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Preface

> We seek, here, to open a dialogue, an investigation, on the subject of cultural identity and representation. Of course, the "I" who writes here must also be thought of as, itself, "enunciated."
> — Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

This work grew out of a conversation I had during my first visit to Guatemala in 2012. A researcher, who knew of my interest in historical photography, suggested that I visit the collection of a "fotógrafo japonés." My East Asian origin might have prompted him to think of Yasu Kōhei or Juan José de Jesús Yas, who is considered to be the first Japanese immigrant to the country. The café where we sat was in the historic center of Guatemala City, where many shops selling imported goods and textiles are run by descendants of Cantonese merchants and immigrants from Taiwan and China. Despite living in this country for generations, East Asians remain underrepresented in academic studies and public discourse.

This project is about a Japanese man who built a life in Central America while maintaining a connection to his homeland. It resonates with my own experiences of grappling with my sense of belonging. The geopolitical entanglements connect Yasu's imperial Japan, a Guatemala scarred by internal violence, and my home country Taiwan in multiple and unexpected ways. When Yasu Kōhei's photography and exceptional biography came to public attention in the late 1970s, Guatemala was in the most violent phase of its long civil war. Under the rule of Chiang Kai-Shek's KMT, Taiwan aligned with the Guatemalan military governments that suppressed mostly indigenous, insurgent groups. I also took notice that Yasu Kōhei recorded his allegiance to Japan at a time when Taiwan was colonized by this rising empire. Working with this East Asian photographer in Latin America was also a way for me to think about the place of my country in the history of colonialism, racism, and geopolitics across the Pacific Ocean.

Still, I find solace in Yasu's sometimes eccentric writings. I also take comfort in finding the same spelling mistakes I tend to make. Like Yasu, I long for the familiarity of my homeland and often feel like an outsider trapped in mobility.

Acknowledgments

This work is about an individual's movement across borders and his encounters with people, objects, and ideas. Yasu Kōhei's desire to explore the world motivated his travels to Europe and America, and the intrigue he inspired led others to follow his tracks many years later. Their pursuits across the Pacific at various historical junctures have left lasting imprints on the story of Yasu. Among the trans-Pacific experts on Yasu who have generously shared their knowledge with me are Fujiwara Toshio 藤原敏雄, Iizawa Kōtarō 飯沢耕太郎, Kojima Hideo 児嶋英雄 and Kojima Keiko 児嶋桂子, Kosaka Ayako 小坂亜矢子, Oyama Takuya 小山卓也, Sagawa Shin 佐川伸, and Umoto Masahiro 羽幹昌弘. I appreciate the kindness of the descendants of Yasu's families in both countries. In Fujisawa, Ichinoseki, I listened to cherished family memories of Yasu Kōhei and appreciated the time and stories shared with me, particularly by Yasu Mikiko 屋須美喜子 and 小野寺君雄 Onodera Kimio. Luis Fernando Noriega, a photographer himself, kindly allowed me to partake in his passion for the craft and the family stories he heard growing up. I hope that this work can help to connect some links in the memory of Yasu/Yas in Guatemala and Japan.

This project, which took place on different continents, could only be realized thanks to the academic and financial support of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context" at Heidelberg University. I would like to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Christiane Brosius, for her guidance, patience, and help at all stages of this research. Many thanks also go to Professor Melanie Trede for her support and contributions to this project. I am also grateful to Professor Monica Juneja for the suggestions and comments on this dissertation.

My time at the "Cluster" was enriched by the stimulating environment created by Björn-Ole Kamm, Jule Nowoitnick, and my colleagues. Hsinyi Li 李欣怡, GPTS-5, and especially Anil Paralkar, Federica Lume-Pereira, Jolita Zabarskaite, and Saumya Agarwal helped me throughout the process to stay on task and to endure the long writing phase, even after we had left the Karl Jaspers Centre. I am grateful for scholarships I received from the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Education of Taiwan during the later phases of this project.

In Guatemala, Julio Menchú introduced me to Yas. He and Lucía Pellecer have worked intensively on the *Fotografía Japonesa* collection containing Yasu's works. ¡Ustedes son los *padrinos* de este proyecto! In working with Yasu's negatives and personal documents, the historians, archivists, and librarians at the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica provided invaluable guidance. I would like to thank Christopher Lutz for his support and warm encouragement. My deepest gratitude goes to Anaís García Salazar, director of the Fototeca, and María de los Ángeles Ávila De León and other staff at CIRMA for their generous assistance. Algunos de mis momentos más felices durante este proyecto fueron las horas que pasé discutiendo el trabajo de Yas con ustedes.

The staff of the Archivo General de Centro América, the Museo Nacional de la Historia, the Academia de Geografía e Historia, and the Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano were very helpful in locating historical documents for my project. María Victoria García Vettorazzi and Claudia Dary helped at various points with their extensive contacts, both academic and

otherwise. Among the experts from whose knowledge of photography and its relationship to religious practices I have benefitted were Fernando Urquizú, Detter López, Enrique Carlos Berdúo, José Edgardo Cal Montoya, Johann Melchor Toledo, and María Cristina Orive. I especially want to extend my gratitude to several individuals who shared their private collections of devotional images with me: Marvin Hernández (OFS), Miriam Quintanilla and Florindo Estrada (family of Prof. Carlos Humberto Quintanilla Meza), Saydee Suares (whose father is the Antigua-based photographer Hugo Suarez), and Sergio Cruz (Foto Rex).

Exchanges with Guatemalan colleagues reminded me of the complexities of writing history in politically fraught contexts. The many passionate discussions shared with, and spectacular meals prepared by, Rosa Pu and Jorge Murga in their Cocina de la Señora Pu stood out in every regard. The members of the Hermandad de Jesús del Silencio at the Ermita del Santo Calvario in Antigua Guatemala let us participate in their veneration of the religious sculptures and showed us around Antigua's incredible cultural heritage. Gracias Josué por mostrarnos tu creatividad y pasión por la fe, y por las horas que compartimos instalando velaciones y aprendiendo de la hermosa flora y fauna guatemalteca. Although we still wanted to make many more trips to Guatemala's religious and touristic destinations, doña Liz and Carlos Arriola, two of our dearest friends, left us during the pandemic in the early summer of 2021.

This project would not have been possible without the help of the staff at the Fujisawa Branch Office of Ichinoseki City Hall and the Fujisawa Community Center. From 2014 to 2017, during my visits to Fujisawa, I was fortunate to receive the assistance of Chiba Matsuo 千葉松男, Oikawa Hideko 及川秀子, Satō Tetsurō 佐藤哲郎 and Itō Mitsuyuki 伊藤瑞之, who provided me with access to Yasu Kōhei's collection and introduced me to my interlocutors in Fujisawa. I would also like to thank Minagawa Yōichi 皆川洋一, Murakami Kōichi 村上光一, Ise Tokurō 伊勢徳郎, and Fujisawa Makoto 藤沢誠 for sharing their insights on Yasu and the history of their town. I extend my gratitude to Sagawa Shin for opening doors and for helping with interviews and interpretations. The guesthouse run by Saitō Shizuo 佐藤静雄 has made my stay enjoyable each time that I have been to Fujisawa. I also appreciate Tanaka-sensei, 田中哲哉, my tutor at the Japan Foundation, for helping me view the material from a different perspective. For the walks and stories we shared, I thank Elizabeth Veneyan.

Studying for a master's degree at the National Taiwan University has awakened my passion for cultural anthropology. The open and encouraging environment has allowed me to pursue research in Latin America. For this, I extend my gratitude to Professors Yuang-Chao Tung 童元昭, Hsueh-cheng Yen 顏學誠, and Kai-shyh Lin 林開世.

My family in Taiwan has always been a source of strength to which I can return, no matter where I am. My German family and my feline friend Pippi were my support in the writing process. Tobias Reu has been and will continue to be the best companion.

Abbreviations

AGCA	Archivo General de Centro América (Guatemala City)
AGHG	Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala (Guatemala City)
AHAG	Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano (Guatemala City)
CIRMA	Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (Antigua, Guatemala)
CNPAG	El Consejo Nacional Para La Protección De La Antigua Guatemala
EAP	Endangered Archives Programme, British Library
EPN	Escuela Preparatoria Nacional (Mexico City)
FIFA	Fujisawa International Friendship Association 藤沢町国際交流協会
HAGCA	Hemeroteca del Archivo General de Centro América (Guatemala City)
HNG	Hemeroteca Nacional de Guatemala (Guatemala City)
IDAEH	Instituto de Antropología e Historia (Guatemala City)
INGUAT	Instituto Guatemalteco de Turismo (Guatemala City)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency 国際協力機構
JOMM	Japanese Overseas Migration Museum 海外移住資料館
MEP	Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris (Paris Foreign Missions Society) パリ外国宣教会 (Pari gaikoku senkyōkai)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs 外務省
T. O. F. S.	Tercera Orden Franciscana Seglar (Third Order of Saint Francis)
TOP	Tokyo Photographic Art Museum 東京都写真美術館
SICA	Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana
UFM	Universidad Francisco Marroquín (Guatemala City)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization
USAC	Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (Guatemala City)

Glossary

Japanese (with Kanji) and Spanish terms

Term	Kanji	Explanation
alfombras		"carpets" made with colored sawdust, fruit and vegetables, and flowers in front of the altar or on the street during the Holy Week processions
anda		floats used for processions, usually made of wood. Depending on the size of the float, the number of people carrying it varies from a few to a hundred
bakufu	幕府	Shogunate administration
bakumatsu	幕末	the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate, dating from 1853–1867
Bansho shirabesho	蕃書調所	Office for the Investigation of Barbarian Books
blanquear		racist proposals to "whiten" the race through immigration
Boshin Sensō	戊辰戦争	Boshin War (Japanese civil war between Imperial and shogunate forces, 1868–1869)
bunka	文化	culture
bunkaisan	文化遺産	cultural heritage
bunkazai	文化財	cultural property
bunmei	文明	civilization
bunmei sekai	civilized world	文明世界
Butsugo Denshūsho	仏語伝習所	French School in Yokohama
chihou-ijin	地方偉人	eminent figure
cofradía		Catholic confraternity in rural Guatemala
Dainippon-teikoku	大日本帝国	Empire of Japan; Japan's official name under the Meiji Constitution
dekasegi	出稼ぎ	workers away from home; ethnic Japanese people who have migrated to Japan (in the late twentieth century)
finca		large rural estate
fotografía		photography, can refer to the photographic studio
Furantsugo Denshūjo	仏蘭西語伝習所	French School in Yokohama
furansugaku	佛学	French studies
gaijin	外人	outsider; foreigner
Futsu gakkō	仏学校	French School
gannenmono	元年者	"first-year migrants" who sailed to Hawaii immediately after the Meiji Restoration in 1868
gikin	義金	contribution
hermandad		Catholic confraternity in urban Guatemala
hōjin	邦人	Japanese national, fellow countryman
ijin	異人	foreigner
ijū	移住	migration; emigration
ijūsha	移住者	immigrant; emigrant; migrant
imagen		image, or Catholic saints' sculptures
imin	移民	emigration; immigration; emigrant; immigrant
indio		indigenous person, racist connotation
inmintan	移民団	colonists; emigrants

Term	Kanji	Explanation
jichitai	自治体	municipality; local government
kaigai	海外	overseas
Kaiseijo	開成所	Institute for Western Studies
kenbutsu	見物	sightseeing
kokka	国家	nation
kokoku	故国	one's native land
kokusaijin	国際人	cosmopolitan; internationalist
kokusaika	国際化	internationalization, also refers to a policy promoted by Japanese governments in the 1980s and 1990s
kosha	黌舎	founded in 1867, a technical school specializing in ship-building attached to Yokosuka Ironworks
kurofune	黒船	black ships; Western ships that came to Japan between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, esp. those of the Perry Expedition in 1853
kyuroūchi	居留地	foreign settlement (Meiji period)
ladino		heterogenous Guatemalan ethnicity; non-indigenous, mestizo, or Hispanicized
Meiji Jidai	明治時代	Meiji period 1868–1912
Meiji Ishin	明治維新	Meiji Restoration; overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate and restoration of imperial rule in 1868
machi-i	町医	town doctor
Meiji-chishikijin	明治知識人	Meiji intellectual
Minervalia		celebration dedicated to the goddess Minerva during the government of President (time frame)
Ministerio de Fomento		Ministry of Development
mizugusuri	水薬	Western liquid medicine
modernismo		modernism
Nippe Kōgyō	日秘鉱業	Japan Peru Mining Company
Nisshin Sensō	日清戦争	First Sino-Japanese war (1894–1895)
Nichiro Sensō	日露戦争	Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), Battle of Port Arthur (8–9 February 1904)
nikkeijin	日系人	people of Japanese descent generally refer to Japanese emigrants from Japan and their descendants who reside in a foreign country.
novedades		novelties
peón		Agricultural laborers farm worker
procesión		procession of saint sculptures, which are carried by members of *cofradías* or *hermandades*
rangaku	蘭学	Dutch studies; Western studies
ran-i	蘭医	A doctor who practiced medicine introduced from the Netherlands during the Edo period
ryoken	旅券	passport
ryūgakusei	留学生	overseas student
sakoku	鎖国	policy of national isolation enacted by the Tokugawa shogunate (1639–1854)
seigaku	星学	astronomy
Semana Santa		Holy Week
Shinto	神道	a Japanese religion dating from the early eighth century, incorporating the worship of ancestors and nature spirits and a belief in sacred power (*kami*) in both animate and inanimate things. From 1868 to 1945, it was the state religion of Japan
shijuku	私塾	Private academy
Shokumin Kyōkai	植民協会	Colonization Society
shokumin	植民 / 殖民	colonization

Term	Kanji	Explanation
shokuminchi	植民地	colony
sodoku	素読	plain reading
Tōhoku	東北	the northernmost six prefectures of Honshu, including Akita, Aomori, Fukushima, Iwate, Miyagi, and Yamagata
tokō kyoka	渡航許可	travel permission
Tōhoku	東北	Tōhoku, the northernmost six prefectures (*ken*) of Honshu, including Akita, Aomori, Fukushima, Iwate, Miyagi and Yamagata
Tōhokujin	東北人	Northeasterner
tsūyaku	通訳	interpreter
turno		shift, here refers to the shift of carrying the float during the Catholic procession; a card with the paraded saint image is often provided to the participants
velación		event before the procession, an exhibition of the saint sculpture at the main altar
waka	和歌	classic Japanese poem
wakangaku	和漢学	studies of Japanese and Chinese classics
yūgaku	遊学	leave one's hometown to study in other places or countries
yōgaku	洋学	Western studies
yōfuku	洋服	Western clothes
Yokosuka Kosha	横須賀黌舎	Naval Engineering School
Yokosuka Seitetsujo	横須賀製鉄所	Yokosuka Ironworks Shipyard
yūkei bunkazai	有形文化財	tangible Cultural Properties of Japan

Notes

As the primary language of this text is English, Japanese and Spanish terms appear first in the English translation, followed by the original words in brackets.

Japanese names are romanized following the Revised Hepburn System and are written in the original order, with surnames preceding given names. Exceptions to this rule include the names of authors whose works are published according to the English convention. Historical figures are listed with their dates of birth and death. The names of Japanese and Guatemalan institutions are also provided with their English translations.

Yasu Kōhei spent more than half his life in Guatemala as Juan José de Jesús Yas but used his birth name in correspondence with Japanese friends and family. For consistency, I will refer to him by his Japanese name, except in quotations from published texts. In 2011, Yasu's hometown of Fujisawa in Iwate Prefecture underwent an administrative merger and is now part of the city of Ichinoseki. Since most of the publications were released before this change, and due to the sense of identity embodied in this historical name, I have chosen to use the name Fujisawa in this dissertation, except for official titles.

As in the rest of this dissertation, direct quotations from Yasu's handwritten texts may contain Spanish spelling errors, such as accents and capitalization, which have been corrected without affecting the meaning of the text. A complete transcription of these texts, following a similar principle, can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.

Unless noted otherwise, the English quotations from texts published in Japan and Latin America are my own translations. To facilitate the reading of the linguistically diverse materials cited in this dissertation, while highlighting their authors' original contributions, I have chosen to present my direct translations of Spanish and Japanese source materials and academic texts in quotation marks or as block quotes. It should be noted that any translation errors are my own, and the original sources should be used for all purposes beyond this dissertation.

Figure 1: “Self-portrait of Juan José de Jesús Yas,” Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1895

Introduction

Migration, Archive, and Transcultural Visuality

The photograph on the left page features a full-length portrait of a man in a studio setting (figure 1). Dressed in a meticulously arranged outfit, he stands with a relaxed yet confident demeanor. His posture exudes an unassuming tranquility. However, certain unconventional details invite closer examination.

In contrast to typical portraits, the man's face and identity are obscured. His hat casts a shadow over half of his face, revealing only a glimpse of his distant gaze and neatly trimmed mustache. The clothing he wears presents a striking contrast. A dark checkered *haori* is paired with a lighter-colored kimono and a white *obi* sash, which are characteristic elements of Japanese attire. Complementing these traditional garments are a white shirt with buttoned cuffs and polished leather shoes, which reflect aspects of Western fashion. Adding to this eclectic ensemble is a pith helmet, a potent symbol of colonial might, which introduces a provocative layer of cultural and historical complexity to the image.[1]

Around the turn of the twentieth century, portraits of mustachioed gentlemen in kimonos typically emerged from two distinct contexts. One of these involved members of the Japanese elite, who blended Western and traditional elements in their dress to demonstrate their progressive attitudes and cultural identity.[2] The other context featured playful portraits of European individuals who manipulated tropes of cultural otherness to enact a "colonial fantasy."[3] These individuals, who were often fashion enthusiasts, dressed as samurai or adorned themselves with chrysanthemums, posing in European cities or while traveling to embody romanticized figures of the Far East.[4] In both types of images, the subjects utilized the extravagant clothing of distant cultures to shape their self-representation.[5]

Neither of these contexts describes the portrait in question. The man in the photograph was neither a European in exotic clothing nor someone portraying sophistication in a Japanese setting. Taken in Guatemala City in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the photograph is a self-portrait by the photographer Yasu Kōhei who, as a native of Japan, had chosen the name Juan José de Jesús Yas to conform to Hispanic conventions. In his forties at the time of the photograph and one of the few East Asians living in Central America, he was torn between the decision to return to Japan or to remain in Guatemala for the long term.

While our contemporary eyes may be quick to seek out cultural references, understanding this photograph requires careful reflection, as it captures a moment rich with ambiguity.

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1 Rovine 2019, 2022.
2 Esenbel 2014, pp. 106–107.
3 Bate 1993, p. 90.
4 See, for example, Guth 2000; Kirk 2008; Miles and Neath 2016.
5 Debroise 2001, p. 37.

It reveals the subject's desire to create a lasting image of himself while also prompting consideration of the photograph's intended audience.[6] As an aspiring photographer and studio owner, Yasu possessed a high level of skill in portraiture and was well-versed in the techniques required to achieve a perfect likeness. As a Japanese expatriate, he aptly navigated the complexities of embodying idealized images of a Japanese person. Being one of the few Japanese individuals to traverse increasingly regulated national borders, he effectively moved across the global transportation network and leveraged the multilingual education in Chinese, Dutch, and French that he had received in his youth.

In the 1970s, a century after Yasu Kōhei arrived in Guatemala and half a century after his death, his story began to attract public interest and scholarly attention. This was spurred by the accidental "discovery" of photographic negatives and personal writings that time had banished into oblivion. In 1982, a comprehensive photographic collection of his work was established in Guatemala, and in 2004, a number of personal objects and studio items were returned to his Japanese hometown. While his visual documentation of Guatemalan subjects has since gained recognition, his trans-Pacific life has been utilized, both in Japan and Guatemala, in the construction of local, national, and transnational histories.

This study examines Yasu Kōhei's trajectory from his childhood in a rapidly changing Japan through the global connections that led him to Central America. It focuses on how he navigated his familial, ethnic, national, professional, and religious commitments and expressed his multiple, shifting, and at times contradictory identities. The second principal theme of this study pertains to the role of contemporary cultural institutions in shaping collections of his materials and their transition from private and commercial spheres to cultural heritage status. In this context, the processes of archiving and preserving Yasu's works and personal items provide a critical foundation. Finally, this study describes how his photographs, originally produced for a local market, came to be utilized in exhibitions across the Americas, Europe, and Japan to illustrate a diversity of discourses on the photographic arts, Japanese and Guatemalan history, and migration.

The overarching framework of this dissertation emphasizes the transcultural connections between geopolitical realities and aesthetic practices, both historically and in the present. Yasu Kōhei's physical movements on steamships and railways were made possible by the expansion of global infrastructure, and he developed his signature thematic and aesthetic predilections while living in disparate places. The transcultural quality of his life and works is mirrored by the ways how his vernacular photography of Guatemalan subjects is viewed today in galleries and public institutions across the globe.

In what remains of this introductory chapter, I will first present our protagonist within the context of nineteenth-century border crossing. This is followed by an elaboration on my analytical framework based on a transcultural perspective and an explanation of how I deploy this framework to analyze both textual and visual materials. I then review the representations of Yasu Kōhei in both Japanese and Spanish-language literature, aiming to identify the evolution of constructing a migrant biography through various genres of writing. Two interrelated parts then address the current status of collections dedicated to

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[6] A glass negative of the portrait is housed in the Fototeca Guatemala, with the reference code FG-005-P08-141. It is captioned as a self-portrait of Yasu Kōhei, taken in Antigua between 1895 and 1915. Analysis of the studio setting indicates that it aligns with the props used in "type" photographs of Mayan Indians from the 1880s, which are now part of a collection at Tulane University. I also discovered a postcard of this genre created by Alberto Valdeavellano that features the same backdrop. The portrait was likely produced by Emilio Herbruger, Edward Kildare, or Alberto Valdeavellano between the mid-1880s and the early 1890s. The glass negative may be a rephotographed copy made by Yasu himself.

Yasu Kōhei's photography and personal possessions. In these sections, I also describe my methodological strategy for engaging the multi-sited nature of migrant collections and my approach toward working with original and digitized archival objects.

Yasu Kōhei: A Biography on the Move

Born in 1846 in Fujisawa, northeastern Japan, Yasu Kōhei 屋須弘平 (1846–1917) was the eldest son of a rural doctor who specialized in the practice of Western medicine. His upbringing provided him with access not only to Japanese materials but also to studies in Chinese classics and science, which were crucial for the acquisition of knowledge translated from Western textbooks. At a pivotal moment, when Japan began to open up to the world beyond its borders after centuries of self-imposed isolation, he followed an educational path similar to that of many ambitious adolescents of his time. He moved to Edo (now Tokyo) and Yokohama, where he pursued an education in Western knowledge and later learned French.

In 1874, Yasu Kōhei worked as an interpreter for a group of Mexican scientists on an astronomical mission to Japan. The following year, he accompanied the Mexicans on their way back to the Americas. During a stay in Mexico City, he continued his science education and learned Spanish. After a coup d'état in 1877, which led his Mexican mentor to leave the country on a diplomatic posting, Yasu arrived in Guatemala City. He eventually split from his benefactor, became a studio photographer, converted to Catholicism, and married into a local family. Now known by his Spanish name, Juan José de Jesús Yas, he spent most of the ensuing decades in Guatemala. He moved his photographic business to the picturesque colonial town of Antigua Guatemala, where he lived until his death in 1917.

Contemporary texts on Yasu's life and photographic practice emphasize his avid adaptation to the Western world. Less has been written about the conflicting senses of belonging he developed along his path. His self-portraits and written exchanges with family and friends in Japan and Guatemala reveal a nuanced set of experiences that transcend simplistic dichotomies, such as West and East or (European) center and (Japanese and Latin American) peripheries. Just as Japan after the Meiji Restoration, Mexico and Guatemala sought to ascend in the global order dominated by the North Atlantic powers. The connections crisscrossing the globe along the margins of the Eurocentric world, which facilitated Yasu's border-crossing endeavors, emerge as a forceful theme of his biography.

Yasu Kōhei's initial journey from Japan via Europe to the Americas was far from typical for a Japanese subject seeking work or educational opportunities in the "West." Its divergence resonates with James Clifford's discussion of travel as "a figure for routes through a heterogeneous modernity," which suggests an exploration of the relationship between rootedness and authenticity. To challenge the rigid division between the West and the rest, Clifford references the Indian anthropologist Amitav Ghosh and his encounters with villagers in an Egyptian community. Ghosh's attempt to articulate an alternative way of "traveling East" provides a framework for understanding Yasu's movements, which may have "partly bypass[ed] the world's violent polarization into West and East, empire and colony, developed and backward."[7]

Yasu Kōhei's kimono portrait illustrates his challenge to the dichotomous perspectives

7 Clifford 1997, pp. 2–4.

Figure 2: "Alfred Percival Maudslay sitting on a mule in a jungle clearing; wearing a pith helmet, shirt, trousers and boots, Quiriguá, Guatemala," 1890

on the representation of self and otherness, as well as the distinctions between the West and the rest during the height of colonialism. To clarify this challenge to the colonial visual language, we can consider an outdoor photograph taken around the same time in Guatemala. In this image, archaeologist Alfred Maudslay is depicted on horseback, wearing the same pith helmet that Yasu donned for his studio portrait (figure 2). Set against the backdrop of vast, uncultivated land abundant with resources and remnants of ancient civilizations, the British man's portrait contrasts with Yasu's photograph, and at the same time complicates our interpretation.

By featuring the kimono and helmet photograph to open my text, I emphasize the importance of situating Yasu's transcultural life within the complex geopolitical dynamics of the time. I argue that this portrait not only reflects his skillful manipulation of cultural elements, but also serves as a powerful expression of an ambition that chimes with Japan's growing imperialist aspirations. Furthermore, the multiple layers of meaning embedded in this image foreshadow contemporary memory projects that utilize Yasu's representation to reconstruct collective pasts in the present.

Transcultural Visuality

Our retrospective contemplations of Yasu Kōhei's Japaneseness risk to come at the expense of misrecognizing his nuanced experience of navigating multiple societies and cultural practices. He positioned himself in various ways: as a Japanese individual, a member of Guatemalan society, a devout Catholic, and the owner of a commercial photographic studio. This multifaceted identity is reflected in Yasu's pictures, which are as idiosyncratic as his writings in Spanish and Japanese and encapsulate his sometimes conflicting sense of belonging. The visual and textual documents that illuminate Yasu's life provide opportunities for diverse modes of appreciation while resisting easy appropriation for specific

historical narratives.

The kimono self-portrait thus serves as a compelling illustration of the significance of transcultural visuality in analyzing Yasu's biography and interpreting his work. This concept sheds light on Yasu's journey as a photographer among European and North American peers, his utilization of Catholic devotional imagery, and the representation of social identities in portraits, including his own. Furthermore, it contextualizes the cultural imaginaries surrounding Japan and Guatemala's engagement with Yasu and his work, both during his lifetime and in the present. To understand Yasu's experience and the contemporary framing of his biography and photography, an analysis that transcends national and cultural boundaries is essential. It is here where the transcultural comes into play.

Transculturation

To overcome the constraints of historiographic approaches that operate on the assumption of national and cultural boundedness, I draw on Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation, which emphasizes the subaltern experience of collective identities in postcolonial Latin America. In his seminal work, *Cuban Counterpoint*, first published in 1940, the Cuban anthropologist described the history of his country as a crossroads of diverse peoples: "After the Negroes began the influx of Jews, French, Anglo-Saxons, Chinese [...] They were all coming to a new world, all on the way to a more or less rapid process of transculturation."[8]

In contrast to "acculturation," Ortiz employs the term "transculturation" to denote the complex process of losing elements from one's home while simultaneously acquiring and creating something new through the contact that migration and displacement entail. Echoing Bronislaw Malinowski's assertion that "the result of every union of cultures[...] always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them," Ortiz argues that the concept of transculturation is essential for understanding the intricate and fluid relationships and histories of ethnic groups in Cuba and throughout Latin America.[9]

For historian Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Ortiz's concept of "transculturation," which emerges from the context of the Americas, serves as a powerful analytical tool for examining the ever-changing and reciprocal processes of cultural exchange among different peoples. In reassessing transculturation for contemporary contexts, he highlights its capacity to capture the realities of "racial formation as an integral dimension of social relations and social structure in the Americas." Specifically, he identifies two fundamental processes of transculturation: "uneven (including hegemonic) transculturation and decentered transculturation–transculturations that have unpredictable qualities including new interactive elements operating under fairly egalitarian conditions." To bring these processes of transculturation into sharper focus, he advocates for the establishment of a new kind of historiography that centers on less represented and marginalized individuals.[10]

The emphasis on individual experience that emerges from Hirabayashi's appropriation

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8 Ortiz 1995, p. 102.

9 In the introduction to *Cuban Counterpoint*, the English translation of Ortiz's book published in 1947, Bronislaw Malinowski articulates this argument by reiterating his agreement with Ortiz: "To describe this process the word trans-culturation, stemming from Latin roots, provides us with a term that does not contain the implication of one certain culture toward which the other must tend, but an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, both contributing their share, and both co-operating to bring about a new reality of civilization."

10 All quotations in this paragraph are from L. R. Hirabayashi (2002, pp. xiii–xiv).

of Ortiz's concept of transculturation, which was devised to approach Latin American pluralities, resonates with my research interest in Yasu. It is crucial to consider the multiple factors that contributed to Yasu's incorporation into Guatemalan society and, in turn, shaped his remarkable cultural contributions. However, as Hirabayashi cautions, it is important to be careful not to transpose the term into contexts where it does not apply. This caveat is particularly relevant to Yasu and the materials examined in this dissertation, which foreground cultural imaginaries and the movement of ideas. At the same time, the political oppression and economic exploitation that motivated Ortiz's work are of less immediate concern. In this context, it is important to note that Yasu may have maintained contact with other Japanese expatriates in Central America, but he was by no means a member of a diasporic community of individuals embarked on a similar trajectory. But despite his singular access to Hispanic Guatemala, his identity as a Japanese Guatemalan reflects some characteristics of transculturation as envisioned by Ortiz and Hirabayashi. This certainly includes a strong racial dimension and an indelible aspect of cultural creativity.

The explanatory potential that Ortiz's concept of transculturation has for the study of cultures and identities, but specifically for the contemplation of art, has also been noted by art historian Monica Juneja. Particularly important for my purposes is Juneja's observation that Ortiz's interrogation of the category of nation invites us to examine "the workings of power within groups that cut across the colonizer–colonized divide, a perspective that avoids the trap of thinking in binaries."[11] In her pursuit to utilize transculturation "as a form of critical thinking about art production, art institutions, and art historical scholarly practice," Juneja offers examples of artists who resist the allure of "self-orientalization."[12]

Taking this into consideration, we can revisit the kimono portrait that opens this chapter. Then as now, Yasu Kōhei's migrant biography and photography animate notions of the other that resist reduction to simplistic assumptions of cultural difference. His self-portrait, along with his vernacular images of Guatemala, raises a series of intriguing questions. How can a seemingly generic studio portrait be perceived by Japanese viewers as evidence of Yasu's deep immersion in Guatemalan culture, while Guatemalans interpret it as an expression of Japanese aesthetics? What compels audiences to find the exotic in a photograph taken by a Japanese individual in Guatemala? Furthermore, does the essential interest in distinguishing the Japanese from the Guatemalan in the photographs of this particular migrant represent a unique case in the analysis of historical photography?

Yasu's photographs were created within specific local, social, spiritual, visual, and economic contexts. Since then, they have since undergone the archival processes of academic evaluation and institutional recognition. This evolution has contributed to what Elizabeth Edwards has termed powerful historical narratives.[13] Interestingly, these narratives do not only vary from country to country. Even within Japan, the same images have inspired local appropriations that diverge from the national historiography.

The specter of self-orientalization resisted by the artists described by Juneja offers an additional impulse for the interpretation of Yasu Kōhei's self-portrait. We may read his decision to wear a pith helmet atop a hybrid kimono-shirt ensemble as a conscious gesture that reflects the ambiguities he experienced. As will be discussed in chapter 3, East Asian residents, such as Cantonese merchants, were recognized as purveyors of desirable Oriental goods and simultaneously disdained for their otherness. Amid respect

11 Juneja 2019, p. 298.
12 Ibid., p. 306.
13 Edwards 2015.

and rejection, they learned to manipulate visual tropes to promote their businesses. In this situation, hegemonic visual languages were mobilized by subjects outside the main racial vectors of (post-)colonial society.

Against the Racist Taxonomy

Although the exact circumstances of its creation are unclear, Yasu's self-portrait in a kimono was not the first time he presented himself in Japanese attire to Latin American eyes. In his autobiographical memoirs, Yasu recounts an event that occurred shortly after his arrival in Mexico with Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, his Mexican mentor. As Yasu recalls, "I visited president Lerdo Tejada with Mr. Covarrubias to greet him and pay my respects. I went in a Japanese dress because he wanted to see it."[14]

A special memory for Yasu, this vignette is fascinating for both what it reveals and what it omits. There are no details about the setting, the president, or other Mexicans who may have been present. Instead, Yasu emphasizes the kimono and his decision to wear it at the president's request. It was as if his identity needed to be ratified by his clothing—a visual index of Japan that held popular currency in the West. As Christine Guth notes, the European production and consumption of symbolic figures such as the geisha and the samurai formed part of a broader visual project through which Japan, though never colonized by a European power, was nonetheless documented and classified through commercial photography.[15]

As his recollection of the presidential reception suggests, Yasu encountered not only bigoted rejection but also a romanticized fascination with his perceived otherness. To be sure, his privileged access to the highest echelons of Mexican society, mediated by his well-connected mentor, bears little resemblance to the severe discrimination faced by other East Asians as indentured laborers and merchants. Rather, I argue that Yasu's case illuminates the ambiguities and contradictions in the social production of the cultural other, encompassing both yellow peril anxieties and the Western infatuation with East Asian style and beauty, as well as the roles Yasu was able to inhabit.

For people like Yasu in Japan who embraced Western culture and education, a suit and short hair signaled a modernizing attitude. Others, by contrast, adopted Japanese clothing to express resistance to Western cultural influence.[16] Given the different political valences of wearing particular garments, it is important to distinguish between Yasu's use of a kimono at the behest of the Mexican president and his decision to wear the same garment on his initiative in the portrait created circa ten years later. Considering photographic portraiture as a form of self-expression, I look for clues as to how Yasu wished to be seen.[17]

In this image, he appears as a person who has absorbed a colorful mix of influences gathered throughout his journey. The name of his business, "Estudio de Fotografía Japonesa," further indicates his awareness of his own Japaneseness and the connotations it carried. While East Asians in America were often subjected to racist taunts based on their physical features, Yasu strategically employed his otherness to his advantage. If, as Nicholas Mirzoeff suggests, visuality refers to the way "the West distinguishes itself from others," then Yasu's performative use of the kimono can certainly be understood as a visual

14 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 59 ff.
15 Guth 2000, pp. 605–606.
16 Ibid., pp. 605–606.
17 McKay 2008, p. 382.

counterpoint.[18]

In his critique of Japanese nationalism and the cultural construction of Japaneseness, Iwabuchi Koichi puts forward a claim that resonates with Mirzoeff's concept of visuality.[19] For Iwabuchi, the idea of Japaneseness that emerged after the nineteenth century can be described as a strategic use of Orientalist tropes aligned with the ruling class's ambition to build a unified nation. In an operation he calls "complicit exoticism," Iwabuchi argues that through its exploitation of Western ideas about Japan "the Japanese government was able to suppress internal heterogeneous voices "while effectively counteract[ing] Orientalism."

> In the eyes of the Other, the complicated and contradictory reality of Japan, where a dialectic between the ideological construction of "Japaneseness" and people's diverse readings of and resistance against it is always at play, disappears. Japan tends to be represented only as an entity [...] And this, together with Japan's self-representation, confirms in its turn the distinct otherness of Japan to the Japanese. It is this interaction between Japan and its Other that makes it possible for Japan to differentiate itself from other nations in a more or less unambiguous manner. "Japaneseness" has to be "imagined" by the Other as well as by its own members, though differently.

Iwabuchi emphasizes the role of discursive construction through Confucian values, mythical origins, and the process of "samuraisation." While he does not directly address visual representation, his insights into how Japanese elites constructed "Japaneseness" provide a valuable framework for understanding Yasu's self-positioning in contexts shaped by racial and national markers. In his encounter with the Mexican president, Yasu projected an aesthetically pleasing image of Japan that clearly distinguished him from the faceless "yellow race." However, given the symbolic nature of the kimono, the question remains what the pith helmet stood for in the Guatemalan photo studio setting.

A series of studio photographs featuring Henry Morton Stanley (1841 – 1904) and an African boy set in an exotic landscape circulated widely around the world at the same time Yasu Kōhei posed for his portrait (figure 3). The British-American explorer's expeditions to Africa had cemented his reputation.[20] Although the pith helmet had been used by the British military since the 1840s, it was Stanley's published colonial adventures that popularized it as a coveted symbol. As Åsa Bharathi Larsson explains, adopting the persona of a colonial explorer became common among "military leaders and missionaries, curators and ethnographers."

The kimono and the helmet, symbols of aesthetic appropriation and resource plunder, embody two violent aspects of the asymmetrical relationship between the north-Atlantic West and the rest of the world at the close of the nineteenth century. The colonial helmet, a detail absent from other photographs by Yasu or his peers in Guatemala, highlights Yasu's awareness of the object's multivalent meanings. This awareness resonates with what Christine Guth terms the "new transcultural traffic in personal style."[21] Subverting the directionality of the colonial gaze, Yasu's use of the helmet challenges the passive and effeminate connotations that the kimono carried in the Western imagination.[22] Prodding us beyond previous literature's identity-based framing of Yasu as merely a straddler of two

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18 Mirzoeff 2011, p. xiv.

19 All quotations in this paragraph and the next two are from Iwabuchi (1994, pp. 50–52).

20 All quotations in this paragraph are from Larsson (2013, pp. 314–315).

21 Guth 2000, p. 632.

22 Ibid., p. 624.

Figure 3: London Stereoscopic & Photographic Company, "Sir Henry Morton Stanley; Kalulu (Ndugu M'hali)," 1872

cultures, his deliberate staging in both a kimono and the colonial pith helmet reveals the complexities and idiosyncrasies of his self-image.

A discussion of the (self-)representation of other Asian populations in the Americas sets the stage for analyzing how Yasu Kōhei mobilized conflicting cultural imaginaries to adopt an economically and affectively viable stance. Unlike the combination of kimono and European suit in his self-portrait, the colonialist pith helmet, resonant with the Japanese imperialist sentiments expressed in his writings, is rarely mentioned in the literature on Yasu. Overlooking his patriotic fervor, however, limits our understanding of his sense of belonging as a subject of the Japanese Empire abroad. The twin questions of why he donned the helmet and why this aspect is regularly ignored by scholars, exhibitors, and diplomatic and cultural institutions that use this image today bring me back to Nicholas Mirzoeff's discussion of diasporic images and transcultural visuality—a concept that I employ to elucidate both Yasu's photographic practice and the archiving, appropriation, and valuation of his work in the present.

Visuality here denotes the politics of images in the colonial context, where they appear "both as a mode of representing imperial culture and as a means of resisting it through reverse appropriation."[23] The concept of visuality itself has "a complex and challenging genealogy," which Mirzoeff traces to Euro-American intellectual debates about race, vision, and history since the first half of the nineteenth century.[24] While Mirzoeff anchors his discussion in a situation involving an imperial center and a colonized periphery, Yasu's trajectory along the margins of the Eurocentric world complicates the relationship between

23 Mirzoeff 2006, p. 54.
24 Ibid., p. 76.

representation and reverse appropriation. For my purposes, transcultural visuality helps capture the multiple references Yasu employed in his self-representations, as well as the political dimensions of cultural knowledge that allow us to interpret his performative act within specific frameworks.

To a certain extent, the curious fusion observed in Yasu's portrait evokes what Mirzoeff calls the "limitations of the taxonomic gaze." This analysis stems from his study of Kongo *minkisi*, figurative religious objects believed to embody magical power used to resist European hegemony in colonial Congo.[25] To Western eyes, these figures may appear uniquely African. However, they emerged from a long process of transculturation, in the sense of Ortiz's notion, which produced a new cultural form that enabled "Africans to imagine themselves as subjects within the colonial system rather than merely its servants or objects." Mirzoeff therefore urges us to resist being drawn "into the anthropological game of trying to determine their 'real' ethnic type," instead of recognizing "the transcultural complexities of the colonial Congo."

My analysis takes transculturation as a point of departure for examining the polyvalent representations of and by Yasu Kōhei. To understand the visual dimension of these representations, embedded in his photographs and evoked in his textual accounts, I employ the concept of visuality.

I draw on Norman Bryson, who distinguishes visuality from vision, the latter being "the notion of unmediated visual experience." Unlike vision, visuality refers to the "systems of visual discourse that saw the world before I did, and will go on seeing after I see no longer."[26] However, Gillian Rose warns against the tendency in the literature on visuality to overemphasize the dominance of institutions while neglecting alternative visual possibilities.[27] Although she does not directly engage with the essentializing closure implied in Bryson's discourse-based definition, Rose demonstrates how individuals can subvert and resist the panoptic, classifying gaze. As an example, she highlights nineteenth-century women's domestic photography, which employed techniques such as "blurred focus, collage and over-exposure."[28]

Mirzoeff's description of the hybridity of the *minkisi* figurines as transculturated images, along with Rose's account of the subversive potential within visual practices, underscores two central themes of my analysis. First, I argue that Yasu Kōhei's photography should not be understood as a mere convergence of two cultures, but as the outcome of his personal experiences, desires, and choices, formed within and in response to specific structural constraints. In its own way, Yasu's portrait in a kimono and pith helmet reflects the subversive creativity of a *minkisi* figure, challenging simplistic readings of visual asymmetry and Eurocentric dominance. Second, I seek to move beyond the taxonomic gaze that frames Yasu's exceptional life through the limiting lenses of disciplinary categories, national histories, and diplomatic narratives. Both Mirzoeff and Rose highlight the agency of visual producers to inscribe their lived experience into creative practices. It is this agency that I aim to foreground in proposing transcultural visuality as a theoretical framework, one that connects the dispersed locations where Yasu created his works and the varied contexts in which they continue to circulate and be interpreted more than a century after his death.

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25 All quotations in this paragraph are from Mirzoeff (1999, p. 150).
26 Bryson 1988, pp. 91–92.
27 Rose 2016, pp. 224–226.
28 Ibid., p. 225.

Contextualizing Yasu Kōhei's Biography

Essential to analyzing the life and works of Yasu Kōhei, or Juan José de Jesús Yas, are texts published in Japan and Guatemala. These works provide valuable source material and serve as a focus for critical contemplation. Tracing the primary intents of these texts, the following brief review of the existing literature is divided into a section on biographical studies and one that describes sources relevant to the historical contextualization. The aim is to describe the emergence of Yasu as a subject of public and scholarly interest and the evolution of knowledge of his biography over time.

The use of the term "migration" in the context of Yasu's life warrants some additional caution. It reflects the common way of writing about Yasu, whose trajectory inextricably linked the experience of crossing borders with his emergence as a pioneer of Central American and Japanese photography. However, it is important to note that Yasu's movements mostly predated the massive Japanese migrations to the Americas, and they diverged from this phenomenon in important ways. This begins with his original plans, which did not include the intention to spend his life on foreign soil. Only much later did Yasu decide to settle for good, and his retrospective recognition that he had already made himself a home in Guatemala, at which he arrived *after* a circuitous journey to Japan and Peru, may have influenced our understanding of his trajectory.

This is not to suggest that Yasu was not a migrant. After marrying into a local family and living in Guatemala as a devout Catholic and respected businessman, he engaged with the host society in ways that were not much different from other migrants in Central America. What I want to emphasize is the importance of understanding the variety of ways in which Yasu became a part of collective memories of migration, as well as the role his biography played as a symbol in shaping those narratives. This points to Mary Luise Pratt's thoughts on the ideology behind textual production at specific historical junctures.[29] In the nationalist paradigm, narratives of the past tend to be framed as national histories. As I will argue, the appropriation of Yasu's life for historiographic projects has therefore tended to overlook the shifting positions that Yasu assumed toward his Japanese heritage and Latin American society. It has also failed to interrogate the constructive nature of archiving his photographs and personal writings.

Biographies

All publications on Yasu Kōhei's biography draw upon his personal writings. These include letters to Japan, composed in Japanese at various points in his life, as well as a lengthy retrospective text, which I refer to as *Memorias*. The latter was authored by Yasu in Spanish during the final months of his life. Owing to very understandable linguistic limitations as well as predominant thematic interests, the selective archiving of these documents resulted in spreading them out across the Pacific and the emergence of distinct Japanese and Guatemalan chains of quotation. While a more detailed examination of these documents will be provided in a subsequent section of this introduction, I will now outline how they are incorporated into the biographical writings on Yasu Kōhei.

The only contemporaneous source on Yasu Kōhei is an article published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (讀賣新聞) newspaper from November 24 to 26, 1889.[30] Titled "Mr. Yasu

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29 Pratt 2008.

30 During my research in Japan, I came across "Mr. Yasu Kōhei" and accessed this article in 2016 through the Japan Foundation's closed academic computer network. I did not find it mentioned in previous

Kōhei" (屋須弘平氏), the article was presented in three installments and offered insights into Yasu's upbringing, his studies in Edo and Yokohama, and his participation in the astronomical observation of the transit of Venus in 1874.[31] Featured in the Americas section of the newspaper, the article was published shortly after the launch of a mining expedition to Peru, which caused some stir and was led by the politician Takahashi Korekiyo 高橋是清. This expedition marked a pivotal moment in Japan's growing interest in Latin America and brought Yasu, who was enlisted as a translator and cultural expert, back to the Americas after he had returned to Japan in 1889. The first paragraph of "Mr. Yasu Kōhei" reveals the origin of this content: it is based on a speech delivered during the farewell ceremony for the expedition. Tanabe Saneaki 田邊實明, the speaker who then served as a ranked police officer in Tokyo, was also a close friend of Yasu. He seized the festive occasion to highlight Yasu's remarkable international achievements to an audience eager for updates on Japan's international affairs.

In 1934, an unpublished eight-page booklet entitled *A Biographical Sketch of Yasu Kōhei* (屋須弘平畧傳, henceforth *Biographical Sketch*) was authored by Saitō Johei, a teacher and amateur historian from Yasu's hometown, Fujisawa.[32] This work combines family memories from the descendants of Yasu Kōhei's siblings, historical vignettes from the region, and letters Yasu wrote home between 1876 and 1889. Written at the height of Japanese imperialism, Saitō's text was commissioned by the Iwate Overseas Emigration Association (岩手海外移住組合) to promote overseas migration.[33] The subtitle, "A Pioneer of Overseas Expansion Born in Our Hometown" (郷土の生める海外進出の先駆), indicates that the text served as a tribute to Yasu, highlighting his academic achievements and overseas pursuits. In the opening paragraph, Saitō referenced Christopher Columbus's discovery of the New World, setting the stage for his exploration of Yasu Kōhei's biography and overseas endeavors. In the concluding remarks, Saitō urged the residents of his, and Yasu's, hometown to reconnect with Yasu's spirit, especially as many of their compatriots were seeking new opportunities in Manchuria, Southeast Asia, and South America during this period.

Both Saitō's biography and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article provide insights into Yasu's early life, culminating in his return to Japan in 1889 and his participation in the expedition to Peru. They highlight Yasu's pioneering role as a Japanese traveler to Latin America, portraying him as both an inquisitive individual and a notable figure from the Iwate region of northern Japan. Both texts omit certain details that the authors presumably considered of minor importance. The difference between the two accounts reflects the distinct political contexts in which they were produced. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* article emphasizes Yasu's academic ambitions and his language skills as an interpreter on the Peruvian mining expedition. In contrast, Saitō's text places greater emphasis on Yasu's connections to his homeland and family, as well as his accomplishments in establishing a new life abroad.

Saitō Johei's booklet was aimed at a specific audience within the Iwate region and likely not distributed beyond northeastern Japan. It was not until the catastrophic Guatemalan earthquake of 1976 that Yasu's œuvre received a broader reception. This event sparked

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publications, which suggests it may have been entered into the system recently and was not yet accessible on the public network. As the only contemporaneous source on Yasu Kōhei, this article holds significant value.

31 "Mr. Yasu Kōhei," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24 – 26, 1889.

32 J. Saitō (1934) It was never formally published, and a copy is currently held in the Prefectural Library in Morioka, the capital of Iwate Prefecture.

33 Ibid.

renewed interest in his photography and the historical events surrounding his life. It drew some Japanese individuals connected to the photographic arts to visit Antigua Guatemala, but also to Fujisawa, to seek information about this largely forgotten, pioneering figure. Among them was Terada Kazuo, a renowned anthropologist at the University of Tokyo who specialized in Latin American studies. Terada became aware of Yasu's collection when he visited Guatemala shortly after the earthquake. Assisted by staff of the Japanese embassy and the Guatemalan historian Luis Luján Muñoz, Terada brought a transcript of Yasu's *Memorias* back to Japan.[34]

Between 1976 and 1979, Terada published three articles on Yasu in newspapers and an edited book.[35] These works follow a chronological structure that highlights Yasu's significance at key junctures of Japanese modernization. Unlike the previous biographies available in Japan, Terada utilized Yasu's Spanish memoirs to situate the protagonist's life within broader historical contexts. His writings offer the first comprehensive account of Yasu's life and have been quoted widely in subsequent Japanese texts. In cases where comparative verification was possible, such as Yasu's young adulthood in Yokohama and Mexico in the 1870s, Terada relied on Saitō's Japanese text rather than Yasu's personal accounts. This approach introduced factual inaccuracies that became entrenched in subsequent Japanese publications. Such errors have largely gone uncorrected because of the difficult access to the primary sources needed for verification. In sum, these publications portray Yasu as a representative of Japan's modernization efforts. While this narrative provides a plausible historical frame for a Japanese audience, at degree of historical accuracy is sacrificed in the process.

In 2004, Yasu's Spanish *Memorias* were translated into Japanese by anthropologist Kosaka Ayako, who also authored the latest biography of him.[36] Kosaka played a crucial role in establishing Yasu's collection in Japan. Her research included interviews with key figures involved in preserving Yasu's photographic negatives in Guatemala, as well as members of the Yas-Noriega family. Her concise and accessible writing provides a sociopolitical context for a general audience, synthesizing existing information while remaining faithful to Yasu's original narrative and carefully avoiding additional interpretations or previously identified errors.

The first Spanish-language biography of Yasu Kōhei, named in this literature Juan José de Jesús Yas, was written in the 1980s by Luis Luján Muñoz, who was then the director of the Instituto de Geografía e Historia (Institute of Geography and History) in Guatemala City. He introduced Yasu to the Guatemalan public through two exhibition catalog essays published in 1982 and 1990, which accompanied Yasu's first two exhibitions.[37] At that time, Luján Muñoz was involved in initiatives to promote the preservation of historical photographs and to study the local history of photography, and his text aimed to contextualize the Japanese artist's rich photographic œuvre as part of national history. Luján Muñoz's portrayal of Yasu mirrors that of Terada, which is particularly evident in his account of Yasu's education in Western science and the significance of his involvement in key historical events in Japan and Mexico.

Luis Luján Muñoz exchanged information with Terada Kazuo during the latter's visit to Guatemala in 1976. The collaboration between the two scholars was significant in

34 Terada 1976.
35 Terada 1976, 1977.
36 Yasu 2004.
37 Luján Muñoz 1982a, 1990.

shaping Yasu Kōhei's biography in both countries and deepening the understanding of his photographic contributions. In Terada's 1976 article, he noted that Luján Muñoz had promised to send Yasu's photographs back to Japan. In 1982, Luján Muñoz acknowledged that Terada had shared valuable information about Saitō Johei's booklet, possibly including a summary or translation into Spanish. Similar to Terada's work in Japan, Luján Muñoz's account of the Japanese photographer's life became the most significant, and likely the sole, reference point for subsequent publications in Guatemala.

Yasu Kōhei and the Asian Presence in the Americas

From the 1980s onward, Yasu Kōhei's biography has been integrated into the historical narratives of both Japan and Guatemala, primarily through the works of Terada Kazuo and Luis Luján Muñoz. Although in Guatemala, historical studies on the subject remain limited, a common theme in both countries is the recognition of Yasu's contributions to photography and art history.

Building on Terada Kazuo's essay regarding Yasu and his involvement in historical events, Japanese scholars have broadened the subject to encompass the Meiji period, the local history of Yasu's native northeastern Japan, the development of photography, and particularly the history of Japanese emigration to Latin America. This expansion reflects a growing interest since the 1980s in understanding the return migration of descendants of the Japanese diaspora from the Americas.[38]

Writings that situate Yasu in mid-nineteenth-century Japan often draw comparisons between him and the ambitious youth of his era. These accounts either praise Yasu for his ability to leverage resources to advance his career, or express sympathy for his unfulfilled potential due to his northeastern origins. While these interpretations provide a framework for understanding Yasu's journey within the context of modern Japanese history, they are limited by their exclusive reliance on the works of Saitō Johei and Terada Kazuo. Alongside the historical focus on Yasu Kōhei's paths during the end of the shogunate and the incipient Meiji modernization, publications emphasize his intellectual connections to northeastern Japan. In this context, Yasu's unique trajectory is contextualized alongside historical narratives about other individuals from the region.

An important theme in works on Yasu Kōhei is his trans-Pacific trajectory. Yasu distinguished himself from his peers by ultimately choosing to stay and settle in the Americas, making him a notable example of *nikkeijin* (日系人), a term that refers to Japanese emigrants and their descendants.[39] This shift in focus underscores the development of the academic field of Japanese migration studies in both English and Japanese literature. Since the 1980s, reverse migration from South America has contributed to the term's prominence. This renewed interest in the history of Japanese emigration, coupled with a desire to understand the communities from which these migrants originated, has brought greater attention to the migrant aspect of Yasu's biography. Both popular and scholarly writings have explored his trajectories, portraying him as a bridging figure who illuminates

[38] Tsuda (2006, 2010). In an article on the Latin American Nikkeijin who began returning to Japan in the late 1980s, Takeyuki (Tsuda (2006, p. 202) analyzes how the Japanese government's "recruitment networks," and "open Japanese immigration policy toward 'ethnic Japanese' (up to the third generation)" facilitate mobility toward the ancestral homeland particularly among the large number of Japanese Brazilians.

[39] The English term "diaspora" may not be suitable for describing the overseas Japanese population, particularly those who are second or third generation and foreign-born Tsuda (2012).

the Japanese presence in the Americas.

A broader examination of Japanese emigration to the Americas at the turn of the twentieth century, primarily published in Japan, focuses on the organization, choice of destinations, and scale of emigration. Migration is framed as an object of diplomatic relations and trade treaty negotiations, as well as an aspect of imperial efforts to alleviate rural overpopulation and expand access to economic resources. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, an important journal on Japanese emigration, titled *Migration Studies* (移住研究), was published by the Japan Emigration Service, a government agency and predecessor of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).[40] This journal published research from various disciplines, covering a wide range of topics, including historical studies on immigration data, official documents, and migration routes; country-specific studies; and analyses of texts produced by individual migrants. Between the first issue of the journal in 1967 and the conclusion of its publication in 1996, a total of thirty-three issues were released.

In 1988, parasitologist Tada Isao contributed a short essay to this journal, recounting his visit to Guatemala and his encounter with Yasu Kōhei and his family in Antigua. Alongside the impressions he gathered during his trip, Tada reviewed Yasu's personal writings, which were likely provided by expatriates or the embassy. He also shared his transcription of Yasu's poems and tried to determine Yasu's illness, which may have caused his death.[41]

With the establishment of the Japan Overseas Migration Museum (JOMM) in 2002, this journal was succeeded by the Journal of the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum (JICA 横浜海外移住資料館研究紀要), which has published 17 issues as of March 2023.[42] Under the guidance of cultural institutions, the predominant research themes on Japanese emigration have undergone a significant shift. Previously, *Migration Studies* primarily focused on policies, the sociology of overseas migration, and economic and agricultural cooperation with Latin America. In contrast, the studies published in JOMM journal reflect the contemporary interest of Japanese society in the life histories and cultural practices of the Japanese diaspora. This shift in focus underscores the development of the academic field of Japanese migration studies.[43]

Around the same time, historians and scholars of Latin American studies in Japan revisited Yasu and his biography, linking him to the historical studies of the earliest Japanese attempts to establish settlements in Mexico and Peru. Ohgaki Kishiro, the translator of Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's travel report on his mission to Japan between 1874 and 1875, contributed two short essays on Yasu that reexamine his participation in Mexican scientific endeavors in Yokohama and his photographic achievements in Guatemala, as well as the relevance of Yasu's sojourn in Mexico to the history of Japan-Mexico exchanges.[44] Another contribution is Tsunoyama Yukihiro's compilation of Yasu's archival documents, which presents Yasu as a nikkeijin in a contribution to Mayan textile techniques.[45] Kosaka Ayako has also written about Yasu's biography in an edited volume focused on Guatemala.[46] As part of the ongoing effort to establish Yasu's historical relevance, I will discuss these

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40 Yamada Harumichi, a researcher at Tokyo Keizai University, has compiled a list of articles published in this journal, which can be read at this website: http://camp.ff.tku.ac.jp/tool-box/mig/iju-loc.html.

41 Tada 1988.

42 The complete contents of this publication are accessible on the JOMM website.

43 See, for example, Adachi 2006b, 2010a,b; Endoh 2009; Goto 2007; Takenaka 2019; Yanagida 2013.

44 Ohgaki (2003) and an online post at https://www.kufs.ac.jp/toshokan/mexico/ref1.htm.

45 Tsunoyama 2004.

46 Kosaka 2006, 2018.

works in detail in chapter 6.

Current research encompasses topics such as the identity ties to the homeland among the first generation of migrants and the identity politics of the second and subsequent generations. This research contributes to the growing recognition of Japan as a multicultural society. In the final section of the dissertation, I will delve into how the evolution of the discourse on *nikkeijin* has shaped the representation of Yasu's life in both academic texts and exhibitions.

A relevant aspect of studying Yasu Kōhei involves tracing the conflicting identities of Japanese expatriates and first-generation migrants. Yasu's writings poignantly illustrate how his pursuits were shaped by the forces of nationalism, imperialism, and racism against Asians. In this context, Eiichiro Azuma's examination of Japanese settler colonies becomes particularly pertinent, as he highlights the transpacific network that facilitated the movement of individual migrants to various destinations.[47] This framework enables a more profound understanding of the complexities surrounding Yasu's experiences and the broader implications of Japanese migration during this period. Sidney Xu Lu connects Japanese trans-Pacific migration to the larger imperial project, focusing on a specific group of individuals known as migration promoters. According to Lu, these promoters played a crucial role in "inventing, disseminating, and manipulating the anxiety of overpopulation to advance expansionist agendas and legitimize emigration campaigns."[48]

Both Azuma and Lu emphasize the significance of individual migrants as active participants in the development of imperial Japanese foreign policy. Within this analytical framework, the American experiences of these Japanese migrants position them as intermediaries between Western ideology and Japanese imperialist aspirations. In alignment with recent scholarship on transculturality, these migrants can be viewed as agents who "may play a central role in the circulation of an idea."[49] This perspective illuminates Yasu Kōhei's participation in the fate of his homeland, which included the daily effort of obtaining news on wars and politics, but also saw Yasu take a more active role in critical junctures of Japanese-Latin American relations. In recent years, research on East Asian Latin America has generated interdisciplinary and cross-regional discussions, highlighting interconnections across the Pacific. This evolving scholarship enriches our understanding of East Asian migration and situates it within a broader global context.[50]

For a long time, literature on the Asian presence in Latin America from the perspective of the host countries was overlooked. In the 1990s, the topic of nineteenth-century indentured laborers emerged as a significant focus of study. Most research has adopted a country-specific approach, exploring issues such as the history of Japanese immigration to Peru and the Chinese presence in Mexico.[51] Studies published during this period are primarily found in anthologies and journals of Latin American (historical) studies that serve the Anglophone academic world.[52] Emphasizing the growing inclusion of Asians in historical studies in the Americas, historian Evelyn Hu-DeHart notes that since the 1970s, the focus on cultural and ethnic history in Latin America has gradually expanded to encompass groups that previously received less attention. This expansion includes "Asians and Middle

47 Azuma 2005, 2008, 2014, 2017, 2019.
48 Lu 2019, p. 264.
49 Abu-Er-Rub et al. 2019, p. xxxii.
50 Hu-DeHart 2005; Kurashige 2017; Seijas 2016; Sinn 2014a,b.
51 See, for example, Zlotnik and de Palma (1991).
52 The following are just a few examples in this field: Giannoni (2004), L. R. Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and J. A. Hirabayashi (2002), Lee (2018), Look Lai and Tan (2010), and Young (2014)

Easterners, notably Chinese, Japanese, and Lebanese (or Syrian-Lebanese, also Turcos and árabes)."[53]

In addition to this expanding body of work, Latin American scholars have begun to investigate the involvement of Asian immigrants in national, regional, and local historical events, emphasizing the agency expressed in specific individuals or groups. A notable contribution is historian María Elena Ota Mishima's study of descendants of Japanese immigrants. She has published several articles and books in Spanish that focus on the experiences of the first Japanese immigrants to Mexico.[54] Despite these advancements, the literature still reflects the uneven nature of the Asian presence in Latin America, primarily concentrating on countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, and Panama, which have served as main destinations for Asian migration.

Central to the context of Yasu Kōhei's biography are studies that investigate the perception of Asian immigrants under the liberal regimes that dominated much of Latin America during his life. These regimes privileged white immigrants from Europe and North America, in stark contrast to their treatment of those arriving from Asia.[55] Following this line of inquiry, scholarship on the history of East Asian immigrants and workers has focused on the trope of the "yellow peril" and the discriminatory laws enacted against Asians.[56] Such studies present East Asian immigrants as a monolithic group, portraying them primarily as passive subjects of racialized discourses and exclusionary policies. However, more recent research has begun to reframe this narrative by emphasizing the active participation of East Asian immigrants in the shaping of early twentieth-century nation-states. This emerging scholarship highlights their political engagement, their interactions with local communities, and the complex processes through which they constructed their identities.[57]

In contrast to the generic portrayal of East Asians in liberal Latin America as passive figures, previous writings on Yasu Kōhei have depicted him as a cultural intermediary. Within these accounts, Japan and Guatemala remain distinct yet influential in shaping his aesthetic sensibilities and spiritual commitments. Although existing studies have emphasized Yasu's education, celebrated his stature as a renowned photographer, and positioned him as an emblem of successful migration, they have largely neglected the critical question of how he navigated the challenges of belonging in a society shaped by enduring stereotypes of East Asian immigrants.

Expanding on this observation, my analysis challenges the prevailing tendency to interpret Yasu's works and biography solely through the fixed endpoints of his migration. Such a perspective overlooks the transnational networks he navigated and the complex, multilayered identities that emerged from his movements across borders. To address this gap, the following analysis draws on Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturation" to examine Yasu's agency as a migrant situated within a marginalized position.[58] In parallel, it engages Nicholas Mirzoeff's reflections on visuality as an analytical tool to interrogate the stereotypical representations that Yasu Kōhei may have sought to challenge.[59] This framework explores how the biases inherent in visual regimes could be employed to challenge and complicate the asymmetrical gaze. Together, these theoretical frameworks

53 Hu-DeHart 2009, p. 238.
54 Ota Mishima 1981, 1982, 1997.
55 See, for example, Foote and Goebel (2014) and Meade (2016).
56 Tchen and Yeats 2014.
57 See, for example, García (2014), Giannoni (2004), and Molina Medina (2012)
58 Ortiz 1995.
59 Mirzoeff 2006.

offer a more nuanced and dynamic lens through which to understand Yasu's experiences and the intricate formation of his identity within the broader context of migration.

One Migrant, Many Archives

This study examines the relationship between cultural imaginaries, racial politics, and the visual representation of the other in Yasu's trans-Pacific journeys, photographic practice, and biography. This study constitutes the first comprehensive analysis of Yasu's life, largely because the relevant material evidence is dispersed across institutions and private collections in distant locations. As a result, my research draws on archives from multiple countries, each guided by distinct priorities.

Archives, as sites of knowledge production for colonial powers, communities, and nation-states, are often established as highly localized institutions. However, growing scholarly attention to migration as both a historical and contemporary phenomenon has prompted researchers to consider archives as "distributed entities" containing "migratory objects and images that move between places and socio-cultural contexts as part of the diaspora or refugee experience."[60] This perspective is particularly applicable to Yasu Kōhei's glass negatives, notebooks, photographic equipment, and books, which now reside within public and private collections across Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

A key distinction among the various collections of Yasu's photographs and objects lies in the historical narratives that frame them. In Guatemala, where glass negatives and digitized reproductions are widely accessed, Yasu's works function as historical evidence of social and cultural conditions at the turn of the twentieth century. By contrast, the collection in Yasu's Japanese hometown, whose name reflects the curatorial intention to assemble objects that he left behind, emphasizes the life of this distinguished pioneer. The following pages provide a detailed overview of the archival collections consulted for this research, addressing their histories, curatorial intentions, and the limitations inherent in their scope. My approach to these archival materials is critical, acknowledging the constructed nature of curated objects.

The "Estudio Fotografía Japonesa" Collection and Its Multiple Copies

The photographic collection of Yasu Kōhei's work consulted for this dissertation primarily originates from the holdings of the Centro de Investigación Mesoamericana (CIRMA) in Antigua Guatemala.

Founded in 1979, the Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA acquired photographic negatives from the Yas-Noriega family in 1982. The collection titled "Estudio Fotografía Japonesa" comprises 928 glass negatives taken by Yasu and his godson, business partner, and successor, José Domingo Noriega.[61] A second collection at the Fototeca, titled "Colección de fotografías de Juan José de Jesús Yas," contains 37 copies of photographs curated by Luis Luján Muñoz. This collection contains mainly photographs of the Yas-Noriegas and other notable families of Antigua.[62] The following institutions and individuals also hold copies from Fototeca's holdings (table 1).

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60 Morton and Newbury 2016, p. 9.

61 The reference code is GT-CIRMA-FG-005.

62 The reference code is GT-CIRMA-FG-033.

Table 1: Institutions and Individuals Holding Copies of CIRMA Materials

Year	Insitution or Individual	Number of Images
1980s	The Latin American Library's Image Archive, Tulane University Library (USA)	78 prints made by the founder of Fototeca Mitchell Denburg
1980s	Umoto Masahiro (Japan)	30 prints
1980s	Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (Japan)	49 prints
2004	Fujisawa Municipality (Japan)	20 prints
2010	Endangered Archives, British Library (UK)	Digital copies of the complete collection

Source: "CIRMA Collection of Juan Yas and José Domingo Noriega Photographs" (https://archives.tulane.edu/repositories/8/resources/2354); Tulane University Latin American Library; interviews conducted with Umoto Masahiro in 2017 concerning his collection and those acquired by the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum.

Removed from their original sites of production and circulation and dispersed through institutional collections with diverse intentions, historical photographs conceal as much as they reveal. With most surviving products of Fotografía Japonesa now digitized and accessible online, they have acquired a different material status. How does the movement of photographs between institutions, along with their placement within evolving archival classification systems, alter their meanings as well as their social and material values? This question is crucial for my research in two ways. First, it shapes my methodological approach to engaging with photographs in their various forms. Second, it leads me to examine the relationship between history and the photographic archive. Previous studies have typically treated Yasu Kōhei's photographs as mere visual evidence for historical inquiry, depicting the photographer simply as a chronicler of his era. This perspective overlooks the particularities of his existence as a member of Guatemalan society. Likewise, it neglects the constructed nature of the archival knowledge produced around his biography and his work.

"Yasu Kōhei no Ihin," Fujisawa

In Japan, the primary collection of items related to Yasu is titled "Yasu Kōhei no Ihin" (屋須弘平遺品, Items Left by Yasu Kōhei; hereafter referred to as the Fujisawa collection).[63] Established in 2004 by the Fujisawa Municipal Government (now merged into Ichinoseki), this collection was funded by the Japanese government to support the creation and preservation of local cultural heritage.

The Fujisawa collection comprises 136 items purchased directly from the Noriega family in Antigua, including photographic negatives and positives, equipment, books, and various other objects. Although smaller in numbers than the one in Guatemala, this collection includes a diverse range of negatives, painted positives, cartes-de-visite, and postcards that offer valuable insight into the commercial products of Yasu's practice.

[63] I recognize the significance of the collection's name, "Ihin," which is intertwined with the archiving process and its outcomes, emphasizing the strong connection between the material items and the individual who once used and possessed them. Invisibilizing this reference in my text may weaken these connections. However, to accommodate readers who may be unfamiliar with the Japanese context, I have chosen to refer to it as the Fujisawa Collection. This designation highlights the item's current location, representing Yasu's birthplace, and distinguishes it from the photographic collection at Fototeca Guatemala.

Among these materials, the most frequently referenced are the personal writings preserved in two notebooks. Judging from the retrospective perspective assumed in both, they were likely written around the same time, during the final months or years before Yasu Kōhei's death in Antigua Guatemala in February 1917. Each notebook contains entries in a hybrid mix of genres, including travelogues, diary entries, random notes, and transcriptions of letters, combined without reconciling differences in grammatical features. Due to language barriers and access limitations, the two texts were utilized differently in biographical reconstructions in each country. Guatemalan scholars tend to favor the Spanish-language retrospective account of his life, while Japanese authors focus on the letters he transcribed before sending them to family and friends in Japan.

In addition to the notebooks, cameras, books, and other private items, Fujisawa (now Ichinoseki) Municipality also holds 20 prints made from negatives at the Fototeca Guatemala. It is assumed that these fine prints, displayed in the permanent exhibition, provide a comprehensive appreciation of Yasu Kōhei's work and illustrate his achievements and social life in Guatemala. There is also a collection of 29 albumen prints, each bearing the inscription "Fujisawa Education Board" (藤沢教). These prints are numbered sequentially up to 44, with some numbers missing. The collection features photographs taken at various stages of Yasu's life in Guatemala.

The Fujisawa collection is managed by the cultural and educational branch of the local municipality, with no individual archivist or expert designated to oversee the objects. In contrast to the ongoing efforts to increment knowledge of the archived materials at the Fototeca Guatemala, the Fujisawa Collection is kept as it is, open for research by interested individuals.

Other Documents

In contrast to the abundance of images attributed to Yasu Kōhei, there is very limited textual evidence documenting his life. CIRMA also holds a collection of documentary materials about Yasu in its Historical Archive (Archivo Histórico).

This collection, titled "Juan José de Jesús Yas" and referenced as "D-0377," contains reproductions of sources in both Spanish and Japanese. Upon my last visit in 2018, it included the following items:

1. Two newspaper clippings about Yasu from Japanese periodicals. The first is a three-page article published in 1986 by photography critic and historian Iizawa Kōtarō. The second is a full-page article written by Kikuchi Ikuzō and published in the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on January 17, 1987, in which Kikuchi describes the discovery of Yasu's works and outlines a sketch of his itinerary.
2. Black-and-white photocopies of the two notebooks, now part of the Fujisawa collection, containing the documents I refer to throughout this dissertation as *Memorias* and *Notes*. The original notebooks remained in the possession of the Noriega family until their acquisition by the Fujisawa Municipal Government in 2004.
3. A Spanish essay written by anthropologist Kosaka Ayako, titled "Juan José de Jesús Yas: el sumario biográfico" (Juan José de Jesús Yas: the biographical summary), which includes references to Japanese and Guatemalan sources.
4. A copy of a typewritten transcription of the *Memorias* made by former Japanese ambassador Mori Junzo.

When I first visited CIRMA to examine the photographic collection, I was advised to also consult these historical documents. This textual collection is considered a contextualizing

complement to the photographic holdings, although there is no record of how each document came to be included. The documents focus exclusively on Yasu, with no material on José Domingo Noriega or the continuation of Fotografía Japonesa after the founder's death. The heterogeneous nature of the Archivo Histórico's collection provides a sedimentary view of the gradual accumulation of information about Yasu over time. With the inclusion of materials brought by Japanese visitors, the collection also serves as a record of the trans-Pacific exchanges in which CIRMA has participated.

I consulted a range of archival materials produced during and after Yasu's lifetime. Several of Yasu's photographs were reproduced as illustrations in periodicals and Catholic publications, available in the libraries of CIRMA and the National Newspaper Archive (Hemeroteca Nacional) in Guatemala City. In Antigua, private households hold prints and secondary reproductions of Yasu's religious photographs; however, in my experience, the identity of the photographer is typically unknown to the owners. It is likely that portraits of members of the local society from Yasu's era also remain in the possession of descendants of his former patrons. Records of Yasu's baptism and marriage are kept in the Archdiocesan Historical Archive (Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano) in Guatemala City, though I have found no official documentation of his immigration or business registration in the country. In Japan, travel permits recording Yasu's two departures to the Americas are preserved in the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo. In Fujisawa (Ichinoseki), Yasu's relatives have kept four cartes-de-visite sent from Guatemala, featuring portraits of Yasu, his wife María Noriega, and the Fotografía Japonesa studio.

The final group of materials essential to my research offers insight into the formation of the Guatemalan and Japanese archival collections on Yasu Kōhei. In Guatemala, Kojima Hideo and Kojima Keiko, who were among the first to recognize the significance of Yasu's work following the 1976 Guatemala earthquake, generously shared their private collection of documents, texts, and newspaper clippings gathered over several decades. CIRMA's library holds published texts created for photographic exhibitions, including the first and most frequently cited Guatemalan study on Yasu, authored by Luis Luján Muñoz. Luis Fernando Noriega, an art photographer and descendant of José Domingo Noriega, shared insights into the family's perspective on Yasu's works being removed from their familial context and transferred to individuals and institutions. In Fujisawa (Ichinoseki), several volumes of official records detail the selection and preservation of Yasu's personal objects. Fujiwara Toshio, a curator and committed advocate of Yasu's work, maintains an extensive collection of publications and exhibition brochures. Insightful information on the establishment of the Fototeca collection was provided by Kosaka Ayako, who conducted a series of interviews in the late 1990s as part of her research on Yasu. Her interviews included conversations with Luis Luján Muñoz, Irma, the granddaughter of José Domingo Noriega, and Mitchell Denburg, the founder of Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA.

Although several scholars contributed to the creation of the Yasu collections in Guatemala and Japan, little is known about the pre-archival context of the objects. Limited information exists on how these objects were prepared for inclusion in their respective collections. Equally scarce is the detail available about the history of the objects themselves. The institutions that house the collections do not synthesize the scattered elements into a coherent and comprehensive account of Yasu.

Wendy Duff and Verne Harris have noted that, when objects enter the archive, the institution "attempts to give to them a shape, a pattern, a closure—to end their inevitable

openness, close off their referents."[64] In my view, this form of closure is evident in the Yasu collections, which often reduce his life and work to illustrative material for historical research. As I will discuss in the next section, recognizing Yasu as an individual in his own right requires attention to the interconnectedness of these objects. This can be achieved through an ethnography of archives conducted across multiple locations.

Ethnography of Archives in Multiple Sites

This project involved tracing Yasu Kōhei's itineraries and locating materials across archives, libraries, museums, and private collections on both sides of the Pacific. Between 2013 and 2018, I concentrated my research on collections in Japan and Guatemala. In 2015 and 2018, I spent a total of eight months in Guatemala, exploring various archives for materials related to Yasu, early photography, and Asian immigration. During shorter visits to Japan between 2014 and 2017, I focused on the development of the collection in Fujisawa, as well as the publications and exhibitions that introduced Yasu to Japanese audiences.

By conceiving this project as a multi-sited ethnography, my aim was not only to understand Yasu Kōhei within multiple contexts, but also to explore the displacements and entanglements inherent in the ongoing historiographic construction of him as both a migrant and an artist. Framing my research as an ethnography in and of archives requires clarification of both terms—"ethnography" and "archive." By archive, I refer to the artifacts that provide evidence of Yasu's life, as well as the spaces and institutional structures where these artifacts are preserved as knowable objects. Here, I follow Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, who emphasize that an archive can be any set or collection of historical objects "brought together with some purposeful intent, if only for storage."[65] As an ethnography, my research reflects on the processes involved in constructing such archives through the practices of collecting, selecting, and appraising artifacts, often undertaken to create a sense of community or to craft narratives about the past.[66]

Archiving can be understood as a "regime of practices" that "varies in any given time and in any given place," as suggested by Eric Ketelaar.[67] Similarly, Ann Stoler regards archives as sites of contested cultural knowledge shaped by specific epistemic interests.[68] Scholarly publications and the textual materials accompanying exhibitions have alternately depicted Yasu as a pioneer of Guatemalan and Japanese photography and as a forerunner of Japanese diasporic communities in the Americas. Rather than acknowledging the constructed nature of the collections underpinning these representations, these previous works have reproduced institutional knowledge as unproblematic fact. I contend, however, that Yasu's unique biography offers a far richer texture of insights and historical lessons, which risk being marginalized when adopting the perspective established by the archives. Thus, while not denying the sincere intentions of the professionals involved in archiving Yasu in Guatemala and Japan, a primary aim of my ethnographic engagement with the production of knowledge about Yasu Kōhei is to recover the dimensions that earlier readings have elided from his biography.

In considering how archival materials can be incorporated into historiographical work, Ann Stoler calls for an "agentive act" that is "squarely focused on what we know and how

64 Duff and Harris 2002, p. 276.
65 Banks and Vokes 2010, p. 338.
66 Papailias 2005, p. 16.
67 Ketelaar 2001, p. 136.
68 Stoler 2009, pp. 32–33.

we knew it."[69] A critical approach to the archive addresses not only the events, stories, and people that have been selected and preserved, but also what has been omitted. The formation of a photographic archive therefore encompasses the pre-archival moments of a photograph, the processes of institutionalization, the potential archives, and the invisible "non-collections" within institutions, as well as the various agencies involved in creating a photographic archive.[70]

To deconstruct established historical narratives about Yasu's life and photography, it is essential to reconnect the archival objects to their earlier contexts. Through the "double operation of critique and montage, the archive becomes open to new understandings." Unlike much anthropological work on archives, the collections discussed here do not result from colonial constellations or hegemonic powers seeking to define and collect. Nevertheless, public agendas and national interests in representing history within diplomatic contexts have influenced their construction. Yasu's case draws attention to how objects traverse value systems as they move across cultural and national boundaries. George Marcus's admonition to see the subjects of multi-sited ethnographies as differently constituted, evolving, displaced, recombined, hybrid, and alternatively imagined, and his emphasis on the system of relations that define them, were particularly relevant to this endeavor.[71]

While maintaining a critical approach to the constructive nature of archives is important, it is equally vital to attend to the local practices involved in producing historical knowledge through the act of collecting. Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz note the enthusiasm of theorists in discussing archives but observe that this often overlooks the practical experience and expertise of archivists.[72] Visiting the various sites associated with Yasu Kōhei brought to the fore the cultural differences that shape the appropriation of historical artifacts. In working with heterogeneous materials from government agencies and academic institutions in Japan and Guatemala, the differences in administrative processes and archival practices proved to be significant.

Differing practices of collecting and archiving have shaped objects in distinct ways across various contexts. In Latin America, the creation of *archivos* played a significant role from the onset of Spanish colonization in the sixteenth century, whereas an equivalent concept of the archive was introduced much later in Japan.[73] To understand the formation of Yasu's archive and its reception within the Japanese context requires recognizing the distinctions present within a semantic field that includes terms such as historical records (*shiryo* 史料), written documents (*shiryo* 資料), paperwork (*bunsho* 文書), historical photographs (*rekishishashin* 歴史写真), and belongings of the deceased (*ihin* 遺品). As will be argued in the third part of this dissertation, such semantic distinctions play a crucial role in shaping the relationship between archives and other cultural practices, such as local historiography in Yasu's case.

Two concerns in the literature on archives are particularly relevant to my own work as a scholar conducting research within these specific spaces of knowledge production. The first is the possibility that the appeal of certain archives may "mask the contingency of their construction, their destructive powers, and the way their content remains vulnerable to interpretive violence."[74] The second concern involves the authority of scholarship to confer

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69 Ibid., pp. 44–45.
70 All quotations in this paragraph and the next two are from Ladwig et al. (2012, p. 21).
71 Marcus 1995.
72 Cook and Schwartz 2002.
73 González Echevarría 1990, p. 32.
74 Freshwater 2003, p. 729.

value on particular collections. As Helen Wood states, "the very fact that a researcher has chosen to examine a certain document can make it more important than its original context meant it to be."[75] It is therefore necessary to consider the "meaning and value that was not originally intended."[76] In this context, I must reflect on the imprints my research may leave on the collections related to Yasu and the potential for my study to alter the very objects it seeks to describe. Although archival labor is often critiqued from a position of academic detachment, it is ultimately research such as mine that generates the historiographical narratives sustaining archival practice.

As Penelope Papailias suggests, the archive is not "a dead, sepulchral space in which only historians seek the past" but "a busy crossroads, intersected over time by the diverse trajectories of researchers, archivists, secretaries, informants, and donors."[77] Navigating this crossroads during my fieldwork, I participated in the dissemination of knowledge on Yasu Kōhei through the essays I wrote and presentations I delivered for three exhibitions held in Yokohama (2017) and Antigua (2015, 2018). Beyond these contributions, my imprint extends to a critical challenge of the dominance of institutional narratives that frequently marginalize alternative meanings in the archiving process. However, this effort to reveal "alternative" perspectives carries the risk of producing yet another authoritative, albeit reductive, interpretation of the photographer's original work. To mitigate this risk, I have carefully documented the sources and original contexts of the materials used in my analysis, thereby enabling readers to draw their own conclusions or build upon this research in future inquiries.

Assessing Archival Photographs and Personal Writings

The remnants of Yasu Kōhei's photographs, which form the primary material for my research, are now dispersed across various formats in several institutions and private collections. In 2010, CIRMA's holdings of the collection Fotografía Japonesa were digitized and made accessible online with support from the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme (EAP).[78] This online access includes metadata created during the accession process, such as the subject, a description, the identity of the photographer, the time and place the image was taken, and the subject category under which it was classified. As I discuss in detail in chapter 6, digitized photographs offer access but also pose unique challenges. In this section, however, I focus on how I addressed the selective bias toward certain images and the relative neglect of others resulting from decisions made by the hosting institutions.

Writing about the history of Andean portraiture, Jorge Coronado discusses how "the possibility of academic knowledge that bases itself on photography is a reflection of the limits of the archive itself."[79] To better understand what is known about Yasu and his photography, specific information about the nature of the archive is necessary. His work on religious imagery and his outstanding photography of colonial architecture have become defining features of his identity as an artist who, to some extent, worked against the grain of his modernist era. However, as he explained in his *Memorias*, Yasu regarded his work as

75 Wood 2000, p. 35.
76 Ibid., p. 36.
77 Papailias 2005, pp. 97–98.
78 Awarded in 2007, see: https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP165.
79 Coronado 2018, p. 18.

closely connected to that of other photographers in Guatemala with whom he had learned the craft during his apprenticeship. By situating Yasu's œuvre within the development of Guatemalan photography, rather than assuming his otherness as an Oriental immigrant with atypical interests, it becomes possible to appreciate his contributions within the broader framework of image production in his time.

A Virtual Collection

Except for the cartes-de-visite that Yasu sent to his Japanese family in Fujisawa, the attribution of photographs to either of the two successive owners of the Fotografía Japonesa studio was determined by experts at the Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA. There is no record of the object features used to attribute the photographs to Yasu or José Domingo Noriega, but I have inferred four criteria from interviews with CIRMA staff and exhibition catalogs. These are the condition of the glass negative, the darkroom technique, the subject, and what were identified as stylistic idiosyncrasies. Thanks to CIRMA's efforts, the online catalog now identifies individual creators for subcategories of the collection, as well as for each photograph.

Out of a total of 928 images in the CIRMA collections, 271 are attributed to Yasu, while the remainder are assigned to Noriega. Among the ten thematic categories, three contain images credited to Yasu: religious images (P06), Catholic priests (P05), and churches in Antigua (P01). Images categorized as outdoor photos, public events, and those taken in other regions of the country are identified as Noriega's work. Yasu's contributions are also represented by a few images in the Group Portraits (P04) and Individual Portraits (P08) categories. The remaining series, including "Cities and Towns in Guatemala" and "Daily Life," primarily consist of works attributed to Noriega.

All photographs attributed to Yasu are generally dated between 1895 and 1915, spanning from his relocation to Antigua Guatemala until shortly before his death. Most locations are identified as Antigua Guatemala and surrounding villages. Both the dates and locations suggest that the collection does not include photographs from the early phase of Fotografía Japonesa in Guatemala City, where Yasu began his commercial activities. However, for reasons to be discussed elsewhere, it appears likely that attributing all the photographs solely to the Antiguan phase of Fotografía Japonesa is incorrect.

As evident from the detailed descriptions, special effort has been made to caption Yasu's photographs of colonial architecture and religious sculpture. These images possess unquestionable artistic value and also serve as documentary evidence for the registration and preservation of Antigua Guatemala's extraordinary cultural heritage. The subjects of these photographs are well known, which has certainly helped in their classification. In contrast, far less detail is available for a large number of mostly anonymous portraits, which are almost uniformly described in generic terms such as "elderly couple," "priest," "Maya Kaqchikel women," or "a lady." The absence of descriptive captions complicates work with this portion of the collection, limiting exploration to the category structure provided by the archive. Since much of Yasu's commercial production was likely commissioned by private clients, this lack of accessibility in the portrait section impedes appreciation of important facets of his photographic practice.

While this imbalance is undoubtedly specific to the conditions surrounding the archiving of Yasu's work, the adequate appreciation of generally repetitive portraiture poses a particular challenge for researchers interested in the photographic event. In his review of Mexican photographic history, Olivier Debroise articulates the problem as follows: "With

the distance imposed by the passage of time, the repetition of poses has conferred a kind of anonymity on these portraits. This contradicts their original intention: to identify and permanently preserve their subjects as recognizable, distinguishable individuals."[80] To address this issue, Debroise recommends that researchers become "scholars of abundance and repetition" who "embrace the prolific production of commonplaces and stereotypes before fixing their attention on the exceptional examples."[81]

One difficulty in studying early photography lies in the breadth of the photographers' work and its circulation. Whether portraits in private collections or postcards reproduced in large numbers, only a selective portion of these images reach galleries and cultural institutions, where they rarely receive significant scholarly attention.[82] This is certainly true of Yasu's work, which has become quite dispersed. Some of his images have been published in journals accessible in libraries and on the Internet Archive (archive.org), where some Guatemalan institutions are uploading their digitized holdings. I also discovered portraits taken at the Fotografía Japonesa studio within private collections during consultations with residents. Finally, as will be examined in detail in the second interlude and chapter 6, some photographs of sculptures of saints circulate as anonymous reproductions among Catholic lay associations, which use them within their devotional practices. In contrast to the difficulty of locating Yasu's work outside the archives, far more material exists on the photographer Alberto Valdeavellano, who was highly active in Guatemala City from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s. Although there is no comparable collection of his negatives at CIRMA, his prolific production of postcards, issued in over five hundred different subjects, is frequently available on Internet auction sites.[83]

To contextualize Yasu's photographic practice, I have assembled an extensive virtual collection of early commercial photography in Guatemala, spanning the period between 1870 and 1920. This collection draws from photographic archives available online, digitized illustrated newspapers, cartes-de-visite, and postcards found on Internet auction sites. The images typically depict politicians, notable individuals, people in traditional Mayan dress, ruins, and archaeological excavation sites.[84] The watermarks and low resolution available in much of this material pose little obstacle, as I aim to gain an overview of the visual content—such as poses, costumes, props, and scenery—as well as the condition of the material, the formats of mounted cards, and inscriptions on the photographs. Putting together this comparative collection allowed me to better appreciate the idiosyncrasies of Yasu's subject choice and aesthetic decisions. To manage thousands of photographs from diverse collections and sources, I use DigiKam, an open-source image organizer with a tag editor that allows me to categorize heterogeneous images according to subjects, people, events, props, locations, dates, techniques, and printing methods. The capacity to apply my taxonomies enables me to look beyond the classifications developed by archival institutions and cross-reference media across collections.

Using these tools, I have divided Yasu's photographs into two groups corresponding to the locations of Fotografía Japonesa's business and the two phases of Yasu's career:

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80 Debroise 2001, p. 39.

81 Ibid., p. 13.

82 Geary 1998; Katz 1981.

83 The auction sites I consult for early Guatemalan photography, including carte-de-visite, cabinet cards, and postcards, are Delcampe, eBay, and todocoleccion

84 The Latin American Library's Image Archive at Tulane University holds 68 prints dating from 1882 to 1888, depicting popular subjects such as *fincas*, indigenous Mayans, and rural landscapes favored by foreign visitors.

approximately 1880 – 1889 in Guatemala City, and from 1891 until his death in Antigua Guatemala.[85] I searched Yasu's writings for relevant information about his clientele and studio facilities. By cross-referencing all the visual information and using textual clues, I identified 457 photographs taken by Yasu, almost 190 more than the 271 attributed to him by CIRMA experts.[86] This in-depth work with both visual and textual material allows several insights into the history of Guatemalan photography. First, it helps relate images to social and cultural currents, as well as to the cast of characters involved in their production and commercialization. For Yasu, this includes his social networks, marketing techniques, and adoption of fashions and styles. Second, by identifying the locations and dates of his photographs, I can examine Yasu's forty-year career and discuss its evolution in terms of resource use and aesthetic expression. Based on these findings, chapters 4 and 5 explore his photography and the broader context of image production in greater detail.

Personal Writings as Accounts of Social Experience

As with Yasu's photographic œuvre, relatively little research has been conducted on the writings he left behind. One reason for this is that Yasu's notebooks remained with his Guatemalan family until they were acquired for the Fujisawa collection in 2004. As a result, earlier studies on Yasu had to rely on photocopies and transcripts held at CIRMA, which complicated assessment of the material condition of his writings and verification of discrepancies between transcripts and original texts. The language barrier further hindered scholarly exchange between Japanese and Guatemalan researchers regarding Yasu's work. Before their translation in 2004, only select Japanese experts were able to read Yasu's memoirs in Spanish, while Guatemalan scholars interested in Yasu had limited access to the Japanese materials.

A close examination of Yasu's Spanish and Japanese texts provides interesting insights into his writing practice. His deliberate choice of languages, formats, and genres reflects the care he took in determining what to write, how to express it, and to whom it was addressed. A comparison of texts produced concurrently in both languages sheds light on how he adapted foreign concepts for his Japanese and Guatemalan audiences, as well as how he portrayed himself to his birth family and marital relatives. Fluent in French, Spanish, and possibly English for business purposes, Yasu demonstrated a strong command of languages. His letters and the books he brought back from Japan attest to his high level of literacy in his native tongue. Within this context, the grammatical and stylistic peculiarities of his Spanish writing can be understood not merely as a "migrant problem," but also as manifestations of his "linguistic and social alienation" and "a creative product of his transnational experience."[87]

To better contextualize his life abroad, I have examined Yasu's writings alongside a broader array of historical documents, some of which have only become accessible in recent years. Whereas previous scholars have treated Yasu's notes and memoirs primarily as sources of biographical data, I approach them as deliberately constructed compilations of information that he deemed significant and reflective of his life after leaving Japan. Yasu's writings, in particular, reveal a fragmented sense of belonging that encompassed patriotic

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85 According to Yasu's writings, he did not expect to return from Japan when he left Guatemala in 1889. It can be assumed that he sold most of his photographic equipment but left behind photographic negatives of himself and his friends, which he entrusted to close friends for safekeeping.

86 See appendix 3 for identification of Yasu's work.

87 Papailias 2005, p. 181.

sentiments and a deep Catholic faith, both of which evolved throughout his personal journey. I interpret these heterogeneous texts as spaces where Yasu negotiated his identity and affirmed his lived experience. In this analysis, I draw on the concept of "textual anthropology" as employed by Penelope Papailias in her work on Greek popular history and migrant biographies.[88] As Papailias explains, the aim is to understand "reading as anthropological practice and address language as cultural performative through engagement with the linguistic 'details' and 'insides' of texts."[89]

Almost all preserved remnants of Yasu's life as a writer and correspondent live in the two small notebooks that are now a part of the Fujisawa collection.[90] Possibly reflecting his declining health, the notebooks are modest in size and weight. Their formats are similar, each slightly smaller than the A5 standard. Although illness marked the end of his life, Yasu's handwriting remained steady and composed. However, water stains and faded text have rendered parts of the notebooks difficult to decipher. The use of different inks, visible erasures, and carefully added marginal notes all suggest a deliberate effort to create a thoughtful narrative of his life.

Analyzed as literary works, the two notebooks incorporate elements of three distinct genres. They include recollections of events Yasu deemed significant at the end of his life, transcripts of correspondence with friends and relatives in Japan, and notes reflecting on religious and political matters. The letters and autobiographical writings present particularly compelling contrasts regarding their temporal perspectives, intended audience, and purpose. By comparing his interpretations of historical events with his personal experiences, we can explore the complex and evolving dimensions of identity that Yasu conveyed to his Japanese and Guatemalan readers.

Memorias

The more voluminous of the two notebooks contains seventy-two pages of lined writing paper and is bound with thread (figure 4).[91] It holds a lengthy text in Spanish that, in my transcription, amounts to 14,039 typed words. In the Guatemalan literature, this notebook is frequently quoted and generally referred to as *Memorias*, or "memoirs" in English, a designation that I adopt in this dissertation for ease of reference. In Japan, it is called 手記 (*shuki*, note or memoir).

The notebook was first mentioned in Japan by the anthropologist Terada Kazuo in the late 1970s. A Japanese translation of the *Memorias* (グアテマラの写真家屋須弘平の手記: 波瀾万丈の生涯) was prepared by Kosaka Ayako and published in 2004, with the establishment of the Fujiwara collection in Yasu's hometown. Previous authors have relied on the transcript of the memoirs without verifying it against the original. As a result, certain errors and omissions in the initial transcription have been carried forward uncorrected. Upon comparing my transcript with Mori Junzo's version, I found that two pages were missing from his transcription.[92]

Likely to emphasize the formal character of this text as an authorized autobiographical

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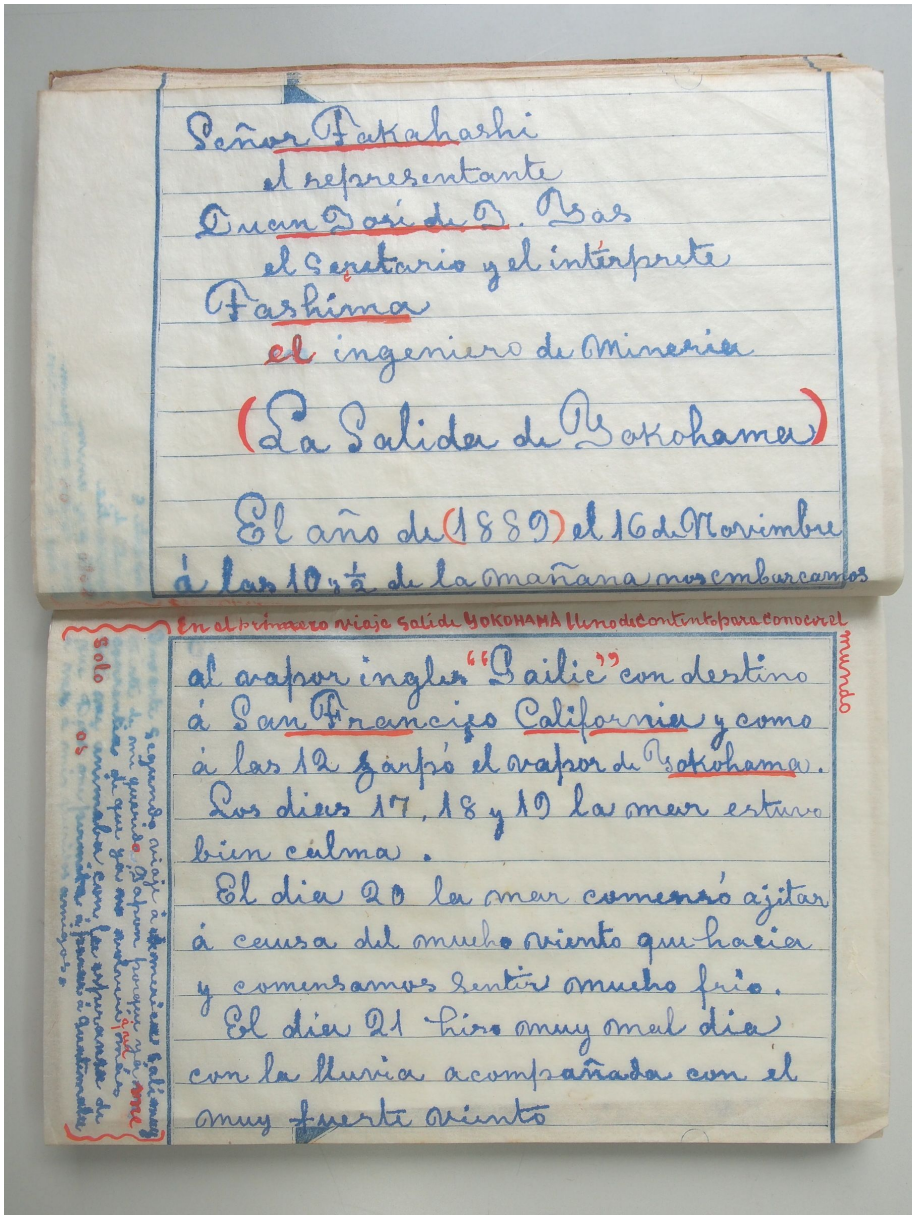
88 Papailias 2005, p. 181.

89 Ibid., p. 10.

90 Catalog of the Fujisawa collection, reference No. 53 (メモ memo pad) and No. 54 (手記 diary).

91 Judging from the material of the paper, which is extremely thin and transparent, and the layout, which appears designed to support vertical writing, it is likely that Yasu brought the notebook or paper with him from Japan.

92 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 81-86 and 596-630.


Señor Takahashi
el representante
Juan Dario de O. Ozas
el Secretario y el interprete
Tashima
el ingeniero de Mineria

(La Salida de Yokohama)

El año de (1889) el 16 de Noviembre
à las 10 y ½ de la mañana nos embarcamos
En el primero viaje salida YOKOHAMA lleno de contento para conocer el mundo
al vapor ingles "Gailic" con destino
à San Francisco California y como
à las 12 zarpó el vapor de Yokohama.
Los dias 17, 18 y 19 la mar estuvo
bien calma.
El dia 20 la mar comensó ajitar
à causa del mucho viento que hacia
y comensamos sentir mucho frio.
El dia 21 hizo muy mal dia
con la lluvia acompañada con el
muy fuerte viento

Figure 4: The title page of the chapter "Departure from Yokohama" in Yasu Kōhei's memoirs

narrative, Yasu added a brown paper cover and affixed his seal to the back. Although the work is untitled, it is organized into ten chapters labeled "books" (*libros*).[93] Beginning with Yasu's initial departure from Japan and concluding with the final phase of his life in Antigua, the chapters recount events and encounters in chronological order, narrated from Yasu's first-person perspective. Broadly speaking, the chapters address three main themes. The first concerns his travels between Japan and the Americas, including details of sea voyages, observations made en route, and descriptions of his travel companions. The second focuses on his photographic work and the associated social life he cultivated in Guatemala. The third centers on his religious life, highlighting Catholic ceremonies such as his baptism, confirmation, and wedding, which are presented not only as family events but also as a lens through which to understand his social network.

93 The outline of the *Memorias* is given in appendix 8. The full text is transcribed in appendix 9.

The *Memorias* are written for a specific audience. Despite spending three decades with his Guatemalan family, they are mentioned only rarely. Instead, the text dwells extensively on his stays in Mexico and Peru, which occurred out of their sight. The narrative is interrupted several times to provide background information. In passages recounting events involving his wife and Guatemalan acquaintances, the narrator's self-reference shifts to an inclusive "we." Together, these details suggest that Yasu intended this text primarily for his wife and her relatives, and perhaps also for a broader network in Guatemala.

Through "an articulation of those events stored in memory and reproduced through recollection and verbalization," the *Memorias* create a space where readers can imagine the protagonist's journeys through shared vocabularies and references.[94] As I will argue in the following chapters, Yasu's Catholic faith formed the foundation of his social life in Guatemala. Confident that his presumed readers shared his piety, the *Memorias* interpret past events through the lens of faith. Adventures and achievements are framed as blessings, while hardship and adversity are portrayed as divine trials. The text offers little about Yasu's early life and, aside from a passage regarding his mother's conversion to Catholicism during his brief visit in 1889, scarcely mentions his family in Japan.[95] By offering a highly selective reconstruction of the past, the text does "not register preexisting selfhood, but rather somehow creates it."[96] Here, Yasu presents himself as a devout individual whose life has been defined by his travels to foreign shores.

Notes and Japanese Correspondence

The thinner notebook contains short, seemingly random notes in Japanese and Spanish on various topics (figure 5). It has no cover or title and appears as a compilation of texts Yasu wished to preserve, some of which may have been transcribed from writings composed decades earlier.

The notebook is referred to as a "memo" in the Japanese collection but is rarely mentioned in Guatemalan publications.[97] For clarity, I will refer to this notebook as *Notes* throughout this dissertation. The *Notes* contain the following items and texts: transcripts of seven letters Yasu sent to Japan; a timeline of personal events between 1874 and 1916 that he deemed significant; a record of the papal election; a list of goods he ordered through a Japanese contact; a list of contributions collected for the Japanese Imperial effort in 1895; scattered notes on the Japanese Navy's victory over Russia; and a transcript of a song composed by the Meiji Emperor about the Battle of the Yellow Sea in 1894.

While various parts of this notebook will be used to discuss Yasu's social and professional life, the transcribed letters are of most interest for my analysis. In addition to the seven letters contained in the *Notes*, which Yasu sent to cousins and a friend in 1916, I have compiled a list of eight additional letters from various sources.[98] The Archivo Histórico at CIRMA has a copy of a letter Yasu received from a cousin. Three messages sent by Yasu

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94 Molloy 1991, p. 5.

95 Sylvia Molloy notes the Spanish American autobiographical convention of omitting "the first years of an individual's life [...] whose sheer triviality might question the importance of his enterprise" Molloy (ibid., p. 7). However, there is no evidence that Yasu's selective account follows this convention. His childhood would have been hardly trivial to a Guatemalan reader.

