

Mutual
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ARTISTS, AESTHETICS, AND ARTWORKS
FROM, AND IN CONVERSATION WITH, JAPAN
PART 1 (OF 2)

MUTUAL IMAGES
ISSUE 8 – SPRING 2020

MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

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EDITED BY
MARCO PELLITTERI & JOSÉ ANDRÉS SANTIAGO IGLESIAS

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MUTUAL IMAGES

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Photography magazines and cross-cultural encounters in postwar Japan, 1945-1955

Emily COLE | University of Oregon, USA

ABSTRACT

This article examines cross-cultural encounters between Japanese and western (European and American) photographers in the immediate postwar period (1945-1955), asking how these encounters influenced Japanese photographic trends. In addition, this article considers what photographic representations of western cultures reveal about postwar constructions of Japanese cultural identity. Building upon recent research framed by conceptions of photography as sites of cross-cultural encounter (see Melissa Miles & Kate Warren), this article argues that photography magazines provided space for consistent exchange between western and Japanese photographers through multiple platforms: interviews and round table discussions of photographic trends; articles on and photo series by western photographers; and images by both western and Japanese photographers depicting western cultural material and landscapes, such as photographs of western-style fashions, domestic space, and daily life in European and American cities. Such encounters directly influenced photographic trends in Japan. Features on European nude photographers popularised nude photography as an art form among Japanese photographers, and works contributed by the likes of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, and Robert Doisneau contributed to a rising interest in photographic humanism. Further, these encounters provided a conduit through which photographers and readers encountered western cultural material at a time when Japan underwent a cultural identity crisis brought on by the devastation of defeat and foreign Occupation. In this way, photography magazines simultaneously functioned as spaces that negotiated what exactly “Japanese culture” meant in Japan’s new postwar world.

KEYWORDS

Japan; Photography; Cultural exchange; Cultural influence; Nude photography; Humanism; Europe; Allied Occupation; Print media.

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In the summer of 1955, the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo held the exhibition “Kyō no shashin: Nihon to Furansu” (“Contemporary Photography: Japan and France”). It brought together such prominent international photographers as Eugene Atget, Robert Doisneau, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, as well as Kimura Ihei, Ishimoto Yasuhiro, and Miki Jun. In the introductory essay of the exhibit catalogue, noted photo critic Ina Nobuo reflected on the deep and lasting relationship between Japanese and French photographic circles. Ina blamed the recent war for cutting off all photographic exchange between the two nations, but noted that Japan’s keen interest

in French photography had led to the speedy resumption of photographic relations at war's end (1955: n.p.). Essential to the reestablishment of artistic interchange were Japanese photography magazines, such as *Kamera* (Camera) and *Asahi Kamera* (*Asahi Camera*), which acted as sites of contact between Japanese and western (European and American) photographers. As photographic exchange became an integral objective of nearly every such magazine published in the immediate postwar period, international photography exerted a lasting impact on Japanese photographic developments.

In recent years, early postwar Japanese photography has attracted increasing scholarly attention in English-language sources. Most have been focussed on photojournalist Domon Ken and the development of his realism movement from 1950 (Feltens, 2001; Iizawa, 2003; Thomas, 2008; Fraser, 2011). While scholars are right to connect realism to the legacy of wartime propaganda and Japan's devastated social, political, and economic conditions in the wake of war and defeat, the connection between realism and European/US-American photographic trends has remained largely overlooked. Equally important, photographic developments beyond realism have received virtually no consideration. If Domon undoubtedly laid the foundation for developments in postwar Japanese photography, European/US-American photographers played a pivotal role as well.¹

Looking at the history of postwar photography through this wider lens, I propose here to examine Japanese photography magazines published from 1946 to 1955, asking three key questions. First, how did these magazines facilitate encounters with European/US-American photographers? Second, how did these encounters affect Japanese photographic trends? And third, what role did contact with and photographic representations of European/US-American cultures play in constructions of postwar Japanese cultural identity? This article builds on the work of Melissa Miles and Kate Warren, who frame their study of early twentieth-century multicultural communities in Broom, Australia, by conceptualising photography as "an important site of cross-cultural communication and interpretation" (2017: 3, 5). With the view that photographs are "products and facilitators of cross-cultural encounters", Miles and Warren argue that Japanese photography facili-

¹ As a product of French invention and importation into Japan, in the prewar period photography maintained close connections to Europe and the US. Many prewar issues of *Asahi Kamera*, for example, include photographs by European/US-American photographers as well as essays penned in English. Photographers in the interwar period were heavily influenced by European/US-American photojournalism, the avant-garde German New Objectivity, and surrealism. For more, see Torihara Manabu (2013).

tated intercultural relations among Broom's diverse residents, as well as reflected such relations and cultural exchange (5). Applying their framework to postwar photography in Japan, this article argues that exposure to European/US-American photographers influenced a variety of developments in Japanese photography, promoting the acceptance of nude photography as a form of art and increasing interest in capturing the customs, appearance, and daily life of postwar Japanese society.² This article further argues that photography functioned as a medium through which practitioners could negotiate postwar Japanese cultural identity. Defeat in war and foreign occupation triggered a cultural identity crisis for many Japanese in the postwar period, complicated by a new influx of European/US-American cultures *via* the Allied Occupation (1945-1952). As both product and facilitator of cross-cultural encounters, photographic representations of European/US-American cultures reflected and assisted the postwar formation of Japanese cultural identity vis-à-vis European/US-American influences.

Photography magazines and cross-cultural encounters

As a core element of Japan's photographic community, photography magazines represent a critical source in understanding developments in postwar photography. In the early postwar period especially, severe shortages of photographic supplies made public exhibitions virtually impossible. Thus, as Ivan Vartanian notes, magazines were "the main vehicle" through which photographers could exhibit their work (2009: 14). The end of the war in 1945—and with it the sudden collapse of the military government—further stimulated interest in print media. The Japanese public, freed from wartime censorship and propaganda, voraciously consumed the printed material that now flooded the market. After years of being deceived by the military government, people, quite simply, wanted to know the truth. Of course, Occupation-imposed censorship posed a new threat to feelings of freedom and liberation, at least related to freedom of speech. The Press and Publications (PPB) division, a subsection of the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), excised with ruthless intensity any negative portrayal of the Occupation or anything that undermined its authority. In addition, censors were

² European/US-American influences included more than nude photography and humanism. In a continuation of prewar photojournalist trends, American periodicals such as *Life* and *Look* greatly influenced Japanese news photographers. Torihara argues that these periodicals became something of a textbook for Japanese photographers, who tried to mimic what was published (2013: 107). The Japanese had easy access to such periodicals through the Center for Information & Education (CI&E) Information Libraries (Takemae, 2002: 395-6; Ochi, 2006).

sensitive to images of prostitutes, reporting on food shortages and starvation, and views of the ruinous landscapes that were the results of US bombing raids. Even so, photographers enjoyed much greater freedom than under the draconian wartime Information and Propaganda Bureau, with its total control over all news, advertising, and public events. Journalism recovered more quickly than the government or the economy and served as an important mouthpiece for free speech (Akio, 1974).

