded by the photographer's strong awareness of the issues, as well as of the way in which reporting became a self-objective. For example, photographer Jun Morinaga, who once worked as an assistant to Eugene Smith, made the following observation at the time:

“There have been too many photographs of anything so far. What they call photo-realism or reportage photography, for example, is too purposeful, and it reeks of arrogance on the part of the sender who is trying to communicate. Moreover, in some cases, they are taken in such a way that they can be used in weekly or monthly magazines. It is for the sake of journalism.” (Morinaga et al. 1971: 309–310)

Considering this backlash, we must understand the issues surrounding realism at that time, especially by keeping in mind the following points made by Koen Shigemori. In other words, Shigemori pointed out the situation around 1970, when the popularization of cameras made photography more accessible to people's lives in the form of family albums, and identified the issues facing amateur photography with an awareness of realism:

“While life documents (*Seikatsu-kiroku*) such lifestyle writings (*Seikatsu-tsuzurikata*), life begins by first objectifying the outward self-consciousness due to the nature of language; in photographic documents, the concern for the outside precedes anything else. In the process of gradually deepening interest in the outside, the contradictory conflict between the outside and the inside of the self is strongly resistant to the realism of the lens, but when the outside can only be addressed simply as the world outside the self, it can only be an ordinary reproduction of reality.” (Shigemori 1972: 208)

Interestingly, Shigemori discusses the nature of photographic documentation in comparison with the lifestyle writing methods (*Seikatsu-tsuzurikata*) of, for example, Ichitaro Kokubun, and the lifestyle documentation movement (*Seikatsu-kiroku* movement) of Kazuko Tsurumi and others¹⁶⁾. However, importantly, he states that photography is documentation from an “interest in the outside”; as it gradually deepens, the “contradictory conflict between the outside and within the self” gives a “strong sense of resistance” to simply copying reality. If you recall, this overlaps with the conflicts of the photographers of the time surrounding the Sanrizuka struggle and the Yasuda Auditorium incident at the University of Tokyo discussed in the previous section.

Third, as typified by Shōmei Tōmatsu, the photographer's attitude entails constantly trying to bridge the “distance” between himself and the reality he witnesses in contradictions and conflicts by taking photographs. For example, Tōmatsu's shock and reflection at not knowing the reality of Nagasaki

after the atomic bombing in the early 1960s led him to spend several decades observing the atomic bomb survivors there, recapturing the lives of each and every one of them out of empathy for those who had also lived through the war and the postwar period (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021). Furthermore, after his first visit to Okinawa at the end of the 1960s and before the reversion of Okinawa to mainland Japan, Tōmatsu continued to photograph Okinawa until his later years, questioning the reality that “Okinawa is in a base” and his responsibility as a mainlander historically responsible for this situation (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2022c).

We can learn more about Tōmatsu’s attitudes to documenting Okinawa around 1970 from the reviews of his photographs in camera magazines of the time. For example, when the photo critic Tsutomu Watanabe commented on an amateur photograph of Kamagasaki, he said that it was “a photograph that gives the sense of Mr. Tōmatsu.”

“Like Mr. Tōmatsu, I think this person is taking pictures not as reportage but as recording. If we talk about neighborhoods, we tend to take pictures with an awareness of the issues, but I like that he does not take grand stances in the photos. It is like he lived there with others and kept a photo journal. There is no attitude of an onlooker. I think that makes the impression stronger. It is not as if we are attached to reality, but I feel a kind of solidarity.” (Watanabe et al. 1971: 265)

Watanabe notes in this statement that the proximity of Tōmatsu’s photographs appears in a “kind of solidarity” with the subject. Contrary to the first type of anonymous photographs taken in an immediate manner and the second type of accusatory photographs taken out of a vivid awareness of the problems of reality, a third type emerges here, in which the photographer attempts to continue taking photographs collaboratively while bridging distance from reality.

