

Basil Hall Chamberlain old stock photography books

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1. Four old photo books in the 19th century

In 2008, Multi-media and Socio-information Studies Archive (MSSA), Interfaculty Initiative in Information studies, The University of Tokyo bought four old printed photograph books to research a visual culture of the Meiji era. These books are supposed to belong to Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935) — the first professor of the department of Japanese of the Imperial University (present department of literature of The University of Tokyo) —. They are high definition photography books with colotype print made by Ogawa Kazumasa (1860-1929). He is one of the most famous studio photographers from the middle of the Meiji era to Taisho era, and probably his photo books were widely sold in general market. Although has been published for 120 years, the photographs on these book have no sign of degradation.

Each large photo books entitled *SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan*, *The Hakone District*, *SCENES FROM THE CHIUSHINGURA AND THE Story of the Forty-Seven Ronin* and *The Volcanoes of Japan* represent Japanese landscapes and cultures in the middle of Meiji era, including short explanations in English. Moreover, the publisher is printed on the three out of four photo books as KELLY & WALSH Limited. It can be inferred from these books that the publishing company which had distribution route all over the world — in Asia, Yokohama, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore — issued them for foreign residents and travelers to Japan.

In this paper, I would introduce outline of these photograph collection and Chamberlain. Next I will examine Ogawa Kazumasa who took and printed various pictures on these books. Finally, I investigate the photo culture before the diffusion of printing technology of photography at the end of the Meiji era.

2. Basil Hall Chamberlain

Basil Hall Chamberlain was born as serviceman's son in Britain, and he came to Japan in 1873. As foreign advisors hired by the Japanese government, he taught English at a naval academy a year after he arrived. He conducted studies on Ryukyu, Ainu and other languages

which made him become the first professor of Japanese and Hakugen-gaku (current linguistics) of the Imperial University in 1888. As a professor, he brought up several eminent scholars. He had vigorously researched until leaving Japan in 1911.

According to a certain research, Chamberlain had about 15,000 books in his personal library (Akasaka Bunko). A part of historical materials related to him is kept in The National Archives of UK, Public Record Office and Aichi University of Education (B.H.Chamberlain and T.Sugiura Collection). In addition, at this university, a part of his beautiful 6,000 postcards is opened to public.

Chamberlain wrote many tomes and dictionaries in Japan. For example, *A Handbook of Colloquial Japanese* (1888) is a basically typical text of Japanese grammar, and *Things Japanese* (1890) is the first encyclopedia about Japan. He wrote a lot of books that introduced Japanese language and culture for foreigners. Especially, *A Handbook for Travelers in Japan* (John Murray, 1891) written with W.B.Mason was reprinted as many as nine times and became an indispensable book for traveler to Japan.

It is easy to imagine that Chamberlain acquired some photographs and photo books published at that time as materials of Japanese culture, however, these four

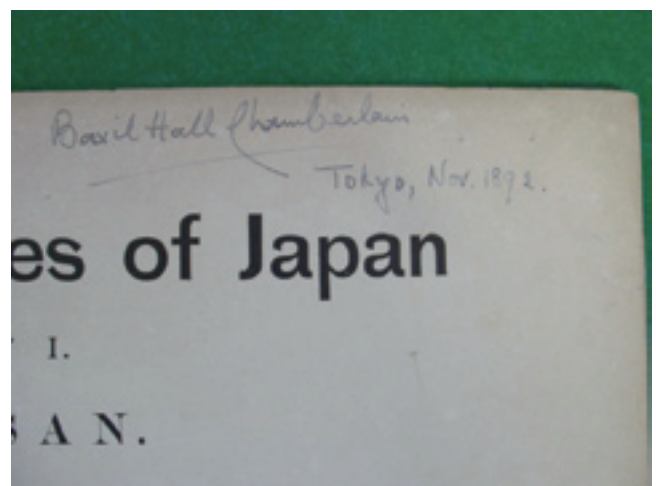


Fig.1 B. H. Chamberlain's signature
(*The Volcanoes of Japan*)

books are valuable samples since they have the owner's signature and autograph description (Fig.1).