96 Couser 2011, p. 14.

97 A photocopy can also be found in the Archivo Histórico, CIRMA, alongside the aforementioned *Memorias*.

98 Details about these letters and their respective transcriptions are provided in Appendices 6 and 7.

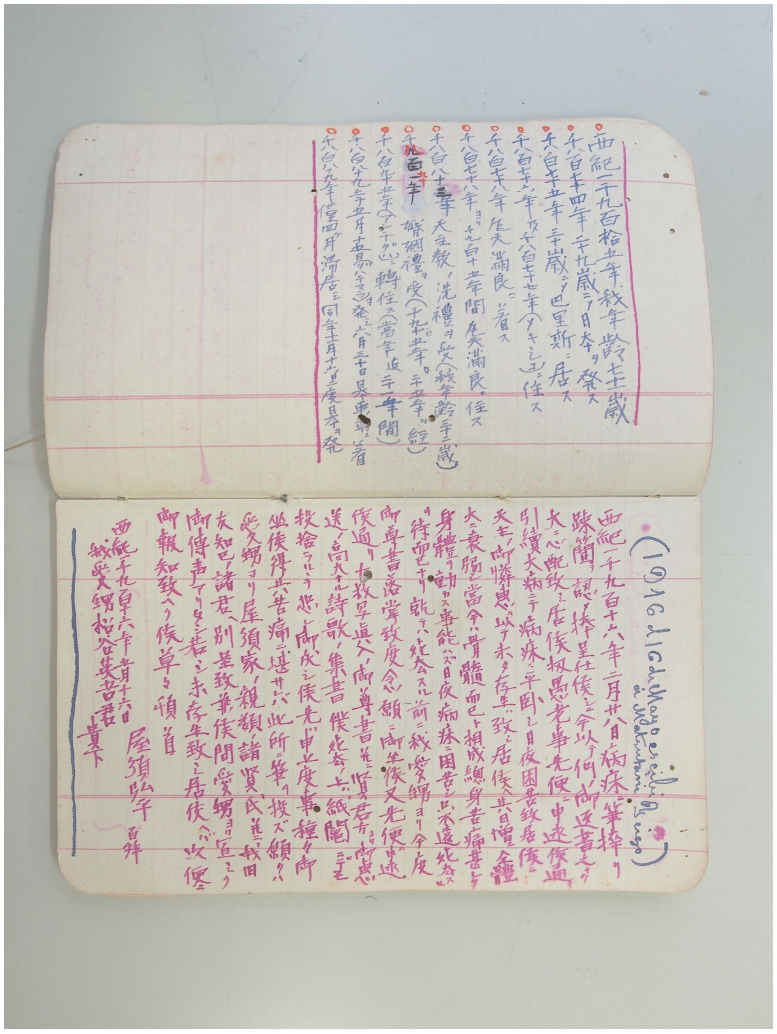

Figure 5: Here are two entries from Yasu Kōhei's *Notes*. The top entry is a chronological list of significant life events. The first line states the author's age and notes that, "In 1915, I am 71 years old." Next is a list of his travels from Japan to Guatemala, including his stays in Paris and Mexico City. The Guatemalan parts record his baptism and marriage. The last two lines note his return to Japan in 1889 and his subsequent departure after only four months. The bottom entry is a transcription of a letter he sent to his nephew, Matsutani Eigo, on May 16, 1916

during his first decade abroad are included in Saitō Johei's 1934 biography of Yasu. The final four letters were sent by Yasu to his close friend Tanabe Saneaki between 1889 and 1890 and reported on his travels to Peru.[99]

The fifteen Japanese letters span a period of forty years, with recipients and contents evolving accordingly. The earlier correspondence reveals Yasu's outlook shortly after leaving Japan, while the later letters reflect his assessments after spending half a lifetime abroad. In addition to the transcriptions of the letters themselves, the correspondence copied into the *Notes* includes supplementary materials such as poems and travelogues that Yasu sent as attachments. These provide valuable insights into his letter-writing practices. Like photographs, letters serve as historical sources distinguished by their immediacy, capturing the moments in which they were produced.

As Liz Stanley observes, such letters bridge "the ontological gap between the migrant in the new settlement, and family connections in the country of origin, through the affirmation received in response to their communications."[100] Most literature on migrant letter writing is based on European materials.[101] Studies focusing on non-European migrants are scarce.

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99 These four letters were donated by the Tanabe family in the late 1970s and have remained unpublished until now. They are preserved in the file titled "Related to Yasu Kōhei" at the Fujisawa Community Center (公民館 Kominkan).

100 Stanley 2016, p. 2.

101 See, for example, Cancian (2013); Stanley (2016) on settlers in South Africa; Krawatzek and Sasse

Over the past two decades, however, an increasing number of Japanese scholars have shifted toward analyzing emigrant writings and cultural identity, moving beyond viewing these private texts solely as historical supplements.[102] As one of the first Japanese individuals in Latin America, Yasu Kōhei's letters offer significant material within this emerging field.

Considering the character of the letters as historical sources is as crucial as understanding the selective nature of memoirs. First, the fifteen surviving letters likely represent only a small fraction of what was once a lifelong practice of postal correspondence. Second, although the existing transcripts convey the probable content of the original letters, no physical copies of the originals remain. Third, only one transcript corresponds to a letter Yasu received, which limits our ability to fully understand the reciprocal epistolary exchanges that shaped his relationships with Japanese correspondents. Given these limitations, I treat the letters as fragmentary glimpses that illuminate who Yasu communicated with through this medium, the concerns he expressed, and the way he portrayed his life abroad.

Composed amid unfolding events, Yasu's letters offer a compelling contrast to the autobiographical writings produced in the final phase of his life. The *Memorias* are structured around faith and community, providing a coherent and chronological narrative of Yasu's life as a migrant. In contrast, the letters emphasize the preoccupations that he pondered at the moments he wrote them. They reveal his ambitions for his emerging business, his worry for his aging mother, and the loneliness and longing he experienced for his Japanese relatives in later years. Taken together as textual evidence of Yasu's reflections on his life, the *Memorias* and the letters illuminate the multiple layers of his sense of belonging.

Drawing on Stuart Hall's description of migrant writing as a "precious record of the historical formation of diaspora," I use these documents to explore Yasu's complex sense of belonging to family, religious community, and nation, as well as the ways that he mobilized his identities across various contexts.[103] Yasu's writings are read not primarily for the factual information they convey, but as hybrid texts through which the author offers accounts of events and people that invite imaginative interpretations by their recipients. While the affective significance of these writings may be difficult to grasp for contemporary readers, comparing Yasu's reflective accounts in letters and texts reveals an intriguing window into his shifting social positionings.

Outline

The text is divided into three parts, each focusing on distinct aspects of Yasu Kōhei's life, his photographic practice, and the contemporary perception of his biography and œuvre. The first two parts explore his upbringing, border crossing, and photography within a historical framework, while the third part examines how institutions have shaped his biography and photographic legacy into narratives over recent decades. Although the chapters follow a chronological order, their structure underscores the dialectical relationship between the creation and perception of what is known about Yasu Kōhei and his photography. Throughout the three parts, each chapter addresses a contested site of convergence and

(2018) on Germans in the United States; Moreton (2016) on Irish emigrants; Elliott, Gerber, and Sinke's 2006 edited volume on European emigrant letter writing.

102 See, for example Dusinberre 2016; Fiset 1997; Madoka 2004; Nakahodo 2016; Nakatani Sánchez 2005; Shimada 2007.

103 Hall 1999, p. 11.

analyzes specific groups of textual or visual materials to illuminate the tensions between cultural imaginaries and senses of belonging. Placed at the junctures between the parts, two interludes discuss episodes and materials that interrupt the biographical flow of Yasu's life (Interlude 1) and the trajectory of curatorial re-contextualizations of his works (Interlude 2), but nevertheless merit individual exploration.

The first three chapters examine the multiple dimensions of national, cultural, religious, and professional belonging that intersected throughout Yasu's transpacific life. Chapter 1, "Westward, to the Americas," explores Yasu's pursuit of Western studies in Japan, which induced him to seek a higher education abroad. Chapter 2, "A Japanese in Liberal Guatemala," centers on Yasu's endeavors to integrate as a photographer and devoted Catholic within the local society during his initial decade in Guatemala. I situate Yasu's endeavors within the context of racialized policies toward immigration that Guatemala's liberal governments pursued at the time. Chapter 3, "Settling In-Between," describes Yasu's eventual settlement in Antigua Guatemala after he returned from an attempt to move back to Japan. It explores his entangled commitments to families and places of belonging that were distributed across the Pacific. The interlude, "Japan and the Other in Yasu's Writings," thematizes Yasu's involvement in the Meiji Empire's outreach to Latin America by examining his role as an intermediary in a Japanese mining expedition to Peru.

The two chapters of the second part analyze Yasu's photographic practice within the broader context of the Guatemalan visual economy. Chapter 4, "Studio Photography and Social Identity," examines Yasu's strategies for carving out a niche in an increasingly competitive market for commercial photography, particularly through his focus on the Catholic community and mass production. By running Fotografía Japonesa as his personal business, Yasu distinguished his studio not only in scale but also through his ties to the Catholic church and the distinct aesthetics of his portraiture. Chapter 5, "Guatemala Moderna, Guatemala Pintoresca," contextualizes Yasu's photographic work within the wider landscape of image production in Guatemala. This chapter considers his contributions to a developing modernist aesthetic as well as to the vernacular economy of Catholic images. The second interlude, "Images of Our Saints," examines the social life of Yasu's religious photography. Unlike most of his other products, Yasu's devotional images have remained in intense circulation throughout the entire twentieth century. Their continued utilization coincides with the original purposes for which they were created.

The final three chapters explore the transformation of Yasu's Guatemalan possessions into archival objects by analyzing the interpretive frameworks and legitimizing narratives that reframe these materials as cultural heritage. Chapter 6, "From Studio Photography to Archival Image," describes the construction of the primary photographic collection of Yasu's work in Guatemala. It focuses on the role of his negatives in revaluing vernacular photographs as historical documents and in extracting images of Catholic devotion from their original contexts of production and dissemination. Chapter 7, "The Homecoming of Yasu Kōhei," examines the appropriation of Yasu's biography in Japan, where he is depicted alternately as a pioneer of Japanese migration to Latin America and as a notable figure of northeastern descent. Chapter 8, "Yasu / Yas on Display," traces photographic exhibitions based on Yasu Kōhei's work in Japan, Guatemala, and other countries. Particular attention is given to how the photographs are framed under different curatorial agendas and institutional auspices. This chapter also addresses issues of cultural diplomacy and the consideration of historical photographs as either art or historical documents. The epilogue, "Sakura," revolves around the production of a local biography of Yasu Kōhei through the staging of a community play named after Japan's most symbolic flower. By

interweaving impressions of the local landscape with imaginings of his life in Guatemala, *Sakura* transforms the knowledge produced by expert historians and art critics into a simple and playful language that resonates with the people of Fujisawa. The epilogue demonstrates how Yasu's migrant biography, defined and appropriated in cultural institutions, can also be adapted to serve more intimate local purposes. Through collectively re-imagining Yasu's life, the participants create a shared past that fosters unity among community members, both those who have left for work and those who have remained at home.

Chapter 1

Westward, to the Americas

"In 1874, at the age of 29, I left Japan with a scientific commission sent by the Mexican government to observe the transit of Venus across the disk of the sun."[1] This passage invites readers to accompany a young man on his transcontinental voyage. It begins with Yasu working as an interpreter for Mexican astronomers during the transit of Venus in Yokohama.

Yasu Kōhei, or Juan José de Jesús Yas, opens his memoirs with this event that marks the onset of his overseas endeavors and eventual stay in Central America. His *Memorias*, an autobiographical account spanning the years 1874 and 1916, were composed months before his demise, with an intended audience of family and acquaintances in Guatemala.[2] As is common in this genre of writing, Yasu may have wanted to signal the gravity of the occasion by framing his departure from Japan by referring to the official status of scientists as emissaries of the Mexican nation. At the same time, he stresses his identity as a student of Western languages and modern science.

While previous studies have acknowledged the importance of this episode and Yasu's role as interpreter for the Mexican astronomers, the path that led him to this moment remains largely unexamined. For those interested in his transpacific biography, this event signifies not only the beginning of his life abroad but also hints at the role that science and education played in shaping his migratory trajectory. What compelled Yasu to leave his hometown in northeastern Japan for the newly established international port of Yokohama? What circumstances led him to work with Spanish-American scientists and ultimately choose Mexico as a destination for advanced study?

Yasu's memoirs are silent on his early adulthood in Japan, and extant documents offer only fragmentary clues. This chapter, which opens a dissertation on Yasu Kōhei's transcultural biography across Asia, Europe, and the Americas, aims to address those gaps. Rather than interpreting Yasu's trajectory as merely the result of circumstances in the context of Japan's rapid modernization, I aim to examine his educational background and the institutions and places where he studied as sites of cultural and epistemological convergence—places where he absorbed and translated foreign languages and knowledge.

This chapter aims to present a more nuanced portrait of Yasu as a Japanese student of Western knowledge. The following analysis examines his journey during the transformative decades of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. It first traces the private education Yasu received at home as part of a nationwide intellectual network of foreign scientific knowledge.

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1 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 2 f.

2 My translation includes corrected spellings of place names and personal names that Yasu had misspelled. For instance, here, in this passage, Yasu specifies an incorrect departure year. According to the 1876 travelogue of the head of the Mexican commission, the Mexican scientists completed their observations in Yokohama in December 1874 and departed Japan on February 5, 1875. Similar inaccuracies appear throughout the memoirs.

Then, following the conventional path of Western studies, he moved to Edo and later to Yokohama, where he added French to his language skills. In this young and bustling port city, Yasu soon found himself acting as an intermediary between Japanese and foreign visitors, including his meeting with the Mexican Commission in 1874. A close examination of the event that brought him into contact with the Mexican delegation offers insight into how "latecomers" to Western science participated in global knowledge networks. The chapter concludes with Yasu's reflections on his long-desired overseas studies in Mexico during the late 1870s.

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of the "transcultural" to analyze Yasu Kōhei's educational trajectory. Rather than reinforcing a binary between Japan and the West, the "transcultural" framework addresses the complex geopolitical forces shaping Japanese society in the late nineteenth century. In this context, the 1874 transit of Venus serves as a lens to examine how scientific collaboration became a site for negotiating language politics and cultural identity. Yasu's encounter with the Mexican astronomers challenged prevailing notions of the "West" as limited to Europe and North America. It revealed to him a broader, more diverse Western world—one that included Latin America as a viable alternative to the European destinations traditionally favored by Japan's elite. His decision to pursue further studies in Mexico must be understood within this expanded vision of global modernity. Rather than comparing Yasu's path with that of his Japanese contemporaries who studied in Europe or the United States and entered the government service, I argue that Yasu's exposure to the Dutch and French languages and sciences gave him a distinct advantage in navigating the complicated geopolitical landscape and achieving his aspirations. The chapter concludes by exploring how Yasu constructed his identity as a Japanese subject abroad. His sense of self was shaped not only by his connections to the Japanese Empire but also by the cultural expectations and social norms he encountered in Latin America.

Global Connections and Western Studies

Yasu Kōhei was born on December 27, 1846, in Fujisawa, a small town located in northeastern Japan.[3] His formative years unfolded during a period of profound upheaval in Japan. He was born in the final decades of the Tokugawa regime, known as the Bakumatsu era (1853 – 1868)—a time of political turmoil and the gradual dismantling of feudal institutions. In 1868, when Yasu was in his early twenties, imperial forces defeated shogunate loyalists in the northeast, his home region, and established a centralized government under Emperor Meiji. This marked the beginning of the Meiji period (1868 – 1912), a transformative era of state-building and modernization.

Japan's growing engagement with Western knowledge was shaped by both internal political struggles and external threats. The initial motivation for studying Western languages—first Dutch, followed by French, Russian, German, and English—was to acquire knowledge of European advances in medicine, military technology, and related fields. During the late Bakumatsu and early Meiji periods, Western studies became central to building a modern military and diplomatic corps capable of safeguarding national

[3] J. Saitō (1934, p. 1) dates Yasu Kōhei's birth to 1846, the third year of the Kōka. Yasu himself provided inconsistent information regarding his age in his memoirs. While most Japanese sources follow Saitō's account, Guatemalan publications rely on historian (Luján Muñoz 1982b), who, without citing a source, specifies 1844 as Yasu's year of birth.

autonomy.

Like many of his contemporaries, Yasu's educational trajectory developed within the expanding field of "Western learning" (*yōgaku* 洋学). During the long period of "national isolation" (*sakoku* 鎖国, roughly 1639 – 1853) imposed by the Tokugawa shoguns, trade was permitted only with Chinese and Dutch ships in tightly regulated conditions. While Japan was not entirely closed to Western goods and ideas, "[t]hese were distributed within a limited circle of people."[4] Beginning around 1720, imported European texts—mostly brought to Nagasaki by Dutch traders—formed the foundation of what came to be known as *rangaku* (蘭学), or Dutch learning. This body of knowledge encompassed medicine, science, and military technology, and to a lesser extent, history, customs, and politics.[5] Contributing to the development of an intellectual infrastructure in Japan, it fostered networks of scholars, introduced specialized terminology, and shaped emerging ideas about what kinds of knowledge were worth pursuing.

With improved transportation, the postal system, and specialist scholars' ability to teach in locations throughout Japan, *rangaku* arrived in Kyoto, Osaka, Sendai, and other areas by the late eighteenth century.[6] Northeastern Japan, where Yasu came from, was among the early regions to adopt the intellectual tradition of Western studies. Sendai was the first domain to establish formal education in Dutch medicine, with the support of the scholar Ōtsuki Gentaku 大槻玄沢 (1757 – 1827).[7] An ardent supporter of *rangaku*, Ōtsuki translated hundreds of publications from Dutch into Japanese. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, many students from Sendai and its subdomain Ichinoseki enrolled in Ōtsuki's private academy.[8]

Terence Jackson's notion of a "network of knowledge" aptly describes the connections based on intellectual pursuits that were developing throughout Japan. Prospective students of Western science could travel from remote regions to urban centers to pursue higher education. Particularly for provincial students aiming to pursue advanced education in the metropolis, "travel to study" (*yūgaku* 遊学) was a prevalent means.[9] As sites of knowledge production and distribution, most private academies were located in Edo and Nagasaki. Students from rural areas, in particular, had to travel to these cities to receive a Western education.[10]

Initially focused on medicine, language, and astronomy, *rangaku* expanded its scope following the Opium Wars in China during the late 1830s. Scholars began studying Western military and socio-political sciences, drawing on publications from Germany, France, England, and Russia. This broadened *rangaku* from its Dutch roots into a more comprehensive field of Western learning.[11]

The fall of the shogunate and the rise of the Meiji Emperor were hastened by foreign encroachment. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry arrived with a fleet of four American

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4 Sakai 2011, 369. n1, 3.
5 Jackson 2016, pp. 2, 3–9.
6 Ibid., pp. 100–101.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., pp. 28, 95, 97, 101.
9 Ibid., p. 103.
10 According to Terence Jackson (ibid., p. 80), between 1853 and 1868, approximately "48.8% Western studies students were in Edo and 17.6 in Nagasaki." Nagasaki, whose importance declined after the opening of additional points of contact with the outside world in the 1850s, was still the second-largest base for foreign studies.
11 Ibid., pp. 11, 100.

warships, known as the "black ships" (*kurofune* 黒船).[12] This compelled Japan to end over 220 years of self-imposed isolation. In 1858, the Tokugawa shogunate signed a series of so-called unequal treaties with the United States, France, Russia, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. These treaties established diplomatic and trade relations and opened the ports of Edo, Kobe, Nagasaki, Niigata, and Yokohama to foreign trade and settlement. Before this, interaction with foreigners had been largely limited to Nagasaki. Afterward, Japanese people increasingly encountered foreign languages, religions, and scientific knowledge. By the time Yasu Kōhei followed the path of education and moved to Edo, the scope and subjects of Western studies had expanded considerably.

As I will argue in the next section, Yasu Kōhei's family background suggests that he was a "samurai student"—the offspring of middle- or lower-ranking feudal elites who were often portrayed as the protagonists of Japan's modernization in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.[13] A common historical interpretation highlights how the social prestige of these privileged classes allowed them to access global knowledge and adapt it to the needs of the evolving empire.[14] Indeed, Yasu's educational trajectory illustrates the evolution of Japanese acquisition of Western knowledge and language skills during his youth. However, reducing Yasu to merely a samurai student or viewing his education as solely a reflection of Japan's growing engagement with the West obscures the unique contours of his life story. In particular, I want to highlight the connections between his initial interest in Western knowledge and his subsequent pursuit of a higher education in Mexico. These connections reveal continuities and adaptations in his cultural and geographical conceptions of ideas such as "civilization" and "the West."

This account of Yasu's formative years echoes Roland Wenzlhuemer's discussion of global connections as "sociocultural arenas in which things happen; in which people can feel, think and act; in which the relationship and interaction between their endpoints is negotiated."[15] Wenzlhuemer proposes viewing such connections as historical phenomena that actively mediate between the elements they link, rather than as passive intermediaries. These connections are transcultural in that they involve "cultural transfers, entanglements, contact zones, or even networks."[16] Focusing on the events that occurred within these connections rather than imagining Yasu's life as a mere leap from one geographic endpoint to another provides a more nuanced perspective on his trajectory. This approach helps us understand his growing interest in Western science in the context of Japan's evolving global relations and how his residency at a foremost Mexican educational establishment fulfilled his desire to "learn about world civilizations."[17] Through this lens, we can better appreciate his life and choices in the context of the era's increasing global interconnectedness.

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12 After the incident, the term "black ships" became a symbol of foreign intrusion. See, for example, Van Sant (2000, p. 17) and Steele (2003, pp. 4–18).

13 Van Sant 2000, p. 132.

14 See, for example Campbell 2014; Iida 1994; Inoue 2003; Kim 2014.

15 Wenzlhuemer 2019, pp. 40–41.

16 Ibid., p. 48.

17 See J. Saitō (1934).

Transcultural Upbringing

Yasu Kōhei's early exposure to Western knowledge and his curiosity about the world beyond Japan have been attributed to his father's influence.[18] In the following pages, I examine how Yasu Kōhei's family background—and, by extension, his broader social network—shaped his pursuit of Western studies in Edo and Yokohama. A comparison of his academic path with that of his father reveals how Japan's educational landscape evolved in response to the growing presence of Western powers.

As the first child of Yasu Shōan 屋須尚安 (1809 – 1864) and Murako, Yasu Kōhei had a sister named Oyasu and two brothers, Kahei and Anpei.[19] According to biographical sources, both of Yasu's parents appear to have come from families affiliated with the Sendai Domain, one of the most powerful feudal entities under the Tokugawa shogunate.[20] The patronage of such a prominent domain conferred considerable social and educational prestige. However, this support system collapsed with the outbreak of the civil war in 1868, which brought an end to the Tokugawa shogunate.[21]

Yasu Kōhei's father, Shōan, was adopted into the Yasu family at the age of three by the husband of his maternal aunt, a retainer of the Sendai Domain.[22] In the Edo period, such adoptions were a common means of ensuring "the continued success" of a family.[23] According to Saitō Jōhei's biographical sketch, Shōan received his early education at home from his uncle Kaorigi Motomichi 芬木元達 (1794 – 1867).[24]At nineteen, Shōan traveled to Edo for advanced studies. According to Saitō, he was the first person from his hometown to study Dutch in Nagasaki, where he could interact with Dutch merchants and Japanese interpreters.[25] The 1889 account of Yasu Kōhei's life published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper offers a different version. It asserts that Shōan studied "Dutch-style medicine" (*ran'i* 蘭医) under Udagawa Shinsai 宇田川榛斎 (1769–1834), a physician and a leading figure in *rangaku*.[26] However, Shōan's studies were interrupted by physical ailments.[27] He eventually returned home, where he practiced medicine as a town doctor (*machi-i* 町医).

Shōan may have hoped that his sons would follow him into the medical profession, as it was one of the few viable paths for social mobility in Edo-period society.[28] In any case, the male children of the Yasu family began their education at home, under his guidance. A vivid episode in Saitō's account illustrates how Kōhei was introduced to Western learning at an early age:

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18 Both Saitō Jōhei's biographical sketch and a 1889 *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper article emphasize the role his father played in cultivating his interest in Western knowledge and the wider world.

19 Compared to Shōan's biography, much less is known about Yasu Kōhei's mother, Murako, with whom he reportedly shared a close bond. Even less information survives about his siblings.

20 J. Saitō 1934.

21 Jackson 2016.

22 To reconstruct the Yasu family's social history, Onodera Mōzō, a distant relative, compiled a genealogical account tracing the lineage back to Yasu Kōhei's great-grandparents.

23 Jackson 2016, p. 37.

24 J. Saitō (1934) refers to Kaorigi's given name as 玄達, which differs from the version recorded in Yasu Kōhei's family genealogy. Given Yasu's close relationship with his great-uncle and the absence of contradictory library records, I find Yasu's account of Kaorigi's name more reliable.

25 J. Saitō (ibid., p. 1). Since Saitō does not cite his sources, it is difficult to verify when or how Shōan studied in Nagasaki, or under whom, during the approximate period from 1828 to 1835.

26 According to Jackson (2016, pp. 89–91), Udagawa was one of the "Four Heavenly Kings of the Shirandō" (Shirandō no Shi-tennō) at the private academy guided by Ōtsuki.

27 "Mr. Yasu Kōhei," published from November 24 to 26, 1889, in *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

28 Jackson 2016, p. 34.

> At the age of five or six, [Yasu Kōhei] learned *rangaku* from his father. Father and son practiced the pronunciation of Dutch books (*ransho ondoku* 蘭書音読) so loudly at home that neighbors and relatives thought they were crazy.[29]

This vignette captures an intimate parental interaction and underscores their access to prized foreign texts and knowledge. Shōan's teaching method may have been *sodoku* (素読)—reading aloud or plain reading—a traditional technique commonly used to instruct learners in the Dutch language.[30] The materials Shōan used were likely those from his studies in Edo and Nagasaki during the late 1820s and early 1830s. At that time, Udagawa Shinsai, Shōan's teacher according to the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article, had published several influential works on Dutch medicine.[31] Likewise, Shōan may have acquired more up-to-date materials from other *rangaku* specialists in the region.

At home, young Kōhei was encouraged to study Japanese and Chinese classics alongside members of the local literati.[32] This was not only a standard component of advanced education in the Edo period but also a prerequisite for engaging with Western knowledge, much of which was initially accessed through Chinese translations.[33] Whether Shōan's instruction sparked Kōhei's curiosity about Western sciences, it likely prepared him to approach unfamiliar knowledge with confidence and helped develop his ability to learn foreign languages independently through textbooks. Years later, when Yasu learned French and pursued his education in Mexico, this early training may have served him to face the unfamiliar tasks.

From Fujisawa to Edo

During his teenage years in the early 1860s, Yasu Kōhei undertook advanced studies in Edo, following the educational path laid out by his father.[34] Like many young samurai from the provinces, Yasu benefited from support networks grounded in regional affiliation.[35] Though previous accounts of Yasu's life have overlooked this period, it merits closer examination. Understanding Yasu's formative years in Edo sheds light on his early engagement with French education. This engagement preceded—and influenced—his later experience with Spanish language learning in Latin America.

A document compiled by Yasu near the end of his life—"Ancestry of the Yasu Family" (屋須家之先祖)—offers valuable insight into a network of individuals connected through Dutch studies, particularly those linking Sendai to Edo (figure 6). In this list, Yasu records the names of deceased relatives, including his youngest brother.[36] On the far left of the

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29 J. Saitō 1934, p. 2.

30 According to Jackson (2016, p. 84), "Sodoku was a traditional method of education that demanded repeated reading without necessarily any comprehension."

31 Udagawa was, as noted by Jackson (ibid., p. 91), "best known for his work in internal medicine, penning one of the most widely used anatomical texts of the first half of the nineteenth century, *Oranda naikei ihan teikō* (Medical examples in outline, 1805)."

32 J. Saitō 1934.

33 Jackson 2016, pp. 37, 83.

34 The *Yomiuri Shimbun* (November 24, 1889) reports that Yasu was fourteen when he left home, while Saitō gives the older age of seventeen. Since the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article was written closer to Yasu's lifetime, I consider it the more reliable source for reconstructing his time in Edo and Yokohama.

35 As described by Jackson (ibid., p. 1), a network of Dutch studies had developed throughout Japan by the early nineteenth century.

36 For each individual, Yasu notes the date of death and posthumous Buddhist name. For those who died outside their hometown—such as in Tokyo or Yokohama—he also indicates the temple where they

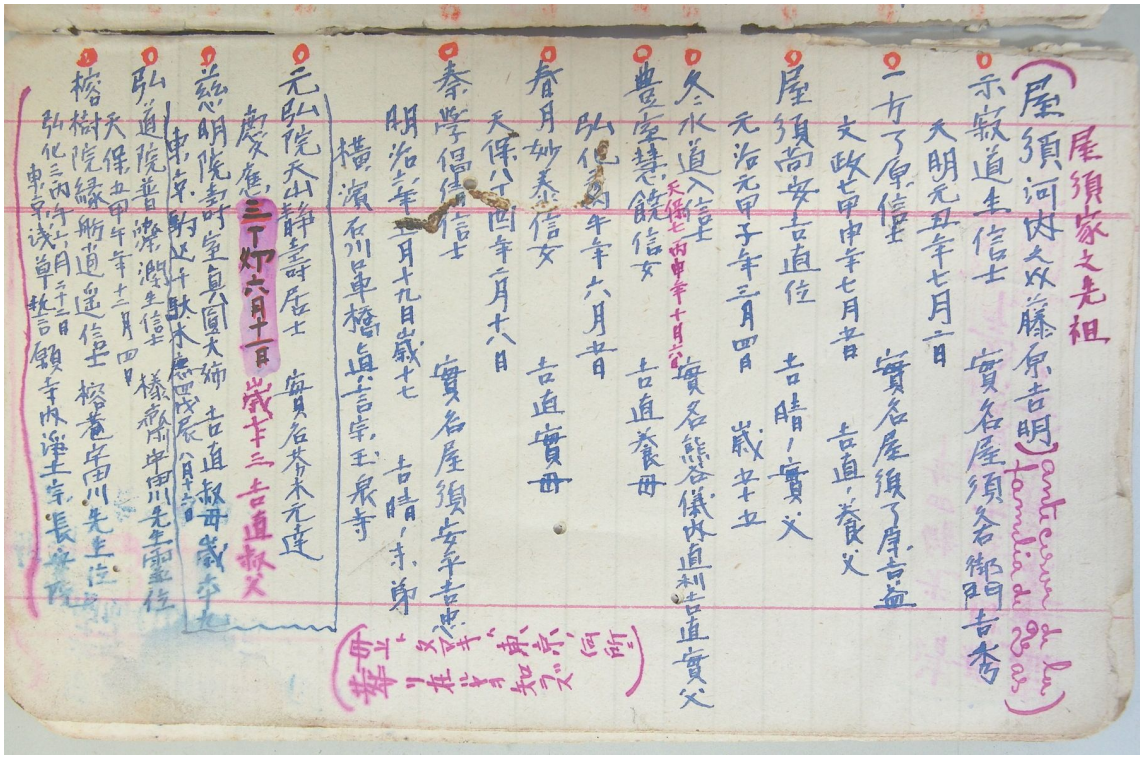

Figure 6: "The Ancestry of the Yasu Family" is one of the pages from the *Notes* written around 1916

document, four names appear separately, divided by a line. These include Yasu's great-uncle and tutor, Kaorigi Motomichi, who later moved to Edo with his wife. Listed alongside them are two *rangaku* masters: Udagawa Shinsai and his adopted son, Udagawa Yōan 宇田川榕菴 (1798–1846).[37] This network, built through kinship ties and affiliation with the Sendai Domain, likely played a critical role in enabling Yasu's educational journey to Edo.

Regarding Yasu Kōhei's studies in Edo and Yokohama, the two main sources on his early life—the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article and Saitō's *Biographical Sketch*—present slightly different versions. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* article reports succinctly: "He was fourteen years old [in 1860] and moved to Edo to study under Mr. Murakami Hidetoshi."[38] In contrast, Saitō's account implies a more intentional decision to follow in his father's footsteps, suggesting that Yasu was seeking to take advantage of the new educational opportunities emerging following Japan's political and social transformations.

> [Yasu Kōhei] left home at the age of seventeen in the second year of Bunkyu (1862) and went to Edo to study medicine under his father's uncle, Mr. Kaorigi Gentatsu [sic], with whom he also studied Japanese and Chinese classics. At the age of nineteen, in the first year of the Genji Era (1864), his father died of illness, but he did not return to his hometown. He continued to study medicine at the behest of Murakami Eishin [sic], a doctor in the service of the Sanada Family in Fukagawa Komatsu-cho.[39]

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were buried or venerated. A few months before his death, Yasu sent this document to descendants of the Fujisawa branch of his family, likely intending to preserve generational memory, including that of relatives who had moved to other cities.

37 Although both Udagawa masters died before Yasu arrived in Edo around 1860, their inclusion may reflect their significance in his father's intellectual formation or possibly a more personal connection.

38 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889. For transcription, see appendix 4.

39 J. Saitō 1934, p. 6.

Both sources indicate that one of Yasu's teachers in Edo was Murakami Hidetoshi 村上英俊 (1811–1890), a scholar of French studies (*futsugaku* 仏学).[40] Saitō misspelled Murakami's name in kanji, suggesting unfamiliarity with figures central to mid-nineteenth-century French learning in Japan.[41] Trained by master Udagawa Yōan, Murakami was initially a medical doctor and a specialist in Dutch studies. Like others of his generation, he used *rangaku* as an entry point into the broader fields of European science, medicine, and engineering. Murakami developed an interest in the francophone natural sciences, which he taught himself with the help of a Dutch-French dictionary.[42] Between 1854 and 1872, Murakami authored some of the earliest linguistic works that made European languages accessible in Japan.

When Yasu arrived in Edo, Murakami was the director of French studies at the Institute for the Study of Barbarian Books (*Bansho Shirabesho* 蕃書調所), the shogunate's main center for Western learning.[43] Murakami likely continued teaching there when in 1863, the Bansho Shirabesho was reorganized as the Institute for Western Studies (Kaiseijo 開成所). In addition to language, Murakami also taught chemistry at his academy.[44] Yasu either studied at Murakami's private academy—possibly residing there as a live-in student—or he attended the Institute for Western Studies. It is plausible that Yasu's education under Murakami included training in science alongside French language studies.

A map of the respective academic trajectories of Yasu and his father helps illuminate the evolving landscape of Western studies in mid-nineteenth-century Japan (figure 7). On the one hand, individuals like Kaorigi, whose careers bridged significant geographical distances, played a key role in connecting provincial students with established intellectual networks in the metropolis. On the other hand, access to Western studies was becoming increasingly available beyond the limited ports of contact between Japanese society and the wider world. Whereas Shōan's education culminated with Kaorigi, Yasu Kōhei likely stayed with his now elderly great-uncle for only a brief period.[45] During this time, Yasu benefited from instruction in the Japanese and Chinese classics and prepared himself for the next stage of his education: the study of French. As a young man from a remote village, Yasu likely relied on Kaorigi's reputation and recommendation to secure a position as a student under Murakami Hidetoshi.[46]

There is no direct evidence indicating why Yasu Kōhei chose to pursue French language studies. However, it is reasonable to infer that the network of relatives and scholars that had facilitated his connection with Murakami Hidetoshi in Edo also influenced this decision.

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40 Kunitaro Takahashi 1974.

41 Saitō also confused the characters for Yasu's other teacher, Kaorigi Motomichi, likely relying on secondhand information from Yasu's relatives or acquaintances in his hometown.

42 According to Iida (1991, p. 2), between 1840 and 1850, Murakami ordered the Dutch translation of *Lärbok i Kemien* (Textbook of Chemistry) by the Swedish chemist Jöns Jacob Berzelius, but instead received the French version, *Traité de chimie minérale, végétale et animale*. The urgency of acquiring scientific knowledge for coastal defense prompted Murakami to begin studying French.

43 Iida 1996.

44 According to Joby (2021, p. 193), "In 1871–72 there were five private schools in Tokyo teaching French, four exclusively…. Tatsuridō had 429 students between 1868 and 1877."

45 In the aforementioned listing of the "Ancestry of the Yasu Family," Yasu records that Kaorigi died in Edo in 1867 and names the temple where he was buried. This suggests that Yasu may have spent several years with him in Edo.

46 According to Jackson (2016, p. 80), "for entrance into Gentaku's school, like most schools, one needed a letter of recommendation from a teacher, usually an acquaintance of Gentaku's. Therefore social ties were essential for receiving training."

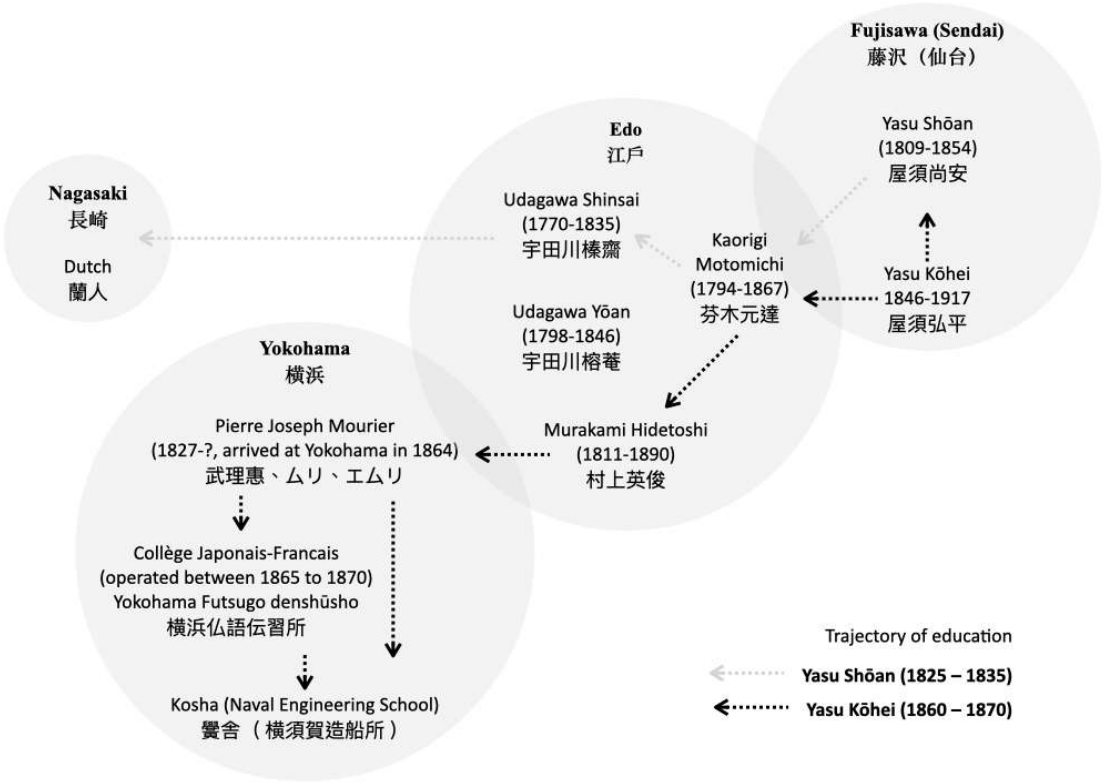

Figure 7: This map traces the journeys of Yasu Kōhei and his father Shōan, from their hometown of Fujisawa to the urban centers of Edo and Yokohama. While Kohēi initially followed the same path as his father, he diverged by transitioning from Dutch to French studies, first under Murakami Hidetoshi in Edo and later under Pierre Joseph Mourier in Yokohama

At the same time, the political context of the late Edo period made France an increasingly prominent reference point in Japan's engagement with the West. While Yasu was studying in Edo, the nearby port of Yokohama had opened to foreign trade and emerged as a cosmopolitan hub for diplomats, merchants, and travelers from around the world. These transformations likely reinforced Yasu's resolve to pursue further education. Unlike the earlier generation of scholars who accessed Western knowledge indirectly during Japan's period of isolation, Yasu had the opportunity to move to Yokohama and receive direct instruction from native French teachers.

A French Interpreter in Yokohama

The exact year of Yasu Kōhei's move from Edo to Yokohama is uncertain, but he remained in Yokohama from the mid-1860s until 1875—a much longer period than his stay in Edo. During this time, he continued his studies in French and the sciences. His stay was temporarily interrupted by the civil war of 1868 – 1869, during which he returned to his hometown. Around 1872, he returned to Yokohama and worked as a French interpreter to support himself. In 1874, he was recruited by the Mexican astronomical expedition mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Yasu's French Studies in Yokohama

The opening of the Port of Yokohama near Edo as a result of the "unequal treaties" transformed the former fishing village into a key gateway for foreigners entering the shogunate capital and its surrounding regions. Within just six years of the port's establishment in 1858, the number of foreign residents in Yokohama grew dramatically, from 44 to 557.[47] As Mio Wakita has noted, Yokohama's new status made it a "venue of 'connections"' while simultaneously serving as "a symbolic and physical space of cultural 'disconnectedness' from the rest of Japan."[48]

Reflecting Yokohama's ambiguous relationship with the rest of Japan, a similar topography of connections and disconnections characterized the city itself. Until 1899, the international presence was confined to a designated area known as the Yokohama Foreign Settlement. As the largest such enclave in Japan, the Yokohama Foreign Settlement was divided into two main districts: the commercial Yamashita district, home to trading houses, shipping companies, financial firms, and various shops; and the residential Yamate district, which housed schools, churches, and cemeteries.

On his visit to Japan in 1874, the Mexican astronomer Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, whose connection to Yasu will be discussed in the next section, described his impressions of Yokohama's "Japanese-Oriental" and "European-Western" downtown districts:

> [The town is], in fact, divided into two fractions which, because of the different physiognomy of their inhabitants and buildings, actually constitute two different towns. The eastern part, including the hills that surround it in that direction and to the southeast, constitutes the European concession, that is to say, the demarcation within which the four or five thousand foreigners who are now in Yokohama are permitted to reside freely. The western part is the real Japanese population, which extends to the northwest almost to the point of being confused with the other Japanese city of Kanagawa, from which it is separated only by some low hills and a canal that flows into the bay. In the European part, all the buildings are of Western architecture and style, though slightly modified by the local dye; while in the Asian Yokohama, which begins at the Matchi-guai-shó, or Government Palace, the buildings, people, costumes, and customs are entirely Oriental.[49]

To illustrate the view of Yokohama Harbor for his readers, Díaz Covarrubias included an image of the port city in the popular vista style (figure 8). Another image (figure 9) depicts the main shopping street, Hon-tshio-dori.

While foreign residents "practiced their own lifestyles and introduced architectural forms, including open space amenities in a geographically enclosed area," Japanese people were attracted to the innovations and activities brought by North Americans, British, French, and other Europeans.[50] Although Japanese subjects needed official permission to live and work in the foreign settlement, it was one of the few places where foreigners and Japanese mingled.[51] Given Yasu's studies and work as an interpreter, it is reasonable to assume he

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47 According to Sawa (1993, p. 132), the early Western presence was as follows: 18 individuals were from Britain, 15 from the United States, 10 from the Netherlands, and 1 from France. The following year the number of foreigners rose to 126. According to Wakita (2013, 84, n 20), out of a total of 557, 200 were from Great Britain, 95 from the USA, 90 from France, 66 from Prussia, 37 from the Netherlands, 26 from Switzerland, 20 from Italy, 19 from Portugal, and 4 from other countries.

48 Ibid., p. 78.

49 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 114.

50 Sakai 2011, p. 347.

51 Ito 2013.

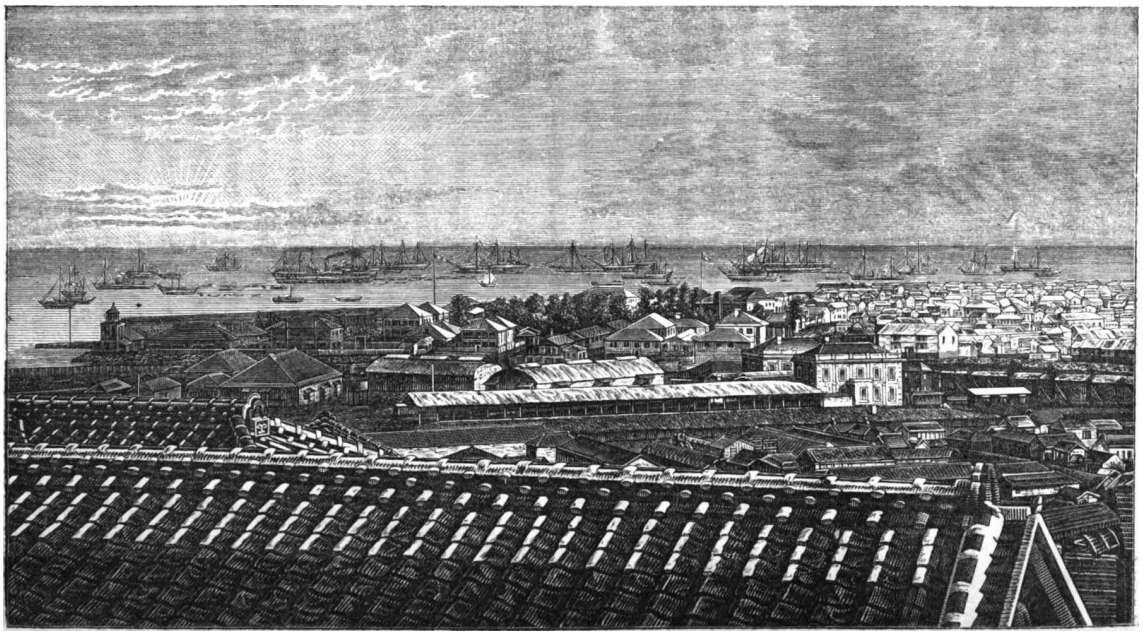

Figure 8: "General view of Yokohama, taken from Nogue Hill"

Figure 9: "Hon-tshio dori or the main street"

lived close to the foreign settlement.

French individuals and institutions played a pivotal role in shaping the foreign presence, especially during the early years of the settlement. In the final decades of the Edo period, both the shogunate and its opponents sought to leverage ties with Western powers to advance military and technological modernization. Aiming for a strategic alliance with France, the shogunate actively supported the establishment of a French diplomatic and religious presence in Yokohama. This alliance also led to the establishment of several important military, industrial, and educational institutions. These include the Naval Hospital and the Naval Engineering School, as well as a French language school founded by the French Marine Nationale.[52]

As with much of his childhood and youth, reconstructing Yasu Kōhei's French education in Yokohama is complicated by the fragmentary nature of the available sources. Among the missing details is the exact year of his move from Edo to Yokohama. This biographical obscurity is further compounded by the disruptions brought on by the regime change following the civil war, which led to the suspension, reorganization, or replacement of many educational institutions. Nevertheless, in what follows, I offer some informed conjectures regarding where Yasu may have received his education and what he might have studied—an exercise made worthwhile by its significance in illuminating the trajectory of his later career.

The information provided by Saitō and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* concerning Yasu's time as a student in Yokohama is limited. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* simply states: "He went to Yokohama to follow the Frenchman Mr. Murī (佛人ムリー氏) and studied [Murī's] profession in depth for several years, until the Boshin War broke out and he returned to his hometown."[53] Saitō's account offers slightly more detail and includes anecdotal embellishments. He also divides Yasu's studies into two distinct phases: before and after the civil war. Regarding the early period, Saitō writes:

> Later, he went to Yokohama to study medicine and astronomy with a Frenchman, Mr. Ēmurie (佛人エームリエ氏). He was so highly regarded by his teacher that he was given the name Yasu Murisu. Later, when Mr. Ēmurie returned to his country, he traveled extensively throughout the country to further his studies. He spent most of his time in Kyoto and Tosa.[54]

Saitō provides no source for his account of Yasu's fields of study, nor does he elaborate on Yasu's activities in Kyoto and Tosa.

Regarding the identity of Yasu's teacher, several deductions can be made. In 1865, there were eleven French residents registered in Yokohama. By 1871, that number had increased to eighty-three.[55] Most were diplomats, Catholic missionaries, or naval officers, but one individual fits the description found in the two biographical sources.

Pierre Joseph Mourier 武理恵 (ムリエ, 1827–?) arrived in Japan with his family in 1864.[56] From 1864 to 1869, he resided in Yokohama and operated a clinic in the foreign settlement.[57] In 1869, Mourrier was appointed a French instructor at the Western

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52 Akira 1981; Tomita 1991.

53 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889. Transcription see appendix 4.

54 J. Saitō 1934, p. 2.

55 Sawa 1995.

56 The information regarding Pierre Joseph Mourrier's stay in Japan presented in this paragraph is drawn from the research of Kadō (2013, 2014).

57 According to Kadō (2013, p. 18) and Kadō (2014, p. 33), Mourrier arrived with his wife and two

School (*yōgakkō*) in Nagoya, where he authored a French language textbook. Although there are no records directly confirming Yasu's connection with Mourrier, both men were present in Yokohama between 1864 and 1868.[58] If Mourrier was indeed the "Mr. Murī"or "Ēmurie"referred to in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article and in Saitō's account, it is likely that Yasu became either his personal student or assistant shortly after Mourrier's arrival. As suggested by Saitō, their relationship may have been close, with Yasu perhaps assisting in Mourrier's medical practice. This connection would align with Yasu's growing academic interests—according to a clue in his memoirs, he began taking courses in the natural sciences around this time. Mourrier also conducted meteorological observations, suggesting a potential area of shared interest.

Both sources place Yasu in his hometown during the civil war, where he may have practiced medicine (see next section). Regarding his return to Yokohama in 1871 and the beginning of his second stay, Saitō writes:

> In 1871, at the age of twenty-six, Yasu returned to Tokyo, leaving his younger brother Anpei in the care of Mr. Kaorigi and Mr. Murakami, and went on to enroll in the French School (Futsu gakkō 仏学校) in Yokohama. Later, Anpei also entered the same school but died of illness in 1873 at the age of seventeen.[59]

It is clear that Yasu returned to Yokohama after the civil war, and it is plausible that he enrolled in a formal educational institution. Indirect support for this comes from his retrospective *Memorias*, in which he recalls studying science in Japan using French textbooks.[60]

However, there are several inconsistencies in the timeline provided by Saitō and repeated in later publications. First, according to the genealogical list that Yasu compiled near the end of his life, his great-uncle Kaorigi had died before the civil war, making it unlikely that Anpei was entrusted to him in 1871.[61] Second, later writers have often assumed without verification that the "French School" mentioned by Saitō refers to the Butsugo Denshūsho (仏語伝習所), the Yokohama Furantsugo Denshūjo (横浜仏蘭西語伝習所), or the Collège Français de Yokohama.[62] However, this institution had already ceased to exist by the time Yasu returned from his hometown.[63]

The Collège Français de Yokohama (hereafter Collège Français) was established in 1865 in the business district of the foreign settlement.[64] In view of the shogunate's plan to build the Yokosuka Ironworks shipyard, the French Consulate recommended the creation of an institution to train interpreters. The school's director, Eugène-Emmanuel Mermet de Cachon, admitted young men between the ages of fourteen and twenty, including

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daughters. His residence and clinic were located at Mourier, Dr., medical practitioner, 171, Yokohama 横浜居留地 171 番.

58 Contrary to Saitō's claim, Mourrier remained in Yokohama until 1871 and did not return to France until 1880.

59 J. Saitō 1934, p. 4.

60 He recalls doing well in physics class because "it used Ganot's French textbook"(appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 114).

61 According to the list of "Ancestry of the Yasu Family," Kaorigi died in Edo in 1867.

62 On Yokohama Futsugo Denshuusho, see, for example,Kunitaro Takahashi (1965) and Tomita (1991)

63 The "French School" mentioned here may also have been a private academy. However, most scholars of French studies—such as Iida (1996, p. 77)—as well as those who cite Saitō's account, assume it refers to the Collège Français de Yokohama, which was dissolved following the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

64 All data and quotations in this paragraph are from Tomita (1991, pp. 40–42).

former students from Hakodate (Hokkaido), retainers of the shogunate, and residents of Yokohama."

The curriculum was structured into elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels, with each semester lasting six months. Students were required to reside at the school throughout the semester to attend daily classes. Alongside French language instruction, the curriculum included geography, history, mathematics, and geometry. Remarkably, the school maintained a stable of "two hundred horses," and "a riding instructor gave lessons." By 1866, nearly fifty students, aged twelve to twenty-five, were enrolled. Three years after its establishment, the school was taken over by the Meiji government and soon incorporated into the Military Academy.[65] Graduates who achieved high marks were provided the opportunity to continue their studies in France, with many subsequently entering government service upon their return. The prospect of studying in France offered to graduates of the Collège Français may explain Yasu's connection to the school. In his recollections, he mentions that during his sojourn in Paris in 1875, he was joyfully reunited with some of his fellow Japanese students. If Yasu had attended the Collège Français, it likely would have been during his initial stay in Yokohama between 1865 and 1868.

Another institution where Yasu may have received scientific education was the Naval Engineering School (Yokosuka Kosha 横須賀黌舎), which was established in 1867 as part of the Yokosuka Ironworks Shipyard (Yokosuka Seitetsujo 横須賀製鉄所) near Yokohama.[66] The school's curriculum included arithmetic, geometry, cartography, physics, cosmography, French literature, and drawing, aiming to provide students with an engineering education in French so they could later pursue specialized studies in Paris.[67] The Naval Engineering School was closed after the Civil War but was reopened by the Meiji government in 1870.[68] In 1872, the Yokosuka Ironworks was renamed the Yokosuka Naval Shipyard, and the following year it became part of the Ministry of the Navy of Japan.[69] If Yasu began his studies after returning to Yokohama in 1872, as Saitō suggests, it is likely that he attended this school. However, the school had an age limit of twenty years, which Yasu, then in his mid-twenties, would have exceeded.

The history of French studies in Japan sheds valuable light on the trajectory of Yasu's early adulthood. During the final years of the shogunate and the early Meiji era, the Japanese navy played a key role in introducing European education and scholarship to Japan. Whether as a student of the French language or through classes in the natural sciences, Yasu's time in Yokohama connected him to the navy in one form or another. Among the subjects emphasized by the maritime focus of French learning was astronomy—a discipline that would play a significant role in the subsequent chapters of Yasu's life. Viewed within the historical and geopolitical context of Yokohama at the time, the convergence of Yasu's linguistic and thematic interests appears more natural than it might initially seem. Rather than being the product of a pioneering individual's isolated choices, Yasu's evolving academic specializations align closely with Wenzlhuemer's reflections on the defining

65 Tomita 1991, pp. 45–46.

66 ibid., pp. 34–36. See also JACAR Glossary Search, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/glossary_en/term3/0010-0080-0110-0080-0010-0010.html). The director of the Yokosuka Ironworks was the Frenchman François Léonce Verny.

67 Iida (1994) provides a clear explanation of the content and structure of the curriculum. As for the director of the Yokosuka Ironworks, it was the French naval engineer François Léonce Verny, see Nakatsu (2018).

68 Hashimoto 1999, p. 66.

69 Tomita 1991, p. 36.

nature of connections as historical phenomena.[70] As a hub rich in such connections, French Yokohama served as the arena from which the trajectories of Yasu's future life began to unfold.

The Civil War Years

At the outset of the Boshin War (1868 – 1869), Yasu returned to his hometown of Fujisawa, where he remained until his return to Yokohama in 1871.[71] The conflict marked the end of the feudal era governed by military commanders. With the restoration of imperial rule under Emperor Meiji, Japan underwent profound political, economic, social, and cultural transformations. The new government hastened efforts to modernize and compete with Western imperial powers. This political divide also had a geographical aspect: the shogunate's strongholds lay in northeastern Japan, where Yasu's family originated, while the imperial court's power base was centered in the southwest.

The literature on Yasu varies considerably in how much it dramatizes his wartime experiences and their significance for his life. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* article, reflecting Meiji-era nationalist perspectives, gives scant attention to the details of the Boshin War.[72] In contrast, Saitō's *Biographical Sketch* devotes considerable space to these brief months, placing Yasu at the forefront of the battlefield and the center of geopolitical intrigue. However, it is important to note that Saitō's account contains several improbable claims, some of which have been repeated by later authors in their retellings. Furthermore, the portrayal of Yasu's wartime experience reinforces particular historical narratives, a topic that I will revisit in chapter 7.

By emphasizing Yasu's ties to northeastern Japan, Saitō's detailed references to prominent individuals and events were likely aimed at reinforcing the collective memory of the Boshin War within a regional readership.[73] In the following passage, which I present here in a slightly abridged translation, Saitō narrates Yasu's journey home to Fujisawa, tracing the shifting front lines. Upon arriving in Sendai, Yasu encounters a soldier acquaintance who asks him to provide medical services. In a revealing, though somewhat apocryphal, twist, Yasu is subsequently assigned to the shogunate ranks as a translator for "Mexican reinforcements." The story unfolds as follows:

> At the time of the Boshin War, [Yasu] wanted to return to his hometown because of the unrest. On the way, he met the headman of Fujisawa, Mr. Okuyama, who was in Nihonmatsu with a group of soldiers escorting Daigo [Tadayuki], the lieutenant governor of the [Meiji] forces. For a short time, [Yasu] stayed at the Sendai residence. This meeting was accidental. A subordinate of Mr. Okuyama's, who happened to know Yasu's family in Fujisawa, told Mr. Okuyama that while he was taking a break, a man dressed in Western clothes, who looked very much like Mr. Yasu, passed by on the street. He was asked to bring Yasu in, so he called out, "Yasu, Yasu." Yasu was very surprised, as he never thought he would meet the village chief and his acquaintances there, so he was very happy to talk to them. He was introduced by [Mr.

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70 Wenzlhuemer 2019, pp. 40–41.

71 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889.J. Saitō (1934) provides a brief account of this period in Yasu's life.

72 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889.

73 The geopolitical metaphor contrasting northeast and southwest Japan—corresponding respectively to the shogunate and the Meiji forces during the civil war—is a recurrent theme in twentieth-century writings. I will explore this tendency and its relation to perceptions of Yasu's biography in Japan more fully in chapter 7.

> Okuyama] to the feudal lord and given the task of treating the sick and wounded soldiers. [...] The Sendai Domain's alliance with the Meiji forces [...] was partly due to Miyoshi Kiyofusa's persuasion, but it was short-lived. Suddenly, Sendai changed its stance and decided to resist the [Meiji] forces, but they did not have enough strength [...], so they decided to ask for support from Mexico. It is said that secret discussions were held to appoint Mr. Sozaburo Nakamura, the head of Iwagasaki, as the messenger, and as Yasu was fluent in Spanish, he could be the interpreter.[74]

Saitō appears to infuse this anecdote with elements drawn from later stages of Yasu's life. By 1867, Yasu was certainly a competent French speaker, but there is no evidence to suggest that he had had meaningful exposure to the Spanish language. So why does Saitō mention Mexico in his story? Following a brief and turbulent attempt to establish a dependent monarchy in Mexico, the French military maintained close ties with that North American country.[75] It is plausible that Mexicans might have been present among the French forces supporting the shogunate's army, but it is unlikely they required a Spanish translator.[76] If such involvement did occur, it is more likely that Yasu's knowledge of French—rather than Spanish, as Saitō suggests—would have been of use. Regardless of the factual accuracy of this detail, this passage reveals the depth of knowledge Saitō and his informants had about key local figures in the shogunate's war effort, reflecting their emotional investment in the story.

During the civil war and its immediate aftermath, Yasu Kōhei practiced medicine in his hometown of Fujisawa. As his father had died in 1864 and he was the eldest son, he may have been responsible for caring for his mother and younger siblings. However, according to the two biographical sources and a letter Yasu wrote to a friend much later, he harbored a strong desire to study abroad.[77] Possibly for this reason, he did not remain long in Fujisawa. In the fourth year of the Meiji era (1871), Yasu returned to Yokohama accompanied by his youngest brother, Anpei 屋須安平 (1856–1873), who, according to Saitō, also planned to study French in the port city. Tragically, Anpei died in 1873, leaving Yasu in deep grief, which "strengthened his ambition to study abroad."[78]

Saitō's *Biographical Sketch* and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article implicitly suggest how the political dynamics leading up to the civil war and its aftermath shaped Yasu's sense of belonging and opportunities. Due to his social and regional ties to the shogunate, Yasu's chances of participating in the Meiji government's efforts to promote Western education among Japanese elites may have been limited. Although Yasu was among a relatively small group of young people who had studied Dutch and French, he "had to work in Yokohama for several years, living impoverished and waiting for the opportunity to go abroad."[79] Neither Yasu's memoirs nor other sources provide detailed information about his activities during this period, but he likely had ample contact with Western visitors and residents. Besides the growth of the foreign settlement itself, Yokohama was also the main gateway

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74 J. Saitō (1934, pp. 2–4). Transcription see appendix 7.

75 After the French invasion of Mexico, the reign of Maximilian of Habsburg's Mexican Empire interrupted the post-independence republic from 1864 to 1867.

76 To date, I have found no sources or historiographical literature clarifying possible Mexican involvement in the Boshin War. One notable French officer who supported the shogunate's army was Jules Brunet, who also participated in the invasion of Mexico.

77 Appendix 7, Letter 1.

78 J. Saitō (ibid.). Yasu's list of "Ancestry of the Yasu Family" (figure 6) mentions the temple where Anpei was buried.

79 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889.

for Western tourists.[80] As one of the few Japanese fluent in French, Yasu may have been patiently awaiting a chance to take the next step.

Religion and the West

As an interpreter, Yasu likely spent much of his time within the foreign settlement of Yokohama, where he would have interacted with a diverse array of residents, including merchants, diplomats, military personnel, and Catholic priests. Immersed in this cosmopolitan environment, Yasu was exposed to cultural elements and practices that were novel to Japanese society at the time and ranged from fashion and religion to technology and political discourse. While previous literature on Yasu has primarily emphasized his ties to regional networks or portrayed him as a courageous pioneer amid rapid change, it has largely overlooked how his experiences in Yokohama influenced his cultural and religious commitments.

As a facet of imperial expansion, Catholic missionaries were often among the earliest arrivals in regions of French influence. In Japan, priests played a significant role in establishing and maintaining the French presence.[81] Even before the Collège Français de Yokohama was founded, the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris (M.E.P.) discreetly offered language instruction in Nagasaki and Hakodate.[82] The director of the Collège Français, Eugène-Emmanuel Mermet de Cachon (1828 – circa 1871), was himself a member of the M.E.P.[83]

One notable religious event linked to the French presence in Yokohama was the construction of Japan's first Catholic house of worship, the Église du Sacré-Cœur (Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus 聖心聖堂), completed in 1862 within the foreign settlement. The cathedral's consecration in December was attended by French expatriates, including the entire consular staff and the captain and crew of a warship. Nearly ten thousand Japanese visitors came to the Temple of Jesus (*yasotera* 耶蘇寺) for sightseeing (*kenbutsu* 見物) on the eve and the day of the ceremony. Still deeply suspicious of Christianity and its institutions, the shogunate sent officials who arrested fifty-five Japanese visitors; they were released following protests from the French consulate.[84]

Not only did the cathedral building become a major attraction, but the Japanese public also showed great interest in the worldview presented by the priests, which offered a counterpoint to the official doctrines of the shogunate.[85] On 28 January 1862, when the first sermon was delivered in Japanese, nearly a thousand people packed into a church built to hold only a third of that number.[86] On 5 October 1863, the Yokosuka Ironworks

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80 Wakita 2013.

81 Lehmann 1979.

82 Yokohamashiyakuso (1931, p. 4). The intertwined relationship between Catholic missions, the French military, and the introduction of Western education during the Bakumatsu period is a rich subject that exceeds the scope of this text, although it was certainly pertinent to Yasu's early adulthood.

83 Iida (1996); Nakatsu (2018, p. 19).

84 Tomita (1991, p. 22). Japanese officials entered the church and arrested the Japanese visitors, as the shogunate was still very suspicious of Christianity and its institutions. The public's great interest in the Catholic Church and the Japanese sermons caused the shogunate to worry about the influence of Western religion.

85 According to Sawa (1993, p. 146), on 10 February 1862, about sixty Japanese were arrested and imprisoned by the shogunate for attending religious services. They were released in mid-February after the intervention of the French consulate.

86 Ibid., p. 142.

Figure 10: Utagawa Hiroshige III, "Illustration of Foreign Residences and the Catholic Church in Yokohama," 1870

donated a large bell. In a letter to Paris, the director of the ironworks mentioned the presence of the French from the foreign settlement at the ceremony: "Important officers, the diplomatic corps, residents, and merchants attended the ceremony. The army and navy were also present at this solemn ceremony."[87] This new place of worship became a popular destination, with images by famous *ukiyo-e* print-makers sold to domestic and international visitors (figure 10).

It seems reasonable to assume that Yasu Kōhei, who later became a committed member of the Catholic Church, either discovered or deepened his interest in Christianity within this environment. It is also likely that he connected this religious curiosity with his pursuit of modern Western knowledge. As John Van Sant has observed, Christianity—introduced to Japan alongside other elements of Western civilization—offered "new values, new meanings, and spirit, refuge."[88]

Two satirical cartoons published in *Japan Punch* in 1865 illustrate the inseparable association between French modern military training and religious instruction as perceived by Japanese students. One of them, titled "An Incident at the French School" (figure 11), lampoons the challenges of transcultural language learning between a French army instructor and his Japanese pupils. The other cartoon, depicting the French priest and teacher Mermet de Cachon in conversation with his students, offers a vivid illustration of the sociocultural milieu in which Yasu lived within this transcultural space (figure 12). Standing at the center and saying "mes élèves" (my students), Mermet de Cachon is surrounded by Japanese individuals, many of whom are dressed in Western-style clothing. His young students, some holding French textbooks and engaged in animated discussion, appear to have embraced aspects of Western education and lifestyle. As historian Todd Munson notes, the caption "Students of the French Tongue" carries a double meaning: it refers not only to the students' engagement with the French language but also to their

87 Sawa 1993, p. 148.
88 Van Sant 2000, p. 84.

Figure 11: "An Incident at the French School," *Japan Punch*, May 1866

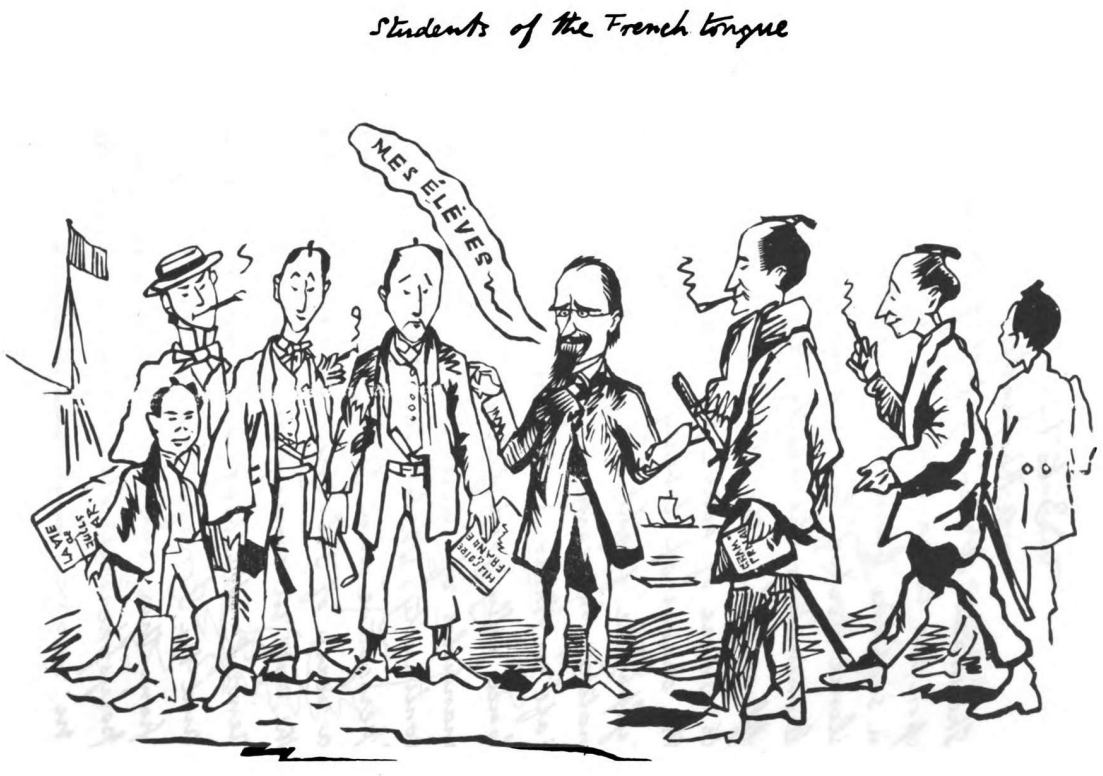

Figure 12: "Students of the French Tongue," *Japan Punch*, February 1866

adoption of French habits.[89]

Young Japanese men who worked or studied in the foreign settlements were among the first to adopt visible markers of cultural change. Army cadets, for instance, wore Western uniforms and boots during training.[90] Individuals from various backgrounds who had experience abroad—refugees, students returning from the Netherlands, and Japanese employed by embassies or the military—also began cutting their hair short, often citing the inconvenience of wearing Western hats with traditional hairstyles. By the second year of the Meiji era, Japanese barbershops had begun to appear in foreign settlements.[91] Saitō's *Biographical Sketch* also highlights the role of dress and grooming in Japan's modernization, recounting how an acquaintance was struck by Yasu's Western attire when they met in Sendai during the Boshin War. In another passage, describing Yasu's brief work as a doctor in his hometown, Saitō underscores Yasu's modern inclinations by noting his use of Western "liquid medicine" (*mizugusuri* 水薬) and his decision to cut his hair in a modern style.[92]

Yasu's pursuit of French education and modern knowledge took place within a specific community at a transformative historical moment. This community not only represented French secular modernity but was also steeped in Catholic religious practice. Like many of his contemporaries, Yasu showed a keen interest in the novelties introduced by foreigners. His embrace of Catholicism—alongside Western dress, science, and the French language—may thus be understood as part of his broader commitment to a vision of Western modernity that he encountered and internalized in Yokohama.

The Transit of Venus in 1874

"This year, astronomers from the major European countries came to Japan. French astronomers were in Nagasaki."[93] This statement from Yasu's memoirs refers to the 1874 transit of Venus, an astronomical event of global scientific significance. Although Yasu specifically highlights the French delegation, he served as an interpreter for the Mexican team that also traveled to Japan to observe the phenomenon. Over the course of two months, Yasu developed a close relationship with Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, the chief scientist of the Mexican group. This collaboration marked a turning point in Yasu's life: he joined the Mexican delegation on their return voyage and continued his education under Díaz Covarrubias's guidance in Mexico. While the transit of Venus has been portrayed in biographical accounts as a simple departure point for Yasu's life abroad, a closer examination reveals it as a moment of rich transcultural exchange. This section reconstructs the broader context of the astronomical event and its significance for Yasu's trajectory as a foreign student and later permanent resident in Latin America.

Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone, I propose to understand the transit of Venus as a space "where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power."[94] Rather than viewing the event as a mere coincidence of individual encounters, I emphasize three key points that

89 Munson 2013, p. 115.
90 Tomita 1991, p. 143.
91 Ibid., pp. 159–160.
92 J. Saitō 1934, p. 4.
93 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 9 f.
94 Pratt (1991, p. 34), see also Pratt (2008).

reveal its conjunctural nature. First, Yasu's linguistic skills—honed through early studies of Chinese, Dutch, and French—and his interest in Western sciences uniquely prepared him to engage with members of the Latin American academic elite. Second, the transit of Venus expanded Yasu's social network and inspired him to envision a higher education in Mexico, a country quite distant from Japan's prevailing conception of the modern world.[95] Third, Yasu's role as an interpreter positioned him at the center of a transcultural constellation spanning multiple languages and continents.

Serving Mexican astronomers who did not fully embody European scientific advancements, and translating a language in which he was not fully proficient, Yasu's experience reflects the slippages, excesses, and ambivalences that Homi Bhabha identifies as characteristic of mimicry in colonial encounters.[96] Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's report, which noted deficiencies in his interpreter, underscores how Yasu's limited scientific knowledge hindered his performance. As I argue in the following section, their communication—and its limitations—illuminates the epistemic dominance of European languages and reveals the precarious position of dependency in which Yasu found himself.

In this chapter, I draw upon Yasu's *Memorias*, which contain a significant passage on this pivotal event, as well as Díaz Covarrubias's *Viaje de la comisión astronómica mexicana al Japón para observar el tránsito* (Journey of the Mexican Astronomical Commission to Japan to Observe the Transit, henceforth *Viaje al Japón*).[97] Yasu's retrospective account, composed long after the event, centers on the extensive hours of preparation at the observatory he spent with Díaz Covarrubias and the expedition's official photographer. Written with the perspective of a lifetime of experience in the same field, one paragraph of the *Memorias* particularly praises the technical skill of the Mexican photographer.[98] However, unlike his dwelling on the photographic process, Yasu offers little information regarding his own duties, such as overseeing carpenters or serving as an interpreter between visiting Japanese students and Díaz Covarrubias. In contrast, Díaz Covarrubias's narrative seeks to demonstrate that intellectuals from Spanish America could hold their own alongside Western European and North American experts at a globally significant scientific event. Within this context, linguistic proficiency played a performative role.

Given the different purposes for which the two protagonists produced their accounts of the transit of Venus, it is interesting to observe how they presented their respective roles in the events and the modernization of their nations. Juxtaposing the texts allows an analysis of the dynamic interaction between these two men, both eager to participate in European modernity yet representing two distinct countries just beginning to envision each other as geopolitical counterparts. By framing the transit of Venus as a contact zone, the frictions and negotiations inherent in Yasu and Díaz Covarrubias's relationship become apparent within the intersecting spheres of language, identity, and geopolitics. Beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of the individuals involved, their encounter emerges as a compelling case of intercultural communication between two non-European nations pursuing their own distinct paths toward modernization.

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95 Nakagawa 1995.
96 Bhabha 1994, p. 122.
97 Díaz Covarrubias 1876.
98 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, Line 21 ff.

"The Black Ship of Science"

Although its significance may be obscure to the modern reader, the 1874 transit of Venus—crucial for accurately measuring the distance between the Earth and the Sun—represented a major milestone in both the advancement of science and international nationalistic competition.[99] France and the United States, the two countries most invested in observing this rare celestial event, each dispatched six and eight scientific teams respectively to various locations around the globe.[100] Francisco Díaz Covarrubias likewise portrayed the transit of Venus as a competition among nations and expressed pride in taking part in this global scientific enterprise, declaring that Mexico had become "a new ally in the army of civilization."[101] In his report on the event, Díaz Covarrubias wrote:

> The year 1874 witnessed a new event in our history. The Mexican nation took part in the great scientific contest that the last transit of Venus through the disc of the sun has given rise to, sending a special commission to Asia to obtain one more piece of information for science [...] The importance of such an event is not only that it has provided Mexico with new data [...] but it also has the very great advantage of presenting our country for the first time to science in an attitude that corresponds to it as a cultivated people.

Alluding to the 1853 arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry's American fleet, which forcibly ended Japan's isolation, historian Saitō Kuniji described the international scientific presence during the transit of Venus as "the black ship of science" (科学における黒船).[102] A year prior to the event, the American consulate requested permission from the Meiji government to send scientists and to allow duty-free entry of their instruments.[103] Initially, the government was suspicious, influenced by lingering distrust of foreign delegations and limited astronomical knowledge. Nevertheless, one of the Meiji regime's imperial priorities was establishing equal relations with the great powers. The Navy also saw this as an opportunity to learn about the latest instruments, publications, and theories from foreign scientists. In the long term, permitting these scientific expeditions laid the groundwork for the development of astronomical research in Japan.[104] To pursue these goals and assert its place in the modern world, the Meiji government eventually adopted an open policy toward scientific delegations, welcoming teams from France, the United States, Mexico, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[105] Japanese scientists participated by conducting observations in Hakodate and Tokyo.[106]

In September 1874, while the American and French commissions were already setting up in Japan, the Mexican government had only just approved Díaz Covarrubias's travel budget.[107] With the backing of president Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, the Mexican scientific

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99 "The Transit of Venus: Importance of To-night's Event," *The New York Times*, December 8, 1874.

100 J. Saitō 1934.

101 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Díaz Covarrubias (1876, pp. 7–8)

102 K. Saitō 1974, p. 50.

103 Díaz Covarrubias 1876.

104 K. Saitō (1974, p. 50). For details on the Japanese Imperial Navy's hydrographic bureau (大日本海軍水路寮, or 海軍省水路寮) in the early Meiji era, see https://id.ndl.go.jp/auth/ndlna/01030279.

105 The Austro-Hungarian expedition is rarely discussed in Japanese literature. According to Gartlan (2016, p. 177), it included the photographer Baron Raimund von Stillfried, a longtime Yokohama resident since the 1860s.

106 K. Saitō 1974, p. 52.

107 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 15.

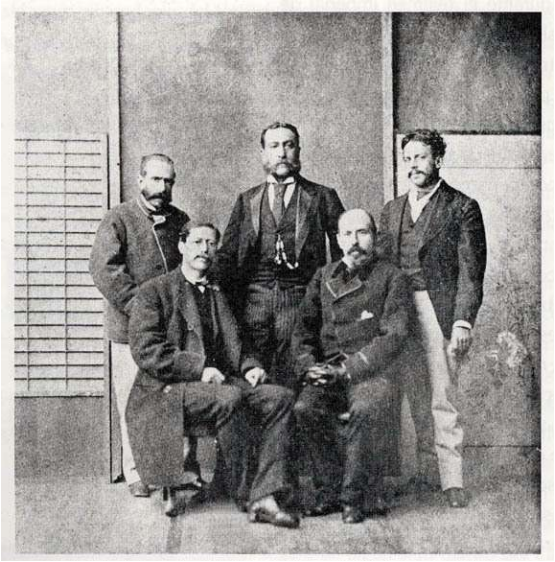

Figure 13: "Mexican Scientific Commission that went to Japan in 1874." Back row, from left to right: Francisco J. Jiménez, Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, and Francisco Bulnes. Front row: Agustín Barroso and Manuel Fernández Leal

delegation finally departed on September 24.[108] Although Díaz Covarrubias had originally planned to observe the astronomical phenomenon from China, he changed his destination upon learning that the United States had selected Japan as one of its observation sites.[109] In his report, he outlined the reasons behind this decision. Beyond physical factors such as weather conditions and travel distance, he emphasized Japan's favorable treatment of foreigners, in contrast to what he described as the Chinese government's notorious hostility toward them.[110] It is significant that Díaz Covarrubias's evaluation, made before his arrival in East Asia, conformed to prevailing Western stereotypes about the contrasting attitudes of the Chinese and Japanese toward foreign presence.

When the Mexican delegation finally arrived in Yokohama on November 8, 1874, they had less than a month to prepare for the astronomical observations of the transit of Venus (figure 13).[111] Since Japan and Mexico did not yet maintain formal diplomatic relations, Francisco Díaz Covarrubias sought the assistance of John Bingham, the U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary in Japan, to initiate contact with Japanese authorities upon landing.[112] The Japanese government extended to the Mexican delegation the same privileges it had granted to the French and American teams.[113] Subsequent negotiations involved identifying suitable sites for the observatories and arranging support for the installation of scientific instruments. The Meiji government also permitted the raising of a flagpole bearing the Mexican national colors at both observatory locations—a symbolic gesture acknowledging the legitimacy of the Mexican scientific mission. Díaz Covarrubias recorded this recognition with evident pride:

> Now that everything is ready to begin our work, I had the pleasure of inviting the entire staff of the Commission to come to Nogue Hill [Nogueyama] on November 30th to hoist our flag

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108 According to Díaz Covarrubias (ibid., p. 47), they traveled first to New York, then to San Francisco, and from there crossed the Pacific.

109 Ibid., p. 13.

110 K. Saitō and Shinozawa 1972, pp. 88–89.

111 According to K. Saitō (1974), the French team was the first to arrive, selecting Nagasaki as their observation site. The American team was based on the Izu Peninsula, while the Mexican and Austro-Hungarian expeditions established themselves in Yokohama.

112 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, pp. 443–444.

113 Bandō 1983, p. 289.

> for the first time in my camp. The same ceremony took place immediately afterward at Mr. Jimenez's camp [the second observatory], with the same participation of all of us and with the same holy and enthusiastic joy.[114]

In return for the hospitality extended by the Meiji government, the Mexican astronomers hosted a group of student interns sent by the Navy Department and the Ministry of Education.[115] These placements facilitated the transfer of technical knowledge and underscored the Meiji state's determination to acquire scientific expertise through direct engagement with foreign specialists.

Working with the Mexican Scientists

Despite his evident interest in science, Yasu was not among the student interns officially placed with the Mexican delegation by the Meiji government. This exclusion may have stemmed from his northern origins, which could have been a potential political liability in the aftermath of the civil war. Alternatively, at twenty-nine years old, Yasu may have simply been considered too old or lacking the formal qualifications required for such a prestigious opportunity. Instead, he was hired as an interpreter for the Mexican scientific team, which arrived much later than the other groups.

Due to the limited detail available in the *Memorias* and the absence of corroborating records, it remains unclear whether Yasu's appointment was arranged through government channels, facilitated by a connection within Yokohama's expatriate community, or secured through some other means. Both Saitō's account and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article suggest that Yasu faced considerable financial difficulty during this period, which may indicate that he was not in the official employ of the Japanese state. In the *Memorias*, he offers only a concise description of the members of the Mexican commission, the two observatories they operated (figures 14, 15), and his own role as translator and assistant:

> The said commission was composed of five persons.[116] Two astronomers, two engineers, and a secretary. The first astronomer, Mr. Francisco Díaz Covarrubias and the second astronomer, Mr. Francisco Jiménez, and the engineers Mr. Agustin Barroso and Mr. Manuel Fernandez. They landed in Yokohama and built two observatories for the work, one on the hill of Nogueyama and the other on the hill of Honmura. [...] Mr. Francisco Diaz C. was in Nogueyama with Mr. Barroso and I was his interpreter. [...] I had to guide the carpenters in the construction of the observatory. I interpreted for the astronomy students from Tokyo who came to visit Mr. Covarrubias.[117]

Díaz Covarrubias's account of the astronomical mission to Japan does not refer to Yasu by name. Instead, Yasu appears only indirectly, as in the passages describing the Japanese

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114 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 192.

115 Díaz Covarrubias (ibid., pp. 178, 443–444) According to Díaz Covarrubias (ibid., p. 188) the interns included "Messrs. Yoshida and Yamasaki, officials of the Navy Department, and Mr. Takano, a student of the Naval Academy." In addition to these three individuals from the Navy, the Ministry of Education also sent Rioge Koé as an intern under Mexican supervision.

116 Francisco Díaz Covarrubias and Francisco Jiménez were both geographical engineers who also carried out astronomical research. Agustin Barroso was the photographer, and Manuel Fernandez was the topographer of this commission. The "secretary," whose name Yasu did not mention, was probably Francisco Bulnes, the chronicler of this event (Biro 2010, p. 365; Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 15).

117 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 4 ff. My translation contains the corrected names of places and individuals that Yasu misspelled in the memoirs.

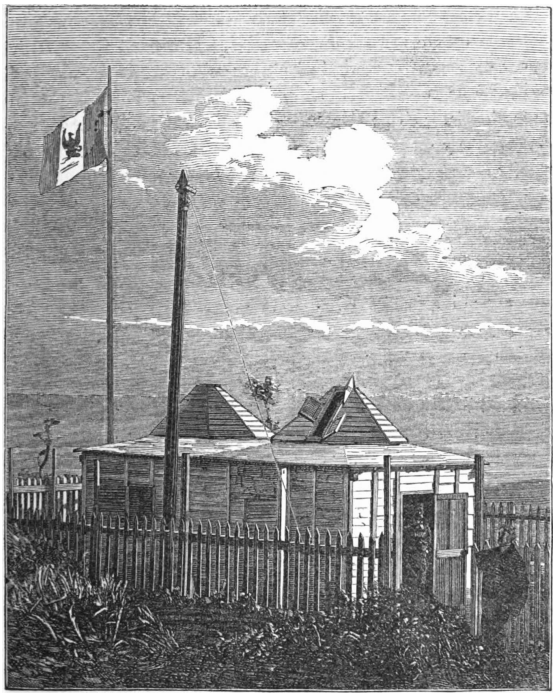

Figure 14: "Observatory of the commission president in Nogue-No-Yama," Yokohama, 1874

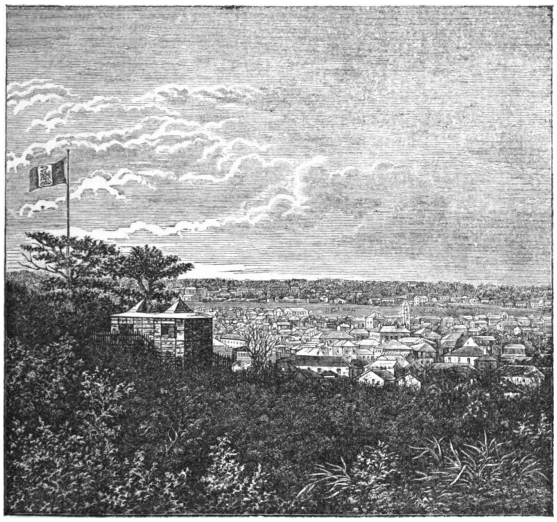

Figure 15: "Professor Jiménez's observatory in the Bluff," Yokohama, 1874. In the center back of this image is the foreign settlement

interns, with whom Díaz Covarrubias noted he enjoyed working. "[I] always tried to resolve all their doubts and questions, and to train them in making calculations and observations," Díaz Covarrubias wrote.[118] However, he also acknowledged the limitations posed by the language barrier: "[all] this was sometimes extremely difficult for me because they did not understand Spanish, English, or French, and I did not understand Japanese." It is in this context that Yasu's role as an interpreter becomes apparent. Regarding the challenges of translation, Díaz Covarrubias wrote:

> My interpreter, with whom we generally understood each other, was not intelligent in mathematics, so he could hardly ever convey my explanations to [the students] in the technical language of science, nor could he translate their questions to me. […] At other times, Messrs. Yamasaki and Takano would bring me their questions, no doubt translated into English by a person versed in mathematical principles, and then there was the advantage that at least I would immediately understand the point of their question and write down for them the desired explanations of the calculations in the same language so that they could immediately have them translated into Japanese.

This passage underscores the difficulties even highly selected Japanese students faced in overcoming language barriers to engage in scientific dialogue. Most Japanese biographies of Yasu follow Saitō's assumption that he had acquired some Spanish by this time. However, there is no evidence to support this claim. As I will explain later, Yasu likely communicated with the Mexicans in French. Due to his lack of specialized scientific training, he could offer only limited assistance in facilitating technical discussions. To address this problem, the Navy Department eventually recruited a "highly respected" English interpreter who

[118] The following quotations are from Díaz Covarrubias' report (Díaz Covarrubias 1876, pp. 178–179)

had previously participated in various international scientific initiatives on behalf of the Meiji government.[119]

While Díaz Covarrubias offered a rather dispassionate assessment of the professional limitations of their encounter, Yasu's *Memorias* present a more intimate account of his work with the Mexican scientists. Rather than focusing on the challenges of translating technical material in a scientific field not yet fully established in Japan, Yasu recalls the long, cold nights spent at the observatory alongside Díaz Covarrubias and the expedition's photographer. "One night the lens fell out of [Díaz Covarrubias's] hand because it was very cold, as it was the cold season," Yasu wrote, "I felt very sorry for him because of all the work."[120]

The transit of Venus on December 9, 1874, generated considerable excitement among the local population. An account of the day in Yokohama, published in the *Japan Herald*, described how "smoked glass has been all the rage [...] and in every street eager gazers might have been seen scanning the sun, not alone amongst the Europeans, but Japanese and Chinese as well have been all on the look out for this celestial phenomenon which takes place at such distant intervals of time."[121] Yasu's *Memorias* offers a concise account that highlights the role of the expedition's photographer:

> On the day of observation of the Transit of Venus before the disk of the Sun, we were very busy. So Mr. Barroso was in charge of photographing the transit of Venus and the entry and exit of the disk. So he made fourteen contacts. The negatives came out very nice. Thank God it was a beautiful day in Yokohama. Well, we knew that the French in Nagasaki did not do well because, at the time when Venus entered the disk of the Sun, it became cloudy. Well, we were very lucky. If anybody saw Mr. Covarrubias' work, they would see beautiful photographs of twelve contacts of Venus and the disk of the Sun.[122]

Photography played an important role in documenting the transit of Venus, with each scientific delegation hiring professional photographers equipped with the most advanced instruments available. In Nagasaki, the American team collaborated with the renowned photographer Ueno Hikoma 上野彦馬 (1838–1904), while the Austro-Hungarian expedition relied on Baron Raimund von Stillfried (1839–1911), an Austrian photographer based in Yokohama. According to the Scottish John Francis Campbell, a Scottish observer hired by the Japanese government in Tokyo, the Mexican team's photographs were "as large and sharp as those which are taken at Kew [Observatory in London]" because of their "good telescope and camera."[123]

Despite the limited recognition he afforded to his Japanese translator, Díaz Covarrubias provided readers with a vivid account, portraying himself surrounded by a select group of visitors:

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119 Katō (2006, pp. 7, 11–13). According to Katō, a Navy trainee and a member of the Mexican crew traveled to Tokyo to request an interpreter. Noguchi Gennosuke 野口源之助 was employed between December 7 and 13, including the transit on the 9th. Katō notes that during an earlier astronomical survey in Hokkaido, Noguchi had worked with Captain Yanagi Narayoshi 柳楢悦, head of the Hydrographic Office, who was also in charge of this event in Japan.

120 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 24 ff.

121 December 21, 1874, *Japan Herald Mail Summary*, quoted from Gartlan (2016, 177, 333 n19).

122 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 28 ff.

123 Gartlan (ibid., 333, Footnote 18 of chapter 6). For Díaz Covarrubias's equipment, see Allen (2004, p. 112).

> In the early hours of the morning, a guard of police arrived at my camp, which had been established by order of the Government of Kanagawa, in case it should be necessary to restrain the curious, whose assemblage might interfere with the observations; but as the orderly and restrained spirit of the Japanese people was already well known to me, and as the method of observation that I have indicated in the preceding chapter was perfectly adapted to the most complete publicity, I did not wish that any person of learning or distinction who wished to witness the observations should be prevented from entering my station.
> Those admitted were generally astronomers, representatives of the national and foreign press, government officials, and some English ladies […]
> Allowing the bystanders to examine everything, and answering the explanations they asked of me, I only recommended complete stillness and the greatest silence at the moments of observing each contact, for which I warned them, in order to be able to count the sounds of the chronometer wheel that I had in front of and near the telescope…the presence of the public could not disturb me at those moments, as they remained seated around the instrument and the observatory while I, standing, kept my place on the wooden platform built around the stone support that held the telescope and was accompanied only by the young naval officers who were practicing in my camp.[124]

Here, Díaz Covarrubias recreates the scene of the astronomical event with great plasticity. He emphasized his confident handling and mastery of technical knowledge, which he displayed before experts and dignitaries. "Toward the end of the phenomenon," he writes, "H.E. the Minister of Education Fuyimaro [sic: Fujimaro] Tanaka also graced my camp with his presence." Satisfied with his ability to showcase the progress of Mexican science, Díaz Covarrubias enjoyed the recognition he received from the Japanese government and the international community in Yokohama.

Politics of Language at the Periphery of the Eurocentric World

Yasu's participation in the transit of Venus highlights the complex linguistic constellations associated with the global connections that emerged in the fields of science and diplomacy in the late nineteenth century. His experience offers a lens through which to examine the politics of language, the practice of intercultural communication, and the dynamics of competition among nation-states.[125]

Unlike the United States and France, which could afford to dispatch multiple expeditions to various locations across Asia and Oceania, the Mexicans and Japanese concentrated their efforts solely on Japan. In both countries, the event was framed as a milestone in their respective paths toward constructing a modern nation. Reflecting this, references to the nation—*nación* in Spanish or *kokka* (国家) in Japanese—and the civilized world—*mundo civilizado* in Spanish, *bunmei sekai* (文明世界) in Japanese—appear frequently in the personal accounts of Yasu and Díaz Covarrubias. These recollections, which underscore the importance of education and scientific research within the framework of nineteenth-century nationalism on the periphery of the Eurocentric world, offer valuable insight into the emerging relationship between Meiji Japan and the Latin American republic.

With regard to its position in the global order, its developmental challenges, and its aspirations for national affirmation, Japan shared much with post-independence Latin America. Yet, the distinct cultural, historical, and political trajectories that shaped each

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124 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from (Díaz Covarrubias 1876, pp. 218–219).
125 Graham 2002.

region's engagement with the West gave their evolving relationship a unique character. Juxtaposing Yasu's recollections with Díaz Covarrubias's account of the astronomical mission reveals the divergent paths available to Mexico and Japan, even as both embraced a progressive orientation. A multilingual intellectual embedded in Mexico's political elite and connected to European academic circles, Díaz Covarrubias sought to showcase Mexican scientific achievement. Struck by the rapid modernization he witnessed in Meiji Japan, he also became a proponent of Japanese immigration to Mexico. Yasu, by contrast, was an aspiring student with no firm social standing, who saw in his encounter with the prestigious Mexican scholar a chance to gain access to Western modernity.

Although Díaz Covarrubias's report focused on the scientific mission, it also served as an introduction to Japan for his Latin American readers. His description of Yokohama's cosmopolitan, polyglot environment offered insight into what captivated his interest in the country. Like many Latin American elites who identified culturally with Europe, Díaz Covarrubias viewed Japan with a mixture of admiration and Orientalist projection. He sympathized with Japan's efforts to cast off feudal traditions and embrace modernity, but his impressions were filtered through expectations shaped by European discourses about the East.[126]

It is clear from his carefully composed travelogue that Díaz Covarrubias was attentive to how he and his nation were perceived by Japanese and European interlocutors. Many passages in the text reveal how he employed his cultural and diplomatic skills in deliberately conspicuous ways. He reflected on the strategic value of the languages at his disposal, carefully choosing those that would most effectively facilitate communication and strengthen his position within scientific and diplomatic circles.[127]

This pragmatic and reflective approach to language use is exemplified in the following passage describing his preparations for crossing the Pacific:

> I was occupied with drawing up the project and plans for the observatories so that after I had selected the proposed sites for their establishment, their construction could proceed without loss of time. During the voyage, I also wrote a new method for measuring latitude, which I had discovered and put into practice with great success in Mexico City shortly before my departure. I wrote it in French, thinking that it would not be easy to print it in Spanish in Yokohama, or at least that no one would be able to read it in that language.[128]

The Japanese government responded to Díaz Covarrubias's strategic use of language in ways that exceeded his expectations. On January 12, 1875, a month after the Venus transit, the Minister of Education invited him to a meeting. Díaz Covarrubias noted that the minister "was kind enough to give me the first copy in Japanese of the opuscule that I had published on my arrival in Yokohama and that the government had translated and republished [in Japanese]."[129] During their meeting, Díaz Covarrubias also exchanged views with the minister on public education and received information about the Japanese government's policy on the subject.

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126 Mandujano López 2012.

127 Díaz Covarrubias (1876, p. 229). For instance, he used English to converse with a Chinese carpenter and Japanese officials.

128 Díaz Covarrubias (ibid., p. 99). In the other passage, Díaz Covarrubias again commented on the lack of speakers of Latin American languages in Japan: "[D]uring my stay in this country, and excepting, of course, the members of the Spanish and Peruvian legations, I found no other person who spoke a few words of Spanish, except a Portuguese who resided in Tokyo (ibid., p. 228)."

129 Ibid., p. 311.

As noted, Yasu was less successful in his attempts at interlingual communication. His participation in the transit of Venus was shaped by the hierarchical dynamics of language and the cultural capital they conveyed. The unequal politics of language limited Yasu's access to the sociocultural sphere of global scientific exchange. This access was sufficient to sharpen his personal aspirations but not enough to overcome Japan's marginal academic position within the international order.

Studying Abroad, in Mexico

Yasu Kōhei, like many of his contemporaries, took advantage of the new opportunities emerging in a country opening to the world and sought academic training abroad.[130] Whereas most Japanese students traveled to the United States or Europe, Yasu chose Mexico City. As he recalled in the *Memorias*: "At the end of the work, I asked Mr. Díaz to do me the favor of taking me to Mexico, where I wanted to finish my studies. Well, he accepted my request with great pleasure."[131]

For Yasu, this may have represented his final opportunity to travel abroad. By that time, the newly established Meiji government had begun implementing a relatively rigid system for selecting and supervising overseas students, particularly among the younger generation:

> Subjects of the study were fitted to countries of specialization and the government list revealed some intriguing Meiji ideas: England—mechanics, commerce, iron manufacturing, ship-building, animal husbandry, and charitable activities; France—law, international law, zoology, and botany; Germany—political science and medicine; United States—postal communications, technology, agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce, and mining.[132]

This arrangement reflected the Japanese state's strategic approach to the acquisition of Western knowledge and the regulation of its subjects abroad. Government-sponsored students were guided in their educational trajectories and did not have to independently determine which forms of knowledge or foreign languages would prove most useful, nor did they need to navigate the complex professional and social networks required to secure permission and funding to study overseas. In this context, Díaz Covarrubias's academic stature and political influence made him an appealing patron for Yasu. The central role of the French language in their interactions may have further persuaded Yasu that Mexico offered a suitable environment for his continued education.

As for Díaz Covarrubias, a leading figure in the modernization of Mexico's educational system, it is easy to imagine that he welcomed Yasu's request with enthusiasm. A strong advocate for establishing diplomatic relations between Japan and Mexico, he was interested in observing how the Japanese Empire was reforming its institutions by sending promising students abroad. During his time in Japan, he closely studied the country's public education

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130 Citing from the study by Ishizuki Minoru and James Conte, Van Sant (2000, p. 51) notes that, despite tight government controls, at least 153 Japanese of Yasu's generation had already gone overseas for higher education between 1853 and 1867. According to Van Sant, while Japanese students in the 1860s favored "England, France, or the United States, but from 1869 to 1879 the United States became the favored destinations."

131 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 15 f.

132 Burks 1985, p. 151.

reforms and provided detailed accounts of how the Meiji government was investing in the overseas education of its most talented youth:

> The government also rewards students who excel in the schools by sending them abroad at the expense of the state to perfect their knowledge. It thus supports thirty first-class and one hundred and fifty second-class students abroad for several years varying from three to five, and the annual pension it grants them is from $1,500 to $1,800 for the former and from $900 to $1,000 for the latter, in addition to their travel expenses and the sum corresponding to one month's allowance for their preparation before leaving.[133]

Beyond appealing to his pride as a scientist and educator, Yasu's request to accompany Díaz Covarrubias likely resonated with the Mexican's broader ambitions to elevate his country's educational system to international standards. Although Yasu was not a government-sponsored student, his interest in studying in Mexico offered a compelling testament to the country's potential as an academic destination. Díaz Covarrubias may have viewed his Japanese protégé as living proof of his claim that the people of Japan possessed a strong eagerness to learn—a point central to his argument for encouraging Japanese immigration as a means of advancing Mexico's economic development.[134] In *Viaje al Japón*, he described his relationship with Yasu: "A young man who knew a little French, who was at my service in Japan as an interpreter, and who to this day would not leave my side, [has] asked me to bring him to Mexico to continue his studies."[135]

Yasu left Japan with the Mexican Commission, journeying through Asian waters, the recently opened Suez Canal, across European lands, and finally the Atlantic Ocean, arriving in Mexico nearly a year later. The cost of such an extensive voyage—covering travel, food, and lodging—was almost certainly beyond Yasu's means. Although no definitive records exist to confirm this, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that Díaz Covarrubias financed most, if not all, of Yasu's expenses during the journey and throughout his first two years in Mexico. While scholarships from European or American patrons were a common means of enabling overseas study during the early Meiji era, this practice also drew on Japan's longstanding tradition of Western studies, dating back to the late eighteenth century.[136] Within networks shaped by regional and familial ties, established scholars and wealthy benefactors frequently sponsored students pursuing education in metropolitan centers. As discussed earlier in relation to Yasu Kōhei's educational trajectory from Fujisawa to Edo and Yokohama, he had already benefited from such forms of support. I suggest here that, beyond their individual stakes, the arrangement between Yasu and Díaz Covarrubias may be understood as a transcultural adaptation of this Japanese model of educational patronage.

In the remainder of this chapter, I examine Yasu's transformation into a student in Mexico within the broader context of a globalizing world and the growing physical and symbolic regulation of national borders. As Yasu crossed nations and continents, his identity as a Japanese subject remained intertwined with the shifting conditions that shaped human mobility between Japan and Latin America. The central argument here—and one

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133 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 248.

134 Immediately following the above quote, Díaz Covarrubias wrote of "the extraordinary dedication that in general is noticed in the people to educate themselves," and concluded that "it is easy to predict a rapid progress with the new system of public instruction" (ibid., p. 250).

135 Ibid., p. 127.

136 Jackson 2016, pp. 107–109.

that extends into the following two chapters—is that Yasu's transpacific trajectory was fundamentally shaped by the evolving mutual perceptions between Japanese and Latin American societies, as well as by the geopolitical currents that defined their place in the global order of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A Japanese Subject Overseas

While previous literature on Yasu's biography has acknowledged his initial motivation to study abroad, it has largely emphasized his ultimate identity as a permanent migrant in Guatemala. This focus tends to reduce his view of Mexico—his chosen destination for academic advancement—to a secondary option, pursued only for lack of alternatives. Moreover, by concentrating on the endpoints of Yasu's journey, earlier accounts obscure the evolution of his ongoing relationship with the Japanese state. When Yasu left Japan to pursue his studies in Mexico, he was required to obtain a travel permit from the Meiji government—an act that formally designated him as a citizen under official oversight. Once overseas, he was expected to comply with a set of regulations issued for travelers, which not only sought to govern conduct abroad but also codified a new legal and political status for Japanese subjects living beyond the archipelago. Situating Yasu's border-crossing within the broader historical context of evolving categories of national citizenship, this section marks his departure as the beginning of a more complex transnational trajectory.

In 1858, the Tokugawa shogunate was compelled to end more than two centuries of seclusion by signing trade treaties with Western powers. By 1866, the government lifted the ban on foreign travel for Japanese subjects, introducing a series of ordinances to regulate departures to treaty-partner countries. Regardless of social status—samurai, farmers, artisans, or merchants—individuals were permitted to leave Japan only for purposes of study or trade. According to Yamamoto Takahiro's analysis of Japan's early migration policies, most applicants in the subsequent decades were petty merchants or low-skilled laborers seeking opportunities in Korea and China, while others were contracted for work in the United States, Britain, France, and Australia.[137]

Following the Meiji Restoration, the state increasingly promoted study abroad as a national priority. "Act 5" of the Charter Oath of 1868 declared that "knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule"—a declaration that, as Van Sant notes, helped legitimize overseas education as a tool of national advancement.[138] Compared to laborers (*dekasegi rōdōsha* 出稼ぎ労働者), who often operated beyond the reach of consular oversight, students (*ryūgakusei* 留学生), though far fewer in number, were regarded as ideal agents of modernization. They were supposed to "observe conditions in other countries, acquire practical learning, and keep Japan from falling behind in progress."[139]

When Yasu applied for permission to travel to Mexico in 1875, overseas movement was still tightly regulated under policies inherited from the Tokugawa era.[140] To control who could go abroad and for what reasons, the government required travelers to obtain official permits and passports. The available sources on Yasu's life offer little detail about

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137 Yamamoto 2017, p. 1020.

138 Tsunoda, De Bary, and Keene, Sources of Japanese Tradition, 2: 136–37. Quoted from (Van Sant 2000, p. 51). All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from the same source.

139 Keene (2002). According to Van Sant (2000, p. 51), 884 passports were issued in the first decade of the Meiji era for students traveling to Europe and the U.S., though many could not go due to lack of funding.