5. Shadow of Modern Japan Accepted by Photographers Amid “Prosperity” and Questions for the Future

The above analysis revealed that the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition contained the “collapse of modern photography” in the history of Japanese photography and held a contemporary significance. Accordingly, on the other side of the upsurge around 1970 when Japan attained rapid economic growth after recovering from the World War II defeat, the history of “A Century of Japanese Photography” revealed the shock that photographers felt by the activities of the people who had lived their lives in line with the modernization of the country since the Meiji period. Furthermore, the existence of a photographer’s subjectivity and awareness of expression in the history of photography was the main topic of discussion at the time. Nonetheless, more significant at the time, when the “imperial-colonial” experience inspired by the Vietnam War and the growing consciousness of being an economic superpower were being sharply reexamined, was what the nation had done in over a century of history that ended with the atomic bombings and defeat in the world war and behind the scenes of the

current prosperity of the world. Therefore, such earnest questions were distinct from the perspective of burying the countless “anonymous” dead in the story of the development and prosperity of the modern nation-state, as seen in the “Meiji Centennial Celebrations.” In other words, the analysis of the paper clearly indicated that the “anonymous” photographs left behind in the 100 years leading up to the end of the war were particularly important during the postwar period around 1970 when Japanese society was approaching a turning point, as symbolized by the numerous records of violence and damage projected beyond the “ideological nature” of the “photographic reporting” during the war.

In this regard, we would like to re-emphasize that photography remains “alive” beyond the times, just as the sight of the harsh development of Hokkaido and the photographs of war casualties during the Russo-Japanese War was incredibly moving to the photographers in 1970. In other words, the authors have systematized “photography in practice” (Yoshinari 2021) so that if photographers take pictures for the “future” to display someday, the photographs taken since the end of the Edo period and the Meiji Restoration are now a powerful tool to depict the shaky historical conditions of around 1970 to appeal strongly to the people living in the “present”¹⁷). For example, Hideo Nakai (1922–93), a writer who secretly maintained a diary about his hatred of war while working for the Army General Staff during the war, described the impact that the “History of Japanese Photography” had on him at the time as follows:

“If postwar photography is anything like postwar literature, we realize that the beheadings of Russian spies, executions of Sam-il Movement prisoners of war, young men lynched in forced labor camps, children chewing radish during the failed Tohoku crop season, intellectual soldiers who committed suicide during training exercises, and pompous-faced politicians in between officers peeking at the conscription examinations of young people in Manchukuo, were all commonplace until only thirty years ago, it should continue to be taken as an answer to the simple question of what the Japanese have finally become in world history and where humanity will continue to go, rather than simply as an ideological pretense or a masterful; technique.” (Nakai 1972: 57)

Thus, as the fundamental problems of the transformation of Japan from an empire to a nation due to defeat and occupation remained even around 1970, these photographs raised the question of what the future of postwar society would really look like amid prosperity. As examples of work from the same period that reflect this anxiety about the future through the eyes of people living during and after the war, we would like to mention the reportage of Takaya Kodama (1937–75), who visited the remaining families in downtown Tokyo 30 years later with the photographs, which Kineo Kuwabara had taken of the soldiers going off to war, as “Streets of the Issengorin” (1975). With his shock at the disappearance of “unidentified” families, such as cabinet workers, painters, pickle-makers, malted rice makers, sundries shopkeepers, worshippers, sandal makers, and liquor makers, who had gone to war after being drafted by the *issengorin* papers from the downtown side streets, making whole towns empty as if they had been spirited away, Kodama retraced the history of each of these families in the Showa era through

the stories of the people living in the downtown streets (Kodama & Kuwabara [1975] 2002). When Kakuei Tanaka, who advocated the archipelago remodeling plan, was replaced by Takeo Miki, who was hailed as “clean Miki” for breaking away from money politics, as the prime minister of Japan, Kodama found this wordplay by the government ridiculous while reflecting on the postwar status of the “people furthest from the emperor” in the photograph¹⁸⁾.