3. Contents of photo books

3 - 1. *SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan*

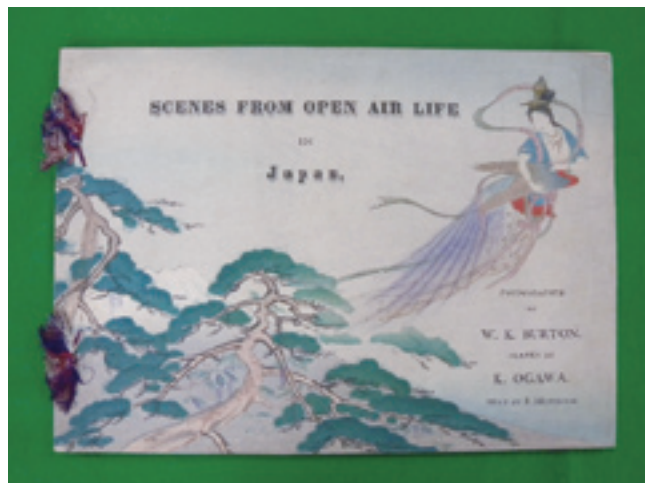


Fig.2 *SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan*



Fig.3 Hucksters by the foot-path on Ginza.
(*SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan*)

Actually MSSA has four Chamberlain's photo books; however, due to limited space, I will introduce only three. First, *SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan* (Fig.2) is rectangular large size photo book which has fourteen pictures taken by William Kinninmond Burton (1855-1899), and Ogawa Kazumasa printed by collotype. James Murdoch (1856-1921) — known as a person who taught English to the young Natsume Souseki — took charge of the content of this book. The cover art is an exquisite celestial maiden flying out from Mt. Fuji. This book has neither colophon nor information about publisher; however, from the peculiar printing type at the

cover, it can be assumed that this book was published by KELLY & WALSH Limited.

Burton who took all photographs appearing in this book is a foreign specialist for public works hired by the Japanese government. He had an extensive knowledge and a wide variety of interest including photography. He is a superior photographer known as a member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. He played an important part in Nihon Syashin Kai (Japan photography association, the first association of private photography enthusiast in Japan) organized in 1889. Moreover, he had a deep friendship with Ogawa Kazumasa, Burton introduced Ogawa to the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain and supported him to be the first Japanese who get the title of F.R.P.S.. In 1891, Burton took some photos at the disaster area of great earthquake in Aichi; then, Ogawa printed and published in the title *The Great Earthquake in Japan, 1891* with collotype print. Published year of *SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan* is not clear, but is surmised around 1892 based on their relationship and publishing business.

The large size photographs in this book are all taken in Tokyo. Each photograph has a short description which is one or two lines caption and few pages of explanation. In the first half of this book, there are five scenes of flower viewing of Ueno and Mukoujima; three scenes of Asakusa Sunday market and laborers. Next, two pictures entitled "Children playing around the well" (children's daily life) are printed in this book. Furthermore, there is one photograph entitled "Asakusa — A Komori (Girl-nurse)". In the latter part of this book, there are photos showing street vendors of Ginza (Fig.3) along with Asakusa and scenery of Ryouunkaku and many event flags entitled "The Shows of Asakusa". The feature of the photograph in this book is to pay attention to Japanese people's daily life in those days. Murdoch wrote "It is the scope of this album to depict stray sights and scenes culled from the plethora of this open-air Tokyo life" in the preface, these photographs are inferred to gather and edit determinedly.

3 - 2. *The Hakone District*

The Hakone District (Fig.4) is a photo book of Hakone, a very popular place among foreigner at that time. This book is large and long in length with seventeen pictures. Murdoch is written on the cover of the book as an author same as *SCENES FROM OPEN AIR LIFE IN Japan*. According to the colophon, it was published on September 10, 1892. Ogawa kazumasa took charge of the print-

ing and publishing, and Tokyo Tsukiji Type Factory is listed as the printers. Considering the collotype technology used in this book, it is no doubt that Ogawa was responsible for photo printing. In addition, this book follows general design of Ogawa's photograph books at the time; it is supposed that he sold the same kind of books serially.

