

The Present-day Significance of the 'Shibusawa Films' for Landscape Research Data: An Example of Southern Korea

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1. Landscape Photographs from the Shibusawa Films

The Institute for the Study of Japanese Folk Culture at Kanagawa University owns the Shibusawa Films, an archive of more than 4,000 still photographs and a small number of movies shot taken before World War II by Keizō Shibusawa, a businessman and folklore scholar. The Shibusawa Films a collection of the still photographs mainly serve as records of folk practices and folk implements, but quite a few photos also capture the precious scenery of the time. Some were taken in the former Japanese colonies such as Korea, Taiwan, and the eastern part of China.

Most of those photos, 235 shots, were taken on the Korean Peninsula. More than half, or 125, were shot in Ulsan in the southeast of the peninsula, and another 58 were taken throughout the Korean Archipelago. This report focuses on Shibusawa's landscape photographs of the southern Korean Peninsula in the 1930s in an attempt to examine their significance from geographic standpoint. I will also assess their significance as landscape photographs by comparing the pictures chronologically and regionally.

2. The Concept of Landscape in Terms of Geography

(1) The Definition of Landscape

Landscape research once flourished as a major field of geography in Japan, but it was sidelined as economic geography became popular in the high-economic growth period of the 1960s. In the 1980s research on landscape came under the spotlight again. Today, such research is conducted in various fields including history, folklore, sociology, architecture, civil engineering, agriculture, philosophy, and literature, not to mention geography. In April 2005 cultural landscape became a new category of cultural properties. In addition, the Landscape Law has taken effect in order to provide that sound landscapes should be the common property of Japan. These changes have been fueling the enthusiasm for research and discussion on the subject.

"Landscape" and "scenery" are used interchangeably in our everyday lives. Yet, only "landscape" is recognized as a term used in geography and botany. In the field of geography, landscapes are divided into two categories: natural and cultural. The former is defined as untouched landscape. Natural landscapes include inanimate components such as oceans, mountains, and rivers, and biotic components like plants. They evolve under the influence of earthquakes, crustal deformation, mountain building, the global circulation of water and air, and climate changes. Cultural landscapes are interpreted as landscapes created by human activities including cities, villages, and cultivated land. Cultural landscapes evolve as the result of economic activities like business and manufacturing as well as politics. In traditional research, landscapes are examined based on phenomenal and surface aspects, that is, location, size, and shape.

The majority of today's landscapes are defined as cultural, which serve as a trace of human activities and which continue to evolve. A landscape itself does not tell us anything; we have to work on it and get something out of it. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the significance of landscape as nonwritten material. Nevertheless, the COE program at Kanagawa University, which strives for the systematization of nonwritten cultural materials for the study of human societies, considers landscapes one form of nonwritten material in human culture, and our members in the field of human geography intend to play a lead role in establishing and systematizing its status.

When studying cultural landscape, it is not enough to pay attention to chronological changes in terms of the passage of time or history. We also need to take into account regional differences, namely spatial changes. Furthermore, we have to think of how we can discover the invisible as we take components out of a visible

landscape and consider their composition. In other words, we need to find out how landscapes have been created and composed in interaction with human activities.

(2) Chronological and Spatial Changes in Landscape

Chronological changes of landscape can be found by comparing a given landscape in chronological order in the manner of a fixed-point observation. We do not ordinarily pay attention to landscapes or scenery nor, when we see it every day, do we notice changes. However, observing the same landscape after 5 or 10 years makes us aware of significant changes. Recording and analyzing changes in a familiar landscape can help us grasp the process of transformation.

To this end, we need to photograph or sketch a particular place from the same angle and location at regular intervals. For institutions like museums, it is effective to build models of a landscape of different times and compare them. It is not until we make chronological comparisons of a given landscape that we can analyze changes. For the purpose of analysis, we need to take into account components of a landscape such as geographical features, architectural structures, street networks, land zoning, and demographic changes. Then, we have to analyze the composition of the landscape, classify architectural structures, assess the functions of each component, and evaluate geographic conditions of architectural structures before looking into chronological changes. A landscape photograph is merely a piece of a still image; however, it contains quite a lot of useful information. An assessment of the usefulness of landscape photographs as nonwritten material depends on whether we have techniques to discover invisible compositions beyond phenomenal or surface factors.