Wartime censorship was not the only blow to Japan's photographic industry. Amateur photographers were hit hard by government restrictions, including sumptuary laws on cameras and prohibitions on taking photographs in urban environments. In an attempt to gain control over the flow of information, Japan's military government forcefully merged most magazine titles and pressured editors to limit their publication numbers (Tucker et al. 2003: 322). The few titles that remained fell in line with wartime propaganda by depicting a whole nation mobilised in support of the war effort. Yet popular magazines emerged after Japan's surrender with renewed vigor. New photography magazine titles appeared at a rapid pace, alongside old titles that had been suspended during the war. *Kamera* resumed publication at the start of 1946, followed by *Koga Gekkan* (*Japan Photographic Monthly*, 1947), *Shashin Techō* (*Photography Notebook*, 1949), *Amachua Shashin* (*Amateur Photography*, 1949), and *Asahi Kamera* (1949), just to name a few titles. From the end of 1945 through 1949, the circulation of individual magazine titles ranged from 2,500 to around 35,000 (Thomas, 2008: 367). Together with technological advances in Japanese camera products, the proliferation of photo magazines triggered a new boom in amateur photography from 1950 (Shirayama, 2001: 3).

Magazines were an invaluable resource for amateur enthusiasts and established professionals alike. According to one estimate, photo magazines received as many as 5,000 submissions from amateur photographers per month (Nihon Shashin Kyōkai, 2000: 403). Most were entered in *getsurei* (monthly contests) that provided a means for professional photographers to communicate directly with amateurs *via* their role as judges and critics of winning submissions. In addition to the general *getsurei*, magazines sponsored numerous contests on more defined themes, such as Hokkaidō landscapes, postwar lifestyles and occupations, and aerial photos. One pivotal role of contests was their ability to showcase the work of amateurs, which in turn often opened avenues to professional employment. Magazines were important for the careers of professionals as well. Editors invited submissions for serial *rensai* (photo stories), a crucial source of

revenue and prestige for professionals. Frequently, popular serialisations were later published as monographs (Vartanian, 2009: 14), such as Kimura Ihei's photographs from his trip to Europe, first serialised in *Asahi Camera* in 1954 and 1955, and later in book form as *Kimura Ihei gaiyū shashinshū: Dai ikkai* (Kimura Ihei on World Tour I, 1955) and *Kimura Ihei gaiyū shashinshū: Dai nikai: Yōroppa no inshō* (Kimura Ihei on World Tour II: Impression of Europe, 1956).

One striking feature of photo magazines in the immediate postwar period is the avid interest in and contact with foreign photographers and photographed subjects. Given the Allied Occupation, it is not surprising that a number of early encounters involved Occupation personnel. A February 1946 issue of *Kamera* published an interview with a G.I. about the Signal Photos department of the Occupation. In 1947, *Shashin Tembō* printed an article on ACME correspondent Tom Sheaffer, as well as an interview with *Stars and Stripes* photographer Helen Bruck. Yet photographic contact did not solely involve Occupation personnel. In May 1946, *Kamera* printed an interview with German-born American photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt, and in August ran a two-page spread on Russian-born (present-day Latvia) US-American Philippe Halsman. When asked by *Kamera* in 1949 to identify the "best ten" photographers in the world, Domon named Hungarian Martin Munkácsi, Briton Herbert List, and French-Hungarian Brassai, among others. From an early date, then, Japanese photographers took note of both US-American and European photographers.

The presence of European/US-American photographs within popular photography magazines appeared in many forms. In addition to interviews with and articles on or by European/US-American photographers, magazines printed round table discussions on international photographic developments, interviews with European/US-American photographers, and photographs depicting European/US-American landscapes, peoples, and daily customs and cultures by both Japanese and European/US-American photographers. Indeed, photos of European and US-American peoples and settings abounded in photo magazines from an early date. A September 1947 issue of *Koga Gekkan* printed a two-page spread of European summer scenes, including mountain cottages and women dressed in traditional dirndl. An August 1948 issue of *Kamera* featured portraits by Berenice Abbott, Brassai, Tony Frischel, and street photos by John Davenport and Jim Steinhard. An article in the same issue on US-American photo

magazine *Photo Arts* stated that Japanese readers could study current US-American photo culture through their magazine.

In addition to the above, it was common for magazines to print selections from exhibits in Japan and abroad. In 1950, *Asahi Kamera* published select photos from a Japan International Salon exhibit, featuring photographers from Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Luxembourg, Spain, Hungary, Italy, and England (Kanamaru, Nishiyama, Ina: 53-64). A report on the 13th annual salon appearing in the March 1953 issue of *Asahi Kamera* noted that the salon received 626 submissions from foreign photographers (Kanamaru, Ina: 33). Photography magazine *Kamera* printed numerous photos from international salons as well,³ including contemporary French art photography and modern art photography from Switzerland. While beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that cultural encounters flowed in both directions between Japanese and European/US-American photographers. The 1952 *US Camera Annual* featured five Japanese photographers, showcasing contemporary Japanese portraiture as well as art and street photography. *Life* famously printed Miki Jun's portrait of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru in the 10 September 1951 issue, and Swiss photographer Werner Bischof published his photos of Japan in the Swiss pictorial *Du*.