140 Kamishiraishi 2013, p. 163.

the process he followed to obtain these documents. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* article notes simply that "he applied for the 'passport' (*kaigai ryokōken* 海外旅行券), and the time he finally sailed from Yokohama was 1 February 1875."[141] Saitō's account includes a letter Yasu wrote to a friend while en route to Mexico,[142] in which he noted, "Thanks to Mr. Masuda's cooperation, I received 'permission to study abroad' (*kaigai yūgaku menkyo* 海外遊学免許) from the Minister of Foreign Affairs."[143] The Mr. Masuda mentioned was likely Masuda Shigeyuki 増田繁幸 (1825 – 1896), the magistrate of Mizusawa, who administered Yasu's hometown at the time.[144]

A record of the issuance of Yasu's travel permit exists in the Diplomatic Archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (figure 16). Dated January 31, 1875, the document likely corresponds to the information recorded on his actual passport.

> Yasu Kōhei
> Family Register and Class: A commoner from Mizusawa
> Age: Twenty-four years and two months
> Eyes: Average (*nami*)
> Nose: Average (*nami*)
> Mouth: Slightly large (*yaya hiroi*)
> Face: Slightly broad (*yaya hiroi*)
> (Skin) color: Yellow (*ki*)
> Body: Five *shaku* and one *sun* (about 155 cm)[145]
> The aforementioned [individual]: To study astronomy (*seigaku*), at his own expense (*jihi*) to go west / to Mexico.[146]

Passports issued by the Meiji government closely followed the model introduced by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1866, which itself drew on French and American examples and included detailed physical descriptions of the holder.[147] The main purpose of these physiognomic descriptions in nineteenth-century passports was generally to verify identity, similar to the role photographs would later serve: to confirm "the truth of one's identity, the fidelity of one's appearance with that of image on the document, [and] to declare prima facie that one is who one claims to be."[148] However, in the early Meiji context, protecting the bearer's identity was likely not the primary objective. Yamamoto notes that such descriptions were often considered superfluous, as applicants "known to the

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141 Appendix 4

142 Appendix 7, Letter 1.

143 J. Saitō (1934) states that Yasu had already secured permission to study abroad with Masuda's help, and that his departure was delayed only by the opportunity to work for the Mexicans. Given Yasu's financial constraints, which would have made such a trip impossible without external support, it seems more likely that he applied for permission only after securing Díaz Covarrubias's backing.

144 Yasu's birthplace, Fujisawa, was part of Iwai-gun (磐井郡).

145 One *shaku* (尺) is approximately 30.3 cm, and one *sun* (寸) is approximately 3.03 cm.

146 Note that the last sentence is difficult to decipher. Experts on pre-Meiji manuscripts and an archivist of diplomatic documents have offered various interpretations without reaching a firm conclusion. Assuming one of the Chinese characters is "西" as part of the phrase "westward" (*seikō* 西行), my interpretation is that Yasu's purpose was registered as going west for study, reflecting his route to America via Europe. However, I cannot rule out that it was also part of the phonetic translation of Mexico (墨西哥) used during the late Edo and early Meiji periods.

147 Yamamoto 2017, p. 1001.

148 Cho (2009, p. 278). For more discussion on the physical description of early Japanese passports, see Yagishita (2012, pp. 342–345).

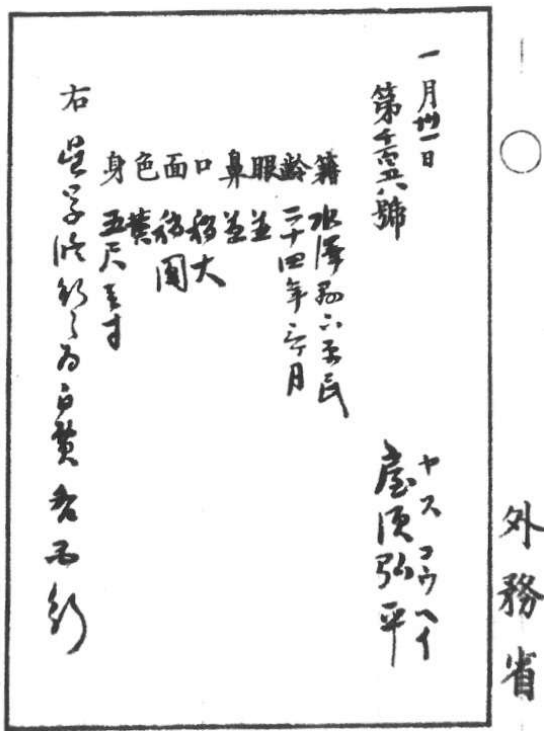

Figure 16: Register entry of Yasu's travel permit. Issued January 31, 1875

foreign ministry, such as diplomats, senior politicians, and military officers, often received a passport describing many of their physical characteristics as 'average.'"[149] Anecdotal evidence even shows passports issued with incomplete information or missing family names.[150] This general laxity in protecting passports from fraudulent use is reflected in Yasu's passport registration, where his eyes, nose, mouth, and face are described in vague terms.[151]

Rather than focusing on rights for travelers, Yamamoto argues that the early Meiji passport system primarily served state interests. While "European passport application fee could be understood as a price for receiving due privileges en route, the application fee for a Japanese passport was nothing more than a tax on overseas travelers."[152] Unlike Western passports, which expressed a government's commitment to protect its citizens internationally, the Japanese system was designed chiefly to "serve the government in regulating the undesired cross-border movement," by certifying "merely a permission to leave the country for a limited period."[153] This strict control over the presence of Japanese nationals abroad was tied to the Meiji government's vision of Japan's international role. It underscored an acute awareness of emigrants as extensions of the Japanese body politic whose conduct and protection were matters of state concern. As Van Sant notes, this importance was illustrated by an incident at the port of Yokohama:

149 Cho 2009, p. 278.
150 Yamamoto 2017, p. 1001.
151 One notable detail is the description of Yasu's skin color as "yellow-skinned" (*ki* 黄), which stands out because "Japanese have traditionally used the word white to describe lighter shades of their own skin color" (Wagatsuma 1967, p. 407). No further records clarify the official color categories used by Japanese authorities. Possibly, "yellow" was a way to distinguish among different groups within Japan or a response to Western racial stereotypes of East Asians.
152 Yamamoto 2017, p. 1015.
153 Ibid., p. 1014.

> [T]he Japanese government was well aware of the tens of thousands of Chinese in the Pacific and in the Americas who were widely regarded as nothing more than cheap laborers. Japanese officials were shocked at the conditions aboard the María Luz, a Peruvian ship crowded with Chinese laborers that arrived in Yokohama for emergency repairs in the summer of 1872. These officials believed that China was paid little respect by the major Western powers not only because of its political and military weakness but also because of the large numbers of Chinese working overseas. Japanese officials thus did not want their people working overseas at a time when they were trying to promote and expand the country's international presence.[154]

The fear of allowing Japanese subjects to travel freely without consular oversight made Yasu's choice of destination unusual. At the time, Japan and Mexico had no treaties or formal diplomatic relations, and there was no consular presence to assist or intervene in disputes involving Japanese nationals.[155] Between 1868 and 1875, only four passports were issued for travel to Latin America.[156] It is likely that the strong relationship Díaz Covarrubias had built with Japanese officials helped secure approval for Yasu's application.[157] The final line of Yasu's passport application supports this idea, listing the study of astronomy as the purpose of his trip, thus connecting his journey to the legacy of Japan's respected Mexican visitor.

Traveling to the West

In both the titles of this chapter and this section, I use the term "west" or "westward" to allude to the paradox of Yasu's journey. Although the most direct route from Japan to Mexico was eastward across the Pacific—one that Yasu would take on later occasions—he and his Mexican companions initially traveled west, through the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean Sea, to reach Europe. Along the way, they encountered the most advanced transportation and communication infrastructure of the time, including telegraph systems, railways, and maritime engineering works that were transforming global mobility in the late nineteenth century. They also visited tourist sites shaped by emerging nationalist ideologies.

In the *Memorias*, Yasu reflected on this journey as a powerful encounter with "civilizations abroad." In this sense, "westward" captures more than just geographical direction. It evokes the dominant Eurocentric frameworks of the era and the routes of cultural and technological exchange that Yasu navigated. Seeing Díaz Covarrubias as a model of the cosmopolitan scientific elite, Yasu likely projected onto Mexico the image of France he had developed while living in Yokohama.

On February 5, 1875, Yasu embarked on his first overseas voyage with the Mexican Commission.[158] In his list of memorable waypoints, the journey went from Yokohama

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154 Van Sant 2000, p. 115.

155 Even in countries with official relations with Japan, Japanese travelers faced the effects of "unequal treaties" signed by the Tokugawa and Meiji governments. These treaties granted extraterritorial privileges to European and North American visitors in Japan, but Japanese citizens did not receive similar protections when abroad (Yamamoto 2017, p. 1015).

156 Nakagawa 1995.

157 According to Díaz Covarrubias (1876, p. 321), when boarding the ship in Yokohama, the naval cadets and officers who had studied under Díaz Covarrubias came to bid farewell and presented the Mexicans with "some pieces of silk and some objects of bronze or of the precious lacquer of his country." In return, Díaz Covarrubias gave books to the students, "because we had nothing else that would have been more pleasant for them."

158 Ibid., p. 321.

"past the coasts of China and the Indies. And through the ports of Hong Kong, Saigon, the Philippines, Ceylon, and Aden. Then through the recently completed Suez Canal and out to sea past the coasts of Greece. We arrived at the coveted port of Naples, Italy."[159] On April 9, the party reached Paris, where Díaz Covarrubias published the astronomical data he had collected in Yokohama.[160] They remained in the French capital for an extended stay to attend the International Congress of Geographical Sciences later that year.[161]

Of all the cities and sites, Yasu was most impressed by the Mediterranean coast, the newly excavated ruins of Pompeii, and the ancient Catholic churches in Rome and Paris. Beginning with his arrival in Naples, Yasu described his European experience in his *Memorias* as follows:

> We disembarked, and at the hotel, we rested from the fatigue of such a long navigation. And visiting the curiosities of the museums, places of the promenades and theaters, etc., etc. I strolled every day along the shores of the sea to contemplate the beautiful panoramas of the islands and the coasts. We also went to visit the ruins of Pompeii, which are very large, where you can see wonderful things and the curiosities of antiquity. The eruption of the Vesuvius volcano caused the ruin. After saying goodbye to this very sad port, we arrived in Rome, where we stayed a few days and visited the main very interesting sites such as St. Peter and its beautiful museums, the observatory, the church of St. Peter where they cut off his head, etc. During this time, His Holiness Pope Pius IX was seriously ill. And then I left Rome with my soul full of sadness, even though I was not yet a Christian. After visiting some remarkable cities like Florence, Milan, Genoa, and Trino [probably Turin]. And then, after crossing the Alpine tunnel of the border, we entered France. We finally arrived in Paris, where we stayed for more than six months. Here I was very happy and enjoyed very much seeing so many wonderful things, it is impossible for me to enumerate here all that I have seen.
> At first, we stayed in the hotel, but then we rented a house near the church of La Madeleine. Finally, with much emotion, we said goodbye to Paris and embarked again at the port of Saint-Nazaire to go to Mexico. And after passing several islands of the West Indies, we visited Havana. Finally, thanks to God, we arrived in Mexico in 1876. We disembarked in Veracruz, and from there we took the train to the capital city.[162]

Along the popular route made possible by the recent completion of canals and railways, and in the company of knowledgeable Latin American intellectuals, Yasu developed a taste for modern sightseeing. He traveled like a European globetrotter, but in reverse, and embraced the grandeur of European architecture and landscapes. The visual impact and pleasure of visiting historical sites later shaped his perception of the landscapes of Guatemala and other countries.[163]

Yasu enjoyed his time in Paris immensely. He spoke French, which likely added to his comfort and sense of belonging while in France. The prospect of leaving Paris for Mexico seems to have stirred conflicting feelings. A passage in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article alludes to this tension: "In the French capital, Paris, he met the students from our country," the author wrote. "They asked him to stay there because he speaks French. However, as he had

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159 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 36 ff.

160 He published his work in Paris, France, in August 1875 (Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 375).

161 In his words, after completing the observations in Japan, they had "the new honor of representing our country at the International Congress of Geographical Sciences, which met in Paris (ibid., p. 306)."

162 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 39 ff.

163 For this journey, Díaz Covarrubias (ibid., p. 308) offered only a brief poetic reflection, using the metaphor of the seasons to summarize his impressions of the different geographical regions he crossed.

promised Mr. Díaz, he could not break his promise."[164] There is no further information about the identity of these students or the specific considerations behind Yasu's decision to continue on to Mexico. It may have reflected a sense of obligation to Díaz Covarrubias, or the financial constraints that limited his options for independent travel.

As A Student, An Outsider

Yasu Kōhei and his companions arrived in Mexico City on November 16, 1875. In January of the following year, Yasu began his studies at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (ENP), where his mentor Francisco Díaz Covarrubias served as vice president and director of the Academy of Mathematics.[165]

A legacy of the Spanish colonial regime, which had ended just over fifty years earlier, Mexican secondary and higher education remained centered around elite, church-run institutions, where instruction was grounded in Latin, scholastic philosophy, and Catholic doctrine.[166] To modernize the system, the Organic Law of Public Education (*Ley Orgánica de la Instrucción Pública*) was enacted in 1867. A commission of reformers, including Díaz Covarrubias was tasked with implementing the law in Mexico City and, eventually, across the country.[167] Other members of the commission included Francisco's brother, José Díaz Covarrubias, Gabino Barreda, Pedro Contreras, Eulalio Ortega, and Ignacio Alvarado.[168] In 1910, the ENP was subsequently incorporated into the newly established National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).[169]

Founded nine years before Yasu's arrival, the ENP began enrolling students in February 1868. It was housed in the Colegio de San Ildefonso, a Jesuit school established in the late sixteenth century and repurposed for various uses following the expulsion of the Jesuit order in the eighteenth century. When Yasu enrolled in 1876, the ENP had several hundred students.[170] He was impressed by the baroque architecture of the campus, which remains a prominent example of colonial architecture in Mexico City's historic center. As he recalled, "In the preparatory school, I was in a very beautiful two-story building with three apartments and three very large courtyards."[171]

To adapt the colonial-era structure for the needs of the ENP, laboratories and classrooms were installed. The school's first director, Gabino Barreda, a relative of Díaz Covarrubias, had studied with Auguste Comte in Paris.[172] The founders' French positivist leanings shaped the design of the curriculum: it excluded religious content, prioritized mathematics and the sciences over the humanities, favored French over English, and relegated Latin to the final semesters of study.[173] Following the positivist ideas regarding a modern education, the ENP was organized into three main branches: law; engineering, architecture, and mineralogy (hereafter referred to as the engineering branch); and medicine, pharmacy,

164 Appendix 4
165 Torres Castilleja and Moreno 2024.
166 Cortés Guerrero 2007, p. 334.
167 Ibid., p. 327.
168 Ibid., p. 331.
169 Torres Castilleja and Moreno 2024.
170 On February 3, 1868, the first school year of the ENP "was inaugurated with an enrollment of nine hundred students (*Antecedentes Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* 2016)."
171 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 109 f.
172 *Antecedentes Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* 2016.
173 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 311.

agriculture, and veterinary medicine.[174]

Previous biographies of Yasu indicate that he studied astronomy. However, despite Díaz Covarrubias's association with the ENP, astronomy does not appear to have been offered as a standalone subject; rather, it was integrated into the mining and engineering curriculum.[175] Based on Yasu's connection with Díaz Covarrubias and references in his memoirs, it can be inferred that his education was likely within the engineering branch of the ENP. Given that four of the five members of the Mexican commission sent to Japan were ENP professors who continued promoting astronomy's advancement in Mexico, it seems evident that astronomy was a part of Yasu's studies.[176]

Yasu's principal challenges at the ENP appear to have arisen from his limited proficiency in Spanish, a difficulty exacerbated by the lack of pedagogical resources available to Japanese learners of the language at the time. Nevertheless, he was able to rely on his knowledge of French to navigate this linguistic barrier.[177] As discussed in previous sections, his earlier exposure to Dutch, Chinese, and French likely contributed to his linguistic adaptability and confidence. Despite the initial language barriers, Yasu expressed considerable satisfaction with the quality of instruction he received. In the *Memorias*, he summarized his educational experience as follows:

> Well, I was studying, and I had to repeat what I had learned in Japan, math, physics, and chemistry. Since I could not speak Spanish well, it was still very difficult for me to give [sic: take] classes.[178] So before going to school, I had to study a lot at home with the Spanish and French dictionaries. The physics class was good because I used the French work of Ganot [Adolphe Ganot (1804–87)].[179]

Yasu's scientific education in Yokohama, which was delivered through French intermediaries, seems to have prepared him well for his studies in North America. There, instructors were also trained using similar European materials. Yasu also mentioned a drawing class in which he excelled to such a degree that he was offered the opportunity to advance to painting ahead of schedule.[180] Although the episode remains sparsely documented, Guatemalan historian Luis Luján Muñoz viewed Yasu's education in Mexico as a formative influence that foreshadowed his later engagement with photography.[181] Given Yasu's academic

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174 Cortés Guerrero 2007, p. 335.

175 As a topographic engineer, Díaz Covarrubias taught astronomy and topography at the Colegio de Minas (Bartolucci 2011, pp. 273–274). In nineteenth-century Mexico, early astronomical science was used by geographic engineers to define national boundaries (ibid., p. 193). In 1855, Díaz Covarrubias produced a geographical map of the Valley of Mexico, and in 1857 he employed astronomical methods to determine the latitude and longitude of the capital (Torres Castilleja and Moreno 2024).

176 In 1862, Díaz Covarrubias was commissioned to build the Chapultepec Observatory, a project delayed for decades due to political turmoil (ibid.).

177 Two dictionaries that Yasu consulted have survived to the present day. He may have carried them with him throughout his years in the Americas, preserving them through multiple relocations. The first, the *Nouveau Dictionnaire Français-Japonais* (官許佛和辭典) was published in 1871. The second, the *Diccionario Francés–Español*, was published in Paris in 1873 by the Librería de A. Bouret e Hijo. The title page of the latter bears a handwritten dedication from Fernando Prado: "To my good friend K. Yas, Guatemala 1881." Since 2004, both dictionaries have been part of the Fujisawa Collection, cataloged as reference numbers 60 and 61, respectively.

178 Literally, Yasu wrote that it was hard for him to give classes (dar clases). However, there is no doubt that he was a student at ENP, not a teacher.

179 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 111 ff.

180 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 117 f.

181 Luján Muñoz 1982b.

inclinations at this stage, it is more plausible that the drawing and painting classes he attended were technical in nature and related to his engineering studies.

Yasu studied at the ENP for nearly two years and performed well.[182] While improving his Spanish and attending classes, he "did not waste a moment."[183] In a letter to friends in Japan, he wrote that he studied diligently every day and passed an unspecified exam after three months.[184] Beyond his academic pursuits, he explored Mexico City and its surroundings. Living in the family home of Díaz Covarrubias on "Calle Alcáceria" [sic, Alcaicería], Yasu undoubtedly came into contact with the city's intellectual and academic circles. He may also have witnessed the construction of the astronomical observatory of Chapultepec Castle, which his mentor had pursued for a long time. In the same letter to Japan, Yasu shared his impressions shaped by his academic interests: "About twelve miles away, to the southwest, there is an old city called Chapultepec," he wrote. "At present, the government is deciding to build an observatory there."[185]

According to the *Memorias*, Yasu's relationship with his mentor was close yet marked by a certain tentative respect that possibly reflected Díaz Covarrubias's social standing or Yasu's dependence on him. In one episode, Yasu recalls visiting the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe—a shrine of profound importance to Mexican Catholicism and national identity—with Díaz Covarrubias's young son, Enrique. After their visit, they went to see a coachman named Francisco Menocal, who worked for Díaz Covarrubias. The curious "niño Enrique" wished to ride a horse despite Yasu's concerns for his safety. To protect the boy, Yasu rode ahead but was kicked by the horse, injuring his head and chest. In great pain and unable to stand upright on the streetcar ride home, Yasu hid in his room to recover, not wanting to upset Díaz Covarrubias with "such nonsense."[186]

Benefiting from Díaz Covarrubias's social and academic status, Yasu enjoyed a comfortable life during his first two years in the Americas. The letter to friends in Japan that he wrote after a few months at the ENP reveals his experiences and aspirations: "Since I left Yokohama, my body has grown stronger and stronger, and it is not inferior to the young men in their prime. Please be assured that I am full of joy that I have finally achieved my goal of studying abroad for so many years."[187] His reference to "young men in their prime" may reflect his awareness that he had left Japan at an older age than most overseas students. Anticipating a lengthy absence, he asked his friends to look after his mother and siblings. "Once a man starts a career," he wrote, "he can't stop it by himself." Away from home, Yasu promised that upon finishing his studies, he would return to Japan to serve his country.

However, Yasu's plans were disrupted by political turmoil. In January 1876, army general Porfirio Díaz overthrew president Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, who had been a supporter of Díaz Covarrubias's academic and educational projects.[188] Yasu had met president Lerdo de Tejada at least once, when Díaz Covarrubias and the scientific commission were invited to a presidential audience after returning from Japan. The president was an important

182 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 25, 1889.
183 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 111 f.
184 Appendix 7, Letter 1.
185 The construction of the observatory was still ongoing (Biro 2010).
186 All quotations in this paragraph are from appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 59–107. Two pages from Yasu's memoirs—one about this visit and another about his time in Peru—were omitted in previous transcriptions, likely during photocopying of the original notebook.
187 Appendix 7, Letter 1. All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from the same source.
188 Torres Castilleja and Moreno 2024.

patron of several of Díaz Covarrubias's initiatives, including the scientific commission to Japan and the reconstruction of the Chapultepec Observatory. In the *Memorias*, Yasu recalled Lerdo de Tejada as "a very learned and very wise person, and for this reason, he was very interested in sending a scientific commission to Japan to observe the passage of Venus across the disk of the sun at great expense."[189] After the coup, Lerdo de Tejada went into exile in the United States, leaving Díaz Covarrubias without an important source of political influence.

Yasu's letter to his Japanese friends mentions the coup after the cheerful remarks about his studies and sightseeing. He described the event with detachment, calling it an "unusual event" (chinji 珍事) that he was glad to share with his friends back home. He recounted how the residents of Mexico City were frightened by armed confrontations between government and opposition forces but assured his readers that, as an "outsider," he felt no fear.[190] The *Memorias* also include a brief account of the coup, which ultimately led to his arrival in Guatemala. Here, a mentioning of Lerdo de Tejada's secret escape segues into an admiring description of Porfirio Díaz's triumphant entry into Mexico City.[191]

Yasu's sense of detachment from the problems of local society reflected his view of himself as an outsider with little stake in the shifting political tides that involved his mentor. Despite the uncertainty, he persisted with his studies at the ENP.[192] However, the change in political power eventually had a lasting impact on his life. The new government grew suspicious of Díaz Covarrubias due to his close ties to the former president.[193] In late 1877, Díaz Covarrubias was appointed Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister for Central America (EEMP).[194] Shortly afterward, Díaz Covarrubias left for his new post in Guatemala, accompanied by his two sons and Yasu.

Much like his reluctant farewell to Paris, Yasu felt compelled to uproot the fragile connections he had made and follow his mentor to yet another foreign land. Just as with his departure from Japan, his time in Europe, and his student years in Mexico, Yasu's next transition was closely linked to Díaz Covarrubias, on whose support he relied. In the *Memorias*, he reflects with regret on his dependence and how his ambitions were twice thwarted by forces beyond his control:

> If I had continued my studies in Mexico without coming to Guatemala, I would have gained a lot... But by coming to Guatemala, I lost everything. (Well, when I was in Paris, my friends who were in the Japanese delegation advised me to stay in Paris to study. I would have benefited by not ending my life as a poor photographer because I had to keep my word to Mr. Covarrubias).[195]

This retrospective lament, penned late in his life, offers insight into the complex ties between geography, modernity, and Yasu's ambitions. As he journeyed westward to the Americas and then south, he found himself increasingly distant from the dignified life he

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189 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 65 f.
190 Appendix 7, Letter 1.
191 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 67 ff.
192 Appendix 7, Letter 1.
193 Biro 2010, p. 366.
194 Francisco Díaz Covarrubias: Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary (EEMP, 07/12/1877-15/12/1879). "Embajadores de México en Guatemala," Relaciones Exteriores, Embajada de México en Guatemala. https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/guatemala/index.php/embajador/embajadores-de-mexico-en-guatemala
195 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 119 ff.

had hoped to achieve through Western education. The *Memorias* describe Yasu's departure from Mexico as follows:

> Finally, Mr. Covarrubias announced our departure. The children, Enrique and Abel, accompanied their father. So there were four of us and the soldiers to show us the way. On the first day, we took the train to the town of Casapalca.[196] […] The next day we left on horseback. I was very pleased and happy [on the trip] because we had fun and played with the riders who accompanied us, and we drove the cattle we found in the country. […] After much work, we finally arrived at the port of Acapulco, where we rested from the exhaustion of the arduous journey while waiting for the steamer that would take us to Guatemala. In the meantime, we visited the ruins of the fortress and other places left by the battle to defend against the French.[197]

Despite his reluctance, Yasu's journey to Guatemala still included moments of reprieve. Díaz Covarrubias may also have been less than happy about the turn of events, but the group appeared to take pleasure in visiting patriotic battle sites along the route.

* * *

In this chapter, I have examined Yasu Kōhei's educational journey and how it shaped his understanding of civilization and the West. Rather than portraying his trajectory as a simple, linear progression, I have explored how his exposure to foreign languages and European ideas expanded and complicated his imagination. I have also highlighted the role of social networks and interpersonal connections, which enabled him to pursue his ambitions amid shifting social and political circumstances. Finally, I have revisited the concept of global connections introduced at the beginning of the chapter, as these transoceanic linkages were pivotal to Yasu's travels and the opportunities available to him.

While global connections created opportunities, they also transmitted Western cultural prejudices and discriminatory views of East Asians. These attitudes reached Latin America through the movement of people, goods, and the circulation of print media. Moreover, such connections fueled nationalism and reinforced control over national borders. Yasu Kōhei's later experiences as a migrant in Central America were shaped by race-based discourses originating in North America, as well as by evolving political and legal frameworks governing migration across the Pacific. In the following chapter, I will discuss how Yasu's decision to settle in Guatemala was influenced not only by his personal interests and limited resources, but also by his efforts to navigate the challenges of life as a member of a racial minority in a foreign society.

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196 Casapalca is a town in Peru that Yasu visited on another trip. He probably could not remember the exact place in Mexico where they changed from train to horse.

197 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 123 ff.

Chapter 2

A Japanese in Liberal Guatemala

In late 1877, Yasu Kōhei arrived in Guatemala City. While he initially benefited from the economic support of his Mexican mentor, the move ultimately cost him the opportunity to pursue a higher education. In the *Memorias*, Yasu reflects on the reasons that eventually led him to split from Díaz Covarrubias:

> Since I could not even continue my studies, I could only spend my time without any benefit. So I wanted to go back to Japan, but he [Díaz Covarrubias] would not give me the money to pay for the voyage. So I had to search for a place to earn the cost of the travel, and I decided to separate from him.[1]

In a country with a small East Asian population and no Japanese consular representation, Yasu's decision to part ways with Díaz Covarrubias was bold. Although he felt directionless at first, he soon found a productive path forward. Drawing on his scientific background and driven by the need to finance his return to Japan, Yasu approached the owner of the city's only photography studio and requested an apprenticeship.[2] Three years later, when Díaz Covarrubias departed for a diplomatic post in Paris, Yasu began laying the groundwork for his own business. Instead of returning to Japan as he had initially planned, he became increasingly integrated into the social fabric of Guatemala City—both through his professional activities and his active involvement in the local Catholic community.

As noted in the previous chapter, prior scholarship has largely overlooked the sequence of decisions and transitions that shaped Yasu's trajectory from overseas student to long-term resident of Guatemala. To interpret his four-decade stay in the Americas as a linear migration between two fixed points is to oversimplify the complexity of his circumstances and the strategies he employed.

Yasu's arrival in Guatemala—and his eventual return following brief interludes in Japan and Peru—was shaped as much by contingency as by a plan. While his intellectual and linguistic acumen enabled transnational movement, his path was equally influenced by geopolitics, immigration policies, and transcultural connections. The evolving political and legal frameworks of Japanese and Latin American governments, along with racialized discourses originating in North America, influenced Yasu's experience as a migrant in Guatemala. Once outside the protective sphere of Díaz Covarrubias's patronage, Yasu was forced to navigate the economic, social, and cultural realities of the host society on his own. In this chapter and the next, I analyze his life in Guatemala, with particular emphasis on the political climate and prevailing social attitudes toward East Asian immigration.

Where this chapter focuses on Yasu's first period in Guatemala, spanning from 1877 to his return to Japan in 1889, the next chapter addresses his second and final stay, which

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1 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 875 ff.
2 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 879 ff.

began in 1890 and lasted until his death in 1917. I divide his Guatemalan life in this way to highlight the distinct social identities Yasu adopted and which were reflected in the plans he made for his life, his relationships with local individuals, and his commitment to building a family in Guatemala. These two phases of his Central American experience also mirror broader political developments, particularly the dominance of liberal governments following the 1871 revolution.[3] In a post-colonial Latin American society that readily absorbed ideological influences from the north, Yasu was compelled to negotiate his identity both as a Japanese national and as a member of the local community.

A substantial body of scholarship examines the role of intellectuals with a Western education in Japan's modernization after the mid-nineteenth century.[4] Likewise, the impact of European ideas on Latin American intellectuals and the rise of nationalism remains a central concern of historiography.[5] Yet, within the literature on Yasu, little attention is paid to his identity as a cosmopolitan traveler with intellectual and academic inclinations. To fully understand Yasu's strategies for navigating racialized social divisions in Guatemala, it is essential to consider the education he received in Japan and Mexico, as well as his ability to engage with cultural elites across a range of contexts. Building on the concept of global connectedness introduced in chapter 1, the following chapters examine how Yasu's educational background, religious practices, and multilingual abilities enabled him to inhabit multiple identities while living abroad.

This chapter begins by analyzing how Guatemalan public opinion was shaped by anti-Asian policies originating in North America and neighboring Latin American countries. It also considers the reluctance of Guatemalan elites to adopt Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's elaborations regarding the potential benefits of importing Japanese labor to Mexico. The chapter then turns to Yasu's entry into the photographic trade and to his efforts to distinguish himself from other Asian immigrants by emphasizing his Japanese identity. My analysis further explores the diverse social networks that enabled Yasu to navigate the challenges of being East Asian in Guatemala. His connections to the Catholic Church sustained not only his search for spiritual belonging but also provided him with an extensive network of social ties—including a close relationship with the Noriega family, which he joined through his marriage to María Noriega, and his involvement in the lay Franciscan order.

"I Thought that the Chinese and Japanese Had the Same Spirit…"

Several months after Yasu and the Mexican scholar and diplomat Francisco Díaz Covarrubias arrived in Guatemala City, an article titled "Immigration" appeared in the newspaper *El Porvenir* on July 4, 1878. The article was authored by Juan Arzú Batres, a prominent figure during the early decades of the Liberal regime, whose supportive commentaries on government policies were frequently printed in leading newspapers.[6] In this piece, Arzú Batres quoted at length from Díaz Covarrubias's account of his travels to Japan. He was particularly drawn to a section advocating for the importation of Japanese laborers as a means of improving the quality of Mexico's workforce.

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3 Guatemalan historiography dates the period of liberalism from 1871 to 1944. Relevant to my description of Yasu's roles as an immigrant and a photographer are the cultural and political dimensions of liberalism between 1870 and 1920, including political ideology, urban planning, and visual culture.

4 See, for example, Burks (1985), Cobbing (2013), Jackson (2016), Joby (2021), and Kim (2014)

5 See, for example, Castro-Klarén and Chasteen (2003), Foote and Goebel (2014), Gagnier (2018), Garrard-Burnett (1990, 1997), Hale (1989), Mahoney (2001), and N. Miller (2020)

6 See, for example, Kirkpatrick (2013, pp. 260–261).

Díaz Covarrubias's *Viaje al Japón* stands as one of the few firsthand accounts of East Asia by a Latin American author and predates the more widely studied modernist writings on Japan from the early twentieth century.[7] It is not difficult to imagine the curiosity with which the Guatemalan lettered elite received the diplomat's rare observations. However, Díaz Covarrubias's recommendation to promote Japanese immigration to Mexico was met with little enthusiasm in Guatemala, where the ruling class favored immigrants from Europe and the United States.[8] In the following pages, I examine Guatemalan immigration policy and public sentiment toward East Asians from two angles. First, I offer a close reading of Díaz Covarrubias's comparative analysis of China and Japan as sources of labor migration. Second, drawing on Arzú Batres's article, I reflect on why Guatemala ultimately resisted the idea of encouraging East Asian immigration.

Francisco Díaz Covarrubias on Japan and China

On 450 pages, Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's *Viaje al Japón* offers far more than a scientific account of his preparations and journey to observe the transit of Venus in Yokohama. The volume provides a wide-ranging portrayal of Japan's history, culture, and political landscape. It presents an eclectic compilation of historical background, statistical data, personal observations, and anecdotal stories gathered along the way.[9] One passage describing the book's curated selection of images highlights the author's intent to take the reader on an immersive journey:

> As soon as I got off the boat, I had to use all my willpower not to stop and examine everything I saw. The costumes, the characters, the various objects offered for sale, the shape of the houses, everything was different from what I was accustomed to seeing and aroused my curiosity vividly [...] It is beyond my power to describe all that I had to see in Japan [...] I shall therefore have to content myself with reproducing some Japanese views, monuments, and types by means of engravings, exact copies of very good photographs that I acquired in Yokohama, taken directly from the objects they represent, and some of which were made by Mr. Barroso. [...] I will intersperse the engravings throughout this account, even if I do not take special care to speak of the matters to which they refer. The reader can only benefit from this, for a good picture is always more eloquent than the best description.[10]

Díaz Covarrubias's book includes twenty-two illustrations of Japanese subjects (figures 17 to 21).[11] These comprise six portraits of local officials associated with his mission, two depictions of the port and main street of Yokohama, and four illustrations of the surroundings of the two Mexican observatories. The volume also features four photographs of Buddhist temples in and around Tokyo—sites Díaz Covarrubias may have visited during his brief stay. Other images capture iconic scenes such as Mount Fuji, along with depictions of Japanese women in kimonos (three illustrations), dockworkers, monks, and traditional modes of transport, including rickshaws, eight-wheeled carts, Japanese-style bunk beds,

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7 Mandujano López 2012.

8 Consulate General at New York 1879.

9 For instance, the chapter on Japanese history draws heavily from Francis Ottiwell Adams's 1865 publication. Elsewhere in the same chapter, Díaz Covarrubias quotes directly from the "Code of Education" issued by Japan's Ministry of Education (Díaz Covarrubias 1876, pp. 249, 446).

10 Ibid., p. 110.

11 According to Gartlan (2016, 331, n2), some of the photographs used by Díaz Covarrubias in *Viaje al Japón* were taken by Baron Raimund von Stillfried.

and boats.

Though eclectic in its visual and textual content, the travelogue is shaped by Díaz Covarrubias's overarching aims. Chief among them was his effort to present Japan as a model from which Mexico could draw inspiration in its own pursuit of modernization. Comparing China and Japan, he argued that Japan had made greater strides toward building a modern state and thus offered a more suitable source of labor for Mexico. In his view, Japan's relatively welcoming stance toward foreigners, its advanced infrastructure, and the superior performance of Japanese workers abroad served as evidence of this distinction.

As discussed in chapter 1, Díaz Covarrubias altered his original plan to travel to China and instead chose Japan as his destination. This change was influenced by conversations with Americans and Europeans he encountered during his passage through the United States. He justified the decision by citing "the eminently progressive spirit of the policy pursued by its present enlightened Emperor."[12] He also remarked that Japan had become "a naval power superior to China" and concluded that, in the event of war, "I would be better off in Japan."

In contrast to the negative accounts he had heard about the hostility of Chinese officials, Díaz Covarrubias emphasized the "open hospitality which the present enlightened government of Japan extends to foreigners."[13] His impressions were further shaped during a stopover in British-controlled Hong Kong, where his unfavorable view of China appeared to be confirmed:

> In Japan today, a foreigner can enter the country under the guarantee of a simple passport issued by a universally respected authority, and in China, it is not possible to go beyond the borders of the cities or the most crowded ports without risking one's life. Shortly before my arrival in the Celestial Empire, there had been a terrible murder committed by Chinese pirates upon the individuals of all the passengers and crew of a European vessel going up the river a short distance from Canton or Macao; and this atrocious fact caused me to abandon my project of visiting the interior of China and obliged me not to go beyond Hong Kong.[14]

To conclude his comparison of the two Asian countries, Díaz Covarrubias wrote:

> I could not insist too much on the characteristic differences between the two peoples, which are little known in my country and which are commonly confused by attributing to them the same nature and the same spirit of routine. But far from having any analogy with the Japanese, the Chinese, on the contrary, in many respects offer a contrast to the character of the Japanese. In fact, the Japanese are almost always friendly, courteous, courageous, honest, and very willing to accept all kinds of cultures, while similar qualities are seldom found in the Chinese.

Díaz Covarrubias highlighted a second key difference between Japan and China in their transportation infrastructure. His astronomical expedition required the movement of heavy equipment—a task made possible in Japan due to its rapid modernization. In stark contrast, he observed that "the Celestial Empire has no railroads."[15] He attributed this disparity to China's resistance to Western influence: "Steam and electricity have already made their appearance in the Japanese Empire, while in the Chinese Empire, the intervention

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12 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 99.
13 Ibid., pp. 88–89.
14 The block quotation and the next are from Díaz Covarrubias (ibid., pp. 125–127).
15 Ibid., p. 89.

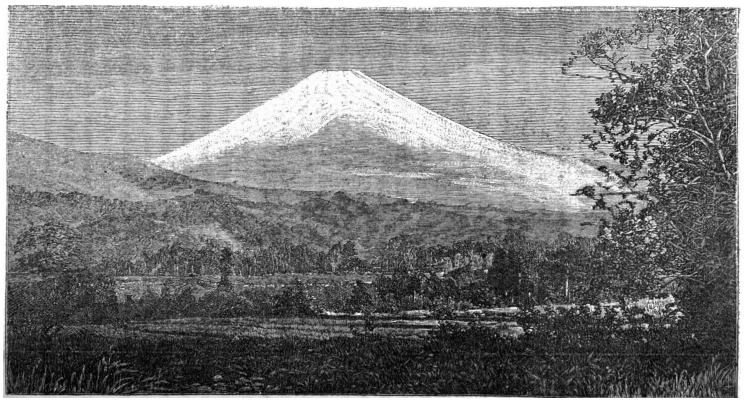

Figure 17: "View of Mt. Fuji"

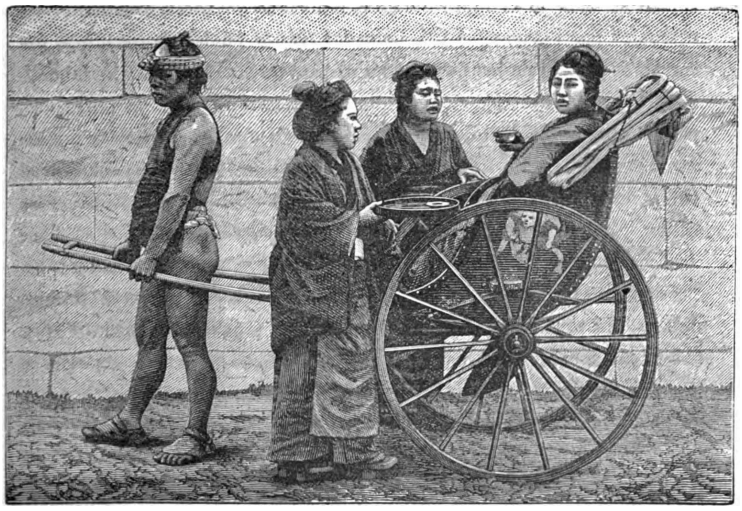

Figure 18: "The Rickshaw"

Figure 19: " 'Karko' or Japanese Carriers"

Figure 20: " 'Musumi' or young Japanese women"

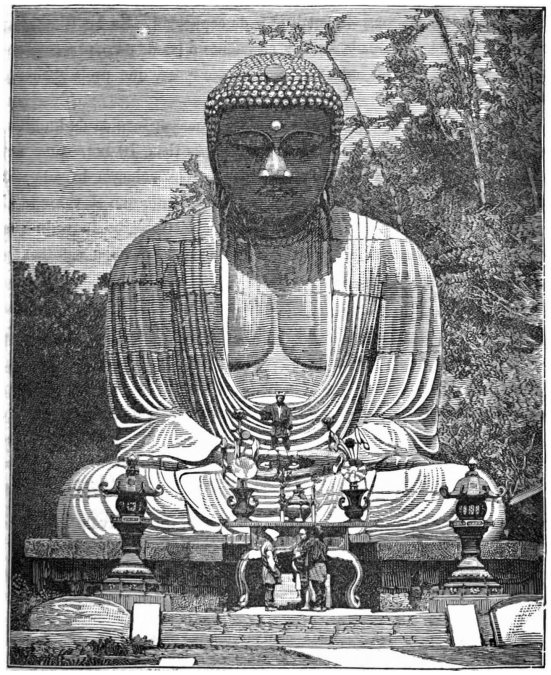

Figure 21: "The 'Dai-Budha' or Buddha of Kamakura, a bronze statue with a height of 16 meters"

of force may be necessary to achieve the same result, given the aversion with which they regard all these elements of civilization."[16] To support his assertion that "the progressive development of the one contrasts with the essentially stationary character of the other," Díaz Covarrubias offered a range of examples, including the Japanese government's promotion of European-style clothing and education. He admired Japan's enthusiasm for embracing "all the great social reforms and material improvements which emanate from the science and culture of the Western nations." In particular, the Meiji government's efforts to modernize education resonated with his own initiatives in Mexico.

Díaz Covarrubias's contrasting portrayal of China and Japan also served as a basis for evaluating their respective suitability as sources of migrant labor for Mexico. To bolster this argument, he referenced the performance of East Asian immigrants elsewhere. Regarding San Francisco, California, he noted that "the Chinese have been on the verge of being expelled from American territory several times because of their excesses." In contrast, he observed:

> There are no colonies or communities of Japanese in other countries as numerous as those of the Chinese; but among the large number of Japanese in the United States and the principal capitals of Europe, far from giving cause for complaint, they are remarkable for their moderation and desire to educate themselves.

The author further argued that a primary reason for the exemplary behavior of the Japanese abroad was "the education which the government is trying to spread among the popular masses and the moralizing influence of the laws whose energetic action is enforced even

[16] All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Díaz Covarrubias (1876, pp. 125–127).

far from the homeland."[17] To illustrate this point, Díaz Covarrubias reproduced at length a set of regulations that the Japanese Empire required its overseas subjects to observe:

> Art. 1 - It is necessary to implement well all the articles of the treaty existing between Japan and the country in which one travels.
> Art. 2 - Whatever is seen or known to be of interest to the Empire must be examined with the greatest care to communicate it to the Japanese Legation, if there is one. Otherwise, it shall be sent to the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established in the ports of Kanazawa, Osaka, Hiogo [sic], Nagasaki, Nügata, and Hakodate. If there is no direct communication with these ports, a detailed report will be given upon your return to the country of anything that may be of interest to you. (*These ports are those that were open to foreign trade. Today Tokyo is the same. Kanazawa port is the same as Yokohama port, just as Hiogo is another name for Kobe port).
> Art. 3 - When one is far from home, one should take care of everything, while observing the most moderate conduct, so as never to do anything, however slight, that could be shameful to the Empire. Debts should never be contracted with foreigners without having the means and security to cover them; but if they are contracted because of some urgent and indispensable need, it is precious to pay them in full before leaving the country in which they were contracted, otherwise, the debtor or his family will be punished on their return to their homeland until they pay.
> Art. 4 - If a fellow countryman is found on a journey, he should be contacted, even if he is not known, and if he observes reprehensible conduct, he should be given good advice, and if he is ill or in need, he should be helped as far as possible.
> Art. 5 - In case of displeasure or questioning of a foreigner, the greatest possible calm is to be maintained; but if something more serious occurs that cannot be avoided, the complaints that there is room for are to be presented to the justice of the land, doing so with moderation, no matter how great the anger that has arisen from the insult received. Unworthy acts, such as wounding or killing a foreigner, must never be committed.
> Art. 6 - It is necessary to carry the passport or the travel permit at all times and to send it immediately after your return to your country to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the offices indicated in Art. 2, according to the circumstances.
> Art. 7 - It is forbidden to change religion or nationality.
> Art. 8 - It is allowed to stay in any part of the world for a period that, if not previously determined, is usually 10 years.
> Art. 9 - On your return to your country within the time limit, you will have to give a detailed account of the events that have taken place during your journey.

Anticipating potential skepticism about these provisions, Díaz Covarrubias noted that by the time he left Japan, the seventh article appeared to have been repealed following the establishment of freedom of religion, though the other rules remained in force.[18] Without mentioning Yasu by name, Díaz Covarrubias explained that the "young man who wanted to travel to Mexico" with him had translated the document.[19] According to the Japanese translators of *Viaje al Japón*, the document was titled *Regulations for Overseas Travel* (海外旅行規則) and was issued in 1869, the second year of the Meiji era.[20] It was attached to

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17 Ibid., pp. 127–129.

18 The lifting of the ban on religious conversion is largely considered an effect of Japan's desire to improve its image in the West (Van Sant 2000, p. 10).

19 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, p. 127.

20 法令全書 (1869: 14–19), cited by Díaz Covarrubias (1983, 58, No. 7). This document is available at the Diplomatic Archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Figure 22: Eadweard Muybridge, "United States Legation, Guatemala," Concordia Park, Guatemala City, 1875

passports to discourage conduct deemed harmful to national interests.[21]

Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's promotion of Japan as a valuable source of labor for Mexico's development found a receptive audience.[22] As Francis Peddie observes, his report on Japan played a central role in shaping public opinion that cast Chinese immigration as threatening, while portraying the Japanese as "welcome Asians."[23] This favorable perception contributed to the signing of the 1888 Japan-Mexico Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation—Japan's first "equal" treaty with a Western country.[24] As Díaz Covarrubias's translator, protégé, and likely his main source of information on Japan, Yasu played a significant role in shaping these ideas. His close association with Díaz Covarrubias leaves little doubt that Yasu was attuned to the emerging Latin American discourse on East Asia—particularly the contrasting qualities ascribed to Chinese and Japanese migrants.

A Guatemalan Reading of Viaje al Japón

Arriving in Guatemala in late 1877, Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, preceded by his scientific reputation, was warmly received by politicians and members of the lettered elite. In the *Memorias*, Yasu recalls his first impressions of Guatemala City:

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21 The rules were probably first intended for migrant workers, the first of whom had already arrived in Hawaii by the time the government lifted the ban on leaving the country in 1866. For example, see the discussion on the so-called "first-year men" (*gannenmono*) in Imai Teruko's work (Imai 1980).

22 Mandujano López 2012; Peddie 2016; Saveliev et al. 2016.

23 Peddie (2016). See also Peddie (2006, 2009).

24 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/latin/mexico/data.html).

> Finally, we arrived in the capital and went to a two-story house in front of the Concordia Garden because it was already prepared to receive us. But after a few months, we moved to a beautiful two-story house on the corner of the Central Market and Santa Rosa Street (which belonged to Don Benancio [sic. Venancio] Barrios, son of Mr. President Barrios) to establish the Mexican Legation, where Marinelli's "Gran Hotel" now stands.[25]

In April of the following year, the Mexican diplomat was invited to educate the Guatemalan public about the upcoming transit of Mercury across the Sun. In an article published in the newspaper *El Porvenir*, Díaz Covarrubias expressed gratitude to the literary society of the same name for the honor. As he had previously done for the attendants of his observatory in Yokohama, he explained the significance of the transit and the methodology for its observation.[26]

As a respected member of the close-knit lettered community, Díaz Covarrubias's words and perspectives carried considerable influence. Less than two months later, his name appeared again in *El Porvenir*, this time as the inspiration for an opinion piece by Juan Arzú Batres titled "Immigration."[27] In the article, Arzú Batres explained that he had initially opposed the idea of inviting East Asian immigrants to Guatemala. However, he noted that Díaz Covarrubias's *Viaje al Japón* had persuaded him otherwise.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Latin America was swept by a wave of liberal progressivism that sought to marginalize the vestiges of the colonial past. In keeping with this regional trend, Guatemalan governments following the Liberal Revolution of 1871 aimed to modernize the nation by building an export-oriented economy centered on commodities such as sugar, dyes, and coffee. As part of this effort, they regarded the importation of foreign capital and labor as essential to expanding the export market.[28] The expropriation of land from Indigenous communities enabled foreign investors and local elites to establish large-scale coffee plantations, generating a labor market with distinct characteristics.[29] By the late 1880s, the government had instituted a system of pressuring Indigenous labor into the seasonal coffee harvest. While there was no immediate labor shortage, the discourse of liberalism was suffused with racist anxieties—both about the Indigenous population and the potential arrival of migrants from so-called "inferior races."

Reflecting the racial ideologies of the period, Arzú Batres opened his article with Social Darwinist rhetoric, asserting that the ethnic character of immigrants would inevitably intermingle with the native population. For this reason, he argued, the government needed to understand "the character of the inhabitants of each country, their tendencies, the homogeneity or heterogeneity of their races, and even the concerns that may be rooted in their spirit." Only through such knowledge could the ruling class not only "avoid the material inconveniences that a bad immigration could bring, but even achieve, for example, a certain intellectual advancement of our peoples." Readers of *El Porvenir* would likely have recognized the subtext of this argument, which echoed the ideology of *blanqueamiento* (whitening)—a vision of social improvement through racial mixing that was common among Latin American political elites.[30]

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25 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 141 ff.

26 F. Díaz C., "Tránsito del Planeta Mercurio" (Transit of the Planet Mercury), *El Porvenir*, April 20, 1878.

27 Juan Arzú Batres, "Immigration" (Inmigración), *El Porvenir*, July 4, 1878. All subsequent quotations from Arzú Batres are drawn from this same article, and no additional footnotes will be provided.

28 Consulate General at New York 1879.

29 All quotations in this paragraph are from Smith (1990, pp. 83–84)

30 Larson 2004.

According to Arzú Batres's original position, Asian races were "more fanatical, more corrupt, and more indolent" than "our Indians." He warned, "What will become of the country if these races are crossed and a third entity is created, certainly worse than our native races?" Since "we" are much less numerous than "the Asians," he argued, Guatemala would be even less capable than California—already ravaged by the yellow race—of defending its territory. He continued:

> That is why, when I heard talk of encouraging Asian immigration, of transplanting to our soil part of that immense seed-bed that, unable to fit into its territory, leaves searching for nourishment, I was disturbed by the thought that we might one day be invaded by those men who leave their homeland but carry with them deeply incarnated the religious fanaticism that forbids them to accept any new idea, their innumerable vices, and their contempt and even hatred of foreigners.[31]

The tropes of moral inferiority, overwhelming numbers flooding foreign lands, and a stubborn rejection of modern knowledge that stood in stark contrast with Western civilization were common elements in racial discourse about the Chinese and, to a lesser extent, the Japanese. Arzú Batres's reference to California demonstrates that North American fears of the "yellow peril" had reached Guatemala decades before East Asian immigration, however modest, became a tangible phenomenon. Japan's emergence as a modernizing power, on the other hand, had not yet gained recognition within Arzú Batres's circles.

Arzú Batres acknowledged that the widespread perception of Asia as a homogeneous entity—a stance shared by Díaz Covarrubias's report as a point of departure—was grounded more in prejudice than in actual knowledge. He explained to his readers that Díaz Covarrubias's report clearly demonstrated the distinctions between the two peoples and that the author's argument proved the benefits of establishing Japanese colonies in Mexico. Arzú Batres urged Guatemala to address its labor shortage by adopting a similar approach. Given the similarities between Mexico and Guatemala, he concluded that Díaz Covarrubias's observations were fully applicable to "those seeking a solution to the vital problem of foreign immigration."

Despite Arzú Batres's emphatic endorsement of Díaz Covarrubias's argument, his comments had little impact on political decisions. In print media, China and Japan were often conflated into a single category, the "yellow race." In 1882, the Guatemalan government formally declared that it would never import Chinese labor.[32] Anti-Asian sentiment subsided somewhat for roughly a decade before reemerging forcefully in the twentieth century, accompanied by decrees restricting and eventually banning immigration from both China and Japan.[33]

The social stratum of intellectuals, journalists, legislators, and diplomats who exchanged information and opinions across Latin American borders is best understood through Ángel Rama's concept of the "lettered city."[34] This relatively intimate class staffed governmental administrations and produced much of the literary output in Latin America's metropolitan

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31 The news about the importation of Chinese workers to which Arzú Batres refers should be the one published in the newspaper *El Guatemalteco*, which announced that Manuel Arteaga Borrero had applied for the exclusive right to import up to twenty thousand Asian workers, in this case from China or the East Indies (Barreno Anleu 2004, p. 61).

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Rama 1996.

centers. As Rama succinctly puts it, journalists like Arzú Batres "received their most important compensation in the form of political spoils—i.e., access to public employment or elected office in the wake of partisan victory—so that, in practice, their independence from the state had narrow limits."[35] Belonging to this lettered class, Arzú Batres, Díaz Covarrubias, and other intellectuals discussed in the following chapters were identified with the ideology of nineteenth-century liberalism. They formed a close-knit circle that shared tasks in policymaking, diplomacy, and producing books and newspaper articles that frequently explained the world from a partisan perspective.

Emphasizing the Japanese Identity

When Yasu arrived in Guatemala in 1877, there were virtually no East Asians in the country. Writing to his younger sister in the mid-1880s, he remarked that Guatemala City, with a population of fifty thousand, was just one-tenth the size of Tokyo, or, "rather the size of a provincial capital in Japan."[36] The town's small scale and predominantly European and American population likely heightened his sense of isolation. Despite the minimal East Asian presence, local newspapers reprinted xenophobic content from the United States and beyond, stoking fears of an impending Asian invasion.

Previous scholarship on Yasu has done little to situate his photographic and religious practices within the broader sociopolitical context. How he navigated racial discrimination with the help of religious faith, business decisions, and the various categories of belonging available to him remains largely unexamined. Equally overlooked is the role that his cultural capital, language skills, and scientific knowledge played in his efforts to forge an identity. In the previous section, I analyzed shifting attitudes toward East Asian immigration through the views of Díaz Covarrubias and Arzú Batres. This section turns to Yasu Kōhei's first decade in Guatemala, focusing on the strategies he employed to establish himself as a Japanese studio photographer amid a climate of racism and anti-Asian sentiment.

Nineteenth-Century Liberalism and the Yellow Peril

Yasu's forty years in Guatemala (1877 – 1917) roughly coincided with the period of Liberal Party rule (1871 – 1944).[37] The liberal – conservative dichotomy was a defining feature of nineteenth-century Latin American politics. Reflected in the names of political movements, this division broadly encompassed competing visions of the postcolonial state: liberals were typically anti-clerical modernizers, while conservatives sought to preserve colonial-era social hierarchies and maintain the influence of the Catholic Church despite the formal end of Spanish rule.[38] The following brief overview of the liberal regime and its approach to foreign immigration provides essential context for understanding Yasu's evolving efforts to assimilate into Guatemalan society.

Upon arriving in Guatemala City, Díaz Covarrubias—the newly appointed Mexican ambassador—and Yasu Kōhei, who accompanied him, were offered lodging in the home of one of president Justo Rufino Barrios's sons. Barrios (1835 – 1885), a military general who

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35 Ibid., p. 52.

36 Appendix 7, Letter 1.

37 Historical studies of Guatemala generally employ one of two periodizations, defining the liberal era as spanning from 1871 to either 1920 or 1944

38 Grandin, Levenson-Estrada, and Oglesby 2011b.

served as president from 1873 to 1885, had played a leading role in the overthrow of the conservative government in 1871, a watershed moment known as the Liberal Revolution. The social and economic impact of the liberal reforms that followed has been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis.[39] Among the most significant reforms were the promotion of export-oriented trade, the encouragement of foreign investment and immigration, and the nationalization of church property—part of a broader effort to diminish the Catholic Church's influence.[40] These initiatives were deeply interconnected: the confiscation of church assets furnished the state with resources and infrastructure to support its development agenda. The establishment of a modern, secular state welcoming Protestant churches was intended to attract immigrants and investors from North America and Western Europe, whom the liberal government viewed as key to building a robust agricultural export economy.[41]

As in other Latin American countries, liberal elites embraced a set of beliefs that included progressivism, scientific positivism, and the application of Darwinian theories of evolution to social development. Many of these elites were simultaneously politicians and plantation owners.[42] They had a vested interest in preserving the superiority of their class, which was racially distinct from the indigenous Mayan majority. Accordingly, policies were enacted to attract European and North American immigrants and to guarantee their rights to own land and establish businesses.[43] In pursuit of "whitening" Guatemala, the Society of Immigration (Sociedad de Inmigración) was established in 1877 as an agency under the Ministry of Development (Ministerio de Fomento). Shortly thereafter, an official agency was established in Guatemala to recruit immigrants, primarily from Europe. The first arrivals following the creation of the Immigration Society were Italians, followed by two to three hundred Irish families who were settled in the province of Alta Verapaz as part of a plan to bring in 10,000 families over three years.[44] Twelve years later, the government signed a contract with an American company to supply one thousand American or European workers to develop the province of Izabal on the Caribbean coast. This contract explicitly excluded the possibility of meeting the quota with Chinese laborers. In 1887, Guatemala signed a treaty of friendship and trade with Germany, granting German immigrants significant privileges, including tax exemptions, retention of their original nationality, and the right to purchase land and businesses.[45]

According to Silvia Barreno Anleu's comprehensive study of early Chinese immigration to Guatemala, there were no explicitly anti-Asian policies between 1871 and 1894, despite the racist tendencies of the liberal political class.[46] This changed rapidly as more East Asian immigrants—who faced discriminatory laws in North America—arrived in Central

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39 See, for example, Cal Montoya (2006, 2007a,b), Cook-Martín and FitzGerald (2010), Dosal (1993), Garrard-Burnett (1990, 1997), Giráldez (2010), and Mahoney (2001).

40 Previous work on immigration and foreign investment has emphasized European and North American arrivals. German immigrants, in particular, left their mark on the plantation economy. See, for example, Castellanos Cambranes (1977), Gibbings (2020), and Wagner (1987, 1991).

41 Historians have highlighted and analyzed the racist underpinnings of Latin American immigration policies, particularly in countries like Argentina and southern Brazil, where efforts to encourage European immigration were especially pronounced (Appelbaum 1999).

42 An incident involving Japanese workers and their employers in Guatemala, discussed in chapter 3, reveals that many plantation owners were local elites and government officials.

43 Consulate General in New York. 1879. Barreno Anleu (2004, p. 82).

44 Ibid., p. 76.

45 Ibid., p. 82.

46 Ibid.

America. The Immigration Act of 1896, which remained in effect until 1908, prohibited the entry of "individuals from the Celestial Empire.'[47]

While racist ideology was slow to be codified into law regarding East Asian immigrants, public opinion shifted more rapidly. An examination of Guatemalan newspapers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals significant prejudice against Asian countries and their peoples. However, since the East Asian population in Guatemala remained very small, these derogatory or overtly exotic portrayals were largely based on reports from abroad.[48] For example, in August 1870, *La Sociedad Económica* published an article titled "The Chinese in the United States" that highlighted the large Chinese population on the U.S. West Coast. Published shortly before the 1871 Chinese massacre in Los Angeles, the Guatemalan author warned of the economic threat posed by the Chinese:

> The number of the sons of the Celestial Empire scattered in the states and territories of the Pacific coast, including Montana, Colorado, and Utah, does not fall below 89,500 [...] The continuous agglomeration of the Chinese in California has attracted the attention of the Government of the United States. The Yankees are already complaining about the competition that the sons of the Celestial Empire are giving them in all trades, to the great detriment of commerce, because the Chinese are very thrifty, they spend almost nothing on American products and send a lot of money back to their country. Beware of them![49]

Adding to the negative sentiment fueled by the North American "yellow peril" trope was the disruption that Asian immigrants posed to the racial order established during the long Spanish colonial period.[50] In Guatemala, this order was essentially dichotomous, distinguishing between the indigenous Maya and the non-indigenous *ladino* population.[51] Although some eastern immigrants—particularly those identified as belonging to the "yellow race"—were sometimes classified as *ladinos*, they were increasingly compared to the indigenous population. The opinion piece by Arzú Batres mentioned earlier exemplifies a view that regarded East Asians as even inferior to "our indigenous peoples."[52] In her analysis of Guatemalan media representations of the Chinese in the late nineteenth century, Barreno Anleu highlights some common discriminatory terms and the implicit meanings behind them:

> In the aforementioned articles, the Chinese were given negative labels such as "exotic inhabitants," "exotic class," "celestial," "yellow race," "inferior race," "degenerate race," "Mongolian race," "children of con," and "disciples of Confucius." These last two terms, which were used negatively, reflect a lack of knowledge of Chinese culture and the significance of Confucius within it. They were also compared to animals, especially in the context of trade, which, according to these articles, the Chinese wanted to embrace, so they called them: "parasites," "pests," "octopuses," "lizards," and "sucking tentacles."[53]

As "an ordered, historical system of how the Westernization process has formulated a villainous Yellow Peril Other to stabilize its own identity," racial stereotypes of East Asians

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47 Ibid., p. 140.
48 Ibid., p. 157.
49 "Los chinos en los Estados Unidos," *La Sociedad Económica*, August 1, 1870.
50 Barreno Anleu 2004.
51 Taracena Arriola, Gellert, et al. 2002, pp. 103–105.
52 Arzú Batres (1878).
53 Barreno Anleu 2004, pp. 167–168.

were readily adopted by Latin American intellectuals and ruling classes.[54] Despite the near absence of immigrants or workers from the Asian continent in Guatemala, the country's lettered elite embraced the narrative portraying East Asians as a threat to the established racial order. This prejudice ultimately led to the prohibition of Chinese immigration—a stark contrast to the favorable treatment afforded to immigrants from Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

The Very Few Asians in Town

Unlike Panama, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil—which became home to sizable Chinese and Japanese communities—Guatemala never emerged as a major destination for immigrants from Asia during the global migration waves that began in the mid-nineteenth century.[55] This was due, at least in part, to the particularly restrictive policies targeting East Asians. After the late 1870s, Chinese contract workers and merchants arrived individually or in small groups, mostly settling in the capital, towns near railroad crossings, or along international borders. Subsequently, little information is available about the early Chinese presence in Guatemala, and even less about the Japanese.[56]

It is worth noting that, unlike immigrants from Western countries—whose origins were recorded by nation-states such as the United States, France, Spain, Chile, and Peru—official demographic data initially categorized the Asian population by ethno-racial "identity categories."[57] Interestingly, putative religious affiliation was also used to define the identity of East Asian immigrants.

According to an 1881 census of Guatemala City published in the newspaper *El Porvenir*, the capital's total population was 57,928. Of these, 1,886 were foreigners: 1,107 from other Latin American countries, 672 Europeans, and ninety-five U.S. citizens. The remaining twelve were grouped under "various nationalities."[58] The same census also listed religious affiliations, including two individuals identified as "Confucian" and two as "Shinto," suggesting these figures corresponded to the Japanese and Chinese populations.

Drawing on Charles Hirschman's work on the development of censuses in Malaysia, Benedict Anderson observes that identity categories in British colonies underwent "an extraordinarily rapid, superficially arbitrary, series of changes, in which categories are continuously agglomerated, disaggregated, recombined, intermixed, and reordered (but the politically powerful identity categories always lead the list)."[59] With the establishment of colonial rule, "the census categories became more visibly and exclusively racial," and "the religious identity [...] gradually disappeared as a primary census classification." Guatemalan censuses also quickly abandoned religious identity categories. As knowledge of China and Japan increased, "Confucius" and "Shinto" were replaced by countries of origin.

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54 Tchen and Yeats 2014.

55 Barreno Anleu 2004; Tigner 1981.

56 During my research, I came across a collection of six printed portraits of wealthy Asian migrant families, likely taken in the 1920s in the capital city. The portraits are housed in Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala. The portraits are part of the "Colección de Luján" under the collection of "Archivo Histórico Fotográfico."

57 Anderson 2006.

58 All quotations in this paragraph are from the "Summary of the Census of Guatemala: Capital of the Republic" (Resumen del censo de Guatemala. Capital de la República), published in *El Porvenir* on January 15, 1881.

59 All quotations in this paragraph are from Anderson (ibid., pp. 164–165)

From Cosmopolitan Traveler to Studio Photographer

How, then, did Yasu respond to the competing cultural imaginaries and racial prejudices imposed upon him? Having had his studies in Mexico interrupted and about to lose Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's patronage after their move to Guatemala, Yasu was compelled to earn the money to return to Japan. At this critical juncture, Díaz Covarrubias's reputation and connections continued to serve him and facilitated his entry into the commercial photography business. Reflecting on this period, Yasu wrote in his *Memorias*:

> One day, I went to talk to Mr. Herbruger, the owner of the only photo shop in Guatemala at the time, who lived across the street from the Mexican legation. I told him about my sad situation and asked him to take me into his photo studio to learn the trade. He was very happy to accept my request. I asked Mr. Covarrubias to give me his recommendation to Mr. Emilio so that he would not mistrust me. Mr. Covarrubias gave me a very good recommendation, telling me about my good conduct with him from when I was in Japan, on the trip to Europe, and during my stay in Mexico, and I presented it to Mr. Emilio, and he was very pleased.[60]

Given that photography was still a rare and highly skilled profession that primarily served clients from the upper echelons of society, one might wonder whether Yasu could have gained access to Herbruger's studio without a recommendation from the Mexican diplomat.[61] In any case, the recommendation appears to have been well received by Herbruger, himself the son of a German immigrant.

Earlier accounts of Yasu's life suggest that his interest in photography may have taken root while assisting Díaz Covarrubias during the transit of Venus in Yokohama, where he observed the work of Agustín Barroso, the mission's photographer.[62] Other influences may have included the rapidly growing photographic industry in Tokyo and Yokohama.[63] While living in Mexico, Yasu may also have visited Barroso's studio.[64] In any case, the sheer number of studios—seventy-four in Mexico City by the late 1870s—may have convinced Yasu of the commercial potential of the new technology, which, at that time, was offered by only one practitioner in Guatemala City.[65]

Herbruger's willingness to take Yasu on as an apprentice may have been driven by the need to expand his studio and meet demand, which will be discussed further in chapter 4. Regardless, Yasu's successful transition to this next phase of his life reflects his skill at leveraging social connections to create new opportunities. Unlike in Europe or the United States, where photography had already become a fully commercialized industry, photographers in Guatemala still operated as "small manufacturers," regarded as " 'learned'

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60 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 879 ff.

61 Debroise (2001, p. 31) asserts for Mexico that "[f]or the most part, nineteenth-century Mexican photographers belonged to the elite class, the only group with the means to acquire the expensive, imported, and ever more sophisticated equipment and to subscribe to the photographic reviews published in France, England, and Spain."

62 Luján Muñoz 1982a.

63 According to Fukuoka (2011), Shimooka Renjō 下岡蓮杖 (1823 – 1914) opened his studio in Yokohama in 1862 and another in Tokyo in 1882. By the 1880s, more than forty photographic studios were operating in Asakusa, a designated commercial district in Tokyo.

64 By the time Agustín Barroso joined the scientific commission to Japan in 1874, he had already spent at least a decade as a photographer and enjoyed significant recognition in Mexico City (Debroise 2001, p. 31).

65 Debroise (ibid., p. 30). Debroise also notes that by the 1870s there were twenty-six studios in Colombia and thirty-one in the metropolitan area of Argentina.

people at the forefront of scientific knowledge, on a par with doctors and pharmacists."[66].

As discussed in previous sections, Yasu was likely aware of both the positive and negative associations tied to his Asian heritage. While many in Guatemala may have perceived Japan and China as indistinguishable, members of the urban middle and upper classes—exposed to advertisements for fashionable Oriental goods via European importers—may have found the label "Japanese" distinctly appealing. By capitalizing on Orientalist stereotypes and setting himself apart from the more visible Chinese immigrant population, Yasu strategically branded his budding business as "Fotografía Japonesa."

His background, marked by scientific and linguistic training, differentiated him from other Asian migrants and facilitated his relatively swift establishment in Guatemala. At the time, the photographic industry in Latin America was still small and dominated by foreigners, creating favorable conditions for his entry into the field. Unlike most Asian immigrants who arrived as laborers, Yasu was able to mobilize his cultural capital to secure a position within the local elite and achieve success on his own terms.

Becoming Juan José de Jesús Yas

About six years after arriving in Guatemala, at the age of thirty-seven, Yasu was baptized into the Catholic faith and took the name Juan José de Jesús Yas. He began attending church soon after his arrival, and his business and religious life quickly became intertwined. In the *Memorias*, he dedicates lengthy passages to describing his growing ties to the local clergy and the pivotal role they played in his conversion.

As scholars of Japanese migration to Latin America have noted, adopting Catholicism and a local name was a common strategy for assimilation.[67] In Guatemala's racially stratified society, joining the Catholic community likely improved Yasu's social standing. Yet, his writings and photographs suggest his conversion was more than pragmatic—he embraced Catholicism as a core aspect of his identity. While previous studies have emphasized religious themes in his photography and his connections to the Church—topics I explore further in chapters 4 and 5—less attention has been paid to how Catholicism shaped his sense of belonging. In the following sections, I examine how his faith broadened his social network and helped him forge familial ties through lay associations and ritual co-parenthood.

The Reduced Presence of the Catholic Church

When Yasu Kōhei arrived in Guatemala City, the dense network of Catholic landmarks that formed "the principal points revealed by a coup d'œil of the capital" was undergoing radical transformation.[68] While Yasu may have seen the Roman Catholic Church as a symbol of Western civilization—as discussed in chapter 1—the prevailing positivist ethos shaping Latin America's political climate offered a markedly different interpretation. Following the Liberal Revolution of 1871, successive governments regarded the Catholic Church as a vestige of the colonial era and enacted policies aimed at curbing its economic influence and cultural dominance.

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66 Debroise 2001, p. 31.

67 Changing one's name and religion as a step toward integration into Latin American society was not uncommon among Japanese migrants (Adachi 2006a, p. 109).

68 Vincent 1898, p. 121.

Shortly after the revolution, Archbishop Bernardo Piñol y Aycinena was expelled from the country.[69] In subsequent years, church properties were nationalized, and many priests and religious orders were forced to leave. Many church buildings were repurposed as hospitals, schools, and other public institutions, and Catholic ceremonies in public spaces were prohibited.[70] Official decrees also restricted the fees that priests could charge for baptisms, marriages, funerals, and other ceremonies.[71]

British archaeologist Alfred Percival Maudslay, who visited Guatemala in the 1890s to conduct archaeological research, recounted the impact that liberal reforms had on Guatemalan Catholicism and the city's urban landscape:

> When the capital was moved to its present site in the year 1774, priests and monks were still a power in the land and the finest buildings in the city were raised by the monastic orders. Now not a monk or friar is to be found in the country, and even the secular clergy are forbidden to wear any distinctive dress. From the time of the rupture with Spain ecclesiastical influence began to decline; it rose again for a time under the rule of the Dictator Carrera, an Indian of pure blood, whom the priests found it worth while to support; but during the wars which followed Carrera's death it again waned, and in 1872 the last of the great Orders was expelled and its property seized by the government and turned to secular use. The Post Office and Custom House are now lodged in the monastery of San Francisco the "Instituto Nacional," a great public school, is well housed in what was once the Jesuit College; the military school is in the Recoletos. The monastery of Santo Domingo harbors the "Dirección general de Licores," the Capuchinos are utilized for a second theatre, and some of the less important religious houses serve as "mesones" or caravanserais for the muleteers and ladino travelers.[72]

Anti-Catholic policies led to a drastic reduction in the number of priests and friars in the country.[73] An article in *Pensamiento Católico* reported that by 1885, only 119 members of the clergy remained, with the vast majority residing in the capital.[74] This sharp decline, combined with the fact that most of the remaining clerics were Guatemalan nationals, transformed the Catholic Church into a smaller, more tightly-knit community.[75]

When Yasu arrived in Guatemala City in the late 1870s, he likely witnessed the visible effects of the Liberal Revolution on Catholic institutions and practices. Nevertheless, liberal anti-Catholicism did not dissuade him. Despite his strong interest in progress and science—elements that might have aligned him with liberal ideals—Yasu developed a close relationship with some priests. In the *Memorias*, he recalled this period as follows:

> Before I became a Christian, I attended Mass at the Santa Clara Church to learn how to serve, and occasionally I helped at Mass. [The] father told me that I was already sufficiently instructed in religion and that I would soon receive my baptism. But I replied "Not yet" because I was keen to learn more. I studied every night, going through the most interesting books, because

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69 H. Miller (1969, pp. 650–651). See also H. Miller (1996).

70 Cal Montoya 2007a, pp. 17–76.

71 Sánchez O. 1898, pp. 143–144.

72 A. C. M. Maudslay and A. P. Maudslay 1899, p. 11.

73 Cal Montoya 2012.

74 *Pensamiento Católico* November 19, 1885. For similar statistics on the Catholic clergy in Guatemala, see *Directorio Nacional de Guatemala* (1898) and *Semana Católica* (1900). The number of active priests at the end of the nineteenth century was between one hundred and two hundred.

75 Among them were only two priests who were not Guatemalan nationals, including Salvador María Medrano, from neighboring El Salvador, and Juan María Martínez del Arenal, from Spain.

during the day I had to work at my vocation (*oficio*) as a photographer.[76]

As discussed in chapter 1, Yasu was remarkably adept at using his available resources to acquire new languages and academic knowledge. As a young man in Japan, he transitioned from the world of Dutch learning to French-based education. Upon arriving in Mexico, he relied on a French dictionary to bridge the gap to the unfamiliar Spanish language. He may have demonstrated similar resourcefulness as he immersed himself in the Catholic faith. Among his belongings preserved by the Fujisawa municipality is a Japanese book that outlines the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism in a question-and-answer format.[77] While it is unclear when he brought the book to Guatemala, it offers valuable insight into his methodical engagement with Western religion.

Yasu's relationships with members of the Guatemalan Catholic Church are reflected in several archival photographs.[78] The portraits of clerics reproduced here are among those taken during this period, as determined from the surviving plates and prints (figure 23 to 26). Their confident poses may reflect elevated social standing but also hint at the trust Yasu had earned within this segment of Guatemalan society. His religious ties are further evidenced in highly staged photographs of priests and friars, which will be discussed in detail in later chapters. Additional proof of Yasu's Catholic connections can be found in a self-portrait he dedicated to Ignacio Prado (1845 – 1918), a prominent priest in the capital.[79] In the handwritten dedication, composed shortly after his baptism, Yasu wrote, "As a small token of my sincere friendship. I am the least of your servants."[80]

Table 2.1 lists the names of churchmen either mentioned or photographed by Yasu. Although this represents only part of the religious network he developed, the list offers insight into their periods of activity and the churches they served.

Table 2.1: Catholic Priests Befriended by Yasu

Ordination	Name	Church or Title, Reference
1855 or 57	Juan María Martínez del Arenal	Vicario Provincial en Centro-América
?	Juan Bautista Raull y Betrán	Archbishopric Governor (1874 – 1885)
1860s	Angel María Arroyo	Catedral Metropolitana (Párroco, doctor; 1885)
1869	Salvador Castañeda y Muñoz	Palacio Arzobispal (Párroco; 1898; M.I. Sr. Canónigo 1912)
	Salvador María Medrano	Parroquia de Candelaria, Cerro del Carmen (M. R. P. C. G. Fr.; 1885), 1896, 1897
1872	Ignacio Prado	Merced (Pbro.; 1885, 1898; Sr. Deán, 1912) Provisor y Vicario General del Arzobispado (Pbro.; 1898)
1873	Bernardino Aceituno	Santa Clara (R. P. Fr.; 1885)
1874	José María Leal	Vicario de Chimaltenango, Comalapa (Pbro.; 1885), Capuchinas (Pbro.; 1898, 1912)

[76] Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 734 ff.

[77] This book, part of the Fujisawa collection (reference number 62), is titled *Catholicism: Questions and Answers (*天主教問答). The copyright page and both covers are missing.

[78] Among the 152 photographs classified in CIRMA as "Portraits of Priests and Catholic Customs" (FG-005-005), 85 are portraits of priests—33 of which are reproductions of oil paintings—and 34 document religious events.

[79] Rojas Lima 2004a, p. 747.

[80] CIRMA collection. The original Spanish text was: "Como un pequeño recuerdo de mi sincera amistad. Soy el último de sus servidores."

Ordination	Name	Church or Title, Reference
1875	Ricardo Casanova y Estrada	Archbishop of Guatemala (Ldo.; 1898, 1912)
1875	José Mariano Iturbide	Catedral (Coadjutor, Pbro.; 1885), Candelaria (Párroco; 1898), Palencia (Pbro.; 1898)
1876	Félix Iriondo Panero	Petapa (Pbro. Ldo.; 1885, 1912)
1877	José María Ramires Colón/Colom	Santa Rosa (Lic.; 1898) 4 Calle Oriente, 38 (Sr. Canónigo Lic.; 1912)
1877	Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto	Santo Domingo (R. P. Fr.; 1885, 1898, 1912)
?	Felipe Montenegro	Beatas de Belén (Pbro.; 1885,)
?	Lauro Ortega	Vicaria de Escuintla, Palín (M. R P. Fr.; 1885), Santuario de Guadalupe (Pbro.; 1898)
?	Federico Virto	Santa Teresa (Pbro.; 1898)
1883	Juan José Rámila	Priest residing in various parishes (pbro. 1898)
1884	Alejandro Muñoz Aqueche	Beatas de Belén (Pbro.; 1898), 3 Av. Sur, 49 (Pbro.; 1912)
1887	Salvador Arzú y Roma	Sacristán de la Catedral (Pbro.; 1898), Mixco (Pbro.; 1912)
1892	J. Luis Montenegro y Flores	9Av. Sur, 53 (Pbro.; 1912)
1898	Maximiliano Jiménez	Memoristas (1898)
1902	Eugenio Novi	Memoristas (1898)
1901	José Cándido Piñol y Bares	8 Calle Poniente, 30 (Pbro. Dr.; 1912)
1906	Pedro Jacinto Palacios	Parroquia Vieja (Pbro.; 1912)

Sources: *Pensamiento Católico* (1885, Año 1, No.14), *Illustración Guatemalateca* (1896), S*emana Católica* (1897), *Directorio nacional de Guatemala* (1898), *El Ideal* (1912), Yasu's *Memorias*, *Síntesis biográfica del clero de Guatemala* (1965).

While Yasu developed close ties with the Catholic community, he did not refuse service to patrons who opposed the church. During his forty years in Guatemala, many politicians—including two presidents and several cabinet members—were Freemasons, a creed strongly opposed by the Catholic Church.[81] An unpleasant encounter with a Japanese Freemason, recounted in Yasu's *Memorias* and discussed in the first interlude, reveals his Catholic disdain for Freemasonry. Nevertheless, he also produced a portrait of Lorenzo Montúfar y Rivera (1823 – 1898), a politician and practicing Freemason.[82]

The Catholic Initiation of Juan José de Jesús Yas

On December 27, 1883—his birthday—Yasu received baptism, first communion, and confirmation, three sacraments that signify key milestones in the Catholic life cycle. In the *Memorias*, he recounts the sequence in which he received these sacraments and reflects on the day with devotional language. Yasu wrote, "Finally, the great day of my spiritual happiness arrived when God Our Lord deigned to invite me, through his infinite mercy, to receive Holy Baptism on December 27, 1883.'[83]

His notes indicate that these rites lasted nearly an entire day. Through his account, we also gain a general sense of how Catholic ceremonies were conducted at the time, despite the constraints imposed by the liberal regime:

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81 One of the church buildings confiscated by the liberal governments was converted into a "magnificent Masonic temple" (Pleitez Guardado 2016, p. 92).

82 The reference code of the portrait at CIRMA is: GT-CIRMA-FG-190-001-001-010.

83 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 739 ff.

Figure 23: Portrait of Juan Galindo, Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1889

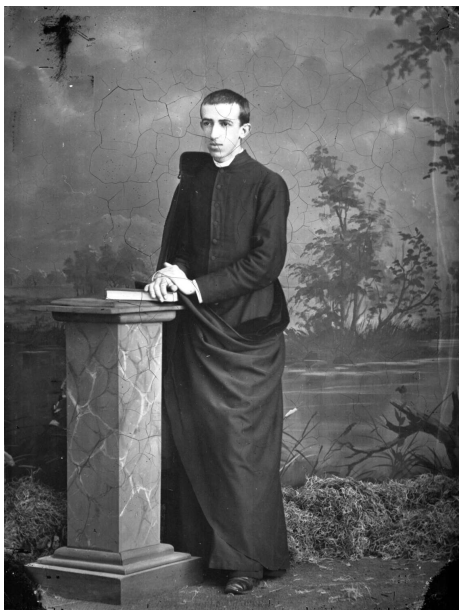

Figure 24: Portrait of Salvador Arzú y Roma, Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1889

Figure 25: Portrait of Federico Virto, Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1889

Figure 26: Portrait of Pedro Jacinto Palacio, Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1889

> I was baptized at the Sagrario of the Cathedral by the illustrious Dr. Arroyo with the greatest solemnity.[84] According to the regulations of the Holy Roman Church making vows to God Our Lord from my own mouth of my fidelity to what the Church commands. Being my godfather very Reverend Father Fray Bernardino de la Concepcion Aceytuno. I immediately received Holy Communion with the greatest affection and with the living faith of the sacrament after thanking God Our Lord for his infinite goodness and mercy towards a poor gentile admitted to the guild of His Church.
> I returned home with my soul filled with joy. And I found lunch ready to offer to the fathers who honored me to accompany me on this day. I was very happy for the great joy and happiness of my new life. And then I went to the Archbishop's Palace to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation from the hand of the Most Illustrious Governor [Juan Bautista] Raul to strengthen my soul more and more and to confirm what I had promised to God our Lord in Baptism, the truth that the Holy Church commands. Being godfather the very respectable Mr. Don Rafael Angulo.[85]

In his recollection of becoming Catholic, Yasu expresses lifelong affection and deep gratitude toward Father Bernardino Aceituno, who served as his godfather.[86] In the *Memorias*, Yasu also transcribed a lengthy poem written by his friend Father Federico Virto, who presented it to him to commemorate the occasion.[87] The poem is entitled "To the Neophyte Don Juan Yasu on the Happiest Day of His Life." In one stanza, the text celebrates Yasu's new identity:

> From now on, that you have taken on the Christian insignia
> From now on, you shall not turn your life backwards
> Of all Christians you have become a brother
> God may preserve in you, with his benign hand
> The Faith and virtues, may God give you peace.[88]

In Yasu's narration of his baptism, the phrase "new life" carries multiple meanings, signifying not only a transformation in his religious identity but also, to some extent, in his cultural identity. A record of Yasu's baptism is preserved in the Historical Archives of the Archdiocese of Guatemala.[89] It reads:

> On the twenty-seventh day of December, eighteen hundred and eighty-three, after the prescribed catechesis and solemn purification from the errors of the Shinto sect, Mr. Juan José de Jesús, a native of Japan, son of Mr. Yashinari Yas and Mrs. Muratro [sic],[90] I have solemnly conferred upon him, according to the conditions of the rite of the Holy Roman Church, the baptism of the Most Reverend Father Bernardino de la Concepción Aceytuno, acting as godfather, with the special permission of his Regular Prelate, M. R. P. Father Salvador Maria Medrano.[91]

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84 The Sagrario is the storage site of the Eucharist, located in a chapel to the side of the main altar of the cathedral. Sagrario is also the name of the main parish at the cathedral.
85 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 708-721.
86 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 171 ff.
87 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 751-793.
88 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 771-775.
89 Expedientes matrimoniales. Caja. 388. Tomo sin foliación, 1891. Libro de bautismos. Libro 10, 1883 – 1885. Folio 149 – 150.
90 It is not clear why his surname was transliterated as Yashinari instead of Yasu. His father's first name is also not mentioned.
91 Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano de Guatemala. Fondo Diocesano. Secretaría de Gobierno Eclesiástico.

The baptismal record lists the names of Yasu's parents, who were not present, and notes that Yasu was a repentant member of the "Shinto sect." This is surprising, as it seems unlikely he was actively involved in Japanese spiritual practices at this time. Whether the reference to Shintoism originated from Yasu himself or was a standard dogmatic procedure intended to reject heathen spiritualities remains unclear. Nonetheless, it highlights the baptism's role as a ritual of purification from sin and initiation into the Christian faith. The renunciation of Shintoism also suggests a distancing from Japanese identity, since Shinto was closely tied to the developing nationalist ideology of Meiji Japan.

Yasu's embrace of the Catholic faith is further reflected in the name he chose for his baptism. Packing an entire symbolic genealogy into one name, "Juan José de Jesús" alludes to John the Evangelist—the saint of the day of his baptism—and the two male figures of the Holy Family.[92] As discussed in chapter 1, Yasu may have already become acquainted with Christianity through religious events and institutions in Yokohama's foreign settlement. During his formative education there, French Catholic priests played a significant role as educators and cultural mediators. Yasu's initial interest in Catholicism may have stemmed from his broader quest for all things Western. However, once in Latin America, the circumstances of his conversion suggest that Catholicism became much more than a means of facilitating his integration into local society; it instead became the spiritual cornerstone of his life in a foreign land.

A Migrant's Problem?

While Yasu Kōhei may have sought spiritual support through his membership in the Catholic community, he also gained material benefits and economic opportunities from the patronage of priests, friars, and common people interested in his devotional images. Even so, establishing a foothold in the local society presented its challenges. In a passage from the *Memorias*, Yasu bitterly complained about the miserable life of a photographer.[93] Yet, the same passage reveals that his business was good and he had no shortage of customers. What, then, prompted such a negative assessment of his chosen path?

In reading the sporadic and chronologically disordered accounts of his photographic practice that Yasu recorded in the *Memorias* toward the end of his life, one theme frequently emerges: his dissatisfaction with several individuals from whom he rented workshops and who prematurely terminated his leases. This theme also appears in a contemporaneous letter Yasu sent to his sister in 1886. In it, Yasu described the studio space he had rented for about a year. Pleased with the location, Yasu signed a three-year lease and invested funds in constructing the studio and related facilities.[94] However, to his surprise, he was informed that the property had been sold and that he would have to vacate:

> But one day when I least expected it, the landlady sent to ask for the house. Since I did not have a contract, I had no choice but to leave the house. So I left the gallery with great loss, and

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Libro de bautismos. Libro 10, 1883-1885. Folio 149-150. The records of his baptism in 1883 and his marriage in 1891 are kept in the Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano (Archdiocesan Historical Archive) in Guatemala City.

92 East Asian immigrants often adopted Spanish first names while retaining their original surnames. This practice is evident in newspaper advertisements featuring Cantonese merchants who used names such as Carlos, Feladelfo, or José, as I will discuss in chapter 3. There is no information on when or how Yasu chose "Juan José de Jesús" as his new name.

93 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 849 ff.

94 Appendix 7, Letter 2.

> I gave it up with great sadness because I made very good business here with a lot of work. Now we could not find a suitable house very soon to establish the photography. We moved to Padre Ortega's house, which is on the south side of the school of the Beatas de Belén, where I built the two-story gallery with a very comfortable space.[95]

Yasu preferred the competitive downtown area near the government buildings and the cathedral, as it promised better business opportunities. He also sought to rent two-story buildings because the upper floors of local architecture provided better lighting, and he needed space for a darkroom in the courtyards. These spatial demands likely compounded Yasu's difficulties in securing a stable location for his studio. Nevertheless, his Catholic connections proved instrumental in helping him find new locations on several occasions, including after his return to Guatemala in 1890.

The difficulty of renting adequate studio space continued to plague Yasu even after he moved Fotografía Japonesa to Antigua Guatemala. His account of the last two decades of his business includes a list of studio locations he was forced to abandon, along with the names of landlords who caused him grief. For the first seven years in Antigua, he rented a space on the property of Don Florencio Salazar, at the corner of El Carmen Street, where he "built the gallery for the works."[96] However, after five years, the contract was terminated because the property was sold. Yasu and his family then moved to the house of Doña Catarina Luna de Gandara, where they lived for more than two years. There, Yasu established a rather large photo gallery, which he found "very comfortable because the house has a lot of light."

From 1907 [sic. 1909] to 1912, Fotografía Japonesa operated out of a house owned by Don Mariano Solís, located on the corner of Camposeco, right next to the central market. Yasu found the property ideal for both his professional and personal life. He "made a lot of money," but was forced to leave when the property was sold to a new owner, resulting in the loss of the investments he had made in building the studio. From 1912 to 1914, he rented a house from Doña Rafaela Morales. In this spacious residence, which had ample light and running water, Yasu built his largest and most comfortable studio. Yet, this property, too, became a source of frustration: the owner, who refused to provide a formal contract, sold the house only two years after Yasu had begun using it. In 1914, Fotografía Japonesa moved to its final location during Yasu's lifetime. By then frail with age and illness, Yasu's *Memorias* suggest that he did not take part in the construction of this final studio.

In total, the family moved at least five times between their arrival in Antigua in 1895 and Yasu's death in 1917. According to the *Memorias*, these frequent relocations were largely due to property owners failing to honor their commitments. Each forced move required dismantling and relocating the business, often without compensation. Not only did Yasu lose the infrastructure of his gallery and studio, but each new location demanded significant investments of time and money for reconstruction and renewed advertising efforts. Reflecting on one such case, he concluded that the "sacrifice I made at the location was only for the benefit of the owner of the house.'[97]

Given the pervasive racist sentiments during the liberal period, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the recurring difficulties Yasu faced in securing estate for his business may

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95 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 953 ff.

96 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from the section "Trasladacion á la Antigua Guatemala," Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 825 ff.

97 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 849.

Figure 27: Emilio Eichenberger, "German Club," Guatemala City, ca. 1900

have been compounded by his status as an East Asian immigrant. To better understand Yasu's challenges in a broader context, I examined the registered locations of photography studios that opened in Guatemala City during the final two decades of the nineteenth century. These locations are documented in official directories and newspaper advertisements.[98]

The findings are revealing. By the late 1880s, the number of photography studios had grown considerably, and many of them were located close to one another. Despite frequent changes in studio names, ownership, and addresses, two well-known photographers—American Edward Kildare and Swiss-Guatemalan Emilio Eichenberger—operated from stable, long-term locations. This continuity may reflect their commercial success, which enabled them to afford premium rents; alternatively, it may indicate their integration into influential landowning circles (figure 27). In contrast, Yasu lacked the support of a Japanese diaspora in Guatemala. To mitigate this disadvantage, he relied instead on his ties within the Catholic community to help sustain his business through frequent relocations.

Weaving Catholic Relations of Family and Fraternity

One of Yasu Kōhei's primary contacts within the Catholic community was Rafael Angulo Urruela (1843 – 1903), a highly influential figure in Guatemala City. Yasu also became a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis, hereafter OFS), an association of lay Catholics affiliated with the Franciscan family of religious orders.

I use the term Catholic community to refer both to the people who identify with the Catholic faith and to the network of clerics, religious orders, and lay organizations that comprise the Catholic Church. Defined broadly as the community of Catholics in

98 See chapter 4, table 4.1 on page 178.

Guatemala, the term also conveys the complex and often uneasy relationship with successive liberal governments that sought to limit the Church's power by repressing its institutions and practices. This antagonism within the liberal zeitgeist may have strengthened the unity of the religious community, enabling Yasu to gain support after his baptism. At the same time, viewing the Catholic community as a structure comprising heterogeneous groups and organizations allows us to focus on the concrete commitments Yasu developed, such as through ritual co-parenthood (*compadrazgo*) and his membership in the OFS.

A Network through Ritual Kinship

Like Father Aceituno, the godfather at his baptism, Yasu also referred to Rafael Angulo Urruela as a *padrino* (godfather), toward whom he expressed deep gratitude and affection. Unlike Aceituno, whose role was primarily that of a religious instructor, Angulo Urruela appears to have supported Yasu in more practical ways—potentially leveraging his extensive network to enable Yasu's social and economic advancement.

Rafael Angulo Urruela belonged to a prominent family with roots tracing back to the colonial period.[99] The family was actively engaged in charitable endeavors and played a significant role in constructing churches and convents, facilitating the establishment of several religious orders in Guatemala.[100] Perhaps due to their deep religious devotion combined with a cautious avoidance of political partisanship, the Liberal Revolution of 1871 had little impact on their social standing.[101] Rafael Angulo Urruela, only three years Yasu's senior, was serving as director of the San Juan de Dios Hospital in the capital when he became Yasu's godfather.[102]

The role of *padrinos* (godparents) and *compadres* (ritual co-parents) in the construction of social ties in Catholic Latin America has long been recognized as an important anthropological topic. Often, the ritual kinship established through religious ceremonies entails an obligation for the more affluent to share social and economic resources with their godchildren and the children's parents.[103] Although *padrinos* may be appointed for various occasions, the conventions surrounding ritual parenthood as a foundation for enduring social bonds are most commonly discussed in relation to the baptism of children.

Yasu's initiation into the Catholic community took place as an adult, and his biological parents were absent from the ritual kinship normally established through baptism. Angulo Urruela sponsored Yasu's confirmation—a separate sacrament, although performed on the same day as his baptism. Despite these deviations from typical ritual parenthood, the relationship between Angulo Urruela and Yasu appears to have evolved into a form of fictive kinship. At Yasu's wedding to María Noriega in 1891, María Angulo, Angulo Urruela's daughter, served as the maid of honor.[104]

Yasu's *Memorias* suggest that Angulo Urruela may have played a role similar to that of Yasu's Mexican benefactor, Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, in facilitating his integration into a new social environment. Several emotional passages recall Yasu's memories of

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99 Díaz 1934b, pp. 90–93.

100 Rojas Lima 2004b, p. 112.

101 Casaús Arzú (2018, pp. 101–102). Both Angulo Urruela's paternal and maternal ancestors belonged to the most influential families associated with the Church since colonial times. The family maintained close ties to the Catholic community, collaborating in the construction of churches and convents for several religious orders.

102 Rojas Lima 2004b, p. 112.

103 E.g., Mintz and Wolf (1950).

104 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 818 ff.

spending time with Angulo Urruela and his family. One passage describes how the *padrino* accompanied him to the Pacific port of San José when Yasu left Guatemala for Japan in May 1889. With no intention of returning, Yasu asked him for "the last blessings and embraces" before boarding the ship. "I could not stop my tears because of the deep sadness I felt," Yasu wrote.[105] Several months later, when he returned to San José—albeit briefly while en route to Peru—he took the opportunity to meet the *padrino*. While still on board, Yasu sent a telegram to Angulo Urruela, who then arrived at the port to accompany his Japanese friend to the capital.[106] The *Memorias* recount this episode in vivid detail:

> We arrived in San José de Guatemala at 6 o'clock in the morning on the 16th. Last night I could not close my eyes because of the great joy I felt and the longing to soon see my beloved and unforgettable Guatemala.
> At the moment the steamer anchored, the officers told me to disembark soon because "your godfather and your friends are waiting at the dock." Well, I did not expect so much happiness in my visit to Guatemala.
> By divine providence, the steamer stayed until midnight the next day. So I decided to make a little trip to the capital, with the greatest pleasure of greeting my friends.
> So I took the 9:30 train, accompanied by my dearest godfather and a friend of his, and we arrived in Escuintla at 11 o'clock and had a good lunch. At 3:30 p.m. we arrived in Guatemala, and when we got out of the station we found Miss Maria Angulo in her carriage to honor me by welcoming my arrival and escorting me to my godfather's house.
> What a joy it was to see my friends again after such a long absence. After dinner, accompanied by my godfather, I visited some friends, especially the governor, Mr. Rafael Angulo, and the family of my friend Doña Jesús Salazar, and I spent a very happy night among friends.
> But I woke up very sad because I knew that in a few moments, I would have to say goodbye again. But thank God I heard Mass first because I had not had the joy of hearing Mass since I left Guatemala.
> [...] I said goodbye to my friends again, and when the time came I went to the train station accompanied by my godfather and my friends to say my last goodbyes and hugs.[107]

This passage shows that Angulo Urruela reciprocated Yasu's affection, traveling repeatedly to the Pacific coast for him. At the same time, it is clear that Yasu's relationship with Angulo Urruela's family deepened his commitment to the Catholic faith.

Yasu and the Secular Franciscan Order

In the social structure inherited from the colonial regime, the Secular Franciscan Order was composed mainly of members of the conservative economic and political elite.[108] The OFS served as an important nexus of influence, building churches, financing charitable works, and owning property on behalf of the Conventual Franciscan Order, whose friars were barred from worldly possessions by a vow of poverty.[109]

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105 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 163 f.
106 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 364 ff.
107 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 362-378
108 According to Pleitez Guardado (2016), prominent families often maintained their influence in the Church by sending their sons to become friars of the First (Conventual) Order. The OFS supported the secular functions of the Church. This, in turn, consolidated the position and influence of these families within the old regime.
109 See Casaús Arzú (2018) and Pleitez Guardado (2016).

Figure 28: Self-portrait of Yasu Kōhei making a profession to become a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1895

As an ancient and exclusive Catholic group, the OFS accepted only neophytes recommended by existing members.[110] After the Liberal Revolution's expropriation of Catholic real estate, the lay members of the OFS—who professed loyalty to Franciscanism while maintaining secular lives—preserved much Franciscan property in their private hands. Although Yasu was neither wealthy nor powerful, his association with Angulo Urruela, whose hospital had Franciscan ties, may have granted him access to this exclusive group.

Although I have found no formal documentation of Yasu's membership in the OFS, two photographs from the Japanese and Guatemalan archives tell the story. The first is a cabinet card depicting Yasu as if participating in a ceremony. In this image (figure 28), Yasu kneels in supplication before a priest, gazing down at a paper scroll held in his left hand. He wears a regular suit, with a scapular draped over his chest and back, and a knotted Franciscan cord tied around his waist. The three knots on the cord symbolize chastity, obedience, and poverty—the foundational vows of Franciscan life. Yasu's hand rests at the base of a cross held by the priest, who faces him and imparts a blessing. Judging by the studio setting—with its monochrome backdrop and carpet—and comparisons with other dated portraits, this photograph likely dates from the 1880s, shortly after Yasu's baptism. Evidently, Yasu treasured this photograph, which appears to reenact the profession or confirmation ceremony marking his entry into the OFS. The second photo that proves Yasu's connection to the Franciscan Order will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. It

[110] All quotations in this paragraph are from Pleitez Guardado (2016, p. 59).

shows Yasu just after his death. Again, he is arranged with the Franciscan cord around his waist, as if to emphasize his religious commitment, which he maintained until the end of his life.

Affective Bonds

Despite the lack of coherent information on the subject, Yasu was certainly acquainted with his future wife's family as early as the 1880s. The connection most likely originated through Jesús Salazar de Noriega, the matriarch of the family, whom Yasu remembered fondly later in life.[111] Jesús is mentioned twice in the *Memorias*, both times in relation to the *padrino* Angulo Urruela, suggesting a possible connection between the two.[112] Yasu may have met Jesús as a parishioner at the Santa Clara church he attended. Alternatively, as Luis Luján Muñoz suggested, she may have been his landlady or may have provided him with lodging and meals during his initial stay in Guatemala.[113]

The documents prepared in connection with Yasu's marriage to María offer some background information about his in-laws.[114] According to these records, María's father was Santiago Noriega of Comalapa, in the Department of Chimaltenango, where María was born and baptized. The documents provide no information about when or why the family moved to the capital, nor do they describe the family's economic circumstances or internal structure. They do note, however, that María "has lived in the house of Mr. Yas since she was a child." Given the absence of any reference to Santiago Noriega beyond this brief mention, it is likely that he had passed away before Yasu met the Noriegas in the 1880s.[115]

Without detailing the specifics of the cohabitation arrangement, Yasu's *Memorias* describe a domestic scene that likely took place in the mid-1880s. He recounts the memory in the first-person plural: "In the third courtyard, we had many rabbits. We had a lot of fun with them. So I worked very happily and quietly in that house."[116] Assuming "we" refers to the Noriega family, this passage suggests that María was one of the intended readers of the memoirs and reflects the joyful times they shared. In addition to the written record, many of the portraits Yasu made for her were well preserved and became an integral part of the photo collections in Fujisawa and Antigua (figure 29).

Another member of the Noriega family with whom Yasu formed a particularly strong bond was José Domingo Noriega, María's nephew. When José Domingo was baptized, Yasu served as his *padrino*. According to Yasu's recollections—which may be inaccurate in this detail—the baptism took place on the same day as his own.[117] Reflecting on that

111 Although the use of "Jesús" as a woman's first name may seem unusual, Yasu's writings and official documents consistently refer to her by this name. In the paperwork related to Yasu's marriage, both "Jesús María Salazar de Noriega" and "María de Jesús Noriega" appear as variations of her full name. In his *Memorias*, Yasu also referred to her as "Chuz," an affectionate diminutive of Jesús.

112 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 375 and 192

113 Luján Muñoz 1982a, 1990.

114 All quotations in this paragraph are from the Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano Guatemala. Fondo Diocesano. Secretaría de Gobierno Eclesiástico. Expedientes matrimoniales. Caja 388. Tomo sin foliación, 1891.

115 María was born in 1873.

116 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 946 f.

117 According to Luján Muñoz, José Domingo was born in Guatemala City on December 21, 1885, and died in Antigua on February 25, 1973. However, if Yasu became José Domingo's godfather immediately after his own baptism in 1883, then José Domingo must have been born in 1883 or earlier (Luján Muñoz 1982a, 1990).

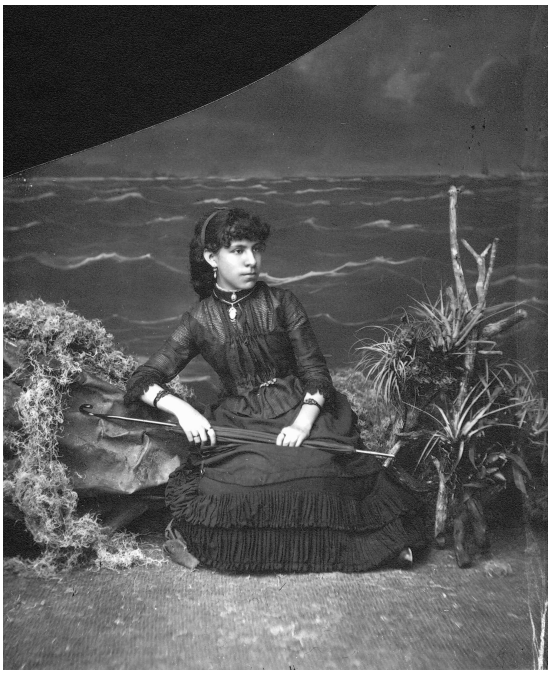

Figure 29: Portrait of María Noriega, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

Figure 30: Portrait of Jesús Salazar de Noriega and María Noriega, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

eventful day, Yasu proudly wrote, "Today the child José Domingo Noriega was baptized, and I am his godfather. I am happy to have my first godson."[118] José Domingo would later become Yasu's assistant and business partner in the Fotografía Japonesa studio, which he continued to operate after Yasu's death.