Let's examine how this might work by looking at photographs of Sagamiōno Station and its neighborhood in the southern part of Sagami-hara City, Kanagawa Prefecture. The city, 40 kilometers from Tōkyō and 25 kilometers from Yokohama, has changed considerably due to rapid urbanization after World War II. Photo 1 was taken in 1957. Behind the train is a platform. Other than a few houses to the right of the north exit of the station, what we see is mountains, a forest, cultivated plots and open fields. Sagami-hara became a city in 1952, and the population was just 90,000 when the picture was taken. Photo 2 was taken in 1985, 27 years later. The area had changed significantly; a land readjustment program had been implemented, and almost all of the forest and agricultural fields had been converted to parking lots or buildings, although there is a bit of forest remaining. The population of Sagami-hara City had grown to 480,000, or by 400,000 since 1957. To our surprise, changes to the landscape of the city continued to accelerate after 1985. Photo 3 shows how in the 8 years from 1985 to 1993, high-rise buildings mushroomed around the station and a two-story parking lot had been built; a new station building was also under construction in 1993. In Photo 4, which was taken in 1998, we can see a huge station building had emerged. The landscape had undergone a complete "transformation," and the population of the city had reached 580,000 that year.

If we look at Photo 1 and Photo 4 only, there is no way to tell they were taken in the same location. It is probably hard to tell so even if we compare Photo 2 and Photo 4, taken 13 years apart. For an area rapidly urbanizing like Sagamiōno, it is impossible to use landscape photographs as nonwritten materials for research unless we have photographs to keep track of changes and allow us to identify the area in question.

(3) The Shibusawa Films as Landscape Photographs

As mentioned earlier, Ulsan is where most of the Korean pictures in the Shibusawa collection were taken. The photos were shot in Dal-ri village in August, 1931, an area today known as Taldom in Num Ward, Ulsan Metropolitan City. Ulsan, now with a population of one million, is located 50 kilometers northeast of Pusan. Shibusawa conducted a 45-day field study there. Dal-ri was a farming village, and the population of Ulsan Village (old downtown) was 11,000 according to old data. As for Photo 5, even though it was extremely difficult to pinpoint where it was taken, we have managed to identify it as the old downtown area of Ulsan, northeast of Dal-ri. We can see vast cultivated fields in the picture.

Identifying the location was difficult because Dal-ri underwent drastic landscape change over the next 70 years. Ulsan and Sagami-hara have a lot in common in terms of development. Ulsan was recognized as a city in 1962, when the population was 80,000. The population kept skyrocketing: 410,000 in 1980, 680,000 in 1990. In 2000, it reached 1,010,000. In the midst of the transformation, the landscape in Photo 5 had changed to what we see in Photo 6, taken in August 2005. The cultivated land had been replaced by a modern city. We can see a vast expanse of high-rise condominiums in the background.

An unchangeable geographic feature, the mountains in this case, was the key to identifying where the pictures were taken. Prior to our visit to the area, we speculated about the exact location by looking at the topographic map of the area and comparing it with the pictures, paying special attention to the mountains. When we got to the area, we found out that it was impossible to observe the landscape on the ground because high-rise buildings blocked our view. Therefore, we looked for a tall building with a rooftop deck as close to the speculated spot as possible and examined the landscape from there. Photo 6 was taken back then as a record of the landscape change even though the location is not exactly the same as where the rest of the pictures were taken.

We can tell that the mountain ridge in the background and the shape of the hill to the left in Photo 5 are identical to those in Photo 6. The height of the hill, called Mt. Hak Seon is 59 meters, and it has been converted to a park. Had we human beings altered the mountains radically, it would have been even harder to pinpoint where the pictures were taken.

To get a full record of landscape change, we need more pictures of the Ulsan area to fill the chronological gaps, as in the case of Sagami-ōno. As for pictures whose photograph locations are unknown, we must examine old pictures of an area in question and track how the landscape has changed. If these conditions are met, the value of the Shibusawa Films as a landscape archive will increase considerably.

We have also found an area which has not really changed over the past 70 years. Shibusawa conducted a 3-day field research starting on August 17, 1931 around Tadohae, or Sea of Many Islands, off the southwest corner of the Korean peninsula. Photo 7 for example, taken in Jin-ri village on Imjado Island, shows paddy fields, paths, and houses with thatched roofs. We can also see a forest and cultivated land in the hill behind the houses.