“I recall again the words of the candle makers, malted rice shops, street performers (*dontsukusan*), clog makers, cabinet workers, kimono makers, bath salt sellers, metal fitters..... of the *issengorin* from the side streets who were to serve as humble shields for the emperor. /‘Yasukuni Shrine Bill? What’s that? We have our own Shinto shrine and Buddhist altar. We don’t need gods any more.’ /1/100th of a second shutter of “Commemorative Photographs in the Summer of 1943” recorded such history and emotions of the Showa era. /I can only hope that the state never requests this kind of “commemorative photo” again. /If my pursuit, which should have followed the past from the old negatives, actually leads to the future, my feet are heavy. /Horrible, and heavy.” (Kodama & Kuwabara [1975] 2000: 246–247)

Considering the weight of the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition, which includes many “anonymous” photographs thrown into the “future” around 1970, as discussed in this paper, we cannot help but wonder if Kodama himself, who at that time was supposed to have visited the past during the war through “anonymous” photographs, was connected to the future. In other words, it was not a glorious future, but a painful one that people’s daily lives might once again be lost for the value of *issengorin*. As summarized in Chapter 3, Kodama’s question also echoed the sentiments of his contemporary, Yasuji Hanamori, who expressed his concerns of “we” becoming “abandoned people” in the process of rapid economic growth.

Thus, people’s daily lives continued amid the national prosperity of the 1970s and were disturbed, which was precisely why the photographers of that era continued to photograph the events occurring before them from their respective positions while struggling between the state and the scene. Above all, every image was filled with the compelling desire of every photographer to stand in “testimony” of the history of their country to the next generation. Therefore, the history of the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition and the weight of the photographs taken around 1970 from their reflection concern matters that each of us living today, half a century later, should reflect on and pass down to the next generation.

Notes

- 1) “Photography in practice” developed by the authors as their methodology, as described below, was inspired by Kunio Yanagida’s theory of feelings and positions the facts captured through the photographer’s mind, which deepens through the act of photography as “feelings,” and the

expression of feelings in various media as “expression of feelings.” Yanagida’s theory of feelings is characterized by the inability to separate objects into facts and feelings because they are “facts observed through feelings” of the perceiving subject; see Torigoe (2002).

- 2) However, while “contemporary photography” is often criticized for being “closed,” Tomiyama (2013) pointed out that by focusing on issues buried within “everydayness,” it was possible to view the tense social situation of the time “calmly and subjectively.”
- 3) In this regard, the photographers’ views toward responsibility during the Fifteen Years’ War are organized through previous research on the history of “photojournalism.” For example, Shirayama (2014), in a roundtable discussion among photographers conducted around the period of the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition, noted that when looking back on the continuity of photographic expression from the prewar to the postwar period, it was questionable that photographers who had previously been engaged in foreign propaganda had “adapted” or “turned” to the new postwar regime (Shirayama 2014: 451–453). As discussed in Chapter 4, while only a few of these postwar photographers generally reflected on their wartime activities, we cannot overlook the fact that Hamaya, for example, embodied a sense of “guilt” for his cooperation in the war (Inoue, 2014: 109), which led to his struggles after the war.
- 4) Additionally, photography historian Masako Toda pointed out that one result of the “History of Japanese Photography” was revealing the emergence of a modern sense of subjectivity after the “Art Photography” flourished before the war (Toda, 2012: 65, 69–84). For example, like a family album, she identified the limitations of being unable to envision a photography history that was dominated not only by photographers but also by those who enjoyed photography (Op. cit.: 84).
- 5) For example, Kinoshita (1999) noted that while photographic records were actively used to visualize the construction of the new nation during the Meiji era, based on the expectations of the society of the time, and the photographs of the Hokkaido pioneers were, from the government’s perspective, “pioneering” photographs, from the indigenous people’s perspective, they were nothing but a record of the “invasion” (Kinoshita 1999: 7), and it seems this criticism does not necessarily apply.
- 6) While the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition included a section on “Manchuria,” Hou (2019) discussed the issue of not displaying photographs taken in Korea and Taiwan under colonial rule.
- 7) Nonetheless, as people who lived in the Meiji era were alive, “various cracks related to the history of the Meiji period” remained (Ishii et al. 2018: 229–30).
- 8) However, simultaneously, we must note that Kasai pointed out how Hanamori’s vision of the time did not include the existence of the Ainu people, an indigenous people (Kasai 2018a: 22).
- 9) In fact, during a roundtable immediately after the “A Century of Japanese Photography” exhibition, Tōmatsu actually said that the exhibition was misunderstood because it coincided with the “national project to commemorate 100 years of the Meiji era,” emphasizing that it had “nothing to do with the government-manufactured Meiji Centennial exhibition” (Ito et al. 1968: 24).