Several photographs taken between 1880 and 1889 attest to the close relationship that developed between Yasu and the Noriega family. The exceptional preservation of the glass plates and prints—unlike most of Yasu's early work, which has since been lost—suggests the personal value he placed on these images. The sitters' patient cooperation, evident in their adherence to Yasu's directions to produce special visual effects, further reflects the intimacy shared among those involved in the photographic sessions.

One photograph presents María and her mother gazing into the distance, posed within a carefully constructed coastal scene (figure 30). In another image (figure 31), María and Jesús are seated beside a young woman who looks cautiously at the camera. Both younger women hold books on their laps. María rests her hand on her mother's knee, while Jesús places a protective arm around the other young woman's shoulders. The identity of this third figure, as well as her relationship to the Noriega family, remains unknown.

In May 1889, Yasu closed his photographic studio and bid farewell to his friends, planning to return to Japan to live with his aging mother. Although no written account survives of the emotional farewell he shared with the Noriega family, a mounted photograph he gave to María and Jesús conveys the sense of separation. On the inside of the photo card, Yasu expressed his feelings about leaving Guatemala:

> My dear friends Jesús and María,
> After our separation, this photo will remain as a memory of the friendship that we had and that we will not forget, even though the distance separates us.

[118] Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 722 f.

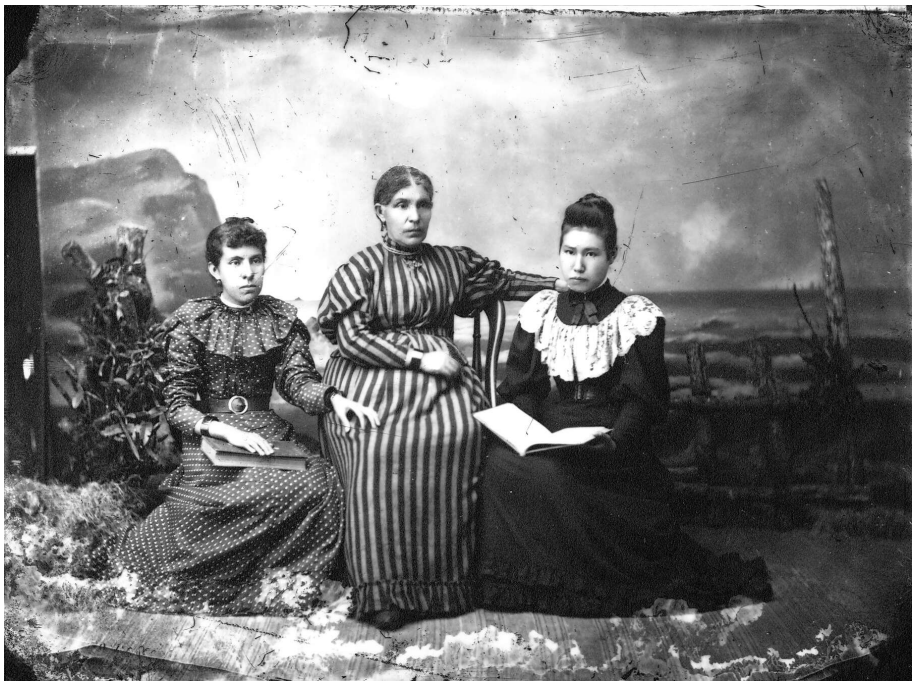

Figure 31: Portrait of Jesús, María, and a young woman, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

Figure 32: A farewell photo card, Guatemala City, dated April 18, 1889

> Keep it! As a reminder of my true affection for you. Farewell.
> Juan José de Jesús Yas
> Guatemala, April 18, 1889.[119]

The photograph mounted on the outside of the card depicts Jesús, Yasu, and María in a studio setting (figure 32). Each is absorbed in their respective tasks, not looking directly at the camera. The composition emphasizes traditional gender roles: Yasu is reading a book, while Jesús and María display their virtue through needlework.[120] Yasu's elevated position completes the tableau, portraying a family centered around a male head of household. By this stage of their cohabitation, it can be inferred that Yasu's role within the Noriega household had gained considerable significance.

* * *

An understanding of Yasu's life as an East Asian foreigner in late nineteenth-century Guatemala must consider the racist ideologies, political dynamics, and global networks that shaped the sociocultural milieu around him.

Racism fueled by fears of the "yellow peril" imported from the United States was complicated by the exoticizing appropriation of East Asian goods and culture through Latin American orientalist lenses. Although public opinion was already forming, East Asian immigration was only beginning. Capitalizing on this opening in the flow of ideas, goods, and people, Yasu leveraged his technical skills to enter the nascent craft of photography. By naming his studio Fotografía Japonesa, he distinguished himself from the larger yet more marginalized Chinese immigrant community and attracted patrons who favored the European taste for things Japanese. His connections with Catholic clerics and lay members of the Church also provided him with both material and spiritual support.

The first phase of Yasu's life in Guatemala, as described in this chapter, ended with his return to Japan in 1889. Although he had intended to settle in Tokyo, he was soon called to serve his homeland. The next chapter begins with Yasu Kōhei's participation in a Japanese mining expedition to Peru, marking the start of his second and final period of residence in Latin America.

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119 This card is now part of Fujisawa Collection, no. 69.

120 B. Levine (2016) discusses the evolving symbolism of knitting in European portraiture—from representing the homemaker's virtue and skill in the mid-nineteenth century to becoming a broader symbol of culture during the Victorian era.

Chapter 3

Settling In-Between

In August 1886, Yasu Kōhei received a letter from his younger sister. In his reply, he wrote, "I have not heard from my family for over ten years and do not know if my beloved brother and sister are well. My heart is restless, and I worry day and night."[1] Upon learning that his elderly mother was still alive, Yasu announced his intention to return home as soon as he could secure the success of his now-flourishing photographic studio, Fotografía Japonesa. Motivated by a sense of duty to his aging mother and confident in his ability to adapt his skills to the Japanese market, he resolved to return.

He embarked on his voyage on May 15, 1889, and after a month and a half that took him through California and Hawaii, he arrived in Yokohama on June 26. From there, he traveled swiftly to Tokyo and then to his hometown of Fujisawa, Iwate, where he was reunited with his mother and young niece, Tamaki. The three of them returned to Tokyo, where Yasu planned to open a photography studio.[2] "We lived very happily in Tokyo in the Tsukidji [sic. Tsukiji]," Yasu later recalled in his *Memorias*, "near the Missionary Cathedral in a very comfortable little house in the company of my little niece Tamaki, the three of us very peaceful."[3] The cathedral likely refers to the Tsukiji Catholic Church, founded in 1874 by the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris (M.E.P.).[4] If so, it would have been the same Catholic organization whose priests may have provided Yasu with French lessons in Yokohama two decades earlier.

However, Yasu's knowledge of European languages, scientific training, and experience in Latin America disrupted his plans. That same year, 1889, a company backed by influential politicians and entrepreneurs launched a silver mining venture in Peru. Japanese migration to Latin America had not yet begun, and few in Japan could speak Spanish. Yasu's background in Guatemala thus made him a rare and valuable asset. Although reluctant, he was recruited as an interpreter and secretary for the expedition.[5] As a result, he had to part from his mother again. The expedition set sail for Peru on November 16.

The mining venture collapsed within a few months. On the return journey up the Pacific coast, the ship carrying the Japanese group made a port of call in Guatemala. Yasu separated from his travel companions to visit his acquaintances in Guatemala City. Although he promised to take "the next steamship" on to Japan, he did not make it back to the port.[6] A year later, he married María Noriega, reopened his business in the capital, and never left Central America again.

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1 Appendix 7, Letter 2.

2 According to the contemporaneous *Yomiuri Shimbun* article (November 24, 1889) on his life, Yasu received a letter "this year" informing him of the deaths of his father and older sister. Learning that his mother was still alive, he decided to bring her to Tokyo to live with him.

3 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 285 f.

4 Gomi 2014, p. 118.

5 Appendix 4, *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

6 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 679.

In the *Memorias*, Yasu Kōhei reflects on his two journeys between Japan and the Americas, describing the first as joyful and the second as reluctant. In 1875, he traveled to Mexico via Europe, hopeful that a foreign education would improve his prospects in a modernizing Japan. His second trip to the Americas, however, was not motivated by his own aspirations, as he had no personal interest in the mining expedition.[7] Yasu's recollection highlights the conflicting commitments to nation, religion, and family that intersected with his professional plans and his desire to maintain control over his own decisions, resulting in confusing affective constellations.

This chapter analyzes Yasu's final and definitive settlement in Latin America, tracing his overlapping commitments to personal ambitions, his homeland, and his transpacific family networks. Among the challenges he faced were business competition, anti-Asian sentiment, the responsibility of supporting his family, and the sorrow of being unable to return to Japan. While organized chronologically, each section highlights a different aspect of the context of Yasu's social life. Topics covered include diplomatic relations between Japan and Guatemala, the influence of Latin American Orientalism, Yasu's family ties, his relationship with the Japanese Empire, and his later years as a member of Guatemalan society, a Catholic, and a Japanese expatriate.

Japanese Expansion in the Americas

As an actor or bystander, Yasu Kōhei was involved in several of Japan's early ventures in Latin America. These include the aforementioned Peruvian silver-mining project (1889 – 1890) and a labor dispute and diplomatic incident involving a group of Japanese workers, their Guatemalan employers, and a U.S. intermediary in 1893 and 1894.[8] Yasu's mixed experiences on the mining project made him aware of how his agency and mobility were constrained by social pressures and national agendas. He was not directly involved in the labor dispute, and despite the arrival of the Japanese consul in San Francisco to Guatemala City, there is no mention of the incident in Yasu's writings.[9] However, some Japanese workers remained in Guatemala after the dispute and are noted in a list Yasu compiled in 1895 documenting a patriotic collection supporting the Japanese Empire (see the interlude following this chapter).

Perhaps because both events ended unfavorably, they have received little scholarly attention in Japan or Guatemala. Nonetheless, they confirm the significance of Yasu's writings as records of the earliest Japanese efforts toward Latin America, which involved political elites and plantation laborers in the 1890s. Yasu's presence in these episodes thus opens a window on the evolving relations between emerging nations on the periphery of the Eurocentric world, which were connected through their simultaneous pursuit of progress and modernity.

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7 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 331 ff.

8 He was also likely connected to an early, unsuccessful attempt to establish a Japanese settler colony in Latin America: the Enomoto Colony in Mexico (1897). The National Diet Library in Japan holds a letter addressed to Yasu from the colony's promoter, Enomoto Takeaki, who was also the patron of the Colonization Society (殖民協会). Given the brevity of this letter and the absence of other supporting documents, further research is needed to clarify Yasu's role in this endeavor.

9 Due to the lack of preservation of correspondence between 1891 and 1916, it is impossible to determine whether he discussed these events with contacts in Japan.

1889: Japan-Peru Mining Corporation

The mining expedition, for which Yasu was recruited almost immediately upon his return to Japan in the summer of 1889, was described by the project's director as "the first Japanese industrial enterprise overseas."[10] Although the expedition ultimately ended in failure, it marked a turning point in how Japanese political elites perceived Latin America.

The project was known as the Japan-Peru Mining Corporation (日秘鉱業会社) and originally proposed by the German-Peruvian diplomat Oskar Antonio Federico Augusto Heeren (1840 – 1909). As a social agent in the sense described by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, Heeren was a consummate cosmopolitan who, due to his background and the expanding global infrastructure, played a significant role as a political and economic mediator between Europe, the Americas, and Asia.[11] Heeren had lived in Edo during the 1860s and later married the daughter of the Peruvian president.[12] Impressed by the Japanese work ethic, Heeren sought to import labor for his Peruvian plantation. In 1888, he sent a Japanese employee to Tokyo to negotiate labor transfer terms and, as a side project, to propose Japanese-Peruvian cooperation in a silver mine in the Andean highlands. Attracted by the economic prospects, Japanese politicians and investors quickly endorsed the venture.[13]

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru through the Treaty of Friendship, Trade, and Navigation in 1873 likely sparked the interest of Japanese politicians and entrepreneurs in ventures such as this. On the Japanese side, the company was represented by Takahashi Korekiyo 高橋是清 (1854 – 1936), who later became prime minister of Japan. Takahashi had served as director-general of the Patent Office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade (農商務省特許局長) but resigned shortly before the Peru expedition. As an ambitious Meiji-era politician, he was convinced that Japan needed to expand its influence abroad to stand "on an equal footing with international powers" and to abolish the unequal treaties that had persisted since the shogunate era. Although many Japanese traveled abroad to study and learn from Western countries, Takahashi believed that too few leveraged these experiences to initiate industrial ventures that would benefit the empire. In his view, most Japanese businesses overseas, such as grocery stores, remained limited in both number and scale.[14]

In his autobiography, Takahashi reflected on the challenges faced by Japanese overseas ventures, attributing their limited experience and business acumen to the shogunate's long-standing policy of national seclusion. He argued that this legacy explained why, even after the Meiji Restoration lifted restrictions, many Japanese businessmen abroad confined themselves to operating small businesses.[15] Furthermore, he observed, "Despite their strong desire to be in a developed country, they are despised everywhere because they cannot speak, do not know the customs, and have few resources."[16]

Nakagawa Kiyoshi's analysis of Takahashi's autobiography contextualizes these at-

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10 Takahashi Korekiyo, quoted in Smethurst (2007, p. 101).

11 Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, p. 2.

12 Smethurst (2007, p. 98). In his monograph on Takahashi, Richard Smethurst provides detailed information on the development of this project without mentioning Yasu. Gomi Astushi's 2004 bilingual publication in Japanese and Spanish is the most comprehensive work on the event and includes archival materials and participants' manuscripts. As a mining expert, Gomi's book also offers extensive details on the project's technical aspects (ibid., pp. 96–114).

13 Ibid., p. 99.

14 Nakagawa 1995, p. 193.

15 Korekiyo Takahashi 1936, p. 351.

16 Ibid., pp. 340–341.

titudes within Japan's shifting political landscape.[17] According to Nakagawa, Takahashi identified Japan's challenges as stemming primarily from deficiencies in language proficiency, cultural understanding, and financial resources. As a strategic response, Takahashi advocated focusing on less-developed regions, such as South and Central America, to open new markets and expand Japanese influence abroad.[18] However, Latin America remained largely uncharted territory for Japan. Unlike major European languages such as English, German, and French, which had been promoted since the mid-nineteenth century, Spanish was seldom taught until the 1890s, when it became a priority as part of broader plans to encourage emigration.

Yasu's Latin American experience made him an ideal candidate for recruitment as an interpreter for Takahashi's expedition.[19] Another reason that has been suggested was their shared origin in northeastern Japan.[20] However, he was reluctant to accept the offer, forced to weigh his patriotic duty against the desire to remain with his family. In the *Memorias*, Yasu wrote:

> Mr. Takahashi asked me to go with him, but I refused, explaining that I couldn't go without my mother's permission because I had been away for a long time and wanted to be with her in her last days. Mr. Takahashi then sent someone to persuade my mother, arguing that the success of the mission would bring great honor to Japan and benefit society as a whole. Eventually, my mother was convinced and gave her consent, leaving me no choice but to accept the request.[21]

According to Tanabe Saneaki 田邊實明, Yasu's friend from Fujisawa whose farewell speech for Yasu at this venture was reproduced in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article, he was the one who recommended Yasu to Takahashi.[22]

On November 16, Yasu boarded the ship in Yokohama together with Takahashi and the technician Tajima Haruo 田島晴雄 (1860 – 1920). After a voyage of forty-six days, which included port calls in San Francisco and San José in Guatemala, they arrived at the Peruvian port of Callao on January 7.[23] Twenty days later, Yamaguchi Shizuka 山口慎 (1846 – 1913) arrived with seventeen Japanese workers.[24] The Japanese were welcomed by Heeren, who provided them with a spacious residence in Lima. They also visited archaeological sites along the coast and were introduced to the Peruvian president and several ministers and foreign officials.[25]

Despite the seemingly promising plans and support from local authorities, neither the investors nor the participants in this venture had conducted much due diligence on the project's feasibility. Instead, they relied on the assurances of the technician Tajima, who had been sent to Lima on an exploratory mission.[26] It was not until the end of March,

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17 Nakagawa 1995.
18 Ibid., pp. 190–191.
19 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889.
20 Several texts on Yasu's biography point to the regional background in northeastern Japan that Yasu shared with both Tanabe and Takahashi as a motive for joining the Peruvian expedition. However, there is no evidence in the *Memorias* that he felt a close bond with Takahashi beyond a concern for his health and safety. For example, see appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 491 f. and 508 ff.
21 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 297 ff.
22 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 24, 1889.
23 Korekiyo Takahashi 1936, pp. 353–361.
24 Ibid., p. 372.
25 Ibid., pp. 381–385.
26 Ibid., p. 341.

however, that the Japanese realized that the Carahuacra silver mine in central Peru, which they had hoped to develop, was already exhausted. In April, Takahashi returned to Tokyo, where the failure of the project caused quite a stir. After waiting several months for a decision on the site, Yasu and the other Japanese participants began their journey home in mid-July. When their ship docked at the Guatemalan port of San José, Yasu left the group to meet with his friends in Guatemala City.

In a letter to a friend in Japan that Yasu sent in August 1890, he asserted that a military conflict between Guatemala and El Salvador had blocked his departure and forced him to stay.[27] The *Memorias* reflect the circumstances in these terms:

> On the 8th [of July], I arrived in Guatemala at 12 o'clock. At that time, there was a war with [El] Salvador promoted by president Don Justo Rufino Barrios with the desire to form the Central American Union, but without achieving his desire, he died in battle.[28] Well, I asked the ministry several times for a passport to return to Japan, but they did not send it to me. This made it difficult for me to travel. So I decided to stay in Guatemala and establish the photo studio again to raise money because I spent all the money I had for the return to Japan. Then I decided to order the most necessary machines and materials for the work from New York. I also had the tubes brought from Japan. So I stayed here until now. So ends the story of my second travel to America.[29]

Yasu resumed his photography business almost immediately upon arriving in Guatemala City to support himself and save money for his return to Japan. Contrary to the assurances he gave friends and family in Japan about his expected return, he married María Noriega in 1891 and never left the country thereafter.

1893: "First Japanese Workers in Latin America"

Before examining the second phase of Yasu's life in Guatemala, I would like to review the other historical event mentioned above, which triggered a diplomatic exchange between Japan and Guatemala. Occurring in 1893 and 1894, this incident sheds light on the challenges faced by Japanese subjects in Central America and what was at stake for them.

In late 1893, Chinda Sutemi 珍田捨己 (1856 – 1929), the Japanese consul in San Francisco, visited Guatemala. His goal was to resolve an incident involving 132 Japanese indentured laborers and their local employers.[30] These workers had arrived from Hawaii after completing their contracts on plantations there and had been contracted by an American broker named Walter Ferguson.[31] Shortly after their arrival, they became embroiled in

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27 Appendix 7, Letter 6.

28 Yasu's account contains a clear historical error: president Barrios was killed in the Battle of Chalchuapa in 1885, not 1890. Luján Muñoz suggests that by confusing the dates, Yasu was likely referring to the failed attempts to create an integrated Central American republic, which resulted in wars in 1902 and 1906 (Luján Muñoz 1982a, n. 9). However, there was indeed a conflict between Guatemala and El Salvador in 1890, known as the First Totoposte War (Troncoso Castillo 2019).

29 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 681 ff.

30 Originally, 144 Japanese had signed the contract, but some quit along the way, so that only 132 arrived in Guatemala (Ishi 1987).

31 In his article on the relationship between Japan and Latin America, Yanagida (2013) outlines the evolution of Japanese emigration from the early nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. He notes that before World War II, Central and South America became alternative destinations as the path to migrate to Hawaii and North America became more difficult. Though not part of an official Japanese government program, the decision of these Japanese workers to travel to Guatemala may reflect the

a dispute over working conditions with the plantation owners. Some managed to escape surveillance and walked to Mexico to seek help from the Japanese consulate there, which then referred the case to the Japanese consulate in the United States.

Following this incident, a treaty was considered to regulate migration from Japan to Guatemala. Although the treaty did not materialize, the largely forgotten incident holds considerable historical significance. Preceding both the arrival of Japanese settlers in Mexico in 1897 and the beginning of mass migration to Brazil in the early twentieth century, it involved what was likely the first group of Japanese subjects in Latin America.[32] It also prompted an immediate response from the Japanese government, which enacted legislation to regulate the overseas migration of its citizens.[33]

After the incident was resolved in early 1894, some of the workers remained in the country and presumably met Yasu in Guatemala City. In the *Notes* that Yasu kept alongside the *Memorias*, there is a list of Japanese individuals from the capital region who participated in a donation to the Meiji Empire in 1895, one year after the dispute.[34] Examining this list with the documents preserved in the Japanese diplomatic archives helps explore issues relevant to Yasu's life. It sheds light on how the category of Japanese subjects in Guatemala became an object of government concern. It also reveals the relationship Yasu developed with his compatriots and, by extension, his sense of national belonging, which will be explored in the first interlude.

According to a report by Japanese Consul Chinda Sutemi in San Francisco, the Japanese workers were assigned to four plantations in different locations, owned by Guatemalan and German individuals.[35] The workers arrived in August 1893, but due to the poor conditions they encountered, some ran away while others refused to work after only a few weeks. When taken to court, a group of workers appealed to the Japanese government for help, but there was no Japanese consulate in the country.[36]

In December, Consul Chinda traveled to Guatemala to negotiate a solution with the plantation owners and to discuss the matter with the government of José María Reina Barrios. Both countries expressed interest in bringing Japanese workers to Guatemala through diplomatic channels, though formal exchanges did not take place until 1935. As a result of the dispute, regulations were enacted requiring brokers to obtain permission from the Japanese government before sending workers to countries with which Japan had no formal treaties.[37]

Focusing on this particular incident, Ōshima Masahiro's review of transpacific labor migration explains why the Japanese diplomatic service sprang into action.[38] At stake was not only the resolution of this case but also Japan's ability, as a modernizing nation, to protect its subjects abroad and to engage Western countries on an equal footing.[39] White "blackbirders" like Walter Ferguson specialized in transporting Asian laborers to work on Latin American plantations and in mines, creating a vast transpacific human trafficking

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allure of Latin America.

32 Nakagawa 1995, pp. 181–182.

33 Ōshima 2011, pp. 86–87.

34 This list will be discussed further in interlude 1.

35 Chinda 1894.

36 Nakagawa 1995, pp. 180–181.

37 Chinda 1894, p. 99.

38 Ōshima 2011.

39 Ibid., pp. 92–93.

network.[40] The contracts that led to the incident were "resale contracts," allowing the broker to sell Japanese workers to plantation owners.

Ferguson had already gained notoriety for an earlier transaction involving the shipment of hundreds of Gilbert Islanders to Guatemala. Members of the Japanese Foreign Ministry were concerned even before the workers left Hawaii.[41] The Japanese consul in Hawaii informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the situation, noting the absence of formal diplomatic relations between Japan and Guatemala and the potential difficulties that could arise. As the conflict at the Guatemalan plantations developed, governors of thirteen prefectures in Japan were alerted. This information was published in newspapers, warning Japanese citizens of the dangers of traveling to the Central American country.[42]

Arriving on January 3, 1894, Chinda visited six coffee and sugar plantations to investigate the dispute. He stayed in Guatemala for nearly a month, interviewing Japanese workers, overseers, and plantation owners. Upon returning to San Francisco, he wrote a report on labor conditions in Guatemala, which was published later that year.[43] The fifty-four-page report includes detailed personal information about each worker, such as age, place of birth, and date of departure. It also provides extensive information about Guatemala, particularly its climate and working conditions on the plantations. The list of plantations (Table 3.1) offers valuable insight into the Guatemalan economy and its ownership structures.[44]

Table 3.1: Plantations Involved in the 1893–1894 Dispute

Plantation	**Location**	**Owners / Cinda's Comments**	**Workers**
Zapote	Coffee finca in Escuintla	Durán brothers, one of them was then Guatemala consulate in San Francisco; Francisco Camacho y Gallegos, then Spanish Consulate in Guatemala	8# / 35
Miramar	Coffee finca in Quetzaltenango	German Company: "Higher altitude, better weather, less endemic disease"	38
Pantaleon	Sugar cane plantation near Escuintla	Herrera brothers, one of them was then Guatemala's Minister of Agriculture	2# / 21
Mauricio	Sugar cane plantation	Samayoha	23
Trapichi Grande	Sugar cane plantation in Retalhuleu	German: "The weather is too hot and unhealthy; the workers are very satisfied with their offer here."	6

Summarized by Chinda (1894) and Oshima (2011); Numbers marked with # in the "Workers" column refer to those individuals listed in Yasu's *Notes*.

According to the contracts, the Japanese workers agreed to labor for three years at a monthly wage of 10 US dollars.[45] They were required to work ten hours a day, twenty-six days a month, and were entitled to $30 for return travel at the end of the contract. Plantation owners were responsible for providing housing, medical care, and food, which included

40 Ibid., pp. 87–88, 100.
41 Ishi 1987, pp. 27–29.
42 Nakagawa 1995, pp. 180–181.
43 Chinda 1894.
44 In 1885, more than 80% of Guatemala's imports were in the hands of foreigners, with the Germans being the most important businessmen. Castellanos Cambranes (1996, p. 132), quoted by Ōshima (2011, p. 89). See also Castellanos Cambranes (1985)
45 Information from this contract reproduced in this paragraph is taken from Ōshima (2011, pp. 99–100)

one pound of rice and one pound of beans daily, along with a twice-weekly ration of 1.5 pounds of beef, soybeans, tea, vegetables, and sugar. However, workers complained that they did not receive the provisions promised, and the climate on several plantations was unbearably hot. Chinda also investigated tensions among the Japanese workers and sought ways to protect the interests of all parties involved. To resolve the conflict, he worked with the Guatemalan government and plantation owners to terminate the workers' contracts and provided subsidies to help them find new jobs. Those who chose to stay in Guatemala found similar employment at sugar plantations or the seaport.[46]

In his report to the Foreign Ministry, Chinda detailed the resolution of the conflict. He also assessed Guatemala's political, social, and physical environment in relation to the planned development of Japanese overseas migration. The final sections of the report addressed four key considerations for Japanese workers abroad: (1) whether the climate was suitable; (2) whether Guatemalan owners paid fair wages; (3) whether Guatemala had adequate labor laws; and (4) which measurement would best promote future Japanese migrant worker programs.[47] With Guatemala's economy reliant on coffee and sugar exports, Chinda believed there was significant potential benefit in sending Japanese workers.[48]

Having traveled by horseback to visit plantations ranging from the Pacific coast to the tropical hills, he found the climate uncomfortably hot and humid. Chinda cited labor shortages and the perceived laziness of Guatemala's indigenous population as factors likely to increase wages for Japanese immigrants. However, he noted that existing laws offered Japanese workers no greater protection than the native population. Japanese laborers risked becoming indentured servants and faced violence if they attempted to escape their conditions. Chinda concluded that any successful labor migration program would need to prohibit private contracts and be founded on bilateral treaties with government oversight.

Chinda's report and his well-prepared interactions with Guatemalan officials reflect the growing importance the Meiji government attached to Latin America. As rising anti-Asian sentiment in the United States made the most common destination for Japanese emigrants increasingly hostile, Japanese opinion makers began promoting Latin America as an alternative.[49] The construction of the Panama Canal in the 1880s was considered an opportunity to export Japanese labor to Central America.[50] In 1888, Japan signed a treaty with Mexico that was considered its first equal treaty with a Western nation. Situated between Mexico, Panama, and Nicaragua—which was an alternative site for a canal across the Central American isthmus—Guatemala attracted Japanese attention.[51] Several months before the labor incident, Japanese and Guatemalan officials had already met in Washington,

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46 Information regarding the whereabouts of these migrant workers following the incident is limited. During my interview with Kojima Hideo and Kojima Keiko (Guatemala City, March 31, 2018), who arrived in Guatemala in the early 1970s, they recounted a meeting with two elderly Japanese women. The women had arrived with a group from Yokohama. While in San Francisco, they learned about the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake. Subsequently, the women found themselves on their own in Central America. The women told the Kojimas that they knew two or three workers involved in the 1893 incident in Guatemala City. One of these women was from Kyūshū and only fifteen years old when she arrived in America. She later married a Chinese man named Lam (林, Hayashi). The other woman, from Hiroshima, was in her twenties and married a Guatemalan.

47 Chinda 1894, p. 80.

48 A brief discussion on Chinda's conclusion, see Ōshima (2011, pp. 97–98)

49 Ishi 1987; Ōshima 2011.

50 Ishi 1987.

51 Itō 1895a,b.

D.C., to explore the possibility of establishing trade and diplomatic relations.[52]

In 1897, Japan made its first attempt to establish a settler colony in Mexico, led by a company founded by the politician Enomoto Takeaki 榎本武揚 (1836 – 1908).[53] About eighty Japanese workers who had remained in Guatemala after the 1893 incident later joined the Colonia Enomoto (榎本殖民地).[54] Although the Mexican colony soon failed, Japan's interest in new Latin American destinations grew. In the final years of the nineteenth century, Japan began sending large numbers of migrants, first to Peru and, in the following decades, to other countries in the region.

Although rarely addressed in histories of the Japanese presence in Latin America, the 1893 incident highlights tensions between Japanese and Guatemalan elites, which were shaped by cultural bias and a lack of mutual understanding. It reveals the scant regard Guatemalan landlords and northern blackbirders held for Japanese laborers, whom they equated with defenseless "coolies" imported from China and other parts of Asia. The Meiji government, eager to reject this association, offered strong support to the workers involved in the dispute. This elitist construction of Japanese subjects as deserving of special protection also surfaced in Chinda's condescension toward Guatemala's indigenous population, mirroring the racist stereotypes that underpinned the plantation economy. In the triangular discursive space of transpacific racism, the affirmation of Japanese modernity was articulated through the marginalization of Guatemala's indigenous people.

Japanese Workers Of Good Value?

In keeping with the progressivist outlook that had taken hold among political elites throughout Latin America, Guatemala's liberal regimes viewed the indigenous majority as inadequate contributors in the transition to an export-oriented plantation economy. They enacted policies that displaced indigenous communities from their lands and promoted the creation of large agricultural estates in the hands of European immigrants.[55] To meet the labor demands of this economy, some plantation owners urged the government to seek immigrant labor from East Asia.[56] These proposals, however, were met with considerable public concern.

For example, the anonymous author of a newspaper article titled "Japanese Workers" took a firm stand against the introduction of workers from Asia and Oceania.[57] He began by comparing Guatemala to other countries in the Central American isthmus, emphasizing Guatemala's advantage of having a large indigenous population. Rather than importing foreign laborers at great expense, he proposed measures to compel the indigenous population to enter the labor market. He insisted that his position was not xenophobic. On the contrary, he argued that Guatemala should welcome immigrants who arrived voluntarily, driven by a desire for progress and capable of assimilating into "our race." Forced immigration from

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52 Ōshima 2011.

53 In 1891, Enomoto was appointed minister of foreign affairs and established the Emigration Department (移民課). He began negotiations with Mexico, which needed workers. In 1893, Enomoto resigned his post and founded the Colonization Society (Shokumin Kyōkai 殖民協会), and in the following years, he worked to prepare the ground for settler colonialism, which he believed would be beneficial to the Japanese Empire. On Enomoto and the settlement in Mexico, the Colonia Enomoto, see Tsunoyama (1986).

54 Ishi 1987.

55 McCreery 2011.

56 Ōshima 2011, p. 89.

57 All quotations in these paragraphs are from "Trabajadores Japoneses," *Las Noticias*, May 28, 1892.

Japan, China, Australia, and Polynesia, by contrast, would bring individuals with the most repugnant vices who could never assimilate. Even worse, in his view, was the prospect of signing a bilateral treaty to import Japanese laborers. While acknowledging that the Japanese government was "leading the country fully into the open road of progress," he claimed that "the masses remain in the darkness of ignorance." As such, he urged that immigrants of "our race" be invited instead, listing "the inhabitants of the Canary Islands, the Azores, the Eastern and Western Pyrenees, the Swiss, Italian, and Austrian trio," whom he described as hard-working, sober, and generally honest.

Despite the negative attitude toward Asian immigration exemplified by this newspaper article, the services of "blackbird" brokers like Walter Ferguson were still employed to address the plantation labor shortage. An 1893 newspaper column titled "The Immigration Project" supported the use of Asian labor as a temporary solution but warned against exposing Guatemalan society to foreign influence. The author wrote:

> At the most, Asian workers can be considered as day laborers for the time and circumstances; once the work is done, it is in our interest that they leave the country with nothing more than the trace of their tasks, without becoming factors in the social organism.[58]

Given the ambiguous opinions and the persistent labor shortage, it is understandable that the Guatemalan elite paid close attention when the diplomat Chinda visited the country to resolve the incident involving the Japanese workers. According to historian Ōshima Masahiro, news of Chinda's arrival was likely sent by the Guatemalan embassy in the United States, and newspapers published four articles about him during his stay.[59]

The first article in the *Diario de Centro América* asserted the need to "strengthen the existing diplomatic relations between our country and the prosperous Japanese Empire.'[60] Another account described the journalist's meeting with Chinda, noting that he was "about 35 years old, short, slender [...] generally well-mannered and friendly," and "spoke English accurately and can write Spanish, although he does not attempt to speak it." Chinda arrived well-prepared, even providing reporters with "a copy each of two Japanese newspapers, *Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun* and *Nihon*, published in Edo, the capital of the Japanese Empire."

The events of the Venus transit, as discussed in chapter 1, illustrated that the Meiji government recognized the advantages of competently representing a modernizing Japan. Consul Chinda's visit was planned accordingly and likely took place in the context of the exploratory treaty negotiations that the two countries had held in the United States several months earlier. Chinda's visit may have improved Japan's image in Guatemala, at least among the political and economic elite. For example, another article about the visit, published on January 24, offered the following assessment regarding the importation of Japanese labor: "The Japanese are, as a rule, educated, industrious, hard-working, and, unlike their neighbors in the Celestial Empire, they are not selfish, nor do they carry in their blood the germs of foul and unknown diseases."[61] While this was theoretically reason enough to hope for their help on Guatemalan plantations, an important caveat was made necessary by the negative experience that Chinda had come to remedy.[62] As Oshima

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58 *Diario de Centro América* (1893: 1), quoted in Barreno Anleu (2004, p. 66).

59 Ōshima 2011, p. 91.

60 All quotations in this paragraph are from Ōshima (ibid., p. 101).

61 *Diario de Centro América* (1894:1), quoted from Barreno Anleu (2004, p. 83)

62 All quotations in this paragraph are from Ōshima (2011, p. 95). Ōshima did not mention the title of the article he referred to, but it was likely the one titled "Inmigración japonesa" mentioned above.

explains, the article ultimately argued that the group of Japanese laborers recruited in Hawaii were unsuitable for the task "because they had acquired the vices and customs of other countries," and that all problems would be solved by attracting Japanese nationals directly from Japan.

However, this tentative support for Japanese labor immigration did not translate into actual policy changes. With anti-Asianism on the rise, encouraging East Asian immigration was soon out of the question. Driven south by anti-Chinese legislation in the United States, Chinese immigrants trickled into the country, but they arrived on their own. On the Japanese side, the Guatemala incident shaped efforts to assert control over overseas migrants. It also contributed to the shifting perceptions that motivated imperial Japanese initiatives in Latin America. At the height of nationalism, ruling elites on both sides of the Pacific adopted a Darwinian outlook on global competition. In their quest to catch up with the trajectory set by Europe and the United States, they positioned themselves in relation to other regions of the world. In this context, East Asian and Latin American elites came to hold largely negative views of each other's countries. Gone were the days when Yasu, departing Japan after the transit of Venus, had considered Mexico a fitting destination for his pursuit of Western modernity.

Cantonese Merchants and Asian Curiosities

At the end of the chapter titled "The Story of My Second Voyage to America" in the *Memorias*, Yasu recounted how the failed mining project forced him to leave Japan and his mother and how the turmoil in Central America prevented his return. Reflecting on the events that led to the reopening of Fotografía Japonesa, his marriage, and the much later writing of the *Memorias*, Yasu's short sentences convey the circumstances that compelled him to start anew in the middle of his life and distance himself from the prospect of returning to Japan.

The portrayal of Yasu Kōhei's transpacific life as a linear trajectory of migration, as presented in earlier accounts, obscures the significance of his brief return to Japan. A savvy businessman and multilingual cosmopolitan, Yasu did not plan to rely solely on studio photography for income, contrary to what most versions of his biography suggest. In fact, before leaving Guatemala, Yasu must have realized that the increasing competition made the photography business difficult. When he returned from his Peruvian adventure, he carefully weighed his options. In a letter sent to friends in Fujisawa on January 1, 1891, Yasu explained his decision to stay for a while and raise funds for the trip back to Japan, which he still intended to make. He wrote:

> I am currently living in the capital of Guatemala, and if I open a small shop with Japanese goods (日本商品ノ一小店), I can make a lot of profit. At the moment, there is no way to get the necessary capital, and I am considering restarting my former photography business to save the money.[63]

His experience in the foreign settlement in Yokohama and his travels through Europe and Mexico had likely provided Yasu with a good understanding of the commercial potentials of East Asian goods. This is borne out by the thoughts on the issue that Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, Yasu's Mexican benefactor and travel companion, expressed when he visited

63 Appendix 7, Letter 7.

Japan for the Transit of Venus. In *Viaje al Japón* he described his observations in the shopping districts of Yokohama and Tokyo:

> In Kio-bashi-dori, as well as in Hon-tshio-dori [...] there are rich and well-stocked shops where you can admire the diverse and varied products of Japanese industry [...] The workshops of elaborately worked ivory objects, the storehouses of lacquerware, the admirable specimens of ceramics, bronzes, enamels, rock-crystal carvings, silk fabrics, and a thousand other fruits of the painstaking labor that characterizes the Japanese, are everywhere to be seen, and are surprising for their beauty and originality, no less than for their extreme cheapness in relation to their merit. [...] I have spent many hours admiring these products of labor, and at the same time, I am surprised that the interest in speculating on sure results has not yet induced our merchants to try the introduction of all these articles into our markets, as they have already been introduced into those of Europe and the United States. I consider it obvious that the merchants who would undertake something in this direction would obtain a very good profit, realizing very soon their merchandise, which would attract much attention in our country for its novelty and beauty.[64]

By the time Yasu returned from Peru, the first Cantonese merchants in Guatemala had established import businesses for Chinese and Japanese products. The growth of these enterprises in the following decades demonstrates the increasing appeal of Oriental goods to consumers in Central America. The growth of this market was caused not only by greater supply but also by the spread of cultural tropes. This was facilitated through connections with European metropolises where Japonisme was a significant trend. In Guatemala, modernist writers' literary portrayal of the Far East, known as Latin American Orientalism, also played a key role in generating demand for East Asian products.[65]

The following section explores Yasu's experience as an East Asian individual during his second stay in Guatemala. While the "yellow peril" racism, political shifts, and changing migration policies continued to shape what it meant to be Japanese in Central America, the focus here turns to the aesthetic dimension. On one hand, goods brought by Cantonese trade networks established material foundations for East Asian culture and identity. On the other, I would argue that the merchants integrated themselves into Guatemalan society by presenting themselves as suitably Westernized subjects. In this way, they mirrored Yasu's approach to some degree.

Japonisme and Asian Novelties

During Yasu Kōhei's second period in Guatemala, which began in the 1890s, East Asia was no longer a distant concept. Cantonese merchants had established businesses across cities in the country. Publications and postcards showcased Art Nouveau designs incorporating Oriental motifs such as lanterns, pagodas, and lotus flowers. Newspapers increasingly reported on current events in East Asia, including wars and political developments. The Cantonese merchant community expanded in both size and prominence within the capital's public life, benefiting from the global flow of goods.[66]

According to Yasu's letter to his friends in Japan, his main obstacle was the lack of capital needed to enter the trade in East Asian goods. Another challenge was likely the difficulty of accessing the established transpacific trade networks, which had expanded

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64 Díaz Covarrubias 1876, pp. 137–138.
65 See, for example, Hagimoto (2016b).
66 Barreno Anleu 2004.

markedly with the arrival of Chinese indentured laborers in the United States.[67] Although still relatively small when Yasu returned from Peru, the number of Cantonese merchants in Guatemala grew steadily around the turn of the century.[68] In 1893, there were 18 stores in Guatemala City; by 1916, that number had nearly tripled.[69]

As Chinese and Japanese novelties entered the Guatemalan market, a group of Latin American intellectuals who lived in Paris and participated in its fashions conveyed the European Orientalist fascination with Far Eastern aesthetics to the reading public in Latin America. In 1893, a short story entitled "The Death of the Empress of China" appeared in the biweekly *Guatemala Ilustrada*.[70] Written by Nicaraguan modernist Rubén Darío (1867–1916), the story concerns a delicate porcelain doll sent as a wedding gift from Hong Kong by an American chinoiserie dealer, which causes jealousy in a young family. As literary scholar Araceli Tinajero points out, the story uses material artifacts belonging to the realm of traditional culture to insert the relationship between Latin America and East Asia into the modernist cosmopolitan exchange of ideas.[71] The protagonist of the story, the sculptor Recaredo, has a strong infatuation with Oriental objects, which Darío describes as follows:

> Recaredo loved his art. He had a passion for form; from the marble sprang graceful naked goddesses with smooth white eyes lacking pupils; his studio was peopled with a nation of silent statues, metal beasts, dread gargoyles, griffins with long leafy tails, Gothic confections of possible occult inspiration. And his greatest love, Japanese and Chinese exotica. In this, Recaredo was an original. I don't know what he would have given to speak the tongues of Japan and China. He had perused the best albums; he had read fine exotica; he worshipped Loti and Judith Gautier. He had scrimped to buy authentic works from Yokohama, Nagasaki, Kyoto, Nanking, and Peking: knives, pipes, weird and hideous masks like faces in drugged dreams; mandarin minidwarfs with bloated bellies and indented eyes; frog-mouthed freaks with big, gaping, toothy grins; tiny, gruff Tartar soldiers.[72]

When the porcelain Empress of China arrives, the artist builds her a cabinet of folding screens adorned with cranes and rice fields and surrounds her with "all his Chinese and Japanese knickknacks" and a "big Nipponese parasol painted with camellias and fat bleeding roses."[73] The story ends when Suzette, the wife, shatters the Empress in revenge, and the love is restored.

Another example of the appreciation of the material culture of the East Asian periphery from the perspective of the Latin American periphery can be found in the works of the Mexican poet José Juan Tablada (1871–1945), who visited Japan for several months in 1900. Reproduced in Guatemala in the periodical *La Locomotora*, the poem "Japón" begins with the stanza "Golden mirage, opium dream, / font of all my desires! / In your garden a dazzling kaleidoscope / burns its crystals into my mind!"[74] The poem becomes

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67 Sinn 2017, pp. 56–59.

68 In 1893, there were seventeen Chinese nationals among 11,331 registered foreigners from 42 countries, and by 1921 there were 759. The 670 Chinese in 1940 represented 4.5% of all foreigners and 0.04 of the total population of Guatemala (Barreno Anleu 2004, p. 107).

69 Ibid.

70 Rubén Darío, "La muerte de la Emperatriz de la China," *Guatemala Ilustrada*, April 30, 1893.

71 Tinajero 2004, p. 70.

72 Quoted from González Echevarría (1997, p. 107).

73 Ibid., p. 108.

74 José Juan Tablada, "Japón," *La Locomotora*, November 10, 1906.

a declaration of love for Japan. Like Darío, the author blends highly symbolic oriental impressions into his modernist art.

Literary scholars highlight the significance of such Orientalist appropriations for the aesthetic development of Latin American literature and the formation of modernist cultural identities.[75] As Hagimoto Koichi explains, the "Latin American Orientalist" writers who lived in Paris and formed a cultural community used literary journalism "to articulate a complex network of identity discourses vis-à-vis Europe and Asia."[76] The recognition they attained through the objectification of a highly aestheticized "my Japan" (*mi Japón*) was mediated, as Roque Baldovinos notes, by a growing market for cosmopolitan luxury goods. Despite their appreciation of China and Japan, however, modernist authors continued to view Europe as the primary model for Latin America's path to modernity.[77]

The biography of the Guatemalan writer Enrique Gómez Carrillo (1873-1927) is a particularly vivid illustration of the aesthetic and cosmopolitan entanglements of Latin American engagement with East Asia. Gómez Carrillo spent much of his life in Spain and France, where he moved in elite social and literary circles. He traveled extensively, publishing his impressions in widely read newspaper articles. In 1905, he was sent to Japan as a correspondent, where he reported on the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War.[78] Although he remarked on discrepancies between his expectations and his direct observations, Gómez Carrillo admitted that Japan already felt familiar to him through literature and visual representations.[79] The connection between preconceived Orientalist imagery and his actual experience is made explicit in a passage describing a street scene:

> Those little houses, which are big boxes covered with black tiles, and in each of which, indispensably, there is a little shop of everything, where the whole family sells and no one buys; those sweaty men dragging carts loaded with huge sacks; that lack of color, of brightness, of general joy, in short, I already knew it. But the reality, this time, is more complete, more intense than the vision.[80]

A comparison of Gómez Carrillo's writings on Japan with those of European Orientalist authors such as Pierre Loti reveals a distinctively Latin American lens. Rather than emphasizing exoticism for its own sake, Gómez Carrillo focused on aspects of Japanese society that resonated with Latin American experiences, using these points of convergence to "symbolically blend and identify with a non-Western Other as a mechanism of self-affirmation."[81] In this context, Gómez Carrillo dedicated *The Japanese Soul*, his second book-length work on Japan, to Guatemalan president Manuel Estrada Cabrera, presumably because it offered valuable insights on how to guide Guatemala along a similar path of development as Japan.[82]

At the same time, Guatemalan newspapers, aided by the telegraph and the global

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75 See, for example, Camayd-Freixas (2013), Corona (2016), Gasquet and Majstorovic (2021), Hubert (2015), and López-Calvo (2013).

76 Hagimoto 2016a, p. 6.

77 Roque Baldovinos 2007.

78 Torres-Pou (2005, p. 186). Most of Gómez Carrillo's articles on Japan were later compiled in the three volumes *De Marsella á Tokio* (1906), *El alma japonesa* (1907), and *El Japón heróico y galante* (1912).

79 "Sí. Lo que ahora veo en la realidad, ya me era por los libros y las estampas familiar" (Gómez Carrillo 1906, p. 153).

80 Ibid., p. 153.

81 Clark 2013, p. 115.

82 Gaster 2014.

circulation of news it enabled, kept their readers informed about events in the Far East.[83] The interest in Japan reflected in the news was shaped by ideas about modernity, statehood, and East Asia originating in Europe and the United States. For example, on June 22, 1892, *Las Noticias* published a brief note that assumed certain truths about the political process in the foreign nation. The headline read: "Japan: Cabinet Remains in Office Despite Recent Defeat in Parliament."[84] Observing the growth of Japan's military power, Guatemala's ruling class was also interested in how the Japanese army was achieving modernization. In 1896, an illustrated magazine published a short article entitled "Militaries" that linked the success of the Japanese military to the bicycle:

> We have learned that the government has sent French bicycles, "Morel", folding, for the use of the army. They have already been distributed to the Polytechnic School and to the chief instructors of the other corps. [...] It is well known that the bicycle, which is used in military service as a means of rapid transportation, is of great importance for the speed of communication. Let us hope that among us, it will produce the good results observed by the European armies in their recent maneuvers and by Japan in its war with China.[85]

Adopting the tropes of European Orientalism, Latin American writers portrayed a Japan characterized by *geishas*, *samurais*, *haiku*, horticulture, and prints. Japan's reputation was enhanced by its successful modernization during the Meiji era and its assertive foreign policy. Japonism gained popularity in the West, while interest in China, which had suffered humiliating territorial concessions to Western imperial powers, declined.[86]

This complex discursive constellation, which fueled fascination with East Asian products sold by Cantonese merchants, did little to raise awareness of the hardships faced by Asian immigrants in Guatemala. Gómez Carrillo's dedication of *The Japanese Soul* to president Estrada Cabrera exemplifies this disconnect, as it fails to acknowledge the legal discrimination against Asian arrivals. The tension between the fear of the "yellow peril" on one side and Latin American Orientalism on the other sets the context for the migrant lives of Yasu Kōhei and the Cantonese merchants, whose upward mobility remained limited despite their commercial success.

Portraits of Cantonese Merchants

Rejection of Asians intensified in the early twentieth century, leading to laws designed to prevent Japanese and Chinese immigration.[87] These laws reflected the rigid racial hierarchy maintained by the dominant class.[88] It is worth noting, however, that many Chinese immigrants who arrived in Guatemala in the 1890s were successful businessmen rather than laborers like those who had come earlier to Cuba, Peru, or Panama. They settled in central parts of the city and had a significant impact on the urban landscape.

The Western gaze judged East Asians by their adoption of European clothing and their

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83 For example, there was the newspaper *Diario de Centroamérica*. *Las Noticias* also had a section titled "News Received by Cable Today," which provided readers with news primarily from Europe and North America and occasionally from Asia.

84 "Japón: El gabinete continúa en su puesto, a despecho de la reciente derrota que sufrió en el parlamento," *Las Noticias*, June 22, 1892.

85 "Notas ciclistas: Militares," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, September 15, 1896.

86 Metrick-Chen 2012, pp. 13–71.

87 Barreno Anleu 2004.

88 Palmer 1996.

Figure 33: Cantonese Filadelfo Lam S. and Q. José Lam, advertisement of merchants in San Marcos

Figure 34: Portrait of Albert Ley, advertisement of merchants in Escuintla

ability to speak Western languages. During his time as a student in Yokohama, Yasu and his peers, who cut their hair short and abandoned traditional Japanese clothing, may have already begun to see themselves through this lens. Cantonese businessmen in Guatemala likely learned the importance of presenting themselves in a "proper" manner. Unlike the playful depiction of Asian otherness in exoticist art in the cosmopolitan world, East Asian immigrants downplayed their otherness to avoid being seen as backward.

An example can be found in *El Libro Azul de Guatemala* (*The Blue Book of Guatemala*, henceforth *Libro Azul*). This bilingual publication, released in Spanish and English in 1915, was intended to promote the country to foreign investors and tourists. It contained an overview of Guatemala's history, social divisions, and administrative regions, along with a brief introduction of notable figures and entrepreneurs. For instance, the section on San Marcos, located in the western highlands, featured local immigrant-owned businesses to showcase the promising opportunities for foreign investment (figure 33):

> Filadelfo Lam S.: Mr. Lam is one of the most prominent merchants in San Marcos, specializing in Chinese and Japanese goods, fine silks, novelties, etc. Mr. Lam was born and educated in Canton, China, and came to Guatemala several years ago to establish himself in business.
> José Longo: Mr. Longo was born in Oviedo, Spain, and came to Guatemala many years ago to establish himself in business. His San Marcos Hotel is of the highest quality, well located, large airy rooms, excellent service, various cafés and a first class restaurant. Don't miss this hotel, you will be pleased.
> Q. José Lam: A prominent Chinese merchant, born in Canton, China, and a graduate of the commercial colleges of Canton, he came to Guatemala several years ago. He has established a fine business in San Marcos, where he carries a full line of Chinese and Japanese goods, silks,

Figure 35: "Portrait of a young Asian man," Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1895

paños, novelties, etc.[89]

Comparing the descriptions of the two Cantonese businessmen with those of the Spaniard, the differences become clear. The text about Mr. Longo emphasizes only the superior location and service of his business. In contrast, the blurbs about the two Cantonese merchants highlight their educational achievements in China. Their portraits also reflect their embrace of Western values, distinguishing them from the Chinese workers with long braids commonly seen in photographs of the period.

The page showcasing the town of Escuintla features two merchants (figure 34).[90] The town is located halfway between the Pacific port of San Jose and Guatemala City, and the many plantations in the region were mostly owned by European immigrants. The upper part of the page describes the store "La Mariposa", which sells general merchandise and alcoholic beverages. Its owner, Ramón Montero, is portrayed as fluent in English, Spanish, and Italian, and "at present [he] is president of the State Council of Public Instruction. The lower part shows a portrait of Albert Ley, manager of the store "Messrs. Hee Shun Lon & Co." The store sold groceries and goods "imported directly from Europe, Asia, and America" and also operated a small garment factory. Ley is depicted as a skilled businessman and an influential member of Guatemala's Chinese community. His portrait is conventional in style, showing a well-dressed young man wearing a bow tie, leather shoes, and a pocket watch. The image conveys success, and one can imagine that his well-tailored outfit served as an effective advertisement for the men's clothing branch of the business.

A portrait from the *Fotografía Japonesa* collection of Yasu's photographs bears a striking resemblance to Ley's. In this half-length portrait, a man with a mustache styled in the fashion of the time wears a three-piece suit, a tie, and a pocket watch (figure 35).[91] Unlike Ley, whose portrait shows him facing the camera with arms outstretched, this man's

89 Jones, Scoullar, and Soto-Hall 1915, p. 313.

90 Ibid., p. 337.

91 Because these images are untitled and unannotated glass negatives, it is impossible to determine the sitter's identity without help from outside the archive.

posture is more contained, with his hands hidden behind his back.

Since the *Libro Azul* was commissioned by the Estrada Cabrera government, its portraits and biographies of successful Cantonese merchants seem to suggest a favorable business climate for Chinese immigrants. However, this image is contradicted by the discriminatory regulations imposed during the same period. As Silvia Carolina Barreno Anleu notes, the state acted two-faced toward Chinese immigrants, recognizing them on the one hand and rejecting them on the other.[92]

A Guatemalan Family

During his first decade in Guatemala, Yasu expanded his social network through his business endeavors and participation in the Catholic community. When he left Guatemala to return to Japan, he may have realized the loss of the comfort that this network had provided. By all indications, he was torn by the affective relationships he had formed in Guatemala. Yasu's sentiment toward the Central American country was so evident that Takahashi Korekiyo, leader of the Japanese mining expedition to Peru, included the following passage in his autobiography, describing his observation of Yasu when their ship stopped in Guatemala en route to Peru:

> This morning we arrived at the port of San José, Guatemala, where the ship will stay for two days. Yasu is leaving early this morning by train for Guatemala [City], which he considers his home. (Yasu has lived in Guatemala for a long time and is married to a Guatemalan.) He will return to our ship before it leaves tomorrow. Yesterday we stopped at the port of Champerico, Guatemala, where many passengers, both men and women, boarded the ship. They were all Guatemalans going home, and three or four of the women were Yasu's friends. Yasu was so happy that he could hardly sleep last night.[93]

As described earlier, Yasu spent this brief visit to Guatemala City with the *padrino* Rafael Angulo Urruela and the family of his close friend Jesús Salazar de Noriega. Upon returning to Guatemala from Peru in 1890, he resumed his business activities and once again made his home in the city.

Although Yasu's Guatemalan family played a central role in his migrant life, little is known about them. Their household included other relatives, but few written records exist about these individuals. As a result of Yasu's profession as a photographer, images of himself and his family provide a glimpse into aspects of his life in Guatemala. These photographs, which are mostly untitled and undated, include portraits of Jesús Salazar de Noriega (Yasu's mother-in-law), María (Yasu's wife), and Manuel Jesús (Yasu's second godson). They are preserved as prints, framed pictures, or glass negatives.

Taking María as an example, Yasu began photographing her before their marriage. She likely participated as a model in his photographic experiments, including those involving multiple exposures. In the archives of Yasu's work, María's portraits span the entirety of his creative period, making her the most frequently photographed member of the Noriega family.[94] It is difficult to identify José Domingo, Yasu's first godson who also became his associate at Fotografía Japonesa, in the photographs.

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92 Barreno Anleu 2004, p. 135.

93 Korekiyo Takahashi (1936, p. 357). Yasu was not married at this time. Takahashi probably got the date of Yasu's marriage wrong when he wrote his memoirs.

94 Some later portraits dating from the 1910s were possibly taken by José Domingo.

The early family pictures taken in Guatemala City are exclusively studio portraits. After relocating to Antigua Guatemala in 1895, a series of more casual photographs captured leisure time spent in the garden or around the house. The absence of Jesús Salazar de Noriega in what appear to be later photographs suggests that she may not have accompanied the move to Antigua or that she may have died a few years after her daughter's wedding in 1891.

In this section, I use Yasu's writings, official documents, and preserved photographs to explore significant family moments. In an article on American family photographs, Lynn Blinn suggests that "the greater the commitment to an identity, the more pictures there will be that represent and reinforce that image."[95] Richard Chalfen emphasizes the added importance of identity and "belongingness" for migrants who undergo major changes in location and in their "personal, social and cultural circumstances."[96] Examining family photographs in this context can shed light on "people highlighting social relations by juxtaposing themselves with other people, and with places, things, and events."[97]

The strong sense of belonging conveyed through family photographs in migratory contexts is evident in Yasu's images, which depict him surrounded by his family and emphasize his identities as a pious Catholic, a husband, and a consummate professional in a modern trade. As the author of most of the photographs, Yasu arranged them not only as records of his social relationships but also as acts inscribing him into the Guatemalan social context. Adhering to local conventions for family portraiture, Yasu employed his professional skills to produce intimate images of a Catholic middle-class family. The significance of these photographs lies in their function as visual representations of Yasu's efforts to establish his place within Guatemalan society.

Marrying María Noriega

Yasu Kōhei and María Noriega were married on November 26, 1891. At the time, Yasu lived and worked in a house north of Guatemala City's central plaza. In his forties, he owned a photography studio and was a committed Catholic with strong connections in the religious community. Upon returning from the Japanese mining expedition to Peru, he initially had no intention of staying. It is unclear what prompted him to change his plans, marry the daughter of his close friend Jesús Salazar de Noriega, and establish himself in a country far from Japan. While there is no reason to doubt Yasu's affection for María, the marriage also facilitated his greater acceptance as an East Asian immigrant within a "discriminatory and elitist" Catholic society.[98]

Like the baptism I described in the previous chapter, the wedding created a paper trail in the parish books that solidified Yasu's status in a country that had just established its civil registry.[99] The marriage registration document, preserved in the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Guatemala City, contains personal information about the groom and bride. The document includes sworn statements from Yasu, María, Jesús Salazar, and two

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95 Blinn 1988, p. 19.

96 Chalfen 1988, p. 14.

97 Ibid., p. 14.

98 According to Nakatani Sánchez (2005, p. 145), male Japanese who immigrated to Mexico in the early 1930s decided to start families with Mexican women in order to "become attached to his new country" and live within conservative social conventions.

99 The books maintained by Catholic parishes traditionally provided the sole records of individuals baptized, married, or buried in Guatemala.

witnesses. The dates asserted in this document concerning Yasu's transpacific crossing are slightly inaccurate.[100]

> [...] that his name is Juan de Jesús Yas, from Tokyo in Japan; that he is forty-four years old and is a photographer by profession; that he remained in his country of origin until the year 76 [sic] and in that year left to travel several European countries and then came to Mexico, where he dedicated himself to the study of engineering, and stayed two years and two months in said capital of Mexico, this being his longest stay in the countries he has traveled, because in those of Europe, which were France and Italy, he did not stay considerable time in any of their towns; that in the year 79 [sic] he came to Guatemala together with Mr. Covarrubias, a Mexican minister who had been his engineering teacher, and that since then he has remained constantly in Guatemala, except for a journey of little more than a year that he made in 89 to his native country and Peru; that he is a Roman Apostolic Catholic, having received baptism after the corresponding catechesis in the Sagrario [main] parish of this Holy Metropolitan Cathedral, as attested by the certificate he has presented; that he is single and free of marital status, for in none of the countries he has traveled through, nor here in Guatemala, has he contracted marriage or betrothal with any person, except for the one he intends to carry out with Miss María Nicolasa Noriega, originally from Comalapa, whom the declarant has known since he came to this republic, and with whom he has no kinship whatsoever [...].[101]

Since María was only eighteen years old and therefore a minor, her mother and two witnesses, in addition to María herself, testified that she had freely consented to the marriage. As the female head of the Noriega family and the only parent of the bride and groom who was present, Jesús served as the host of the celebration, inviting guests with a card that announced: "Jesús Salazar de Noriega informs you of the imminent marriage of her daughter María to Don Juan José de Jesús Yas. Guatemala, November 1891."[102] Yasu regarded November 26th as a special date because it marked the engagement of St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary.[103] The *Memorias* contain a brief, affectionate passage describing the wedding, listing the participants in the ceremony, including the three godparents and the witnesses. Yasu also expressed satisfaction with the wedding venue, the historic church of Cerrito del Carmen, which offers a magnificent view of Guatemala City and was a popular subject of tourist photography.

He fondly recalled the special moment shared with his family and friends.

> On November 26, 1891, we awoke to a beautiful day. We went to Cerrito [del Carmen] in four carriages. When we arrived there, we climbed very slowly. We went around in the carriage, looking at the beautiful panorama of the city, and as we went around, we arrived at the church (I said to myself that I was going to heaven to receive the Sacrament from God Himself).
> Finally, we arrived at the door of the church. We got out of the carriage, went inside, and received the Holy Sacrament, making solemn vows to God with our mouths, according to the command of our Holy Mother, the Roman Church. Then we gave thanks to our God and to our Father, Brother Salvador.

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100 Yasu left Japan in 1875, shortly after the transit of Venus in 1874. He arrived in Guatemala with Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, who assumed his diplomatic post on December 7, 1877. Díaz Covarrubias departed Guatemala on December 15, 1879.

101 Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano Guatemala. Fondo Diocesano. Secretaría de Gobierno Eclesiástico. Expedientes matrimoniales. Caja 388. Tomo sin foliación, 1891.

102 Collection "Yasu Kōhei no Ihin," No. 56.

103 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 795 f.

Figure 36: Wedding photo of Yasu Kōhei and María Noriega, Guatemala City, 1891

> We left the church and got into the carriage. We descended with greater order and returned to the house to find the table already prepared to offer lunch to the godparents, witnesses, and other guests. And we had a pleasant time during lunch. And then our godparents and witnesses and the guests began to dance very happily; because I had never seen our *madrina* María Angulo dance before. That day she danced very happily to the admiration of everyone. The party went on until late at night. The next day, at the wedding, we spent the whole day dancing very happily. This is the memory of our wedding.[104]

Among the vestiges of Yasu's existence that have been preserved, this passage is a rare instance reflecting his social life in Guatemala. His friends, both priests and members of secular society, came from diverse backgrounds and countries; nevertheless, they participated in the colorful family event as a community bound by shared religious affiliation. The wedding sacrament was performed by Father Salvador Medrano, whose friendship with Yasu is explored in chapter 4 through a series of portraits. As the daughter of Rafael Angulo Urruela, an influential member of local society whose importance to Yasu was described in the previous chapter, the maid of honor provided both emotional continuity and social prestige.

Besides one studio portrait commemorating this occasion, no images of the wedding ceremony or celebration have been preserved in the archives of Yasu's works (figure 36). The photograph shows Yasu and María dressed in conventional wedding attire. María, standing, wears a white dress, a bun, and a veil adorned with flowers, while Yasu, seated and dressed in a full suit, holds a bowler hat on his lap. Both wear white gloves, adding a touch of elegance. Behind them, the painted backdrop depicts the interior of a European villa. A carved table beside María is decorated with books. The absence of saint images and crosses—elements that Yasu included in other photographs commemorating Catholic rites of passage—marks this portrait as a representation of the secular aspect of the wedding.

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104 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 808-823

Created with visible care, this photograph was mounted as a print and sent to Yasu's family in Fujisawa, inscribed: "In commemoration of receiving the sacrament of marriage on the 26th day of the 11th month of the year of our Lord 1891" (天主降生一千八百九十一年十一月廿六日聖意ニヨリ結婚禮受領記念).[105] The same photograph appears in the background of another photo card that Yasu sent to Japan, to which I will return later in this chapter.[106]

Head of Family

Even before Yasu married María, he had become godfather to her nephew, José Domingo. Although Yasu and María had no children, Yasu appears to have acted as a father figure to José Domingo from his early years. José Domingo later became Yasu's partner and successor at *Fotografía Japonesa*. In 1906, José Domingo married María Esperanza Morales, with whom he had two daughters: Blanca Margarita and María Emilia de Jesús Noriega Morales.[107] In 1907, Yasu became godfather to Manuel Noriega, possibly another child from María's family; however, little information about Manuel is available.[108]

Two mounted photographs taken in late 1907 show Yasu with his second godson, Manuel, then still an infant. One of them features a group of twelve individuals of varying ages posed in a studio setting (figure 37). They pose for the camera in front of a hand-painted backdrop depicting an arched interior. This is the same backdrop that was used for the portrait commemorating Yasu's wedding to María. At the center of the composition, behind a tripod supporting what appears to be a floral arrangement resembling a baptismal font, Yasu cradles the infant in his arms. To the left, a priest clasps his hands in prayer, flanked by two altar boys—one holding a baptismal candle, the other a crucifix. The mother gazes tenderly over Yasu's shoulder at her child. To Yasu's right stand his wife, María; a man likely to be José Domingo; an unidentified boy; and four women who regularly appear in Yasu's family photographs. Above the painted background hangs a large framed image of the Holy Family—Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child walking in harmony—visually completing the composition.[109]

Incorporating Catholic imagery as effective visual cues, the camera captures the lively play of the baptismal ceremony. Although Yasu likely did not press the shutter himself, he clearly orchestrated the photographic event. The composition involves not only the family but also the priest, who participated in staging this testimonial scene by performing his ritual role. As I will explore in chapter 4, many of Yasu's photographs were deliberately staged, a practice that can obscure the essential collaboration between photographer and sitters required to produce such a performative visual style.

The final product of this photographic and ritual event was a mounted image (figure 38). Yasu printed the commemorative photograph in a large format and affixed it to a decorative card. The inscription reads, "In memory of the baptism of Manuel María, October 2, 1907."

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105 Oyama 1982a.

106 See page 136.

107 Luján Muñoz 1982a.

108 By convention, Yasu and María would have shared the role of godparents, but María's participation is not mentioned in the existing documents.

109 A photographic reproduction of this image is preserved in the Fotografía Japonesa collection at CIRMA, indicating that this element of the background was likely a photographic copy produced by Yasu himself. This suggests that he may have created it for use in similar portrait settings for visiting clients. By producing his own backgrounds, Yasu could control both the scale and the visual integration of the image into the studio environment, tailoring the setting to suit specific ceremonial or aesthetic needs.

Figure 37: Photograph reconstructing the baptism ceremony of Manuel María, Antigua Guatemala, 1907

Figure 38: "Remembrance of Manuel María's Baptism, October 2, 1907," Antigua Guatemala

Figure 39: "Memito and his Godfather, 1907"

Set within an oval frame, the inscription, the reenactment of the ritual, and the centrally placed image of the Holy Family together confer on the photograph its meaning as a family keepsake, an expression of religious devotion, and a marker of social standing.

Another picture also shows Yasu's affection for the new family member. Captioned "Memito [Manuel's nickname] and his godfather," the image shows Yasu holding the boy on his lap while looking directly at the camera (figure 39). The cut-out figure of a woman in the lower-right corner suggests that this photo may have been taken at a family reunion. The plants and paper flags decorating the courtyard further indicate that the occasion could have been a holiday.[110]

Except for the pictures discussed here, few images of Yasu appear among the family photos. One such photograph was cited by the Japanese journalist Kikuchi, who visited Guatemala in the 1970s and used the image to illustrate an essay on Yasu (figure 126).[111] The photograph is captioned "Yasu Kōhei and his Guatemalan Family." Likely taken in the early 1910s, the portrait shows María seated at the front left, with Yasu standing behind her. The man standing to Yasu's right is probably José Domingo.[112] The identity of the elderly woman in the center remains unknown, although she appears in several other photographs within the photographic collection in Guatemala.

Several images capture the successive homes that Yasu shared with the Noriega family, depicting the leisurely aspects of everyday life. Although their dates are difficult to

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110 The handwriting on the mounted print does not appear to be Yasu's.

111 Kikuchi 1979, p. 67.

112 As noted above, identifying José Domingo Noriega in photographs is challenging, as only one known portrait exists of him as a young boy with his father (GT-005-P04-052). However, given the presence of this man in several other surviving family photographs and the proximity in which both Yasu and José Domingo lived and worked, it is likely that this is him. In 1906, José Domingo Noriega married María Esperanza Morales and had two daughters, who are probably the children seen in the front row of this portrait.

Figure 40: A photo card depicting Yasu's private residence. In the center of the picture is a framed wedding photo hanging on the wall below a larger framed image of the Sacred Family. Location unknown, ca. 1891 – 1910s

determine, all were likely taken after Yasu's return from Peru. One photograph shows a bright and spacious interior with two beds, and a third bed is visible through an open doorway (figure 40). Above the doorway in the center hangs the large picture of the Holy Family that Yasu had previously used as a backdrop in the photograph commemorating Manuel's baptism. On the right-hand wall is a shrine of photographic reproductions of saint images—likely the type Yasu produced and sold to Catholic clients. On the central wall, above a cabinet stocked with flasks, candles, containers, and what appears to be a small collection of teapots, hangs Yasu and María's wedding photograph. Two large suitcases, marked with Yasu's Spanish surname, attest to his experience of long-distance travel.

As discussed previously, Yasu's memoirs contain detailed accounts of the challenges he faced in securing suitable premises for himself and his business.[113] Nevertheless, Yasu found joy in the spacious gardens of certain homes, where he cultivated fruits and vegetables.

One house in Guatemala City was especially pleasant, where he worked in a peaceful environment and spent his after-hours playing with rabbits.[114] Of another property near Camposeco in Antigua, where the Yas-Noriega family lived during his later years, Yasu wrote:

> Well, to distract myself a bit, I cleaned the land up to the last corner. I removed all the stones and put them in one place. So I prepared the land. I planted all kinds of vegetables, like radishes, turnips, parsley, mint, cucumbers, onions, beets, lettuce, carrots, and tomatoes. I planted some black wheat just to try it out. Well, it turned out well, and so many other things that I can't list because of the other things that were there, especially it was a pleasure to see the wonders of so

[113] See chapter 2, page 96
[114] Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 946 f.

> many *huisquiles* and *caibas*. I made a little garden around a lemon tree that was on the property, and I installed around that tree the rustic table of reeds, where I was very happy to take my coffee every morning, sitting on the stone seat that I put around the table, which had shade even when there was good sun. When there was a celebration, we all ate and drank together, very happy and contented.[115]

Two undated photographs appear to illustrate the description of this property, or perhaps another with a lush garden. One depicts María alongside what may be José Domingo and some other families (figure 41). Two dogs rest at their feet, while one girl holds two cats. The other girl, standing on a chair in front of her mother, appears to be dressed for a party. On a small table sit a plate of fruit and three bottles, at least one of which contains Gallo beer, a popular local brand. Although this photograph may have been taken around or after Yasu's death, it conveys the domestic ambiance he cherished—complete with garden, lemon tree, and pets.

Another photograph shows family members in a similar garden setting, featuring a tall lemon tree at the center and growing vegetation, including corn, in the background (figure 42). A table and chairs are arranged for outdoor sociability, surrounded by pathways and plantings. Given their relatively formal attire, it is likely this was another commemorative photo taken for a ceremonial occasion.

One outdoor photograph features Yasu standing alongside three other individuals in front of a two-story house, with two farmers and an ox cart visible in the background (figure 43). The identities of the individuals depicted remain unknown. However, the same building appears as the backdrop in other Noriega family photographs, suggesting it may be the exterior of the house where Yasu lived and worked during his later years.

One photo, presumed to include Yasu, was taken on a *finca* near Antigua Guatemala (figure 44). It depicts him alongside María, a man believed to be José Domingo, a child, and another individual wearing the traditional cut-off pants of indigenous men, all standing in front of a white building. Unfortunately, there is no information regarding Yasu's connection to this place or the circumstances of the photograph.

What I have presented here is a collection of photographs that have endured decades and multiple rounds of selection. What we have at our disposal are the results of deliberate efforts to create these images and preserve the fragile glass negatives—first by the photographer and his family, and later by archival institutions. From this, we can infer aspects of Yasu's social and family life in Guatemala.

Yasu created these photographs not only for his Guatemalan family but also shared them with his acquaintances and relatives in Japan. In the following section, I discuss the role these photographs played in Yasu's correspondence to his homeland, especially during his later years. The mounted photographs preserved by the descendants of Yasu's siblings in Fujisawa reveal an even more carefully curated image that Yasu wished to present to those who may never have seen him in person.

Looking at family photographs taken by people of African descent and circulated across the Atlantic, Tina Campt argues that these images represent important efforts to "make new homes and selves elsewhere."[116] Yasu's family portraits and his practice of sending them to Japan also reflect his desire to assert his identity and established social status abroad. As a medium of expression within the migratory context, these photographs embodied

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115 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 837-848. Huisquiles and caibas are fruits of Central America.
116 Campt 2012, p. 147.

Figure 41: María Noriega and family in their garden, seated at the tea table, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1910s

Figure 42: María Noriega and family pose in front of lemon tree, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1910s

Figure 43: "Portrait of Yas-Noriega family," Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900s

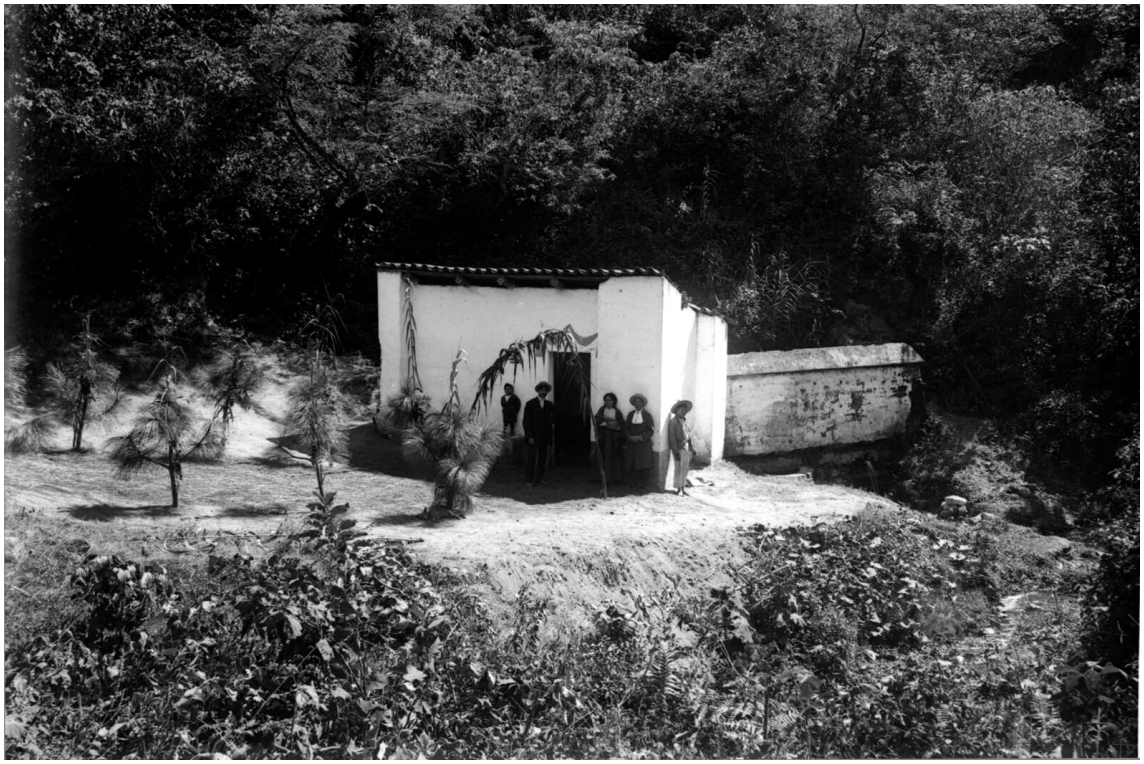

Figure 44: Family outing at a finca near Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900s

Yasu's connections to his Guatemalan family while reassuring his Japanese relatives of his well-being. Today, they serve as valuable material for contemporary memory projects.

Yasu Kōhei's Final Years

"The photographer, Mr. Yas, is very ill." On May 5, 1915, a brief note about Yasu's ailment appeared in the local section of the *Diario de Centro América*.[117] Printed among other announcements concerning local and national figures, the sentence attests to Yasu Kōhei's public recognition in both the capital and Antigua Guatemala, where he resided.

Nearly forty years after his first arrival in Guatemala, Yasu had just turned seventy and could barely climb out of bed due to declining health, which was likely exacerbated by tuberculosis.[118] He passed the studio to his godson José Domingo Noriega, who later changed its title to Foto-Yas.[119] At the same time, he prepared for his end by writing letters to Japan and composing the *Memorias* for his Guatemalan family acquaintances. In this section, I analyze how Yasu reflected on his life and how he conveyed his autobiographical thoughts through texts and photographs to those close to him on both sides of the Pacific.

117 "El fotógrafo, señor Yas, está muy enfermo," *Diario de Centro América*, May 5, 1915.

118 Tada (1988, p. 29), a Japanese physician, explains that Yasu suffered from tuberculosis. Although he remained lucid until the end of his life, the progression of the disease in his bones caused increasing pain and limited mobility, confining him to bed. In 1988, Tada traveled to Antigua and, with the help of descendants of the Yas-Noriega family, obtained Yasu's death certificate from the local cemetery.

119 Schlesinger 1998.

Letters Sent to Japan

In October 1916, Yasu Kōhei wrote what may have been his last letter to his family in Japan.[120] In this letter, he bade farewell to Matsutani Eigo 松谷英吾, his younger sister's son, with whom he had exchanged poems and photographs and who had kept him informed of family developments in Japan. Yasu wrote:

> I, a foolish old man, who until now has only waited for death to come. Day after day, I feel nothing but fatigue and physical pain; it will not be long before I die. Now I would like to say goodbye to my family and close friends. On the sickbed, I hold the pen to write this letter and present it to you with respect.[121]

Anticipating the end of his life, Yasu's final letters to Japan express a desire to renew ties with relatives and friends. Between February and October 1916, he wrote at least seven letters, which he transcribed—along with a reply from one correspondent—into the *Notes*.[122] One letter was addressed to Kawakami Kunitachi, a friend in Tokyo. Of the others, one was addressed to Yasu Kisaburo 屋須喜三郎 and five to Eigo, two younger relatives in Fujisawa whom Yasu had never met. Recurring themes in these letters include genealogical ties, nostalgia for his hometown, the torment of illness, and the fear of dying.

Kisaburo was the son-in-law of Yasu Kōhei's brother Kahei, who had been adopted into the family to carry on the Yasu name into the next generation.[123] Kisaburo was likely the head of the family in Fujisawa at the time. Yasu Kōhei's letter to him was brief, primarily describing his illnesses and his wish to hear from his relatives. He also expressed regret that he would not be able to see his nephews and nieces before he died.[124]

While transcriptions of these correspondences are preserved in Guatemala, only a few original letters still exist in Japan. Among the remaining items are some photo cards showing Yasu's studio and homes, as well as a portrait of María, likely one of the photographs Yasu Kōhei sent home (figure 45). Framed in an oval adorned with white gardenia flowers, María gazes firmly and calmly into the camera. She wears elegant attire: her hair neatly styled in a bun, a white blouse paired with a dark skirt, and a long pearl necklace. For Japanese beholders, María's likeness strongly evoked the image of sophisticated ladies from metropolitan cities like Tokyo. An inscription on the back of this mounted photograph defines it as a memorial image. In his modest mode of expressing himself, Yasu likely helped his Guatemalan wife to compose it in a form that could somewhat be understood across both cultural contexts, even if only indirectly. It translates as "This truly ugly photograph, as a memento of me, I send it to my beloved niece Midori. Yasu Maria."[125]

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120 No correspondence is preserved from the twenty years between Yasu's return to Guatemala in 1890 and the final year of his life. However, the intimacy of his letter to a nephew he had never met suggests that his communication with relatives in Fujisawa continued throughout his time in Central America.

121 Appendix 7: Letter 14. In the letters he sent in 1916, Yasu did not mention the names of his brother Kahei and sister Oyasu, whose married name was Matsutani, suggesting that his younger siblings may have died by then.

122 Appendix 6 describes the contents of each of the known letters Yasu sent to Japan. Appendix 7 contains transcriptions of these letters.

123 According to the manuscript preserved by Yasu's family in Fujisawa, Yasu's younger brother had a daughter, Chitose, and the adopted son, Kisaburo.

124 Appendix 7, Letter 12, Letter 15.

125 The inscription on an exhibition card that accompanied this photograph reads: "Kono makotoni minikuki Shashin vatakushi no Katami to shiti vaga aisuru Meiko Midori sama ni Okuru Yas Maria." The card

Figure 45: Portrait of María Noriega sent to Japan, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1910s

Besides the exchange on each other's lives across the Pacific, the correspondence with his relatives in Japan also served to reinscribe himself into the family genealogy, an important concern during Yasu's final years. An expression of this concern is a list of names and concomitant information that Yasu prepared and attached to a letter. In a note to his nephew Kisaburo, Yasu Kōhei wrote, "Just for your information, on June 7, I made a list of what I have researched about the 'Ancestry of the Yasu Family' and related names."[126]

The term "ancestors" evokes a sense of historical depth. Indeed, many of the individuals named in Yasu's list were born nearly a century before the letter was written. The document records the names of paternal ancestors, along with details such as dates of death, posthumous Buddhist names, and burial sites. All the individuals listed had died before Yasu left Japan, and some were buried in Tokyo and Yokohama. In red ink, a marginal note states that the burial places of Yasu's mother and his niece Tamaki "remains unknown."[127] It is likely that Yasu compiled this genealogy to ensure that certain family members, such as his youngest brother and great-uncle, would be duly remembered by

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also provides the Japanese text: "この真に醜き写真、私の形見として、わが愛する姪子みどり様に送る 屋須マリア."

126 Appendix 7, Letter 12.

127 Since 1889, when the nuns informed him that his mother and niece had been baptized in Tokyo, Yasu may not have heard much more about them.

future generations.[128]

When discussing the connections forged by the members of the Cantonese diaspora in the United States during the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Sinn explains that a common practice was "the repatriation of the bones and coffins of those who had died abroad, an activity requiring not just money and labor but also trust and goodwill."[129] Many Cantonese were unable to return home before they died, so their remains were sent back in coffins or bone boxes through established Cantonese networks. Yasu had lived half his life as a member of a Guatemalan family and may not have wished to be reunited with his ancestors after his death. Nevertheless, it was important to him to inform his Japanese relatives of his impending demise and to reaffirm his place in the family genealogy. Although most of his Japanese relatives were not Catholic, Yasu used the term *tenshu* (God, 天主) several times in his letter to Kisaburo. In doing so, he positioned himself between two distinct, and in parts contradictory, religious systems of envisioning death and its aftermath. As a Catholic, he prepared for his encounter with God, and as the member of a Japanese family, he evidently subscribed to the importance of genealogical remembrance.

Slightly different from the letters sent to close relatives, which focused on registering family records, Yasu dispatched more affectionate correspondence to Matsutani Eigo, his sister's son. Eigo was a schoolteacher, and Yasu felt connected with him through their shared literary interests. Yasu used poetry to record his voyages and share them with Japanese correspondents. Especially the letters he exchanged with Eigo revolved around this literary genre. In a letter dated February 1916, he thanked Eigo for a collection of poems he had compiled.

A Japanese group photo resided among Yasu's Guatemalan heirlooms before it was brought back to Japan as part of the Fujisawa collection. The photo depicts Matsutani Eigo with his colleagues and students (figure 46). Taken in March 1914, the inscription on the back reads, "Students of the eleventh graduation class' of Fujisawa Primary School."[130]

Yasu appeared to be torn between his two homelands. While preparing for his final rest in Antigua Guatemala, a pious town he cherished, he also expressed strong sentiments regarding his Japanese roots, his enjoyment of Japanese literature and the regret of unfulfilled ambitions he had carried since departing Yokohama. Concerned that his Guatemalan family had little use for his Japanese heirlooms, he wrote, "After your uncle's death, these [photos and poems] will be thrown away like waste paper (kamikuzu 紙屑)."[131] Despite living together for many years, language barriers and geographical distance seemed to limit how much Yasu could share his nostalgia for Japan with his Guatemalan family.

A series of exchanges between Yasu and Eigo centered on whether the latter should come to Guatemala to accompany the elderly Yasu and start his life in the Central American country. Although overseas migration was promoted by the Japanese government, traveling alone without compatriots may have caused anxiety for the young Eigo. Yasu must have felt intimate with Eigo to prod him to make such a life-altering decision. Yasu suggested that he could work as José Domingo's assistant in the Fotografía Japonesa.[132] Reluctant to leave his family and public employment and skeptical about starting over in a foreign language, Eigo was hesitant. Given Yasu's deteriorating condition, Eigo thought that he

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128 Yasu's youngest brother, Anpei, died at a young age while studying in Yasu's care in Yokohama (see chapter 1).

129 Sinn 2014b, p. 235.

130 Ihin 71.

131 Appendix 7: Letter 13.

132 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Appendix 7, Letter 14.

Figure 46: "Photo sent to Yasu in Antigua Guatemala by his nephew, Matsutani Eigo. 'Fujisawa Elementary School, Eleventh Advanced Course Graduation Commemorative Photo,'" dated March 25, 1914

would arrive after his uncle's death, and he did not savor the idea of depending on José Domingo. At the end of the letter he sent in reply to Yasu's proposal, Eigo asked Yasu to confirm José Domingo's approval of such an arrangement. To comfort Yasu's longing for Japanese food, Eigo promised that if the journey ever took place, he would bring food specialties and other items with him.

A month after Eigo's reply, Yasu sent another letter to his nephew. He congratulated him on the birth of a third daughter. "Although you would have been pleased if it had been a boy," Yasu wrote, "it is God's will." In response to Eigo's concern about leaving his wife and children to join Yasu in Guatemala, Yasu expressed his understanding, but his desires were fueled by Eigo's suggestion that he would bring food from Japan. Accordingly, Yasu made a long list of items he craved, including buckwheat, tofu, grated yam, eggplant, cucumber, leek, bracken, mushrooms, fish, fruit, plums, and any soft foods suitable for his "old teeth."

The letter also included seven of Yasu's poems, some inspired by his time in Mexico and Peru. Anticipating that he might not meet Eigo in person, Yasu provided instructions on how to maintain contact with the Noriega family. "After I die," he wrote, "if you want to contact Domingo, you can write in English or French and address it to Fotografía Japonesa." In this way, Yasu sought to build lasting connections between his two families that would endure beyond his death.

Comparable in their immediacy to photographs, migrant letters are valuable historical

sources that capture the moment of their creation.[133] Unlike the *Memorias*, which were written retrospectively long after the events, Yasu's letters offer insight into the evolving nature of his cultural identity and sense of belonging as he navigated different contexts. In his first letter from Mexico in 1876, he described himself as a *gaijin* (外人), or outsider, and noted that local political unrest had little impact on his personal situation. The expectation of eventually returning to Japan helped Yasu maintain emotional distance from the hardships of life abroad. However, in his final days, Yasu's sense of alienation deepened, particularly when reflecting on Japan and his family.

The Testament

On December 2, 1916, three months before his death, Yasu Kōhei composed his will. The notarized document reads as follows:

> In the city of Antigua Guatemala, on December 2, 1916, at eleven fifteen a.m., the undersigned Notary, accompanied by witnesses, legally competent and resident, Messrs. Priest Don José Mariano Yturbide, Lawyer Don Francisco Muñoz Beteta and Don Manuel de J. Azurdia, at the request of Mr. Don Juan José de Jesus Yas, I went to the house number three on the second street east, and in the presence of the said gentleman, he verbally expressed his desire to make a testamentary disposition.
> The testator, whose name is indicated, is of Japanese origin, born in the province of Sendai; called in the Japanese language, and registered in the records of this empire by the name of YAS KOHEI; he is seventy-two years old; he has lived in this republic for more than forty years; he is a photographer, married, from this neighborhood, and enjoys all his mental faculties, judging by the correctness with which he speaks.[134]

A recurring theme in Yasu's letters, as well as in the *Memorias*, is his sense of economic insecurity, which was in sharp contrast to the hopes he had when he first set out to obtain a Western education. His will suggests that by the end of his life, he owned little beyond the tools of his trade, and he held no real estate. Yasu named María as his principal heir and executor, leaving her "all the furniture that he has in his bedroom, religious books, pictures (*cuadros*), images (*imagenes*), trunk, and objects of personal use and, in addition, a counter (*mostrador*) that he has in the photographic workshop that he has in this city."[135]

To José Domingo, already in charge of the studio, and Manuel Jesús—who was about nine years old at the time—Yasu bequeathed "all the machinery, apparatus, essential elements, equipment, and furniture" in the photographic studio." This inheritance came with the condition that the two nephews, who were also his godchildren, would care for María and provide her with a monthly allowance of ten American gold pesos for the rest of her life.

In addition to the documents related to his baptism and marriage, the will yields evidence of how Yasu integrated himself into Guatemalan society not only as a businessman but also through relationships of actual and ritual kinship. Unlike many East Asian immigrants who established families within their diasporic communities, Yasu's role as a spouse and

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133 Stanley 2016.

134 "Testamento" in the Fujisawa collection "Yasu Kōhei no Ihin," No. 59. Perhaps because he left his hometown before the Meiji redistricting, or perhaps because he identified with the old topography of the shogunate, he told the notary that he was from Sendai, not Iwate, as would have been the correct designation at the time.

135 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Yasu's will.

Figure 47: Yasu lies on his deathbed, wearing the knotted cord that signifies his affiliation with the Secular Franciscan Order, Antigua Guatemala, February 28, 1917

head of a local household helped anchor him in Guatemala. This role was a central element in the plural structures of belonging that characterized his migrant experience.

Last Photos

During the months that Yasu was bedridden at the end of his life, he appears to have focused on organizing his estate and how he wished to be remembered. As a photographer familiar with commissions for funeral and postmortem portraits, it can be surmised that Yasu made advance arrangements for his wake and funeral ceremonies. Following Yasu Kōhei's passing, José Domingo took it upon himself to produce a visual record, skillfully capturing his godfather's final photographs.

One of the two photographs very likely linked to Yasu's death and funeral shows him lying on his deathbed (figure 47).[136] Given the natural light and the surrounding space, it appears that the photograph was taken in the family home, perhaps in the courtyard or a hall where mourners came to pay their respects. This is evidenced by the religious symbols visible around the bed and the condolence cards attached to the floral arrangements. On the wall behind the bed is a large cross decorated with ferns and roses. Dressed in a suit that

[136] There appears to be no reasonable doubt that this is a photograph of Yasu Kōhei on his deathbed. However, as with most works in the Fotografía Japonesa collection, no contemporaneous caption provides ultimate proof.

has become too large for his diminished stature, Yasu's body shows signs of rigor mortis. The knotted cord identifying him as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order is draped along his leg, and a crucifix is placed in his crossed arms. According to Pleitez Guardado, it was common for OFS members in Guatemala to be buried in full Franciscan habit.[137] Though Yasu is shown in secular garb, he is adorned with the symbols of his religious community. The moment captured by the camera underscores his Catholic identity as central to the funerary rites.

As anthropologist Lucía Pellecer noted in her study of funerary rituals and photography in Guatemala, creating images of the deceased as mementos was quite common in Antigua during Yasu's time.[138] Often, these images were the only photographs ever produced of a person. By analyzing stylistic features and the recollections of older residents in Antigua, Pellecer attributed the photographic negatives of postmortem images preserved in the collection to José Domingo Noriega. Although within Fotografía Japonesa's division of labor, Yasu may not have overseen photographic commissions at households around Antigua, he was certainly aware of this pictorial tradition, possibly requesting to be portrayed in this manner for his own postmortem photograph.[139]

Yasu's involvement in the photographic documentation of his death is more evident in a second image. Unlike the previous image, this one was taken in the studio and used for a Requiem Mass invitation (figure 48). At the center of the composition is a stately coffin adorned with a carved cross and heavy fittings. The coffin is positioned at eye level, framed by tall white candles, and rests in a lush bed of ferns, lilies, and other vegetation. While the coffin, candles, and white lilies serve as religious symbols associated with death and eternity, the background—the most temporal element of the photograph—depicts the refined elegance of European interiors and landscapes. This particular backdrop was frequently used by Yasu after his return to Guatemala in 1890. It also appears in the photographs commemorating his wedding (figure 36) and Manuel Noriega's baptism (figure 37).

To my knowledge, there is no evidence that Yasu or José Domingo Noriega took any other photographs depicting the Fotografía Japonesa studio as a funeral parlor. The care taken to stage this image distinguishes it from the postmortems that Noriega typically produced in courtyards or cemeteries, which captured the moment of mourning with a realistic aesthetic. However, the photograph here resembles two images reproduced in illustrated periodicals from Yasu's time. On July 1, 1897, *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* published a photograph by Alberto Valdeavellano, a well-regarded practitioner, showing the coffin of the late Mrs. Celia Barrios de Reyna, mother of the then-president. The photograph, entitled "Chapel Where the Body of Mrs. Celia Barrios de Reyna Was Laid to Rest," depicts an elevated coffin surrounded by floral wreaths.[140]

A few years before Yasu's death, a photograph was taken of the coffin of Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada—whom Yasu had photographed on various occasions—lying in state in the Cathedral of Guatemala City. This image was printed in the Catholic magazine *El Ideal* on May 15, 1913, with the caption: "The coffin containing the body of the archbishop, placed on an artistic catafalque."[141] In a much more lavish configuration,

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137 Pleitez Guardado 2016, p. 37.

138 Pellecer González 2013.

139 Debroise 2001; Pellecer González 2013.

140 "Capilla ardiente donde fue colocado el cadaver de la Señora Celia Barrios de Reyna," *La Illustración Guatemalteca*, July 1, 1897.

141 "El féretro que contenía el cadáver del Sr. Arzobispo, colocado sobre catafalco artístico," *El Ideal*, May

ORACION

Inmenso Dios, creador y redentor nuestro: conceded al alma de vuestro siervo **Juan,** aquella paz que no puede dar el mundo para que nuestros corazones se socieguen. Suplicámoste Señor, lo juzgues con misericordia y las penas que merezca por sus culpas, le sean perdonadas por vuestros méritos.

¡Dulce Corazón de Jesús sed su salvación!

Una lágrima por los difuntos se evapora; una flor sobre su tumba se marchita; una oración por su alma la recoge Dios. Orad por ellos. (*San Agustín*)

Misericordiosísimo Jesús dadle el descanso eterno Amén.

REQUIESCANT IN PACE
EN MEMORIA Y SUFRAGIO DEL ALMA
DEL SEÑOR DON

JUAN JOSE DE JESUS YAS

QUE FALLECIO EL DIA 28 DEL PASADO

se celebrará una misa de requiem en la Iglesia de la Catedral de esta ciudad, el día 20 del mes en curso a las 8 a. m. Su viuda y demás familia invitan a Ud. para que se sirva asistir a dicho acto religioso; y por cuyo favor le quedarán eternamente agradecidos.

Antigua G., Marzo de 1917.

La vida es un destierro: El cielo es nuestra patria, allí es a donde me llama Dios, allí es donde yo te espero.
(*Sta. Mónica*)

Bienaventurados los que mueren en el Señor, porque los acompañarán sus buenas obras.
Apoc. XIV. 13

Tipo-Lito. Central, 8 A. S., 19

VUELTA

Figure 48: "Notice of funeral ceremony," Antigua Guatemala, March 1917

this image bears particularly striking similarities with the photograph of Yasu's casket: there is the finely carved coffin placed on a tall catafalque, framed by white candles and numerous lilies that fill the foreground.

According to Pellecer, the Catholic Church at the time established rules prohibiting the use of the frontispieces and altars of its sanctuaries for the display of coffins, suggesting that this had been a relatively common practice.[142] Since Yasu died as an ordinary church member, his funeral could not be celebrated in the same way as that of the archbishop. However, as owners of a photography business, his family had the means to stage a similar ceremonial display of the coffin and to memorialize it in a photograph that framed his death as both an aesthetic and social event.

The image of Yasu's coffin was later reproduced on the back of the invitation card for the Requiem Mass held at the Cathedral of Antigua a month after his death. Below the invitation on the front of the card are two excerpts from Catholic texts. One, attributed to Santa Monica, reads:"Life is an exile: heaven is our home, there is where God calls me, there is where I wait for you." Playing on a common Catholic trope that identifies human life as a pilgrimage in foreign lands, this quote may have particularly resonated with Yasu Kōhei. A passage in the *Memorias* expresses a similar sentiment in the same religious language: "After more than one trip around the world," Yasu wrote, "God finally sent me to this picturesque city of Antigua Guatemala to ask for hospitality forever and ever and for all eternity."[143]

* * *

15, 1913.

142 Pellecer González 2013, p. 58.

143 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 869 ff.

As one of Emperor Meiji's first subjects in Latin America, Yasu's experience was shaped by political transformations in Latin America and Japan's efforts to redefine its place within the global order. After forgoing the support of his Mexican benefactor, Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, with whom he had arrived in Guatemala, Yasu faced uncertainty and the emergence of racist stereotypes of East Asians that were spreading across the continent. Nonetheless, he sought to capitalize on the growing market for East Asian aesthetics, as reflected in the name he chose for his business, Fotografía Japonesa. His affinity for Catholic spirituality-possibly first aroused during his studies in Yokohama-granted him access to influential circles in Guatemalan society and facilitated his marriage into a local family. Although Yasu initially aspired to partake in the grandeur of European civilization and the modern world of global connections, he ultimately found himself again on the periphery of the Eurocentric world. This marginal position may have contributed to the sense of defeat that surfaced in his late-life reflections.

Interlude 1

Japan and the Other in Yasu's Writings

Yasu Kōhei's letters and memoirs offer a vital foundation for tracing his transatlantic and transcultural movements within the context of broader historical developments—an approach consistent with existing scholarship on his life. Composed under a range of circumstances—aboard steamships, during transient stays in unfamiliar cities, or on his sickbed near the end of his life—these texts prompt a closer examination of their form, language, and purpose. How did Yasu make sense of his experiences, both during his travels and in retrospect? How did he translate foreign environments into Japanese and render his early aspirations in Japan into Spanish? These shifting modes of expression shed light on the ways Yasu navigated complex cultural terrains and constructed meaning through writing.

It would be a mistake to treat these rich and varied texts as mere factual accounts. Yasu carefully recorded, transcribed, and recalled the events of his life for different audiences, at different times, and in different languages, bringing the subjective nature of his writing into focus. Given the inherently reflexive character of letters and memoirs as literary genres, his writings offer valuable material for exploring his complex and, at times, conflicted sense of belonging.

Studies of Japanese emigration writings from before World War II reveal the variety of genres employed in letters sent home by those who had relocated to the Americas or Australia. Except for a few cases of female students from affluent families, most of this correspondence was composed by well-versed male emigrants. Yasu was one of them. Every diaspora trajectory evokes different narratives, and the stories Yasu created were imbued with his aspiration toward Western modernity, a firm belief in Christianity, and a sense of patriotism for the emerging Japanese Empire.[1]

For Yasu, writing in Japanese was not only a means of maintaining connections with distant friends and relatives but also a way to engage with the literary traditions he had come to appreciate in his youth. This is reflected in the careful handwriting of the letters he sent home years after his departure. Even while abroad, he likely kept himself informed through the latest publications on Japan's international endeavors, a fact evident in how he wrote about Spanish American cities in the style of reports on colonial societies that were circulating in Japan. While living in Central America, Yasu also embraced the conventions of the Latin American autobiographical genre, using them to weave together the various

[1] In her research on Japanese *tokkōtai* (特攻隊), or *kamikaze* (神風) pilots who carried out suicide missions during the latter stages of World War II, anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney notes that the pilots left behind an impressive number of lengthy diaries. She attributes their impulse to write to the Japanese mode of communication, in which the written word is preferred for expressing one's innermost thoughts and feelings. "In part," Ohnuki-Tierney (2002, p. 189) writes, "it [was] also due to the fact these young men were exceptionally well educated, and reading and writing were their major activities. However, even to a greater degree, it was because they had to sort out their thoughts and feelings by pouring out their anguish in writing."

notes he had gathered throughout his life into the narrative of a pious Catholic biography.

This interlude seeks to reveal the nuanced sense of belonging and keen observations found in Yasu's writings. The events corresponding with many passages of the *Memorias* were omitted from earlier attempts to reconstruct his biography, presumably because Yasu's personal reflections did not always resonate with the dominant historical narratives. Others were inadvertently lost during the process of institutionalization, leaving little trace in how Yasu is represented today. Rather than shaping his preserved writings into a unified story, the following sections explore individual themes that speak to the multiple dimensions of his identity as he moved across countries, contexts, and religious commitments.

Asians On the Move

Descriptions of Yasu's travels between Japan and the Americas comprise a substantial portion of his memoirs, in which he devotes considerable space to each of his three transoceanic voyages. As shown in the full transcript of the *Memorias* reproduced in appendix 9, Yasu organized his "Journeys to America" into chapters. His account of the first westward journey via Europe to Mexico focuses on impressions of cities and tourist sites. In contrast, his later Pacific crossings are composed largely of day-by-day records of the route and weather. The following excerpt, from his 1889 return voyage to Japan, documents seven days at sea after departing Honolulu. Reflecting the monotony of life aboard the *City of Peking*, one of the largest steamships of its time, the entries follow a simple and repetitive pattern:

> On the 17th [of June] the weather was very cloudy. It rained last night. At 8 o'clock, it began to rain, but it was very warm, although there was no sun.
> On the 18th the weather was very fine with the wind blowing from the northwest. Until yesterday the wind was always from N.E. The heat was very strong. It rained at night.
> On the 19th it was very cloudy. It rained at 8 o'clock. Wind direction as yesterday, N.W.
> Day 20 dawned very beautiful.
> Day 21 dawned very beautiful, the sea very calm, but very warm.
> The 22nd day dawned beautifully, and the very calm sea seemed like a carpet or a mat, but very hot. Wind S. W.
> The 23rd dawned very beautiful S.W. wind, the sea a little rough, and the wind quite strong. At night, it rained.[2]

For readers of a different era, it may be difficult to grasp Yasu's motivation for preserving these details, which involved recording them during his travels, possibly translating them into Spanish, and ultimately transcribing them into the appropriate chapter of the *Memorias*. The literature on nineteenth-century travelogues and diaries, especially those like Yasu's that contained various genres and languages, lies far beyond the scope of this text. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Yasu's account of his journey resonates with the writings of other travelers who crossed the oceans on similar quests.

An example of such writing is mentioned by John van Sant, who describes the sea diary kept by one of the 148 "first-year migrants" (*gannenmono* 元年者) sailing to Hawaii immediately after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The diary had a very particular style, as its author "primarily wrote brief descriptions of the weather—it rained often—and the

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[2] Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 249 ff.

direction the ship was headed (south, then east)."[3] One might wonder why a first-time traveler embarking on an unknown journey would choose to record his route in this way, but there was a precedent that might explain it. In 1862, a book by Joseph Heco 浜田彦蔵 (1837–1897) titled *Floating on the Pacific Ocean* (*Hyūryūki* 漂流記, literally "drifting stories" or "memoirs of a castaway"), was published in Japan.[4] The book focuses on the experiences of its first-person narrator, Heco, who was rescued by Americans after a shipwreck in 1850 and brought to the United States, where he received an education. Several years later, he returned to Yokohama and worked as an interpreter for the American embassy. Heco's account includes detailed observations of temperature, rain, sunlight, and wind direction—details—strikingly similar to the passages from Yasu's *Memorias* and the diary cited by Van Sant.