In Japan, the focus on foreign photography was so great that at times it took up nearly half of any given issue. The January 1953 issue of *Asahi Kamera* illustrates the extensive presence of European/US-American photography and cultures in Japanese photography magazines. A color portrait of French ballet star Liana Dayde by Funayama Katsu graces the cover, immediately presenting Japanese readers with a glimpse of Europe and the US. Then, as the reader begins to peruse the issue, another colour portrait appears on the first page: a European/US-American model in soft golden hues by German-American fashion photographer Horst P. Horst. This is followed by a seven-page feature on Brassai and his street photos of Paris. A single photo of a kimono-clad Japanese woman breaks this opening onslaught of European/US-American photography, but only briefly as the reader then moves on to Mihori Ieyoshi's collection of photos on European/US-American ballet. After a few more pages reserved for Japanese photographers and motifs, the reader comes

³ Popular in the first half of the twentieth century, salon photography refers both to a style of photography that emphasises a classical "fine art" composition, as well as to contests or exhibitions in which photographers submitted their work to be judged and displayed. The March 1950 issue of *Asahi Kamera* reported on the growing numbers of Japanese photographers who submitted their photos to international salons, as well as the recovery of Japan's own International Photo Salon.

to a section on the 1953 *US Camera Annual*, filling a staggering fifteen pages, and then to an essay on nude photography by Lewis Tulchin. Additional photographs taken by European/US-American photographers or featuring European/US-American subjects include an instructional article on photo-caricatures by Japanese-American Harry K. Shigeta, stills from the 1950 French film *Le Chateau de Verre* (*The Glass Castle*), and selections from Fritz Henle's "City at Night". In addition, the issue carries a photo of Philadelphia Station by Kikuchi Kosuke and a portrait of film director Josef von Sternberg by Hamaya Hiroshi. Finally, the second half of the magazine includes an interview with photojournalist Margaret Bourke White, as well as an essay on Brassai.

As the above example suggests, magazines provided ample opportunity for cross-cultural encounter and exchange through photographs, essays, interviews, and roundtable discussions. These encounters had a lasting impact on Japanese photographic trends, contributing to new developments in nude photography, and feeding a growing fascination with human-interest photography. While Japanese photographers have always expressed some degree of interest and involvement with European/US-American photographic circles, their fascination with European/US-American trends in the postwar period owed mainly to Japan's defeat in war and the dismal social conditions in the years that followed. This will be examined in the next section.

European photographic influences and Japan's postwar society

Three words characterise the state of Japanese society in the immediate postwar years: *yakeato* (burned ruins), *kyōdatsu* (mental numbness), and *kasutori* (days in the dregs). At war's end, lively urban centres were reduced to charred and desolate landscapes, filled with the starving, orphaned, and homeless. Most destruction came from wave after wave of incendiary bombs that unleashed intense, all-consuming infernos.⁴ Those left in the ruins fought to find even the most basic necessities of life. Rampant starvation decreased the average height and weight of school children until 1948 (Gordon, 2013: 226), and severe housing shortages forced people to live in train stations, buses, or shacks made of scavenged debris. The strain of putting body and soul into the long and drawn-out war, of living in constant fear of bombing raids, and of

⁴ According to US reports, bombing raids killed 85,793 people and left over one million homeless. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey. "Effects of Incendiary Bomb Attacks on Japan—A Report on Eight Cities". Physical Damage Division (April 1947), 67. For Tokyo alone, the raids destroyed roughly 51 percent of the physical landscape of Tokyo. See Peter C. Chen (2008).

struggling through dismal social conditions had taken its toll on the Japanese physically and mentally (Cole, 2015: 1-2).

One response to the miserableness of living in a *kyōdatsu* society was to find outlets of escape, such as the so-called *kasutori* culture. The term *kasutori*, which referred to a cheap alcoholic drink made from the dregs of sake, soon evolved in meaning, coming to express a new feeling of liberation from the oppression of wartime Japan. It embodied the sense of impermanence that attended the postwar era, and represented a rejection of political authority and a break from established values (Dower, 1999: 149). Concerning the latter, *kasutori* culture evoked a newfound delight in carnal pleasures and sexual indulgence. This hedonistic outlet quickly bloomed into a flourishing print culture specialising in “sex journalism” (*sei jaanarizumu*) (McLelland, 2012: 11). As part of the “commercialisation of sex”, common symbols of *kasutori* magazines ranged from kissing to strip shows and *pan pan* prostitutes,⁵ and from masturbation to incest (Dower, 1999: 150-51).

It is within this context that photographers began to experiment with nude photography. Even though this genre existed before the war, photographers had to practice it in secret due to strict government constraints, if they took nude photographs at all. Nojima Kōji recalled in a 1951 roundtable that a lack of public approval kept him from pursuing his interest in nude photography in the prewar years. Even just photographing breasts was enough to warrant a visit from the police. It was only the postwar chaos, Nojima explains, that provided the opportunity for nude photography to flourish (Nojima et al: 76-82). In the early postwar years, critics looked negatively on early nude photos as nothing more than lewd imagery associated with *kasutori* culture; however, their popularity soared nonetheless as a challenge to prewar and wartime conservatism (Nihon Shashin Kyōkai, 2000: 465). Respected photographers Sugiyama Kira, Matsugi Fujio, and Fukuda Katsuji quickly wrested nude photography from its association with *kasutori* culture (Ina, 1978: 145), but it was not until magazines showcased the works of European nude photographers that the images earned critical esteem. From around 1948, virtually all photography magazines featured nude images by European/US-American photographers. *Asahi Kamera* serialised features on nude

⁵ The exact origin of the term *pan pan* is unclear. According to some sources, Imperial Japanese troops used the term for prostitutes in Japan’s South Pacific island colonies. During the Occupation, the term evolved to refer to women who served Occupation personnel. For more on *pan pan*, see Holly Sanders (2012), Tanaka Masakazu (2012), and Sarah Kovner (2013).

photos by the likes of Andre de Dienes and Martin Munkácsi and included nude photography in printed selections from *US Camera Annual*. The increased prevalence of nude images by European photographers stimulated interest among Japanese photographers of multiple genres; art, street, and news photographers all submitted their attempts at nude photography to magazines. By 1953, nude photography even began appearing in the monthly contests, indicating just how popular it had become among amateurs.