- 10) However, Tsuchiya (2009) pointed out that Tomomi Ito, who was a member of the Japan Realist Photographers Association at the time, also belonged to the Communist Party, and in a discussion meeting before the Security Treaty of 1970, he called for further discovery, organization, and examination of “the genealogy of people’s photography,” linking photography to society and serving the people, based on the importance of Hokkaido pioneer photography (Ito 1969).
- 11) As in his well-known masterpiece “Yukiguni” (1956), Hamaya frequently visited Kuwatori Valley in Niigata Prefecture for photography before the war, and after the defeat, he settled in the snowy city of Takada (now Joetsu City).
- 12) This skepticism toward realism was a common perception in the world of photography at the time. For example, at the roundtable discussion in 1972 with Nobuo Ina, Shigemine Kanamaru, and others, Tsutomu Watanabe stated that “realism” was “hardly reaching the depths of reality” as the current “superficially peaceful state of affairs” in Japan, “such as the world’s second-largest GNP,” continued (Ina, Kanamaru, & Watanabe 1972: 200).
- 13) The quotes show that the infringement of freedom of expression was also worsening at the time in other scenes such as television and film production. For example, see Yasuda (2013) for a discussion on the various explorations of the expression of political and social issues in the production of television programs in the 1960s.
- 14) Furthermore, these aspects can also be seen in the conflict over the student movement at the Tama Art School where Tōmatsu was working at the time. In other words, in the sealed-off school, faced “harsh” questions such as “Why are you taking pictures?” “What will you do with those pictures” and distrustful looks of students (Tōmatsu 1969: 58).
- 15) As is well known in the history of photography, in 1971, the following year, there was an incident where a police officer was actually killed in the middle of a general strike in Okinawa, which was carried out to “crush the Okinawa Reversion Agreement,” and the arrest of one of the demonstrators based on a photograph published in a newspaper as “evidence” had a strong impact on Nakahira (Nakahira 2007: 41–73). In this case, however, his claim for state compensation was ultimately denied, but his innocence was confirmed (“Innocent Man’s Appeal Dismissed, No Admission of State Compensation - Okinawa Demonstration Case,” *Mainichi Shimbun*, October 9, 1993, Morning Edition).
- 16) The authors have thus far discussed the link between Tōmatsu’s decades-long photographic activities in Nagasaki after the atomic bombing and the documentation of people’s lifestyles carried out by Tōmatsu, who experienced the war personally, as he continued to develop his work while experiencing the reality of people’s lives on the ground (Yoshinari & Miyoshi 2021).
- 17) Moreover, responses to the “History of Japanese Photography” from people outside the photography field at the time include articles by the literary critic Oketani Hideaki and the writer Morisaki Kazue (Oketani 1972; Morisaki 1972). In particular, as Narita mentioned above, Morisaki, a “second-generation colonizer” who returned from Korea, was one of those who questioned the “imperial-colonial” experience during this period (Narita 2020: 209–218), and it is significant for

describing the meaning of images for people living in Korea and Chikuho, Kyushu, while also describing her life experiences there.

- 18) Although they all ended up being repealed, during this same period (1969–1974), the Yasukuni Shrine Bill, the aim of which was to nationalize the Yasukuni Shrine, was submitted to the Diet several times.

Photo Source

[Picture 1, 2] Japan Professional Photographers Society (Eds.). (1971). *History of Japanese Photography 1840–1945*. Heibonsha.

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