Whatever the reasons for this stylistic convergence, the parallels between Heco's writings and Yasu's memoirs extend beyond the monotonous chronicling of sea voyages. Heco also included reflections on his cultural identity and the contrast between his "native land" (*kokoku* 故国) and the foreigner (*ijin* 異人).[5] Heco's sea diaries thus became vivid narratives, featuring detailed descriptions of his encounters not only with Americans but also with "people of the Qing dynasty [Chinese]" (*chingokujin* 清国人).

Though mostly quite terse, the references to fellow travelers and the qualities attributed to them contained in Yasu's *Memorias* offer similar insight into how Yasu positioned himself at the intersection of class and national affiliation. Here, Yasu's selective use of national identifiers is particularly revealing. In an entry recounting his journey aboard the *City of Peking*, he invoked the ethnically unmarked category of "the passengers" to underscore his growing ennui after an extended period at sea:

> All the passengers are already very tired because of the long navigation, I even more because I have been at sea for about a month and a half since I left my unforgettable Guatemala because we are being deceived, saying we will arrive tomorrow and tomorrow, but we have not arrived yet, who knows if we will reach Yokohama as announced.[6]

Given that "all passengers" is used to contextualize Yasu's despair, it can be assumed that he was referring primarily to those who shared his experience of traveling on the upper decks. In contrast to these ethnically unmarked travelers, who presumably included both Westerners and wealthier East Asians, Yasu drew clearer distinctions between two other groups: the Japanese and the Chinese workers. Aboard the *City of Peking*, Yasu encountered many homebound Cantonese laborers. Before the ship reached Hawaii, two deaths occurred on the lower decks. Here is how Yasu recorded this incident:

> The 9th was a very cloudy day. It rained in the morning, but the afternoon was beautiful. In the

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3 Van Sant (2000, p. 106). For the history of *gannenmono*, see also Sakata (2020). The numbers of travelers on the ship vary slightly according to source.

4 . In a preliminary note to an edition of Heco's *The narrative of a Japanese* (Heco 1964, p. 1), the translators Nakagawa Kiyoshi and Yamaguchi Osamu explain that *Floating on the Pacific Ocean* (1962) was the only published story of a shipwreck survivor during the long Edo period. In an 1995 article on Historical Relation between Japan and Latin America, Nakagawa mentions two other books of this type: *A Story of a Navigation to the East* (*Tōkō Kibun* 東航紀聞), published in 1851, and *Strange Stories from Overseas* (*Kigali Ibun* 海外異聞), published in 1854.

5 Studies of Heco's writings are abundant in Japanese; for English-language discussions, see, for example, Hsu (2006) and Van Sant (2000).

6 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 271 ff.

> evening it rained again. Today a Chinese man who worked in the Panama Canal and wanted to go back to his country, Canton, died on board. [..] On the 16th, the weather is very good. It is said that another Chinese man died this morning, making a total of two.[7]

The brevity of this account makes it impossible to gauge the depth of Yasu's emotional involvement in the events. The only detail he added to the dispassionate listing of the victims was their nationality and their status as Panama Canal workers. In a more personal tone, Yasu described his encounters with Japanese subjects in Hawaii:

> On the 12th, the weather is very beautiful. At 5 o'clock in the morning, we passed near the island of Sanroebi [sic] in the Pacific Ocean, and at about half past nine we arrived at the port of Honolulu, which is the capital of the Kingdom of Java [sic].[8] How happy I was to see land after nine days of navigation without seeing anything but the sea and the sky, so I named this island Oasis of the Pacific Ocean. I disembarked in the city for some diversion. Here I had the pleasure of meeting many Japanese people. It is said that there are seven thousand Japanese cultivators here, hired for three years by the owners of sugar and rice farms.[9]

As the midpoint of the Pacific crossing and a hub in the development of the plantation economy, Hawaii was a site of vibrant transcultural encounters.[10] Migrants, merchants, and tourists from around the world passed through or stayed for extended periods. For mid-nineteenth-century Japanese, newly able to travel after centuries of seclusion, Hawaii became a primary destination and a place where they gained a fresh perspective on the Japanese nation through interactions with migrants from diverse regions.[11]

Not surprisingly, Yasu was pleased by the large number of Japanese workers he met in Hawaii. However, he came to view his countrymen from a different perspective. Having lived in Latin America for over ten years, Yasu found that in San Francisco, where he boarded the *City of Peking*, he could barely use his native language with the Japanese he encountered.[12]. After leaving Honolulu, Yasu's complicated relationship with his cultural roots reached a turning point when he encountered an individual he regarded with outright contempt.

> We learn that ninety-nine Japanese cultivators boarded the "Pekin" to return to Japan. Among these Japanese was a Mason from Yamagata Prefecture. Well, I was very disgusted and displeased to talk to this man because he had a criminal and malicious appearance and a contemptuous look. Well, perhaps God would send me this displeasure as the beginning of the battle so that I would be prepared to meet and defend the enemies of our Holy Mother Church.[13]

It is difficult to know exactly how this passenger had offended Yasu, or whether his Freemasonry, which was scorned by the Catholic Church, was sufficient to provoke Yasu's

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7 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 213 ff.

8 I was unable to identify the island that Yasu called "Sanroebi. The reference to a "kingdom of Java" may be the result of a phonetic or orthographic mix-up. The Spanish pronunciation of "Java" sounds very similar to "Hawái."

9 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 221 ff.

10 See, for example, Dusinberre (2016) and C. T. Sasaki (2017)

11 Kimura 1988, pp. xiii–xiv.

12 Tanabe Saneaki, Yasu's friend, was surprised to find him struggling with Japanese when they met in 1889 after Yasu's return to Japan. He mentioned this in the biographical remarks cited in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* article (November 25, 1889) referenced in chapter 1 and transcribed in appendix 4.

13 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 230 ff.

reaction. It is worth noting, however, that Yasu assumed his Catholic persona in this instance and justified his aversion as a matter of faith. According to historian Tsunoyama Yukihiro, Yasu's attitude toward this worker was shaped by a sense of superiority linked to his privileged upbringing in northeastern Japan.[14] However, it may be more accurate to view his Mexican education and business success as key influences on his attitude toward other East Asians. Accustomed to interacting with the middle and upper classes of Latin American society, he regarded the Western passengers on the upper decks as his natural peers, rather than the Japanese and Chinese laborers confined to the lower cabins.[15]

Religion and the Other in Yasu's Journey to Peru

The intricate sentiments that Yasu conveyed in his sea diaries toward the individuals he encountered, including their religious affiliation, social class, and origins, are also evident in other episodes of his life.

In the *Memorias*, Yasu included his return to Japan and subsequent activities in Peru in a chapter entitled "My Second Return to America," in which he recounts various events related to the Catholic faith. Although the nationalist fervor sparked by the Peruvian project did not feature prominently in Yasu's recollection of these events, this does not suggest a general disinterest in the Japanese Empire. Rather, it underscores the significance of other impressions—particularly the social and cultural tensions that stood at the forefront of Yasu's memories of his Andean sojourn. In the following pages, I examine the religious theme that runs through the events recounted by Yasu. Of particular note are the Catholic conversion of his mother, which Yasu orchestrated before departing for Peru, and the rituals he shared with indigenous miners in the Peruvian highlands. Largely neglected in previous analyses of Yasu's biography, these two episodes offer a window on his evolving sense of belonging, in which religious commitments came to occupy an increasingly central place.

When Yasu agreed to join the expedition to Peru, he made arrangements for his mother and niece, with whom he had recently moved to the cosmopolitan Tsukiji district of Tokyo. He recalled:

> Now I had to let my mother settle down. I would rather not send her to my brother's house because I wanted to convert her to Christianity. I, therefore, entrusted her to the headmistress of the girls' school run by the Most Reverend French Mothers near the cathedral. I asked her to teach my little niece Tamaki well on the matter of religion and conversion to Christianity.[16]

The Catholic nun whom Yasu asked for help was probably Sister Mathilde Raclot, a well-known missionary.[17] She came to Japan in 1872 and established an orphanage in Yokohama. Two years later, she moved to the foreign settlement of Tsukiji, where she

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14 Tsunoyama 2004, p. 214.

15 This explanation for Yasu's attitude resonates with Van Sant's (2000, p. 38) attribution of Heco's seemingly racist stance toward the Chinese to the influence of his white American benefactor.

16 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 305 ff.

17 Mère Ste. Mathilde Raclot (1814 – 1911) was a nun in the French order of the Dames de Sainte-Maur (Sisters of the Infant Jesus). According to Tomita (1991, pp. 110–122), she was the first French nun to arrive in Japan. While Yasu was in Yokohama in 1872, the order established a school to educate orphans and children from poor families. This suggests that Yasu may have had previous contact with the nuns. In 1875, the order moved to Tsukiji and established a school called *Pensionnat et Orphelinat du St. Infant Jésus* (仏国童貞女学校) (Gomi 2014, p. 118).

founded schools, a convent, and an orphanage.[18] A few months after Yasu left Japan, she sent a letter to Peru informing him of the baptism of his mother and niece. In his memoirs, Yasu wrote, "I rejoiced in my soul and thanked God for His goodness to the heathens, and also thanked the superior for her zeal and activity for them."[19]

Yasu's reluctance to entrust his mother to the care of other members of his Japanese family is a particularly curious detail. Toward the end of his life, as he was composing the *Memorias*, he was also sending letters to non-Catholic nephews in Fujisawa to cultivate kinship ties and ensure his place in the family lineage would be remembered. Yet when he departed for Peru, he chose instead to place his mother and niece in the care of religious institutions. In this retrospective account of what had transpired, and without rejecting in principle Japanese notions of kinship and lineage, Yasu's first considerations ostensibly emphasized the spiritual well-being of his two female relatives, presenting their state of divine grace as his primary concern.

Despite his ambivalent feelings about the venture, the expedition to Peru, which took him away from Japan and his aging mother for good, occupies a significant place in Yasu's *Memorias*. Much of his account is once again devoted to the journey itself, both at sea and along the arduous trails of the Peruvian highlands (figure 49). Other parts describe his interactions with Japanese guides and engineers, a Chinese cook, and both Japanese and Peruvian miners. The social and cultural dynamics of the expedition were complex. In a group photograph taken by Yasu in the garden of Oskar Heeren's estate in Lima, the elite leaders of the Japanese delegation appear alongside workers recruited from Japan's rural poor (figure 50).[20] At the mining site itself, the presence of indigenous Peruvian laborers further complicated the expedition's already stratified social landscape.

The accounts of their experiences in Peru written by Takahashi Korekiyo, the politician who led the expedition, and his trusted aide Yamaguchi Shizuka reveal the deep social divide that existed within the expedition. In these texts, the Japanese workers are portrayed as illiterate, condemned by their low birth to backbreaking labor, unable to cooperate, and unfamiliar with urban life.[21] During the journey across the Pacific, the workers became involved in a group dispute with the Chinese laborers with whom they shared quarters. Concerned about the possible repercussions of such antisocial behavior, Takahashi required them to sign a "no fighting" agreement.[22] A passage from Takahashi's memoir, paraphrased by historian Richard Smethurst, describes the harsh conditions at the mine and offers a glimpse into Takahashi's authoritarian attitude toward the Japanese laborers:

> The mountaintops were in sun in the morning and rain in the evening and it was cold. No matter how many layers of clothing one wore, one could not escape it. The Japanese, unused to high altitudes, were nauseated. They did not have enough blankets to protect themselves from the cold and had to buy more from local people. The miners complained that if it stayed this cold they would freeze to death. Takahashi replied, "I came here to serve the state, so I am prepared to die in this enterprise. If you are cold, take my clothes." The miners responded that they could not take the boss's clothes and no longer complained.[23]

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18 Tomita 1991, pp. 110–118.

19 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 313 ff.

20 Oskar Heeren, a German-Peruvian diplomat who had lived in Japan, represented the Peruvian side of the mining project.

21 From Takahashi's diary and Yamaguchi's diary, quoted in Gomi (2014, pp. 46–47).

22 Smethurst 2007, p. 104.

23 Ibid., p. 105.

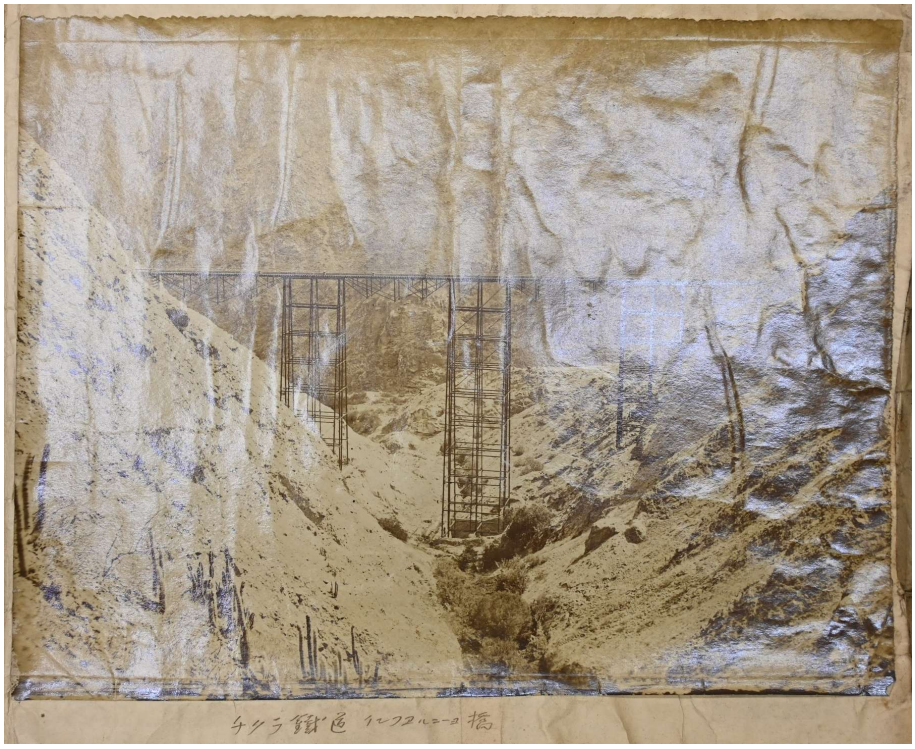

Figure 49: On the way to the mining site in the Peruvian highlands, Peru, 1890

Figure 50: Group photo of Japanese miners, with Takahashi Korekiyo on the far-right wearing a hat, taken by Yasu Kōhei at Quinta Heeren, the residence of Óscar Augusto Heeren in Lima, Peru, February 2, 1890

Yasu's role as mediator placed him in an uncomfortable position amid the expedition's unequal power dynamics. As a result, the passages in the *Memorias* that recount this period reflect a fraught and conflicted experience. Much like his earlier work with Mexican scientists during the 1874 transit of Venus, his predicament had a significant linguistic dimension. While his fluency in Spanish was a valuable asset, the principal figures in the enterprise—including the Japanese representatives, an Irish engineer, Peruvian investors, a North American equipment supplier, and the German-Peruvian diplomat Oskar Heeren—likely conducted their affairs in English.

Like Yasu, Takahashi and Yamaguchi were both students of Western Studies at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate. They had gone abroad for higher education in the United States, but unlike Yasu, they returned to Japan to become successful businessmen and political actors. The social gulf between Yasu on one hand and Takahashi and Yamaguchi on the other is evident in Yamaguchi's rather spiteful description of Yasu's behavior upon their arrival in the Peruvian highlands:

> After one o'clock in the middle of the night, someone knocked on the door, entered silently, and asked me something in a sad voice. I opened my eyes wide and saw someone appear with his head covered with a white cloth, it looked like a ghost to me. In the dim light, I identified that it was Yasu, I saw with surprise, and he said to me with a trembling voice [...] "Boss, Mr. Yamaguchi! I can't stay here anymore, no way! I slept with the sheet hanging from the ceiling, but it still blows and gets in, you see?" he pointed to the kimono sleeves and continued to cry: "Today I also went to the hole in the rock above, and there are still skeletons from the wartime, I think if I die here, I will be just like the skeleton! That is what I think, and it makes me very sad. So I resign and wish to return to Japan," Yasu lamented. I was surprised by his state of regret, and I resigned myself to the fact that whatever he is, he is a useless person.[24]

Takahashi and Yamaguchi asserted their social status in part by denigrating the lower-class workers and Yasu, whose life had taken a different path. Yasu responded by labeling them "insensitive people."[25] In the accounts of their Peruvian experiences, Yamaguchi and Takahashi expressed sentiments rooted in patriotic solidarity and selfless dedication to the development of the motherland. Yasu's narrative, by contrast, centers more on his Catholic faith and the social connections it enabled.

Unlike the other managers and technicians, Yasu was assigned to work closely with the Japanese miners, the Chinese cook, and the local indigenous workers. His duties included managing this multicultural group, resolving conflicts, and negotiating with local authorities. In the *Memorias*, Yasu described his work as follows:

> I had plenty of other things to take care of. I also had to visit the Japanese miners' ranch three blocks from the office from time to time to keep it in perfect order. I had to work so hard to get to the ranch. I had to stop from time to time on the way because I was short of breath from lack of air due to the enormous altitude. But it was more than worth the sacrifice because they were never in harmony with each other or with the Peruvian miners. On Holy Thursday, there was a disturbance in the mine, with discord between the Japanese and Peruvian miners, resulting in two injuries. On Holy Saturday, I had to make a small visit to Yauli to go to the Governor's office to settle the legal matter.[26]

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24 My English translation of Gomi's (2014, p. 145) Spanish translation of Yamaguchi's Japanese text.
25 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 598 f.
26 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 558 ff.

Although not free of racial stereotypes, Yasu expressed some sympathy for the indigenous miners working on the project. At their request, he organized the supply of coca leaves, which are widely regarded throughout the Andes as a remedy for the hardships of life at high altitude. "The natives chew coca leaves mixed with a little lime and say it's a very effective painkiller," he recalled, "so that when you have it in your mouth, you don't feel cold, sleepy, hungry, or tired at work."[27]

The emotional bond Yasu felt with the Peruvian miners was deepened by their shared Catholic faith. As he began to identify more closely with his indigenous brothers in faith, he distanced himself from his Japanese compatriots. The *Memorias* recount Yasu's "very pleasant memory of my pious month" of Mary, conventionally celebrated in May:

> I made a poor little altar in the warehouse, a little corner to consecrate this beautiful month to our Holiest Mother Mary to ask for her mercy. Well, here I prayed alone to honor with sadness, because there was not even one person to accompany me to pray. I could also not get a single [real] flower, just with spiritual flower each day. One Sunday I went out to look for flowers to offer to Mary Most Holy. I climbed the hill in front of the mine, and it took me three hours. To reach the top I had to walk through knee-deep snow. The barometer I was carrying was marked at about 20,000 thousand feet above sea level. Well, thanks be to God, I found a pine-like plant and another unknown one, and I brought them to the house to offer them to the Blessed Virgin as proof of my true love. I was very happy with the Virgin alone, offering her all my sorrows and toil for her love.[28]

At the end of May, he invited the Peruvian miners to celebrate together with their wives and children. A joyful highlight amid what he remembered as a painful period of his life, Yasu recalled that he "called for all the loaves and cups" and made a "little speech" to conclude the "month of devotion to the Blessed Virgin." All the miners arrived happily, kissing the image of the Virgin that Yasu had staged at his temporary residence.[29]

The deliberate act of sponsoring an altar and a celebration for the Virgin Mary, which apparently went beyond the miners' annual festivities, suggests that Yasu went to some length to forge connections grounded in his Catholic faith. The shared faith also prompted Yasu to recognize the indigenous miners in their humanity. On the margins of the page in the *Memorias* that describes the expedition's end, Yasu added some thoughts on their plight:

> (Here I will mention some little things that will not attract the attention of insensitive people.) In these places, it is very sad because one cannot ask for spiritual help [because] there is no church. Here you cannot fulfill the commandments of the Church. That is why the poor miners, when they die without any help, are buried in the pampas without a coffin, like a dog. And the animals trample on the grave searching for food. Well, I visited a helpless dying miner named Juan Espinosa. I asked him if his soul was at peace and gave him some comforting words of affection. He told me, "Yes, I am at peace." I brought the crucifix so he could kiss it and ask forgiveness for all the sins he had committed in his life. After a few hours, he surrendered his soul to the Lord very peacefully. Then I prayed the commendation of his soul at his side, accompanied by some indigenous people.[30]

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27 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 556 ff.
28 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 611 ff.
29 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 620 ff.
30 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 598 ff. The page where this anecdote was recorded was omitted from the transcript of the *Memorias* referenced in previous publications.

In the glaring absence of priestly care, Yasu took it upon himself to administer the last rites to the dying Juan Espinosa. Perhaps intensified by Yasu's awareness of his own approaching death as he wrote the memoirs, this extraordinary passage offers a glimpse into the depth of his religious devotion. At the same time, it sets him apart from the "insensitive people" whom Yasu believed would fail to grasp its significance. This likely included his Japanese co-travelers, who viewed the mining expedition as an economic enterprise and did not share Yasu's spiritual commitment.

Two Spanish-American Cities

Although Yasu structured the *Memorias* chronologically around specific events, his evaluations of these events were shaped by the religious beliefs he held at the end of his life. The religious tone present in many parts of the *Memorias* may have also been shaped by its intended audience in Guatemala. In contrast, his correspondence with relatives and friends in Japan mentioned Catholic themes in a less explicit manner. In these letters, Yasu shared what he had seen and learned abroad through photographs, poems, and short essays on individual topics. To his sister and nephews, he sent poems about the seasons, nature, and landscapes. For male acquaintances of higher social status, Yasu composed longer articles about Latin American cities.[31] Perhaps the reason he believed such an introduction to the history and geography of a foreign country would interest his readers lies in the social atmosphere of a period when the Japanese Empire was increasingly looking outward and overseas.

Two of the preserved letters to correspondents in Japan contain brief accounts of Latin American towns: Mexico City, where Yasu studied at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, and Antigua Guatemala, where he lived for the last three decades of his life. These two places mark the first and last stations of his life in Latin America. While his description of Mexico City focuses on historical, sociological, and economic data, his notes on Antigua emphasize the town's colonial heritage and its appeal to outsiders. Reflecting the literary conventions of expedition narratives, a genre that flourished alongside Japan's imperial development, Yasu's texts offer less personal impressions and instead emphasize precise geographic coordinates for both cities.[32] At the same time, he employed Japanese objects and concepts to convey what he observed in the "New World" (*shinseikai* 新世界) to correspondents who had never set foot in the Americas.[33] In general, these two texts blend the travelogue genre with an analytical approach to foreign societies that resonates with writings produced by proponents of Japanese settler colonialism. The relevance of these texts is not limited to the information they contain about Yasu's trajectories. Rather, they provide examples of Japanese representations of "the other" at two distinct moments in the emergence of the Japanese Empire.

The first text was attached to a letter Yasu wrote in 1876 to friends in his hometown of Fujisawa.[34] The description of Mexico City and the surrounding valley is approximately six hundred words long and reads like an encyclopedic entry, detailing the geographic features, population, institutions, landmarks, scenic attractions, weather, agricultural production,

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31 See appendix 6 for a list of letters Yasu sent to Japan between 1876 and 1916. The appendix includes the locations, addresses, and summaries of each letter's contents.

32 Fujiwara Toshio and Elizabeth Veneyan have assisted with the translation of these two texts.

33 Appendix 7, Letter 7.

34 Appendix 7, Letter 1.

endemic diseases, history, and social divisions that Yasu observed in the Mexican capital.

> "The Geography of Mexico City" (メクシコ府ノ地理大畧)
> Mexico City is located in the central part of the Valley of Mexico. The city sits at 19 degrees 26 minutes 12 seconds north of the equator and 99 degrees 7 minutes 9 seconds west of the British Greenwich meridian. The city is approximately one and half *ri* [about 5.9 kilometers] long and has a population of around 200,000.[35] Its continuous construction of beautiful homes and shops makes it one of the largest metropolitan areas in the Republic. In the center of the city are the president's residence, nine ministries, schools, and many beautiful grand temples [churches]. There are also places of recreation, such as the Alameda and the Zócalo. One *ri* north of the city is a small town called Guadalupe. Two *ri* east is a large lake called Lake Texco [sic. Texcoco], which is about twelve *ri* wide. One *ri* southwest is an old castle called Chapultepec, where the government has now placed an observatory and established the meridian line. Half a *ri* southwest of Chapultepec is a small town called Tacubaya. It is said that the highest point in the Valley of Mexico is 2,260 meters above sea level (one meter is 3 *shaku* and 3 *sun* in our country), and the soil is very dry. Despite this, the land is fertile and the crops mature well, ripening three times a year. The main grains grown are corn, beans, wheat, and barley. The people eat corn and beans every day. In addition, there is a drink called *pulque*, which is similar to *doburoku* [unrefined sake] in our country. Several kinds of rare fruits have never been seen in our country. Flowers bloom all year round, and plants and trees are always green and never fall. Although the climate in the Valley of Mexico is mild, in the provinces facing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the heat is like a blazing fire. Still, it rains a lot in the summer, and when there is little rain, many people suffer from fever. There are two kinds of people in Mexico: Spanish colonizers (スパニア植民) and the Indian people (印度人種). The Spaniards are rich, and the Indians are poor.

Yasu uses the term "our country" (*wagakuni* 我が国) twice. The first instance compares *pulque*, Mexico's popular alcoholic beverage, to the fermented rice wine (*doburoku* 濁酒).[36] The second instance invokes "the rare and special fruits not found in our country" to emphasize Mexico's year-round warm climate and agricultural abundance. In this way, Yasu's text frames Mexico as the "other" in relation to "our country," highlighting both differences and similarities between the natural plants and agricultural products of Japan and Mexico.

Using familiar objects to illustrate the unfamiliar was one of Yasu's favored textual strategies, as demonstrated in the following example about the town where he lived at the end of his life. The text on Antigua is included in a letter informing a friend in Tokyo of Yasu's declining health and approaching end.[37] It is accompanied by a photograph of the picturesque town (figure 51). Similar to the description of Mexico City, the text provides factual information about the town's history and geography.

> "Antigua Guatemala" (旧瓦天満良)
> Antigua was founded by Pedro Alvarado, a subordinate officer of Hernán Cortés, the governor of the army of Mexico, who conquered Central America and established a colony on July 25, 1525, in a place called Almolonga, near the Volcán de Agua. Later, in 1541, it was destroyed by an eruption of the Volcán de Agua. The place is now known as Ciudad Vieja [Old City],

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35 *Ri* (里) is an old Japanese unit for distances. 1 *ri* equals ca. 3.927 km.

36 As Debroise (2001, p. 123) noted, foreign travelers were fascinated by *pulque* culture, and photographers often included pulque makers and shops in their "type" photographs.

37 Appendix 7, Letter 11.

Figure 51: "Panoramic view of Antigua Guatemala," ca. 1900

> and the Spaniards later moved to this place [Antigua] and designated it as the capital. However, it was destroyed for the second time due to the great earthquake of July 29, 1773. Thereafter, in 1774, the capital was moved to the present capital city. The ruins of the *jinja* [神社, shrines] from ancient times still exist today, and their beautiful architecture symbolizes the progress and prosperity of that era. The location of the town is as follows: to the south is Volcán de Agua, to the west are Volcán de Fuego and Volcán de Acatenango. A small mountain in the northeast surrounds the town, which is shaped like the bottom of an earthenware bowl used for grinding *miso* in our hometown. [Antigua] is located at an altitude of 4,950 *shaku* [about 1,485 meters] above sea level and has a mild climate. Flowers can be seen throughout the year, much like in springtime in Japan. The people are warm and kind-hearted, and they help the poor and unfortunate. The water is abundant and pure, and there are hot springs in three places, where many locals and foreign visitors come to improve their health.
> According to the 1874 census, the population was 15,000. Today, it is 30,000.
> The Volcán de Agua in the south is 12,300 *shaku* [about 3,690 meters] above sea level, the Volcán de Fuego in the west is 12,820 *shaku* [about 3,846 meters], and the Volcán de Acatenango is 13,012 *shaku* [about 3,903 meters] above sea level. The city is located at 14 degrees 30 minutes north latitude and 90 degrees 40 minutes west longitude.

Yasu negotiated his multiple and sometimes conflicting identities through the practice of cultural translation, employing familiar objects and concepts in his letters to Japanese correspondents. Here, he explained the geography of Antigua as resembling the shape of a mortar used to grind *miso* (味噌), a fermented soybean product widely used in Japanese cuisine. Particularly interesting is his description of the beauty of Antigua's ruined churches and monasteries by using the term *jinja*, which denotes Japanese Shinto shrines. According to the baptismal records, Yasu officially renounced Shintoism during his Catholic baptism.[38] As he described Guatemala's sacred architecture to his Japanese correspondent by invoking a comparison that his faith denied, his choice of words revealed the tensions inherent in his self-positioning.

Unlike his depiction of Mexico City, which resembles reports on colonial society, Yasu's description of Antigua shares many similarities with those produced by other Guatemalan writers of the same period. In 1896, Ramón Aceña described his native Antigua in the publication *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*. He outlined its functions as a former capital and advocated for improving the infrastructure of what had become a popular destination for leisurely excursions. Like Yasu's text, Aceña's article recalls the town's colonial past and devotes considerable attention to its landscapes and resources:

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[38] Chapter 2, page 96.

> Those who seek relaxation for their senses will find a sky as clear and serene as that of Naples; hills and mountains covered with greenery; crystal-clear waters, pleasing to the palate, like those of the Rock of Horeb, and some with rare medicinal virtues; tasty fruits and appetizing vegetables; beautiful vistas that vary in their hues, from the somber tones of the ruins to the magnificence of the indescribable sunsets that can be admired on dry afternoons.[39]

Another article on Antigua Guatemala appeared in the same journal, authored by Matilde Ariza Poitevín.[40] Her portrayal of the picturesque town emphasized Antigua's unique natural, cultural, and historical landscape—its volcanic setting, excellent climate, church ruins, and connection to Mayan civilization. Where they evoked the affection for Antigua's virtues that characterized Guatemalan public opinion, Yasu's letters to Japanese correspondents resonated with these accounts.

Brief and scattered across the decades of his life abroad, Yasu's descriptions of these two Latin American places offer an insightful glimpse into aspects of his transcultural existence. As suggested by a paragraph from the *Memorias* mentioned earlier in this interlude, Yasu could barely communicate in Japanese when he returned to Japan in 1889. However, this did not imply that he had lost his sense of belonging to the country where he had grown up. In the letters sent to Japanese correspondents, the use of expressions evoking a shared national identity, such as "person from one's own country" (*hongokujin* 本国人 or *hōjin* 邦人) and "our country" (*honpō* 本邦 or *wagakuni* 我が国), is particularly evident. By defining "the self" and "the other" in this way, Yasu cultivated his social ties in Japan while also maintaining his identification with the global rise of the Japanese Empire, despite living halfway across the world.[41]

At the Margin of the Japanese Empire

Of the two notebooks Yasu left behind, the smaller one (the *Notes*) contains several sporadic entries that may initially seem unrelated. However, upon closer examination, many of these entries concern the military expansion of the Japanese Empire and the broader issue of nationalist sentiment. Although fragmentary, the information in these notes bespeaks Yasu's emotional engagement with Japanese imperialism as it took shape in the late nineteenth century, alongside the rise of nationalism as a global phenomenon.

The literature on Japanese emigrants, as a general category referred to as *nikkeijin* (日系人), and their relationship to the Japanese Empire emphasizes the distinctions between generations.[42] It distinguishes *issei* (一世, first-generation migrants born in Japan) from *nissei* (二世) and *sanssei* (三世)—their second- and third-generation descendants. First-generation *issei* tended to identify more strongly with Japanese politics and cultural practices than their foreign-born descendants. This pattern is exemplified by Yasu, who, although not part of a diaspora community, can be regarded as an *issei*. He presented himself as maintaining strong emotional ties to Japan after many years abroad. Although he converted to Catholicism and may have distanced himself from Shintoism as the official religion of the Meiji state, Yasu consistently expressed strong support for Japan during its period of outward expansion. The patriotic inclination evident in Yasu's personal writings is a

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39 Ramón Aceña, "La Antigua Guatemala," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, December 1, 1896.

40 Matilde Ariza Poitevín, "La Antigua," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, December 1, 1896.

41 As Azuma (2019, p. 49) argues, Japanese migration to Latin America played a significant role in the history of Japanese expansionism.

42 See, for example, Azuma (2005, 2014), Glenn (1986), Oiwa (2006), and Van Sant (2000).

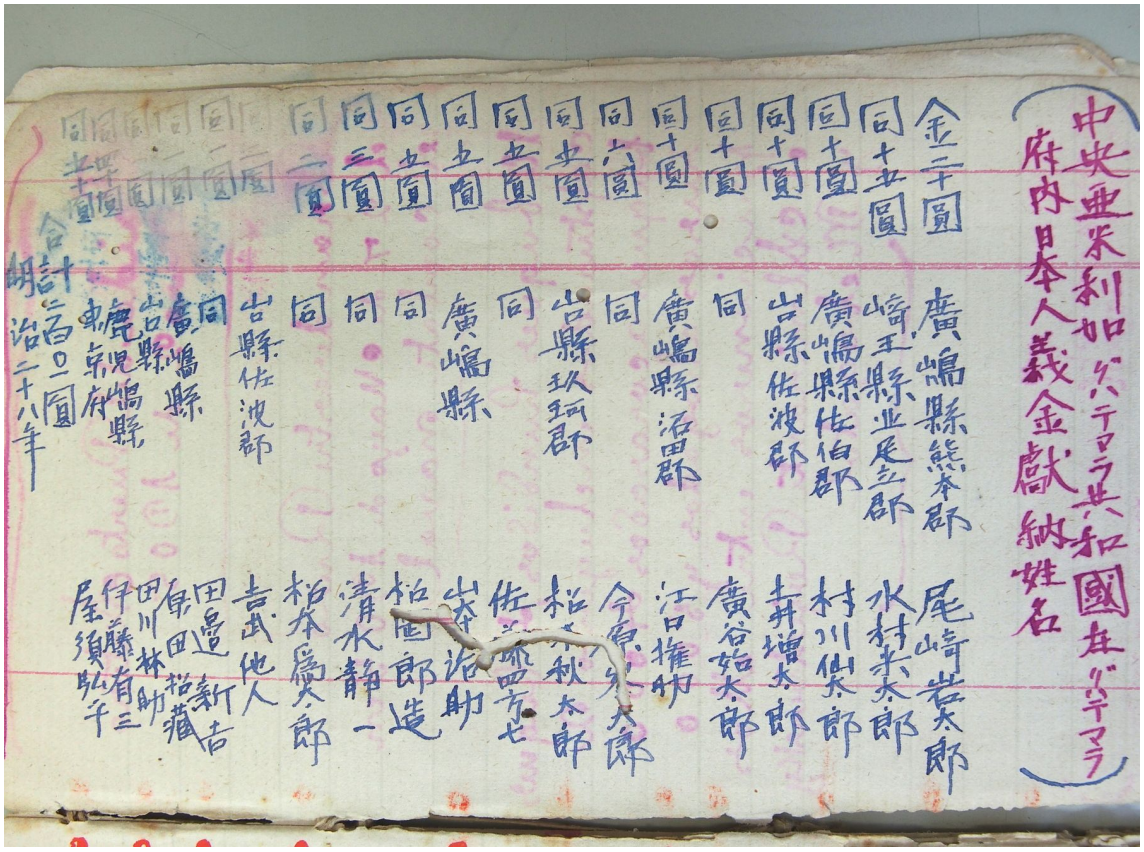

Figure 52: "Voluntary Donations of Japanese Residents in Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala"

dimension less explored in previous accounts of his migrant biography. In what follows, I examine Yasu's emotional and material investment in Japan's rise.

As discussed in chapter 3, a dispute between Japanese agricultural workers and plantation owners in Guatemala brought to the fore the ambitions and limitations of imperial Japanese diplomacy while our protagonist was in the country.[43] We can glean a connection between Yasu and the incident through an entry contained in the *Notes*. The entry consists of a list titled "Voluntary Donations of Japanese Residents in Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala, Central America" (中央亜米利加グハテマラ [sic グアテマラ] 共和國府内日本人義金獻納姓名) and associated with 28th year of the Meiji era (1895 CE). The list records the names of nineteen individuals from different regions of Japan, all residing in or near Guatemala City at the time. Nine of these names also appear in the report on the plantation labor incident compiled by Chinda Sumetei, the Japanese consul in San Francisco, who arrived in Guatemala to resolve the conflict.

Each entry on Yasu's list notes the individual's place of origin along with a monetary unit, ranging from 1 to 50 units (figure 52). At first glance, the information contained in this list is difficult to decipher, but historical context suggests it was created during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 – 1895. The term *gikin* (義金), specifically used for voluntary war donations during that conflict, indicates that this may have been a patriotic fundraising effort.[44] Even in its de-contextualized form, the list offers a fascinating glimpse into the

43 Chapter 3, p. 111 ff.

44 Two Japanese authors, Tada (1988, p. 3) and Ōshima (2011), refer to this list and briefly explain its connection to the expansion of the Japanese Empire.

relationship between Japanese expatriates and imperial ambitions during the Meiji period. It also illuminates Yasu's connections with other Japanese residents in Guatemala and how he nurtured his patriotism while far from home. Yasu's ability to stay informed about events in Japan relied on a global communications network. However, the war news he received about East Asia was filtered through the concerns that Guatemalan newspapers deemed locally relevant. Yasu's interest in Japan's fate may have been heightened by the rise of nationalism in Guatemala, expressed through military parades and public celebrations aimed at reinforcing the fragile legitimacy of the postcolonial state.

In addition to the personal information Yasu recorded in the list, the amounts donated by each individual provide insight into the relative wealth of the contributors. Yasu himself is listed with the largest contribution of 50 units of an unspecified currency, likely US dollars. He and an individual named Ito together contributed half of the total sum of $201. The remaining seventeen individuals contributed between 5 and 10 each.

Regarding their origin, nine contributors are recorded as being from Hiroshima Prefecture and seven from Yamaguchi Prefecture. Both are located in southern Japan, a region that sent large numbers of emigrants to the Americas in the following decades.[45] Yasu identifies himself as being from Tokyo, while two others hail from Saitama and Kagoshima prefectures. Comparing Yasu's list with the report on the plantation labor conflict authored by Chinda Sutemi, the Japanese consul, reveals additional details about the nine individuals who appear in both documents, including their ages, year of departure from Japan, and their approximate financial status.[46] Many originated from the same village, underscoring the importance of territorial ties and social networks in their trans-Pacific migrations.

Yasu's record provides information about the whereabouts of some Japanese workers following the incident. At least one-tenth of these workers remained near the capital a year after the dispute over working conditions on Guatemalan plantations. Most were single adult males between the ages of twenty and forty. Having previously lived in Hawaii, they were unfamiliar with Guatemala and the Spanish language, likely limiting their ability to earn an income in the foreign country. In contrast, Yasu owned a photography studio and was well-connected within local society, distinguishing him from most others.[47] After Chinda's visit in 1894, a second Japanese diplomat, stationed in Mexico, passed through Guatemala in 1898 on his way to Peru. He observed:

> There are currently more than sixty Japanese living in this country. Except for a few, they have always been addicted to drinking and gambling, and those who have accumulated some money are extremely rare. A few have married natives (*dojin* 土人), and 16 have died since Meiji 26 [1893] in this country and El Salvador.[48]

The text highlights the challenges faced by Japanese immigrants in Central America, including language barriers, unfamiliar social customs, and the absence of a government to protect their rights and safety. Most of the workers were single adult males, whose

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45 As noted by Tigner (1981, 477, note 3), of the forty-seven prefectures in Japan reporting the number of residents abroad during 1908 – 1938, the leading regions for Japanese emigration to Latin America were Kumamoto and Fukuoka, followed by Okinawa, Hiroshima, Hokkaido, and Fukushima.

46 The names of the individuals are, in Japanese: 村川仙太郎、土井桝太郎、江口権助、今原峯藏、山本次助、原田松藏、廣谷初太郎、吉竹他人、松本秋太郎、佐藤四方七、田川林吉.

47 No information is available on Ito, whose contribution to the Japanese Empire was comparable to Yasu's.

48 Quoted from Ishi (1987, pp. 31–32). According to Ishi, who was a diplomat in Guatemala he met only a few people during his tenure in the late 1980s who could have been *san sei*, third generation descendants of these Japanese emigrants.

situations were further complicated by gambling habits and poor health. Yasu's social and cultural capital undoubtedly afforded him different opportunities, making it difficult to gauge the extent to which he shared the experiences of other Japanese residents in Guatemala.

While Yasu's *Memorias* and his letters provide no information on Japanese acquaintances in the country, the collection of money for the Japanese Empire reveals a connection between Yasu and his compatriots that was mediated by Japan's imperial expansion. It also demonstrates the reach of the Japanese state in engaging with its overseas subjects. Although details about who initiated and organized the collection and how the funds were transferred to the Japanese government remain unclear, such information would provide valuable insight into the Japanese diaspora in Guatemala. The Sino-Japanese War of 1895, a pivotal moment in Japan's emergence as an expansionist empire, sparked widespread enthusiasm among the Japanese populace.[49] Historian Martin Dusinberre notes that the recruitment of soldiers helped integrate "disparate parts of the country into the common national landscape of the homeland."[50] Yasu's list of donations suggests that Japan's military conflicts also fostered nationalist sentiment among Japanese people living abroad.

In his research on Frank (Sakae) Matsura 松浦栄 (1873–1913), a young photographer who migrated to the United States two decades after Yasu arrived in Guatemala, historian Shipu Wang illuminates how expatriates responded to global interest in Japan's military campaigns. During the Russo-Japanese War (1904 – 1905), Matsura wrote an article for a small American newspaper expressing pride in Japan's progress, crediting its rising power partly to the modern education available to young women.[51]

Although I have found no evidence that Yasu engaged in public advocacy on behalf of Japan, the list of contributors to the wartime collection shows that he followed Japan's imperialist policies and supported its military ventures. Further proof of this can be found among several other items Yasu left behind. The first is a book titled *Atlas Geográfico Universal*, part of his possessions archived in the Fujisawa collection. An inscription on the title page reveals that Yasu acquired this atlas in 1888, the year it was published. On the East Asia page, places related to the Japanese wars are marked and highlighted in red ink, including several battles during the Japanese advance on the Korean Peninsula and mainland China (figure 53).

The final vestiges of Yasu's attitude toward Japan's wars appear again in the *Notes*. When Japan went to war with Russia in 1904, Yasu recorded the fall of Port Arthur and the Battle of Tsushima, two key victories for the Japanese Navy. The entry reads:

> The fall of Port Arthur on January 2, 1905.
> Great Russian disaster on May 27, 1905, in a naval battle.
> 10 ships were sunk, 2 ships were captured, including 2 armored ships, 4000 Russians drowned, and 5000 prisoners, including Admiral Rojestvensky [sic. Zinovy Rozhestvensky] and Nebogatal [sic. Nikolai Nebogatov].

The *Notes* also include a transcription of "The Great Victory of the Yellow Sea" (*kōkaitaishō*

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49 Historian Donald Keene captures the patriotic fervor leading up to the twentieth century: "On August 1 the Japanese declared war on China. The emperor issued a rescript to the military, urging them to fight on land and on the sea until the nation's objectives were attained. [...] There can be no doubting the intense enthusiasm engendered by the war among the Japanese" (Keene 2002, p. 481).

50 Dusinberre 2016, p. 286.

51 Wang 2018, pp. 184–187.

Figure 53: "China and Japan," an entry from a world atlas purchased by Yasu Kōhei in Guatemala in 1888

黄海大捷), a war song about the siege of Port Arthur whose lyrics were composed by the Meiji Emperor. The scattered entries in his notebook do not provide a definitive means to gauge the scope and scale of Yasu's enthusiasm for the Japanese wars. Even so, it seems certain that he followed the movements of the Japanese army from afar, thus affirming his sense of belonging as a subject of the Japanese Empire.[52]

Yasu's attitudes toward soldiers and patriotism are also evidenced elsewhere in his writings. A passage from the *Memorias* recounts the journey to the mining expedition in Peru. While the sadness of bidding farewell to his friends after a short stopover in Guatemala still weighed on Yasu's soul, the steamship called at port in Panama City. It was Christmas Day, and Yasu was moved by the fusion of patriotism and Catholic faith he witnessed. Reflecting on this moment decades later, he wrote:

> On the 25th, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the steamer anchored in Panama Bay, and at a quarter to 8, we disembarked to the city. (I separated from my travel companions before going to the hotel and headed to the Cathedral with the ardent desire to visit the newly born Christ Child. Well, thanks to God, I arrived at a very good time, and I had the joy of hearing the very solemn Mass, where two corps of Colombian soldiers guarded the Holiest Sacrament with great reverence.[53] How much joy I felt in my soul to see these good soldiers. I could not hold back the tears in my eyes for joy. Because not even in Guatemala had I seen a guard of soldiers assist [a religious event]. I had only heard that there was a guard of soldiers during the time of president Carrera, but when I arrived in Guatemala, the government had entirely changed its

52 Keene 2002, p. 609.

53 Panama was part of Colombia. The Republic of Panama became an independent nation in 1903.

policy.[54]

Military participation in public events and the use of patriotic symbols were common in late nineteenth-century Guatemala. Within the liberal regime, they served to showcase the country's progress toward becoming a modern and powerful nation. However, unlike Yasu's experience in Panama City, the Guatemalan government prohibited military guards from participating in Catholic pageantry. As this passage reveals, Yasu regretted this exclusion—perhaps because he felt that the presence of military guards lent a solemn dignity to church events. The quote also suggests that Yasu admired the appearance of soldiers in ceremonial uniforms, indicating that his appreciation for patriotic displays extended beyond his support for Japan.

Positioned Identities

Yasu Kōhei's transcultural life coincided with early exchanges between modern Japan and postcolonial Latin America. This positions his insights on historical events, whether as a spectator or a peripheral actor, as a valuable resource. Utilizing Yasu as a focal point to observe changing trans-Pacific relations offers a close-up perspective on the evolution of nationalist agendas and policies designed to promote or restrict the movement of people across borders.[55] Although Yasu took an unusual route to the Americas, he also witnessed the movements of many other Japanese seeking better opportunities. Situating these isolated episodes within their global contexts allows for a clearer understanding of the flows of labor, commodities, and ideologies that emerged in the late nineteenth century. It also enables an appreciation of the diversity in the individual trajectories of Japanese migrants.

Previous texts on Yasu Kōhei provide little context to situate his personal experience within the encompassing movements of East Asian migrants, goods, and ideas that define him as a product of the historical conjuncture. Yasu is portrayed as the protagonist of a heroic and romantic story about an individual and his adventures overseas. However, Yasu's shifting identifications, which included a pious Catholicism and support for Japan's wars, emerged within the force field defined by the rising powers of nationalism, racial discourse, border regimes, and the imperial ambitions of his homeland.

This brings to mind Stuart Hall's work on Caribbean cultural identity, which is constantly shaped by the positioning and repositioning of multiple presences: the African, the American, and the European.[56] Hall's theorization of cultural identity is relevant to Yasu's experience for two key reasons. It firstly highlights the external influences and power relations that create the context in which the individual migrant can assume a position. In Yasu's case, this encompasses the discourse of East Asia as a recognizable entity that emerged in nineteenth-century Latin America, coinciding with the European fascination with Japonisme and the moral panic surrounding the Yellow Peril, along with the discriminatory laws and restrictions prompted by racial ideology. Secondly, Hall's affirmation of individual subjectivity in the face of such presences allows for a better understanding

54 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 403 ff.

55 A similar approach to the autobiographical writings of Japanese individuals in America is evident in John Van Sant's (2000, pp. 25, 32) study of Joseph Heco. Van Sant views Heco's memoirs as valuable material illuminating his transnational and transcultural experiences during his stay in the United States in the 1850s.

56 Hall 2021a, pp. 264–268.

of how Yasu could strategically respond to the structural limitations of his position, for example, by alluding to Japan in the name of his photography business or by mobilizing his distinctly Guatemalan Catholic faith to his commercial advantage.

Hall's elaborations refer to specific groups of people, historical moments, and geopolitical situations. Hall particularly talks to the political struggle of the black diaspora in colonial and postcolonial Britain. To organize their plight within the rigid racial binary, immigrants adopted the unifying category of blackness to counter the terms of the dominant society, whose whiteness defined them as its "constitutive outside."[57] Hall urges us to unravel the collective identity implied by the political category that imposes "an imaginary coherence on the experience of diaspora and fragmentation."[58] Furthermore, he calls for an examination of how the positioning and subjectivation of black individuals and experiences within dominant regimes of representation were "the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization."[59] Reading Hall's reflections on the diversity within the collective category of "black" as a context from which to think about Yasu Kōhei brings to the fore the risks associated with framing East Asian migrants as a monolithic unit.

To avoid racist and essentializing constructions of collective identity, Hall cautions us to recognize "the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities."[60] His critique of essentializing categories corresponds to his positing of cultural identity as a way of thinking about the multiple and plural. Acknowledging the considerable burden that the term "identity" has carried over the years, I find Hall's thoughts on cultural identity as "points of identification made within the discourse of history and culture" to be a useful foundation for recovering the intricacies of Yasu's positioning from the streamlining embrace of its historiographical reconstructions.[61] While Hall encounters his Caribbean subjects in situations where collective identity is at stake, he sees space for individuals to employ cultural strategies and resist domination. Echoing Frantz Fanon's reminder of the hegemonic power of colonialism imposed on the subject, Hall calls for an engagement that acknowledges colonialism's "irreversible influence, whilst resisting its imperialising eye."[62]

Overdetermined by geopolitical structures yet never fully encompassed, Yasu's personal accounts of historical events and private encounters provide profound perspectives on his times and his agency. In one photograph, he articulates his Japaneseness by donning a kimono, while in another, he presents a manifesto of deep Catholic devotion during his baptism, an act that signifies a departure from Japanese nationalist religion. Yasu Kōhei had to navigate the unequal structures of race, power, and culture at various points in his life. This is particularly evident in transcultural encounters that took place in spaces such as the Peruvian mining site, where he found himself caught between Japanese and Chinese workers, and Andean peasants. In contemplating Yasu, these episodes may appear marginal to the historical narratives in which his biography comes steeped. However, they serve as a critical window on how he conceived of himself. If nothing else, Yasu's testimony challenges the portrayal of early East Asian migrants to the Americas as either victims of discrimination or exceptionally heroic figures. As Hall has noted, "identities become

57 Hall 2021c, p. 334.
58 Hall 2021a, p. 259.
59 Ibid., p. 260.
60 Hall 2021b, p. 249.
61 Ibid., p. 261.
62 Ibid., p. 267.

multiple" in the diaspora.[63] Focusing exclusively on Japanese and Guatemalan "culture" and history when analyzing Yasu Kōhei's life and artistic expression risks oversimplifying the plurality of his commitments.

63 Hall 2019, p. 207.

Chapter 4

Studio Photography and Social Identity

Among the multiple social identities Yasu Kōhei inhabited during his time in Guatemala, his role as a studio photographer was arguably the most significant. From the early 1880s until his death, his business, Fotografía Japonesa, thrived in the developing market for commercial photography. In the following two chapters, I explore the social and cultural contexts of Yasu's photographic production. Drawing not only on photographic archives and textual sources but also on other visual materials from the turn of the twentieth century, I analyze how his multifaceted identity shaped his strategies within an evolving industry. Particularly central to this inquiry is Yasu's distinctive position as both Asian and Catholic.

In this chapter and the next, I trace the development of Guatemalan photography as it intersected with Yasu Kōhei's professional life, from its origins as a foreign import to its localization and eventual participation in global visual economies. I also consider the effects of technological innovation and the social meanings attached to portraiture. Through this analysis, I aim to offer a nuanced understanding of Yasu's work and its contributions to the visual representation of race, class, and religion in Guatemala.

Studies of Yasu's visual production have focused primarily on his status as a pioneer of photography in Guatemala. Since his photographic negatives were transformed into archival objects in the early 1980s, this body of work has come to be widely recognized as a valuable social document. Most attention has been paid to his images of clerics, Catholic artifacts, and church buildings, which are considered historical records of Central America's cultural heritage. However, due to the absence of captions or contextual information, his portraits, apart from those of a few prominent individuals, have received limited academic attention. This same lack of documentation has also left gaps in our understanding of his business practices, studio operations, and clientele. While some scholarship has addressed Yasu's Catholic-themed work, the influence of his dual identity as an East Asian immigrant and a Catholic on both his enterprise and visual output remains insufficiently explored.

In this chapter, I examine Yasu's nearly forty-year career as a studio photographer through a substantial body of archival photographs that document his productive life. My approach aligns with scholarship in the history and anthropology of early photography in non-Western contexts, considering not only the visual content of Yasu's work but also the sociocultural milieu that shaped its production and circulation. I draw on Yasu's *Memorias* as a complementary source of insight into how he carved out a niche in an emerging photographic market, deploying the technologies available to him.

The chapter opens with an exploration of Yasu's entry into the photographic profession. It identifies the late 1870s as a turning point when studio photography expanded beyond an elite clientele. During this period, Western European immigrants were joined by a new generation of local photographers, marking a shift in the industry's landscape. Following this, I situate Yasu within the context of the evolving market. Rather than presenting his career as a continuous trajectory, I highlight his return from Peru in 1890 as a rupture that helps delineate distinct phases in his body of untitled photographic negatives and sheds

light on how he responded to growing competition.

Attention then turns to Yasu's studio, examining its construction and function as a social space for self-representation. Next, I consider his portraits of notable figures, analyzing how Yasu, despite limited access to the propertied classes, established a market niche and developed a recognizable visual repertoire through cross-media reproduction. The chapter concludes with a discussion of a particular series of portraits depicting individuals close to Yasu, including his wife and Catholic priests. I argue that the use of multiple exposures and deliberate staging in these works sets Yasu's portraiture apart from that of his contemporaries and, in the case of the clerics, reveals the complex identity politics of sitters whom liberal governments sought to expel from positions of social power.

Yasu's Portrait Photography

In the late nineteenth century, Central American governments promoted a plantation-based economy centered on the export of agricultural commodities such as coffee and sugar. This economic shift prompted an influx of European and American migrants, the displacement of indigenous communities due to the expansion of plantations, and the rise of a powerful landowning elite. As in other parts of Latin America undergoing similar political and economic transformations, the development of the photographic trade mirrored these broader sociocultural changes.[1]

Since the 1980s, historians and anthropologists have explored the role of photography in relation to social, economic, and political change. Portraiture, in particular, has emerged as a rich area of inquiry that reflects its diverse vernacular expressions shaped by specific social and ethnic configurations. In Latin America, an important body of scholarship has developed around studio photography in countries such as Mexico, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina.[2]

In contrast, comprehensive analyses of Guatemalan photography remain scarce, with most scholarship limited to descriptions of individual studios and their output. Notable exceptions include, in chronological order of publication, *Las Bellas Artes en Guatemala* (1934) by Victor Miguel Díaz; Cid Fernández's article "De 1843 a 1868. Primeros fotógrafos que trabajaron en esta Guatemala Asunción," published in *El Imparcial* in 1962; Ignacio Solís's *Nuestra artes industriales* in 1981; and an unpublished inventory of turn-of-the-century photographic studios held at the National Library in Guatemala City. The latter, compiled by Ella Bolaños Alvarez in 1993 under the title "La Fotografía de don Leopoldo Bolaños Schaeffer," is housed at the Museo Nacional de la Historia de Guatemala.[3]

Coinciding with the establishment of CIRMA's Fototeca Guatemala in the late 1970s, historian Luis Luján Muñoz authored comprehensive studies of early photography in Guatemala. He produced a series of essays on foreign and local photographers—including Eadweard Muybridge, Alberto Valdeavellano, and our protagonist, Yasu Kōhei—whose works became more accessible to scholarly engagement as they were incorporated into the photographic archive.[4] Luján Muñoz's foundational research was further developed by

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1 R. M. Levine (1989b, p. 310) and Solano Roa (2018).

2 The number of publications and the depth of research on this subject vary considerably across countries. Those mentioned here have played a particularly significant role in shaping the history of photography in Latin America since the 1970s, likely due to the establishment of photo libraries (*fototecas*) that have facilitated the study of historical photography.

3 Museo Nacional de la Historia. Documento: "La fotografía de don Leopoldo Bolaños Schaeffer."

4 These essays accompanied photo exhibitions of each photographer held in Guatemala during the 1980s,

Figure 54: Eadweard Muybridge, "Frontispiece to Muybridge's Central American Album," 1877. Photographers from Europe or North America, like Muybridge, were popular among the sociopolitical elite in Latin America

historians working with CIRMA's expanding photographic collections.[5]

Reflecting an institutional commitment to documenting and interpreting the archive's holdings, these studies sought to chart the chronological and thematic evolution of photography in Guatemala. Within this framework, Yasu's work served to illustrate both the technical conditions of early studio photography and the subsequent expansion into outdoor photography. In the absence of extensive first-hand documentation of historic practices of photographic production, Yasu's *Memorias* were especially valued as a rare practitioner's account of the craft.

Positioning Yasu at the intersection of local developments offers a foundation for understanding Guatemalan photography within the broader global history of this visual technology. This approach aligns with scholarship on Latin American photography, which contends that despite regional specificities, the introduction of photographic technology across the young republics prompted a broadly similar reception. These societies were marked by a transitional period in which remnants of the colonial order persisted even as new social actors began to assert themselves.[6]

Portraiture, in particular, reveals the confluence of technological innovation and socioeconomic transformation. The invention of the carte-de-visite format in the second half of the nineteenth century made photography more affordable and widely accessible, prompting members of the middle and even working classes to visit studios to have their likenesses made.[7] The carte-de-visite, with its visually uniform and highly standardized

curated by Luján Muñoz in collaboration with CIRMA, a topic I revisit in chapter 6 and chapter 8.

5 See Adams (2007a) and Taracena Arriola and Adams (1998).

6 González-Stephan 2013, p. 28.

7 See Poole (1997, p. 112), on the visual similarities between portraits produced in Latin America and those made in Europe. See also González-Stephan (2013, pp. 26–27) on how portraits not only "authenticated

format, allowed for only minimal variation in pose and composition.[8] As a result, sitters from diverse social backgrounds were framed within a shared modernist aesthetic, fostering a visual language that transcended ethnic and class divisions. In her study of nineteenth-century Venezuelan photography, Beatriz González-Stephan observes that by the mid-1870s, "postures, expressions, decorations had a standardized regulation; therefore, the same style was repeated internationally."[9] Andrea Volpe also argues that the "availability of portrait photographs" reduced the sitter to a "conventional pose and formulaic form," and in doing so, contributed to the construction of a "collective middle-class body."[10]

However, an approach that emphasizes the uniformity of Latin American portraiture risks overlooking the variation, innovation, and individual artistic sensibilities that shaped photographic practices across the region. By privileging narratives centered on nation-building and technological progress, the history of photography in Guatemala is cast as a linear development—one that mirrors trajectories in places like Japan, where photographic practice was primarily driven by inventions originating in Europe and North America. Yet, as Christopher Pinney has argued, photography, despite its global diffusion, derives its significance through specific local appropriations.[11] To counteract the Eurocentric frameworks that obscure local visual cultures, Pinney advocates for an understanding of photography in relation to other modes of iconic representation.[12] This perspective is especially pertinent to Yasu's Catholic devotional photography, which reflects not only his sensitivity to market demands but also his deep personal engagement with saint imagery and the Catholic faith.

As I will argue in this and the following chapter, Yasu, who established his business in a cosmopolitan city of Central America, was among the few photographers to produce portraits for a broad spectrum of social classes. Contrary to what the name of his studio, Fotografía Japonesa, might suggest, and unlike colleagues who promoted their Eurocentric backgrounds as markers of stylistic authority, Yasu does not appear to have leveraged his origins as a sign of aesthetic expertise. On the contrary, while his East Asian identity may have shaped the contours of his business to some extent, it was his Catholic faith that seems to have informed his photographic practice more strongly.

In his work on the history of devotional art in Guatemala, historian Fernando Urquizú highlights Yasu's role in adapting and innovating the visual reproduction of images of saints for the photographic age.[13] I argue that Yasu's cross-media engagement with religious imagery—encompassing photography, printmaking, and life-size sculptures—drew on techniques and visual vocabularies refined through his experience in portraiture of living sitters. His creative use of multiple media and artistic forms reflects both his deep integration into the Catholic community and his pioneering role as one of Guatemala's earliest professional photographers. I contend that Yasu's varied forms of portraiture, including those of clerics and sculptural representations of saints, must be understood in relation to the contexts of their production.

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their identities in formation" but also rendered their bodies "part of the liberal project of the modern nation."

8 Rudd 2016, p. 213.

9 González-Stephan 2013, p. 16.

10 Quoted by Rudd (2016, p. 213).

11 Pinney 2003a, p. 1.

12 Ibid., pp. 11–14.

13 Urquizú Gómez 2008, 2018; Urquizú Gómez and Cameros 2014.

A Japanese among European and U.S. American Photographers

Given his precarious position as an East Asian immigrant on the verge of forgoing the support of the Mexican benefactor who had brought him to Guatemala, Yasu turned to photography as a means of establishing himself. Although the brief and understated account in his *Memorias* lends the decision an air of serendipity, the available evidence suggests that Yasu assessed his options with clear intent and recognized photography as a viable path forward. At the time, the field was still dominated by a small number of foreign practitioners, leaving space for new entrants with commercial and artistic ambitions.

In the mid-nineteenth century, photographers from Western Europe and North America began arriving in the post-colonial metropolises of Latin America, offering their services to the region's elite. By the 1860s, some of these itinerant photographers settled in major urban centers, and the market gradually opened to locally trained practitioners. As one American diplomat observed,"The photographers of Central and South America are almost invariably from the United States, and there is usually one in every town of importance. The people are vain of their appearance, hence photography is a lucrative business."[14]

In Guatemala, a small group of photographers had established themselves in the capital prior to the Liberal Revolution, including the German-American Emil Herbruger Wheling (1808 – 1894, hereafter Herbruger Sr.).[15] Originally from Rheda-Wiedenbrück in East Westphalia, Germany, Herbruger Sr. emigrated to the United States at an early age before traveling throughout Central America.[16] While many traveling photographers passed through Guatemala, Herbruger Sr. was among the first to establish a permanent photographic business in Guatemala City.[17] Coinciding with economic and social crises in Europe, a new wave of immigrants arrived in Latin America in the late 1870s.[18] Among them were photographers who served not only local elites but also the growing diasporic communities.

Yasu learned photography in the studio of Emil Ernest Herbruger Rietbrock (1842 – 1891), the son of Emil Herbruger Sr., who had founded Fotografía Imperial in the 1860s and primarily catered to the ruling elite and senior members of the Catholic clergy.[19] The younger Herbruger appears to have inherited the studio from his father, likely around the time of the Liberal Revolution of 1871. In late 1872, he published a notice in *El Imparcial* announcing the relocation of the studio, now renamed Fotografía Central: "The undersigned has the honor of informing the respectable public of this capital that on December 10th he will open his new photographic establishment in Calle del Carmen, in front of the Hotel

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14 Curtis 1888, p. 98.

15 Garzón Díaz (2003), Luján Muñoz (1982a), and Taracena Arriola (2007). See also Hannavy (2008, pp. 283–285) for a brief overview of early photography in Central America. Foreign photographers mentioned and the years of establishment of their businesses include León de Pontelle (1843), Emil Herbruger (1846), Nicolás Fuchs (1847), Osbert Salvin (botanist, 1861), G. A. Hawley (1860s), Enrique Seeligman (1860s), Sanford Robinson (1880s), and Juan José de Jesús Yas. Only two are documented as active in Guatemala.

16 Carney (2022) and Garzón Díaz (2003). Herbruger's original surname was likely Herbrügger Wehling, though "Herbruger" became the established spelling in Guatemala for him and his descendants.

17 Taracena Arriola (2007, p. 23) notes two Guatemalan photographers—J. Dototeo González and Viviano Salvatierra—who displayed their works alongside Herbruger Sr. at the first photography exhibition in Guatemala in 1868. However, no further records of them have been found.

18 Bendaña Perdomo 2011, pp. 143–144.

19 Photocopies of some carte-de-visite portraits by Herbruger Sr. are preserved in the Fondo Documental Luis Luján Muñoz at the Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala City.

del Globo."[20]

Other photographers may have been active in the capital when Yasu arrived in Central America in the late 1870s. Nevertheless, his observation that Fotografía Central was "the only studio" in the city highlights Herbruger's dominant position in the nascent market.[21] In response to increasing demand for photographic services, Herbruger expanded his operations by employing assistants and apprentices, forming what Taracena Arriola describes as a "workshop" (*taller*) or "technical enterprise with employees and apprentices that produced branded goods."[22] Yasu worked as an unpaid assistant in exchange for instruction and room and board. His account provides a glimpse into the workings of a photographic studio at the time:

> In a short time I learned to print and tone well. Every day I cleaned up the workroom and the darkroom in good order because they were in great disorder. In a short time, I was put in charge of all the positive work. I had to prepare a lot of albumen paper every day, 30 to 40 or 45 sheets when I had to make large portraits in the solar chamber.[23] I worked into the night and got up very early because I had so much work to do. In addition to making the portraits, I had to leave many clean plates for the negatives and take care of developing and cleaning the gallery with the good order of the furniture, etc., etc. I practiced taking the negatives and studied the photographic works.[24]

Yasu does not specify exactly how he acquired these skills, but it is likely that he learned the necessary techniques of photography and darkroom work "by the custom of the trade" from Herbruger or other more experienced colleagues during his daily tasks.[25] Undoubtedly, his understanding of composition and subject selection was also shaped by handling the large volume of portraits produced in the thriving studio—including works by the elder Herbruger as well as photographs imported from abroad.

Among the anecdotes Yasu included in his *Memorias* is one about a commission Herbruger received to produce mass copies of portraits of the president and his wife. To ensure the highest quality, Herbruger invited Edward Kildare, who lived in California, to come to Guatemala and work as a retoucher (*retocador*).[26] As I will explore later in this chapter, retouching played a vital role in portrait production within the Guatemalan context. When executed with skill, it served to align images of local elites more closely with the European ideals to which they aspired.[27]

In his memoirs, Yasu did not specify how many copies were produced by Fotografía Central, but the number appears to have been substantial. As Olivier Debroise notes, the death of Mexican president Benito Juárez prompted "an edition of twenty thousand copies of his portrait in carte-de-visite format, an enormous number that far surpassed

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20 *El Imparcial*, December 27, 1872.

21 *Memorias*. There are some inconsistencies in the literature regarding the studio's name during Yasu's tenure. Here I follow Yasu's account and corroborating advertisements in contemporary newspapers.

22 Taracena Arriola 2007, p. 35.

23 The solar chamber was used to make enlargements using sunlight.

24 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 888 ff.

25 Debroise 2001, p. 35.

26 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 898 ff. Kildare remained in Guatemala into the early years of the twentieth century. After 1890, he worked with Alberto Valdeavellano, another major figure in Guatemalan photography.

27 Debroise 2001, pp. 31–34.

that of any other publication."[28] While Guatemala's domestic market was likely much smaller than Mexico's, the capital attracted foreign businessmen and diplomats drawn by the opportunities of the expanding plantation economy. Political leaders and upper-class families from various American states became popular subjects for carte-de-visite collections compiled by these visitors, as well as by freshly arriving immigrants enticed by the promises of the modernizing nation.

Taking on apprentices who later became established studio owners, Herbruger's Fotografía Central functioned as a key incubator for commercial photography in Guatemala. In his *Memorias*, Yasu mentions a Spaniard named Luis de la Riva who was "in charge of managing the photography business" and alongside whom Yasu "often worked late into the night."[29] Another colleague, Felise Muñis Cano, was responsible for handling the negatives and remained at the studio for only a short period.[30] Here, Yasu's description hints at a racialized division of labor in the studio's daily operations. Yasu spent most of his time in the back of the studio, where the darkroom and laboratory were located. Herbruger and the American Kildare, on the other hand, were in the gallery, serving customers. De la Riva, with whom Yasu became friends, probably greeted visitors.[31] By recruiting photographers from North America and Europe and placing them in contact with clients, Herbruger reinforced the allusions to European modernity that Fotografía Central's marketing projected.

The question then arises whether Yasu, as the sole East Asian in this environment, was granted the same privileges as the other apprentices. Given the negative stereotypes of the Asian other prevalent in local society, how did his cultural identity affect his position within Herbruger's studio? Drawing on his experiences in Yokohama, Paris, and Mexico, Yasu was undoubtedly aware of European tastes for Japanese aesthetics. However, we lack the information necessary to determine how the ambiguities of being Japanese in this creative visual space shaped his apprenticeship experience.

Recent studies on Japanese migrants who became photographers in their host countries have focused on places with larger Japanese populations, such as Brazil, the United States, and Australia.[32] These works provide valuable insights into the photographic practices of individual Japanese photographers and their interactions with local communities. For instance, Shipu Wang explores the œuvre of Frank Sakae Matsura 松浦栄 (1873 – 1913), a studio owner in Okanogan, Washington. Wang examines Matsura's performative photographs, which include self-portraits and staged images featuring Native Americans and female friends. He emphasizes that Matsura's studio functioned as a space where social norms could be temporarily challenged. This was possible not only because of the borderlands' unique social dynamics but also due to Matsura's shared diasporic status with other community members.[33] Wang further discusses how Matsura's work empowered groups marginalized by racial, gender, and social hierarchies to use photography as a form of self-expression.

In a different context, Melissa Miles and Kate Warren explore how Japanese expatriate

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28 Ibid., p. 27.

29 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 906 ff.

30 Possibly Félix Muñiz, mentioned in *Diario de Centro América* (1900). Like many who trained with Herbruger, Muñis Cano went on to open his own studio (see table 4.1).

31 Díaz 1934a, p. 29.

32 See, for example, Hubert (2018), Miles (2014, 2017), Miles and Neath (2016), Miles and Warren (2017), and Wang (2014, 2018)

33 Wang 2014, 2018.

communities in Broome, Australia, used photography to access social spaces that typically excluded "colored races" such as Asians and Aborigines.[34] Unlike Matsura's more immersive social interactions in Okanogan, the Japanese photographers discussed by Miles and Warren primarily worked for the local (white) elite.[35] The authors characterize these photographers as "cultural mediators," highlighting that photography "involves understanding and translating the cultural preferences, desires, and social values of their subjects into their photographs."[36]

These studies approach photographs made by Japanese immigrants as expressive historical sources that reveal relationships seldom documented in written records, thereby challenging dominant narratives.[37] However, the authors present the photographers' Japanese identity as a fixed, knowable category that facilitates their role as cultural mediators. This risks reifying Japaneseness and essentializing their identities. By framing their work as "acts of intercultural photographic connection," the authors imply a moral dimension rarely applied to European photographers abroad, thereby reinforcing a notion of Asian otherness that overlooks the complex, multifaceted commitments these individuals may have developed throughout their careers.[38]

"Photographic Contest"

Despite his status and influence, Herbruger was keenly aware of the growing competition in the photographic business. Advances in communication and transportation made it easier to import photographic equipment, and the increasing simplicity of the technical processes encouraged more local and foreign photographers to enter Guatemala's emerging market. Yasu's *Memorias* recount how Herbruger was irritated by the establishment of a rival studio nearby run by the American Warterstein [sic: Wolfenstein], causing him such distress that "he could not be quiet day and night, and would only talk about it; otherwise, he would die of rage."[39]

The new studio, Palacio de Artes (Palace of Arts), was founded by Swedish-American Valentin Wolfenstein, who had traveled to Guatemala and Mexico after an unsuccessful attempt to expand his business in Los Angeles.[40] An experienced practitioner, Wolfenstein strategically located his studio near Herbruger's in the center of Guatemala City. To attract the curious public, Wolfenstein displayed sample portraits he had created in San Francisco. In response, Herbruger went on the offensive. Eager to assert his position as the preferred photographer for the local elite and foreign visitors, Herbruger accused Wolfenstein of not producing the sample portraits himself. On April 18, 1880, the newspaper *El Porvenir* published an article titled "Photographic Contest" (Contienda Fotográfica), which began by outlining the conflict between Herbruger and Wolfenstein:

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34 Miles and Warren (2017, pp. 3–4). The article focuses on two photographers in particular: Hichijiro (Shikyjiro) Wada and Yasukichi Murakami.

35 According to Wang (2014, 2018), Matsura hailed from a wealthy, educated family devoted to Western culture and Christianity, which Wang argues enabled him to consciously integrate into the local community despite his relatively privileged status.

36 Miles and Warren 2017, p. 13.

37 Ibid., p. 5.

38 Ibid., p. 21.

39 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 904 f.

40 According to Andrews (1971, p. 83), Wolfenstein "arrived in Los Angeles in the late '60s and soon showed the small community that he had a well-developed sense of portrait work and several special skills."

> Fotografía Central set out to prove that these samples were not the work of Mr. Wolfenstein but of another photographer living in San Francisco, and to defend themselves, the proprietors of the new establishment finally took the most logical and prudent action they could have taken, which was to leave the matter to the public to settle by submitting some photographs taken in the country.[41]

The competition between the leading local studio and the American photographer stirred public excitement. This controversy highlights several key aspects of the photography market at the time. First, Herbruger's challenge to Wolfenstein's authorship of the portraits taken in the United States reflects the widespread practice of reproducing images—particularly of celebrities—without much concern for copyrights. Second, as portraiture gained popularity, the public began to engage more critically with photographic images, comparing the work of different studios. In this context, the photographic studio functioned not only as a place to take pictures but also as a gallery to exhibit work and receive informed feedback from an increasingly discerning audience, educated to recognize variations in quality and style.

Noting the number of patrons who frequented the Palacio de Artes and acknowledging that the works produced by Wolfenstein "are as good as many of those" indicted by Herbruger, the newspaper author refrained from making an immediate judgment. Instead, he recommended waiting to assess the quality of portraits produced in Guatemala after Wolfenstein had "gained a little more knowledge about our climate, light, and various other conditions." A month later, the results were announced as follows:

> We are now fully convinced that the samples exhibited by Mr. Wolfenstein & Libes are not, as stated, other people's work that they have appropriated, for as we indicated in our previous issue if the photographs they have taken here do not surpass them in quality, they have as much merit as the aforementioned specimens.[42]

While acknowledging Wolfenstein's skill, the author did not miss the chance to praise Herbruger, whose "recent portraits are so remarkable that they can be considered perfectly finished works." Ultimately, the author concluded that "the real winner of this competition is the Guatemalan public, which will certainly benefit from the patronage of these two institutions."

The conflict between Herbruger and Wolfenstein marked the start of a period of growing competition in the commercial photography market. Although Wolfenstein arrived equipped with the latest technical expertise, Herbruger, building on his father's established reputation, continued to dominate the market among elite clientele. However, as demand expanded to include broader segments of society, Guatemalan photographers gradually supplanted the immigrant pioneers as the preferred recipients of official commissions.

A Photographic Career, 1880–1917

Yasu joined Herbruger's studio during the early phase of localization and expansion in the photographic market in the late 1870s. Although Herbruger may not have intended for his

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41 "Contienda Fotográfica," *El Porvenir*, April 18, 1880. The quotations in this paragraph and the next are from the same source.

42 "Retratos," *El Porvenir*, May 15, 1880. The quotations in this paragraph and the next are from the same source.

assistants and apprentices to become competitors, nearly all photographers who worked at Fotografía Central eventually left to establish their own studios. This pattern reflects the broader development of early photography on the periphery of the Eurocentric world, where foreign-run studios served as the primary training grounds for local photographers.[43]

Shortly after the "photographic dispute," American photographer Kildare parted ways with Herbruger and took over the Palacio de Artes from Wolfenstein.[44] The same newspaper revisited this episode, positively linking the flourishing photography scene in the capital to the progressive spirit of the era:

> Since the establishment of the competition between the galleries of Mr. Herbruger and Wolfenstien [sic.] & Liebes, there has been more and more progress in photography. That of the latter, known as the Palacio de Artes, has lately become the property of Mr. Kildare, with whose artistic knowledge there are truly admirable works. In the Palacio de Artes, we have also seen precious illuminations, magnificent life-size portraits, and other remarkable works from the brushes of Messrs. Hanssen and Hasselman. May we always continue in this way, and may this spirit of progress be extended to many other branches.[45]

Despite the expanding market for photographic products in the early 1880s, there remained only a limited number of professionals with the necessary skills. This may explain why Kildare persistently urged Yasu to leave Herbruger and join the Palacio de Artes.[46] Frustrated by the modest salary at Herbruger's studio, which he felt did not reflect the volume of work he performed and hindered his plans to save for his return to Japan, Yasu accepted Kildare's offer. However, he soon found himself in a similar situation of dependence and realized that the only way to earn a decent living was to start his own business.

The following pages provide an overview of Yasu's studio practice, which he developed over the course of four decades. In the mid-1890s, Yasu's decision to relocate Fotografía Japonesa to the nearby town of Antigua reflected the growing competition he faced in the capital. My analysis follows the phases of Yasu's productive career. First, I examine the founding of Fotografía Japonesa in Guatemala City in 1880, its reopening after Yasu's return from Peru in 1891, and his eventual move to Antigua Guatemala. Subsequent parts focus on the period after the 1895 relocation, exploring how he shifted his production to target travelers while continuing to serve the local clientele. In the later phase of his Antiguan operations, Yasu increasingly delegated studio responsibilities to José Domingo Noriega, his godson and associate.

Fotografía Japonesa in Guatemala City

Alone and without significant resources in a foreign city, Yasu lacked the social capital enjoyed by Kildare or the Herbrugers. As a result, he acquired the tools of the trade gradually, rather than aiming for a grand opening. In the early 1880s, he left Kildare and ventured out on his own. A passage in the *Memorias* recounts how he sought a market niche to build his fledgling business:

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43 For example, as Wakita (2013, p. 85) noted, Austrian photographer Baron Raimund von Stillfried was frustrated that his Japanese assistants tended to leave and start their own businesses as soon as they acquired sufficient knowledge, leading him to restrict the scope of what apprentices could learn.

44 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 911 f. Kildare was already listed in the *Directorio de la ciudad de Guatemala* (1881) as the co-owner of the Palacio de Artes, alongside Martin Stevenson.

45 "Retratos," *El Porvenir*, May 15, 1880.

46 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 912 ff.

> So I kept working, but I wasn't making any progress. That's why I decided that I could not do anything unless I worked independently. So, once I had made up my mind, I gradually acquired the machines and other tools I needed for the job. Finally, I left Mr. Kildare and moved to a small house in the Callejón de Cristo [alley] where I began to work in the courtyard, without a gallery. Well, business was not bad there. And then I thought of making many portraits of president Barrios, to sell at a modest price to the soldiers of the Guard of Honor and the San Francisco barracks to match their salaries.[47] In this way, I made some money. I bought more machines and other tools to do formal work. I also bought an American Golden Gate [lens] from Don Emilio, which we still use.[48]

Note the location of his first studio: not on a spacious avenue like Fotografía Central or the Palacio de Artes, but tucked away in an alley. Judging from his recollections of clients—soldiers from the Guard of Honor and the San Francisco barracks—and the studio's subsequent locations, Yasu likely stayed near the main square, Plaza de Armas. A traveler who visited Guatemala City around the same time described the crowded surroundings:

> Most of the public offices are grouped around the Plaza de Armas. On the North side is the Municipalidad, or City Hall; on the south is a row of small shops, with the president's palace at the western angle; on the east are the cathedral and the archiepiscopal palace; and on the west are the National Palace and two of the barracks. On the south side, the sidewalk passes under cover of the buildings there in the manner known in South and Central America as portals. The tramcars start from the plaza. Next to the president's palace are more barracks, and adjacent to the cathedral is the market. The south-western corner is the central point for the nomenclature of the streets, previously mentioned.[49]

Comprising the market and the army barracks, the area was frequented not only by the political and economic elite of the capital but also by workers, military personnel, and merchants. These social sectors may not have been the clientele valued by the owners of the established studios. However, given the affordable price at which Yasu could reproduce the president's likeness—and his marginal status as the owner of a fledgling business—he targeted the popular segments of society as his market.

Selling portraits of famous individuals that originated in other studios was common in the second half of the nineteenth century and constituted an important part of the photographic trade's revenue stream.[50] The source material Yasu used for his mass reproductions may have been commercially available portraits—perhaps even those he had helped produce at Fotografía Central. If Herbruger, who had accused Wolfenstein of imitation, was not outraged by Yasu's business model, it may have been because he did not perceive him as a threat. After all, Yasu was selling inferior products to the humble masses.

Yasu's strategy proved successful, enabling him to purchase additional equipment and establish a more formal working environment. His connections with other photographers helped him acquire used items such as lenses and backdrops. By the mid-1880s, he had expanded his business and broadened his clientele to include wealthier residents of Guatemala City. In late 1885, he placed an advertisement in the daily newspaper *La*

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47 Yasu does not mention the origin of the image he used for the reproduction. He may have taken a finished portrait, most likely by Herbruger, and reproduced it in his studio, since he did not yet have the reputation to be commissioned directly by the president.

48 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 920 ff.

49 On soldiers and barracks (Vincent 1898, pp. 124–125).

50 Rudd 2016, pp. 197, 208.

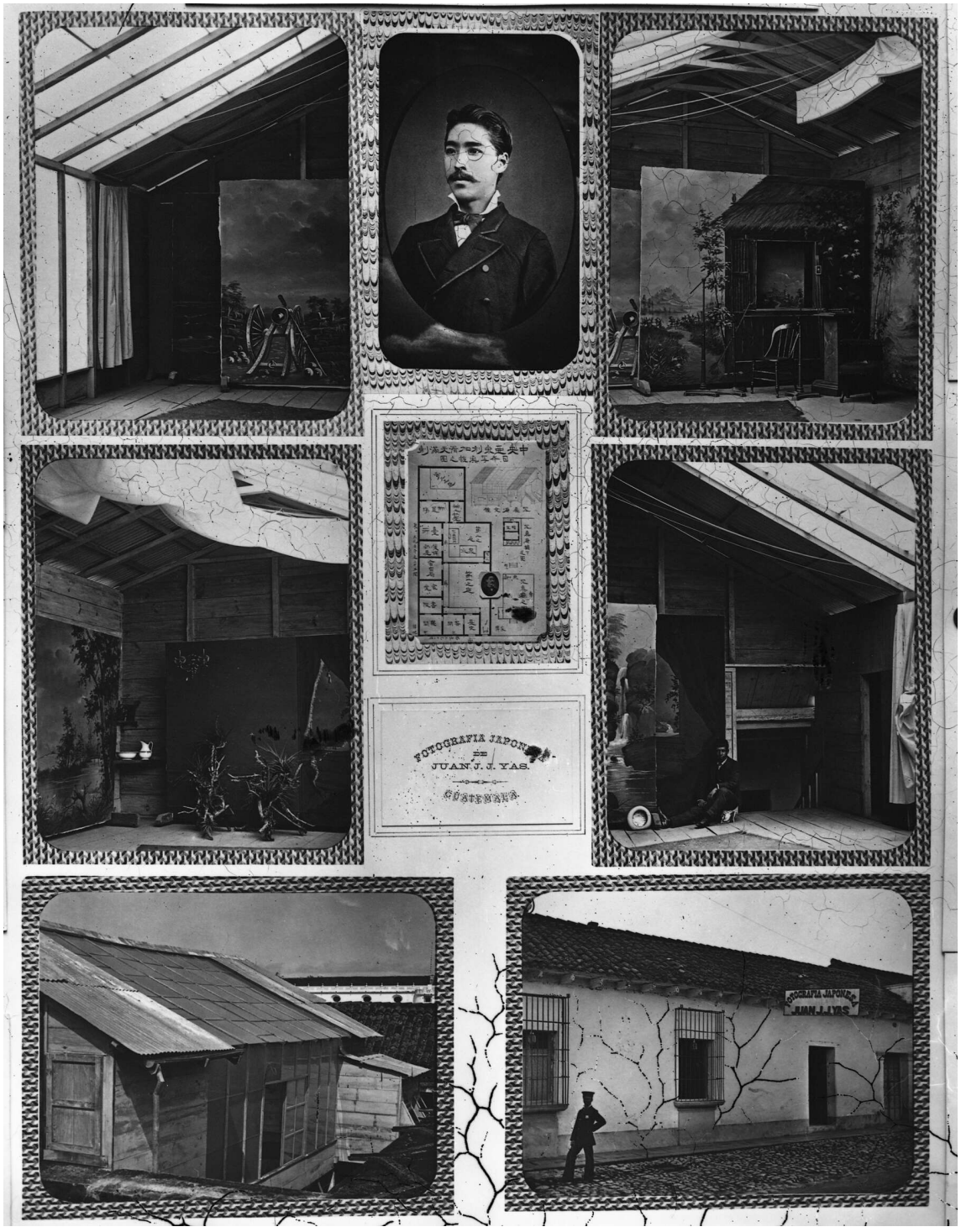

Figure 55: An advertisement from the Fotografía Japonesa studio, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900. It features interior photographs of Yasu Kōhei's studio at various stages. The floor plan of the studio, located on Calle del Carmen, is at the center of the announcement

Prensa that ran for twenty-five days. In this brief notice, he announced his new location at number 53 Calle del Carmen and invited the public to see the "important reforms and great improvements" he had made to his shop (figure 55).[51] Reflecting on the renovation of his studio, which included building a gallery to enhance lighting, Yasu wrote, "I spent a lot of money to set up photography in this house. I bought much wood, glass, and other materials necessary for construction."[52] "Thank God," Yasu added, "I bought from a German photographer who died several very good machines of all sizes and other useful equipment with very fine French tubes."[53]

Only two studios paid to advertise in the paper during this period. The other was the Palacio de Artes, owned by Kildare. Herbruger remained active but was likely too well-known to expect a return on investment in advertising. In contrast to Yasu's modest and straightforward advertisement, Kildare's announcement highlighted his excellent skills, the public recognition he had received at an Industrial Art Exhibition, and the Best Portrait Award from the Society of Guatemalan Artisans. His studio was so well established that he omitted its address in the advertisement.

Fotografía Japonesa's next location was on 8th Avenue South—close to Herbruger and Kildare. Thanks to his Catholic connections, Yasu became the photographer of priests, friars, and bishops who, despite the turbulent political climate, maintained high social status. Within a few years, his initial strategy of serving the popular classes had brought him considerable business success.

A Competitive Market

When Yasu left Guatemala in 1889, he had accumulated considerable capital. In a letter to his relatives in Japan, he mentioned investing 4,000 in an unspecified currency toward the construction of his studio, equipment, and other necessities. Although the exact value of this sum is difficult to determine, the sizable amount likely reflected the profitability of his photographic business in Central America. Anticipating similar or greater success, he was eager to return to Japan to continue his work in photography.

After canceling his lease and disposing of his photographic equipment, Yasu left Guatemala in April 1889 to join his mother in Japan. Fourteen months later, he returned to Guatemala, started a family, and reopened Fotografía Japonesa. Although the exact date of the reopening is unknown, it occurred before his marriage to María Noriega in late 1891. Whereas the original purpose of Fotografía Japonesa had been to earn money to return to Japan, the business now served as a means of support for his Guatemalan family. A few brief sentences in the *Memorias* describe the five years before his move to Antigua in 1895, including the studio's location and the nature of his business during that period:

> When I formally established the Fotografía at the corner of Concepcion [Church], I built the gallery with a lot of comfort for the works. I got more machines and more precise equipment for the work, arranged the shop properly, and put in a very beautiful mahogany counter and shelves. So I worked, and thank God there was no lack of work. In addition to the individual portraits, I photographed the main sculptures of the saints in the churches. There was never a

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51 Juan José de Jesús Yas, "Fotografía Japonesa," *La Prensa*, December 3, 1885.

52 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 934 f.

53 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 948 f. The identity of the German photographer is not determinable from this statement alone.

lack of income for the establishment.[54]

Yasu may have worked from this location until his move to Antigua Guatemala in 1895. An 1894 guidebook lists his business at 24 Seventh Avenue. Consistent with his earlier choices, Yasu positioned Fotografía Japonesa in the heart of Guatemala City.

The market for photographic products, however, underwent significant change. By 1894, the number of studios in Guatemala City had doubled compared to a decade earlier. While portraiture remained a primary income source for established studios, a select group of well-connected photographers began to find success producing images that the government used to promote its vision of progress. New opportunities also emerged in the mass production of patriotic photographs depicting tourist sites and national celebrations.

Table 4.1: Studios in Guatemala City and Antigua (c. 1870–1920)

Date	Photographer / Studio Title	Address
1870–94??	Herbruger, hijo [Central]	Gran Hotel 8a Av. S. 6
1878–82	Someliani, A.	—
1880– 81	Wolfenstein y Liebes [El Palacio de Artes]	Gran Hotel
1880–98	Girón, Manuel María & Uribe, Alberto [Souvenir]	—
1880–98?	Kildare, E. J. & Stevenson, Martin [Palacio de Artes]	8a Av. S. 9
1880?–89	Yas, Juan José de Jesús [Japonesa]	Callejón de Cristo; Calle del Carmen 53
1883–1889	Valdeavellano, A. [Souvenir]	
1886–?	Recinos, Abel [El Siglo XX]	9a Calle O. 9
1888–1900	Muñiz & Cano, Félix [El Siglo XX]	—
1889–?	Valdeavellano, A. [El Siglo XX]	9 Calle O.
1889–?	Benj. W. Taliaferro & Co. [La California]	—
1891–95	Yas [Japonesa]	At the corner of the Concepción Church
1892–96	Valdeavellano, A. [Palacio de Artes]	—
1894–?	Bravo, Federico	9a Calle O.
1894–?	Durán, Miguel L.	5a Calle P. 21
1894–?	Machado, Julio	5a Calle P. 11
1894–?	Medina, Felipe	8a Av. N. 16
1894–?	Orozco, Tomás	6a Av. N. 41
1894–?	Penedo, Manuel	4a Calle O. 10
1894–?	Piloña, José González	5a Av. N. 10
1894–?	Piggot, James K. [Palacio de Artes]	—
1894–?	Sánchez, Rómulo	7a Calle O. 18
1894–?	Torres J., Mariano	Av de Caballería
1896–1953	Yas (1895–1917) & J. Domingo Noriega (1900s–1953)	At various locations in Antigua
1896–?	Valdeavellano [El Siglo XX]	9a Calle O. 9
1898–1900	Eichenberger[?], Emilio [La Souvenir]	9a Calle O. 12
1898–?	España, Rodolfo	12 Av. N. 37a
1898–?	HANNA H R	6 Av S. 25
1898–?	Frener, Camilo	2 Av. N. 38
1898–?	García, Rodolfo M.	9 Calle O. 14
1900–12	Eichenberger Hermanos [Imperial]	9a Calle O. 1
1900	Bravo, Enersto	10 Calle O.
1901–11?	García Sánchez, José [La Exposición]	—
1907–?	Valdeavellano? [Arte Nuevo]	—
1909–?	Prado, Angel [Artística]	6 Av S. 41

54 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 691 ff.

Date	Photographer / Studio Title	Address
1910?–?	Valdeavellano y Bolaños	—

Sources: Announcements and advertisements published in the following periodicals and official documents: *Directorio de la Ciudad de Guatemala* (1881); *El Porvenir*; *La Prensa*; *Directorio del viajero en la república de Guatemala* (1889); *Las Noticias*; *Guatemala Ilustrada*; *Primer Directorio de la Capital y Guía de la República de Guatemala* (1894); *Diario de Centro América*; *La República*; *Álbum de la Exposición Centroamericana* (1897); *Directorio nacional de Guatemala* (1898); *La Locomotora*; *El Ideal*; Bolaños 1993. Urquizú 2014. Díaz 1934.

Based on approximate dates derived from newspaper advertisements, table 4.1 charts the development of the photographic business in Guatemala City, starting from the elder Herbruger's founding of Fotografía Imperial. Over the following decades, while some foreign photographers—both visiting and immigrant—remained active, native Guatemalans increasingly dominated the market. By 1890, the number of professional photographers in the capital had grown significantly. It is also important to note that ownership of the most prestigious studios changed hands frequently during this period.

The First Studio in Antigua

Despite his strong social network and established clientele in Guatemala City, Yasu relocated his family to the neighboring town of Antigua in 1895. Unlike the modernist elites who governed from the capital, Antigua remained deeply rooted in its Catholic heritage and devotion to religious imagery. According to Yasu's own words, he was drawn to Antigua's picturesque landscape and traditional customs—likely alluding to the Catholic rituals that the liberal government aimed to suppress in Guatemala City.

Given Yasu's strong ties to the Catholic hierarchy, he likely attended Antigua's religious celebrations before relocating there. For example, in November 1893, the faithful gathered to honor the Mother of Mercy with ceremonies held across three of Antigua's churches: La Merced, Escuela de Cristo, and El Calvario. Prominent Catholic figures from Guatemala City were invited, including Federico Virto, who had written a poem for Yasu's baptism, and María Leal, who had her portrait taken at Fotografía Japonesa. As will be explored below in this chapter in the section on Yasu's commercial reproductions of images of saint statues and archbishops, Yasu maintained a deep commitment to Antigua's devotional traditions.

Though Yasu's inherent affinity with Antiguan sights may have provided a crucial stimulus, Fotografía Japonesa's relocation may also have been motivated by the economic boom experienced by the ancient city of 30,000 due to the expansion of the coffee economy.[55] With support from the Guatemalan government, the wealthiest classes and foreign investors acquired large estates and secured, at minimal cost, the labor of Indigenous communities displaced from their lands.[56] The plantation economy also attracted migrants from other countries, regions, social classes, and ethnic backgrounds to the city, thereby transforming its social fabric.

In his comprehensive study of Mexican photography, Oliver Debroise explains how

[55] Antigua fell into decline after the Spanish Crown moved the capital to Valle de la Ermita, now Guatemala City, in 1777. However, it regained some luster in the nineteenth century due to its beautiful ruins and natural surroundings, as well as the development of exports such as cochineal and coffee (Greatorex-Bell and Lutz 2016).

[56] The highly labor-intensive, export-oriented agricultural industry changed the social composition of Antigua and other "towns in the lower fertile volcanic ridge" as peasants "were stripped of their lands nearly overnight" (Grandin, Levenson-Estrada, and Oglesby 2011a, p. 109).

political imperatives shaped the development of portrait photography. He argues that the proliferation of studios reflected how local society responded to the "strict and unprecedented imperial protocol" established by the crown.[57] It was through the need to ensure the "reaffirmation of social attitudes through acts of representation" that photography became an important medium. The influx of locals, European immigrants, and tourists provided a new source of income for Yasu's business. Owning the first photographic studio in Antigua gave him an advantage he no longer enjoyed in the capital. Portraits taken during this period depict a wide range of people, including priests, politicians, students, musicians, businessmen, and wealthy oligarchs and landowners (figure 56). Fotografía Japonesa became an important center for social exchange and self-representation.

In addition to portraiture, a prominent theme in Guatemalan photography at the turn of the twentieth century is the *vistas*. These images of towns and landscapes showcase the striking natural beauty, exceptional colonial architecture, and abundant agricultural produce thriving on fertile volcanic soil. These *vistas* were initially produced by traveling photographers throughout Central and South America. With the introduction of postcards around the same time, local photographers increasingly captured the country's landscapes and public works. Archival evidence indicates that images of Mayan ruins, volcanoes, and lakes were especially popular among tourists and investors visiting Guatemala.

The unique beauty of Antigua has been noted by foreign travelers since the early nineteenth century.[58] With the advent of photography, the colonial city became a popular subject for travel photographers. In the mid-nineteenth century, William Fitzgibbon and William Claudio Buchanan traveled throughout Guatemala, producing numerous scenic photographs, including views of Antigua.[59] Recognizing the market potential of such picturesque scenes, Herbruger Sr. announced in 1869 that he could offer an "assorted and choice selection of scenic photographs of the ruins and other notable places in Antigua, Guatemala, and of its people, and recent events: also copies of various venerable images of this city."

Yasu did not overlook the commercial appeal of images depicting ruins, urban scenes, and landscapes. To meet the market demand driven by foreign visitors, he produced a series of scenic photographs showcasing coffee plantations, colonial architecture, town squares, and panoramic views of the city and its volcanic surroundings.[60] An advertisement offers a glimpse into the range of products Fotografía Japonesa sold during the later years of Yasu's life. Published in 1907 in a guidebook for foreign visitors and the local elite, the advertisement appeared alongside The Continental Hotel in Guatemala City. Alternating between Spanish and English, the text listed the products Yasu offered:

> 2d. Street East and 3d. Av. Norte-Antigua G., C. A.
> Opened in 1895.
> In this establishment, with the most modern system known, the public will be able to obtain all types of work related to the trade. Portraits from life-size to the smallest miniatures, with the guarantee of perfection of likeness and cleanliness of the work. I also have a complete

57 All quotations in this paragraph are from Debroise (2001, p. 30).

58 Greatorex-Bell and Lutz 2016.

59 All quotations in this paragraph are from Taracena Arriola (2007, p. 24).

60 Possibly due to the limitations of his equipment, no such photographs survive from the first half of his productive career. A photograph of a view of Guatemala City, likely taken by Yasu in the early 1880s, is listed in the Fujisawa archival acquisition file. This photograph was ultimately not included in the Fujisawa collection and is probably still held by his family in Guatemala.

Figure 56: "Antigua Student Band," (La Estudiantina Antigüeña Los Mosqueteros), Antigua Guatemala, dated 1900

Figure 57: Photographic gallery of Fotografía Japonesa, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

Figure 58: Exterior of studio Fotografía Japonesa, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

collection of views, buildings, and ruins of this historic city.
Special attention to tourists—Select views of the ruins, landscapes, and buildings of this historic City and surroundings.[61]
Juan J. J. Yas
Antigua G., August 1907.[62]

Published twelve years after Yasu's arrival in Antigua, the advertisement reveals that, by his early sixties, he had developed a sophisticated portfolio that included outdoor photography. The ad employed a strategic approach to its audience: while promoting "views" in English to appeal to foreigners, portraiture—primarily a local service—was advertised in Spanish.

A Family Business

Unlike other photographers in Guatemala, Yasu never changed the name of his studio nor partnered with other practitioners. His approach resembled that of his teacher, Emilio Herbruger, who also kept the business within the family.[63] The *Memorias* mention a brief partnership early in Yasu's career with Alberto Valdeavellano, then an aspiring photographer; however, their differing working styles led to a short-lived arrangement. Around the same time, Yasu hired an assistant, whom he recalled as Cayas, a native of the Western Highlands, to help with retouching during a period of high demand.[64] No other assistants are mentioned in Yasu's writings, though it remains possible he employed additional personnel for darkroom and post-production work.

Yasu's only known long-term collaborator was his godson, José Domingo Noriega. When Yasu relocated Fotografía Japonesa to Antigua in 1895, José Domingo—born around 1883—was still in his teens. According to Luján Muñoz, José Domingo had lived in Yasu's household since the age of five and began learning photography early on.[65] It can be inferred that José Domingo had started working in the studio by the early 1900s at the latest. Yasu had already entrusted Fotografía Japonesa to José Domingo Noriega by 1916, shortly before his death. In these letters, he offered his nephew, Matsutani Eigo—who had never set foot in Guatemala—the opportunity to come to Antigua and assist the new owner.[66] In his will, Yasu bequeathed all the studio's equipment to Noriega, who continued the business into the mid-twentieth century.[67]

By maintaining the model of a small family business, Yasu not only reduced labor costs but also succeeded in establishing a reputation that benefited his family after his death. The success of this model can be attributed to José Domingo Noriega's continuation of the business under the name Fotografía Japonesa—a brand that became well known and served as a silent tribute to its late founder (figure 59).

Because Yasu and Noriega worked together for nearly two decades, a blending of their

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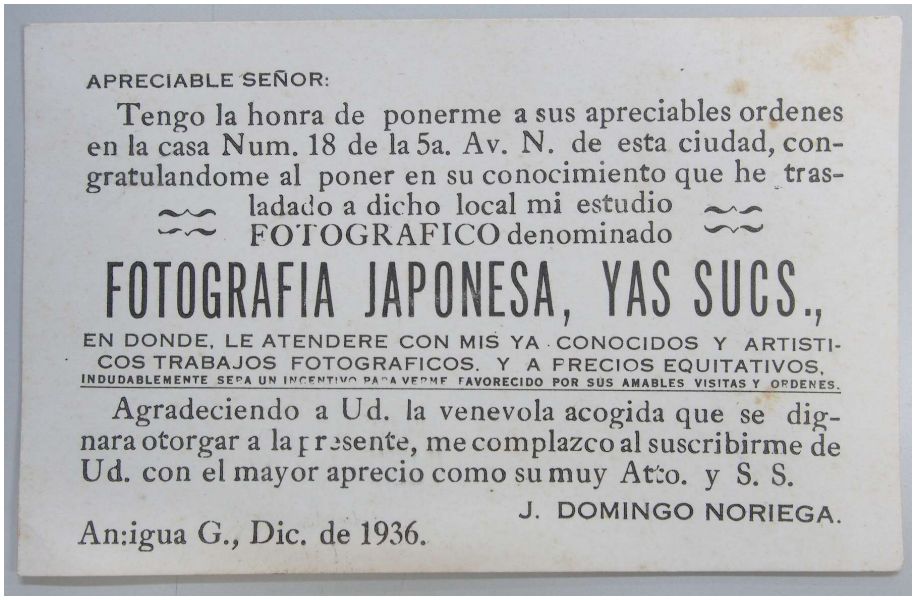
61 Italics added by the author to indicate the English segment of the original advertisement.
62 Castañeda 1907, p. 170.
63 Archival documents indicate that Herbruger appears to have ceased working in the 1890s.
64 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 944 ff.
65 Luján Muñoz 1982a.
66 Appendix 7, Letter 8. This exchange is fuller explored in chapter 3, page 138.
67 In a 1999 interview conducted by anthropologist Kosaka Ayako, Irma Noriega, José Domingo's granddaughter, stated that the studio closed in the 1950s. In the booklet published in 1982 for the first exhibition of the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection, Luis Luján notes that "he [Domingo] stopped making photographic works around 1960, although the studio had closed shortly before..." (Luján Muñoz 1982a).


APRECIABLE SEÑOR:

Tengo la honra de ponerme a sus apreciables ordenes en la casa Num. 18 de la 5a. Av. N. de esta ciudad, congratulandome al poner en su conocimiento que he trasladado a dicho local mi estudio FOTOGRAFICO denominado

FOTOGRAFIA JAPONESA, YAS SUCS.,

EN DONDE, LE ATENDERE CON MIS YA CONOCIDOS Y ARTISTICOS TRABAJOS FOTOGRAFICOS, Y A PRECIOS EQUITATIVOS, INDUDABLEMENTE SERA UN INCENTIVO PARA VERME FAVORECIDO POR SUS AMABLES VISITAS Y ORDENES.

Agradeciendo a Ud. la venevola acogida que se dignara otorgar a la presente, me complazco al suscribirme de Ud. con el mayor aprecio como su muy Atto. y S. S.

J. DOMINGO NORIEGA.

Antigua G., Dic. de 1936.