Japanese photographers and critics lauded the works of European photographers; however, critics were quick to point out the failings of Japanese nude photography. In his essay in the 1950 *ARS Shashin Nenkan* (*ARS Photographic Annual*), Ina Nobuo asserted that Japanese nude photography ultimately failed because it was weak (2). Tanaka Masao outlined the problem more bluntly in the next essay of the same journal, complaining that Japanese nude photography lacked beauty as an art form (5). The crux of the matter, Tanaka explained, lay in the pose and appearance of the models. In a 1951 roundtable printed in *Asahi Kamera*, Sato Kei expressed his admiration for Dutch photographer Emmy Andriess and her skill in making a beautiful nude photograph. Other discussants applauded Willy Ronis's ability to photograph models with a natural pose. But regarding Japanese photographers, the panel complained that models were too stiff, their posing too excessive. Japanese photographers would do well, critics suggested, to follow techniques employed by European nude photographers (Nojima et al: 76-82).

And Japanese photographers did just that, learning from European photographers they encountered in Japanese photography magazines. In addition to images submitted by European photographers, *Asahi Kamera* printed translations from Lewis Tulchin's book *The Nude in Photography* in the beginning of 1953. The text outlined a number of key points—all illustrated with diagrams, sketches, and photos of European/US-American models—integral to a successful nude photograph: understanding composition, good and bad poses, working with negatives, and enlarging prints. The fundamental principle behind Tulchin's instructions was that nude photography was an art form, a point emphasised in an opening section titled "Intentions and Aims" that explained Tulchin's target audience: those who valued the creativity and artistry of nude photography (1953a: 50). As Tulchin's essays demonstrate, then, encounters with European photographers were crucial in the transformation of Japanese nude photography from lewd *kasutori* culture to art photography.

Nude photography's acceptance as an art form is exhibited in a number of special issues published by popular photography journals. *Foto Aato (Photo Art)* released three special issues solely on nude photography in January and December 1951 and January 1952, alongside the regular issues that featured numerous nude prints. In these special issues, the attempt at photographing the nude female form through an artistic lens is evident through careful consideration of composition, as well as the use of fundamental elements of photography such as line, shape, and tone. A photograph by Domon Ken, for example, uses close cropping to transform a woman's buttocks into an abstract shape of smooth curves and sharp tonal contrasts. Another photograph by Narahara Ikko showcases a nude form stretching diagonally across the frame. Rather than focussing on the nude woman as an object of sexual desire, the eye follows the soft lines of the body from one corner of the frame to another. By thoughtfully employing artistic principles of line and shape, Narahara creates in this image a lyrical yet dynamic composition.

Nude photography constituted one facet of postwar Japanese photographers' increased fascination with the human form. On the other end of the spectrum was an avid concern with humanist photography, defined by Peter Hamilton as simply the focus on "the everyday life of ordinary people" (1997: 76). As with nude photography, European photographic trends proved an overwhelming influence on the shift to people and daily life. From early 1950, numerous Japanese photography magazines ran regular features on European humanist photographers, praising their portrayal of the individuality of humanity. "Kaigai yūmei shashin-ka shōkai" ("Introduction to Famous Foreign Photographers"), serialised in *Asahi Kamera*, for instance, familiarised Japanese readers with humanist photographers such as Werner Bischof, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Robert Doisneau. Their photos captured European cities and rural vistas, opened windows into daily European/US-American life at home and on the street, and demonstrated the latest fashion trends.

Japanese photographers and critics trained a spotlight on European photographers from the early 1950s. In 1951, Miki Jun, with Ōtake Shōji, Kimura Ihei, Domon Ken, and other noted photojournalists, founded a photography collective modelled on Magnum Photos.⁶ Before its demise in 1958, *Shūdan Foto* held eight exhibitions featuring

⁶ International photographic collective Magnum Photos was founded in Paris in 1947 by Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, David "Chim" Seymour, George Rodger, William Vandivert, Rita Vandivert, and Maria Eisner.

prominent European/US-American photographers (Nihon Shashin Kyōkai, 2000: 408), most of whom were connected to *Life* magazine or photo collectives like Magnum and Rapho.⁷ The first exhibit in 1951, titled “Nichifutsu beiei rengō shashin” (“Japan-France-US-UK Photo”) included works from Cartier-Bresson, who became immensely popular in Japan as one of a number of European humanist photographers, as well as for his philosophy of the “decisive moment” (Torihara, 2013: 119–121). In 1953, *Asahi Kamera* published a translation of Cartier-Bresson’s *Images à la Sauvette (Images On the Run)*, in which Cartier-Bresson described his approach to photography as the pursuit to capture, in one photograph, “the whole essence of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes” (1952). Translated essays and photographic works by Cartier-Bresson contributed to his rising popularity (Nihon Shashin Kyōkai, 2000: 409). So influential was Cartier-Bresson and other French photographers that the terms “decisive moment” (*ketteiteki shunkan*) and “humanism” (*hyūmanizumu*) became catchwords in Japanese photographic circles, appearing in articles on European/US-American photographers and in critiques of Japanese professional and amateur photographs. In an essay published in *Kamera* in 1953, for instance, Domon criticised salon pictures for failing to capitalise on the decisive moment and root their photos in reality (Vartanian et al, 2005: 22–23).

Cartier-Bresson’s “decisive moment” specifically, and European humanism more generally, dovetailed with a similar trend developing in early postwar magazines. In 1950, Domon famously launched a realism movement,⁸ advocating a type of photograph he defined as “the absolutely pure snapshot, absolutely unstaged” (Nihon Shashin Kyōkai, 2000: 389). Originating in his critiques of successful submissions to the monthly amateur contest in photography magazine *Kamera*, the movement took further shape in serialised discussions between Domon and Kimura in the second half of 1951. Initially a response

⁷ Founded by Charles Rado in 1933, Rapho (from Rado-Photo) specialised in humanist photography. Early members include Brassai, Nora Dumas, and Ergy Landau, later joined by Robert Doisneau, Edouard Boubat, Yousuf Karsh, and Willy Ronis, among others.