The most important point of this book is the map of Hakone revised by Chamberlain's own handwriting (Fig.5). On the woodblock color print map in this book,



Fig.4 *The Hakone District*



Fig.5 Corrected page (*The Hakone District*)

it is written "THE MAP OF THE HAKONE DISTRICT"; however those words are crossed out corrected as "MIYANOSHITA and HAKONE" by handwriting. From various corrections to name of place on the map, it can be surmised that he knew this area well enough at that time.

All printed photographs that shooting scenic landscape of Hakone in this book resembles "Yokohama Shasin" (Japanese souvenir photography for foreigner). It has been described that pictures are taken by Ogawa; however, Ogawa himself stated in the book that some of them were taken by Burton and Kusakabe Kinbei (1841-1934) — the President of huge factory of "Yokohama Shasin" — .

3 - 3. *SCENES FROM THE CHIUSHINGURA* *AND THE Story of the Forty-Seven Ronin*



Fig.6 *SCENES FROM THE CHIUSHINGURA*
AND THE Story of the Forty-Seven Ronin



Fig.7 Harakiri of Lord Aasano
(*SCENES FROM THE CHIUSHINGURA AND THE Story of the Forty-Seven Ronin*)

of the *Forty-Seven Ronin* (Fig.6) is almost the same design and size as *The Hakone District*. According to the colophon, the author is Murdoch and most photographs are taken by Ogawa Kazumasa. Published on December 17, 1892, there are fifteen large photos by Ogawa and two pictures by Kajima Seibei (1866-1924), one of the most famous photographers at that time and he had connection with Ogawa.

The pictures on this book start with the stage photo (Fig.7) showing a scene of Harakiri (suicide) of Lord Asano who committed bodily injury in the Edo castle. However, after that are series of tomb photos of Ako Roshi (heroes of this story) at Sengaji, Tokyo (from plate 1 to 4). Especially plate 4 is a picture of Daibutsu, a typical Japanese landscape which has no relationship to this story. After plate 5, printed photos return to stage photograph again; then, they narrate the story from the beginning to the end.

The same sort of this photography book is in the possession of International Research Center for Japanese Studies entitled *DORAMA OF FORTY SEVEN RONINS*. All pictures in this book are all colored. Particularly, the blood color paint is quite lurid on Harakiri scene. These photo books are printed by collotype at Ogawa's factory from 1892 to 1895 and sometimes colored by hand.

4. Photo books of Ogawa Kazumasa

In addition, *The Volcanoes of Japan* (Fig.8) is rectangular large size photo book, published by KELLY & WALSH Limited. This book uses Mt. Fuji as the theme and was published after the book published by Ogawa Kazumasa Shuppan-bu (publishing house) on the same subject (H.G.Ponting, *Fujisan*, October 1905).

Thus, many photography books were published from 1890s to 1900s, and a person who attempted to utilize technological innovation and expand the shooting subjects was Ogawa Kazumasa. He brought back the latest



Fig.8 *The Volcanoes of Japan*

printing technology from U.S.A. to Japan in 1880s, opened a large-scale collotype printing company with photo studio "Gyokujun-kan"; made and sold high definition printed photo books for foreigner mainly during the first half of 1890s. Then, in the latter half of 1890s, the trend of photo books shifted to more cheaper and smaller, Ogawa changed his shooting subjects to war and current topics. He understood customer's taste and adjusted the components of his photography. From these four photo collections, we can realize his earliest attempt concerning photo book.

Until recently, it was not clear that who are the target groups of these photo books at that time. Hence, the discovery of Chamberlain old stock photography books proves that hired foreigners were the readers of these books. Further discovery and analysis is needed in the future.

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