Figure 59: José Domingo Noriega's business card, 1936

distinct bodies of work was inevitable. Today, a significant portion of the negatives in the Fotografía Japonesa collection at CIRMA—including portraits and numerous outdoor photographs—are attributed to José Domingo Noriega.[68] While Noriega's many subjects, encompassing the social, political, and economic dimensions of Antiguan society, have been explored in scholarly publications, little research has focused specifically on his photography. One notable exception is a text by María Cristina Orive, who described the differences between Yasu and Noriega in a 1990 essay on the Fotografía Japonesa collection. Orive observed:

> Noriega's portraits do not carry the elaborate stage settings that Yas so liked, nor is he so concerned with background screens. He does care for the models to feel at ease, to pose naturally [...] Both photographers set up the stage for their works, but while Yas adds in, Noriega takes away. The difference also lies in the subject matter: Yas's religious fervor is in contrast with Noriega's interest in Antiguan society at their activities: weddings, family gatherings, the first transportation services, the first automobiles arriving in the city, the celebration of the centennial of the Independence in 1921, the 1934 flood. For Noriega it is important to go out into the street, to get into the houses, to record life.[69]

Though somewhat tinged with assumptions based on the photographers' identities—Yasu as an outsider with artistic rigor, Noriega as an insider with social roots—Orive's observations nonetheless provide an important starting point for studying these photographers and have influenced how others have viewed Yasu.

In her newspaper column entitled "Ayer" (Yesterday), writer María Elena Schlesinger evoked nostalgic memories of the two photographers working together in Antigua and how the young boy from the capital became the well-known Don Mingo (a nickname for Domingo).[70] Locals saw the Japanese photographer and his young assistant, "impeccably

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68 Yasu took a series of outdoor photographs of Antigua as early as 1907, likely with José Domingo's assistance. Therefore, the dating and authorship of the photo collection warrant reconsideration.

69 Orive 1990, p. 16.

70 All quotations in this paragraph and the next two are from Schlesinger (1998, p. 19).

dressed in hats, shirts, ties and cravats, carrying countless bags, tripods and cameras," wandering through various corners of the "quiet and dusty town" and its surrounding farms, taking pictures of plantations or churches. The anecdotes, which the author collected from residents of the old town and annotated with details from previous publications, paint a nostalgic picture of Noriega's role in local society:

> Don Mingo was an extremely kind and gentle man. Like from another time. He was always smiling, remember in Antigua the people who came to his studio to ask for the family photo when Panchita turned fifteen, with her pink taffeta dress and the roses on her head, or the infant who died of worms before he was forty days old, a pure little angel. With the charisma of a confessor, Don Mingo became an accomplice in the joys and sorrows of his people. He explained to the parents of the child who had died of whooping cough that the statue of the angel, which the priest of St. Francis had lent them for the photo, dressed in white and wearing a crown of orange blossoms, had already come to take the child to heaven, to the presence of Christ and the Virgin Mary. They wiped away their tears before taking the picture with their little angel.

Despite José Domingo's popularity among residents and his recognition as a photographer, Schlesinger notes that Don Mingo's studio remained known simply as "Foto Yas."

A Photo Gallery in Little Paris

A recurring theme in the *Memorias* is Yasu's preoccupation with establishing an ideal gallery. Here, I examine the qualities of the photographic gallery Yasu sought to create. I argue that this endeavor involved both the practical task of designing a well-lit space for photography and the sociocultural goal of shaping an urban environment that would attract patrons to the studio for portrait sittings. To illustrate what such a fashionable space might have looked like, I begin with a brief discussion of how political figures, intellectuals, and foreign residents aimed to transform Guatemala City into a place with a European flair.

Paris of Central America

Inspired by Walter Benjamin's discussion of fin-de-siècle Paris, some texts on Guatemala's social history have noted the taste for cultural consumption enthusiastically embraced by the capital's modernist and cosmopolitan elites.[71] In the two decades following the Liberal Revolution of 1871, the export economy generated considerable wealth, much of which was concentrated in the capital. Michael Kirkpatrick identifies this period as a turning point that transformed Guatemala City "from a culturally and demographically large town to an enormous and vibrant—if unpredictable and dangerous—regional capital."[72] According to David McCreery, the driving force behind the Liberal government was "the quest for 'development,' by which they meant the acquisition, as quickly as possible, of the obvious characteristics of modern, that is, North Atlantic, society."[73] Accordingly, the government sought to attract immigrants who could introduce both economic and cultural modernity.

At the time, Guatemala was not a preferred destination for European immigrants, who tended to favor Latin American countries with longer histories of immigration or the

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71 See, for example, Kirkpatrick (2013); McCreery (1983).

72 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Kirkpatrick (2013, p. 25).

73 McCreery 1983, p. 13.

United States, where opportunities appeared more promising. In response, the Guatemalan government sought to make the capital a showcase of the nation's potential. A touch of Paris or a "tropical Athens" was intended to dispel the country's image of backwardness in comparison to its regional neighbors.[74] To illustrate how governments prioritized appearances over substantive development, McCreery cites a revealing policy decision from 1879. When coffee export prices declined, the government "cut back on telegraph construction, fired agricultural inspectors, and stopped supporting various schools at the same time that it promised a Spanish operetta troupe twenty thousand pesos to perform during the dry season."[75]

By the 1890s, major redesigns of the city's transportation infrastructure and urban layout were underway. Modeled after European capitals, Guatemala City—now the seat of a postcolonial nation—introduced new parks, avenues, statues, and monuments. An article published in *Las Noticias* on May 27, 1892, announced the project for a large park:

> Guatemala will soon have a park: La Aurora is measuring enough space for the new public playground in our cultured capital to be something like a reminder of the Bologna Forest in Paris, the Prater in Vienna, or Central Park in New York, on the right proportion between these great centers and small but precious Guatemala.[76]

In 1884, Helen Sanborn visited Guatemala with her father, a Boston-based coffee merchant. Serving as a hub for business in the provincial departments, Guatemala City became a gathering place for foreigners to exchange information and negotiate better deals. In her account of the visit, Sanborn describes meeting Euro-American investors at the luxurious Gran Hotel. She also attended a French opera at the newly built theater and visited the popular bullfights. Sanborn highlights the pride Guatemalans took in their theaters, hotels, boulevards, and the array of European-style amusements the city offered, noting that residents referred to their capital as "pequeña París" or "the Paris of Central America."[77] A similar observation, albeit rendered in a more cynical key, was made by the American visitor Nevin Otto Winter:

> The present Guatemala City [...] is now the commercial, political, and social center of the republic, and in it is concentrated the wealth, culture, and refinement of the whole country. Because of its superiority over the Central American municipalities, Guatemala City has been called the "Little Paris," a designation very pleasing to the inhabitants of the metropolis of America. Its similarity to Paris is about as great as that of St. Austin to New York.[78]

Yasu was certainly aware of the Guatemalan elite's fascination with Paris. The French education he received in Yokohama had made the French capital the focus of his aspirations. Before arriving in Latin America for the first time, he spent nearly a year in the "capital of capitals," as modernist poet Rubén Darío called it.[79] However, once Yasu settled in Central America, the Paris of his earlier years gradually lost its hold on his life. Confronted with competition from other immigrant photographers, whose North Atlantic origins lent

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74 Kirkpatrick (2013, p. 14), Peláez Almengor (1994)
75 McCreery 1983, p. 13.
76 "Park of Guatemala" (Parque de Guatemala), *Las Noticias*, May 27, 1892.
77 Sanborn 1886, p. 109.
78 Winter 1909, pp. 54–55.
79 Almandoz 2018, p. 129.

greater authority to their claims of representing European modernity, Yasu was forced to rely on his technical expertise and the distinct marketability of his work.

An Ideal Gallery

According to the 1881 census, Guatemala City had 57,928 inhabitants. While more than a tenth were foreigners, most residents were registered as *ladinos*: people of European descent.[80] The city's urban, economic, religious, and technological transformations brought about what Michael Kirkpatrick describes as "a thoroughgoing epistemological shift in how urban Guatemalans—*capitalinos*—understood and experienced their social world."[81] Within this changing cultural landscape, photographers styled their studios as places where modernist aspirations and Parisian desires could take form. This was reflected not only in the services they provided but also in the fashionable furnishings, ornate décor, and aspirational names of their studios—such as *Arte Nuevo*, *Imperial*, or *Palacio de Artes*.

Alberto Valdeavellano, who established his reputation in the final decade of the nineteenth century, built a magnificent and exotic gallery in the Moorish style. To promote his studio, El Siglo XX (Twentieth Century), he placed a full-page illustrated advertisement in the *Catálogo Ilustrado y Lista Oficial de Recompensas de la Exposición Centro-Americana e Internacional*.[82] The advertisement offers a glimpse into the experience of visiting the renowned studio. Through two photo collages, readers were immersed in the opulent entrance and various interiors, including the men's and women's dressing rooms, the salon, the gallery, and a room filled with oriental objects. The facility featured a photographic studio, a large portrait studio, and the shop of the American painter A. F. Rouse, whose expertise added a refined touch to the portraits.[83] The advertisement illustrates how the sensory experience offered by the finest studios extended well beyond the portrait session itself.

Partnerships between photographers and painters were a common strategy to increase income. Operating his studio independently, Yasu struggled to compete with the extravagant services offered by Valdeavellano and others. Based on the surviving negatives and prints, the Fotografía Japonesa location at 53 Calle del Carmen appears to have been the first studio Yasu was able to equip with a dedicated gallery and the necessary furnishings. For this studio, Yasu created two layout plans—one in Japanese, the other in Spanish—proudly titled "Layout Plan of Studio Fotografía Japonesa in Guatemala City, Central America" (中央亜米利加滑天満羅府日本写真舘之圖).[84]

These layouts (figure 60) illustrate not only the workflow and spatial arrangement

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80 "Summary of the Census of Guatemala: Capital of the Republic" (Resumen del censo de Guatemala. Capital de le República), *El Porvenir*, January 15, 1881.

81 Kirkpatrick 2013, p. 25.

82 An unnumbered page between pages 60 and 61.

83 Amézaga Heiras (2017, p. 39) notes a similar collaboration between painters and photographers in 1860s Mexico: "In order to cover the costs of setting up a photographic studio, several photographers and painters joined forces to create a more prestigious commercial office where they could work on photography and painting or illuminated photographs."

84 The Spanish-labeled plan is an albumen print housed at Fujisawa as part of the "Fujisawa Education Board Collection," reference number 31. An identical plan with a Japanese caption is found on a glass plate negative in the Fotografía Japonesa collection at CIRMA (GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P09-013). This collage photograph combines nine images of the studio setting with the plan at the center. Some images appear to have been taken in later years, suggesting Yasu compiled photos from his early years to advertise his studio in Antigua.

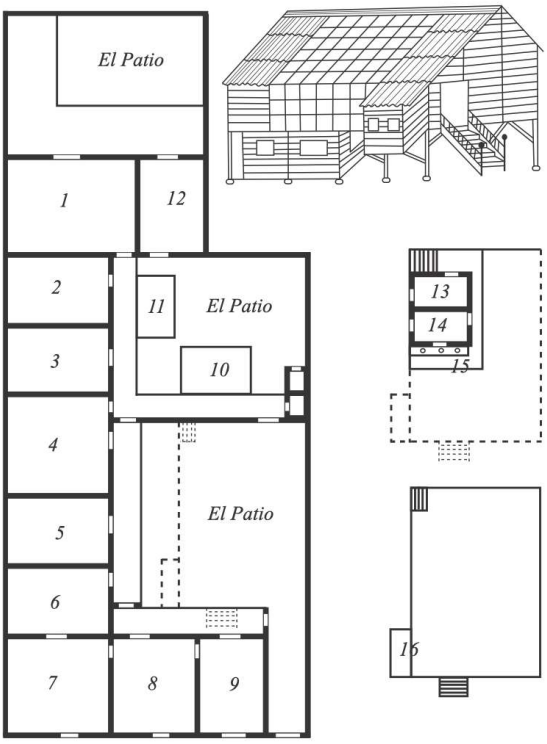

Figure 60: A reproduction of Yasu Kōhei's studio plan by the author. In this plan, the entire studio is divided into three spaces with the following arrangement: The "house" includes: 1. storage; 2. kitchen; 3. servant's room; 4. laboratory; 5. dining room; 6. study; 7. bedroom; 8. living room; 9. [unclear]; 10. tank; 11. printing room; 12. laboratory. The ground level under the gallery includes: 13. darkroom; 14. room for toning; 15. laundry room for portraits. The photographic gallery: 16. retouching room. The references for this plan are: Fujisawa Education Board [31], Fujisawa, Ichinoseki; Fototeca Guatemala, CIRMA [GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P09-013]

of early photographic studios in Central America but also exemplary solutions for water supply and lighting conditions.[85] The rooms associated with photographic work were located on the ground floor around the two courtyards. In the first courtyard, beneath an elevated space used as the photographic gallery, were the darkroom, the toning room, and the washing room for printed portraits. The retouching room was a small space adjacent to the gallery. The second courtyard contained the water tank and the printing room. A passage in the *Memorias* describes this space:

> I built a two-story gallery, 15 meters long and 8 meters wide, with a very comfortable and well-painted ladder, the retouching room in the gallery and the darkroom, the toning room and the washing room downstairs with another ladder, and the printing room in the second courtyard and the preparation of the papers and other works in a very spacious room.[86]

One albumen photograph, likely taken at this location, illustrates the elevated studio space (figure 61). They depict a wooden structure raised on stilts, framed by the tiled roofs of neighboring buildings. The glass roof and windows were essential for utilizing natural skylight.[87] One photograph was taken while the studio was still under construction, with open sides providing a clear view of the interior. To convey the scale of the studio, Yasu included two figures—presumably María and the young child José Domingo—in the composition.

Yasu's floor plans for Calle del Carmen 53 reveal that his living quarters were located within the same space as the photo studio, likely leaving limited room for displaying his

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85 Although labeled as the layout of the Fotografía Japonesa studio, the floor plan mainly depicts Yasu's private living quarters, with around the two larger courtyards dedicated to the photographic studio and related processes.

86 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 929 ff.

87 Lemagny and Rouillé 1987, p. 41.

Figure 61: María Noriega and a child inside the unfinished Fotografía Japonesa in Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

work or conducting photo sessions. One postcard he sent to Japan depicts the paraphernalia he used for his art.[88] Unlike Valdeavellano, who furnished his studio with opulent and exotic European objects, Fotografía Japonesa offered a modest yet neatly arranged selection of props and photographic furnishings—such as chairs, carpets, books, balustrades, and columns for sitters to hold.

In the *Memorias*, Yasu recalled five sets representing a field, a window, a cannon, the sea, and a European interior. Albumen prints preserved at Fujisawa illustrate the cannon scene, among others, mounted on wooden frames (figure 62).[89] Based on my analysis of Yasu's portraits across various photographic collections, the settings he employed during the early phase of his career (1880 – 1889) included a fountain pavilion, a coastal volcano, log cabins, river bridges, waterfalls, a lakeside pavilion, and interiors opening onto landscapes framed by windows. After reopening Fotografía Japonesa in 1890, his sets featured an interior with two arches, a room decorated with painted candlesticks, a garden, and a pavilion overlooking water. Romantic landscapes and bourgeois interiors were among the most common thematic backdrops of this period.

While Yasu left no detailed information regarding the origin of his backdrops, Luján Muñoz suggests that, lacking the resources to purchase professional artwork, Yasu may have painted them himself.[90] This speculation is likely based on a passage in Yasu's memoirs where he recalls taking painting classes in Mexico before arriving in Guatemala. Luján Muñoz also notes that it was common for studio photographers to paint their own backdrops, describing this as "a feature that is quite recurrent in the history of photography

88 In the absence of further information, it is difficult to confirm whether this image corresponds to the studio discussed here. However, its spatial configuration closely resembles the one described above.

89 Fujisawa Education Board, No. 16. Backgrounds and props are useful in dating and locating Yasu's portraits.

90 Luján Muñoz 1982a.

Figure 62: A display of backdrops shows one that bears the signature of Carlos A. H. J.

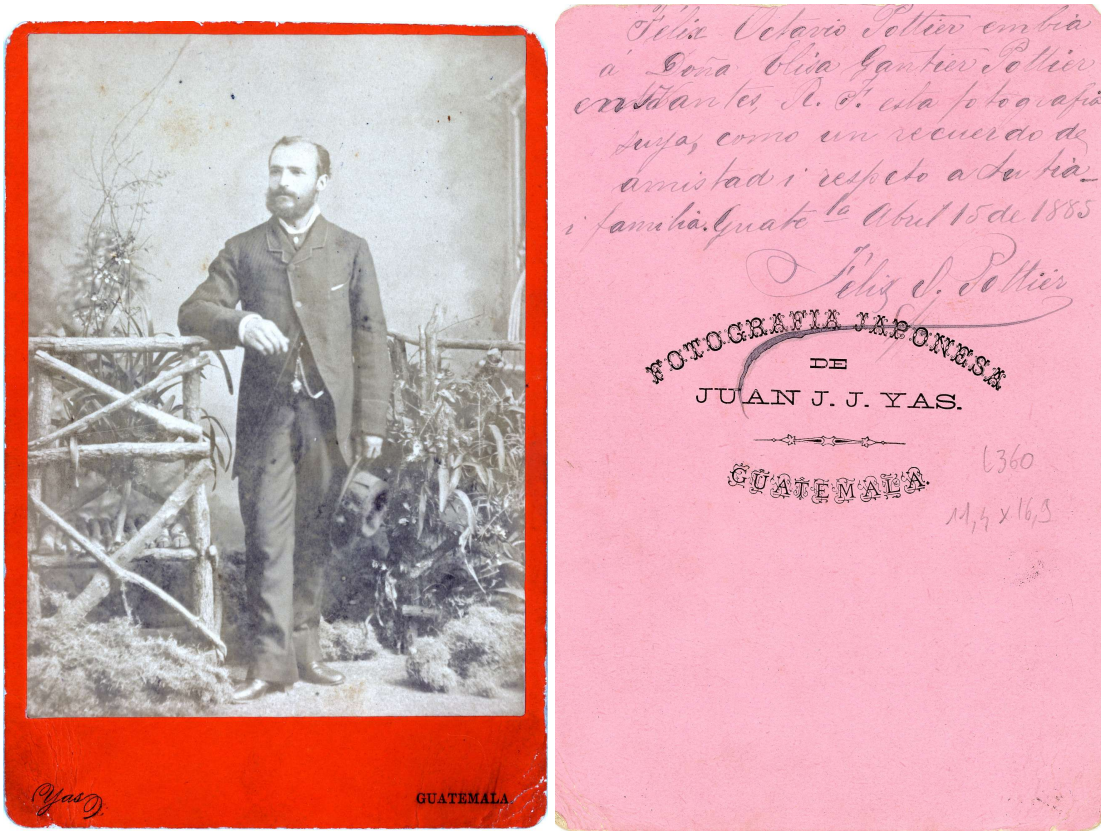

Figure 63: Portrait made by Yasu Kōhei in Guatemala City, 1885

in Guatemala, especially at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century," though he offers no concrete evidence to support this claim.[91] María Cristina Orive, who played a key role in incorporating Yasu's photographs into the CIRMA archives, has proposed that some backdrops may have been imported from the United States. Her hypothesis is grounded in the visual similarity between Yasu's backdrops and those used by the contemporaneous Mexican photographer Romualdo García (1852 – 1930).[92]

Although there is no clear evidence on this matter in Yasu's writings, the *Memorias* note that he ordered machinery and materials from New York when he reopened Fotografía Japonesa after his time in Peru. Another plausible source for Yasu's tools and sets may have been other photographers in Guatemala. A backdrop he frequently used after 1890, including in photographs commemorating family celebrations, also appears in portraits taken at Emilio Herbruger's Fotografía Central in the 1880s. This suggests that Yasu either acquired it from his teacher or commissioned local artists to create backdrops. A signature visible in the lower corner of one backdrop on an albumen print identifies the maker as "Carlos A. H. J."[93]

A cabinet card made by Yasu in 1885 provides insight into the workings of one of his earliest studios. In the portrait, a young man in a formal suit stands beside a fence adorned with flowers and plants (figure 63). On the reverse side is the inscription: "[Name omitted] sends this photograph to [name omitted] in Nantes, French Republic. This photograph

91 Luján Muñoz (1982a, 1987).
92 Orive 1990.
93 Further research is needed to establish the provenance of these items and to identify their creators.

of his, as a gesture of friendship and respect [...] Guatemala, April 15, 1885." In the background, a sparse grouping of trees and the corner of a gazebo are visible, depicting a conventional garden setting. The hand-painted landscape blends seamlessly with real orchids, moss, tree branches, and a wooden fence in the foreground. Soft lighting minimizes edges and contrasts among the various materials. A detailed examination of Yasu's sets and backgrounds reveals his precise use of vegetation, employed exclusively to evoke outdoor scenes or the impression of natural landscapes, thus avoiding the incongruity between hand-painted backgrounds and the studio's wooden floor.

Practitioners of the photographic trade like Yasu attracted clients by constructing an "ideal gallery." Within this space, photographers employed a variety of props, sets, and furniture to help clients present themselves as optimal versions of themselves. In addition to facilitating self-representation, "photographic furniture appealed to—and helped to cultivate—photographers' and sitters' desire for visual novelty."[94] In his study of the early history of photographic portraiture in Latin America, Robert Levine observes that "less affluent patrons did not have to be embarrassed by their clothing or the setting in which their portraits were taken—studio clothing and props offered attributed dignity to all sitters."[95] Elaborate studio sets were also a central element of business competition, enabling studios to convey a sense of exclusivity.[96]

As Deborah Poole notes regarding Peruvian studio photography in the early twentieth century, photographers "were ranked in accordance with the prestige and class position of their respective clientele."[97] Among the various props Yasu employed during portrait sessions, hand-painted backdrops and decorative furniture played an important role in attracting business. The numerous portraits of priests that Yasu produced are set in various scenes. Interestingly, the well-known figures identifiable among his non-clerical patrons almost always chose an elegant backdrop of a European interior—a backdrop Yasu proudly recalled purchasing from a German photographer.[98]

Portraits for Everyone

Portraiture was the dominant genre in Yasu Kōhei's photographic practice, and his work closely followed the stylistic conventions of his time. The substantial number of surviving prints and negatives attests to his success in meeting a demand shaped by Guatemalan visual culture and popular taste. In the following pages, I examine Yasu's work through the lens of likeness, a concept that operates along two distinct dimensions. I argue that Yasu's photographs reflect a broader visual convention of producing likeness through the imitation of Western European aesthetics. Using backdrops, costumes, and photographic manipulation, portraits produced in postcolonial Latin America were designed to resemble those of celebrities in Paris and other European metropolises.[99] Simultaneously, Yasu introduced his own variations to European portraiture, which he absorbed into his practice. Unlike other photographers whose portraits of politicians and celebrities saturated the Guatemalan market, Yasu created a series of images featuring high-ranking clerics. In

94 Rudd 2019, pp. 14–15.
95 R. M. Levine 1989b, p. 307.
96 Rudd 2016, pp. 211–213.
97 Poole 2003, p. 176.
98 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 934 ff.
99 Debroise 2001, pp. 34–36.

these works, his visual reference was not the secular culture of Paris and London but images of the Pope and the aesthetics of Catholic Europe.

From Faithful Copy to Work of Art

In a 1907 advertisement, Yasu promised to guarantee "the perfection of the likeness and the cleanliness of the work."[100] His wording echoed that of other photographers, who promoted themselves as artists of skill and refined taste. While the idea of a perfect likeness may seem abstract today, portraitists and sitters in late nineteenth-century Guatemala clearly understood the desired outcome. This is evidenced by the popularity of Alberto Valdeavellano's portraits among the wealthy families of the capital. In the following excerpt from an 1897 article, Rafael Spínola—editor-in-chief of *La Illustración Guatemalteca* and a politician of the liberal regime—praised the photographer in an apostrophic ode:

> At the Moorish doors of your artistic abode, we can see the most beautiful girls of Guatemala arriving in shifts every day. They are the fairies of beauty who come to you, wizard of the arts, looking for a stroke of your magic wand to enhance with its touch the charms with which nature blessed them at their birth. And they do well. They are beautiful, but they want to be made even more beautiful by your craft.
> The photographic machine faithfully copies beauty, but art purifies it, enlarges it, enhances it, gives it a touch of grace, and finally bathes it in that special complexion that comes from the play of light combined with the harmony of features and the mysterious secrets that the artist possesses. This is why beauties come to you: they willingly surrender to the power of your imagination, which has unfathomable resources to bring out all kinds of beauty.[101]

Here, the author describes the work of the photographic machine as a largely mechanical process that requires artistic intervention to elevate its product to a higher level. The task of "careful artistic retouching" aimed to improve the photograph "by giving the portrait the true aspect of the human face."[102] Spínola's praise of Valdeavellano reflects how Guatemalan society understood this true aspect: a likeness achieved by enhancing the mechanical copy through the art of expert retouching.

Scholars of nineteenth-century Latin American portraiture have noted the prevalence of a tendency toward European style among the ruling class.[103] Robert Levine attributes this tendency to the Spanish colonial past, which upheld uniformity as the cultural norm of official life and the broader social environment. Even in the postcolonial republics, "homogeneity and cultural conformity" remained the essential paradigm. According to Levine, this resulted in a situation where "[p]hotographs did not differ much from country to country [and] elites wanted to look European, whether in Montevideo, Guayaquil, or Bogotá."[104]

With the advent of the carte-de-visite, portraits became more widely accessible. In the developed countries of the North, even the popular classes could obtain images of

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100 Castañeda 1907.

101 Rafael Spínola, "In the Album of A.G. Valdeavellano" (En el Álbum de A.G. Valdeavellano), *La Illustración Guatemalteca*, January 1, 1897.

102 Tissandier 1877, p. 146.

103 See, for example, Debroise (2001), R. M. Levine (1989a), and Solano Roa (2018). Tina Campt also discusses a similar case in her studies of Afro-Caribbeans and West Indians (Campt 2008, 2009a,b, 2012, 2017, 2021; Campt and Thomas 2008).

104 R. M. Levine 1989a, p. 32.

themselves and their families as keepsakes.[105] In Guatemala, the clientele visiting photographic studios expanded from the wealthy elite to include families of middle status. Despite this broader market, Yasu faced increasing competition during the final years of his business in the capital (1890 to 1895). Although some well-known personalities chose Fotografía Japonesa for their portraits, they preferred their publicity photos, which featured the names of the sitter and photographer, from competitors such as Herbruger, Kildare, or Valdeavellano. As Levine observes, photography, like other social activities, cannot be separated from the broader social environment and political ideology.[106] Ethnic and social divisions under the liberal regime were especially evident in the self-representation of elite society, which favored portraits produced by photographers who embodied Europeanness.[107] Ann Parker and Avon Neal note that, in the 1970s—sixty years after Yasu Kōhei's death—photographic enterprises in Guatemala remained sharply divided along class and ethnic lines.[108]

My approach to the concept of the "ideal portrait" involves comparing the extant portraits produced during the liberal regime, viewing them as constructions of self-image. In doing so, I aim to deepen our understanding of the social landscape of the period and to examine the extent to which cultural norms were indeed stable, as Levine asserts. One challenge in analyzing early Guatemalan portraiture is the limited background information on the sitters. While most images discussed in the literature depict identifiable individuals of high social status, portraits of common people remain largely outside the scope of scholarly analysis.

Most portraits of the period fall into one of two categories, distinguished by the style of the background: they are either set against monochrome scenes or hand-painted backdrops. Portraits with monochrome backgrounds are fairly uniform, typically half-length compositions. In contrast, photographs taken against hand-painted backgrounds exhibit greater variety in composition, pose, and number of subjects. This distinction, along with the association of these styles with differing degrees of formality and social status, is a hallmark of the Latin American portrait tradition. As studio sets became an important competitive element among practitioners, portraits of prominent individuals—mass-printed and reproduced in newspapers—began to feature both styles. Nevertheless, the half-length portrait with a monochrome background remained the preferred choice for formal social occasions.

Few patrons of Guatemala City's glamorous studios—often wealthy men—chose to have their portraits set against lush vegetation, perhaps because such botanical scenes were too closely associated with mass-produced postcards. An exception is the portrait of Manuel García Elgueta, taken by an unknown photographer in the 1890s.[109] Renowned for his studies of Mayan language and history, García Elgueta is depicted in a manner reminiscent of iconic images of the colonial explorer Sir Henry Morgan Stanley, whose possible influence on Yasu's aesthetic was discussed in the introduction.

Interestingly, Yasu's photographic collection includes several portraits of male subjects posed against dense vegetation backgrounds. Many of these photographs were taken during the early years of Fotografía Japonesa in the capital. They feature priests and bishops with

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105 DeFalco Lippert 2018, p. 138.
106 R. M. Levine 1989a, p. 32.
107 See Levine's (ibid., p. 9) discussion of Latin America in general, and Taracena Arriola (2007, p. 21) regarding Guatemala.
108 Parker and Neal 1982, p. 3.
109 Chinchilla Mazariegos 1999, p. 61.

Figure 64: "Portrait of Friar Julián Raymundo Rivero y Jacinto," Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

whom Yasu may have been personally acquainted. The negatives alone do not reveal the sitters' identities, but the portrait of Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto—who became an archbishop years after the photograph was taken—was published in *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* in 1896 (figure 64). Judging by the props used, the image likely dates to the 1880s. A comparison of the printed reproduction and the glass negative shows that the edges of the published portrait were partially trimmed. However, Riveiro y Jacinto, seated confidently in a chair covered with branches, does not appear to have objected to being photographed in this unusual setting.

The intersection of photographic technique with social and ethnic divisions becomes especially apparent in the artistic enhancements achieved through retouching. Like Valdeavellano, Yasu applied his brush directly to the negatives to refine his subjects' portraits.[110] For instance, in a portrait of Father Federico Virto, subtle traces of retouching are visible in the facial details. Yasu smoothed the lines around Virto's eye sockets and forehead, accentuating his elegant contours and the cleanliness of his complexion. In his wedding portrait, Yasu adjusted the brightness of his and his wife's skin tones and removed their facial wrinkles. The result was an image that more closely resembled the European ideals Guatemalans sought to emulate. The precision of Yasu's brushwork reflects not only his technical skill but also his profound awareness of the politics of race, providing less affluent clients with a way to partake in the prestige otherwise reserved for the small "white" elite.

As seen in the preserved tintypes, similar artistic alterations were applied to the final products through pigmentation. Although less subtle than the retouching of glass negatives,

[110] Anaís Garcia, director of the Fototeca at CIRMA, generously shared many glass negatives from the collection with me and offered valuable insights into working with Yasu's photography. She emphasized that retouching was a common practice in Yasu's work.

Figure 65: Tintype portrait of a child, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

Figure 66: Tintype portrait of a child, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

some tintypes were colored to match the sitters' skin tone, clothing, hair, and other features (figures 65 and 66). Unlike albumen prints, which were pricier because of their lengthy production process, Yasu's tintypes were widely sold. "People wouldn't even let me eat," Yasu wrote in the *Memorias*, "because so many people came at the same time to ask for the ferrotypes (tintypes) because the price was more convenient than the portraits on paper."[111] The lower price and instant production of tintypes attracted a wide clientele, including "many people from well-distinguished families."[112]

Another distinctive feature of Yasu's photographic practice was his keen market awareness and ability to develop appealing products with modest resources. For example, he incorporated the floral frame commonly used by other photographers, such as Valdeavellano, to decorate portraits of female sitters or picturesque landscapes in illustrated publications. Yasu lacked the support of an artist with credentials like those of American painter Rouse, who collaborated with Valdeavellano. Nonetheless, he skillfully reproduced floral frames on a comparable flat background. Some frames include handwritten inscriptions, such as "a souvenir of friendship" (un recuerdo de amistad). This inscription, combined with the floral frame, transformed a simple portrait into an object of social value that could be given as a token of affection.[113]

Certain compositions and botanical arrangements once thought unique to Yasu's aesthetic are also found in the work of other photographers. For instance, Yasu's portraits are

111 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 956 f.
112 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 960 f.
113 The American photographers Parker and Neal (1982, p. 16) note that such "memento-type backgrounds" remained popular into the early 1980s.

often arranged among fresh flowers, moss, tree branches, and rocks. Luis Luján Muñoz has suggested that this may reflect the horticultural tradition of Yasu's native Japan. This claim, however, may result from the limited availability of comparative materials—particularly portraits, which are kept in private collections. A juxtaposition of Yasu's work with Guatemalan postcards from the same period reveals that similar botanical arrangements were standard settings for portraits of indigenous Maya people produced for the tourist market (figure 88). This is evident in works titled "Tipo de Indio" or "Indio" by Valdeavellano and the Swiss-Guatemalan Emilio Eichenberger.[114]

It has been suggested that Yasu's studio photography is best described as formal and decorative, especially when compared to the portraiture of his collaborator José Domingo Noriega.[115] There is no doubt that Yasu invested considerable care and thought into his work. However, when making broad evaluations, it is important to remember that the surviving glass negatives represent a particular subset of Yasu's overall output. Many less remarkable glass plate works may have been reused, discarded, or simply allowed to deteriorate.

Comparing the two photographers' portraits also requires considering the rapid evolution of photographic technology and aesthetics. Separated by a generation, their differing styles reflect the fact that photography was becoming increasingly commonplace. Reflecting on generational differences in early portrait photography, Olivier Debroise attributes the stiff posture of Mexico's nouveau riche in daguerreotypes to their unfamiliarity with the photographic process. He contrasts this with the European bourgeoisie, who were accustomed to sitting for oil portraits.[116] Yasu's portraits from the 1880s to the 1910s may reveal the bewilderment of his subjects as well. In contrast, the Antiguans who visited Noriega's studio in the 1920s were undoubtedly more familiar with the photographic process.

Cult of Portraiture

On March 8, 1892, a distinctive advertisement appeared in the newspaper *Las Noticias*, announcing: "Soon we will publish the female silhouettes. You can purchase a photograph of one of the most beautiful young ladies of this capital. The photograph will be taken at the Palacio de Artes by Kildare & Valdeavellano."[117]

This advertisement stands apart from typical studio promotions, which usually focused on business location or the photographer's technical skill. Instead, Edward Kildare and Alberto Valdeavellano strategically capitalized on their appeal among the upper-class female clientele to boost their prestige. The demand for celebrity images was by no means unique to Guatemala, nor was it a recent development.[118] Indeed, as early as 1855, William Fitzgibbon sold thousands of copies of his portrait of Guatemalan president Rafael Carrera.[119] Yet, the commercialization of portraits featuring young socialites remained an

114 Frost 2021.
115 Orive 1990.
116 Debroise 2001, p. 21.
117 "Siluetas Femeniles: se dará una Fotografía de una de las más Bellas Señoritas de esta capital" (Female Silhouettes: a photograph of one of the most beautiful young ladies in this capital city will be provided), *Las Noticias*, March 8, 1892.
118 As Lemay (2018, pp. 98–115) explains, the carte-de-visite's popularization ignited a widespread desire to collect likenesses—from family members to public figures—with over three hundred million sold in England alone by the 1860s.
119 Taracena Arriola 2007, p. 19.

uncommon practice within Latin America. Reflecting this rarity, a US diplomat observed in 1880:

> In Venezuela, or Havana, or the Argentine Republic, if a gentleman possesses the photograph of a lady, he is either a near relative or is engaged to marry her. Otherwise her brother or father has good cause to thrash him, or challenge him to fight a duel. If the photographer sold the picture, or gave it away, he is liable to be punished by fine and imprisonment.
> In Guatemala, on the other hand, as in Peru, the pictures of the belles of the city, whether married or maidens, can be purchased by anyone who wants them at the photographers', and often at the shops, and the rank and popularity of the subject is usually estimated by the number of her portraits so disposed of.[120]

The Palacio de Artes produced images of Guatemala City's wealthy and beautiful from the 1890s through the early decades of the twentieth century. These portraits of upper-class women were sold commercially and exhibited in the gallery itself. Many were subsequently published in illustrated magazines, reaching an even broader audience. As Keith McElroy observed in Peru, which experienced a similar phenomenon, it "became a mark of flattery to have portraits of beauties from prominent families sold commercially."[121]

Because these celebrity portraits were primarily produced for the local market, they appear to be largely absent from photographic archives. However, evidence of this type of image production can be found in the illustrated news publications that gained popularity just a few years later. Alberto Valdeavellano's work, including his signature female silhouettes, features prominently in the pages of *Guatemala Ilustrada*. In one notable photo collage titled "Flowers of Central America," hundreds of women's portraits were carefully assembled to create a collective representation of the region's elite. These images not only reflected Guatemalan tastes for upper-class female portraiture but also highlighted the collaborative nature through which these women shaped their public personas.[122]

Previous studies of Yasu have done little to elucidate the relationship between his photographic practice and the broader visual economy of Guatemala during his time. A closer examination of his work reveals that Yasu skillfully balanced commercial success with the limitations of his personal resources. A key aspect of his career was his involvement in the celebrity portrait market, where he primarily sold copies of portraits of public figures, securing a steady source of income. Yasu astutely recognized the public's fascination with the likenesses of leading politicians. While members of the Guatemalan elite sought the most prestigious studios—such as those of Herbruger and later Kildare and Valdeavellano—for their official portraits, Yasu took a different approach. Lacking access to these high-profile commissions, he carved out a niche by offering more affordable presidential portraits. This strategic adaptation enabled him to meet market demand despite not enjoying the privileges of his more established contemporaries.

Two examples illustrate Yasu's engagement with presidential portraiture at the Fotografía Japonesa. The first is a portrait of president José María Reina Barrios (1854 – 1898), who served from 1892 to 1898 (figure 67). In this image, Reina Barrios is dressed

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120 Curtis 1888, p. 98.

121 McElroy 1981, p. 146.

122 There is no detailed research on these sitters in Guatemala. As Henneman (2016) notes regarding "professional beauty" portraits popular in late nineteenth-century London, the women who posed for such images challenged traditional gender norms of passivity and modesty by participating in the creation of these commercialized self-representations.

Figure 67: A portrait of president José María Reina Barrios, likely a copy created by Yasu Kōhei

Figure 68: Portrait of president, by Edward Kildare and Alberto Valdeavellano

in an elegant military uniform, standing in profile within a spacious hall. Surrounded by richly decorated furniture, he gazes directly at the camera. Based on the quality of the glass negative, this portrait is archived as an original work by José Domingo Noriega and is identified not as Reina Barrios but rather described as a "senior officer" (oficial de alto rango). However, a comparison with an almost identical photograph suggests that the negative is actually a copy of an original image produced outside the Fotografía Japonesa.

The portrait appeared on the front page of *Guatemala Ilustrada* in February 1894.[123] It was labeled "General José María Reina Barrios, the current president of the republic" (figure 68). At the bottom left, the image was credited to the studio of Kildare and Valdeavellano. With Reina Barrios standing in a slightly different pose in an otherwise identical setting, Yasu's version of the portrait is clearly derived from a second take produced at the same photographic event. The assassination of the president in 1898, after four years in office, caused a national sensation.[124] Whether Yasu re-photographed the portrait during Reina Barrios's lifetime or posthumously remains uncertain, but it is reasonable to assume he recognized a market opportunity. Yasu likely employed technical methods similar to those he used for popular Catholic prints—copying images while omitting the original photographer's name and studio. By converting the original photograph into a negative, he could produce multiple formats, which he then sold at different price points.

Following the assassination of Reina Barrios, Guatemala entered a new political era under the lengthy dictatorship of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1857 – 1924), which lasted from 1898 to 1920. This shift altered the political landscape and transformed the visual culture of the country, as Estrada Cabrera adeptly exploited emerging photographic technologies

123 "General José María Reina Barrios," *Guatemala Ilustrada*, February 4, 1894.
124 Bendaña Perdomo 2011, p. 167.

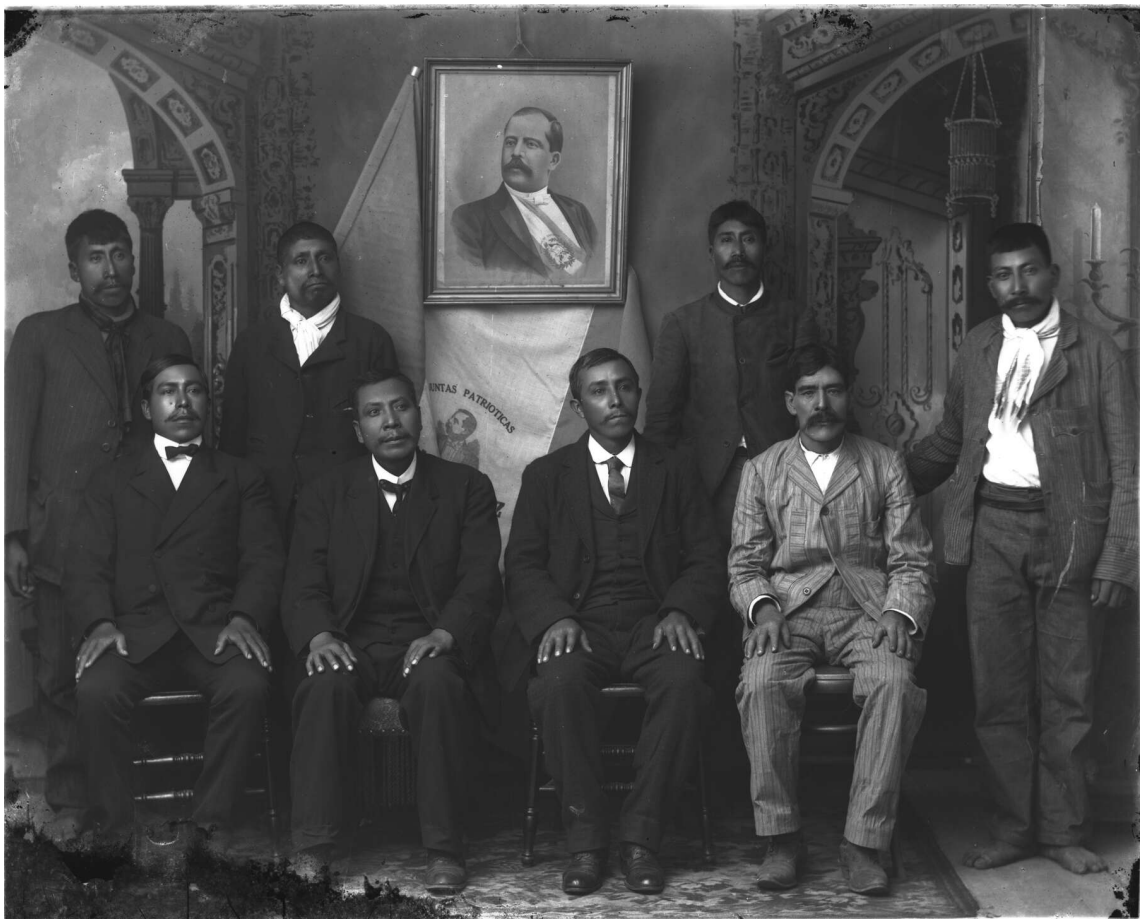

Figure 69: "Portrait of the Patriotic Assembly." In the center of this studio portrait is a framed picture of president Manuel Estrada Cabrera, who was in office from 1898 to 1920. Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

to solidify his image and authority.

As Tani Adams and Arturo Taracena Arriola have noted, the cult of personality surrounding the dictator was vividly expressed through studio portraits that depicted devoted groups of ladino and indigenous men standing before his likeness—an expression of reverence famously captured in Miguel Ángel Asturias's novel *Señor Presidente*.[125] Estrada Cabrera's strategic use of imagery extended to civic rituals, such as the invented Festival of the Goddess Minerva, which celebrated education but also served as a stage for his visual propaganda, placing his portrait at the heart of temples erected nationwide.[126]

While there is no direct documentation of Yasu's role in producing official portraits for the regime, his position as the foremost photographic studio in Antigua Guatemala strongly suggests his involvement in supplying the market with copies of the dictator's widely disseminated image. This is evident in two archival photographs where a nearly life-size bust portrait of Estrada Cabrera occupies a central, commanding position behind the photographed groups (figure 69). Titled "Portrait of a Patriotic Group," such images highlight how the ruler's likeness functioned as the symbolic center of political allegiance. This period witnessed the rise of national festivals centered on political figures, with their images dominating public and collective memory. By displaying Estrada Cabrera's life-size portrait in his studio, Yasu replicated this culture of image veneration on a more intimate

125 Adams and Taracena Arriola 1998; M. A. Asturias 1999.
126 Carrera Mejía 1998.

scale. The formal dress of the group members hints at the solemnity of the occasion, while the dictator's presence-in-absence transformed the photographic studio into a politicized space, reinforcing the significance of both the political celebration and the collective portrait itself.

Selling Images of Archbishops and Saints

Sensitive to both market demands and political currents, Yasu produced portraits of political figures and filled his studio with patriotic imagery. However, the majority of his photographic archive reveals a stronger devotion to religious subjects. Well over two hundred photographs in the Fotografía Japonesa collection fall under the category of religious imagery (imaginería religiosa), an expression commonly used in Guatemala to denote photographs of *imagenes* (religious sculptures) and *estampas* (devotional prints). Alongside images of local churches, friars, and priests, Yasu's archive contains over four hundred photographs with religious themes, all created during the liberal government era. As one of the few photographers extensively engaged with religious subjects, Yasu's work represents a comprehensive historical record of venerated *imagenes* in Guatemala.

Studies of early religious photography have been limited for several reasons. One is that, with few exceptions, reproductions of Catholic imagery rarely include the photographer's or studio's name, making it difficult to trace an image's provenance. Like other popular-market genres such as tourist postcards or portraits of ordinary people, devotional photography holds little appeal as high art. This section centers on these religious photographs, placing them in dialogue with the celebrity portraits to underscore two important points. To begin, Yasu's work reveals that new visual technologies were used not only to create images of a modernizing nation but also to preserve long-standing iconographic traditions. Moreover, since these Catholic images likely circulated widely within religious communities, examining the visual elements Yasu kept from earlier media and the innovations he introduced in adapting traditional imagery to photography helps us understand how the visual aesthetics of devotion were updated during this moment of shifting technology.

In the absence of extensive records on early visual culture in Guatemala, it remains challenging to determine how the public distinguished photographic portraits from traditional religious images when Yasu began producing photographic replicas of saint sculptures. This question gains particular importance considering that many consumers of religious imagery came from rural areas and were unfamiliar with the emerging photographic technology. The following episode from an 1886 travelogue by Helen Sanborn, an American visitor to Guatemala, vividly illustrates the kind of confusion that arose at a time when photographic portraiture was just beginning to gain popularity. While traveling by boat, Sanborn observed a Guatemalan boy accompanying a French priest:

> This boy's ignorance of the world was surprising, as we chanced to find out; for, while the priest was once absent a few minutes, we took occasion to try to divert him with papers and books. He was pleased with the pictures, but regarded them in a very different light from what we expected; for on seeing a picture of Lydia Pinkham he looked very reverent, and asked if it was not sacred. To him pictures of women were representations of saints and angels to be worshipped, and he will never know they can represent simply inventors of patent medicines.[127]

[127] Sanborn 1886, p. 193.

Figure 70: A priest holds a portrait of the sculpture of Saint Dominic, which was also photographed by Yasu Kōhei, from the Santo Domingo church in Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

The picture Sanborn describes is a portrait of a woman wearing an elaborate pleated collar and a bun, set in an oval frame. Despite the critical remarks about Catholic imagery, the key moment in this episode is that the young boy could not distinguish between a woman's portrait and a religious image.[128] He even mistook an advertisement for medicine for a depiction of the Virgin Mary. This misunderstanding might have seemed fanciful to Sanborn, who was used to seeing portraits of friends and strangers. However, I argue that Yasu likely recognized the commercial potential of the spiritual aura surrounding religious imagery for many local clients in Guatemala. He captured this aura in photographs of various religious subjects, offering them to pious Catholics collecting saint images—much like the modernist upper classes collected portraits of politicians and national celebrities.

Unlike the volcanic landscapes or indigenous Mayan sitters favored by foreign visitors like Sanborn, Yasu's religious imagery catered to a distinctly local audience. His strong ties to clerical circles and membership in the lay Franciscan Third Order (OFS) granted him privileged access to the Catholic Church's elite and to venerated sculptures of saints. Placing these sacred figures before his camera was itself a remarkable innovation.

From Paintings of Archbishops to Photographs

A striking example of Yasu's work with celebrity portraits is his series featuring high-ranking Catholic clerics in Guatemala. To explore how Yasu transformed these images into marketable products, I begin by examining how he used the camera to convert oil paintings of archbishops into portable card photographs. This leads to an analysis of the connection between these portraits of Guatemalan archbishops and the broader iconography of Catholic papal representations.

A series of twenty-nine negatives offers a compelling example of how Yasu transformed historical objects into modern commodities. At first glance, these photographs—each depicting a different bishop of similar size—convey a striking stylistic uniformity. Yet, a closer examination reveals the meticulous retouching Yasu employed to create this effect. Most of the source material consisted of oil paintings of archbishops dating from the colonial period through the nineteenth century, originally rendered on wooden panels.

Yasu's process began by photographing each painting, either in its original setting within the cathedral or archbishopric or from reproductions already available on the market. In the resulting negatives, he painted over visible backgrounds—wood panels, inscriptions, and other details—with dark paint, producing monochrome, light backgrounds in the final prints. These uniform backgrounds translated the historical portraits into the visual language of nineteenth-century photography, allowing Yasu to seamlessly incorporate the photographic portrait of the incumbent archbishop, Ricardo Casanova y Estrada (1844 – 1913), into the collage—creating a virtual gallery of archbishops (figure 71).

The portrait of Casanova y Estrada stands out as an original work by Yasu, showcasing his skillful integration of visual references from the broader Catholic imagery tradition. Created to commemorate Casanova y Estrada's consecration as Archbishop of Guatemala on July 25, 1886, the archbishop himself visited Yasu's studio—likely both to mark this significant occasion and to have a formal publicity portrait made. Yasu captured him in two distinct expressions and settings, each conveying different facets of his authority

[128] Sharpe (2017) explores how the American artist John Singer Sargent (1856 – 1925) used Spanish photographic reproductions of sacred sculptures. Not everyone in the US shared Sanborn's protestant aversion to Catholic imagery.

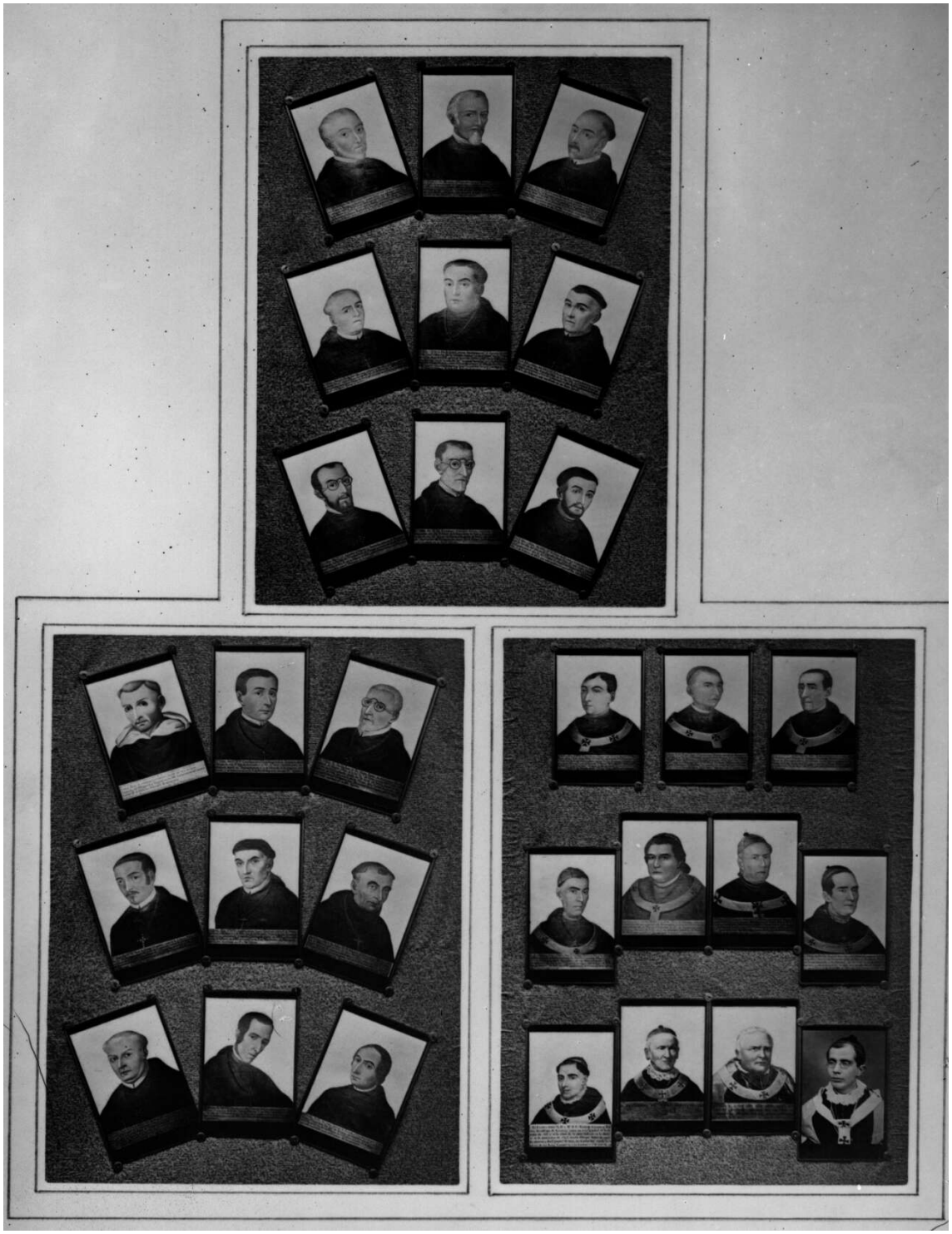

Figure 71: A collage of reworked paintings of Guatemalan priests and bishops is accompanied by the portrait of Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada, Guatemala City, ca. 1886

and presence. In the first series, the archbishop appears in a simple cassock, his serious demeanor underscored by a large cross and a Bible. The second series shows him adorned in elaborate liturgical vestments, with a long cape that gracefully fades into the background as it extends along the carpet, lending a regal air to his solemn pose. While this latter series highlights the richness of the vestments, the seated posture of the dignified cleric draws attention to his contemplative expression. Unlike Yasu's typically theatrical portraits of churchmen—often staged with hand-painted backdrops and lavish vegetation—the restrained interior and modest upholstered chair in these images emphasize the archbishop's quiet authority. Compared with contemporaneous portraits of Pope Pius IX that employed similar settings with draperies and decorative chairs, Yasu's approach reveals a shared visual strategy designed to underscore the sitter's spiritual and institutional power.

Another set of negatives captures Casanova y Estrada's visit to Antigua in 1902 (figure 72).[129] In the group photograph, the seated archbishop is adorned in papal vestments, complete with a white mitre and bishop's staff. In striking contrast to the bright, central figure of the archbishop, six priests dressed in black cassocks flank him on either side. Once again, Yasu appears to draw on papal portraits that had circulated for nearly half a century, using them as a visual model to shape this composition (figure 73).

In retrospect, it is evident that neither Yasu nor the archbishop commissioning the works intended these portraits to exist solely as large, delicate photographic prints. By framing the archbishop's image in various formats and adding captions, Yasu created products that appealed to a broader clientele. His incorporation of the archbishop's portrait into the virtual gallery of bishops further exemplifies his inventive reutilization of available images. While Yasu was not the first photographer to capture high-ranking clerics in Guatemala, he pioneered the transformation of these portraits into widely accessible commodities. Considering the importance of images on home altars, Yasu's role in modernizing the Catholic visual economy was both innovative and significant.

Estampitas*: Portraits Of Saints*

In a brief passage from the *Memorias*, Yasu recalled that "in addition to private portraits, I took photographs of the most important *imágenes* of the churches."[130] These *imágenes* are sculptures depicting Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the extensive pantheon of Catholic saints.[131] Within the collection of Estudio Fotografía Japonesa, there are 206 glass negatives categorized as "Imaginería Religiosa" (Religious Imagery), encompassing processions, altar decorations, and portrait-style photographs of saint sculptures. Although these photographs are labeled as having been taken in Antigua between 1895 and 1915, Yasu's *Memorias* confirm that he began photographing church sculptures in Guatemala City as early as the early 1890s. Centering on Yasu as a committed Catholic, the following analysis explores his active role in integrating modern technology into the visual economy of popular Catholicism.

The life-sized *imágenes* of Jesus, Mary, saints, and various secondary figures central to the Passion of Christ that Guatemalan Catholic churches possess are kept in shrines and altars year-round and carried in solemn processions during Lent, Holy Week, and other

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129 This photograph is published in Teletor (1965, p. 114). Many thanks to Fernando Urquizú for providing me with a copy of the book.

130 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 694 f.

131 According to the Real Academia Española (RAE), the term *imagen* refers to a statue, painting, or effigy of a deity or sacred figure.

Figure 72: A group photograph featuring Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada's visit to Antigua. Based on Yasu Kōhei's work and other textual references, I have identified some of the priests in the photograph. The third from the left is Maximiliano Jiménez. The man holding a book is Juan José Rámila. The two standing by the bishop on the other side are J. Luis Montenegro y Flores (left) and Eugenio Novi. Antigua Guatemala, 1902

Figure 73: "A group portrait of Pope Pius IX, ecclesiastical leaders such as cardinals, and attendants," 1859

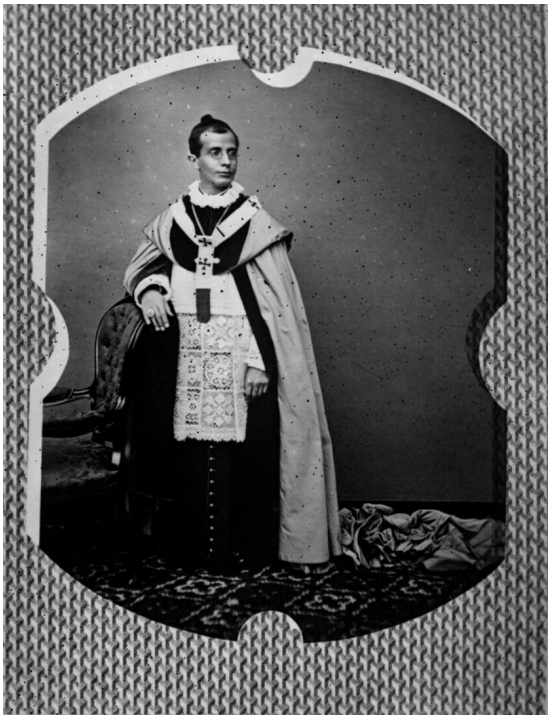

Figure 74: "Portrait of Archbishop Ricardo Casanova," Guatemala City, ca. 1886

Figure 75: "Portrait of Archbishop Ricardo Casanova," Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1902

religious celebrations. Yasu's photographs of these saint sculptures reflect local devotional traditions and cover two main categories: the Holy Week sculptures, known as *imágenes de pasión*, and representations of other saints that have attained canonical status in the course of the Catholic Church's long history. Yasu's source material included both the original sculptures and printed devotional images circulating in the market. To produce his photographs, Yasu either staged portrait sessions in churches or his studio, or he created photographic reproductions of existing prints, known as *estampas*.

A notable example of this practice is a collage—likely created in Guatemala City before 1895—featuring sixteen small, stamp-sized images, or *estampitas*, carefully arranged on a single photographic plate (figure 76). These miniature images appear to originate from diverse originals produced by various techniques. At first glance, it is difficult to distinguish between Yasu's original photographs and his photographic copies of prints, as both exhibit a consistent visual language. Regardless of their source, the religious figures are presented at a uniform size. To print all sixteen images simultaneously, Yasu normalized the tonal values across the plate. Given the considerable effort involved in resizing, cropping, balancing tones, and arranging the images with the technology available at the time, it is clear that Yasu intended to produce and sell a substantial number of *estampitas* from this collage. This example highlights Yasu's innovative blending of traditional devotional imagery with emerging photographic technology, expanding access to religious icons for a broader audience.

To make his photographs resemble the devotional images already in circulation, Yasu applied his creative skills with careful precision. For example, in a photograph of a sculpture of San José, he retouched the studio floor to diminish the photographic look, making the image appear more like an original icon card. In some cases, he painted halos around the subject with a single brushstroke. Even when reproducing existing prints, Yasu sometimes

Figure 76: "Collage of various Religious Images," Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889. This collage contains photographic reproductions of printed images as well as portraits of saints sculptures taken in Yasu's studio

Figure 77: Studio portrait of Jesús Nazareno taken by Tomás Zanotti, Quetzaltenango, ca. 1900s

made alterations according to his own judgment—such as adding names to saints. One particularly striking and enigmatic example shows him extending the garment draped around Jesus' shoulders to cover Christ's bare chest in a print depicting the Holy Trinity.

Yasu's photographs brought both technological and aesthetic innovation to Antigua's visual traditions of religious representation. Far from mere reproductions of ancient images in a new medium, they infused a layer of photographic realism that paintings or lithographs could rarely achieve. Moreover, by using sculptures as actors in narrative tableaux, Yasu enhanced the emotional and devotional appeal of these photographs to his Catholic clientele.

Yasu was not alone in recognizing the commercial potential of religious photography. His contemporaries, such as Alberto Valdeavellano and Tomás Zanotti (1868 – 1958), also produced images of Catholic saints. What set Yasu apart is his meticulous attention to detail, achieving harmonious tonalities and leveling the planes within his complex assemblages. Valdeavellano, whose work reflects a penchant for the Art Nouveau style, created several photographs of the crucified Jesus from La Merced church in Guatemala City. Unlike Yasu's integration of sculptures into scenic tableaux, Valdeavellano emphasized the naturalistic three-dimensionality of the sculptures displayed on the processional float.[132] Italian-Mexican Tomás Zanotti worked in Quetzaltenango from 1898 to 1950, initially as an associate of American photographer James Kenneth Piggott (1859 – 1941) and later independently.[133] His archive includes numerous studio photographs and collages

[132] These photographs form part of the Colección de Luján (Fotos Impresas), Archivo Histórico Fotográfico, at the Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala.

[133] Tomás Zanotti arrived in Quetzaltenango around 1898, where he worked as a commercial photographer. According to Pellecer González (2013, p. 81), he became an associate of Piggott by 1900 at the latest. An extensive archive of Zanotti's photographs, containing more than 3,000 negatives, is kept in the Fototeca at CIRMA.

of sacred sculptures. Many of these are arranged in a manner similar to the collages Yasu created in Antigua. Unlike Yasu, however, Zanotti paid little attention to correcting visual inconsistencies caused by disorderly studio props (figure 77). He also did not stage theatrical scenes or create visual narratives comparable to Yasu's work.

Photo Studio as Thirdspace?

Yasu infused his portraits of relatives and friends with the same artistic and theatrical flair evident in his religious photography. Whereas his public portraits remained formal and conventional, those of his loved ones broke from tradition, featuring cross-media blending, extravagant poses, and dynamic compositions that heightened dramatic tension. To conclude this chapter's exploration of photography and social identity, I focus on a selection of photographs from Yasu's archive that depart markedly from his more conventional client work.

Too easily interpreted as supplementary to Yasu's public works, these studio portraits of his wife and clerical friends reveal a rare intimacy absent from his formal commissions. These images not only illustrate how Yasu reinforced the visual nature of religious rituals and clerical identities, but also demonstrate his innovative use of multiple exposures to create a space of dialogue between different social identities. Within the confined space in front of the camera, the photographer and his subjects transcend the rigidity of conventional portraiture by collaborating to produce images that are both meaningful and expressive.

To consider intention and collaboration in the creation of these unconventional portraits, I draw on Wendy Garden's analysis of photographic space and the dynamic between photographer and subject in colonial India. In the following extended passage, which I have slightly condensed for my present purposes, Garden invokes Edward Soja's concept of spatiality to articulate the idea of a "third space"—a site of resistance where body politics and identities are negotiated through the photographic event:

> For Soja Firstspace is the 'real', the concrete materiality of spatial forms of the world, while Secondspace interprets this reality through imagined representations of spatiality (Soja 1996: 6) [...] However photographic space is neither a real nor an imaginary space [...] While a photograph does have an indexical relationship to space, photographic space straddles the real and the imaginary. It is a combination of both that produces something else. The camera never passively records but always actively constructs. And what it constructs collapses the boundaries between reality and artifice [...] As such photographic space has much in common with Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace. [...] Photographic space, as a Thirdspace, is a site from which to contest the dominant ideologies of Firstspace.[134]

In particular, Garden advocates for "an understanding of photographic space as a negotiated site" shaped collaboratively by both photographer and subject—a space where the photographic event can serve as "a contestation, a contortion, or in accord with the intention of the photographer."[135]

Certainly, Fotografía Japonesa under the Liberal regime and the photographic studios in colonial India reflect markedly different socio-political contexts. Most of the clerics who sat for Yasu's lens were from the upper echelons of Guatemalan society. Nonetheless,

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134 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from (Garden 2007).
135 Ibid.

I contend that the concept of the Thirdspace offers a valuable framework for understanding how Yasu and his subjects collaborated to position themselves outside the dominant discourse of their era—that is, to assert their profound religious convictions and corporeal identities as Catholics amid the currents of modernity.

Theatrical Complicity

In the *Memorias*, Yasu recounts photographing Catholic clerics from the capital and provincial towns.[136] An examination of the preserved negatives reveals dozens of studio portraits depicting priests in suits and cassocks, both individually and in groups. Considering the government's repressive stance toward the Church and restrictions on foreign missionaries, it is likely that Yasu's work documents most of the prominent members of the Catholic hierarchy residing in Guatemala during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see table 2.1).

Against this backdrop of political pressure and social constraint, Yasu's studio emerged as a space where clerics could assert and express their identities. Given that the studio was operated by a pious and well-connected Catholic, it is reasonable to assume that these clerics found a degree of comfort there. Among the portraits, several stand out for their unconventional style and composition. Judging by the backdrops and props, these images likely date from the 1880s. The priests are presented in hermetic, anachronistic settings—a gloomy seascape, a long, dim forest path, and an incongruous arch set against a blurred background (figure 78). Their piety is made manifest through symbolic objects such as the rosary, the cross, and the Bible. Much like Yasu's pictorial arrangements for saint sculptures, these scenes are intensified to evoke a painterly quality.

Significantly, Yasu deliberately erased the topographical specificity of the painted backgrounds. Elements that might have conveyed precise historical and cultural references—ships, fortresses, European pavilions—are either obscured by plants or excluded from the composition altogether. Through this process, Yasu crafted a photographic space that aligns closely with Heike Behrend's description of Kenyan photo studios as sites of "wish fulfillment, illusions, and imaginations that transcended the 'cultural realism' while at the same time confirming it."[137]

To illustrate these dynamics more concretely, consider the portraits of Spanish priest Salvador María Medrano (?-1896), a close friend of Yasu and María Noriega who presided over their wedding in 1891. In these portraits, Medrano appears to express his religious affiliation with uninhibited conviction.[138] Although the images are fairly similar, subtle variations in the positioning of Medrano's hands, the orientation of his body, and his facial expressions draw attention to different sacred objects: the Franciscan habit with its knotted cord, the rosary, and the small crucifix, among others (figure 79).

These portraits showcase Yasu's skill in crafting immersive, symbolic within his studio. Rather than depicting built structures or distinct settings, he focused on creating tightly controlled, self-contained worlds. The only exception is a simple interior with a window, where Medrano sits on a rattan chair. Using twigs, flowers, grasses, and moss, Yasu blurred the line between background and floor, shifting attention from the sitter's face to

136 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 941 f.

137 Behrend 2003, p. 238.

138 The reference codes for the photographs of Salvador María Medrano are as follows: GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-114, GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-115, GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-116A, GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-116B.

Figure 78: Portrait of Salvador Córdova, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

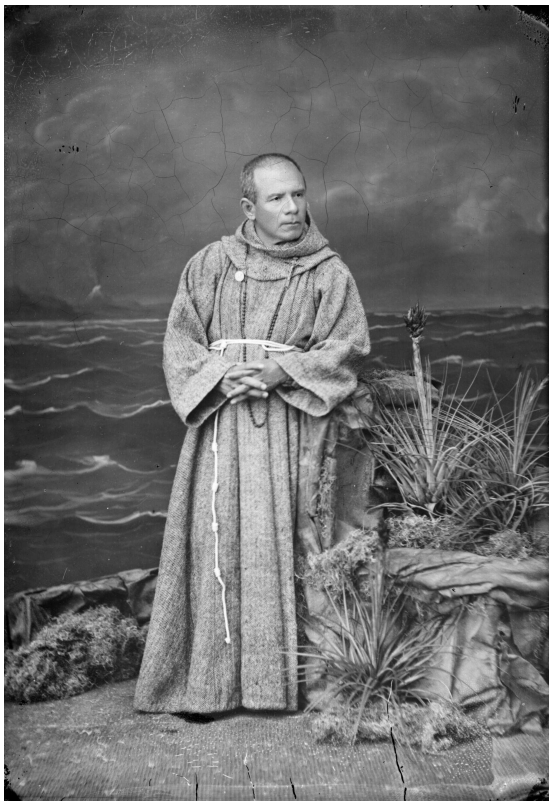

Figure 79: Portrait of Salvador María Medrano, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

the textured environment. To enhance the painterly effect, Yasu staged biblical scenes and added evocative backdrops—a thatched hut, a volcano, or a faint boat at sea—that evoke feelings of isolation and displacement. In Medrano's portraits, these melancholic settings deepen the symbolic power of the religious garments and objects, enriching the visual narrative.

An even more theatrical expression of reverence and spiritual solemnity emerges in a series of photographs featuring an unknown friar. In the opening image, he is seated on a moss-covered chair resembling a rock, set against a natural landscape.[139] In another, the friar leans forward, gazing to the side, draped in his habit.[140] The third photograph intensifies the drama with a turbulent sea and low storm clouds looming in the background. At his feet lies an open Bible, while his face, marked by apparent despair, clutches a large crucifix, seeking solace in prayer. The power of these images is inseparable from the religious objects and garments he wears.

The government's prohibition against clerics appearing in public in their religious attire provides the political context for these dramatic portrayals of priests and friars in cassocks and habits.[141] The striking examples invite us to rethink dominant narratives about nineteenth-century portraiture, which stress how sitters conformed through repeated, formulaic poses to the ideals of the modernist project. In contrast, Yasu's theatrical por-

[139] The reference codes for these two photographs are GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-035 and GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-096.

[140] The reference code for this photograph is GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-033.

[141] Estrada Monroy 1979, pp. 681–683.

trayals resist these conventions. Though placed before a camera—a symbol of modern technological progress—Yasu and his subjects deliberately drew on the composition and style of ancient religious paintings to evoke timeless images of piety and devotion. Furthermore, these photographs reveal a collaborative dynamic: Yasu and his religious friends transformed the photographic session into a shared creative experience. Through careful framing and expressive gestures, they crafted visual counterpoints within a society committed to progress and modernity.

As Deborah Poole has noted, "Both modernity and photography are negotiated affairs. Photography, no matter what its claims, cannot 'shape' anyone's identity. Nor does 'modernity' work in either even or irresistible ways on every individual and culture."[142] By occupying this photographic Thirdspace and producing images that resisted government attempts to remove the Church from its historic position of power, these clerics may have negotiated their complex relationship with both modernity and photography—asserting their faith and identity amid shifting social forces.

Multiple Exposure

Alongside his creation of evocative natural landscapes conveying the anguish of faith, Yasu also experimented with multiple exposure techniques. Eight such double and multiple exposure portraits are preserved in archives in Japan and Guatemala. Seven of these persist as glass negatives in Guatemala, and one is a self-portrait Yasu sent to Japan. Two depict Yasu and his wife, María Noriega, while the others feature churchmen identifiable by their religious garments. Like the photographs discussed in the preceding section, these multiple-exposure images offer a glimpse into how individuals whose societal standing was challenged by dominant political ideologies constructed and asserted their self-image.

In his study of vernacular photography in India and Africa, Christopher Pinney highlights the frequent use of double and triple exposure techniques. He argues that such portraits "place a person beyond the space and identity that certain forms of Western portraiture enforce."[143] He further describes photographers as "impressarios" who craft "an ideal and aspirational vision of the bodies that sitters wish themselves to be." He connects these easily overlooked, anonymous portraits to broader discussions of postcolonial identity politics.

Multiple-exposure photographs from the late nineteenth century have seldom attracted critical attention. Contemporaneous critics dismissed them as mere gimmickry, eccentric experiments, or even diabolical spiritualist works, deeming them aesthetically unappealing. Scholarship on photographers like Canadian Hannah Maynard (1834 – 1918) reflects this view, interpreting such images as idiosyncratic personal expressions or as visual records of the spiritualism movement rather than as deliberate artistic or political statements.

Yasu's double-exposure portraits do not convey psychic or playful intentions, nor do they depict subjects in mourning or in contact with the dead. Unlike ghostly or spirit-like depictions common in some contemporaneous works, Yasu's doubles maintain a consistent texture, size, lighting, and composition. True to the style of his regular work, he employed varying backgrounds to convey meaning.

Compared to other experiments he made in this style, double exposures of María Noriega (figure 80) and Yasu himself demonstrate a simpler technique and expression.

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142 Poole 1997, p. 201.

143 All the quotations from this paragraph are from Pinney (2003b, pp. 213–214).

Figure 80: Double exposure of María Noriega, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

The two Marías are positioned at opposite sides of the frame—one standing, the other seated—with furniture centered between them, perhaps to anchor the composition and ease its complexity.[144] The trees extending from the backdrop act as a clear dividing line, and the faint gray overlap of the exposures runs through the center. In contrast, the self-portrait Yasu sent to his relatives in Japan minimizes visible traces of multiple exposures, thus enhancing the illusion of a duplicated self (figure 127). It is possible that Yasu carefully eliminated the overlapping edges during printing to astound his relatives, who may have been unaware of this photographic technique.

In the double exposures of Yasu and María, the effect simply duplicates the subjects in two different poses. However, Yasu's other experiments with this technique are more ambitious, incorporating not only varied poses and positions but also changes in clothing and gestures to create richer visual narratives. For instance, in the portrait of Alberto Ruano, a seated figure looks forward while his standing double gazes sideways—yet their eyes never meet (figure 81). In a striking multiple exposure of Federico Virto, the two figures face each other and even shake hands (figure 82). Virto appears once in a priest's cassock and once in secular attire, embodying two social identities engaged in an exchange. Their interaction portrays the sitter as both giver and receiver of pastoral care.

Yasu also experimented with triple exposures. In one image of Virto, the priestly self sits with arms folded, gazing sideways at two secular doubles (figure 83.) The central figure's gesture suggests that he is explaining something to his clerical counterpart. In both images of Virto, the seated priest occupies the static center, while the other selves are oriented toward him. A similar composition appears in a multiple exposure of José María Leal, taken after Yasu's return from Peru. Leal's priestly version sits centrally with an

[144] For technical insights on achieving double exposure effects, see Weissman Wilks (1980, pp. 10–13)'s discussion of photographer Hannah Maynard.

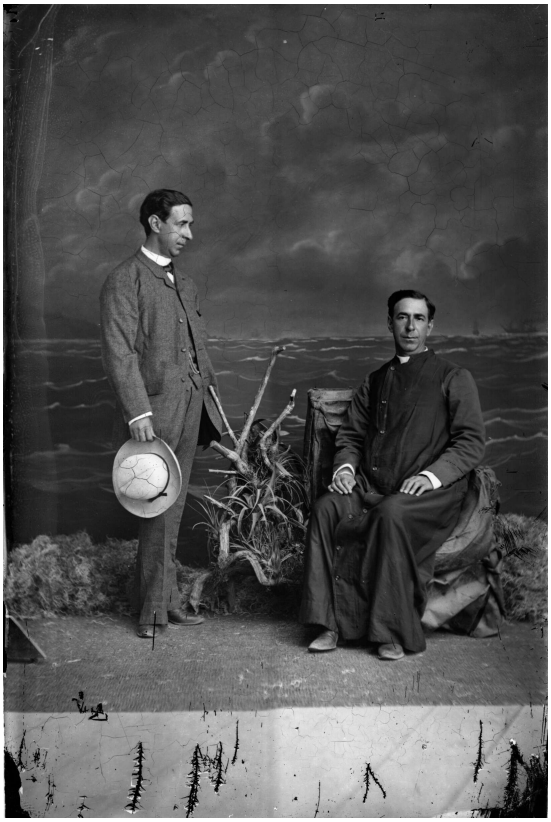

Figure 81: Double exposure of Alberto Ruano, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

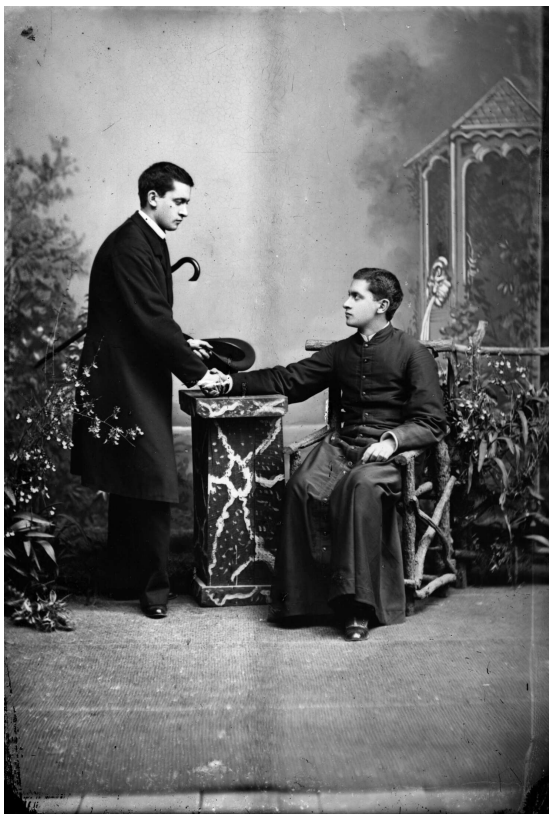

Figure 82: Double exposure of Federico Virto, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

open book, listening intently to two secular alter egos—one dressed in a fur cape (figure 84). Another triple exposure shows Leal three times in secular outfits: the central figure again holds an open book and turns to face the man on the right, who wears a bowler hat and holds a walking stick; the man on the left leans casually against a lectern, looking past the camera (figure 85).

Compositions featuring several figures in similar outfits and multiple poses were common in the indigenous portraits of Alberto Valdeavellano and Emilio Eichenberger. In those images—aimed at highlighting the distinctiveness of Mayan identity—the indigenous subjects typically appeared once facing the camera and once in profile to showcase traditional dress. In contrast, Yasu's use of multiple exposures carries deeper symbolic and narrative weight. In his portraits of priests, the clerical figure is always seated, embodying stability and authority, while the secular doubles approach them, suggesting acts of confession, counsel, or spiritual advice. Here, Yasu's studio becomes a "Thirdspace," a setting where these embattled churchmen could negotiate and reaffirm their conservative social roles. In the images at hand, this was made possible through the expressive potential of Yasu's multiple-exposure technique.

Throughout his productive life, Yasu used photography to negotiate complex social identities, particularly in portraits of his wife and priestly friends. The experiments with multiple exposure, alongside the theatrical scenes that belonged to the core repertoire of Yasu's visual expression, reveal great trust and collaboration between the photographer and the sitters. Within the intimate confines of his studio, Yasu and his subjects worked closely together, using the camera to craft idealized and meaningful portraits.

* * *

Figure 83: Triple exposure of Federico Virto, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

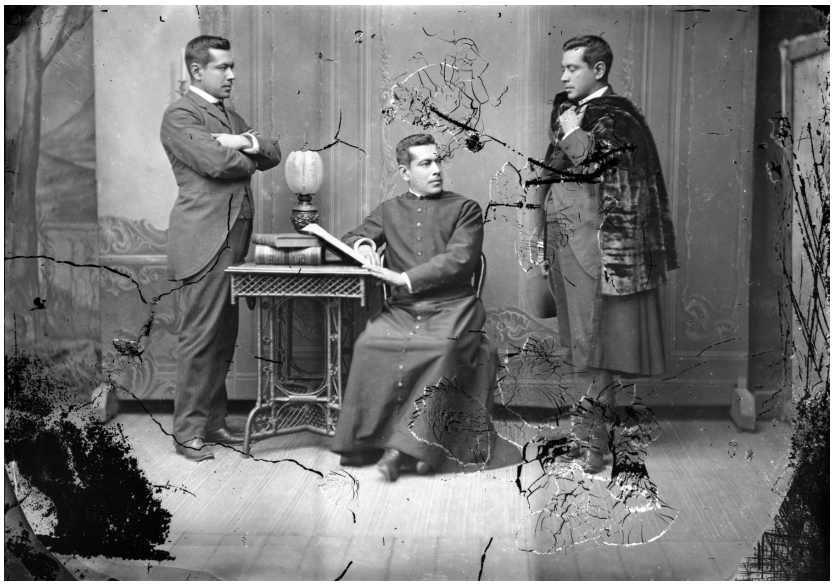

Figure 84: Triple exposure of José María Leal, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

Figure 85: Triple exposure of José María Leal, Guatemala City, ca. 1883 – 1889

Several key aspects define Yasu's practice as an immigrant with limited resources and a pious Catholic—an identity marginalized by the ruling elites who viewed Catholicism as a relic of a colonial past. First, Yasu demonstrated a keen awareness of market demand and skillfully leveraged his social and economic capital. Second, the uniqueness of his studio work does not lie in replicating "Japanese" aesthetics or religious motifs, but rather in his expressive experimentation with photography's technological possibilities. His portraits of family members and churchmen reveal clear visual ties to popular European and American styles while also alluding to long-standing devotional image conventions, adapted for mechanical reproduction.

This chapter has examined how Yasu Kōhei navigated an expanding and increasingly competitive market for commercial photography. Initially catering to the popular classes, he later carved out a niche as the photographer of record for churchmen and the Catholic community. By maintaining Fotografía Japonesa as a family enterprise, Yasu's studio stood apart not only in scale but through its focus on Catholic subjects and the refined aesthetic quality of its portraits. His close ties to the capital's ecclesiastical circles, combined with personal faith and passion, enabled him to stage scenes evoking Catholic narrative and pictorial traditions. From reproductions of archbishops' portraits to politically charged images, and his carefully curated work with *estampas*, Yasu adapted his work creatively to the ever-changing market. Yet, it is arguably the photographic tableaux explored in the final section that most set him apart from contemporaneous Guatemalan photographers.

Olivier Debroise's reflections on early Mexican photography highlight the "inherent ambiguity of photography," describing the portrait as a trick that "takes (absorbs) the form of reality."[145] Though characterized as formal and restrained, Yasu Kōhei's work subtly experiments with photography's technological and representational potential to reveal the multiplicity of the self. Through dramatic scenes and multiple exposures, he captured the layered identities of his clerical sitters as they enacted their roles as churchmen and citizens. In these thoughtful and inventive images, the distinctive quality of Yasu Kōhei's photographic œuvre finds some of its fullest expression.

[145] Debroise 2001, pp. 37–38.

Chapter 5

Guatemala Moderna, Guatemala Pintoresca

Upon opening the 1915 *Libro Azul de Guatemala* (*The Blue Book of Guatemala*, hereafter *Libro Azul*), one of the most comprehensive publications on the country during the late liberal period, the reader is immediately confronted with a full-page image (figure 86).[1] It shows president Manuel Estrada Cabrera accompanied by Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, gazing out over the expansive landscape over which he ruled. "Look at the results of your work," proclaims the goddess, crediting the nation's progress to the president's accomplishments. The message of Liberal Guatemala conveyed in this image is unambiguous: it aligns the nation with admired European antiquity, celebrates modernization through symbols such as the railroad, and glorifies the paternalistic bond between the authoritarian leader and the people.

Issued at the moment when the state was already under strain from declining coffee prices, the lavishly produced *Libro Azul* served, ironically, as a final effort to enshrine the illusion of liberalism's golden age.[2] Embellished with hundreds of portraits of elites, photomontages of railways and ruins, lush landscapes, and Art Nouveau ornamentation, the book projected an image of Guatemala as a youthful republic rooted in an ancient land. At the same time, it showcased the ruling elite's reverence for classical European culture and its aspirations to guide the nation toward inclusion in the modern, developed world.

Ideas of progress and order came to dominate the Guatemalan political imagination in the second half of the nineteenth century. Historians and literary critics have drawn on an expansive archive of textual sources to examine the elaborate cultural apparatus maintained by Liberal intellectuals who worked to forge a cohesive sense of national identity and purpose.[3] Within this framework, magazines, newspapers, chronicles, public parades, and ceremonial performances are interpreted as components of a broader patriotic enterprise. Photography, too, played a central role in this discursive regime, communicating political ideology through carefully crafted representations. While contributing to the nationalist project, photographers also exercised significant autonomy in selecting subjects and stylistic approaches, making photography a rich field in Guatemalan historiography.

This chapter explores the entanglements of photography, political discourse, and the Catholic Church as mediated through print culture between 1890 and 1920. The chapter title, "Guatemala Modern and Picturesque," serves a dual purpose: it identifies two key

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1 Jones, Scoullar, and Soto-Hall 1915, p. 86.

2 During the Liberal period, Guatemala's economy was heavily reliant on agricultural exports and vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets. Foreign capital played a dominant role in this system. According to Bendaña Perdomo (2011, pp. 168–169), "100% of banana exports and more than 50% of coffee exports were in foreign hands."

3 Rendón 2000, 2002, 2011.

Figure 86: "Mirad Vuestra Obra - Look at the results of your work," an illustration from the *Libro Azul* (1915)

thematic currents in the image production of the period while also referencing the ideological frameworks these terms invoked. Drawing on Yasu's photographic archive, along with newspapers, albums, and postcards, my analysis traces how photographic reproduction interacted with contemporary literary and artistic conventions. The concept "image production" is employed as a conceptual framework to encompass the wide array of materials generated through photographic processes.

An assessment of Yasu's portraits of Catholic sculptures and clerics complicates the apparent contradiction between "modern" and "picturesque" as categories of visual representation. Studio photographers were responsive to market demands and willing to work across an eclectic range of subjects. At the same time, social networks and personal preferences shaped the specializations that individual practitioners developed. Focusing solely on images disseminated through official publications risks overlooking the uneven terrains of representation shaped by the varied and idiosyncratic ways in which the nascent photographic trade entered Guatemalan society during the Liberal era.

In her analysis of the Andean image world, Deborah Poole identifies three interconnected levels within the visual economy: first, the organization of the production comprising individuals and technologies involved in image creation; second, the circulation of these visual goods; and third, the cultural and discursive frameworks through which images gain historical, scientific, and aesthetic significance.[4] While this study does not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis of modern imagery in Guatemala—or Central America

[4] Poole 1997, pp. 9–10.

more broadly—Poole's framework proves useful for highlighting the subjectivity of photographers at the level of production. Moreover, the dissemination of their work through postcards, illustrated newspapers, and holy cards corresponds to Poole's second level of circulation, connecting visual production with diverse audiences and markets.

Poole's approach facilitates a closer examination of an array of actors in the politics of visual reproduction—from Peruvian studio photographers to influential figures like Alexander von Humboldt. This valuation of heterodox visual practitioners aligns with Gillian Rose's critique of analyses that reduce visual culture to institutional power alone. Rose warns against privileging hegemonic visual regimes and urges the study of "visualities other than those of dominant institutions."[5] In this spirit, the following analysis contrasts the imagery of progress and modernity with the devotional photographs created by Yasu, images that resonated with popular Catholic audiences.

The chapter opens by linking photographic production to the political ideologies of the Liberal regime, showing how Guatemala's commercial photographers expanded their businesses to produce images for postcards and illustrated news that circulated both locally and abroad. Drawing on Christopher Pinney's concept of vernacular modernity—originally developed through his study of Indian and African portraiture—this section examines how local photographers navigated the demands of diverse clients, including state institutions, the church, and international tourists. Next, it explores two dominant visual categories that shaped the illustrated press and postcards during the Liberal era: images celebrating modernity and those portraying landscapes and indigenous peoples as passive, controllable subjects.

The analysis then shifts to the visual representation of the Catholic Church, a presence marginalized within the dominant Liberal government imagery. Yasu's photographs published in local church magazines serve as a lens to explore how ecclesiastical circles sought to respond to the challenges posed by the Liberal state. Drawing on Yasu's prolific production of religious imagery, the concluding section reflects on the relevance of Christopher Pinney's concept of vernacular modernity in the Guatemalan context.[6] Central to Pinney's work is the question of how "local visual traditions mediate modernity in ways that are independent of and critical of European modernity." Without downplaying Yasu's embrace of modern technology, this inquiry is crucial for understanding how his East Asian and Catholic identities in Latin America—a complex constellation of contiguous "peripheries of Europe"—complicate conventional distinctions between West and non-West.

Photography and the Liberal State

In an article depicting the bustling marketplace of Jocotenango, a small town north of Antigua, the Guatemalan writer José Milla y Vidaurre (1822 – 1882) humorously critiqued his inadequate "photographic" skills—a metaphor since photography was still mastere by a few experts only—for failing to provide readers with a clear and organized verbal sketch:

> On the 15th of this month, around ten o'clock in the morning, I went to Jocotenango, not so much to see the fair, but to see those who wanted to see it. Armed with my spirit of observation as a sharp instrument, I went to collect the materials for this article; or to be more precise, I went to take a photograph of the fair. If it seems chaotic, confusing, and incomprehensible, it

5 Rose 2016, p. 225.
6 Pinney 2003b, p. 202.

> may be either the effect of the photographer's clumsiness or, on the contrary, too much fidelity to the image. If it is the former, I am to blame; if it is the latter, I am also to blame for having chosen this matter as the subject of my sketch. In either case, I submit to the judgment, and I promise no improvements, for I do not know how to take better photographs, nor are there better things here in which to practice my art.[7]

Milla y Vidaurre employed the tension between order and fidelity to illustrate the impossibility of capturing a pleasing image of the chaotic market scene. His description fails either by mirroring the scene's disorder or by reflecting his lack of photographic skills. By the article's end, he asserted that the market's exuberance need not be reconciled, as everyone recounted it through their experience.[8] Yet, his playful admission of incompetence highlights a broader expectation for outdoor photography at the time—that images should depict humans and animals arranged in an orderly composition.

Whether the author had a specific image in mind when writing this passage remains uncertain. Yet, considering the visual culture of his time, it likely referenced scenes of modernizing rural life promoted by the Liberal government. A few years earlier, the renowned British-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge had been commissioned by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company to document Central America.[9] His photographs of provincial towns capture bustling marketplaces and busy coffee plantations, frozen in time through meticulous composition (figure 87). Milla y Vidaurre's playful remark can thus be considered an artist's reluctant acknowledgment that his craft could not rival such photographic precision. This moment of visual transition parallels a broader shift in the role of the "official photographer," a role that passed from foreign practitioners to local studios between. Guatemalan photographers seized this opportunity to create images for expanding markets and a press undergoing rapid technological transformation, mirroring the wider social and political changes of the Liberal era.

Advertising Photography in Liberal Guatemala

Approximately since the 1980s, scholars in history and anthropology have begun to investigate the relationship between photography and nation-building in Latin America. Despite regional and national variations, two overarching themes have emerged: the role of photography in reinforcing ideals of social order and progress, and its function in constructing visual representations of "the other."

Robert Levine, among the first to offer a comprehensive account of photography in the region, argues that images produced by photographers working for foreign companies and government officials helped craft panoramic, visually controlled scenes "emphasising technical and material progress."[10] These photographs, he contends, served the purpose of legitimizing mechanisms of social control and the suppression of African and, in particular, indigenous cultures.[11] They thus concealed deep-seated issues of race and class through distant, idealized perspectives. In Levine's view, this tendency distinguished Latin American photography from the more critical approaches of European and North American

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7 Milla y Vidaurre (1882: 142).
8 Ibid.: 151.
9 Some publications on his travels in Central America are Braun (2010), Luján Muñoz (1984), Prodger (2008), and Solnit (2004).
10 R. M. Levine 1989a, p. 56.
11 Ibid., p. 60.

Figure 87: Eadweard Muybridge, "Coffee Harvesting, Las Nubes, Guatemala," 1875

practitioners. Olivier Debroise observes that postcolonial Latin American elites favored representations that emphasized whiteness, urban sophistication, and progress, actively distancing themselves from images that framed them as exotic or backward.[12]

In Guatemala, the construction of national identity unfolded prominently in the visual domain, where the public encountered Liberal ideology and perceived the reach of government initiatives across the country.[13] This visual articulation of national progress not only served to legitimize a repressive state apparatus but also fostered a sense of collective belonging. After the Liberal Party overthrew the Conservatives in 1871, photography assumed a central role in projecting the image of the state to its citizens, as well as to foreign investors and tourists. Beginning with the presidency of Justo Rufino Barrios and continuing through the administrations of María Reyna Barrios and the long rule of Manuel Estrada Cabrera, successive Liberal leaders crafted a repertoire of patriotic symbols that projected an idealized vision of the nascent republic. Through photography, they converted coffee plantations, railroad construction, expositions, and political and cultural figures into emblematic images circulated widely in both the capital and the provinces.

In 1875, Anglo-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830 – 1904) arrived in Guatemala at the invitation of president Rufino Barrios.[14] Tasked with capturing the burgeoning plantation economy and the picturesque landscapes of the western highlands, Muybridge produced a series of images that featured in official publications. These photographs served to showcase the natural beauty and economic potential of the republic, conveying, as Robert Levine notes, the message that "Latin America was joining the modern world."[15] They also aimed to attract foreign investment and immigration.[16] Among

12 Debroise 2001, p. 63.
13 See, for example, Rendón (2011).
14 Luján Muñoz 1984.
15 R. M. Levine 1989a, p. 28.
16 Taracena Arriola 2007, p. 30.

the images compiled into albums for international circulation, one stands out: "Reception of the Artist by the Jefe Político, Mazatenango," which features Muybridge himself at the center of the composition. The image illustrates the privileged reception extended to foreign professionals by the Guatemalan political elite.

In the early years of the Liberal regimes, the production of political photographs was still dominated by foreign photographers. Their prestige helped extend state messaging to an international audience, while the local photography industry remained nascent. Over time, however, domestic photographers began to fill these roles. In Mexico, the government established an official photographic studio under the Ministry of Development in 1876 to systematically document national infrastructure.[17] In contrast, the Guatemalan government relied on private contracts with individual photographers. One such figure was the Italian Agostino Someliani, who in 1876 was commissioned to produce a visual record of the country's architecture, agricultural estates, and cultural heritage.[18]

When in early 1890, Yasu Kōhei returned from Japan, he reopened Fotografía Japonesa amid a shifting photographic landscape. Guatemalan studio photographers increasingly produced images for markets such as postcards and the illustrated press. To improve their competitiveness, studios formed alliances and consolidated resources, resulting in larger enterprises such as those led by Edward Kildare, Alberto Valdeavellano, Emilio Eichenberger, and later Leopoldo Bolaños Schaeffer. The collaboration between Kildare and Valdeavellano—supported by their associated painters—virtually monopolized the production of official imagery for patriotic celebrations. Only in the 1910s did other artists, including Eichenberger and José García, begin to benefit from public commissions. While Yasu's name never appeared in official illustrated publications, some of his portraits of Catholic clerics are found scattered among Valdeavellano's acclaimed works.

Levine characterizes this period as one defined by a polarized market shaped by the Liberal elite's appetite for images of public works and modernity and by foreign consumers' desire for exotic scenes and curiosities.[19] The pages that follow explore how Guatemalan photographers navigated the ideological demands—domestic and international—while asserting their agency as creators of distinct visual expressions.

Illustrated Press

Beatriz González-Stephan, in her analysis of nineteenth-century Latin American national identity formation, emphasizes the pivotal role of cultural heritage within the visual economy of representation. The role was manifested through institutions like "museums, libraries, anthologies, literary histories, and universal expositions."[20] She highlights the active role of the "symbol-manipulating elite" in harnessing new visual technologies and draws attention to the growing interplay between images and text in printed media. As illustrations increasingly interrupted written content, González-Stephan calls for a rethinking of what constituted "reading" in the context of the late nineteenth-century press, where visual depictions of national culture were as influential as textual narratives, especially in periodicals often labeled as "illustrated."

In a similar vein, Roslyn Poignant's study of British illustrated magazines in the late nineteenth century underscores how these publications indexed key societal shifts—

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17 Debroise 2001, p. 82.
18 Solis 59-60.
19 R. M. Levine 1989a, pp. 61–62.
20 All quotations in this paragraph are from González-Stephan 2003, pp. 226–227.

advances in printing technology, urbanization, and an expanding readership—and she describes them as "the cultural production that best characterized the age."[21] Poignant explains that the images in these magazines "mirrored for their consumers the modern world of spectacle in which they were themselves immersed." Despite their reputation as democratic media, she argues that such publications largely reflected the values of the "dominant white, male-oriented middle classes." This phenomenon was even more pronounced in Latin America, where, as González-Stephan observed, a small, literate male elite imposed its sociopolitical vision upon media representations.

Published biweekly from 1893 to 1918, the liberal and anti-clerical *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* focused on news related to literature and the arts. The majority of its photographs were studio portraits of public figures, including the president, government ministers, and women from the upper class. Photographs documenting special events also received considerable attention. From the magazine's inception, Alberto Valdeavellano served as the primary creator of its visual content, including advertising.[22] Among the historical events he documented were the construction of railroads, expositions, the celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas in 1892, the Festival of Minerva, and military parades. During the war between Guatemala and El Salvador in 1906, portraits of high-ranking military officers by Valdeavellano and Kildare, accompanied by biographical sketches, were published. The visual representation of the Liberal government crafted by Kildare and Valdeavellano and circulated through illustrated periodicals not only shaped contemporaneous perceptions but continues to dominate the images that we associate with that era.[23]

Yet, the images were not mere illustrations appended to text. Rather, they constituted main content, conveying information about events and activities independently. For example, in a section titled "Our Print" (Nuestro Grabado), the editors previewed images slated for upcoming issues. An announcement called "Cycling Notes" prepared readers for a "picture of a group of cyclists [...] taken by our friend, the distinguished artist Don Alberto G. Valdeavellano," to commemorate the founding of the Guatemalan Cyclists' Union.[24] In an 1896 issue of *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, the editor described a featured photograph and the circumstances of its capture: the "magnificent view" depicted a late June morning when 1,500 soldiers gathered to greet president José María Reyna Barrios, the minister of war, police commanders, and other officials. The editor promised that subsequent issues would feature photographic coverage of the defensive military exercises associated with this event, captured by "the intelligent artist, Mr. Alberto G. Valdeavellano."[25]

Before technological advances in newspaper printing during the 1920s expanded the use of photography in publications, illustrated news and postcards remained the primary vehicles for visually disseminating national information. Well-connected photographers like Valdeavellano and Kildare, whom Beatriz González-Stephan identifies as members of the "symbol-manipulating elite," wielded considerable influence over the representation

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21 All quotations in this paragraph are from Poignant 2003, pp. 69–70.

22 The only photograph published in the first issue depicts a building, captured by Valdeavellano.

23 The first photographs to appear in *Guatemala Ilustrada* date back to May 1893. The magazine ceased publication the following year, and *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* was introduced in 1896. It remained popular until 1898. In my observation, almost all of the photographs published in these two magazines from 1893 to 1898 were credited to Kildare and Valdeavellano, except for images of other Central American republics and photographs of local priests taken by Yasu Kōhei.

24 "Notas Ciclistas," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, January 15, 1897.

25 "Mock Drill" (Simulacro), *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, August 1, 1896.

of the government and the nation.[26] Their close ties to the ruling party granted them exclusive access, while their esteemed reputations as leading studio portraitists ensured the widespread circulation of the images that the Liberal regimes sought to project.

Picture Postcards

Few academic studies have been conducted on Guatemalan postcards from the early twentieth century.[27] Many postcards were, in fact, reprints of earlier photographs produced before the postcard medium became widespread.[28] This pattern of reuse is particularly evident in the work of Valdeavellano, whose photographs circulated both as postcards and in illustrated magazines. Created through the partial recycling and assemblage of older studio materials, these postcards emerged as photographers sought to capitalize on new market opportunities for graphic products. At the same time, they provide important context for understanding Yasu's religious cards, or *estampas*, mass-produced images that appeared during a historical moment when mechanical reproduction was gradually supplanting individual creations in visual markets.

Christraud Geary notes that postcards had their early heyday between 1895 and 1920.[29] The earliest Guatemalan postcards I located, all featuring address dividers on the back, date from after 1902 and were produced by Valdeavellano and Emilio Eichenberger.[30] Eichenberger entered the studio photography market later than many contemporaries. His studio operated first as Souvenir and later as Imperial, becoming a preferred portraitist for government officials and elite women in Guatemala City. However, his postcards primarily fall into the genre of "type photography," depicting indigenous individuals in staged, stereotypical poses.[31] In contrast, Valdeavellano was Guatemala's most prolific postcard producer. The extent of his production can be deduced from the sequential numbering of the postcard designs that he marketed, which ran into the five hundreds. Valdeavellano's postcards covered a broad range of subjects, from public works and touristic views to exoticized indigenous types. Unlike Eichenberger's generically titled "indios" series (figure 92), Valdeavellano's postcards were systematically curated, featuring captions that identified subjects' occupations or places of residence (figures 88 to 91).

In a commercial announcement from 1909, Valdeavellano promoted his extensive œuvre of "views," which included architecture, parks, public venues, monuments, indigenous Maya, and provincial landscapes.[32] This curated and annotated collection advanced a nationalist vision that both appropriated and exoticized indigenous culture, appealing to domestic and foreign audiences alike. Over the course of his career, Valdeavellano shifted his focus from private studio portraits to the public dissemination of images aligned with the Liberal nationalist agenda. As will be further examined in the remainder of this chapter, Yasu Kōhei's also engages with these commercial trends. However, his involvement with

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26 González-Stephan 2003, p. 227.

27 In this regard, Susan Frost (2021) offers a brief overview of the two primary figures in this trade—Valdeavellano and Eichenberger.

28 Geary and Webb 1998, p. 162.

29 Ibid., p. 147.

30 These two practitioners dominated the local postcard market well into the 1910s, as evidenced by examples available on online auction sites.

31 Susan Frost (2021) points out that many postcards with Eichenberger's name also bear the inscription "Giron, For." This suggests he may have purchased glass negatives from Girón, the former owner of Studio Souvenir.

32 *Guía del viajero en la República de Guatemala* 1909.

the emerging mass-market photographic industry was primarily tied to popular Catholic devotional practices, which distinctly contrasted with the Liberal regime's nationalist project.

Imagined Guatemala

Building on criticism that has been brought forward regarding the specifics of Benedict Anderson's history of the concept of nation as imagined community, John Charles Chasteen highlights the pivotal role that the expanding print media of the nineteenth century played in shaping national identity throughout Latin America. Chasteen argues that Anderson's focus on the pre-independence period overlooks this essential dynamic.[33] Likewise, Sara Castro-Klarén critiques Anderson for neglecting "local intellectuals and homegrown discourses of independence in print and iconography, as well as other modes of encoding and circulating memory."[34]

To improve our understanding of the heterogeneous forces at play in the imagination of the Guatemalan nation, this section turns to the role of graphic representation in the consolidation and intensification of Guatemalan nationalism during Yasu Kōhei's times. I examine how official ideology was visualized by Valdeavellano and his peers through images of public works, prominent figures, natural resources, and the newly imagined national borders. Unlike Eadweard Muybridge—who pursued a progressive aesthetic grounded in precise photographic composition—Valdeavellano incorporated the ornate stylistic elements of Art Nouveau into his composite photographs, crafting a far more decorative vision of Guatemalan modernity.