⁸ “Realism”, “documentary photography”, and “photojournalism” are usually considered interchangeable terms; however, according to Julia Adeney Thomas, Japan’s postwar realism movement was neither photojournalism nor documentary photography. The latter is similar to realism in its attempts to capture “real” life. What distinguishes it from Domon’s realism is its use to investigate social conditions. In other words, documentary photography actively attempts to bring about social reform. Domon’s realism, in contrast, did not attempt to highlight dismal social conditions or to engender social change (Thomas, 2008: 367–69). Thomas further argues that realism did not share characteristics of photojournalism—photographs taken for news media. Instead, the postwar realism movement simply recorded daily life and emphasised “unmanipulated” snapshots. Whether these scenes were truly unmanipulated and objective, however, is the subject for another essay.

to wartime propaganda, the realism movement eventually became a means for Japanese to come to terms with the *kyōdatsu* condition that plagued early postwar life. Domon believed realism to be the only legitimate photographic technique for postwar society, stating that the public wanted to see the “real” after being deceived by the wartime government (Feltens, 2001: 64). He urged photographers to record the dismal postwar social conditions by confronting reality directly and by attempting to photograph this reality in an objective manner. For Domon, realism was the only way society could move past the dire straits of a defeated and occupied Japan. “Realism”, he wrote in one essay, “is the raising of one’s eyes to look to the future” (Vartanian, et al., 2005: 24-25).

While supportive of documenting the human condition, photographers and critics grew increasingly critical of Domon’s version of realism. A full analysis of the debates surrounding realism is outside the scope of this article;⁹ however, briefly put, many critics decried the false impression of postwar Japan that realism created with its allegedly superficial focus on homelessness, prostitution, war orphans, and disabled war veterans—motifs critics pejoratively termed “beggar photography”.¹⁰ Even Domon himself grew tired of the proliferation of such themes. Despite offering encouragement to photographers in their quest to capture wretched social conditions, he felt that amateurs obsessed over images of poverty and ruin. Even worse for Domon was the fact that many of these photographs were staged, an action he claimed prevented photographers from capturing the full truth of the subject.

Critics of realism identified yet another glaring problem: many photographs appeared detached from their subjects and devoid of emotion. Critic Tanaka Masao, although supportive of realism’s focus on the socially disadvantaged, nevertheless criticised the genre for its lack of emotion (Feltens, 2001; 65). Domon also expressed growing frustration with the abundance of unemotional photographs that amateurs submitted to magazines (Thomas, 2008: 382–89). In an essay included in the 1955 exhibition catalogue for “*Kyō no shashin*”, Domon wrote that the Japanese display, compared to French works, did not sufficiently represent reality. In other words, Japanese photographs failed to convey adequately the emotional undercurrents flowing through their subjects. While he felt vacant when looking at images by Japanese photographers, he

⁹ For more on realism debates of the early 1950s, see Julia Adeney Thomas (2008).

¹⁰ For a full explanation of “beggar photography”, see Tanaka Masao (1953).

reported that he was filled with emotion by those of humanistic French photographers (Nihon Shashin Kyōkai, 2000: 406).

European humanist photography became popular in Japan precisely because of this desire for a higher emotional impact.¹¹ Throughout the 1950s, a steady stream of European humanist photographers published their works in the frontispieces of Japanese photography magazines. Observing these photos on a monthly basis, Japanese photographers applauded Robert Doisneau for his humour (*Asahi Kamera*, 1952: 7) and praised Edouard Boubat for capturing the “essence of the object” by pressing “the shutter at the best emotional moment” (Ina, 7: 1952). Domon cited Robert Capa in one critique of an amateur photo, urging the amateur to take note of the “deep emotion of [Capa] related to the motif”. Indeed, it is only the deep feeling of the photographer, Domon explained, that can create a “truly splendid photograph” (1950: 123-124).

The series “Gendai no kanjō” (“Moods and Expressions”) in *Asahi Kamera* exemplifies how Japanese photographers employed the emotional nuances favoured by European humanism. The magazine printed 69 instalments of the series between 1952 and 1957, making it one of the longest-running series in early postwar photography magazines. In the first instalment in May 1952, the editor offered the following introduction to the series: “Confused emotions flow in contemporary Japanese society. This series is a project of *Asahi Kamera*’s editorial department to express the feelings of society, taking as material the daily life of the Japanese who live in an age of hope and hardship” (author’s translation). As this series illustrates, capturing the sentiments of postwar society was fast becoming a cornerstone of Japan’s photographic community.

Many of the themes and subjects that appear throughout “Gendai no kanjō” epitomise the social, economic, and political challenges confronting early postwar Japan. In each photograph, the photographers’ careful attention to composition stirs an emotional response from the readers. Yoshioka Senzo’s photograph “Unmei no kora” (“The Children’s Fate”) ran as the second photo of the series in June 1952. Taken at the Elizabeth Saunders Home, an orphanage in Japan established in 1948 by Miki Sawada for children

¹¹ Japanese photographers and critics distinguished between European and American humanism, noting that US photography exhibited directed and stylised compositions with less emotional impact, whereas European photography tended to be more candid and emotive. Lighting also played a critical difference, with natural lighting (favoured by European photographers) better able to convey human emotion than the use of a flash (popular among American photographers) – see Kanamaru Shigene, Ina Nobuo & Kimura Ihei (1949).

born of relationships between Allied Occupation forces and Japanese women,¹² the image depicts a group of small children in an outdoor setting. Yoshioka zoomed in on the children, allowing nothing else to enter the frame aside from the lush trees that fill the background. Even so, the photographer kept enough distance to allow the viewer to take in the full details of the children's clothing and appearance. The camera peers at the children from a low angle, putting the viewer on the same level as the children's faces. Normally such a technique would allow the viewer a greater connection to the photographed subject; in this case, however, each child looks upwards towards the sky, breaking the connection between their gaze and the viewer and thus preventing the formation of a bond between viewer and children.

In an essay titled "Watashi no sakuga seishin" ("My Photographic Ethos"), Yoshioka explains that he has two eyes, that of the camera mechanism (*shashin no mekanizumu no me*) and the eye of his heart (*watashi no kokoro no me*) (author's translation). Yoshioka's philosophy as a photographer was to draw on both as he reacted in the decisive moment in order to seize the essence of the subject, thereby imparting an emotional imprint into his photographs (1953: 114). In his photograph of the orphans, Yoshioka at once created a close emotional connection to the children through an intimate and simple frame, yet managed to sever that connection by capturing them at that passing moment when all the children looked up at a bird in the sky. Additionally, the children are pictured without any adult or caretaker in the frame. In this way, Yoshioka evoked their precarious situation in Japanese society. In this photograph, Yoshioka demonstrates his ability to draw on both the eye of the camera mechanism and the eye of his heart to expertly seize the decisive moment and capture the emotion of the subject, portraying in a group of small children a scene of hardship in postwar society.