We could figure out where the pictures were taken because the village was close to a harbor. We referred to a topographic map of the area to confirm the land features and location of the village before we actually observed the landscape. Photo 8 was taken in September 2004 at the same angle from the same location as Photo 7. Once again we could identify the spot thanks to the mountains in the background.

The landscape of the area has not changed over the past 70 years. Some of the paddy fields have been converted into cornfields, but the land is still mostly cultivated. A village of the same size still remains although the roofs of the houses are no longer thatched. The trees on the top of the hill have not changed.

Nevertheless, if we take a close look at the components of the landscape, some changes become apparent. A Christian church has been built in the village, and the houses have been renovated with tiled roofs replacing thatched ones. Utility poles have been set up. About 100 meters to the left of the photograph location, a grocery store has opened although that is not captured in the picture. A careful examination of pictures enables us to detect changes in economic and social life.

3. Use and Systemization of Landscape Photographs as Research Materials

Compared to Ulsan, the Jin-ri landscape has gone through minor changes. Yet, even the area which has not been subjected to urbanization is changing gradually. We can see that by comparing the components of its landscape in chronological order.

Comparisons of each component of a landscape reveal various aspects of landscape change. A close examination of architectural structures and their materials tells us how buildings have been changed in terms of height, size, and fire resistance. A close look at the geometry and structure of street networks shows that streets have been straightened, expanded, paved, and divided into roadways and sidewalks. By examining land

arrangement and planting, we can also see how land has come to be zoned into small square blocks and how some land has come to be used for urban agriculture

The Shibusawa Films do not include many landscape photographs. Most capture folk implements and people from the viewpoint of folklore. Out of 235 pictures taken in the Korean Peninsula, only 67, or 30%, depict landscape. However, in the entire collection of Shibusawa Pictures, more than 1000 out of 4000 depict landscape before World War II.

The Shibusawa Films are valuable in the field of geography since they enable us to discover the process of changes over time when compared with current landscapes. In other words, they serve as records which reveal the features of a given landscape at a certain point of time. Another significance of the Shibusawa Pictures is that a comparison of landscapes of the same time period in the pictures gives us the means to track regional changes. They function as materials which show us regional characteristics in a certain period of time.

However, in order to use the Shibusawa Films as study materials we have to overcome many obstacles. For example, we must identify the exact locations and camera angles based on the names of villages recorded in the pictures because the locations of Shibusawa's picture shoots are unidentified. In an extreme case, the only clue we get is just the name of the country, "South Korea." Therefore, identifying the locations will be painstaking work.

In order to pinpoint the locations, topographic information recorded as landscape in the pictures plays a key role. We have to retrace Shibusawa's trip, compare several pictures, and speculate on the exact locations using the natural features such as mountains and rivers as clues, though that requires a lot of time and effort. Furthermore, we need to collaborate with folklore scholars and historians in reading up on folk implements and folkways of the era based on the Shibusawa Pictures.

When looking at photographs as nonwritten materials, we tend to regard them as secondary materials because they are different from direct materials such as folk implements and archive documents which give us definite, clear-cut information. However, it is obvious that we can't preserve landscape as it is. We can only preserve it in the form of models or photographs. When using landscape as study materials, photographs do serve as direct reference materials, and we must consider what is captured in pictures -- our target of research. To enhance the value of pictures as nonwritten materials, we must look into the unseen components of landscape such as social systems and the way people thought in the era, namely social, political, and economic structures.

<References>

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<Photos>

- Photo 1 Sagamiōno Station and its Neighborhood in 1959 (from “Minamiōno” published by Minamiōno Elementary School, 1982)

- Photo 2 Sagamiōno Station and its Neighborhood in 1985 by Hiroaki Hamada

- Photo 3 Sagamiōno Station and its Neighborhood in 1993 by Hiroaki Hamada

- Photo 4 Sagamiōno Station and its Neighborhood in 1998 by Hiroaki Hamada

- Photo 5 The Northeast View from a Public Square in Dal-ri, owned by Institute for the Study of Japanese Folk Culture: SA3885

- Photo 6 The Northeast View from Dal-dong by Hiroaki Hamada, August 17, 2005

- Photo 7 A Paddy Field and a Village in Jin-ri, owned by Institute for the Study of Japanese Folk Culture: SA2024

- Photo 8 A Paddy Field and a Village in Jin-ri by Hiroaki Hamada, September 11, 2004