Aesthetics of Composite Pictures

Previous studies have made little effort to contemplate Yasu Kōhei's photography in the context of the visual culture of Guatemala's modernization. As seen in the staged group portrait with president Estrada (figure 69), Yasu was an active participant in the construction of state authority through graphic means. Given this preliminary assertion, at which I have arrived in chapter 4, Yasu's visual repertoire warrants a more nuanced examination within the broader context of image production under the Liberal regime. The following discussion of the photographic collages created by Valdeavellano is meant to provide such context for the analysis of Yasu's own engagement with the visuality of the Liberal era.

Deborah Poole's analysis of nineteenth-century albums of type photographs—favored by European explorers and Latin American political elites—introduces the concept of the "aesthetics of the same" to describe the seemingly arbitrary yet purposeful collection of cartes-de-visite portraying diverse ethnic and social types from across the Americas.[35] She argues that this compulsive gathering of images reflects a desire to transform silent, anonymous "types" into "equivalent, and hence comparable, images," thereby constructing visual categories that shaped perceptions of identity and difference.[36]

Extending this framework, I turn to a parallel mode of visual representation that held significant prominence in the Guatemalan press for nearly two decades: the technique of

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33 Chasteen 2003, p. ix.
34 Castro-Klarén 2003, p. 163.
35 Poole 1997, p. 119.
36 Ibid., p. 115.

Figure 88: Postcard featuring an indigenous woman in a studio setting, made by Alberto Valdeavellano, Guatemala City, ca. 1900

Figure 89: Postcard featuring indigenous men in a studio setting, made by Alberto Valdeavellano, Guatemala City, ca. 1900

Figure 90: Postcard "Coal Seller" by Alberto Valdeavellano, Guatemala City, ca. 1900

Figure 91: Postcard "Tropical" by Alberto Valdeavellano, ca. 1900

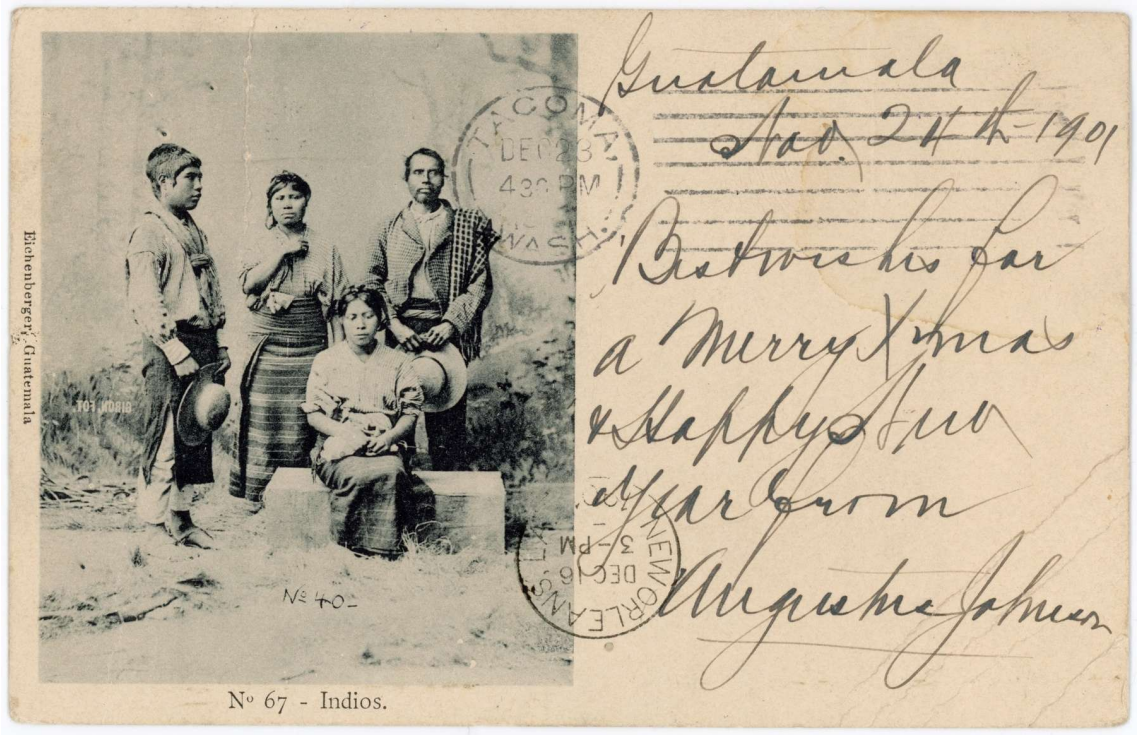

Figure 92: Postcard "Indios," by Emilio Eichenberger, posted December 23, 1901

composición, or composite photography. This method, which involved the manipulation of photographs with painted elements, produced richly layered collages of the faces of the nation, ranging from political leaders and indigenous figures to civic monuments and ancient Mayan ruins. Far from arbitrary, these compositions enabled photographers like Alberto Valdeavellano to craft a complex and nuanced image of Guatemala that was at once modern and picturesque, reflecting the aspirations and contradictions of the era.

To illustrate this dynamic, consider the two types of *composiciones* that Valdeavellano frequently paired in his commissioned work. The first reflects an idealized vision of a "Guatemala Moderna" (Modern Guatemala) and typically offered broad views of urban spaces. This general view was punctuated by emblematic symbols of the liberal era, such as the Columbus monument, the opera house, schools, railroads, and scenes of civic celebrations. Distinct figures in elegant attire populated the scenes, representing the nation's leadership and social elite. Valdeavellano juxtaposed this image of the modern republic with a romanticized "Guatemala Pintoresca" (Picturesque Guatemala), which offered a parallel view on the nation. In these *composiciones*, the modern urban landmarks of "Guatemala Moderna" were substituted with imposing Mayan monuments and the evocative ruins of Antigua's monasteries. The cityscapes gave way to lush tropical forests, cascading waterfalls, and rural dwellings, inhabited by figures clad in traditional indigenous garb, signifying their Mayan identity. Together, these two types of imaginations of the nation as modern and picturesque at once engaged in a visual dialogue that captured the tensions and interplay between progress and tradition, and between elite power and indigenous heritage—tensions that were central to the formation of Guatemalan national identity during the Liberal regimes.

Although these *composiciones* offered little contextual information, their format defined the aesthetics employed in *Guatemala Ilustrada* and later in *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*. Comprised of dense arrays of miniature exteriors and portrait photographs, the *composi-*

ciones reveal a visual logic that appears to have been a hallmark of Valdeavellano's practice. His taste for such photographic assemblages is further evidenced by several examples held in the historical photographic collection at the Academy of Geography and History (AGHG) in Guatemala City. One *composición* titled "Guatemala" combines six images featuring civic monuments and buildings: statues of García Granados, Christopher Columbus, and president Rufino Barrios, alongside the Cathedral, the National Museum, the Mineral Palace, and the Presidential Palace. Another untitled composition presents more than seven images of natural and productive resources—coconut groves, the Laguna El Naranjo, and a settler's ranch—each accompanied by identifying captions. These visual selections underscore Valdeavellano's effort to portray Guatemala as both culturally rich and economically promising, in line with the liberal state's modernizing narrative.

Beyond the juxtaposition of the modern and the picturesque, Valdeavellano's assemblages generally followed one out of two compositional logics. In one type of works, he grouped visually similar subjects, such as bust-length portraits of women or schoolchildren, to generate a collective image of national beauty or educational advancement. The other type combined heterogeneous elements ranging from individual leaders to landscape views into a single frame that was unified through textual captions or thematic titles. These included collages of revolutionary heroes or cabinet members, each reinforcing a particular ideological message: elite cohesion, civic progress, or a foundational national myth.

Among his compositions, Valdeavellano's collage of revolutionary heroes stands out for its explicit evocation of Liberalism's break with history, which contrasted with Yasu's reassembled gallery of archbishops analyzed in chapter 4. While Valdeavellano's visual narrative disrupted colonial continuity to assert the birth of a modern republic, Yasu's composition underscored institutional continuity and ecclesiastical succession. If seen together, these contrasting visual products highlight how Guatemalan photographers evoked divergent visions of social identity, which nevertheless coexisted during a period of profound political and cultural transformation.

Christopher Allison characterizes the composite images popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century as "a favorite format for historical narrative," emphasizing their ability to assemble "documentary and human witnesses in different media into a single engraving intended for mass distribution."[37] Evoking a comparison with Yasu's gallery of archbishops, Allison identifies in this format a defining impulse of early Christian visual culture: "the urge to combine portraits as witnesses to history."[38] However, whereas images of Mayan monuments and ruined monasteries convey a sense of historical continuity and enduring legacy, Valdeavellano's *composiciones* depart from this framework. Rather than anchoring meaning in a continuous past, they project an aspirational narrative shaped by the future. This orientation, reinforced by strategic captions and symbolic visual arrangements, embodies what Beatriz González-Stephan terms"a shared semiotics of spectacle, serialization, and systematic compartmentalization."[39]

By the early twentieth century, the rise of photography in daily newspapers and the increasing accessibility of postcards led to a decline in the prominence of illustrated magazines. As these newer forms of visual media expanded their reach, some magazines, struggling to generate fresh imagery, began to recycle earlier content. Once a central platform for national visual representation, *Guatemala Ilustrada* had ceased publication.

37 Allison 2018, p. 119.
38 Ibid., p. 117.
39 González-Stephan 2003, p. 232.

In response to this shifting media landscape, Valdeavellano redirected his efforts toward two emerging outlets: the magazine *La Locomotora* and the commemorative *Álbum de Minerva*, produced with the annual Fiesta de Minerva. In *La Locomotora*, he documented infrastructural developments, particularly the construction of railroads, while the *Álbum de Minerva* became a venue for his elaborate and artistically crafted *composiciones*. In both publications, Valdeavellano collaborated with the painter P. Dávila, who contributed ornate Art Nouveau frames that heightened the visual sophistication of the collages and reinforced their alignment with the modernist aesthetic.

Outwardly a celebration of youth, the protagonist of the Fiesta de Minerva was president Manuel Estrada Cabrera, the political leader with whose image I began this chapter. Appointed after the assassination of his predecessor, Reina Barrios, Estrada Cabrera ruled Guatemala with an iron fist from 1898 to 1920. As David McCreery explains, the annual Minerva Festival, celebrated for two decades, reflected the mentality of a regime "constantly tempted to substitute appearance for reality" and defined its versions of liberalism and development as a class project dependent on the subjugation of alternative and indigenous epistemologies. "If it seems foolish to fund an opera company while closing an agricultural school," McCreery points out, "then President Estrada Cabrera's plan to build a temple to Minerva instead of a school is perfectly logical from the standpoint of the plantation owner's economic and political interests."[40]

Catherine Rendón highlights the top-down control of labor and cultural symbolism exercised through the Minerva Festival, noting the pressure on local governments to participate. From the capital to the most remote towns, Minerva temples were constructed and came to signify loyalty to the new president. Financially burdened municipal leaders were compelled to impose new taxes and mobilize "the poorest Guatemalans" for the labor required.[41] Paradoxically, this system of coercion was underpinned by the legal reissuance of exploitative policies targeting indigenous communities, reinstated in 1905 during the height of preparations for the civic ceremonies.[42]

Rendón's analysis of the Minerva Festival is especially relevant here in two key ways. To begin with, she employs a concept akin to *composición* to describe how the central government symbolically "pasted" European fashions onto Guatemala's rural landscape. Students were costumed in attire inspired by Greco-Roman antiquity or contemporary European and American styles. The spectacle was further elevated by the participation of internationally renowned intellectuals, including "the Latin American Oscar Wilde," Enrique Gómez Carrillo, in 1901, and José Santos Chocano—dubbed the "Walt Whitman of Spanish America"—in 1909.[43] Rendón asserts a parallelism between the civic celebrations and the logic of Catholic traditions, observing that "the Minervalias combined all the magnificence of the processions of Holy Week with the allure of classical mythology in *fin-de-siècle* style."[44] Whether in Valdeavellano's photographic representations or in the Minerva festivals themselves, these secular rituals drew not only from classical iconography but also from the visual strategies of popular religious practices in their articulation of modernity.

It is within this broader symbolic landscape that Valdeavellano, in collaboration with the artist P. Dávila, played a central role in the production of a commemorative album

40 McCreery 2011, p. 119.
41 Rendón 2011, p. 163.
42 Bendaña Perdomo 2011, p. 169.
43 Rendón 2011, pp. 162–164.
44 Ibid., p. 163.

Figure 93: Page featuring the pavilions of Switzerland, Belgium, and France from the *Album de Minerva* (1902)

Figure 94: Page featuring the Chinese and Turkish pavilions from the *Album de Minerva* (1902)

promoting the "educational renaissance" associated with the Minerva Festival.[45] Valdeavellano documented the festivities in Guatemala City, photographing professional groups and honored guests, and contributed the portraits of public figures included in the publication.[46] For this project, Valdeavellano adopted distinct visual strategies tailored to different audiences. In the souvenir album intended for national and regional readerships, his *composiciones* emphasized ornamental detail and elaborate framing. By contrast, his postcards—produced for an international market—were visually restrained and classical in composition, aligning with collectors' preferences for historically themed imagery.

While the indigenous majority was rendered invisible in the civic spectacle, the small population of East Asian immigrants gained some visibility within the cultural imagination shared by Guatemalan literati at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the same edition of the Minerva Festival that yielded the commemorative album, the contributions of immigrants to the national project were acknowledged through decorative pavilions. Valdeavellano photographed these pavilions and reworked them into *composiciones* for inclusion in the album. One page features the pavilions of Switzerland, Belgium, and France (figure 93).[47] On another, the Chinese and Turkish pavilions are arranged alongside "type" portraits and ornamental frames (figure 94). In the collage of the Chinese pavilion, lanterns and a girl holding a paper parasol are visible; in the Turkish *composición*, a boy reclines on a woven carpet. Valdeavellano's *composiciones* here redirect the Western hegemonic gaze—traditionally cast on Latin America as an aesthetic object—onto the

45 Rendón 2011, p. 164.

46 From the early 1900s, Valdeavellano was associated with Fernández. There is no further information about Fernández.

47 These two pages are from the fourth year edition of the *Album de Minerva*, published in 1902.

immigrant other, constructing an image of a postcolonial constellation that ultimately rationalizes the marginalization of the indigenous majority.

The annual Minerva festivals came to an end with the fall of Manuel Estrada Cabrera, and the once-ubiquitous temples erected for the celebrations fell into inevitable decay. By the late 1910s, illustrated magazines ceased to be the primary medium for expressing the modernist imagination, and the government discontinued commissioning albums featuring elaborate *composiciones*. From that point onward, Valdeavellano's photographic work largely shifted to producing numerous postcards aimed at satisfying the international demand.

Panoramic Views of Antigua

Except for a few reproductions of outdoor photographs in later publications, Yasu Kōhei's work does not appear to have participated in the flourishing Central American postcard production of the early twentieth century, which circulated primarily in the North Atlantic world.[48] As previously noted, nearly all Guatemalan postcards from the first two decades of the twentieth century were produced by Alberto Valdeavellano and Emilio Eichenberger. The subjects of these postcards typically fall into two categories: *vistas*, which are landscape views, and *tipos*, which are ethnographic portraits of Indigenous people. As Christraud Geary observes, postcard production often relied on a photographer's existing body of work, a practice clearly seen in Valdeavellano's postcards, many of which reused images previously published in illustrated magazines.

Although Yasu was certainly aware of the imminent marketability of panoramas of Antigua Guatemala, where he lived as the town's resident photographer, he appears to have remained largely absent from the postcard trade. If one wonders why Yasu, despite his general interest in business ventures, did not participate in the seemingly profitable postcard market, the answer likely lies in his limited access to the necessary resources. These were more readily available to photographers affiliated with larger enterprises, such as Valdeavellano, who further benefited from public commissions to document official events and archaeological excavations.

Nevertheless, a 1907 advertisement, which was in parts written in English, indicates that he did promote a selection of views of local landmarks, highlighting his photographic collections of Antigua's famed colonial architecture and surrounding landscapes. Among the materials preserved in the Fotografía Japonesa archive, a set of sixty-one negatives titled "Churches and Convents of Antigua Guatemala and its Surroundings 1895-1915" offers insight into how he may have sought to engage the international tourist market on his terms.[49]

A few passages from contemporary travel accounts help illuminate the relationship between photography, travel, and the production of souvenir images in the late nineteenth century. Well-equipped explorers and archaeologists brought their cameras and documented how they selected sites to photograph the landscapes and monuments of Central America. Consider, for instance, the following passage in which William Brigham explains how he selected vantage points that allowed him to capture Antigua's volcanoes and

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48 I have analyzed well over five hundred early postcards collected from various photographic archives and online auction sites, as outlined in the Introduction.

49 The outdoor photographs in the archive were all taken in Antigua and its vicinity. This may reflect both the increased portability of photographic equipment in the later years of Yasu's career and the fact that José Domingo Noriega had grown old enough to assist with field photography.

colonial ruins within a single frame:

> Early Sunday morning we went to the Plaza, and from the second story of the cabildo photographed both the great volcanoes Agua and Fuego. Directly before us were the ruins of the palace of the Viceroy, the arms of Spain carved in the stone, which still stands firmly, a century after the terrible earthquake which shattered the rest of the building and ruined the whole city.[50]

The other tourists Brigham met while traveling were also eager to capture the landscape. "During the travels," he reported, "foreigners liked to 'photograph the view.' Vista was also a very popular industry in Guatemala at the end of the nineteenth century."[51] Initially produced by European and North American itinerant photographers, these images featuring volcanoes, lakes, and indigenous villages were widely available for purchase in photographic shops by the 1890s. They also appeared in official publications and promotional materials, helping to construct and circulate a visual image of Guatemala abroad. As a result, travelogues from the period reveal that tourists followed well-defined itineraries, often focusing on the western highlands, volcanoes, Lake Atitlán, Antigua, and the capital.[52]

Two collages from the Fotografía Japonesa collection are partially made from the same photographs. Unlike Valdeavellano's *composiciones*, which were placed in elaborate frames, they are entirely unadorned (figures 95 and 96). The choice of subject is deliberate: at the center of the collage is a recognizable view of Antigua framed by the looming volcanoes, while surrounding images showcase the city's most famous colonial buildings. Many of the individual photographs of government offices, plazas, and the ruins of churches and convents remain well-preserved, suggesting that Yasu and José Domingo Noriega valued these images, perhaps for their commercial appeal.[53] A slightly different collage, produced by Noriega in 1949, also features many of the same outdoor photographs originally taken by Yasu.

Valdeavellano's postcards frequently incorporated human figures to highlight the subject matter. For instance, in a view of La Reforma, a European-style boulevard constructed during the Liberal era, the statue of a raging bull in the foreground is balanced by a carriage positioned centrally, accentuating the avenue's depth. In another postcard, a crowd of indigenous women and children fills the foreground, while a brand-new train appears in the background. This juxtaposition reinforces the postcard's title, "Peasants of the Santa Rosa Hacienda," underscoring the arrival of modern transportation alongside the control of indigenous labor. When photographing the churches of Antigua, Valdeavellano also placed indigenous individuals in the foreground.

Yasu's cityscape photographs, in contrast, do not engage in such manipulation of symbols of culture. With few exceptions, his exterior shots are devoid of people, focusing instead on colonial architecture through precise compositions whose stark lifelessness underscores the grandeur and historical weight of the buildings. This approach likely reflects the reality of Antigua Guatemala at the time, which, as an American traveler observed in 1898, was "[a]ltogether [...] a dead city," sparsely populated after losing its

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50 Brigham 1887, p. 159.

51 Ibid., p. 114.

52 See, for example, A. C. M. Maudslay and A. P. Maudslay (1899), Sanborn (1886), and Vincent (1898)

53 While it is difficult to exclude the possibility that some photographs were taken by Noriega, the handwriting on several suggests that Yasu was responsible for most of the cityscape shots and the collages. The Temple of Minerva included in the second collage (figure 96) was likely constructed in the late 1910s and therefore added by Noriega.

Figure 95: A collage of churches and ruins in Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900. Yasu Kōhei inscribed a handwritten title on each photograph

Figure 96: A collage of churches and ruins in Antigua Guatemala from around 1910. Judging by the embedded photograph of a later event, the Fiestas Minervalias, this may be an addition by José Domingo Noriega

Figure 97: "Façade of the El Carmen church in Antigua, Guatemala," ca. 1882 – 1888

Figure 98: "Ruins of the El Carmen church, Antigua Guatemala," ca. 1900

administrative functions to Guatemala City.[54]

It is also notable that Yasu's images of Antigua's architecture closely resemble photographs taken by foreign visitors in the 1880s. For instance, his depiction of the colonial ruins strikingly parallels photographs of the churches of El Carmen and San Francisco held in the Tulane University collection (figures 97 and 98). In both, the decaying facades framed by lush vegetation evoke a haunting atmosphere that perfectly captures the colonial and volcanic landscape.

Type Photography

By the 1870s, Guatemalan photographers began producing portfolios of types (*tipos*) to meet the global demand for collectible images of exotic others. The appeal of this genre to foreign visitors is captured in a scene described by traveler William Brigham as he recounted his experiences in Central America:

> Early in the morning of the third day of our stay at this place, we started for one of the best bathing places, on the way taking several photographs. At a bath-house we passed, the men bathing in the tank came out frequently through the wide-open door to talk with the women who were washing clothes in the brook outside. As these men were wholly naked, I wished to photograph this "custom" of the country; but when they saw the camera they modestly retired within and shut the door.[55]

Reproduced as cartes-de-visite, these early images of indigenous "types" quickly became

54 Vincent 1898, pp. 141–142.
55 Brigham 1887, p. 172.

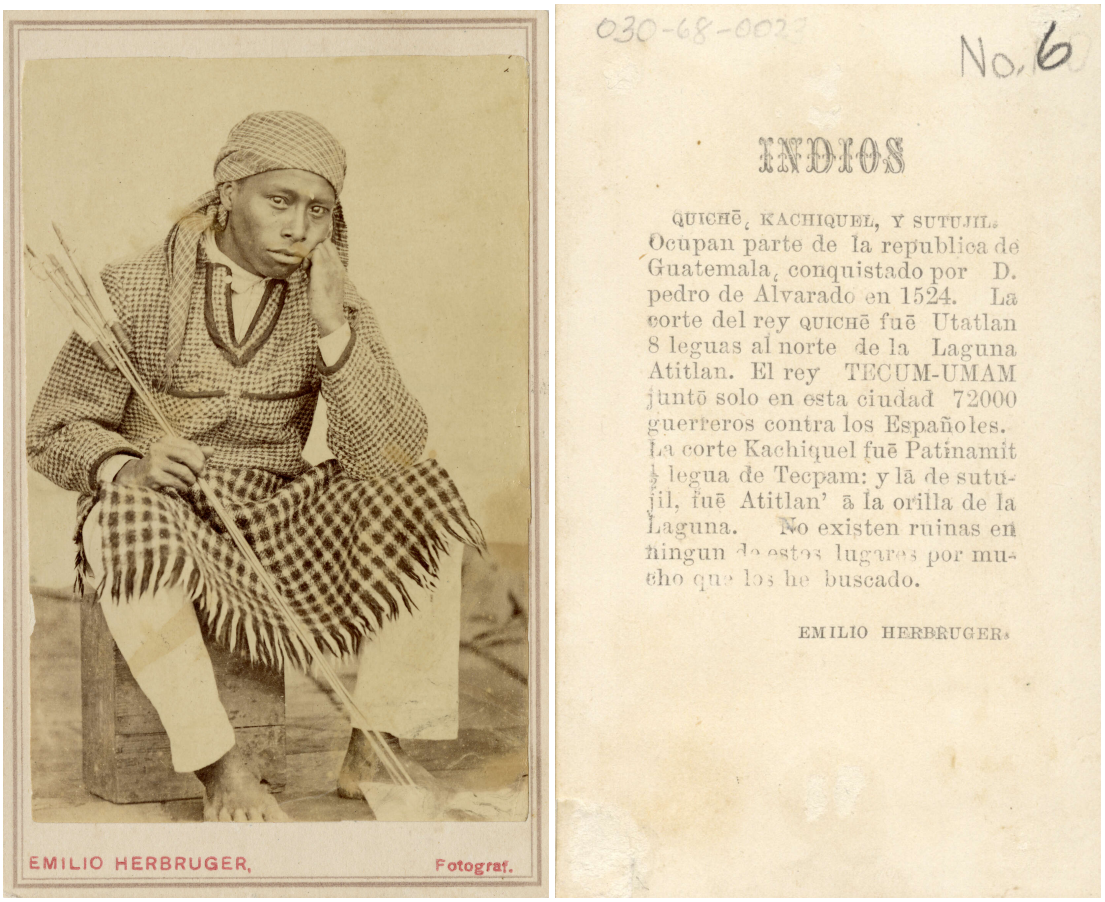

Figure 99: "Maya-Kaqchikel from Sumpango" is part of a series of cards by Emilio Herbruger Sr. that showcase Guatemala's indigenous people, with each card featuring a description on the back

"one of the most popular and widespread visual genres in the European world."[56] In Guatemala, the evolution of this genre is evident when comparing the earliest surviving examples—created by Emilio Herbruger Sr. in the 1870s—with the mass-produced postcards of the early twentieth century. Herbruger's compositions were relatively simple: his subjects were posed in natural light, likely in a studio courtyard, with minimal props or staging (figure 99). By contrast, later studio photographs in the 1890s were more theatrical, featuring elaborate painted backdrops and carefully choreographed poses intended to signal the subjects' ethnic or occupational identity.

Equally telling is the shift in the accompanying texts. The versos of the early cartes-de-visite typically included passages of "pseudo-scientific discourse" that attempted to classify the sitter's ethnicity within racial taxonomies.[57] The captions on later postcards adopted a more commercial and reductive tone, using generic labels such as "Indians," "families," "Indians returning from the market," or "Indians selling jars." This transformation reflects not only changing photographic practices but also a broader shift in how images of indigenous subjects were consumed as visual commodities, tailored to the tastes and expectations of both domestic and international audiences.

In discussing the production of type photography in Latin America—a region ambiguously positioned between the West and the rest—two key factors warrant consideration.

56 Poole 2004, pp. 42–43.
57 Geary and Webb 1998, p. 159.

First, as Deborah Poole and other scholars of early photography have observed, portraits of indigenous people staged in controlled settings initially responded to colonial desires for ethnographic knowledge. These images catered to the imperial impulse to document and classify colonial subjects, which was soon appropriated by metropolitan middle classes, who engaged with such photographs out of scientific curiosity or as a form of visual entertainment.[58] Second, as Olivier Debroise emphasizes in his analysis of "Types du Mexique," these images held specific local significance. They depicted individuals who, while never fully granted the status of citizenship, remained essential to urban life—serving as the connective tissue between the bourgeois city and its peripheries.[59] Defined "by their function or trade," as the captions on Valdeavellano's widely circulated postcards indicate, these figures became emblematic of the Liberal elite's efforts to define and organize the nation. Such prints became tools for visualizing and codifying social hierarchies, helping to anchor emerging narratives of national identity within a framework of observable and classifiable difference.[60]

Photographic reproductions reinforced and promoted the carefully curated image of political figures, infrastructure, and aspirations. Simultaneously, photographers of the Liberal era sought to weaken and marginalize conservative institutions such as the Church, along with social sectors like indigenous peoples and Asian immigrants, who were excluded from the nation's vision of progress as defined by the dominant discourse. The imagined community these images helped construct was closely aligned with the Liberal government's blueprint for a new Guatemala. A historiography of photography that focuses on postcards, official publications, and other visual products created for the Liberal city primarily captures the perspective of social circles privileged by the political conjuncture. Through the lens of Valdeavellano and his peers, photography—as a modern technology—appears to have been devoted almost exclusively to projects that celebrated the progressive spirit of the era.

Against this backdrop, one of the most striking features of Yasu's work is the complete absence of photographs depicting native types. Given the significant market for such images, it is notable that Yasu made no effort to partake in those profits. This particularity is further complicated by the fact that Yasu began his commercial career marketing affordable reproductions of the presidential likeness to soldiers and patrons of modest means. There is no evidence to suggest that Yasu held any special sympathy for the lower or indigenous strata of Guatemalan society. As someone subjected to the exoticizing gaze himself, he may simply have lacked interest in such subjects. While certainly not a rebel championing the disenfranchised, Yasu used his camera to pursue an identity project that ran counter to prevailing political currents. The large number of Catholic-themed works in his archive offers rich insight into how his photography engaged with the concerns of the Catholic population, supported popular religious practices, and ultimately contributed to the development of the Catholic visual economy in Antigua.

Catholic Guatemala Illustrated

The "modern" and "picturesque" Guatemala captured by Valdeavellano and his contemporaries constructed a national identity defined by an exclusive "we"—one that included the

58 See, for example Appadurai 1997; Flint 2015; R. M. Levine 1989a; Poole 1988.
59 Debroise 2001, pp. 117–118.
60 Ibid., p. 118.

indigenous and the Catholic as aesthetically pleasing yet culturally backward obstacles to progress. However, the still powerful Catholic Church maintained its own cultural apparatus, promoting an alternative image. Drawing on a review of Yasu's photographs as published in periodicals representing two contrasting discourses—the liberal *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* and Catholic Church publications—this section addresses the visual representation of the Church during the era of Liberalism.

My analysis unfolds in two parts. First, I demonstrate how Liberal mainstream texts and images associated the Church, clerics, and Catholic tradition with colonial history, anti-progress sentiment, and nostalgia. Second, I explore how the Church's publications responded to the Liberal regime's critiques, once again employing imagery. Central to this analysis are Yasu's portraits of clerics and photographs of saint sculptures, which helped construct a visual narrative advancing the interests of the Catholic community.

Church as the Colonial Heritage

Following the Liberal Revolution of 1871, the newly established Liberal government sought to diminish the political, social, and economic power of the Catholic Church. This was achieved through various measures, including the expulsion of clerics and religious orders, confiscation of church property, and legislation that stripped the Church of its traditional exclusive roles in civic education and marriage ceremonies. Public religious events, such as Holy Week processions, were restricted, and priests were required to wear secular clothing in public. In the widely circulated pictures and illustrated publications examined in the previous sections, images of church organizations and ritual activities are almost entirely absent-limited to a few rare depictions, without significant textual commentary, of the archbishop and select high-ranking priests. Not only was the Church visually erased from representations of social life, but Liberal writers frequently mocked it for its superstitious ceremonies and perceived backwardness.

Within a broader regional context, Guatemala's anti-Catholic climate reflected the intersection of two converging trends. On one side, progressive elites across Latin America sought to break free from the colonial legacy tied to the Catholic Church's cultural and social dominance. On the other, U. S. visitors, investors, and missionaries increasingly promoted Protestant disdain for Catholicism. Given this shared anti-Catholic sentiment among Latin American liberals and northern investors, tourists, and immigrants, it is unsurprising that Catholic imagery vanished from illustrated magazines read by the literate urban class and from postcards sold to foreign visitors.

The dominance of visual productions aligned with the modernist agenda, alongside the marginalization of religious institutions in media controlled by Liberalism—which form the bulk of today's newspaper archives—has fostered the widespread assumption that Catholicism was virtually absent from the local visual economy of the era. However, the scarcity of Catholic imagery in contemporaneous media primarily reflects the Liberal government's antagonistic stance toward the institution. In the following pages, I examine several examples demonstrating how priests, worship practices, religious architecture, and sacred art continued to be represented in postcards and magazines despite this general hostility. I argue that these representations isolated the nostalgic and historical elements of Catholicism, emphasizing its contributions to the national heritage. This dual process of incorporating others as cultural symbols while excluding them from the national project was also applied to the indigenous population.

The November 15, 1896 issue of *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* features Valdeavellano's

composición of Cerro del Carmen, a hill crowned by an ancient church that overlooks Guatemala City. Framed with the artist's signature floral border, the *composición* presents an idyllic view of the old church buildings in the background, while a smiling indigenous boy, a "lively *patojo*," occupies the foreground. The same issue includes a lengthy text with the same title that echoes Valdeavellano's visual collage through prose.[61] Written by Antonio Batres Jáuregui (1847 – 1929), a former conservative writer who later assumed a prominent role within the liberal government, the text concludes with an apostrophic address to the landmark. Quoted at length, this passage encapsulates the core elements of the progressive social project and the role assigned to Catholic symbols:

> Oh, Cerro del Carmen! Tomorrow, within short hours, the morning sun will tinge in golden colors again on the feudal towers of your temple, which from its heights will yet see perish many generations; it will see this beautiful city grow and develop until it becomes an emporium of riches and ostentatious luxury, protected by peace and the aegis of work and order; it will see its sons congregated in happy fraternity, where the opinions will not cause strife, and the aspirations will not be vain flirtations; it will see Guatemala, garden of Central America, flaunt fragrant flowers and abundant fruits. "Hello, dear Mother, sweet Guatemala, I salute you"[62]

Batres Jáuregui quoted the final verse from a patriotic ode by the seventeenth-century Jesuit priest Rafael Landívar, a key figure in Guatemalan history. When Valdeavellano's photo collage is paired with Batres Jáuregui's enthusiastic description of the landmark, the message becomes clear: embraced by the panoramic view, with the church in the background and children in the foreground (figure 100), the Cerro was no longer a sacred place but rather "a charming and poetic corner that synthesizes the memory of all Guatemala."

The re-purposing of religious sites as places for recreation and patriotic reflection is a recurring theme in contemporaneous Guatemalan texts and travel accounts (figure 101). Visitors from the United States, in particular, described the architecture of the churches in intriguing terms while dismissing the religious services held inside as premodern and superstitious.[63] Although the sites were "apt to repeat themselves to a great extent," the traveler Frank Vincent groused, he provided a detailed description of the distinctive features of the Santo Domingo and San Francisco churches in Guatemala City.[64] He noted that "[s]ervice was in progress during my visit, but only a few poor Indian women were present."[65]

For the progressivist literati, the Church—as a major power structure throughout the long Spanish colonial period—offered more to Guatemala's historical and cultural lineage than merely its magnificent architecture. In an essay entitled "Zurbarán in Guatemala," the renowned art critic Ramón Salazar expressed his admiration for a painting housed in the church of Santo Domingo. There, he proclaimed, "I found myself in the presence of [Francisco de] Zurbarán, the famous master who had studied in London and Dresden, the painter who enjoyed painting a dying monk. [...] The works of the master Zurbarán are all over Europe, as there is hardly a major museum that does not have one or more works by

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61 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Antonio Batres Jáuregui, "El Cerro del Carmen," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, November 15, 1896.

62 Ibid.: 117.

63 Brigham (1887, pp. 149–150); Sanborn (1886, p. 268).

64 Vincent 1898, pp. 136–137.

65 Ibid., p. 128.

Figure 100: Alberto Valdeavellano, postcard of Cerro del Carmen, with *patojos* in the foreground, Guatemala City, ca. 1900

this renowned painter."[66], Salazar's prose highlights the northern European influences on the Spanish master, repositioning Zurbarán's work beyond its original religious context and aligning it with the aesthetic frameworks of cosmopolitan European museums. Although Zurbarán's painting remained inside the religious sanctuary, the precious Catholic artwork was employed as a rhetorical bridge to secular modernity.

While *La Ilustración Guatemalteca* limited its visual representation of the Catholic Church, the publication occasionally included notes on religious events in the capital and Antigua. These were usually featured in the biweekly summary section (*resúmenes quincenales*) and mentioned priests connected to high-society families or senior clerics. These priests were praised for their oratorical skills and charismatic appeal to the faithful. For example, Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto, appointed archbishop in 1914, sustained his influence during the period of Catholic repression through his friendship with president Justo Rufino Barrios.[67] In the fifth issue of *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, Yasu Kōhei's portrait of Riveiro y Jacinto (fig. 64) was placed prominently in the middle of the article on Zurbarán mentioned above. At that time, Riveiro y Jacinto was chaplain of Santo Domingo. A biographical sketch praised his efforts to restore the church and his charisma, which "captivated the listeners who filled the church with more than eight thousand people during the last Lent."[68]

Another note reviews a sermon on "The Freedom of Man" delivered by Salvador Arzú y Roma, presbyter of La Merced church: "The words of the preacher had a profound effect on the audience: its mystical content made a deep impression on all who heard it. In the

66 Ramón Salazar, "Zurbarán en Guatemala," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, October 1, 1896.
67 Cal Montoya 2012, p. 98.
68 "Presbítero Don Julián R. Riveiro," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, October 1, 1896.

Figure 101: Alberto Valdeavellano, postcard "El Calvario church," with an indigenous woman in the foreground, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

morning there were many communions. The crowd came to the door of the church."[69] The publication also included obituaries marking the deaths of priests, such as Presbyter Ildefonso Albores and Father Salvador Medrano.[70] In the case of Medrano, whose funeral drew a large crowd, the editor noted, "we would have liked to provide a portrait of the deceased, but no photograph was found in his house."[71] As a late gesture, a portrait titled "Don Salvador Medrano" appeared a few issues later on a page also featuring pieces titled "Mysticism," "Editor," and "María."[72] Though published without attribution, the portraits of Medrano and Riveiro y Jacinto are part of the Fotografía Japonesa collection.[73]

The relationship between the state and the Catholic Church grew less hostile during the presidency of José María Reina Barrios (1892 – 1898). According to historian José Cal, Reina Barrios permitted the Church to "expand its spaces of public expression."[74] In 1892, on the quadricentennial anniversary of the "discovery" of America, the city's religious organizations and clerics participated in public celebrations. Then, in 1897, amid economic crisis and social unrest, Reina Barrios allowed the return of the exiled Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada to help him "regain his social acceptance." On the occasion of the archbishop's return, a full-page portrait of Casanova y Estrada was featured

69 "Revista quincenal," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, September 15, 1896.
70 A. Macías del Real, "Presbítero Dr. Don Ildefonso Albores," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, October 1, 1896.
71 "Resumen Quincenal," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, March 15, 1897.
72 "Don Salvador Medrano," *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, April 15, 1896.
73 These priests' portraits can be found by following the reference code provided by Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA: GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-114, GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-115, GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-116A, and GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P05-116B.
74 All quotations in this paragraph are from Cal Montoya 2012, pp. 95–96.

on the last page of *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*. Below the portrait, a two-line caption reads: "Lic. Ricardo Casanova y Estrada, Archbishop of Guatemala" and "Photograph by A. G. Valdeavellano."[75] Judging by the similar attire worn by the archbishop in his earlier photograph taken at Yasu's studio for his 1886 installation, this portrait likely dates from around the same period. Casanova y Estrada probably visited multiple studios to reach a broader audience. Once the negatives were stored in the studio of a prominent photographer like Valdeavellano, they could be reproduced whenever needed. This portrait of the archbishop appeared alongside many other images in the issue, most taken by Valdeavellano, including members of the bicycle club, a series on the Bank of Guatemala, and a portrait of an indigenous woman titled "India de San Antonio las Flores."

A month later, another group of images of clerics appeared in *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*. Four portraits of priests, whose names were frequently mentioned in the biweekly summary sections, were placed side by side on the same page.[76] In a subsection entitled "Religious Preachers," which appeared several pages behind the portraits under the heading "Our Print," brief blurbs described each priest's affiliations and accomplishments. A small editorial note explained the origin of the portraits: "We have inadvertently received the following portraits of distinguished priests," it announced. "Please forgive us if we have offended their modesty by pleasing our readers." Among the four priests, Ignacio Prado and Salvador Arzú had their portraits taken at Fotografía Japonesa; the glass negative of Prado's likeness is preserved in Yasu's archive.

Yasu's Work for Catholic Magazines

Although three of Yasu's photographs were featured in the magazines discussed in the previous section, none were attributed to the Japanese photographer. This omission may have been due to exclusive agreements between the magazines and the photographer Alberto Valdeavellano, who was credited as the photographer of record. It also appears that the priests, the subjects of the photographs, had little influence over how they were portrayed. However, as will be explored in the following pages, the situation was different in publications directed specifically at the Catholic community. By examining two of Yasu's photographs published in these religious periodicals, I will analyze how the Catholic perspective was articulated during the liberal regime.

It is important to recognize that, despite the government's antagonism toward the Church, the vast majority of the population, including the elites, were baptized Catholics. Historian Ricardo Bendaña Perdomo notes that Pope Leo XIII sought to ease tensions between the government and the Church by inviting president Rufino Barrios to his 1878 inauguration, seven years after the Liberal Revolution. This gesture led to a détente, during which the Church was granted permission to purchase a printing press. In 1885, the first Catholic magazine, *El Pensamiento Católico* (Catholic Thought), began publication.[77]

As historian José Cal highlights, the archbishop aimed to imbue the magazine with a "Central American character." However, this effort faltered due to renewed and harsher repression following a change in the presidency. In 1887, the concordat between Guatemala and Rome was revoked, granting the government the authority to compel priests and seminarians to "perform military service [...] and [to] prohibit the Catholic Church from

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75 *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, March 15, 1897.

76 *La Ilustración Guatemalteca*, April 15, 1897. The priests mentioned are Ignacio Prado, Manuel Leal, Francisco J. Torres, and Salvador Arzú.

77 Bendaña Perdomo 2011, p. 155.

issuing publications without the permission of the government."[78]

Meanwhile, Archbishop Casanova y Estrada, exiled in Costa Rica, worked to maintain the Catholic Church's presence in Guatemala through written media. With the inauguration of president José María Reina Barrios in 1892, a shift toward a more conciliatory stance allowed the publication of periodicals like *La Semana Católica* (The Catholic Week) and *El Ideal* (The Ideal), which sought to connect with the Catholic faithful and ensure that the Church's voice remained active in the public sphere.[79] In addition to these periodicals, smaller or short-lived publications such as *El Día* (The Day, 1887-1888) and *La Familia Cristiana* (The Christian Family, 1902) emerged, providing a platform for Catholic intellectuals to debate and promote their ideas about society and the republic.[80]

In contrast to the liberal elite's illustrated magazines, Catholic periodicals typically featured fewer full- or half-page illustrations. One notable exception was *El Ideal*, which, first published in 1887, used lithographs as its central visual feature. These lithographs, ranging from religious narratives to depictions of saints, indicate that Catholic readers embraced the new media as eagerly as their liberal counterparts. While photography was employed sparingly in these publications—unlike in *La Ilustración Guatemala*, where it was more prevalent—the few photographs that appeared were often sourced from abroad. Yasu's work, however, marked a significant shift: he produced the first local photograph published in Catholic magazines.

On April 27, 1895, the portrait of Dominican friar Juan María Martínez del Arenal (1828 – 1894) appeared in *Semana Católica* (figure 102). In the photograph, the friar is depicted standing upright, dressed in his white Dominican habit, with his gaze directed out of the frame. One hand holds branches that form a natural frame around him, while the other gently touches the rosary worn around his neck. The scene is set against a background of herbs, stones, and moss, which blends into the ground, evoking images of a journey through the wilderness. This photograph was accompanied by an extensive article entitled "Fray Juan María Martínez," written by the Santo Domingo chaplain, Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto.[81]

The article chronicles the life of the Spanish friar, who had recently passed away in the convent of Santo Domingo, emphasizing the persecution of religious orders that had forced him to leave Guatemala during the 1870s and early 1880s. According to the archive of Yasu's works, the portrait featured in *Semana Católica* is one of four images taken at *Fotografía Japonesa* following the friar's return to Guatemala in 1885. Among these portraits, the majority of which depict him in his habit or priest's cassock, one particularly striking image shows him wearing a large cape or *poncho*, giving the appearance of a secular traveler.

The full-page portrait of "Juan María Martínez del Arenal, Provincial Vicar of Central America" was presented as a "gift to subscribers." While the caption does not suggest any narrative beyond the portrayal of the church official, the photograph marks a significant moment in the evolution of Catholic visual culture. Much like the photographs created by Valdeavellano for the illustrated magazines discussed earlier, this image of the vicar contributed to the magazine's modern, innovative look, enhancing its appeal and likely boosting sales. The editors evidently anticipated that some readers would value the portrait

78 Cal Montoya 2012, p. 95.
79 Ibid., pp. 95–96.
80 Urquizú Gómez (2008, pp. 93–97); see also Taracena Arriola (2008: 123).
81 Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto, "Fray Juan María Martínez," *Semana Católica*, April 27, 1895.

Figure 102: Portrait of Dominican friar Juan María Martínez del Arenal, featured in the magazine *Semana Católica* (1895)

Figure 103: Portrait of Juan María Martínez del Arenal, Guatemala City, ca. 1883-1889

enough to remove it from the publication and display it as part of their personal collections, reflecting their Catholic identity.

In September 1913, *El Ideal* published a photograph titled "Our Lady of Sorrows," depicting the Marian image venerated in the church of El Calvario in Antigua Guatemala (figure 104).[82] The publication coincided with the celebration of the feast day of this Marian apparition on September 15. The subject of the photograph, "La Dolorosa del Calvario," is one of the oldest and most beloved religious sculptures in Antigua.[83] While sculptures representing this Marian devotion typically accompany the crucified Christ during Good Friday processions, "La Dolorosa" is an exception. Unlike other processional sculptures, which are designed to be easily carried, "La Dolorosa" is a fully carved, life-sized work, too heavy to be transported on processional floats.[84] Furthermore, the profound beauty of the image lends it special significance, prompting her admirers to keep her carefully on her altar and only move her on rare occasions.

To capture the perfect representation of the sculpture for *El Ideal*, Yasu took multiple photographs (figure 105). The first attempt shows the Virgin on a wooden pedestal in front of a dark curtain, with a simple setting inside the church. This marked only the initial stage of the photographic process. Based on traces found in the negatives, it is evident that Yasu, after the photographic event, experimented with various techniques in his studio. He likely

82 "Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, que se venera en la iglesia del Calvario de la Antigua Guatemala," *El Ideal*, September 1, 1913.
83 Rodas 2009, pp. 59–61.
84 Ramos Sosa 2012, p. 493.

Figure 104: "Our Lady of Sorrows, which is venerated at the Calvario church in Antigua Guatemala," *El Ideal* (1913)

Figure 105: Our Lady of Sorrows, from Yasu's negative, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

used existing religious art as an archetype or visual reference. One image in the series appears to have been copied from a print of the sculpture, which may have served as a visual model for the photograph. To emulate the aesthetic of the print through photography, Yasu removed the background.

The decision to remove such a sacred sculpture and stage it for photographic manipulation speaks to the trust Yasu had earned from the Church and the lay community. Unfortunately, it remains unclear whether Yasu was primarily guided by his own artistic instincts or if he was working under specific instructions from the client for this particular project. Nevertheless, the artistic intentions behind this creation are clear. The arch at the top highlights the aureole, while the surrounding block of black color reinforces her commanding presence. The cropping and color contrast serve to soften the sculpture's three-dimensionality, transforming the massive figure into a flat, portable image akin to a picture card. In his study of the artistic evolution of Guatemalan religious sculpture, Rafael Ramos Sosa discusses the characteristics of *La Dolorosa* and notes its "severe composition in an emphatic frontal block, a sculptural concept recovered from the Renaissance onwards from classical statuary."[85] As published in *El Ideal*, Yasu's final work underscores the sculpture's defining features: "[the] composition in a closed line, in which the movement of the drapery frames and accentuates two points: the face and the hands." Through his photography, Yasu captured the essence of the sculpture and navigated the intersection of traditional religious imagery and the emerging modernist realm of photographic realism.

As with many reproductions of religious images found in periodicals of the time, *El Ideal* did not credit the photographer, perhaps to preserve the focus on Mary's beauty rather than on the artist's skill. By integrating artistic techniques and visual regimes from

85 All quotations in this paragraph are from Ramos Sosa 2012, p. 493.

different traditions, Yasu's work underscores the pivotal role the photographer played in the transition to a new economy of religious images—one that made visual representations of venerated sculptures more accessible to the masses. While Yasu's religious photographs illustrate how segments of the Catholic Church adapted visual technologies for their own purposes, they also invite us to question the assumption that there was a simple, uniform connection between visual regimes and political ideologies during the Liberal era.

By contrasting the work of photographers Alberto Valdeavellano and Yasu Kōhei, I seek to challenge the narrative that emphasizes the preponderance of Liberalism in the field of visual production. While Valdeavellano embraced his role within the Liberal project, Yasu's work reveals the existence of an alternative visual economy that ran parallel to the government-promoted one. Liberalism sought to diminish the significance of Catholic devotion, replacing it with modernist images that glorified political leaders. Yet, the new possibilities offered by photography also paved the way for Yasu, whose vision of its hagiographic potential diverged from that of the state. These photographs offer a way of looking at a more complex world of images, one where creators responded not only to political propaganda but also to market demands.

To overemphasize the modernist agenda and the unifying effects of a repressive regime would be to overlook the broader context and the subjectivity of the photographers themselves. As Kirkpatrick notes, Liberalism "and the Catholic Church were not binaries as is commonly assumed but both appropriated language from one another to rationalize their respective projects."[86] Within the context of Yasu's full body of work on religious subjects, these photographs demonstrate that, while Catholic circles were undoubtedly constrained by the political climate, they were far from absent in Guatemala's photographic visual economy.

Religious Art for the Popular Classes

In chapter 4, I mentioned a passage from the travelogue of American visitor Helen Sanborn, who recounted her encounter with a Guatemalan boy accompanying a French priest on a ship to Panama. While the priest was away, Sanborn showed the boy some books, only to discover that he could not distinguish between an image of a secular woman and one of a saint.

This moment highlights the ambiguity with which portraits of famous individuals were perceived in Latin America, where the iconographic traditions of Catholicism had been ingrained since the early colonial period. Scholars have pointed out that, in the post-colonial Catholic context, attitudes toward portraiture and photography varied widely across social classes. The emerging "aristocracy and the new middle class" saw photography as a vehicle for European cultural prestige, while rural communities viewed it as part of a "syncretic pictorial cult tradition," which suggested the appropriation of this new medium within the framework of faith.[87] In this context, photography acquired a unique status, becoming an " 'emanation' of the absent, of presence," which, paradoxically, reaffirmed "the original function" of the medium.[88]

From this understanding of the context of photography in vernacular visual culture, it becomes clear how the boy interpreted the portrait Sanborn showed him through the lens of

86 Kirkpatrick 2013, p. 42.
87 Debroise 2001, p. 27.
88 Ibid., p. 27.

his Catholic, iconographic knowledge. His inability to distinguish between a secular woman and a saint reveals the deep integration of Catholic imagery in everyday life. This moment also highlights the limits of the liberal-era governments' attempts to replace Catholic iconographic traditions with modernist and patriotic imagery. While photography could be employed to create a modern visual experience, it also had the capacity to transport Catholic iconographic traditions into a new era. As scholars of the history of photography have noted, the widespread fascination with portraiture that began in major cities worldwide in the mid-nineteenth century was also embraced by religious communities. They harnessed the medium's technical capabilities to facilitate the circulation of sacred icons.

To conclude the analysis of Yasu Kōhei's photographic production, I draw attention to a genre of images that may seem counterintuitive as a precursor to modern vision. By examining hundreds of archival photographs of saint sculptures and devotional prints carefully preserved by Yasu and his successor, José Domingo Noriega, the following discussion seeks to illuminate the relationship between photographic reproduction and visual piety. To better understand Yasu's photographic intervention in Catholic iconography and the significance of aligning with established visual conventions, Christopher Pinney's concept of "vernacular modernism" serves as a guiding framework.[89]

To be sure, the sculptures of saints that Yasu brought to his studio did not possess the agency of the people requesting portraits in India and Africa, the subjects of Pinney's exploration of local appropriation. Nor could the life-size representations of religious figures conspire with the photographer to resist the hegemonic influence of the West. However, the concept of vernacular modernism is invoked here to highlight the importance of the space in which photographic events unfold and the potential for photography to articulate alternative histories. The photographs of Catholic images produced by Yasu in collaboration with the church hierarchy and religious community emerged as a counterpoint to the dominant images of political leaders and female socialites in which other studios excelled. Yasu's religious photography provided the faithful with an opportunity to reclaim their venerated sculptures of saints, serving as an act of resistance in the face of anti-Catholic sentiments.

In the following pages, I will first explore the origins of photography in the production of religious imagery in Guatemala. Drawing on the concept of vernacular modernism, my goal is to illustrate how this photographic production contributed to the church's objectives at a very local level. Next, I will recount an anecdote involving the covert abduction of a sculpture for use in a studio setting, an act that stirred scandal in the conservative town, to highlight the collaborative nature of Yasu's vernacular modernist religious portraiture. Finally, I will examine Yasu's occasional use of local sculptures as actors in the recreation of Catholic scenes from other contexts—an act that, I argue, demonstrates his agency as a creator of religious visual art.

Estampas, Evangelism, and Vernacular Modernism

John Berger once described the changes photography has brought to the way individuals appreciate works of art: "Because of the camera, the painting now travels to the spectator rather than the spectator to the painting. In its travels, its meaning is diversified."[90] Berger's insights aptly capture the relationships that emerged from Yasu's recreations of Catholic

89 Pinney 2003a.
90 Berger 2008, p. 20.

images. Most of the venerated sculptures in Guatemalan churches were created during the Spanish colonial period or in the first half of the nineteenth century. For the pious, approaching these sacred images, which are typically placed in altars and shrines, is not an easy task. Although, as Luis Luján Muñoz notes, European religious prints were available at affordable prices during the colonial period, this may not have been true for the popular masses, who had very limited economic means.[91]

This situation shifted with the advent of printing technology, and later, with the mass-market introduction of photography in the early 1890s. Reflecting on his work in Guatemala City after returning from Peru in 1890, Yasu's *Memorias* contain a brief remark indicating that he had photographed most of the significant sculptures displayed in local churches. Seen in the context of the Church's efforts to modernize its evangelization strategies using technological means, this seemingly innocuous sentence marks a pivotal moment in the Guatemalan economy of religious images.

In his work on the evolution of the art of Lenten and Holy Week processions, Fernando Urquizú emphasizes the significance of *Rerum Novarum*, the encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891. In this document, Pope Leo XIII proposed "to use the progress of science and technology for the spread of the Gospel, leaving the local ecclesiastical authorities free to reorganize their faithful after the attacks suffered by liberalism and the threat of socialism."[92] Urquizú further explains that Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto, the chaplain of the Church of Santo Domingo, was the most prominent figure in implementing the papal encyclical in Guatemala. In the more conciliatory climate following José María Reina Barrios's assumption of the Guatemalan presidency in 1892, Riveiro y Jacinto began fostering "new religious societies led by lay people who enjoyed a certain autonomy," circumventing restrictions on clergy participation in public religious ceremonies. The lay groups dedicated to the Holy Week processions began to operate as religious enterprises, utilizing printing and photography "as a means of propagating their devotion, thus achieving a very successful response of popular support."

As Olivier Debroise has noted, photographs had been placed on Mexican home altars as early as 1842, where they were arranged "among candles, bouquets, fragrant herbs, and holy cards with pictures of saints."[93] However, unlike these earlier practices where photographic reproductions were typically confined to small devotional cards, the papal guidance expressed in *Rerum Novarum* granted laymen like Yasu direct access to the actual sculptures for the first time—works that had long been guarded with strict reserve and kept beyond the reach of the common people. This new access enabled Yasu to capture the sacred figures in a way never before possible, allowing for an intimate, up-close portrayal of their features.

Among Yasu's glass negatives is an expansive collection of photographic reproductions of sacred sculptures, featuring depictions of the Archangel Michael and of St. Joseph, reproductions of the different sculptures of the cross-bearing Christ, and of Mary of the Immaculate Conception. Another series of negatives captures religious prints of figures such as Saint Peter of Saint Joseph de Betancur—commonly known as Hermano Pedro—who holds a central place in the pantheon of Guatemalan saints, alongside the Crucified Jesus from the Santa Clara Church. Yasu also reproduced images of the Sacred Heart, the Holy Trinity, and the Holy Family, all of which were integral to the global network of

91 Luján Muñoz 1982a, pp. 123–124.

92 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Urquizú Gómez 2008, p. 374.

93 Debroise 2001, p. 27.

Catholic imagery.

Yasu's photographs not only preserved these sacred objects in their original form but also infused them with narrative elements of an allegorical nature, adding layers of meaning to each image. While international visitors flocked to Valdeavellano's lavish studio in the capital to view portraits of landscapes and Mayan "types," the pious populace turned to Fotografía Japonesa for a more intimate connection to their cherished saints. In Yasu's studio, faithful customers could find a range of products— from small miniatures to larger prints—offering a tangible way to carry their devotion wherever they went.

In his photography, Yasu seamlessly blended colonial pictorial conventions with the aesthetic of contemporary devotional cards, positioning the Guatemalan faithful within the broader network of devotional imagery that spanned both sides of the Atlantic. Whether capturing a sacred sculpture or reproducing a delicate French lace-framed card, Yasu transformed these images into commodified objects, tailored to meet the demands of the market. His depictions of saints were likely sold side by side with portraits of political leaders, further emphasizing the wide-ranging appeal of his work. While his photography did not directly challenge the Church's efforts to harness imagery for doctrinal and political purposes, Yasu's vernacular modernism functioned as a subtle form of a "provincializing strategy, for it relocates the historical agency and centrality of Western representational practice in a new space."[94]

Collaboration with the Confraternities

Besides photographing religious prints, Yasu Kōhei also worked with life-size images of saints, a notable departure from his usual focus on portraits and landscapes. Yasu was granted permission by the church to photograph these sacred sculptures, which were carefully safeguarded to prevent desecration. In his matter-of-fact statement that he "took photographs of the most important *imágenes* of the churches," Yasu downplays the complexities involved. At the time, photographing religious sculptures in Guatemala was still a relatively novel practice. The trust placed in Yasu by both priests and lay confraternities—allowing him such access to these venerated objects—underscores the unique and valued relationship he had cultivated within the religious sphere.

Some of Yasu's photographs were taken inside the churches, as seen in the expansive settings surrounding the sculptures. However, many of the images also feature scenic backdrops and studio settings, suggesting that the sculptures were removed from their shrines and transported to Yasu's studio. In contemporary Guatemala, it is virtually unheard of for valuable sculptures to be removed from churches unless for a procession or for restoration work—and even then, the process requires elaborate rituals (figure 106). To understand how Yasu might have gained permission to take these sacred sculptures for a portrait he intended to sell, I inquired with an official from a major confraternity in Antigua. Half-jokingly, my informant replied, "They probably wrapped them in a carpet to carry them to the studio at night."[95]

Interestingly, this playful speculation may not be far from the truth. Mario Gilberto González, a former chronicler of Antigua, recounts a fascinating story that sheds light on the matter. He references a quirky news item published in *La América*, a local newspaper, which humorously reported a scandalous incident involving a Jesus sculpture being wrapped

94 Pinney 2003a, p. 12.

95 Interview with Abelino Reyes in Antigua Guatemala, May 5, 2015.

like a tamale—the traditional Guatemalan dish wrapped in banana leaves for steaming.[96] The vignette, quoted by González as follows, offers a rare glimpse into Yasu's photographic practice:

> Before Holy Week, at a certain at a certain evening hour, a bundled figure was seen being carried on shoulders from the temple of La Merced to a house near the old temple of El Carmen. Two or three nights later, the bundle was seen on its way back, and the curious, who are never in short supply, went back and forth to find out what it was. What could it be? The cross-bearing Jesus of La Merced was wrapped up like a tamale and taken under cover of night to a photographer to have his portrait taken, and they made three portraits; one of imperial size, another smaller, and the last of even smaller proportions, which were sold in the temple on Holy Thursday, the first for four pesos, the second for two, and the third for one peso. How could they treat the venerated image in such a way when just to move it from one place to another in the temple required rogations and other formalities.[97]

The passage vividly captures the townspeople's astonishment upon discovering that the venerated sculpture of Jesus had been removed from its altar. Their indignation at this perceived act of impiety likely lingered until they were able to purchase the finished photograph on Maundy Thursday. González further elaborates on the context of the newspaper story, illustrating the broader impact this incident had on the market for religious images in Antigua:

> It just so happened that the leaders of the confraternity of the Crucified Jesus of La Merced decided late at night to take the venerated image wrapped in a sheet to the recently inaugurated photographic studio "La Japonesa" that don Juan José de Jesús Yas (Cohei Yasu [sic]) had opened in the house at the corner of El Carmen, known as the house of don Florencio Salazar. They took it in this way "*entamalado*" so that no one would notice, and the first photographs of this venerated image were taken to sell copies in three sizes on Holy Thursday. But as the popular saying goes, "nothing is hidden between heaven and earth," and the townspeople found this strange until they discovered what was going on. This was the photograph that became the Venerable Image of Jesus Carrying the Cross of La Merced, and for many years it was the only photograph that appeared in books, magazines, and on religious cards. A photograph of excellent technical quality, whose negative is still intact after one hundred and ten years. Don J. Domingo Noriega, who inherited the photographic studio "La Japonesa," kept the negative in good condition.[98]

By revisiting the historical moment when the pious people of Antigua first encountered the photographic reproduction of the venerated sculpture, González offers a portrayal of the complex emotions the faithful likely experienced. The irreverent manner in which the sculpture was transported was initially provocative, as was the secular nature of the act itself. Yet, González's account also reveals the enduring impact of this episode, preserved in the collective memory of the city's inhabitants.

Yasu had only just arrived in Antigua that same year, and since these events occurred shortly before Holy Week, his studio could not have been operating for more than a few months. It seems unlikely that his access to the sculpture was solely the result of trust earned in such a brief period. Rather, his reputation as a skilled artist in this genre must

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96 All quotations in this vignette are from González R. 2005.
97 Gacetillas, *La América*, quoted in González R. (ibid.).
98 Ibid.

Figure 106: Photograph of Jesús Nazareno leaving La Merced church, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

Figure 107: Portrait of Jesús Nazareno of La Merced church, featuring the sculpture against a simple background, Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

have preceded him—perhaps through the recognition of his work in Guatemala City by confraternity leaders—or possibly through an arrangement brokered by a higher-ranking churchman such as Riveiro y Jacinto, who was well acquainted with Yasu's notable achievements.

For the confraternities—who served as the primary guardians of the sculpture's sanctity given the precarious position of priests and friars—the commercial opportunity was simply irresistible. Once the sculpture was returned to the church and prepared for veneration during Holy Thursday, the faithful were reassured, and those with sufficient means could incorporate this novel photographic replica of Jesus into their devotional practice. Despite González's detailed account, I was unable to definitively identify which photograph resulted from this particular episode. However, among Yasu's glass plates, there is an image of the cross-bearing Jesus of La Merced set against a studio-like backdrop that fits the description well (figure 107). This full-length portrait reveals the life-size sculpture in great detail, emphasizing Christ's agonized facial expression and capturing the precise moment of the Passion embodied in the ancient wooden figure. Since, then as now, the sculpture was kept unreachable for most visitors, Yasu's photographs likely offered a rare chance to study finer details: the crown of thorns, the robe's embroidery, and the subtle texture of the skin.

The full set of *imagenes de pasión* accumulated by many churches over the centuries includes Jesus and Mary depicted at various moments of the Passion narrative. The cross-bearing Jesus, or *Jesús Nazareno* in the local nomenclature, represents Jesus en route to Calvary. The buried Jesus, or *Señor Sepultado*, often features movable joints to allow placement in a glass sarcophagus, carried in Holy Friday processions. The Virgin Mary appears in mourning as the Lady of Sorrows, *Dolorosa*, and the Lady of Solitude, *Soledad*. Among these, the cross-bearing Nazarenos are typically the most venerated, due to both the artistic quality of their representations and the affective bond they offer in a Christian

tradition whose key metaphors refer to sorrow and pain.

Within a walkable radius of the compact center of Antigua Guatemala lie the most important centers of devotion, each housing its own *Nazarenos* and additional sculptures: the Cathedral, La Merced, San Francisco El Grande, Escuela de Cristo, El Calvario, San Felipe, and San Bartolomé. Unsurprisingly, Yasu's photographs capture religious sculptures from all these churches. The lay confraternities responsible for preserving this religious heritage likely valued Yasu's work, as it enabled them to generate income through the sale of cards, posters, and other products.

One such example is the sculpture of Saint Christopher in the church of San Cristóbal El Bajo (figure 108). This is an aged piece, renowned for its exceptional beauty and realism. Both Saint Christopher and the removable figure of the Christ Child are attributed to Alonso de la Paz, one of Antigua's most celebrated seventeenth-century sculptors.[99] With even a basic understanding of the Catholic saint's history, viewers can readily identify the visual references.

In this photograph, St. Christopher, holding a palm tree that is part of the original sculpture, and the Christ Child sitting on his shoulder, occupy the central position. Behind them, the painted background depicts a river, trees, and rocks with soft contours that harmonize with the sculptures. The texture of the wooden figures is softened, and the contrast of light and shadow that might have created hard edges is hidden. To achieve the final visual harmony and stage a coherent aesthetic for the saint sculptures, Yasu manipulated a variety of materials, including paper, wood, metal, stone, orchids, and grass. He used his craftsmanship to convey the realism of the original sculptures in the medium of his choice.

Before Yasu arrived with his camera, affordable likenesses of the sculptures were available only as lithographic prints derived from paintings. If his contemporaries resembled my current informants, they must have marveled at the unprecedented access to the sculptures' expressive features that Yasu's photographs provided. These images offered the pious a way to bring the essence of the sculptures into their homes. Interestingly, and somewhat contrary to Walter Benjamin's famous critique of mechanical reproduction, Yasu's photography may have restored the aura of these wondrous sculptures by delivering naturalistic views that viewers could scarcely obtain without the camera's eye.[100]

As Fernando Urquizú explains, the half-length compositions, in particular, which provided an intimate view of the facial features, "had a profound impact on the faithful, who saw in them a living image of the cross-bearing Jesus."[101] Maya Mayblin also notes that the realism of such statues is designed "to provoke powerful constellations of emotions in onlookers, emotions of sorrow and awe but also empathy based on a sense of shared humanity with divine figures. Such emotions would become the engine of a renewed faith."[102] Through careful arrangement of camera angles, lighting, and scenes, Yasu's photographic reproductions captured the most touching details and amplified their sentimental effects. Working alongside the lay confraternities—empowered by the church hierarchy as agents of the new evangelism decreed by Pope Leo XIII, Yasu's photographs provided a potent modernizing impulse to the visual economy of Catholic devotion, helping to transform

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99 According to the *Hermandad de Jesús Nazareno de la Humildad de la Aldea de San Cristóbal el Bajo de Antigua*. Source: https://fuertesenlafesancristobalelbajo.wordpress.com/resena/.

100 Benjamin 2008.

101 Urquizú Gómez and Cameros 2014.

102 Mayblin 2014, p. 273.

Figure 108: Portrait of Saint Christopher from the church of San Cristóbal El Bajo in Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1900

Guatemala into a "growing market of devotees."[103]

Global Devotions and Local Images

While Yasu's work with processional images and local parish saint sculptures has garnered attention from historians of Guatemalan religious art, his reproductions of more generic Catholic imagery—such as the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Marian advocation of Lourdes in France—have received less focus. However, examining these works offers valuable insights into the dissemination of piety during the early photographic era.

Here, I draw on literature about the circulation of holy cards and specific devotions, highlighting the role that print media and the Vatican played in expanding the market for devotional images. This scholarship also explores how widely recognized images—such as the Madonna, the Holy Family, and the Sacred Heart—whose origins may be obscure to the pious, function both as models to imitate and as objects for reflection (figures 109 and 110).[104]

Although Catholic orthodoxy does not regard such cards as sacred or miraculous, they serve as tools that remind individuals of their devotional obligations, the sacraments, and the exemplary lives of saints and other venerated figures.[105] In his study of Our Lady of Fatima, a twentieth-century devotion, David Morgan explains how "the image anchors the evanescent or elusive origin and brings the devotee to the ongoing reality of the saint."[106] Using the concept of ecology, Morgan illustrates how image veneration functions within the Catholic world, emphasizing the interconnectedness of devotion and visual culture:

> Word and image work together to create a presence that matches the saint's power with the existential needs of the faithful. Lore and imagery are focal objects for devotees to access the saints through an entire ecology, which consists of the history of images and stories old and new, the sacred spaces in which images are venerated and stories shared, the community of devotion, and the institutional Church and its figures, who assert what control they can over popular piety. To see the cult image is to hear the saint's story, and vice versa, and in this entangled encounter to enter into a relationship with all of these actors, who in turn act as a collective agency upon devotees.[107]

The ecology surrounding any particular devotion in nineteenth-century Guatemala lies beyond the scope of this text. Nevertheless, negatives referring to the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of Lourdes that are preserved in the Fotografía Japonesa collection connect Yasu's photographic practice to the broader system of Catholic visual piety. There are nineteen photographs of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, including outdoor shots of processions, images of church altars where the Sacred Heart is venerated, "portraits" of saint sculptures made in his studios, reproductions based on printed cards, and portraits taken in front of images of the Sacred Heart. Unfortunately, the significance of the devotion Yasu captured at the time appears not to have endured: the provenance of the six Sacred Heart sculptures—all photographed after 1890 at the Fotografía Japonesa studio—remains unknown.[108]

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103 Urquizú Gómez and Cameros 2014.
104 George and Rizzi Salvatori 2008, pp. 267–268.
105 Ibid., p. 251.
106 Morgan 2020.
107 Ibid.
108 My dating is based on the hand-painted backgrounds and props Yasu used for these Sacred Heart images. See the Introduction and appendix for further details.

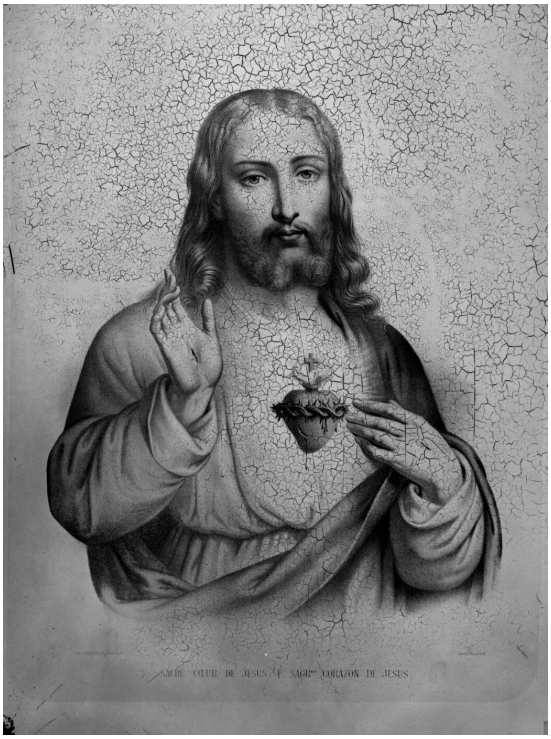

Figure 109: Yasu Kōhei's photographic reproduction of the popular religious image of the Sacred Heart, Guatemala City, ca. 1891 – 1895

Figure 110: María Noriega with the portrait of the Sacred Heart in the Fotografía Japonesa studio, Guatemala City, ca. 1891 – 1895

As Morgan notes, in nineteenth-century France, "a new iconographical tradition of the Sacred Heart developed. [...] The heart was placed amid the chest of Jesus, who was shown opening his tunic to reveal the flaming organ [...] sharing his heart with all believers."[109] Unlike his elaborate staging of Saint Christopher, Yasu did not add additional visual elements to his photographs of the Sacred Heart statues. The sole exception is one sculpture without a crown. In this case, Yasu painted an aureole on the negative, enhancing its quality as a representation of the divine. One may surmise that Yasu's understated rendering of the Sacred Heart sculptures was intended to draw attention to the form of the heart itself.

Among Yasu's Sacred Heart images are five reproductions of prints that were popular in Guatemala. One of these also appears in a photograph of the altarpiece at La Merced church in the capital, which Yasu likely took before he moved to Antigua Guatemala.[110] Another print corresponds to a widely circulated image that David Morgan loosely attributes to the eighteenth-century artist Pompeo Batoni, whose influence on Sacred Heart iconography was greatly amplified through mass reproduction and print media.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart flourished after Pope Pius IX declared a universal feast day for its celebration in 1856 and beatified Margaret Mary Alacoque, the nun whose visions inspired the devotion, in 1864. French enthusiasm for the Sacred Heart further intensified in the 1880s with the construction of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre, Paris.[111] While there is no evidence to suggest that Yasu had a particular devotion to the Sacred

109 Morgan 2008, p. 22.

110 A reproduction of this particular print also appears in CIRMA's collection of photographs by Tomás Zanotti, who was active in Guatemala's western highlands during the early twentieth century.

111 Morgan 2008, pp. 16–23.

Figure 111: Local sculptures performing the apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes, Guatemala City or Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1891 – 1910s

Figure 112: Local sculptures performing the apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes, Guatemala City or Antigua Guatemala, ca. 1891 – 1910s

Heart, the *Memorias* reveal that he visited Sacré-Cœur with great excitement during his Parisian sojourn in 1875.

Another intriguing example to consider is Yasu's interpretation of Our Lady of Lourdes, a figure widely venerated in nineteenth-century France and throughout Catholic countries in continental Europe. Through his photographic staging, Yasu reinserted local religious statues into a global sacred narrative.

His photographs of Our Lady of Lourdes, a devotion that began only in 1858, illustrate how he used his knowledge of religious lore, his skill in arranging scenes, and his photographic expertise to recreate the apparition of the Virgin Mary to the young girl Bernadette Soubirous (figures 111 and 112). Yasu likely used a statue of the Marian advocation of the Immaculate Conception to portray Mary of Lourdes, pairing it with a statue of a young woman to stand in for Bernadette. This transformation was made possible by the overlapping identities of Marian advocations, in which Mary of Lourdes represents the Immaculate Conception, allowing the scene to be rendered without altering the statue's dress or iconographic features. Even so, it is significant that Yasu repurposed a venerated sculpture to enact the narrative he sought to represent.

As with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the history of devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes in Guatemala calls for further research. In the context of Yasu Kōhei's religious photography, however, it is important to recognize that he did not merely work with the sculptures and narratives present in local churches. Rather, he appropriated devotional objects circulating within the global Catholic community and transformed them into visual products that enhanced their resonance and circulation at the local level.

* * *

The photo collage that opens this chapter sought to celebrate the achievements of the liberal regime while enticing European and American investment in Guatemala. To this

end, the Roman goddess Minerva was incorporated into a constructed national heritage that promoted a Europeanized vision of progress and shared purpose. Returning to the chapter's central theme—Yasu's role in integrating photography into the reproduction of local devotional imagery—I would like to draw attention to another striking juxtaposition of the secular and the sacred.

Here is one of the photographs Yasu created featuring the Sacred Heart (figure 113). In this image, he crafted a cross-media composition that merges religious iconography with portraiture, drawing on conventions from religious painting to place his two sitters within a shared pictorial space. The backdrop—a painted scene of grasses and shrubs along a luminous, misty waterside—was one of Yasu's favored settings for religious imagery.

On either side of the frame stands a figure: the priest in a laced surplice on the left and a life-size statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the right.[112] Yasu's photographic intervention enhances the lifelikeness of the statue, which already possesses distinctly anthropomorphic features, while softening the priest's skin tone, creating a near-uniformity in the appearance of both figures.

Facing each other, the priest looks upward in reverence, while the sculpture returns his gaze with a gentle, pastoral expression. Between them, Yasu inscribed a handwritten phrase that reads, "Our joy and salvation is in this divine heart."[113] The placement of the text, reminiscent of captions in early religious paintings, begins near the priest's mouth, giving the impression that he is pronouncing the phrase as an exhortation or reminder to the viewer. This is reinforced by the priest's gesture, which points to the heart referenced in the inscription, positioning him as both guide and human surrogate. Yasu's studio portrait thus depicts a scene of intimacy and reciprocity, presenting Jesus as responsive to the faithful, while inviting the viewer to witness—and participate in—the devotion's emotional resonance.

This composition recalls the multiple-exposure images discussed in the previous chapter. Through careful lighting and likely retouching, Yasu crafted a scene imbued with human presence and spiritual immediacy. This exemplifies his skillful use of photographic techniques: at times softening textures, at others accentuating the vivid expressiveness of carved wooden figures. In doing so, Yasu harnessed the potential of photography to articulate a wide range of religious sensibilities. His work complicates simplistic interpretations that associate the new pictorial technologies entering Guatemala solely with the liberal political conjuncture. Just as Alberto Valdeavellano, benefiting from his connections in the lettered city, came to represent the progressivist aspirations of a modernizing Guatemala, Yasu emerged as a central figure in the transformation of the Catholic visual economy. As a recent migrant from East Asia with few initial ties to Guatemalan society, Yasu found patrons and collaborators within the embattled Catholic Church.

Another theme that emerges in this chapter is the tangible aesthetic and economic impact of Yasu's interventions on the evolving visual economy of Catholicism in the photographic era. As I will further explore in the following interlude, Yasu's photographs—and the marketable objects derived from them—reshaped how pious Catholics in Antigua engaged with the religious sculptures that form a vital part of the city's cultural heritage. Within this context, the anecdote of *Jesús entamalado* transcends a mere charming fragment of communal memory. It anticipates the ways contemporary Antiguans use religious sculptures to stage narrative scenes, especially during their elaborate Holy Week traditions.

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[112] Church and location unknown.

[113] "En ese corazón divino está nuestra dicha y salvación."

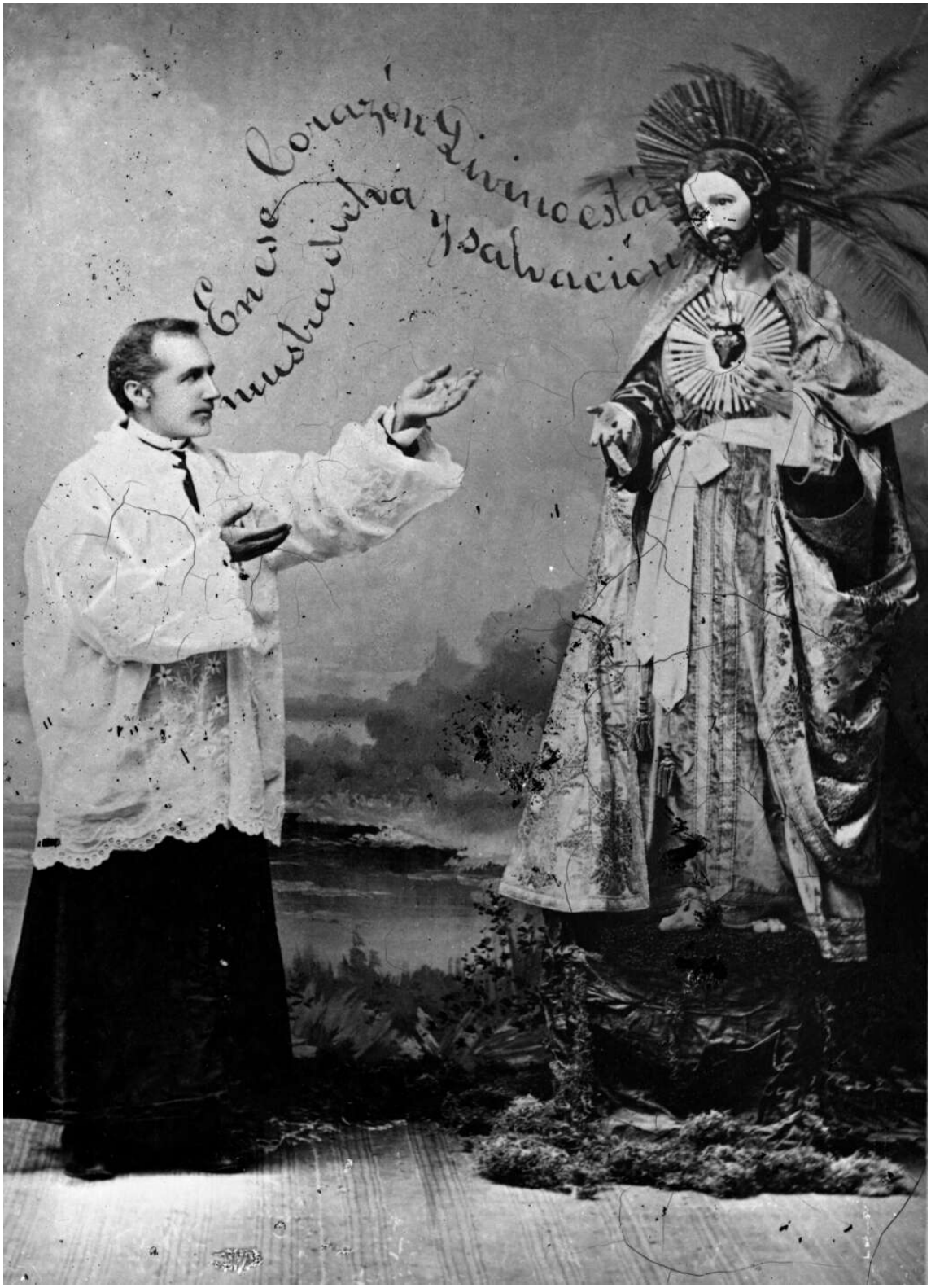

Figure 113: A priest with the Sacred Heart at the Fotografía Japonesa studio, Guatemala City, ca. 1891 – 1895

Interlude 2

Images of Our Saints

"Look at this river here!" Guillermo said. As we discussed Yasu's photograph of Saint Christopher, I asked what he found special about it. He pointed to the painted background depicting a river scene. "Saint Christopher helped people cross the river. He wanted to follow God and waited for the moment. One day, he was helping a little child across the river and noticed the child was very heavy. The child told him that he was Christ, carrying the weight of the world."[1]

Knowing that I was searching for "old" photographs of religious sculptures from Antigua Guatemala, Guillermo told me about an image that might interest me: a photograph of Saint Christopher, the patron saint of San Cristóbal El Bajo, a village near Antigua. "I've worked with the confraternity (*hermandad*) of that church for several years, but I've never seen such a beautiful photo."[2] A few days later, Guillermo brought the picture, which he had borrowed from his church friend, Josué. It was a worn, black-and-white print, roughly A4 in size, depicting the sculpture of Saint Christopher leaning on a palm tree with the Christ Child on his shoulder. The photograph, taken a hundred years earlier by Yasu Kōhei, had first caught Guillermo's attention when he visited Josué's house: "There it was, hanging on the wall of the dining room."[3]

Guillermo said he had always wanted a picture of the sculpture from the church in San Cristóbal El Bajo, where he lives. He hoped to restore the photo and make a copy. In Guatemala, as in many parts of the Catholic world, keeping images of venerated and miraculous sculptures or paintings in private collections is common among the devotees. These items are purchased in shops or at church entrances after Mass or during religious festivals. While some images are famous throughout Latin America or the Catholic world, in Antigua it is the local sculptures that play a predominant role.

My interest in these photographs as expressions of lived religion emerged relatively late in my fieldwork. I initially spent time at the Fototeca Guatemala, examining digital copies to identify traces of Yasu's photographic techniques and the subjects he captured. To learn more about the sculptures Yasu had photographed, I showed digital copies of the images on my tablet to people I met in churches or confraternities.[4] I was struck by

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1 Interview with Guillermo Dieguez, May 27, 2015, Antigua Guatemala.

2 In this context, *hermandad* (literally "brotherhood") refers to organizations of lay members of the Catholic Church who take care of the church buildings and organize activities around particular saints' sculptures. In Guatemala, the *hermandad* is typically more urban and *ladino* (mestizo), while the *cofradía*—also a type of confraternity—is associated with rural and indigenous contexts. Guillermo was a member of the *hermandad* that organizes the procession of Saint Christopher's sculpture every year on July 25th. Saint Christopher is the patron saint of those who transport goods and passengers, a vital trade in Guatemala.

3 Interview with Guillermo Dieguez, May 27, 2015, Antigua.

4 I met many people who were very aware of local religious traditions and frequently attended church activities.

how readily the Catholic faithful recognized the depicted sculptures, despite the numerous churches from which the images originated. Rather than viewing the digital copies as distant or unfamiliar, they perceived the aura of the past as enhancing the beauty of these representations. Several of my interlocutors quickly launched into enthusiastic elaborations about the specific features of the sculptures—such as their costumes, crowns, aureoles, and jewelry. They also used their knowledge to identify the period reflected in Yasu's depiction. If, as Jorge Coronado argues, the "primary circuits of consumption" are disrupted by the archiving process, Yasu's religious photography seems to resist this erasure.[5]

This interlude begins with an examination of the several types of images produced by Yasu Kōhei that remained in circulation within the community long after his death. I then turn to his influence on a central feature of Antigua's Holy Week celebrations: the *velación*, an elaborate theatrical display in which processional sculptures are presented to the public days before being carried in procession. The final section returns to the photograph that opens this chapter, offering a reflection on the connection between images of saints and the practices of domestic devotion.

Photographs That Withstood Oblivion

Religious imagery and the associated practices in which Yasu participated through the photographs he produced at his studio have deep roots, extending back to the early colonial period. In his portrayals of ancient sculptures, Yasu drew on visual references familiar to the faithful. What set his photographic reproductions apart from those of his contemporaries was his remarkable ability to translate three-dimensional sculptures into flat, printed, card-like images with striking clarity and presence. His work established a compelling visual precedent that shaped the way local photographers have approached these subjects over time. These images influenced photographic practice and continue to circulate. In Antigua, much like what Coronado observed in the Peruvian Andes, there exists "a long-standing engagement by the town's populace with technological image production and its consumption"[6]

Yasu's impact on the aesthetics of devotion is multifaceted. His choices of angles and compositional style became key points of reference for later photographers. Some may have learned directly from Yasu or from Domingo Noriega. The enduring influence of Yasu's aesthetic is especially visible in the photographs of processional sculptures produced by Carlos Francisco Juárez Arrazola and Hugo Juárez of the Foto Flash studio during the 1940s and 1950s.[7]

Just two years after Yasu's death in 1917, his photograph of the sculpture of Jesús Nazareno carrying the cross was used by the confraternity of La Merced parish on a numbered card.[8] These cards, used to assign turns and positions to volunteers carrying the float during Holy Week processions, were likely printed in the hundreds and preserved by participants as cherished mementos. I later came across Yasu's photographs on numbered cards issued decades afterward, originating from the mid-twentieth century (figure 114).[9]

Though Yasu was not the only photographer capturing sacred sculptures, he forged

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5 Coronado 2018, pp. 182–183.
6 Ibid., p. 189.
7 Reyes 2015.
8 Urquizú Gómez 2007.
9 Urquizú Gómez and Cameros 2014.

Figure 114: A photograph of Jesús Nazareno de La Merced, taken by Yasu Kōhei, is featured on this Holy Week processional number card (*turno*). The original negative is preserved at the Fototeca Guatemala, [GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P06-120]

essential aesthetic connections between earlier lithographic prints and the emerging photographic medium. He also pioneered the creation of photographic products that continue to hold a prominent place in the local visual economy of devotional images. The scale and significance of this visual economy are articulated by historian Fernando Urquizú, who notes that throughout the twentieth century, photographs of Guatemalan sculptures and processions served multiple purposes: as expressions of devotion, illustrations in religious and historical publications, documentation of lay brotherhood activities, historical records, souvenirs, and even advertising materials enhanced by graphic design.[10]

The most compelling influences stemming from Yasu's extension of religious aesthetics into the medium of photography lie within the realm of devotional practice itself. Undeniably, photography has reshaped the paradigms through which the faithful engage with sculptures of the saints to whom they direct their veneration. In general terms, photography enables a fragment of the aura surrounding a distant pilgrimage sculpture to be brought into the home, where the image serves as an interlocutor for daily petitions and requests for intercession. In Antigua, however, where the sculptures remain physically accessible, the availability of photographic representations has, in turn, transformed how these figures are viewed, touched, dressed, staged, and carried in processions. This dynamic is especially evident in the elaborate *velaciones* staged in the context of these processions.

In her sixties, Doña Liz had moved to Antigua from Guatemala City with her son, Carlos, a few years earlier. Since their arrival, they had grown close to El Calvario and its devotional images.[11] Regular participants in the activities of the *hermandad* that organizes processions and other events, they attended Mass whenever possible. During these frequent gatherings, Doña Liz would sit on a pasteboard seat in the archway leading

10 Urquizú Gómez 2008, pp. 373–378.

11 Doña Liz and her son Carlos passed away from COVID-19 in the spring of 2021. This passage is a tribute to two beloved friends.

Figure 115: Doña Liz sells images and other devotional items at El Calvario, Antigua Guatemala, during Holy Week, March 29, 2018

to the church atrium, selling cards, posters, candles, and other devotional items on behalf of the confraternity (figure 115). That is where I first met her.

Doña Liz was especially fond of images of La Dolorosa, which, not surprisingly, were among the most cherished offerings on her table. "The Virgin is too heavy for the procession," she told me, recounting how, in 1776, when the colonial administration moved to Guatemala City and attempted to remove all the sculptures, La Dolorosa resisted the two oxen brought to haul her away. Despite the embellishments and the good-natured laughter that accompanied her story, the emphasis on the sculpture's physical weight captures its autonomous agency—a central element of the narrative that attests to the miraculous power of this Marian devotion.[12]

Yasu's photograph of La Dolorosa, published in *El Ideal*, underscores the symbolic significance the Virgin has acquired within the local religious community. Today, the confraternity of El Calvario distributes color prints of the sculpture in various formats, made from a digitized version of a 1931 chromolithograph titled "Venerated Image of the Virgin of Sorrows of El Calvario in Antigua G." Discovered among family possessions of confraternity members, the print—based on the photographic angle and the aureole attached to the Virgin, which experts associate with particular historical depictions—was likely derived from Yasu's original image.

Yasu demonstrated particular skill in translating wooden sculptures into two-dimensional

12 In recent years, the sculpture has been carried out twice in processions: once to invoke rain during a severe drought and once to aid in the recovery of colonial paintings stolen from the church.

Figure 116: Reproductions of a photograph taken by Yasu Kōhei of the Jesús Sepultado of San Felipe

representations using photographic techniques. Typically, his images emphasized the realism of the sculptures, especially their expressive faces, which were well known to the faithful. For La Dolorosa, however, Yasu seems to have taken a different approach. Rather than highlighting lifelike detail, he transformed the vivid sculpture into a formal icon. He removed it from the altar, experimented with angles, created a monochrome background, adjusted the lighting, and refined the composition until he achieved a classical effect. In doing so, he flattened the commanding, heavy Virgin into an image aligned with a longstanding iconographic tradition dating back to the colonial period.

While some lingering doubt clouds the connection between Yasu's Dolorosa and the reprints now sold by the *hermandad*, the lineage remains unmistakable in "The Miraculous Image of San Felipe," This local icon has been continually reproduced across generations—repainted, printed with modern techniques, and deeply woven into the visual economy of devotion. The image depicts the Jesús Sepultado (Buried Jesus) of San Felipe de Jesús, a small town near Antigua. Yasu's elaborate production reveals how he carefully reproduced the established visual conventions of image veneration.

The viewer's attention is immediately drawn to several striking elements. At the center lies the figure of Jesus, reclining and draped in a white cloth, crowned with solemn dignity.[13] Surrounding the photograph is the cut-out *urna*—the glass case that houses the sculpture—reimagined here as an altar-like frame that elevates the image. Below, a caption proclaims the miraculous power of this sacred image and identifies the sanctuary where it resides (figure 116). Through his photographic craft, Yasu removed the Jesus sculpture from its original setting, amplifying its presence by introducing a visually resonant, symbolic altar.

As Fernando Urquizú has suggested, the popular miraculous image of San Felipe offers a valuable case study for tracing the evolution of devotional imagery within a specific local setting.[14] Precedents appear in small prints dating back to the colonial period.[15] Yasu's introduction of photographic technology allowed for near-perfect reproduction of the sculpture. His work preserved the photograph's fidelity while maintaining—and at times enhancing—the conventional framing. The enduring popularity of Yasu's work is evident in the numerous reproductions derived from his photogrpahs. This demonstrates

13 Sergio Cruz, owner of Foto Rex in Guatemala City and an avid collector of religious photographs, holds two slightly different color prints of the Jesus of San Felipe that trace back to Yasu's original work.

14 Urquizú Gómez 2008; Urquizú Gómez and Cameros 2014.

15 Luján Muñoz (1982a, pp. 123–124). Many prints arrived from Spain during the colonial era and were widely accessible and affordable in Guatemala.

the role that Yasu's photography played in ushering in a transition towards a modernized visual economy and devotional practice.

Velación: Staging Narrative Scenes

When I spoke to Fernando Urquizú in 2015, he noted that the elaborate installations known as *velación* that the *hermandades* of Antigua Guatemala stage in the sanctuaries and naves of the churches during Holy Week may have had an aesthetic point of origin in Yasu's studio.[16] Three years later, when I participated in the overnight assembly of a *velación* at the Ermita del Santo Calvario just outside the town center, I gained a stronger sense of the connection made by Urquizú between Yasu's photography and this element of Antiguan Holy Week traditions (figure 117).

Although La Dolorosa, the life-size sculpture of Our Lady of Sorrows housed at the Calvario, did not participate in the procession following several days later, she was the center piece of the display, which was themed "The Coronation of the Holiest Virgin Mary" and inspired by the writings of the seven-teenth century nun Mary of Jesus of Ágreda. Carefully guarding an elaborate ritual protocol when the heavy statue had to be moved around the church, we set her on a pedestal before a painted backdrop covering the altar. Angels and papier-mâché clouds signalled that the coronation took place in heaven and encompassed the body of the Eternal Father, whose statue—an extra among the cast of sculptures available at the Calvario—lacked adequate clothing. The full set of El Calvario's statues was used to represent different elements of the story. After the display was set up in the small hours of the day of the *velación*, a group of youthful specialists took over to lay a beautiful sawdust carpet rimmed with a fragrant arrangement of fruits and flowers. When the church opened to the public, visitors were handed a leaflet explaining the meaning of the *velación* and invited to walk around and admire the sculptures.

Within the broader Holy Week traditions of global Catholicism, a *velación* typically refers to the veiling of images to commemorate the Passion of Christ. Yet in Antigua, the term takes on a far more elaborate and localized meaning. Here, *velaciones* are immersive stagings of religious narratives, orchestrated by *hermandades* within church interiors to prepare the community for Lenten processions and the events of Holy Week. During these displays, altars and sanctuaries are concealed behind vast painted backdrops. Transformed into theatrical sets, these spaces feature the venerated wooden sculptures placed at the center, accompanied by a supporting cast fashioned from humbler materials. The *velaciones* depict a verse or story from the Bible or other Catholic narratives, which may or may not have a direct connection to the passion of Christ.[17]

As photographer María Cristina Orive observed shortly after Yasu's work resurfaced from the rubble of the 1976 earthquake, Yasu Kōhei's pictures of saint sculptures were of a distinctive quality. Paying meticulous attention to the setting when he brought the *imagenes* into his studio, he "took care of the surroundings, choosing adequate screens for backgrounds, adding rocks, vegetation, and suitable ornaments to enhance them."[18]

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16 Interview with Fernando Urquizú, July 8, 2015.

17 Déleon Meléndez and Chávez García (2009). The *alfombras* (carpets) composed of plants, fruits, vegetables, colored sawdust, and other materials create a multisensory spectacle. Extending onto the streets along the procession route, they are expansive and delicate, incorporating allegorical representations or religious messages within their designs.

18 Orive 1990.

Figure 117: Preparations and *velación* for Our Lady of Sorrows at El Calvario in Antigua Guatemala

However, an examination of Yasu's cross-media repertoire of religious images reveals that his intent extended beyond mere aesthetic enhancement. He approached the subject with the eyes of a storyteller, animating the sculptures as central figures within religious stories. As evidenced by the numerous surviving negatives of this type, the resulting narrative pictures were well-received, likely leaving a strong impression on the local aesthetics of Catholic devotion.

This manipulation of heterogeneous materials to create scenes in which to stage the venerated sculptures underpins Urquizú's identification of Yasu Kōhei as the creative origin of the distinctively Antiguan *velaciones*. Perhaps inspired by Yasu's creations, which were certainly sold within the context of Holy Week celebrations, the local confraternities adopted his style and began crafting elaborate scenes of their own, incorporating backdrops, sculptures, papier-mâché structures, and all the necessary props. As Urquizú notes, once the staged studio scene style entered the churches, "[i]t was an entirely different manifestation from the traditional altars of Hispanic descent and burial mounds."[19] Several photographs of *velaciones* taken by Yasu Kōhei show that Antigua's narrative *velaciones* existed during his time. In present days, they represent a facet of a broader tradition of scenic displays, which also encompasses nativity scenes and the allegorical floats that bear the saint sculptures during processions.

Family Memories and Images of the Saints

Josué's house was situated on the tree-lined Avenida de los Pasos, the road leading to the Ermita del Santo Calvario church. It formed part of a complex where his paternal relatives lived, surrounded by fruit trees and flowering plants. After his father passed away when Josué was young, he was raised by his mother alongside his siblings in the home his father had built. On a sunny day in July 2015, I visited Josué and his family to view Yasu's photograph of Saint Christopher—previously brought to my attention by Guillermo—in its natural setting.

He led us into the courtyard and proudly showed us the animals, trees, vegetables, flowers, and orchids that he had cultivated over the years. "These plants," he said, pointing to a section of his garden, "are the ones I used to decorate the *sagrario* (tabernacle) in the Calvario church during the Holy Week."[20] Normally, the *sagrario* is a highly formal element within the church, the place where the elements of the Eucharist, the transubstantiated flesh and blood of Christ, are kept after Holy Communion. On Holy Thursdays, the *hermandad* of El Calvario, of which Josué was president, constructed a shrine for the adoration of the Eucharist in an annex of the main church building. In this makeshift *sagrario*, the Eucharist was placed within an allegorical scene that changed annually, and Josué was responsible for its creation. He spoke with great enthusiasm about his work, proudly recounting the prizes he had won for his arrangements, which also included annual nativity scenes.

The dining room of the family home opened onto a verdant courtyard. Upon entering the room, my attention was immediately drawn to three framed pictures hanging on the sky-blue wall (figure 118). "When my grandmother was alive, she used to change the position of these pictures depending on the occasion," Josué recalled. "Sometimes San

19 Urquizú Gómez 2008, p. 375.

20 All quoted conversations are drawn from my interview with Josué Galindo on July 25, 2015, in Antigua Guatemala.

Juan Bosco would be in the middle. And on my father's birthdays, it would be his photo [that would be placed there]. On Saint Christopher's Day, [the saint's] photo would be in the middle."

Born in Antigua, Josué's grandmother was introduced to religious traditions from an early age. Over the course of her life, she collected religious images, primarily reproductions of sculptures from local churches. Among her collection were the photograph of Saint Christopher, a lithograph of the Dolorosa from the Calvario church, and a small picture of Jesús Nazareno from La Merced. Josué inherited these images along with her devotion to religious practice. He remembered the stories associated with each picture and was careful to maintain their arrangement. "Every time someone in my family dies, one of these pictures falls," he said, contemplating the mysterious connection between religious imagery and the course of family life.

I was delighted to encounter Yasu's photographs outside the archive for the first time. Although I had previously handled the clean scans and original glass plates, I felt a deeper connection to the images of virgins and saints preserved in Josué's home. Whether framed in a metal case, taped to the wall, or tucked into a wallet, these photographs—reprinted many times—still retained Yasu's original intent. They were affordable portraits of saints, created for the local community of devotees. As these images are passed from one generation to the next, they become entwined with new stories. As Diana George and Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori observe in their study of vernacular religion embodied in holy cards, such images "can be understood and often function as rich and cherished repositories of personal and cultural memory both visual and verbal."[21] Though it may be unclear how these photographs first entered the household, they have since become part of the family. Just as the photograph of the sculpture of Saint Christopher from the nearby village was placed alongside a portrait of a deceased relative and repositioned according to the religious calendar, memories, images, and objects of veneration converged in the visual fabric of Catholic piety.

The historical authenticity conveyed by Yasu's images is most valued by devotees who seek faithful representations of the beloved saint sculptures they regularly venerate. Within *hermandades*, replicas of these sculptures circulate from household to household, while printed images are sold in churches. Even the lesser-known *imágenes* are instantly recognized by a surprising number of individuals within the Catholic community. This experience has given me a markedly different perspective on Yasu's work than what I had encountered through archival photographs alone.

These photographs are not forgotten once the events and people they depict have passed. On the contrary, they are framed and reproduced, used with care, and imbued with enduring emotion. The social biography of Yasu's photographs of sacred sculptures persists through their continued role in the lives of individuals like Josué, Guillermo, Carlos, and Doña Liz.[22] Situated within their social and religious contexts, viewers like them recognize the authenticity, graphic precision, and historical resonance of Yasu's works.[23] Witnessing how these images are integrated into domestic spaces and religious practices, and listening to the narratives families have woven around them, prompted me to reflect on the transformation of these "vernacular photographs" into objects of archival knowledge.

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21 George and Rizzi Salvatori 2008, p. 251.
22 Kopytoff 1986.
23 Poole 1997.

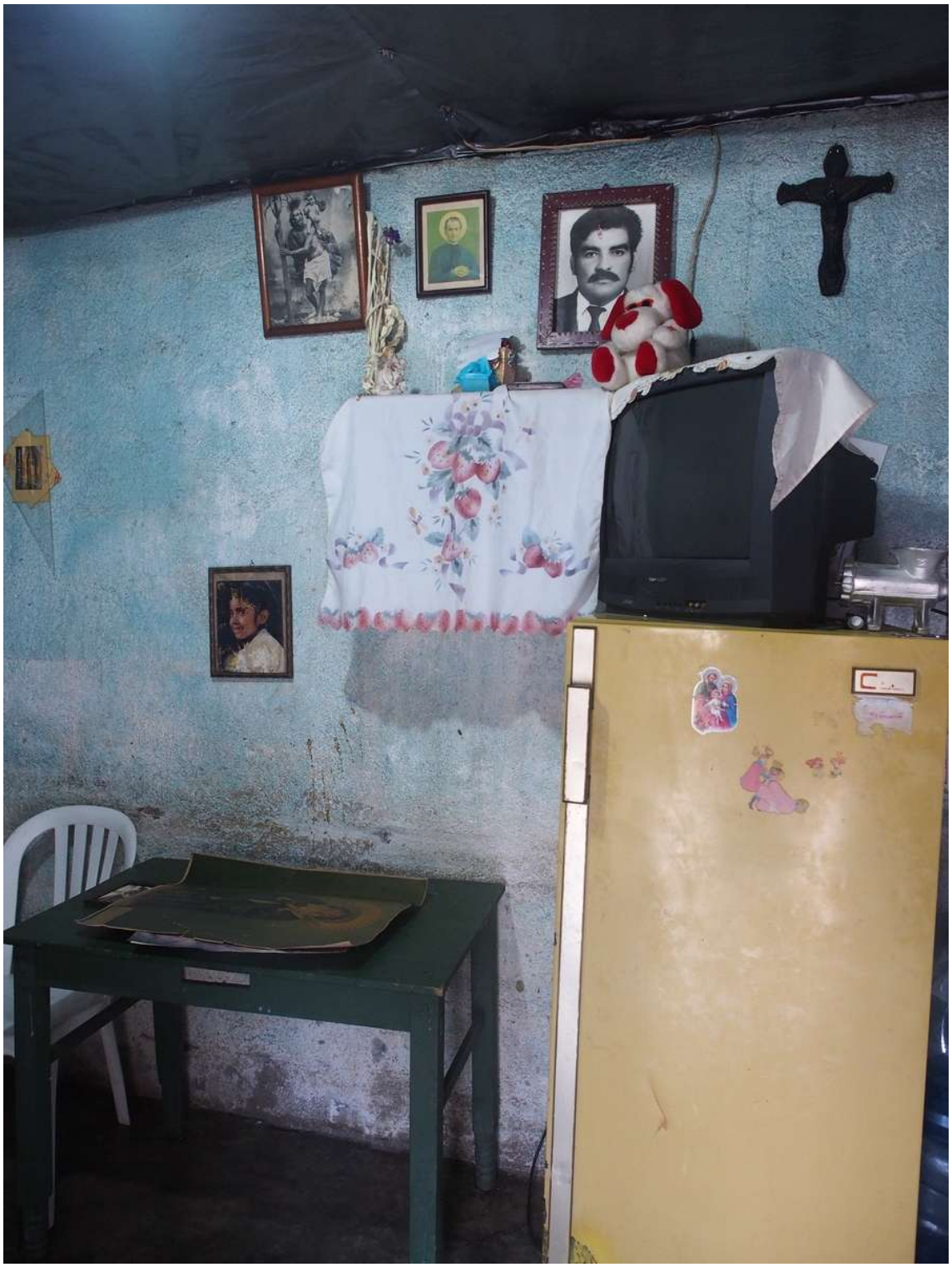

Figure 118: On the wall in Josué's living room, Yasu's Saint Christopher is displayed next to Don Bosco and Josué's late father

Chapter 6

From Studio Photography to Archival Image

Whether in Japan or Guatemala, the contemporary resurgence of interest in the life of Yasu Kōhei can be traced to the aftermath of the devastating 1976 Guatemalan earthquake. Amid the widespread destruction, a remarkable discovery was made: hundreds of glass negatives were found hidden behind overturned bookshelves in the Noriega family compound. Recognizing their historical value, the Noriega family offered the collection to the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA), where a team of researchers undertook the meticulous task of conservation. In 1982, the Fotografía Japonesa collection was officially opened to the public, quickly becoming an essential part of Guatemala's visual historical record. The term "discovery" is employed in both Japan and Guatemala to describe Yasu Kōhei's extraordinary biography and his emergence as a subject of archives and exhibitions. It further highlights the prolonged period of neglect that Yasu and his work experienced throughout much of the twentieth century.