Cross-cultural encounters with European/US-American photography stimulated Japanese photographers' interest in strongly emotional portrayals of humanity. Yet these photographic encounters did not only influence Japanese photographic trends. Throughout the immediate postwar period, Japanese photographers served as cultural

¹² Reports on the number of children born of relations between Occupation personnel and Japanese citizens vary considerably. The US military's *Stars and Stripes* newspaper reported on 10 March, 1947, that between the start of the Occupation and June of that year, Japanese women in the Tokyo-Yokohama district would have given birth to 14,000 Amerasian babies. Two years later Miki Sawada estimated US servicemen had sired 200,000 babies in Japan. Masami Takada, head of the Children's Bureau of the Welfare Ministry, put the figure at 150,000. When the bureau conducted a survey in the spring of 1952, though, it found a total of only 5,002 Amerasian babies. See Sabin, Bruitt (2002), "They Came, They Saw, They Democratized". *The Japan Times*.

mediators by photographing instances of cross-cultural encounter and exchange. The next section examines how such photographs played a role in postwar formations of Japanese cultural identity.

Hybrid identities: Photographic depictions of Japanese and European/US-American Cultures

Before analysing how photographers visualised cultural identity, it is important to define the term itself. At the most basic level, cultural identity refers to an individual's definition of self in cultural terms. Such an identity is both personal and part of wider social structures, and is determined by the past as well as the present (Holland, 1998: 4). Individuals define a sense of self through available cultural resources—like photography—and in relation to major structural features of society. Such features include language, social class, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and generation (*Ibid.*: 7).

Before the Occupation, notions of Japanese identity were defined by war and by a totalitarian, militaristic regime. This impacted the visualisation of Japanese identity both at home and abroad; images made manifest wartime ideals espoused by the military government—harmony, chastity, and discipline (Orbaugh, 2012: 7)—that healthy men, women, and children were expected to embody in a unified effort to support the war. But the construction of a unique Japanese identity that instilled unity both at home and across the empire, in the words of Kirby Hammond, “fell apart after the war” (Hammond, 2015: 105). The end of the war effected drastic changes in Japanese society, readily reflected in photographs and other visual culture. While recent scholarship rightly cautions against drawing a distinct line between pre- and postwar Japan, those living in 1945 certainly must have felt that their way of life had been turned completely upside down (Orbaugh, 2012: 7). Defeat brought with it the destruction of political, social, and cultural institutions important in the shaping of Japan's identity. Furthermore, the millions of repatriated soldiers and civilians returning from Japan's former empire found themselves ostracised as they returned home, further contributing to a sense of fragmentation and turmoil.¹³ To make matters worse, many Japanese, such as soldiers and draftees, could not return to their prewar occupations and status because those original positions simply no longer existed (Hashimoto, 2015).

¹³ For more on repatriates and their experiences returning home, see Lori Watt (2009).

Complicating matters was the pervasive influx of European/US-American mass cultures occasioned by the overwhelming presence of Americans and other Allied personnel, creating an “epistemologically chaotic” time that made constructing identity “an especially challenging endeavour” (Orbaugh, 2012: 53-58). While this began with the Occupation,¹⁴ it persisted with the prolonged existence of the US in Japan throughout the Cold War.¹⁵ Of course, contact with European/US-American cultures was nothing new to the Japanese. During the Taishō era (1912 to 1926) there existed a particularly strong desire for European/US-American cultures, celebrated in the form of the “modern girl” (*moga*) and “modern boy” (*mobo*), a youth culture representative of an enthusiasm for the middle-class lifestyle, department stores, cinema, and jazz (Gordon, 2009: 155-157). When the wartime military government discouraged the material extravagance associated with European/US-American cultures, however, the *moga* and *mobo* all but disappeared. The trend towards westernisation renewed once again after the war, albeit in a very different context: the Allied Occupation. Political scientist Sodei Rinjirō notes that, during the Occupation, the Japanese looked to the United States as a “wellspring of culture” and a “cure” that would help Japan in its journey of postwar recovery (2001: 263). Sociologist Yoshimi Shunya points especially to the impact of the American Occupiers on the “ears” and “eyes” of the Japanese—embodying a “whole new way of life” for postwar society (2015). Japanese citizens constantly encountered European/US-American cultures through contact with Occupation personnel, print media, and the activities of the Occupation’s Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E).

While some Japanese looked to the US as a “wellspring of culture”, the Occupation itself promoted American culture as a symbol of democracy, spearheaded by the CI&E’s attempts at teaching and reforming Japanese citizens along a democratic path. To give one example, the CI&E established centres, staffed by American librarians and visited by roughly two million Japanese, to encourage the consumption of print and visual media that promoted American culture, lifestyle, and democratic values (Takemae, 2002: 395-396). As cultural centres, the libraries were created with the specific intent to reorient Japanese “peoples and institutions” (Ochi, 2006: 359-360). As a result of this and other

¹⁴ John Dower’s *Embracing Defeat* laid the groundwork for studies of Japanese culture and identity during the Occupation. Literary scholars Michael Molasky and Sharalyn Orbaugh examine how Japanese authors used literature to negotiate the humiliating experience of defeat and Occupation, as well as the postwar identity crisis that went with it. See Michael Molasky (1999).

¹⁵ For more on how Cold War cultural dynamics impacted Japanese culture, see Jan Bardsley (2014); Koikari Mire (2008); Shibusawa Naoko (2006); and Marukawa Tetsushi (2005).

projects, Japanese “eyes” and “ears” avidly listened to American music, watched Hollywood cinema, and looked with a keen desire to the latest fashions worn by Occupation personnel and exhibited in magazines, fashion shows, and department store window displays. While American culture certainly remained dominant in the immediate postwar period, European culture abounded as well, principally through the popularity of French cinema and fashion. Parisian fashions in particular, such as the designs of Christian Dior, enticed Japanese women once Japan began its rapid economic ascension from the mid- 1950s (Koizumi, 2008: 30).

Photography magazines played a key role in the ongoing postwar cultural exchange, giving space for Japanese photographers to negotiate formations of cultural identity by representing visually the adoption and adaptation of European/US-American cultural influences.¹⁶ In the wake of defeat, photographers employed photography as a cultural resource to contribute to discourses on Japanese culture and to the creation of a new Japan. Writing in the first postwar edition of *Kamera*, editor Kuwabara Kunio positioned photography’s role in a new Japan as one of promoting cultural education. Photographers, Kuwabara urged, should follow worldly progress and aim to pursue cultural significance in their work. He called for amateurs to rise from hibernation and to communicate a peaceful and beautiful Japan. Photographers faced a seemingly insurmountable challenge in overcoming material shortages, not to mention food, housing, and other material needs. Yet despite the “burned ruins” on which *Kamera*’s publishers stood, its duty was to bring Japanese readers a vision of Japanese culture that was high class and pure (Kuwabara, 1946: 112). Kuwabara was not alone in expressing such sentiments,¹⁷ demonstrating that the connection photographers made between photography, culture, and representing a new Japan was central from the initial postwar years.

Among cultural commentators, one prominent discourse on identity centred around preeminent folklorist Yanagita Kunio, who in the prewar period used culture to reinforce the image of Japan as a unified, homogenous culture; however, this homogenous culture was still complex (*fukugōtai*): the old and the new, the foreign and the domestic combined

¹⁶ The publication of these images was particularly important for identity formation. Images provide the viewer with a means of identification through the process of assimilating “an aspect, property or attribute of that which is seen, and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model which the other—in this instance the image—provides” (Wells, 2009: 294).

¹⁷ An announcement for submissions to *ARS Shashin Nenkan* posted in early 1947 encouraged photographers to submit their work with the promise that the annual welcomed any style. The most important thing was that the photos be worthy of appreciation and suitable to a new Japan. And in an essay in the 1948 annual, Nagahama linked amateur photography to the construction of a new cultural nation.

to make Japanese culture “dynamic and adaptive” (Morris-Suzuki, 1995: 766). By the postwar period, the definition of culture as encompassing a national unity and blending new and old “was taken for granted” (*Ibid.*: 768). Yanagita’s conception of Japanese culture as *fukugōtai* is a prominent characteristic of photographs in postwar popular photography journals, envisioned most readily in depictions of women.

Through their clothing, posture, and surroundings, photographs of women at times signified modern European/US-American influences—the “new” and “foreign” aspect of Japan’s *fukugōtai* culture. Indeed, the media often used women to promote the diffusion of European/US-American, especially American, culture into Japanese society (Yoshimi, 2015), a process that continued well into the 1950s as Cold War pressures moulded Japanese women in the media as symbols of democratic progress, economic recovery, and modern domesticity (Bardsley, 2014: 2). Fashion itself reflected effects of the Occupation on formations of Japanese cultural identity. According to political scientist and museum director Marloes Krijnen, fashion is “one of the most primal ways humans define their identity” and a “powerful tool” that “communicate[s] who we are” (2019: 3). Postwar Japanese society witnessed an intense interest in European/US-American clothing styles almost from the start of the Occupation, and Japanese at the time considered this era to be a new epoch in Japanese clothing trends, as discussed in Katō Tomoko’s essay “*Saiken Nihon no fukusō*” (“Clothing of a Rebuilt Japan”). By taking old materials and old clothing, Katō declared, Japanese women could make something new and express their own individuality and style (Katō, 1946: n.p.). The accompanying illustrations, all showcasing European/US-American designs, plainly indicate that the author envisioned a new postwar fashion defined by European/US-American trends. Articles like Katō’s appeared frequently in early postwar media, anticipating the European/US-American clothing “boom” from the early 1950s.

Scholar Koizumi Kazuko calls the postwar boom in European/US-American fashion a clothing revolution, emphasising this point by looking to the sudden increase in European/US-American dressmaking schools. In the first years after the end of the war, European/US-American styles were not sold in Japanese stores—women had to make their own, leading to an explosion in European/US-American dressmaking schools. In 1947, there were 400 such schools with around 45,000 students. By 1951 this rose to 2,400 hundred schools, and by 1955, there were 2,700 schools with around 500,000 students. This was a nearly one thousand percent increase in students in less than ten

years (Koizumi, 2008: 30-31). Japanese street photographers captured this clothing revolution on film. Yamada Shuhei, for example, snapped a photo of a young girl on a sidewalk dressed in long skirt, bobby socks, and saddle oxfords, engrossed in reading a magazine illustrated with women in European/US-American designer fashions. Yoshida Senzo's "Dress Making School" depicts young designers adorning models in their European/US-American-style creations; and "Diōru shō yori" (English title "Intense Interest") by Ōtsuka Gen shows an audience of Japanese women riveted by models in Christian Dior garments walking down the runway. In each of these instances, photography, as a product of cross-cultural encounters, demonstrates Japanese society's widespread embrace of European/US-American clothing styles.

Despite their popularity, representations of European/US-American fashions in Japanese photography magazines did not completely supplant images of Japanese clothing customs.¹⁸ Photographs of women in kimono usually incorporate other elements—*shoji* screens, tea, *tatami* flooring, ink scrolls—that work to reinforce an image of traditional Japan. Notably, photographers made a clear distinction between photographing women in Japanese- and European/US-American-style garments, illustrated by two articles in a special publication on photographing women by ARS publishing. In "Kimono no josei wo utsusu" ("Photographing Women in Kimono"), the author cautioned readers to consider carefully kimono patterns and hairstyles (Fukuda, 1952: 34-37). The kimono should be of simple color and pattern to make the woman's face and figure more beautiful, the author explained, and the hairstyle should be short or gathered up to expose the nape of the neck. The author concedes that a more modern (i.e. urban) environment could provide refreshing contrast to kimono; however, most photographs in this article show women indoors with a *shoji* screen backdrop or in a garden setting. While the author failed to mention so specifically, the use of such props and backdrops was clearly meant to underscore the Japanese-ness of the clothing.

In the second article, titled "Yōsō josei no satsuei: Sutairu to fukusō sono ta" ("Photographing Women Dressed in Western Style: Style, Clothes, etc"), the author emphasised the individuality of the women as an inherent element of European/US-

¹⁸ In her study of representations of Japan and the Occupation in *The Japan Times* from 1945 to 1964, Fabienne Darling-Wolf argues that the experience of European/US-American cultural influences was one of "hybridisation rather than imposition", pointing to photographs showing how Japanese incorporated European/US-American cultures into their own traditional cultural practices such as *hina matsuri* (doll festival) and *geisha* who served European/US-American Christmas shoppers (2004: 415).

American fashion. Even if the garments suit one model, he stated, she cannot wear them if the clothes match those worn by another (Nagashima, 1952: 32-34). Noticeably, one of the models poses with English-language fashion magazines. It was common at this time for objects of obvious European/US-American origins to appear as props in portraits of women wearing European/US-American-style garments, or to photograph the women in urban environments, usually in close proximity to automobiles or imposing ferroconcrete buildings. As with the photographs that accompanied the previous article, the environment and props reinforced the clothing and appearance of the women.

Photographers negotiated an identity that was both Japanese and yet one that incorporated European/US-American influences by sequencing photographs of women in distinctly Japanese and distinctly European/US-American clothing styles, thus highlighting the *fukugōtai* nature of Japanese culture. Editors frequently juxtaposed images that featured European/US-American and Japanese material culture in two-page spreads or in a succession of photographs. Appositions occurred with other cultural material as well. In a June 1953 issue, *Asahi Kamera* sandwiched an article on photographing European/US-American cuisines between photos of traditional farm life in Akita and sumo wrestling. *ARS Shashin Nenkan* printed a photo of a stylish Tokyo family dressed in the latest European/US-American trends on a day out in the famed Asakusa entertainment district opposite a depiction of village life in the rural snow country (1951). And in a December 1948 two-page spread in *Koga Gekkan*, two Japanese children decorate a Christmas tree on one page, while on the next an *oni* (demon) Nō mask floats eerily against a black background. These represent only a small fraction of the many juxtapositions between Japanese and European/US-American material cultures that appeared in popular photography journals.

At times, this complex Japan-European/US-American binary existed within a single frame. A photograph in the 1949 *ARS Shashin Nenkan* depicts a woman standing on a sidewalk, seemingly frozen in time as the street activity whirls around her. With stylish permed hair, dark lipstick, and a fashionable blouse, the woman seems like she could pose on the cover of *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*. Behind her, two women walk across the frame robed in elegant kimono. Similarly, in a photo essay on Asakusa's "*Sanja Matsuri*" (*Asahi Kamera*, September 1955), photographer Tanuma Takeyoshi included what quickly became a famous snapshot of two young girls dressed in kimono and striped *happi* coats mingling in the street next to two girls in cardigans and swing skirts.

Juxtapositions between Japanese and European/US-American clothing—whether they appeared across multiple pages or within a single frame—show how photographers and editors negotiated cultural identity through a Japan-European/US-American binary by retaining clear depictions of Japanese culture even in the face of a European/US-American cultural invasion. On the other hand, the inclusion of both within a single frame highlights how elements of the two cultures frequently encountered one another in the streets and in everyday life, rather than existing in strictly separate spheres, thus suggesting a process of cultural hybridisation in the early postwar period. And finally, it is notable that depictions of Japanese cultural practices rarely appeared subordinate to European/US-American cultures—an important point considering the hegemonic position of the US vis-à-vis Japan during the Occupation. Rather, photographers frequently portrayed both in an equally positive light.

Cross-cultural encounters and mutual influences

This article has examined how popular photography journals functioned as sites of cross-culture exchange between Japanese and European/US-American photographers. This exchange had a profound impact on the development of postwar Japanese photographic trends, among them the rise of nude photography as a type of art photography, and the widespread appeal of human-interest photography—that is, photographing people in their everyday lives. Concerning the latter, Japanese photographers found particular inspiration in famed photographers such as Brassai and Doisneau for their ability to centralise the emotional impact of the photographed subject.

Examining photography as a site of cross-cultural encounter also sheds light on the diffusion of European/US-American cultures into Japanese society. One of the most prominent examples is the adoption of popular European/US-American fashion trends, but this is by no means the only case. Other evidence of cultural influences include couples walking hand-in-hand (an act discouraged before the arrival of the Occupation), crowds cheering at baseball games and tennis matches, and even Japanese members of the National Police Reserves stylised as the new “Japanese G.I.”—an image that appeared in numerous periodicals, including a 7 July 1954 issue of *Asahi Guraifu* (*Asahi Graphic*). “The members of the National Safety Force”, the featured stated, “spend their weekend in a fashion they learned from American G.I.s stationed in Japan. They pick up girls around the station and enjoy transient romance in various places.” The write-up on the “Japanese G.I.”

ends with the simple observation that before 1945, “Japanese soldiers were never allowed to be seen with girls in public”. Aside from illustrating the remilitarisation of Japan that began with the so-called Reverse Course in 1947, these images of the “Japanese G.I.” display a masculine identity remade vis-à-vis American servicemen. As this and other examples suggest, then, photographic representations of both cultures indicate formations of a cultural hybridity that resulted from cross-cultural encounters in the immediate postwar period.

Photographic influences did not flow in one direction solely from European/US-American to Japanese photographers. A number of the American and European photographers mentioned in this article spent months or even years in Japan, engaging with Japanese photographers and photographing Japanese people, locations, traditions and daily life—later publishing their images for European/US-American audiences. Werner Bischof, for example, sojourned in Japan on his way to an assignment in the Korean War. Upon completion of his work, Bischof returned to Japan and stayed for nearly a year. The images from his time in Japan, published as a monograph in 1954, display an impressive array of subjects and settings that demonstrate his deep appreciation for and interest in Japanese culture. Serene rock gardens of Buddhist temples are interspersed with chaotic, jumbled urban vistas, sumo matches with volleyball and baseball games, and traditional silk dying in Kyoto with colossal cranes in a Tokyo shipyard. Even though his book was published for a German-speaking audience, Japanese audiences also took interest in Bischof’s views of Japan. Kimura Ihei, who formed a close bond with Bischof, proclaimed that his photos captured the quiet beauty of Japan with Japanese eyes (Tori-hara, 2013: 103).

Bischof is just one example among many—what of other photographers? What stimulated their interest in Japan? What subjects did they capture, and how were they represented? How were their photographs received back home? Did contact and exchange with Japan influence European or American photographic trends? Consideration of such questions of cross-cultural encounter and exchange can lead to insights on mutual influences between Japanese and European/US-American photographic communities.

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