In 2013, I visited the Fototeca Guatemala, the division at CIRMA in charge of the photographic collections, in the beautiful colonial town of Antigua Guatemala. By that time, Yasu's work had been exhibited several times in Guatemala and abroad. At the CIRMA, the photographic collections are preserved in a space adjacent to the main building, which features colonial architecture. Along the open walkways overlooking a gorgeous fountain garden, Yasu's photographs, and those of other artists, are occasionally displayed. Like other visits by individuals and groups, mine was arranged by appointment and hosted by experts who provided material and contextual information related to the photographic archive. To view the archival images, I could either access the database, which is now available online, or request an archivist to handle the original plates for a brief examination. This was the starting point of my dissertation.

However, as I spent more time in Antigua and saw how people utilized pictures in Catholic devotion, to create memories among colonial ruins, and to honor loved ones in family homes, my intrigue grew as to how Yasu's studio photographs, created for the private use of patrons of Fotografía Japonesa, had come to be transformed into cultural heritage and objects of public interest. In particular, the discovery that some of Yasu's works were still sold and used in the context of the many street processions of the famous Antiguan Holy Week prompted me to reflect on the divergent social lives these photographs have embarked on once they were released from the hands of their makers.

As one of the oldest and largest collections in CIRMA's vast photographic archives, Estudio Fotografía Japonesa has accrued a biography of its own. I am particularly interested in the new phase of the social life of these images following their rebirth through rediscovery, once the process of archiving has conferred upon them a sense of "institu-

tional belonging."[1] This chapter traces the formation of the photographic collection at the Fototeca Guatemala, following the objects' journey from Yasu's commercial enterprise to his relatives' storehouse of forgotten paraphernalia and ultimately into the hands of specialists dedicated to the visual record of Guatemalan history. My focus lies on how archival practices transform private objects into historical documents.

The archival photographs examined in this chapter comprise Yasu's work alongside photographs produced by his godson and successor José Domingo Noriega. They include both the negative collections housed at the Fototeca Guatemala and the digitized online collection supported by the British Library. To encompass the various forms in which the Fotografía Japonesa collection is embodied, I adopt the "broad definition" proposed by Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, who view the photographic archive as "a concept which refers to any set or collection of historical photographs, brought together with some purposeful intent, if only for storage."[2]

Following this broad definition, the chapter explores what qualifies a photograph for archiving by examining which images were selected and which were excluded. It examines how decaying family heirlooms were transformed into valuable historical objects and considers the motivations of those who made these assessments. The chapter also asks how institutionalization alters the materiality and changes our perception of the images. It also reflects on the histories and memories lost in the process of archiving. To trace the trajectories that brought the glass negatives into the archive, I draw on essays published by Japanese travelers in the late 1970s, writings by Guatemalan authors about the collection, and interviews with archivists, historians, and members of the Yas-Noriega family.

This chapter opens by describing the transfer of the negatives from private hands to an institutional context, emphasizing the interest of Guatemalan researchers and Japanese visitors that prompted their removal from the family compound and subsequent institutional acquisition. The next section examines the processes through which the images were transformed into valuable documents for research and reference. The third section considers the advantages and limitations of digital conversion in understanding the photographs and their production, alongside the power dynamics shaping the digitization process and the use of its products by and within the involved institutions. This section also explores how the local confraternities of popular Catholic religion have appropriated digital photographs, thereby restoring some images to their original contexts of consumption and circulation. The final section revisits the collective memory of the Yas-Noriega family, reflecting on how the family as a site of memory has been largely overlooked in the construction of the collection's history.

In Guatemala, Yasu Kōhei is commonly known by his Spanish name, Juan José de Jesús Yas. In discussing Guatemalan ownership and appropriation of his work, I use the surnames Yasu and Yas interchangeably. Due to the passage of time, I was unable to meet most of the individuals involved in acquiring and archiving the Fotografía Japonesa collection in person. Luis Luján Muñoz, along with the daughters and granddaughter of José Domingo Noriega, who negotiated the purchase for the family, has passed away. Recordings of interviews with American photographer Mitchell Denburg, Luis Luján Muñoz, and Irma Noriega were kindly provided by anthropologist Kosaka Ayako, who conducted them in 1999 and granted permission to quote from them in this text.

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1 Newbury 2016, p. 160.

2 Banks and Vokes 2010, p. 338.

Reappraising Vernacular Photography

In the following analysis, I explore the pre-archival phase of the Fotografía Japonesa collection, emphasizing the role of experts in transforming private objects into historical documents. This examination addresses key questions regarding archival practices at the initial stage, including the changes that commercial studio photographs undergo during the processes of selection and classification, which lead to their status as valuable research resources. It moreover considers the differences and convergences between public and private forms of collecting.

The Discovery of the Glass Negatives

In the accounts of Japanese authors who visited the Noriega family following the 1976 earthquake, intriguing details emerge regarding the journey of the images from the private collection to the archive. In an essay published in 1977, anthropologist Terada Kazuo shared insights he gathered during a visit six months after the earthquake:

> During my three-day stay in Guatemala City in August 1976, I learned from Kojima Hideo, a researcher based in Guatemala, about Yasu Kōhei, who became a photographer in Guatemala during the Meiji period. Recently, a lady with the surname Domingo and her son visited Mr. Luján [Muñoz], the director of the Instituto de Antropología e Historia, to inquire whether he would be interested in purchasing a notebook and some photographs from the first Japanese immigrant, Yasu. Mr. and Mrs. Kojima read the memoirs and were moved by the profound love that their predecessor had for the people and nature of Guatemala [...] The Japanese ambassador in Guatemala, Mori Junzo, possesses a copy of the memoirs, let me create another copy before leaving Guatemala.[3]

This passage underscores the moment that initiated the return of Yasu Kōhei's transcultural legacy back across the Pacific. After decades of neglect and oblivion, the moment was facilitated by a small network of scholars and diplomats. It also illustrates the mutual interest that developed between the two countries, potentially strengthened by the earthquake—a horror all too well known to inhabitants of Japan.

Another account presents a different perspective on the motives and agency involved in this process. At the time, CIRMA was a newly established, independent research center, and its leaders and staff were keen on expanding its collections. Mitchell Denburg, an American photographer and founder of the Fototeca Guatemala, visited the Noriega family after learning from Luján Muñoz about the negatives. When interviewed by anthropologist Kosaka Ayako two decades later, Denburg recalled his impressions as follows:

> At that time CIRMA was beginning. And Luis Luján [Muñoz] knew about Juan Yas. He had bought some negatives for the Instituto in the city. And a friend of mine who was the benefactor of CIRMA, he had bought these negatives. [And] there were more negatives in Antigua because they only bought the colonial buildings.
> So I went and spoke with the family. The negatives were in a very bad condition because they were on the dirt floor and very humid. So you open the negatives, you could take your finger and wipe it off. But the collodion negatives of Yas, the best ones are maybe eighty photos, were in boxes with paper. And so these were in very good condition because they were not

[3] Terada 1977, pp. 93–94.

> on the floor. And many of the negatives were of Noriega from the studio. So we left those negatives [that were not in a good shape].[4]

According to Kojima Hideo and Kojima Keiko, the Noriega family first contacted Luján Muñoz to sell all the negatives and documents to the Museo Nacional. But with limited resources at hand, Luján Muñoz selected only a portion of the negatives for the Instituto de Antropología e Historia, where he served as director.[5] Luján Muñoz also obtained some items for his private collection on Yasu and Antigua, which were later incorporated into the Fototeca.[6]

From early on, Yasu's glass negatives have attracted significant attention from scholars interested in the Guatemalan past. The evident concern with transferring the fragile plates into the safety of the archive reflects the understanding that photographs serve as important visual records of history. When explaining to Kosaka his motive for purchasing the glass negatives from the Noriega family, Luján Muñoz emphasized the value of their capacity to document colonial architecture as it once was, before the successive earthquakes of the twentieth century caused its decay. The deteriorating photographs became part of a mission to salvage local history.

Photographs as Social Document

Luis Luján Muñoz was one of the first to publish on the history of photography in Guatemala. His research on Yasu (Juan José de Jesús Yas), José Domingo Noriega, Alberto Valdeavellano, and other early photographers remains a key reference in the field of Guatemalan photography. His interest in early photography underpinned the recognition of its potential as historical source material that provided scholars with visual access to the economic, political, and religious realities of Guatemalan society.[7]

Luján Muñoz's involvement in locating historical photographs was tied to his expertise and the unique history of the town of Antigua. He was not only a historian of Spanish colonialism but also of colonial art and religion. He published a substantial body of texts on colonial architecture and cultural traditions, particularly in Antigua. Aligning himself with a continent-wide surge of interest in the preservation of early photographs, Luján Muñoz aimed to acquire visual resources from abroad that could enhance the study of nineteenth-century Guatemala. He traveled several times to the United States to obtain photographs of Guatemala's cityscapes and natural landscapes. At university libraries in Berkeley and Stanford, he conducted research on the British-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who had travelled to Guatemala in 1875 on a government commission to promote the image of the country. A copy of Muybridge's Guatemalan photographs was donated by the U.S. embassy and is now part of the collection at the Instituto de Geografía e Historia, which Luján Muñoz directed.

Several years before the 1976 earthquake struck Guatemala, Luján Muñoz had been in contact with José Domingo Noriega, who was the nephew, godson, and business associate of Yasu Kōhei. Through the introduction of Dr. Carlos Martínez Durán, who had a

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4 Interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako in English, 1999.

5 Interview conducted by the author in Spanish, 2018.

6 After Luján's death, most of his collections, notes, and writings were transferred to the Biblioteca Ludwig von Mises at the Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala City, where they constitute the Fondo Documental Luis Luján Muñoz.

7 Luján Muñoz 1982a, 1984, 1987, 1990.

collection of photographs of "Mr. Yas and Mr. Noriega," he arrived at Noriega's house in the Candelaria neighborhood of the capital city. José Domingo Noriega later moved back to Antigua, where he died in 1973. As Luján Muñoz recounted in Kosaka Ayako's interview, "He prepared for us a very interesting collection of photographs of Mr. Yas and himself."[8]

Reflecting his interest in the images as historical documents, Luján Muñoz emphasized the "testimonial importance" and "aesthetic quality" of the photographs from this period. With his professional attention to historical detail, he was enthusiastic about how studies could benefit from them. In an introductory essay for the first public display of the Yas-Noriega collection, Luján Muñoz addressed the significance of the details and the holistic view that a historical photograph can provide. The pictures "allow us to study the ruins as they were at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one," he pronounced, "that is without the destruction caused by the earthquakes of 1917-18, 1942, and 1976, and before many were destroyed around 1943."

Without much information remaining on the pre-archival phase of these locally produced and preserved photographs, Kosaka's interviews with the key figures involved in their transformation hold significant value for understanding the archiving of early studio photography in Central America. In this context, both Denburg and Luján Muñoz articulated the institutional perspectives they represented. For Denburg's Fototeca and the society of historians and geographers represented by Luján Muñoz, the glass negatives in workable condition offered an invaluable resource as a window into the past, its architecture, and society. On behalf of CIRMA, Denburg ultimately acquired the majority of the negatives that constitute CIRMA's Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection.

The Estudio Fotografía Japonesa Collection

In 1982, the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa archive was established at Fototeca Guatemala. According to information provided by the institution, this collection consists of "928 dry gelatin negatives on glass plates and 834 positives." Once described as unsorted deteriorating objects scattered in dusty boxes, they are now each titled, attributed, and categorized items for academic consumption. On the occasion of the establishment of the collection, exhibitions were organized and news reports published about the photographers and their work. With the introduction of these exhibitions and publications, the biographies of Yasu and José Domingo Noriega were gradually transformed into entries in the chronology of local and national history.

Fototeca Guatemala and Old Images

In the process of transitioning from private to public possessions, the personal documents, photographs, and objects of photographer Yasu Kōhei have acquired a new valuation. In this context, the criteria employed by research institutions to select certain items and discard others become significant. Beyond the content of the images, the originality and reproducibility of the old glass negatives are subject to scrutiny. This process raises considerations regarding the respective values of original negatives and archival pictures. Insights from the aforementioned interviews reveal a discernible preference for glass negatives, prints, and postcards, even when they originate from the same negatives. The

[8] All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Luján Muñoz (1982a).

issue of which photographic format best represents the past also comes to the forefront. Ultimately, the types of histories that can be conveyed through archival photographs become a central focus of exploration.

The establishment of Fototeca Guatemala epitomizes a strong impulse to preserve the historical record, particularly in a town that thrives on its rich vestiges of the past. Founded in 1978, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica initially served as a library and a "meeting place for social science researchers." Over time, its collections expanded with the creation of the Archivo Histórico in 1997 and the Fototeca Guatemala in 1979. Today, CIRMA stands as one of the most important research centers for Mexican and Central American studies. The commitment to preservation is expressed on the website of the Fototeca, which announces that the institution is conducting "the most important effort to save Guatemala's visual memory."[9] For the experts at the institution, the mission was not merely to collect rare early photographs but to preserve the decaying, ephemeral images for further study. Following his visit to the Noriega family, Mitchell Denburg canvassed the town for additional objects of historical significance. He reached out to two of Antigua's long-established studios, Foto Solis and Foto Flash. To his amazement and disappointment, he discovered that these studios had discarded "thousands and thousands of negatives" related to images of the town's architecture.[10]

During his conversation with Kosaka Ayako, Denburg recalled that the 928 negatives in the Yas-Noriega collection were in a soiled condition. Only a tenth, stored in boxes, remained in good condition. This led him to speculate that these may have been Yasu's most treasured works.[11] Two decades after the moment, Denburg's recollection of the preservation process remained focused, as he recounted that the beginning of the archive consisted in the careful cleaning of the negatives: "What we did was first we dried the negatives. We opened them all up, let them dry, and then we cleaned the glass. Not the emulsion, just the glass, you know, the glass side. And that was the beginning of the archive. And then I started printing those negatives."[12]

The director of the Fototeca, Anaís García, whom I interviewed in 2015, provided a more detailed account of the archive's formation. Having worked at the Fototeca since 2010, she is responsible for all of its photographic collections. In the following excerpt, she shares her understanding of how the negatives transferred from the Noriega family's possession to the Fototeca.

> What happened was this: The CIRMA was founded in 1978, and when they started, they wanted to look for everything old and make it available as a reference for the Guatemalans, put it in Spanish. And with everything that is published in the United States, they tried to translate it into Spanish and give it to the public. With that in mind, [Luis] Luján Muñoz and Mitchell [Denburg], who is one of the people who started CIRMA in 1978 and is now its president,

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9 "La Fototeca Guatemala, creada en 1979, al principio inspirada por el trabajo de Mitchell Denburg, representa el esfuerzo más significativo para rescatar la memoria visual de Guatemala." (http://cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php?title=Categor%C3%ADa:FG)

10 Interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako, 1999.

11 Based on my own work on the attribution and dating of the photographs in this collection, I came to the conclusion that some of them—those featuring priests, celebrities, and devotional images—were likely taken during the first phase of Yasu's studio in Guatemala City, between 1882 and 1895. The group of photographs Denburg referred to is likely from this set of negatives, which Yasu and his family preserved with care through multiple relocations and decades. For my attribution of these photographs, see appendix 3.

12 Interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako, 1999.

> started looking for collections of old photographs. And they came across this family who had many glass plates that they just kept on the floor, a lot of them broken. [The family] needed to sell this material that they could not preserve, and CIRMA needed to have this wonderful collection. So they decided to buy it. They talk to the family and buy it, and in the process, Luján Muñoz buys part of it, Mitchell buys part of it for CIRMA, and another part stays with the family who later sells it, and it ends up at the Fujisawan Museum.[13]

This passage offers valuable insight into the individuals and institutions involved at the pivotal moment of establishing a photographic collection. It reveals the commitment of the founding members of a young institution to locate, collect, and preserve historical material for the public benefit. The purchase appeared to resolve the critical situation surrounding the fragile glass plates, damaged by the earthquake, in the best possible way. However, for the analysis of the arbitrariness that is necessarily involved in the archiving process, this brief account falls short of some crucial details. Without an in-depth understanding of the decision-making that unfolded during the selection and valuation of the items that entered the archive, it may seem that the collection existed in a pre-assembled state, perhaps not reflecting the maker's intentions, yet ready for the experts to appreciate its value.

The Creation of a Photographic Collection

At the Fototeca Guatemala, two collections consist of materials produced at the Studio Fotografía Japonesa. The first is the "Estudio Fotografía Japonesa (GT-CIRMA-FG-005)," and the other is the "Luis Luján Muñoz's collection on Juan José de Jesús Yas (Colección de Luis Luján Muñoz sobre Juan José de Jesús Yas, GT-CIRMA-FG-033)." The first collection comprises "928 black-and-white negatives in dry gelatin on glass plates of various sizes," along with "834 black-and-white positives printed on 8x10 inch gelatin paper."[14] The second collection consists of "37 black-and-white positives printed on 8x10 inch silver gelatin paper," reproduced from Luján Muñoz's personal collection of negatives.[15]

The significant difference in size between the two collections reflects their distinct focuses. The Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection encompasses a wide range of topics, aiming to represent the full repertoire of the studio's practice. In contrast, Luján Muñoz's collection is more selective, as indicated by its title, including only identified photographs that capture members of the Yas-Noriega family, other prominent figures in Antigua, and images that document the sociopolitical events and infrastructure development of the town.[16]

In addition to their poor preservation, the second critical issue with the negatives upon their arrival at the Fototeca was their state of organization. Creating a collection therefore required a significant curatorial effort. Working with the large number of negatives that bore no information began with initial sorting, cleaning, and general classification of the images. In 1982, the Fototeca organized a photographic exhibition titled "Exhibition-

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13 Interview conducted by the author in Spanish, 2015.

14 The information page for the Archivo del Estudio "Fotografía Japonesa" can be accessed online at: http://old.cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php/ISADG:GT-CIRMA-FG-005.

15 The information page for the Colección de Luis Luján Muñoz sobre Juan José de Jesús Yas can be accessed online at: http://old.cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php/ISADG:GT-CIRMA-FG-033.

16 Given his prior contact with José Domingo Noriega, it can be surmised that Luján Muñoz had some preliminary knowledge of the content of these glass negatives. With the likely assistance of the Noriega family, he probably selected the family photographs that documented the photographer's private life.

Tribute to: J.J. Yas and J.D. Noriega" (Exposición-Homenaje a: J.J. Yas y J.D. Noriega) in Antigua. For this first public display of the new collection, the curators selected one hundred photographs, which can be divided into the following groups: outdoor photographs of Antigua's landmarks; images of other Guatemalan cities; scenes from the coffee plantations near Antigua; portraits of townspeople; religious images of saint sculptures; and post-mortem portraits of young children.[17]

The images in the exhibition represented almost a tenth of the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection, suggesting that most negatives had, at this point, undergone a preliminary process of identification and classification. According to the exhibition list, titles were assigned to all the photographs on display. For Denburg and Luján Muñoz, the purpose of the exhibition was to bring the images to the attention of the people of Antigua and to leverage public interest in order to crowd-source a reference system for the glass plates, most of which lacked contextual information.[18]

While the exhibition aimed to elicit stories about the photographs, especially the portraits remain vague, thus illustrating the difficulty of preserving the context of photographs that are not linked to original written sources.[19] For fairly obvious reasons, this did not apply to the photographs in the exhibition that depicted Antigua's ancient Catholic sculptures, streets, and architectural structures. Built during the Spanish colonial period, before the relocation of the capital city and the recurrent earthquakes hastened their decay, many of Antigua's convents, churches, and colonial mansions are in ruins. Nevertheless, they remain landmarks in the old town, which was declared a National Monument by the Government of Guatemala in 1944 and a Monument of the Americas by the VII General Assembly of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History in 1965. In 1966, the Guatemalan Congress passed the Law for the Protection of La Antigua Guatemala, establishing regulations to preserve the tangible colonial heritage.[20] In 1979, Antigua was inscribed as number 65 on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a cultural event that embodied official recognition and public attention, the exhibition was sponsored by the National Institute for Conservation and the Tourist Board, highlighting the historical significance of the photographs that were displayed three years later in CIRMA's Tribute to Yasu and José Domingo Noriega.

The description of the scope and content of the Fotografía Japonesa collection on CIRMA's website offers a comprehensive overview of what the institution identifies as its strengths and utility (figure 119):

> Monuments of Antigua (churches, convents, hermitages, parroquías) that allow us to explore the ruins of this city as they were in the late 19th century and early 20th; other words, without the damage caused by earthquakes in 1917-18, 1942 and 1976, and before many of them were destroyed. There is a considerable amount of portraits of people belonging to different social strata of Antigua, among which the popular types, as well as the genre of mortuary portrait and religious images. It is also possible to find images that portray the daily life, and customs of the community antigüeña, coffee farms, and their surroundings. It also includes a small number of images of landscapes and architecture of Guatemala City, Chimaltenango, Quiché, and Sololá.[21]

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17 List of exhibited photographs included in the catalog Exposición-Homenaje a: J.J. Yas y J.D. Noriega.
18 Interviews conducted by Kosaka Ayako, 1999.
19 Morton 2016, p. 22.
20 Bell 2016.
21 http://old.cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php/ISADG:GT-CIRMA-FG-005, Metadata, quoted from the En-

Figure 119: CIRMA's webpage for the Fotografía Japonesa collection

Within this institutional context, the commercial photography of Fotografía Japonesa was re-signified in accordance with the Fototeca's mission, serving as a visual record of the collective history of Guatemalan society. In this description inscribed in the metadata of the Fotografía Japonesa collection, the once vibrant photographic business, the visual references drawn from various sources, and the individual practitioners' efforts and creativity are overshadowed by the historical value that their content conveys. As Jae Emerling notes, "as a depository of statements and images of past events, the stature of the archive goes hand-in-hand with the creation of modern historiography."[22] This principle is exemplified by the thematic categorizations introduced in the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection, which reflect the historiographic points of view of the research institution.

The Fototeca organized the originally unsorted negatives according to the subject of the image content. In the internet-facing database published on CIRMA's website, ten categories are enumerated under the subheading "Organization." These categories are indexed with the codes GT-CIRMA-FG-005-P01 to P10, and the thematic topics they

glish translation published on the website.

22 Emerling 2011, p. 120.

represent are as follows:

1. Churches and convents of Antigua Guatemala and its surroundings;
2. Farms of Antigua Guatemala;
3. Architecture and streets of Antigua Guatemala;
4. Group portraits;
5. Portraits of priests and Catholic customs;
6. Religious sculptures;
7. Guatemala City, Chimaltenango, Quiché, Sacatepéquez and Sololá;
8. Individual portraits;
9. Daily life;
10. Mortuary portraits, weddings, baptisms and babies.

Following the classification and grouping of the images by content, the next step consisted of authoring a description for each photograph. Given the size of the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection, this was a significant undertaking for the archivists who worked on the task over the years. After the initial attempt to use the exhibition as an opportunity to collect information, similar efforts to recruit outside experts were made at various points. For example, the art historian Fernando Urquizú was invited to identify the religious sculptures that Yasu Kōhei had photographed in churches and his studio.[23]

While many images now have extensive descriptions, the majority remain generically captioned. For instance, under the categories of individual and group portraiture, descriptions include the sitters' age, sex, occupation, ethnic group, or profession. When possible, the names of identified individuals are included in the title. Categories that encompass social and religious events are specified as civil ceremonies, baptisms, meetings, weddings, or funerals. The outdoor photographs are categorized according to their location, with names of towns or cities provided, or they are attributed to specific *fincas* (plantations) around Antigua.

Compared to historical buildings, landscapes, and famous saint sculptures, which are easy to identify and have a clear theme, the studio portraits that constitute the majority of the glass negatives present significant challenges. In the case of unidentified subjects, the descriptions include details such as clothing, stage of life, or assumed civil status, such as adult woman, young adult, child, or elderly person. Based on their attire, ethnicities such as Maya de Comalapa or Maya Kachiquel may be attributed. This approach also applies to people identified by their occupation, such as students, teachers, politicians, or clerics. Their visual representation accentuates their place in the socioeconomic order, categorizing them as "mister," "fine lady," or "day laborer."

When contemplating the nature of historical photography in its various material forms, Christopher Morton has noted the existence of a "difficult archive" in his approach to a published photographic work, where the challenging provenance has made it a subject less favored by researchers.[24] By adopting the concept of "difficult archive," I aim to address the complexities of identifying "vernacular photographs" produced in commercial studios, such as those created at Fotografía Japonesa. The lack of detail in the accompanying descriptions complicates the process of locating individual photographs, requiring viewers to navigate broad classifications. Throughout this process, several questions emerge: What logic guided the sorting and classification of the previously untitled glass negatives?

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23 Interview with Anaís García, director of the Fototeca in Antigua Guatemala, April 17, 2015.

24 Morton 2016, pp. 35–36.

How was the information used in the image descriptions retrieved? In what ways do naming and classification shape both the photographs and the experiences of archive users? What techniques were employed to elevate the status of these photographs as authoritative documents?

To further investigate these questions, it is essential to examine the evolution of the collection-making process and the layers of information that have accumulated throughout their institutional history following the photographs' incorporation into the Fototeca. However, this inquiry is complicated by the limited information on the collection's formation. Possibly due to the photographs' treatment as academic references and artistic work, the process through which the collection was assembled has not been systematically recorded or made publicly accessible. As a result, I was unable to determine whether the metadata currently available online reflects the original cataloging carried out in the 1980s or whether it has been modified over time.

Another particular challenge posed by the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection is the attribution of authorship to the studio's two consecutive owners. Although photographic technologies evolved during the studio's operation, the periods of activity for both photographers overlapped. Anaís García, who manages the collection, explained the criteria applied by the experts:

> Noriega may have made most of the plates. But actually, it is hard to say. Because by the time of Yas, dry plate technology was already in use in other parts of the world. In Guatemala, however, they were still using the wet plate. Similarly, some photos would have been taken in 1916 that were still using collodion. Here in Guatemala, the transfer of technology is slower than in other places, slower than in Paris and London.[25]

The results of Fototeca's efforts to attribute authorship of the photographs in the Fotografía Japonesa collection are tentative. By looking for contextual information and comparing backdrops, studio settings, and other features with more easily dated materials, I have arrived at my own divergent attributions.[26] This is not meant as a critique of the efforts undertaken by the Fototeca. As Anaís García's words make abundantly clear, the task of attribution is complicated by many factors, of which the delayed arrival of technical innovations in Guatemala is but one. However, Fototeca's tentative attribution of authorship in the Fotografía Japonesa collection also reveals that, as a criterion supporting the prevalent utilization of the archive, authorship is of subordinate importance. Within CIRMA's institutional context, Yasu Kōhei's and José Domingo Noriega's works are historical documents of Antiguan sights and society, and it is for the historian's contemplation that the Fotografía Japonesa collection has mostly been prepared.

The organization of categories and the corresponding standard descriptions assigned to the now institutionalized glass negatives reflect Fototeca's overarching mission to facilitate social and historical research. This thematic disposition echoes Jorge Coronado's observation that the archive "tends to support basic, ubiquitous premises that come to embody what we understand as photography, or at the very least they come to constitute the limits within which we can understand it."[27] As historian Taracena Arriola points out, collections at the Fototeca are excellent "social documents" for historians, and a

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25 Interview conducted by the author, 2015.

26 My criteria and a comparative juxtaposition of CIRMA's and my image author attributions are presented in appendix 3.

27 Coronado 2018, p. 183.

very good way to use them is "to describe in detail the information they contain in terms of dates, authorship, and origin; to compare them with documents of the era, and most importantly to evaluate them concerning the photographic collections housed at CIRMA's Fototeca Guatemala."[28] To shore up their meanings and prepare the archival objects for such use, archivists undertake activities such as "setting standards, undertaking appraisal, targeting acquisitions, imposing orders of arrangement, creating logical descriptions, and encouraging certain types of preservation, use, and public programming."[29]

Archival criteria supporting divergent forms of analysis, such as "authorship, and authority, seriality, reproducibility, medium, and technique,"[30] played a minor (authorship) or were elided entirely in the transformation of these photographs into legible complements to written texts. The biographical vignettes and memories of the photographers' family were subordinated to Guatemala's collective history. As we could say by echoing Marcus Banks and Richard Volkes's words, the social biographies of the photographs in the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection had accumulated as objects of commerce and property of the Noriega family "were obscured, even erased, and the meanings attached to them were reworked during their transition from private to public institution."[31]

In his book on the history of South Andean portraiture, Jorge Coronado examines how the strictures of the archive limit the ways photographs can be understood. Given that the photographs are "mined for historical and social information, for political significance," he urges scholars to reflect on "who is authorized by the archive to speak and understand about photographs, and how such process arises and takes place."[32] While Coronado's admonition is compelling, it raises important questions about how the digitization of photographs complicates the relationship between the archive and authority. Once digital copies of archived material are made available online, they can be consumed, interpreted, and appropriated in ways that escape the institution's custody.

Digitization and Disconnection

More than four decades after its founding, Fototeca Guatemala has amassed 222 collections comprising over one million photographs in formats ranging from daguerreotypes and glass negatives to digital images. As noted in the previous sections, archival arrangement ultimately altered the original order of the photographic negatives. For instance, there is no identification on the group of glass negatives that Mitchell Denburg referred to as being in relatively good condition. The material handling of these objects in the studio, and later in the family's possession, along with the memories of the photographers preserved by their relatives, was lost once the negatives underwent professional appraisal and reorganization. Once inside the archive, the grouping and valuation of these images continue to be shaped by shifting academic interests. As Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton observed:

> The manner in which photographs move and come together within a collection over time, works to both deconstruct meaning and renarrativize the photographs in accordance with each new archival situation. This process is often informed by the successive material performances of

28 Taracena Arriola 2007, p. 15.
29 Cook 2001, p. 27.
30 Coronado 2018, p. 183.
31 Banks and Vokes 2010, p. 340.
32 Coronado 2018, pp. 186–187.

> an image.[33]

The "successive material performances" mentioned here may be further disrupted or transformed once the photographs are digitized. Almost three decades after the establishment of the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection, the photographs were made accessible online following their digitization in 2007, supported by the British Library.

The following pages focus on how this process signifies a new chapter in the social biography of images, highlighting both the potentials and challenges presented by this new material form. Digitization, on one hand, further detaches photographs from their original context of creation, introducing additional layers of mediation that may obscure their initial meanings. On the other hand, it offers the potential for expanding access—if made openly available—by enabling a broader public to engage with and interpret the images beyond the institutional boundaries.

The Endangered Archives Programme

In comparison with other collections housed at Fototeca Guatemala, the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa has garnered considerable visibility, owing to its exquisite material condition, historical value, and the diverse topics it encompasses. Portions of this collection have been exhibited and featured in various publications, further elevating its profile. In 2007, the entire collection was digitized with the support of the British Library's Endangered Archives Program, marking a notable achievement in its preservation (figure 120). As part of Fototeca Guatemala's online offerings, which have included catalogs for the entire collection since 2010, all items in the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection can be accessed with individual codes and descriptive information regarding dates, locations, and contents.

Three years after this founding program was established, in 2007, the British Library awarded Fototeca Guatemala £51,826 as part of the Endangered Archives Program (EAP) grant. The funded project involved the digitization of Fototeca's two main collections over a period of fourteen months: Estudio Fotografía Japonesa and the Tomás Zanotti Archive (GT-CIRMA-FG-061). According to the grant, the resulting 4,507 digital images, 940 from Estudio Fotografía Japonesa and the remainder from the Tomás Zanotti Archive, "will be made available to the public through the Guatemalan Photographic Library's internal database. In addition, the records of the multilevel descriptions will be accessed through CIRMA's website."[34]

Titled "Rescue of two photographic collections of rapidly changing cultures in rural Guatemala dating from the 1890s through to the 1930s," the EAP blogpost announcing the project proposed by Fototeca Guatemala addresses the historical significance of the collections involved.

> The three photographers - Yas, Noriega, and Zanotti - produced arguably the most extensive photographs on culture and ethnicity in Guatemala in the late 19 th and early 20th centuries. Their images document the evolving nature of interethnic relations in Guatemala, the emerging syncretism and dialogue between native cultures and Western culture, and the broad cultural change provoked by the expansion of the coffee industry as of the late 19th century. At a time

33 Edwards and Morton 2009, p. 10.

34 "Rescue of Two Photographic Collections" (2017), https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP165.

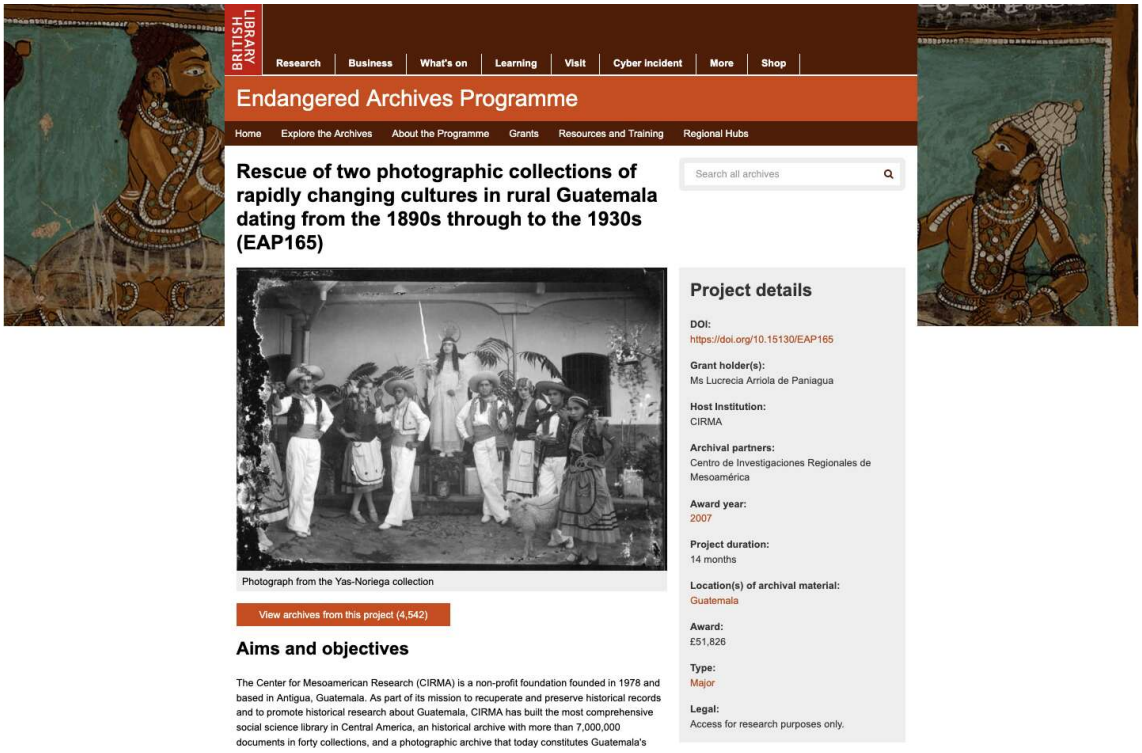

Figure 120: Blog post announcing the Endangered Archives project for the preservation of the Fotografía Japonesa collection

> when virtually all other photographers focused on the metropolitan elite in the nation's capital, these three revealed the rapidly changing cultures in the interior of the country.[35]

The statement recognizes the vast collection of photographs for its academic and preservation value as a record of fast-changing provincial life. While acknowledging the diverse topics conveyed by these images, the description of each photographer's practice, which is inferred from the limited set of remaining negatives, may shape the approach that users of the EAP website take to interpreting these photographs.[36]

While acknowledging the potential of digitization in enabling historical images to reach a broader audience, the following section will address some issues that accompany this process, specifically de-materialization and accessibility.

De-materialization and Accessibility

The first issue relates to the de-materialization of digitized images. Due to their inherent fragility, the glass plates from Estudio Fotografía Japonesa are not generally shown to researchers or the public. For many researchers interested in the collection, viewing the negatives may not be a priority, as these images are utilized as visual evidence of historical events or to explore issues related to the material culture of a particular historical moment. However, for those who seek to unravel studio photography as a photographic event, digitization presents both an opportunity and a constraint to appreciation.

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35 ibid.

36 See Zeitlyn (2015) and Zeitlyn et al. (2010) for a good example of how digitization with the help of an EAP grant can contribute to academic research, but also add value to vernacular practices of photography.

On one hand, digitization offers a chance to examine details that are edited out in other publication formats. On the other hand, while many of the digital copies preserve the scratches and decaying parts of the glass originals, the clean edges of the digital format, along with the homogeneous tone and good resolution, present the images in their best light, which may diminish the perception of their material condition.

In her research on Latin American portrait photography at the turn of the twentieth century, Juanita Solano Roa suggests taking a "backward approach" to better understand the "transparency of the photographic object."[37] She argues that analyses based on digital copies often accentuate "the optical aspects of the images" while obscuring the "material considerations," as well as the "social, political, and economic circumstances" in which the portraits were produced. This is evident in the retouching of negatives to achieve better skin tones and perfection, a common practice seen in the work of Yasu Kōhei and others in Guatemala.

This potential for revealing intricate details while simultaneously decreasing the material tactility of the originals is exemplified in the portrait of "Mr. and Mrs. Matheu." This negative has been reproduced in three different formats. It first appeared in the 1982 exhibition catalog (figure 121). Then, in 1990, it was published in the photo book *Antigua Guatemala* (figure 125). Most recently, it was made available online as part of the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection in 2010 (figure 122). In addition to the information on formatting and cropping a photograph for publication, these three images demonstrate how some wear on the negatives was removed from the digital copy during the preparation process for the online catalog. In digital reproduction, the distance between the contemporary viewer and the materiality of the original object is obscured. When looking at the images, it becomes difficult to imagine the flaking emulsion and the cracks present in the glass negatives.

Viewing images on a computer screen differs from examining glass negatives. Digital copies may fail to convey the same information that can be detected in the original plates. To address this disparity, it is essential to consider the evolving materiality of the image through the process of digitization. As Costanza Caraffa and Tiziana Serena emphasize, photographic archives function as "dynamic organisms which are active in time and space, which may change their roles and character, and which must be understood in terms of their materiality and social biography."[38] Within this framework, digitized photographs exhibit a unique materiality that isolates image content as the sole element of meaning. This isolation effectively erases other critical information, including the material conditions, the state of deterioration, and the traces of the photographer's manipulation of the negative.

This reduction of information conveyed by the digitized photograph severely limits our understanding of the evolution of photographic techniques and the intentions of their makers. To illustrate this point, I refer to a talk given by Christopher Pinney in Dhaka in 2013, where he discussed a body of medium-format negatives from a photographic studio in central India. Rather than adhering to the common academic practice of placing the images within an ethnographic or historical context, Pinney raised several critical issues regarding the nature of photographic negatives as objects of social practice. He advocated for studies that take seriously the production of the negative as a "photographic event" that occurs within the enclosed studio space, an aspect that is typically invisible in the final product. To fully comprehend this event, it is essential to consider the details overlooked

37 All quotations in this paragraph are from Solano Roa (2018, pp. 193–194).
38 Caraffa and Serena 2015, p. 9.

Figure 121: The portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Matheu appeared in the 1982 exhibition catalog as "portrait of two elders"

Figure 122: Portrait of Manuel Matheu Sinibaldi and Dolores Ariza de Matheu, included in the Individual Portraits category of the Fotografía Japonesa collection

Figure 123: A retouched glass plate and its resulting print

by clients and subsequently removed or cropped, such as "background noise" or "random inscriptions."[39]

In addition to what processed photographs, whether printed or digitized, reveal, significant insights can be gained by examining the photographic plates themselves. To assign an approximate date of production to the negatives, one can analyze the manner in which the glass was cut, the marks left by running water, and the application of the coating. Furthermore, to distinguish the sequence of serial attempts to produce a particular image, attention can be directed to the details of what was retained and what was altered. Often, specific parts of the images were retouched and modified in the pursuit of perfection (figure 123). In some instances, photographers left comments on the plates, indicating techniques that required improvement.

These various manipulations are evident in Yasu Kōhei's photographic practice, highlighting the intricate relationship between technique and artistic intent. To further explore this connection, I sought access to the glass negatives relevant to my project. Given the fragility of the originals, the archivists at the Fototeca Guatemala graciously allowed me to view these materials. In particular, I aimed to support my hypothesis that Yasu's photographic reproductions of local saint sculptures were influenced by prints that gained popularity during the colonial period. To this end, I requested to examine several negatives of the Buried Jesus sculpture, Jesús Sepultado, from the church of San Felipe de Jesús. Although their archival codes differ, these negatives were captured as a series at the same time and place, providing a valuable context for understanding Yasu's work.

In this series, Yasu made several attempts to photograph the heavy sculpture to achieve a flat look that mimics the aesthetics of the prints. On the back of one of the negatives is a

39 "Once Upon a Time in Central India: an archive from a small-town photographic studio" (Talk given at Dhaka, 26.01.2013) YouTube.

note in Yasu's handwriting that reads "más rápido" (faster).[40] This note raises questions about its intended purpose during this particular photographic event. One can speculate that it served as an instruction to himself or an assistant to shorten the exposure or development time of either the negative or the prints that were to be made from it. Even if the exact meaning remains opaque, this observation underscores the significance of photographic manipulations and scratches that are visible even in the digital copies. Such details may assist in inferring "the moments of production and the intentionalities or agency at work, allowing me to glimpse the sedimentation of memory and history down the years."[41]

Far from the normalized and evenly toned digital copies, the glass negatives exhibit variations in size, emulsion, and degree of decay. Digitization also obscures the retouches and enhancements that photographers applied directly to the glass plates. The authority of the digitized photograph as a "visual document" stands in stark contrast to the multiple manipulations applied to the negative during the digitization process, ultimately depriving it of its social biography as an object in and of itself. Because they bear the traces of careful manipulation by the photographer and his assistants, Yasu's glass plate negatives constitute a "material memory" akin to the concept James Elkins discusses in relation to oil paintings. According to Elkins, these artworks record the touch, the feeling, and the moment in which the painting was created.[42]

The subsequent issue raised by the digitization of archival photographs pertains to the potential for appropriation by a wider public. Through its grants, the EAP promotes open accessibility of the digital copies on the British Library website. The initiative provides convenient access to resources that may be difficult to reach over long distances. However, the relatively sparse information attached to the photos and the publication of the materials through the resources of the British Library may result in the archival objects losing their connection to the home institution.

In 2010, Fototeca Guatemala uploaded the digital images of the two EAP supported collections to the CIRMA website. Linked off a cover page for each collection, multiple levels of descriptive text offer detailed information on thematic categories and individual pictures. Since 2013, the same digital products have also been published through the EAP section of the British Library website. Visitors to the EAP site receive brief general information about the project, yet there is no mirroring of Fototeca's categories or descriptions of the individual photographs. The digital images available on the EAP site are of much higher resolution and are provided without the watermarks that Fototeca Guatemala embeds in the files. The introductory page of the Endangered Archives Programme website declares:

> Since 2004 we have supported over 350 projects in 90 countries worldwide, resulting in over 6.5 million images and 25 thousand soundtracks being preserved. In addition to being accessible through local archival partners, this growing archive of endangered material is available freely online through this website for the benefit of researchers everywhere.[43]

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40 On several glass plates (P05-104, P08-080, P08-081, P08-082, P08-091), Yasu inscribed the names of the sitters in the margin of the negative, a detail that is visible in the digitized images. These instances primarily consist of portraits of priests taken during the initial phase of his business. It is plausible that he recorded these names to maintain a record of his friends prior to his planned permanent departure to Guatemala in 1889. In contrast, some other negatives display only simple numbers (P05-003), indicating a different approach to cataloging or identifying the subjects.

41 Banks and Vokes 2010, p. 341.

42 Elkins 1999.

43 "Welcome to the Endangered Archives Programme." https://eap.bl.uk/. Accessed on January 17, 2019.

Considering its database a digital repository of culturally important archives from around the world, the EAP encourages users of the online materials to share their experiences "[if] you have a story to tell about how you have used the archives on this website [...] whether it's for publishing a book or article, doing research, tracing your family history, or whatever else it may be." Some links prompt website visitors to provide additional information they might have about individual items. A legal disclaimer specifies that access to the materials is for research purposes only. The usage terms printed on each image page state in rather arcane language that materials cannot be copied or distributed "except as otherwise permitted under your national copyright laws."[44]

Fototeca Guatemala, in contrast, has fairly restrictive usage policies. Visitors are encouraged to make a reservation to view high-quality digital copies on CIRMA computers and to consult the staff. CIRMA also requires applications for use in academic publications or commercial projects and charges a fee that, considering the realities of academic publishing, can be substantive. As Anaís García, the director of Fototeca Guatemala, explained, these fees are necessary to ensure the viability of CIRMA as a non-profit research center. Given the differences in policies governing reproduction and encouraging the usage of the materials, it would seem that the level of coordination between the EAP and the local partner archive is rather ambiguous. This situation is particularly evident in instances where authors may choose to credit the EAP instead of Fototeca Guatemala or CIRMA as the source of the images.

Such circumstances raise a potential issue. When digital pictures are distributed outside the archive, they may lose all connections to the social biography that they have accrued during their transformation into archival objects. This situation not only results in a lack of proper acknowledgment of the archival efforts made by the host institution, but it also restricts the reader's opportunity to access more detailed information about the referenced photographs. As Christopher Morton and Darren Newbury note, the new forms of circulation that digitization makes possible complicate claims of ownership and copyright, requiring "tricky negotiations around the material form."[45] The complex and sometimes contradictory relationship between the archival item and its digital copies is evident even in the local context, particularly in the case of Yasu Kōhei's photographic reproductions of saint sculptures, which have continued to circulate among generations of participants in Guatemala's ample popular Catholic expressions. This topic will be explored in the following section.

Return to the Site of Circulation

The archive is a peculiar site that preserves decaying documents and objects; however, the rules it establishes restrict access for a significant portion of the population. This restriction becomes particularly evident in the case of religious photographs, which circulated widely among the faithful when they were once produced. When these devotional photographs are returned to the public domain through digitization and online placement, their non-academic appropriation can effectively challenge the serene sanctity of the historiographic gaze imposed by the archive. In this context, I will examine recent appropriations of

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44 According to anthropologist David Zeitlyn (2015, pp. 541–542), who collaborated with Cameroonian photographer Jacques Toussele to scan and catalog his studio photographs with an EAP grant, Toussele had to sign a license agreement allowing EAP to distribute digital copies of the negatives for non-commercial purposes only. In this case, the photographer retains all commercial rights.

45 Morton and Newbury 2016, p. 14.

the digital copies of Yasu Kōhei's religious photography by local Catholic groups in Antigua. The processes of digitization and open accessibility facilitate the activation of once-forgotten photographs and create new opportunities for engagement between these images and the local population.

The displacement of meanings when objects are moved from their original context of production and circulation into the archive is apparent in Yasu's photographs of the sculptures of saints venerated in local churches. Exhibitions and publications that engage with this archival material emphasize their artistry and value as historical documents. However, a closer examination of how Guatemalans utilize these images reveals different insights. Their practices situate the objects within the broader visual economy of devotional art, where both tiny prints and larger reproductions of Yasu's commercial products hold intrinsic value as religious artifacts.

Participant observation in the popular religious contexts where these photographs continue to circulate, along with interviews with individuals knowledgeable about the local uses of religious images, deepened my understanding of the social life of Yasu's photographs beyond the confines of the archive. Created for the veneration of religious sculptures and sites, Yasu's devotional photographs have retained their aura over time. The faithful can still recognize the sculptures, churches, and rituals depicted in these historic images. Re-appropriating the digitized images for use within the context of religious practice appears to introduce a contemporary interpretation to the contextual information that was lost during the archival process. In this context, I examine the new uses that the people of Antigua make of the digital copies of Yasu's extensive production.

Notions of ownership regarding religious photography held by the local community of Catholic practitioners complicate the ambiguous terms of use and copyright. For them, photographic reproductions of saints' sculptures should typically be regulated by the church or the lay confraternities that have formed around them, organizing processions and other events of popular piety. Some of my interlocutors, who are members of these confraternities (*hermandades*), noted the similarity between Yasu's work and contemporary photography, particularly that produced in connection with the processions of the sculptures during Lent and Holy Week. Others regarded these photographs as beautiful and precious, viewing them as old and authentic artifacts that testify to the valuable garments the sculptures once wore before much of it got lost over the past century. Simultaneously, the black-and-white photographs reinforce the historical depth of the veneration of the icon within the local community.

Measuring how the digitization of the Fotografía Japonesa collection has changed the way the public uses photographs of the past is challenging. Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA is a specialized archive, and residents, even those interested in the sights of the past, do not always know of its existence or the types of collections they could access. During my research, I discovered a significant interest in Yasu Kōhei's photographs of churches, monasteries, and the sculptures themselves, particularly among the confraternities that organize the Easter Week processions of hallowed sculptures. When I informed them about the material published online by CIRMA and the EAP, they closely examined the details of the old church buildings. Given that the sculptures of the saints are so closely linked to the churches and the confraternities that take care of them, it seems natural that they use Yasu's images for their purposes: as a reference for reconstructions, inspiration for religious displays, or as valuable devotional images.

Some larger confraternities publish their own magazines during Holy Week, highlighting prominent members and reporting on the participation of individuals involved in this

Figure 124: Yasu's pictures of a *velación* in the annual publication of the Escuela de Cristo confraternity

religious event. They distribute it along with photo souvenirs that the faithful can purchase at the church entrance. In 2018, an article entitled "A bit of history: From the notes of my father, Don Guillermo Lira Molinedo" appeared in the magazine *Gólgota*, an annual publication sold by the confraternity of the Escuela de Cristo church.[46] In this essay, Yasu's depiction of the church and the theatrical and thematic display of the crucified Jesus, known as the *velación*, are seamlessly integrated into the text to underscore the historical depth of the confraternity (figure 124). Once again, Yasu's black-and-white photographs serve as compelling visual evidence of a collective past. Some of the captions for the photos of the *velación* in the metadata of the CIRMA website do not contain information regarding the identity of the sculpture, the church, or the event. The Catholic author of the *Gólgota* article recognized the sculpture and utilized his contextual knowledge to speculate that the photo might have been taken around 1915.

An article by historian Fernando Urquizú, an enthusiastic participant in the realm of popular piety, presents a similar case of appropriation of digitized archival photographs and their de-contextualization through background information. Published in the magazine of the confraternity of La Merced in Antigua, Urquizú's short essay explores the history of the church and the long-standing tradition of its Easter Week procession.[47]

Among the historical photographs featured in the text is one from the collection of Estudio Fotografía Japonesa. The description provided by the Fototeca for the "Portrait of Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada" states only that "[Casanova y Estrada] was seated with a staff, wearing a mitre on his head, a cape, and a pectoral cross; [he was] accompanied by other priests standing, dressed in black cassocks. Antigua Guatemala."[48] In contrast, Urquizú's article provides more detailed information about the accompanying priests and the sociopolitical context in which this photographic event occurred. Such information is significant in deepening our understanding not only of the photograph itself but also of the circumstances of its production. According to Yasu's *Memorias*, the priests Luis Montenegro and Eugenio Novia were and friends. He also took portraits of them on several occasions.

46 Mulet Lira 2018.
47 Urquizú Gómez 2018.
48 Figure 72.

In both cases, the lay organizations involved are quite large and socially and historically significant. They believe that historical photographs can serve as a testament to the history of their organizations. The importance of these historical images is further underscored by expert commentary. These publications utilize Yasu Kōhei's images to highlight the history and authority of the religious group. However, they make no reference to the Endangered Archives Program or Fototeca Guatemala as the sources of the photographs. Instead, only Yasu's Spanish name and the approximate years of production are mentioned. This omission may stem from the fact that many members of the organizations responsible for the events of popular piety, though experts in the history of saints, sculptures, and churches, have less to do with the academic world of research archives. As Morton and Newbury observe, the decontextualization and reappropriation of historical photographs take on peculiar forms within the digital image ecology of the twenty-first century.[49]

In a quite different context, Sophie Feyder encountered contestation in the interpretation of who owns the rights to archival photographs. Shortly after Feyder provided an assistant with digital copies of photographs from a South African archive that she consulted for her research project, she noticed that these images began to circulate via email and memory sticks. Regarding the "different understandings of who these images belonged to," Feyder observes:

> For me, it was obvious that the images belonged to the photographer and his descendants' copyright over these images should be protected. Yet for this research assistant, the claim to 'authorship' was overshadowed by family bonds. According to this logic, a photograph of one's grandmother clearly belongs to the private realm of one's family and not to some unknown people [at the site of the archive]."[50]

For the Catholic authors and the confraternities acting as publishers, the absence of source information appears irrelevant. To them, the sculptures are akin to well-known members of the family, whose images cannot be alienated by conflicting claims.

Family Recollections

This chapter is about the making of Yasu Kōhei's photographic collection, which inevitably turns into a reflection on remembering and forgetting, and on who owns the rights to the images of the past. It is about how and why, through the selective practice of archiving, certain images of "Yasu Kōhei" or 'Juan José de Jesús Yas" are singled out as meaningful and others are not. By examining the constructed nature of the archives of Yasu's works, the aim is to trace the histories that hold significance within the social contexts in which these archival objects are embedded. To achieve this aim, the preceding sections have explored the details on how the collections of objects related to Yasu came into being. This process was initiated by a moment of rediscovery triggered by the emergence of the glass plates from the rubble of a devastating earthquake. It also consisted of negotiations and transactions, as well as efforts to select, categorize, and preserve the objects, all of which contributed to overwriting the sentimental associations that Yasu's family had attached to his objects with the discourses that the institutions managing the archives sought to promote.

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49 Morton and Newbury 2016, p. 11.

50 Feyder 2016, pp. 148–149.

The creation of a photographic archive based on glass negatives places a premium on academic expertise regarding the photographer over the spontaneous insights that family members may provide through their contextual knowledge. This focus also prioritizes the content of the images over the photographic practices involved. However, such an approach effectively confines the photographers to the historical moment of their production. The narrative structure imposed by the institutional portrayal of the photographers' lives truncates the emotional connections that their descendants may have with the photographs, which are transformed into archival objects. Once the glass negatives are situated within an institutional context, the familial memories are lost to the discourse that the archive represents.

In the sense that it preserved moments of intimacy shared with the photographers, the family collection preceding CIRMA's acquisition of Yasu's and José Domingo Noriega's works can be regarded as an institution of memory.[51] When I visited Antigua for my research in 2015, the Noriega family was no longer living there. However, I had the opportunity to speak with Luis Fernando Noriega, a photographer and the grandson of José Domingo Noriega's brother. He expressed interest in Yasu Kōhei's photographic practice. Luis has some family photographs from the early twentieth century, some of which are included in the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection.

The material for this analysis is sourced from the following two references: The first is an essay by Japanese journalist Kikuchi Ikuzō, who interviewed José Domingo Noriega's two daughters during a trip to Guatemala in 1976. His inquiries, reflecting his interest in the Japanese diaspora in Latin America, primarily focused on Yasu. The second source is an interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako with José Domingo Noriega's granddaughter, Irma, in 1999. Due in part to the passage of time, the memories recorded by Kikuchi and Kosaka during their conversations with the three female descendants of Yasu's Guatemalan family are fragmented and disjointed. The interests of the interviewers also influenced the structure of these memories. Nevertheless, I contend that the family memories present a compelling contrast to the coherent and chronological narratives produced by the archival process.

The following pages explore the memories that the photographs evoked in members of the Noriega family, which became erased in their academic appropriation for the archive. The objective here is to examine the history that has been excluded in the process of institutionalization. My first point regards how members of the Noriega family positioned themselves in relation to the institutions involved in archiving Yasu and José Domingo's negatives. The second point addresses the evolving memories of Yasu and Noriega across generations. While Irma's mother and aunt, who grew up in the same household during Yasu's lifetime, retained much clearer memories of the studio and the two photographers, Irma's knowledge of Yasu comes primarily from her grandfather José Domingo. The family's memories are also continually transformed, shaped, and reinforced through publications and exhibitions, as well as interactions with scholars and visitors.

Curious Visitors and the Revaluation of the Family Possession

Fascinated by the story of the first Japanese migrant to Central America, which he had encountered during his initial visit, the Japanese journalist Kikuchi Ikuzō returned to Guatemala in 1976. At that time, José Domingo's daughters, Jesús and Margarita, were

[51] Papailias 2005, p. 203.

both in their seventies. The two older sisters operated a small grocery store from the family home. They welcomed the Japanese visitor and, upon his request, showed him "the real place, the scene" (*genchi* 現地) where Yasu's photographs and memoirs were kept. Entering from the back of the store through a "courtyard full of orchids and plants," Kikuchi was led into the family's living quarters. There, he became captivated by the remaining photographs of Yasu and kept taking pictures of them, including Yasu's wedding photo with Maria, his self-portraits, and his memoirs.

Kikuchi's account includes some family memories regarding the discovery of the negatives. At his request, Jesús and Margarita also created a simple genealogical illustration to explain Yasu's Guatemalan family. As Kikuchi recounted, Margarita and Jesús had lived with Yasu until they were six and ten years old, respectively. They then left their Antiguan home with their father, José Domingo, who had found work in Guatemala City. By the time they returned to Antigua, Yasu had passed away.

Margarita and Jesús shared with Kikuchi that Yasu had been very kind to them. Although he had adopted a son named Esteban, Yasu maintained a special relationship with José Domingo Noriega, his wife's nephew and his godson. Margarita and Jesús remarked to Kikuchi that "Japan is an advanced industrial country, these Japanese are very smart." Because Yasu was "very studious," Margarita and Jesús recalled, "he also educated one of the family's young people, and this boy later became a professor of economics at a university in Guatemala."[52] Margarita and Jesús had shared similar stories with Luis Luján Muñoz, likely during his research on the biographies of Yasu and Jose'Domingo Noriega in the late 1970s. When interviewed by Kosaka in 1999, Luján mentioned the same information about Yasu's educational contributions and intellectual qualities. However, this type of information, with its personal and informal touch, was not included in the formal biographies that Fototeca added to the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection.

Despite the warm welcome he received from the two sisters, Kikuchi was disappointed to find that none of the glass plates remained in the family's possession. He reported that "as the owner of a photographic studio, Yasu kept about two to three hundred plates; most of them are now in a museum. What remains [with the Noriega family] is the travel case, his book collection, and his self-portraits, etc."[53] Twenty years later, in 1999, Kosaka spoke with Margarita's daughter, Irma, at the same family home in Antigua. By the time of Kosaka's visit, Irma had received several visits from individuals from Guatemala and Japan, all seeking information about Yasu and Noriega. Among those who visited, Irma mentioned the anthropologist Terada Kazuo, the Japanese ambassador, and photo critics from Tokyo.[54]

The presence of these visitors and their interest in the negatives appear to have prompted the family to reconsider the significance of these objects, which had recently transitioned from personal belongings to valuable components of a collective public history. When Kikuchi inquired about the negatives with Margarita and Jesús Noriega, José Domingo's two daughters, they informed him that there were two or three hundred photographs in "the museum." It remains unclear whether Kikuchi was not interested in the specific name of the museum or if the Noriega sisters did not recall or chose not to disclose that detail. In this context, "the museum" serves as a general reference to the institutions represented by

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52 This pupil of Yasu's, Manuel Noriega Morales, entered the history books as the first president of the Guatemalan Central Bank.

53 Kikuchi 1979, pp. 64–65.

54 Interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako in Spanish, 1999. Translation by the author.

the academics and specialists mentioned in the previous sections. Likewise, when José Domingo Noriega's granddaughter, Irma Noriega, discussed the total number of glass negatives that had entered various institutions, she referred to an impersonal "they" or "the museum." Here is her account of the earthquake and the institutionalization of the images, as recounted to Kosaka:

> Irma: [At the time] my grandfather was already sick. Juan Yas had already died. He [Noriega] was already tired, old, and without money, [so] he put all the negatives into boxes. And as we were very small and mum and my aunt had other things to worry about, they just left these thousands of negatives in the dirt. There was air, dust, cold, and rain for years.
> Until Mitchell Denburg came and they told him about us and he was able to find 750 good copies. I think 500 [plates] are at CIRMA and 200 are at the Museum of Art [...] the Museum in Guatemala [City]. In Guatemala, there are 200. It's the Museum of History. Then the fifty that someone has taken, and now they are somewhere.[...] And then, it took me a week to clean out one room. Burying all the garbage.
> And there went all the history of Antigua because there was no paper or anything after all the time. And that's how our story with my *abuelito* finished. Only this was left, and the photos at CIRMA.[55]

This passage gives a sense of the limited agency Irma had regarding the stream of individuals and institutions that sought to collect the photographs of her *abuelito*.

Initially, she was uncertain whether it was the Museum of Art or the Museum of History. There did not seem to be much of a connection between these institutions and the family, who held a different value for the photographs.

"My Two Grandpas"

The long interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako at Irma's home in Antigua Guatemala yields ample evidence of how the family recalled the two photographers behind the Fotografía Japonesa collection. Possibly still impressed by the Japanese visitors who had engaged with her late mother and aunt two decades earlier, Irma, who never met Yasu, attempted to respond to Kosaka's curious questions. She recalled what she had learned about Yasu from her *abuelito*, her grandfather, José Domingo Noriega:

> [Yasu] enjoyed the good life. My *abuelito* ate a lot of Swiss cheese. He drank a lot of nice wine. And he was very... *Papatú* was his nickname. The whole family called him that. *Papatú*. He was very beautiful and loving. Never bothered anyone. And he drank a lot of wine and ate a lot of cheese. He was very relaxed about everything.[56]

There are several levels of memory at play here. It evokes nostalgia for Irma, who recalls what her grandfather shared with her. But it is also José Domingo Noriega's wistfulness for Yasu and the time when the two photographers lived and worked together. As Irma continued, she noted that in the final years of José Domingo Noriega's life, the commercial photography business became increasingly competitive, and the family's economic situation worsened. Pointing out the various locations where the Fotografía Japonesa had been installed, Irma praised the last one before its shuttering, the beautiful one next to the ruins of the Carmelite church:

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55 Interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako, 1999.

56 All quotations in this section are from the interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako, 1999.

> We were born there. It was about twenty-five years ago [that it closed]. I remember my *abuelito* and I were very little. We were little, little, and they put us by the window. It was a beautiful studio. I was very little. That was the last place where my *abuelito* was. From there we moved to San Sebastián. By that time, Juan Yas was already dead. It is the beautiful house on the corner of San Sebastián. It was the last "Fotografía Japonesa" and my *abuelito*... it was the last one. After that, my *abuelito* could not pay the rent.

Here, Irma's recollection of the final stage of Fotografía Japonesa's history is personal and emphasizes her *abuelito*. Yasu had died before Irma was born, and she expressed stronger feelings when discussing José Domingo Noriega. She remembered that her *abuelito*, like Yasu, also appreciated the joys of everyday life. She described her grandfather as a very hard-working individual, dedicated to his photographic practice. Although it is unclear in the transcript whether this is her memory or derived from another source, she emphasized the significant amount of time José Domingo spent preparing his clients for a studio portrait:

> Ay, how nice my *abuelito* was. It was... When he took a picture, it would take half an hour with him. So, 'Move like this' or 'Move like this.' Ay, it was like an hour. Very nice. And then he took a perfect picture.

Irma also remembered how her *abuelito* was beloved in the town and how people would call him by his nickname to request a photograph:

> My *abuelito* with his camera walked around [all the town]... With a young assistant that helped him carry [the equipment] and everything. And it was like Mingo come here… Mingo go there [to make photographs for them].

By the time Kosaka conducted the interview, Irma had started examining the photographs with the resources available to her. She had formed her own assessment, one that did not reflect the expert opinions. Irma felt a stronger affection for her grandfather, José Domingo Noriega, than for the elder Yasu, whom she had never met in person. She recalled the days she spent in the studio and how her *abuelito* would work with his clients for hours, striving to produce perfect portraits. On other occasions, when there was a funeral, her grandfather would take his equipment and an assistant to make post-mortem photographs, which were one of Noriega's specialties. "People would always call him by his nickname: 'Mingo, come over here! Mingo, come over there!' "[57]

Interweaving her childhood memories with a sense of historical value enhanced by her interactions with visitors, Irma developed her way of evaluating photographs, especially those of her *abuelito*. Commenting on the picture (figure 125) published in Luján Muñoz and Orive (1990), the first and only photo book to date that is based on the Fotografía Japonesa collection, Irma asserts that this portrait is one of her *abuelito*'s best. She urges Kosaka to take a closer look: "Look at this picture. Look at the hands. Look at everything. Look at it. It's such a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful picture... Matheu. This is the very nice

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[57] This intimate recollection resembles a short article on José Domingo Noriega, written by María Elena Schlesinger in 1998, a year before Kosaka's visit.Schlesinger (1998, p. 19) In this text, Schlesinger vividly describes José Domingo Noriega's engagement with the social life and popular class in Antigua Guatemala through his photographic practice, noting his "charisma [which was] almost like that of a church confessor." Such details may have come from the interviews with residents or with Irma. It is also possible that Irma's sweet impression of her grandfather was encouraged by reports like this.

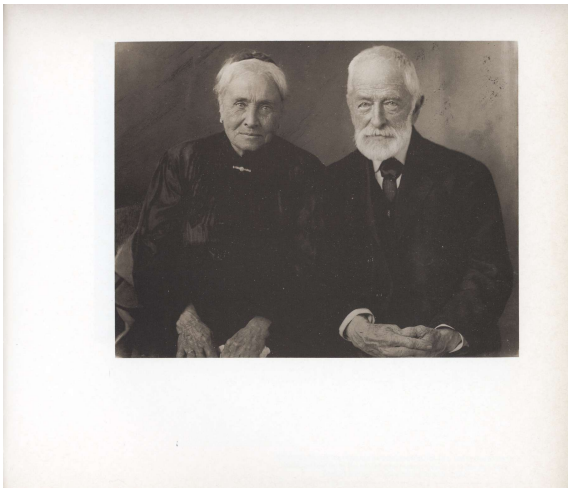

Figure 125: The Matheu couple is featured in the 1990 photo book *La Antigua Guatemala*

Matheu family in Antigua. All the photos. And it's famous all over the world, this one."[58]

The emphasis on José Domingo Noriega's photographic accomplishments was a recurring theme in this interview. Referring to a magazine that featured his work, Irma asked Kosaka to take a look: "[...] here you are...the honors my grandfather received everywhere. Magazines were sent to me. Magazines that don't come here to Antigua Guatemala... Here they made great articles about great artists... Look at the photos of my grandfather." Most of these publications were sent from Japan, and Irma expressed her disappointment and frustration regarding the lack of recognition for José Domingo's work in Antigua. In contrast to the attention Yasu's biography had received from Japanese researchers, she found that there was little acknowledgment of José Domingo's contributions nearly half a century after the archive was established.

Through her interactions with individuals interested in Yasu Kōhei and José Domingo Noriega, Irma cultivated a sense of her role as a steward of their legacy. While a stream of international visitors affirmed her connection to this part of Antigua's cultural heritage, the stories she and her family could share were not incorporated in any text or archive. Irma showed Kosaka a photograph sent by Terada Kazuo, the anthropologist from the University of Tokyo, who had visited the Noriegas in 1976. As she examined the photo with Kosaka, Irma pondered on how memories fade when the person holding them passes away:

> Then my *mamalita* (mom) was still alive, my aunt and my whole family. Only now she died and she died and I am the only one left. My sister lives in Guatemala [City] and the whole thing is me... But my mom is already dead. And the little I know, just me. And when I die... I say it's over.

The transformation of Yasu's objects into archival items illustrates the power inherent in the imposition of "official narratives over the private stories of individuals."[59] What can be done with this small oral history of Yasu and Noriega? The few recorded narratives are fragmentary, subjective, and discontinuous, standing in stark contrast to the linear biographies associated with the two in the archiving process. As Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz note, "things worthy of memory in society (and archives) have traditionally been

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58 There is no caption or description of this picture in Luján Muñoz and Orive (1990). In Fototeca Guatemala's online catalog, the couple is identified as Manuel Matheu Sinibaldi y Dolores Anza de Matheu.

59 Cook and Schwartz 2002, p. 18.

surrounded by concepts of truth, authority, order, evidence, and value."[60] In this sense, the memories that the families associated with the photographs and personal objects were overwritten with the meanings and values that the institutions promoted. Irma's awareness of the worth of Yasu's objects prompts us to consider the question of how, then, the large social narratives are integrated into the particular histories preserved in the family archive? What is the relationship between personal memory and cultural patrimony on much larger social scales?[61]

Through these encounters, Irma may have developed a way of narrating her version of her two ancestors: What questions were raised by these visitors, and which objects did they inquire about? At the beginning of the interview with Kosaka, Irma confidently presented her "priceless mementos" of Yasu that she still kept. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the creation of what Irma referred to as priceless objects resulted from the efforts of Japanese diplomats and expatriates in Guatemala. After several years, these objects, Yasu's diaries, lenses, and books, were returned to his hometown, where they became defined as local cultural heritage.

* * *

Within a relatively short period between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, most of the glass negatives discovered after the earthquake transitioned from the Noriega family into the possession of various individuals and institutions. As the archive of the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa was established at the Fototeca Guatemala, exhibitions were organized, and news reports were published about the photographers and their work. Through these exhibitions and publications, the biographies of Yasu Kōhei and José Domingo Noriega were gradually incorporated into the chronology of local and national history.

The brief descriptions of the context of the Fotografía Japonesa collection in Guatemala reflect the fact that the primary consideration for including these negatives in the archive was the historical significance of the images themselves. Yasu's biography in this Central American country held greater importance for the Japanese authors, who were also aware of the transition of the negatives from the family to public institutions. For the Japanese authors, the pre-archival process was significant as it helped to rationalize Yasu's place in the history of Japanese overseas relations. It is undoubtedly for this reason that the two Japanese authors who visited Guatemala immediately after the earthquake provided detailed insights in their accounts.

As the literature on the constructive nature of archives suggests, objects acquire a new status upon entering an institutional context. Often, the new meanings that these objects hold for users of the archive exceed the stories they conveyed before their preservation. In the case of the photographic collection at CIRMA, the image contents are considered particularly valuable for the study of history, while the family context in which they were originally steeped recedes into oblivion. Whereas the importance of the photographs is self-evident to Guatemalan beholders, the negatives are only meaningful in Japan through their connection to Yasu Kōhei's migrant life. For the Japanese visitors of the Noriega family, their memories of Yasu and his photographic practice therefore served as an important complement through which Yasu's biography could be linked back to his place of birth.

60 Cook and Schwartz 2002, p. 17.
61 Woodham et al. 2017, p. 7.

Chapter 7

The Homecoming of Yasu Kōhei

In February 1976, Kikuchi Ikuzō, the correspondent for the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* in Brazil, was assigned to cover the aftermath of a recent earthquake in Guatemala. During his brief visit to the country, Kikuchi met Kojima Hideo, a Japanese expert in natural dyes residing in Guatemala. Kojima informed Kikuchi about the discovery of "the very first member of the *nikkejin* (日系人), the Japanese diaspora."[1]

In Kikuchi's account of this conversation, Kojima, with evident excitement, recounted the story of the discovery in the following manner: "When the great earthquake occurred, the Noriega family compound in Antigua was also damaged and its walls fell. At that time, an inherited large bookcase collapsed, and the books were scattered. And at the back of the shelf was an old notebook in Spanish, written with a fountain pen, and an old photo album."[2] Intrigued by the history of one of the earliest members of the Japanese diaspora in Latin America, Kikuchi began asking questions about the compatriot who had arrived in Guatemala a century earlier:

> "By the way, who is this person called y-a-s-u (ヤス)?"
> "Ah, that is... according to his diary, in 1874, the seventh year of Meiji, when Japan attracted the attention of the world as the place to observe Venus, he worked as an interpreter for the Mexican Commission, and thereafter, to study astronomy, he went to Mexico via Europe."
> "So, it sounds like he was not only a wandering migrant but also a scholar. But why would such an intellectual be buried here?"
> This y-a-s-u-k-o-u-h-e-i (ヤス・コウヘイ), written as Yasu Kōhei (屋須弘平), was a scholar of *rangaku*. When he somehow returned to Japan from Mexico to live with his elderly mother, Takahashi Korekiyo (later prime minister) asked him to go to Peru as a Spanish interpreter for the excavation of Peruvian silver mines, but the mine was already an abandoned one. The sad Korekiyo returned to our country. However, Yasu decided to accomplish something before returning home.

This was Kikuchi's dramatic reconstruction of his conversation with Kojima, who had lived in Guatemala for an extended period. Through a series of questions and answers, Kikuchi gradually painted a picture of Yasu and his Japanese background. Readers unfamiliar with Yasu gained insight into this Japanese man, who spent most of his life in Central America, through the translation of his Western name, his background in Japan, and his connections to well-known Japanese historical figures. By emphasizing the pronunciation of Yasu's native name, rather than Juan Jose de Jesús Yas, and highlighting his identity as an "old *nikkejin,*" a link was established between this still-unknown author of the discovered diary

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1 As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kojima Hideo, a Japanese researcher living in Guatemala, played a key role in disseminating information about Yasu to Japanese circles.

2 All quotations in this paragraph and the following block quote are from Kikuchi (1979, pp. 64–65).

and the Japanese expatriates.[3]

Over time, through the efforts of Japanese visitors, expatriates, and diplomats in Guatemala, a connection was established between Yasu's birthplace, Fujisawa, and Antigua Guatemala, where our protagonist spent a large part of his life. In the subsequent decades, Yasu's biography became woven into the Japanese historical narrative, supported by various publications and events that highlighted his contributions. The reemergence of Yasu's memoirs and negatives ignited the interest of several Japanese authors, whose texts wrote Yasu Kōhei into the national historiography. This reappropriation of the forgotten ancestor culminated in the establishment of the Fujisawa collection in 2004, further solidifying his legacy.

In particular, earlier Japanese authors have characterized the contemporary reception of Yasu as a "rediscovery" (*saihakken* 再発見), a term that underscores the scarcity of information that previously existed about him. Hardly any documents related to Yasu had circulated in Japan, let alone photographs that could provide visual reference for a Japanese audience. This changed with his rediscovery. Despite geographical distances and linguistic constraints, dozens of reports, essays, and studies were produced over the past decades, reflecting a growing interest in Yasu's life and contributions.

Kikuchi's account marks the beginning of Yasu's reintroduction in Japan. While Guatemalan scholars and archivists had concentrated on acquiring and processing Yasu's negatives, their Japanese colleagues took an interest in examining the significance of Yasu's transnational biography. His pioneering role as a traveler to the Americas, his early education in Dutch and French studies, and the historical events in which he participated all became focal points of Japanese texts.

This chapter analyzes how, since the late 1970s, a diversity of authors, civic groups, and local governments have gradually reestablished Yasu's ties to his birthplace, Fujisawa in Iwate Prefecture, through written publications, exhibitions, and cultural and diplomatic activities. Concerted efforts to foreground Yasu's regional background and identity have culminated in the "return" of the material vestiges of his Guatemalan life to his hometown and enabled their recognition as cultural property. While this chapter draws on the concept of "homecoming" to explore the reception of Yasu Kōhei, his biography, and his objects in contemporary Japanese society, it is equally important to recognize the diverse narratives that emerged. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates how a collection of seemingly random objects, once used by a migrant an ocean away, inspires the collective memory of a small town and shapes the imagination of both the present and the future.

The two main archives of Yasu Kōhei, the Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA and the collection owned by the Fujisawa Municipality (now merged into Ichinoseki), differ in their integration into historical narratives. In Guatemala, the photographic negatives are of great documentary importance, and their digitized versions are utilized in multiple contexts. In contrast, the Fujisawa collection, titled "Items Left by Yasu Kōhei" (Yasu Kōhei no Ihin) features items that lack local utility or connection, apart from as material evidence of Yasu Kōhei's life. In this context, I argue that Yasu's written documents, more than the images he bequeathed, are of primary relevance as they link him to key moments in Japanese history. To approach the evolving reception of Yasu Kōhei in various genres of historical writings, I employ what anthropologist Penelope Papailias describes as textual anthropology. This framework allows for an analysis of the history of historical narration

[3] The found diary is, of course, Yasu's *Memorias*.

and provides insight into the context of historical writings.[4] By utilizing this methodology, it becomes possible to juxtapose travel essays, newspaper articles, government reports, and academic studies that draw on Yasu's biography.

This chapter furthermore examines the genesis of the Fujisawa collection, its transformations, and its addition to the collective memory of the townspeople and larger historical narratives. As I will argue in the following pages, the assemblage of Yasu's objects in Japan presents a fascinating case of what Arjun Appadurai describes as a "work of collective memory,"—an archive of aspiration.[5] From the outset, Yasu's international trajectory defined him as an inspiration to his townspeople. The acquisition of his objects, along with the subsequent events, further reinforced his posthumous capacity to inspire. Thus, with Appadurai, I regard the Fujisawa archive not as "the grave of the accidental trace," but rather as "the material site of the collective will to remember.'[6]

Between Nikkeijin and Tōhokujin

In the dialog quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Kikuchi and Kojima, two Japanese residing in Latin America, discussed the limited information available about Yasu Kōhei during a telephone conversation. In conversing about this unknown individual from times past, they settled on using the term *nikkeijin*, which was just gaining traction in Japan and mainly refers to the Japanese diaspora. The simple act of identifying Yasu as one of the earliest Japanese migrants is the most common way of connecting his life with Japanese history. Although various publications on Yasu have been written across different genres, including travelogues, newspaper articles, magazine essays, and research notes, most share two notable similarities. First, they typically follow a similar outline that emphasizes Yasu's educational background and his involvement in two significant events: the transit of Venus and the mining expedition to Peru. Second, they rely on a common pool of sources and seamlessly blend quotes from earlier authors with original elements. This phenomenon intrigues me, as it reflects what Papailias describes as a "discursive network" in historical production. It showcases how the rare knowledge of Yasu connects authors with diverse training and interests.[7]

With these preliminary remarks, the following pages analyze the historical reconstructions of Yasu Kōhei that were produced in Japan over the last four decades. I expound on the web of mutual references that emerged in the process and examine the incremental access to archival materials that informed them. Two distinct discursive representations of Yasu's biography will be explored. The first discourse situates his life within the broader context of the national history, depicting him as a Japanese with a peculiar educational background and a member of the diaspora in Latin America. The second discourse highlights Yasu's identity as a person of northeastern descent, a perspective that complicates his appropriation of the national historic discourse. Following Mary Louise Pratt's thoughts on analyzing the ideologies underlying textual production at specific historical junctures, I aim to elucidate the context of the writing and the concepts of self and other that emerge from the migrant's story.[8]

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4 Papailias 2005, pp. 9–10, 227.
5 Appadurai 2003, p. 14.
6 Ibid., pp. 16–17.
7 Papailias 2005, p. 227.
8 Pratt 2008.

The Nikkeijin

On December 6, 1976, an article titled "A Meiji Immigrant Drama: Photographer Yasu Kōhei Who Lived in Guatemala, Central America" was published in the culture section of the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (日本経済新聞) newspaper.[9] In this article, Terada Kazuo, then a professor of anthropology at the University of Tokyo, recounted his encounter with the story of Yasu Kōhei and provided a biographical sketch of the remarkable individual.

Writing shortly after a visit to Guatemala, Terada sought to make sense of Yasu's transcultural biography. A chapter in a book he subsequently published fleshed out what he had learned about Yasu.[10]. The source materials available to him included information obtained from Kojima Hideo, the expert in natural dyes living in Guatemala, and from the historian Luis Luján Muñoz. The Japanese ambassador in Guatemala had furnished him with photocopies of Yasu's notebooks and the *Biographical Sketch* authored by Saitō Johei.[11] Terada's essay presents a chronological account of Yasu's life, incorporating details about his education derived from Saitō's sketch. It continues with a retelling of Yasu's description of his travels across Latin America.[12] In addition to the information that he assembled about Yasu, Terada's text contains accounts of his interactions with the individuals who assisted him in gathering details about our protagonist. As a scholar of Latin American studies, Terada had solid connections with local researchers. The essay recalls the following meeting during a visit to Guatemala in 1976:

> On the second day, I had lunch with Mr. Luján, and Mr. Kojima, Mr. Luján showed us the content of the memo, according to Luján, Yasu came here via Mexico in the early Meiji period, unexpectedly opened a photography studio here, once traveled back to Japan and went on the trip to Peru with Takahashi Korekiyo, later he came back to Guatemala and stayed here, it is said that he was known as a photographer. The photographs taken by Yasu are the oldest in Guatemala.
>
> Mr. Luján has always been interested in Japan, and now that the materials of the Japanese immigrant have entered the Institute, which focuses on prehistory, history, and ethnic studies, these materials will help improve relations between Japan and Guatemala. I was touched by the interest and concern of a small Central American country for Japan. From the Japanese embassy, I had a photocopy of Yasu's notebook, ambassador Mori Junzo was generous enough to give it to me, and Mr. Luján also promised to send me copies of the photographs. Then I left Guatemala.[13]

While Terada's writings stand out as the first contemporary texts portraying Yasu's trajectory in Japanese, several additional factors contributed to establishing him as the expert of record referenced by later authors. First among these was his access to original documents and his ability to read and translate from the foreign language. His accounts connected Yasu to historical events and thus enhanced the significance of his example. To emphasize the relevance of his participation in historic events, Terada quoted portions of Yasu's

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9 Terada Kazuo, "ある明治移民のドラマ 中米グアテマラに生きた写真家・屋須弘平," *Nihon keizai shimbun*, December 6, 1976.

10 Terada 1977.

11 Terada's essays are likely the first published texts that have drawn on Saitō's unpublished biography of Yasu. A photocopy of Saitō's manuscript is among the holdings of the Iwate Prefectural Library.

12 As discussed in chapter 1, Saitō established explicit connections between Yasu's journeys and the Japanese colonial enterprise. This focus on Yasu within the context of Japanese colonialism is absent from later texts.

13 Terada 1976.

memoirs.

For the most part adopting a scholarly tone, Terada did not eschew moral evaluation regarding Yasu's lack of ambition to advance in Japan despite his considerable talents, which he found puzzling. Terada's scholarly stance was also reflected in the selection of images he drew upon to illustrate his texts. In a frequently cited article included in a book about his Latin American undertakings, Terada used only two images: one was Yasu's kimono portrait, and the other a page from Yasu's memoirs."[14] These illustrations underscore Terada's privileged access to first-hand material and his ability to work with the old and foreign documents. Terada reflections on Yasu's trajectory sounded like this:

> Yasu Kōhei was a dedicated scholar who, before traveling to Mexico at the age of twenty-nine, had studied Japanese and Chinese classics, astronomy, and medical studies; he also could use Dutch, French, and Spanish. He was also associated with the Venus observation in the seventh year of Meiji and the silver excavation in Peru led by Takahashi Korekiyo. If he had returned earlier from Guatemala, or if he had returned directly to Japan from Peru [like other Japanese colleagues], his talent for technology and language would have made it possible for him to be an active figure in the Meiji period. He did not take the Japanese way of advancement [in his career], nor did he seem to have such an interest. [...] A few months after I accidentally received his Spanish diary, I was at a loss to understand the heart of this person. He was a mysterious Japanese migrant who had no hesitation, no bravado, and no complaints.[15]

Terada was drawn to Yasu as an example through which he could reflect on the history of the Meiji period. He referred to Yasu as "the first Nikkeijin in Guatemala" and as a "Meiji migrant," both of which situate Yasu within the context of Japan's modernization. 'Nikkeijin' generally refers to groups of migrants, often peasants, who left for the Americas due to limited opportunities to partake in Japan's modernization. Yasu Kōhei had little in common with these Nikkeijin, nor did his trajectory align particularly well with another category of Japanese subjects abroad, *ryugakusei* students who returned swiftly after completing their studies.

Kikuchi Ikuzō visited Guatemala in the same year as Terada. He also learned about Yasu from Kojima Hideo. As a journalist, Kikuchi adopted a different style, allowing more room for interpretations and personal impressions. Following his conversation with Kojima, he obtained Saitō's booklet in Japan and attempted to read Yasu's memoirs. Certainly no stranger to Latin script, Kikuchi nevertheless found it challenging to decipher Yasu's hand. He described how he made "every effort to read Yasu Kōhei's diary [but probably] because of the special decorative Spanish letters, it is very difficult for me to read."[16] To gather more information about Yasu, Kikuchi traveled to Guatemala for a second time. He visited the Noriega family and met Jesús and her younger sister Margarita, daughters of Yasu's godson Domingo Noriega, at their home. The sisters shared some of their memories of Yasu and showed him photographs and personal objects. This inspired Kikuchi to speculate on Yasu's family life. However, similar to Terada, Kikuchi did not invest much effort in exploring Yasu's photographic practice or his religious conversion. Kikuchi concludes his text by questioning Yasu's decision to remain in Guatemala:

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14 Interestingly, Yasu's frequently used kimono portrait was not included in the first publication on his biography and photography in Guatemala in 1982. Terada may have been the first to recognize the unique appeal of this photograph.

15 Terada 1977.

16 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Kikuchi (1979, p. 70).

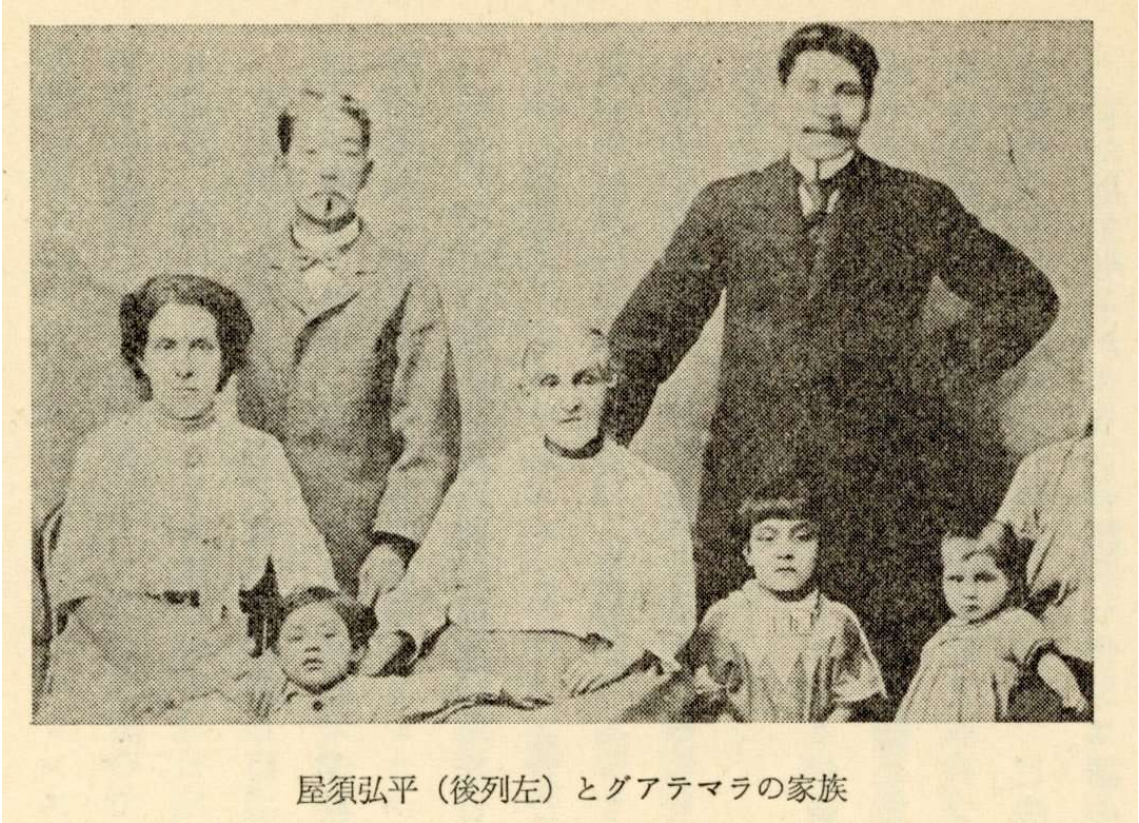

Figure 126: "Yasu Kōhei (back row, left) and the Guatemala Family" is a family photograph featured in Kikuchi Ikuzō's book

> During the [Meiji] Restoration, Japan must have wished to have such talented young people with international knowledge and language skills. If Yasu, who had studied medicine, astronomy, French, Dutch, and Spanish, decided to return to Japan as a "*yōkōkaeri*" (洋行帰り one who returns after studying abroad), he would have been able to put his skills to good use. Why would he end his life and career in this corner of Central America?

Kikuchi's perplexity reflects the conundrum noted by Terada. Yasu Kōhei's access to an academic education and the opportunity to study "astronomy" in Mexico were deemed sufficient grounds to categorize him alongside the elite students who served the Meiji state upon their return. In this context, however, Yasu's decision to remain in Guatemala is not viewed as a testament to an exceptional life. Instead, it is considered an incomprehensible dereliction of patriotic duty.

Like Terada, Kikuchi saw Yasu's life through the lens of Japan's national history. This contrasted sharply with the type of material and information that he obtained from the two sisters in Antigua, which portrayed Yasu in Guatemalan contexts. Among the three illustrations used in Kikuchi's text, one depicts the aftermath of the earthquake, contextualizing Kikuchi's arrival in Guatemala and the rediscovery of Yasu Kōhei's photography. The other two illustrations are a family tree of the Yas-Noriega family, presumably based on information from Jesús and Margarita, as well as a photograph of Yasu, María, José Domingo Noriega, an unknown elderly woman, and three children (figure 126).[17]

[17] Kikuchi does not mention the provenance of this photograph. It is likely one of the images he encountered

In 1988, university researcher Tada Isao published a short essay about Yasu in the journal *Migration Studies* (移住研究).[18] In contrast to earlier texts, Tada explored Yasu's life in his seventies. Alongside a brief biographical sketch, Tada delved into Yasu's mind by transcribing his final letters to Japan, which include poems of loneliness and nostalgia. Tada collected insights from Japanese expatriates who were familiar with Yasu's biography. The journal that published Tada's essay was established by JICA to promote the multidisciplinary study of the Japanese diaspora, encompassing its history, politics, and more. Here, Yasu's biography is presented as an example of the quandaries of diasporic life. Two photographs accompany Tada's article: one is the framed commemorative picture of Yasu's second godson's baptism, discussed in chapter 3. The other is a photograph of Yasu's tomb in the cemetery of Antigua Guatemala, located alongside other members of the Yas-Noriega family. This motif was popular among Japanese visitors in the 1980s and 1990s.

Since the 1980s, Japanese historians, anthropologists, and experts in Latin American studies have sought to overcome material and geographical barriers by scouring Yasu's writings and the historical documents. Ohgaki Kishiro, a professor of Spanish and Mexican history, translated Francisco Díaz Covarrubias's travelogue.[19] In his 2004 publication, historian Tsunoyama Yukihiro published additional source documents in a section of a book titled "The First Japanese Migrant to Guatemala."[20] Anthropologist Kosaka Ayako traveled to Guatemala, where she conducted interviews with Yasu's family and local scholars. She contributed an essay on Yasu to an anthology focused on Guatemala and translated Yasu's *Memorias* into Japanese.[21]

The latter group of researchers was influenced by the perspectives of earlier authors regarding Yasu Kōhei and related historical events. Yasu gradually emerged as a subject for specialized studies. Research interests in his life encompassed immigration history, intellectual history, photographic history, and Latin American history. These subsequent texts emphasized Yasu's role in the history of Japanese modernization and migration. They focus on concepts that connected Yasu to his homeland, rather than on his emotional involvement in other societies.

Certain terms from mainstream narratives of modern Japanese history are frequently employed to identify Yasu as a "Meiji intellectual" (明治知識人, *Meiji-chishikijin*), "North-easterner" (東北人, *Tōhokujin*), "Japanese diaspora" (日系人, *nikkejin*), "Japanese migrant" (日本人移民, *nihonjin-imin*), "cosmopolitan" (国際人, *kokusaijin*), and "local great man" (地方偉人, *chihou-ijin*). By labeling Yasu with these terms, each of which has its extensive referential framework, the texts illustrate the similarities between his trajectory and those of other individuals from the past. This approach reflects the available "cultural script" and provides references for authors to draw upon.[22] In this sense, Yasu's education and participation in the transit of Venus, along with Takahashi Korekiyo's ill-fated excursion to Peru, can be evoked to complement the dominant view from positions of power. In contrast, aspects of his life that lacked such relevance fell outside the scope of Yasu's

in the family home in Antigua. The photograph exhibits clear cropping, featuring only those individuals mentioned in his article. The two little girls in the foreground are likely José Domingo's daughters, Jesús and Margarita.

18 Tada 1988.

19 Ohgaki 1983.

20 Tsunoyama 2004.

21 Kosaka 2006, 2018.

22 Papailias 2005, p. 88.

historical persona.

Yasu as a Northeasterner

In contrast to texts that situate Yasu Kōhei within the broader context of nineteenth-century Japanese history, writers from the northern Iwate region emphasize his connections to family and hometown. This focus effectively challenges the dominant narrative that characterizes Tōhoku as inherently opposed to the new Japan. Tōhoku refers to the northeastern region of Japan and comprises six prefectures: Akita, Aomori, Fukushima, Iwate, Miyagi, and Yamagata. The regional identity acquired new meaning in response to the emerging nationalist narrative since the Meiji Restoration. Echoing the journalist Kikuchi Ikuzō, who noted the connection to southern Iwate that he shared with Yasu Kōhei, several other authors have also examined the regional. Their contributions enrich the discourse surrounding his legacy and highlight the complexities of regional identity in the context of national transformation.

The current face of the rivalry between northeastern and southwestern Japan has its origins in the conflicts during the late Edo period, particularly the civil war between the Tokugawa shogunate and the forces aligned with the Emperor Meiji. This rivalry is evident across various textual genres, where northeastern authors express opposition to the elites from the southwest.[23] The southwestern faction, which has prevailed in the political scene since the Meiji period, embodies the marginalization of the historically thriving region in the northeast. Following the tragic catastrophe of the 311 Tōhoku earthquake in 2011, scholars have increasingly focused on the representation of Tōhoku and its perceived otherness in Japanese mainstream culture.[24]

Writings on Yasu Kōhei by authors from the northeastern region emphasize his local origins and contextualize his experiences within the historical events that contributed to the decline of privilege for individuals of Yasu's status. These authors utilize his regional identity for an alternative historical narrative that foregrounds Yasu's educational path and the challenges he encountered within the Meiji state. By presenting an oppositional perspective and articulating dissatisfaction with the dominant narrative of national progress under Emperor Meiji, the northeastern viewpoint also challenges the notion of national homogeneity.

Highlighting the essential connection he had with his birthplace, the northeastern re-contextualization of Yasu's biography provided an important impetus for the creation of the Fujisawa collection in 2004. It has also brought novel relevance to materials that throw into relief the regional theme. Among these are Yasu's memoirs and Saitō Johei's 1934 biographical sketch, which describes Yasu's activities during the civil (Boshin) war, noting that his linguistic skills were put to patriotic use when he translated for French and Mexican soldiers assisting the shogunate forces against the Meiji army.[25]

The dialog with Kojima Hideo transcribed in Kikuchi's article, from which I have quoted at the outset of the chapter, the emotional charge contained in the focus on Yasu's regional identity is thematized paradigmatically. Here, Kikuchi asks Kojima about Yasu's connection to the politician Takahashi Korekiyo:

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23 Fumio Yonechi, Imaizumi Yoshikuni, and Fujiwara Takao have published articles that examine the formation and perception of Tōhoku within the historical context of Japan.Yonechi (1995), Yonechi, Fujiwara, and Imaizumi (1995, 1996), and Yonechi, Imaizumi, and Fujiwara (1998).

24 See, for example, Hopson (2017) and Kawanishi (2016).

25 J. Saitō 1934.

> [...]Why would Korekiyo know of Yasu's existence?
> Yasu was born in the south of Iwate Prefecture. It seems that Korekiyo knew about him as a member of the ex-Ida clan."
> How could that be true?
> This sentence suddenly came out of my mouth. I was born in a town in the south of Iwate Prefecture. I am Yasu's fellow citizen. The old diary of the man from my hometown, who ended up in Mexico and Peru, has now reappeared as a by-product of the great earthquake. It could be my self-centered explanation, but for me, it is like a fateful encounter.[26]

Takahashi Korekiyo was a prominent figure in Japan, and Kikuchi underscores his background as a native of Tōhoku. The regional origin shared by Yasu, Takahashi, and himself adds depth to Kikuchi's exploration of Yasu's identity. While residing in Latin America, Kikuchi described that he discovered the old "diary," a term used in the texts from the 1980s to refer to Yasu's memoirs, which were for the most part not composed in the course of events as a conventional diary would be. The personal notes in the "diary" ignited Kikuchi's interest to learn more about Yasu. The perceived personal connection motivates the sentimental and introspective remarks he made about Yasu.

Both Terada and Kikuchi expressed puzzlement about Yasu's decision to remain in Guatemala; however, Kikuchi's inquiries delve deeper into the profound distrust of the government that Yasu may have experienced. In contrast to Terada, who presented a more tentative view, Kikuchi dwelled on passages on the civil war, infusing historical details with his opinions. While Terada attempted to capture the complexity of Yasu's cultural and religious identity following his conversion to Christianity in Guatemala, Kikuchi established a connection between Yasu's faith and the martyrdom of the Catholic community from Yasu's hometown, which had been erased centuries earlier.

A further author examining Yasu Kōhei through a northeastern lens was Oyama Takuya, a high school English teacher in Morioka, the capital of Iwate Prefecture. In a book dedicated to Iwate's "great intellectuals" of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Oyama sought to identify the qualities and cultural traditions shared by these figures. Similar to Kikuchi's text, Oyama's account of Yasu is interspersed with reflections on specific historical events, resulting in a highly personal narrative. Yasu's education in foreign languages and science is mapped onto the intellectual landscape of the region, emphasizing its relevance as a center for Western studies during the Edo period. For Oyama, Yasu and the other protagonists in his collection of great intellectuals were first and foremost "northerners who carried the burden of stigma as traitors to the Boshin War at the time of the [Meiji] Restoration."[27]

Oyama emphasized the confrontation between the Meiji government and the Tōhoku samurai as a crucial backdrop to Yasu's life. His text primarily reviewed earlier works published about Yasu while simultaneously embedding his protest against the harsh fate of the local people within the biographical account. In a passage on the Boshin War, he described the stereotypes that motivated the unbridled disdain that the southwestern alliance harbored for the "Northland." According to Oyama, these included the notion that the people from the mild climate region (*danchi* 暖地) were more intelligent (*rihatsu* 利発), while those born in the cold (*kanchi* 寒地) of Tōhoku were unsophisticated (*pokutotsu* 木訥).[28] The regional polarization of Japanese politics encapsulated in this brief passage

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26 Kikuchi 1979, pp. 65–66.
27 Oyama 1982b, p. 108.
28 Ibid., pp. 19–20.

明治14年頃、グァテマラの首府で写真館を開業した当時の屋須自身のポートレート。どちらも屋須弘平である。彼の精巧な技術をうかがわせる合成写真である。（以下屋須に関する写真は、岩手県藤沢町屋須喜一郎氏提供）

Figure 127: Photocard featuring Yasu Kōhei in a double exposure taken at his studio in Guatemala City in 1881. The photograph is part of the Yasu family collection in Fujisawa, Ichinoseki and is featured in Oyama Takuya's book

was woven throughout Oyama's narrative.

In this way, Oyama lamented the fate of many intellectuals during the pivotal moment of Japan's modernization. Among them were the renowned writers Nitobe Inazō, Miyazawa Kenji, and Ishikawa Takuboku. The text also mentions Terui Ryojiro, who participated in one of the first overseas colonization projects in Mexico. As Oyama noted, these talented and ambitious individuals, including Yasu, did not enjoy the same privilege as their southwestern peers. By contrasting Yasu's career with those of successful historical figures familiar to contemporary readers, Oyama effectively explained Yasu's path as a consequence of the northern defeat in the civil war.

Oyama's book features four photographs related to Yasu Kōhei. According to Oyama's explanations, these were provided by Yasu Kiichirō, the grandson of Yasu's younger brother in Fujisawa. The photographs had been sent by Yasu Kōhei from Guatemala. The first is an intriguing double exposure of our photographer (figure 127). Contrasting with a simple studio setting, the visual tropes embodied in Yasu's attire are rich. He is depicted wearing a three-piece suit, adorned with a pocket watch and leather shoes. His hairstyle and mustache reflect a westernized lifestyle. The caption states that this is a photo taken "at the time when [Yasu Kōhei] opened his studio in the capital of Guatemala." The second photograph shows Yasu's studio. The third is a memorial picture of Yasu Kōhei's wedding to María Noriega, dated November 26, 1891. The final photograph transports readers of Oyama's book to Yasu's family home, where numerous Catholic images surround the beds, revealing his devotion.

Both Kikuchi Ikuzō and Oyama Takuya present accounts that diverge from the dominant narrative of Japanese homogeneity. They reflect on the sentiments and sense of cultural belonging that people in the northeastern region have developed over the past century since the establishment of the Japanese nation state. However, it is evident that their narratives

do not escape the assumption of an all-encompassing modernization and nationalization that began in the second half of the nineteenth century. These texts portray Yasu in a manner that aligns with the sociopolitical ideologies prevalent around 1980. As such, they should be understood in relation to specific transitions in Japanese history.

The construction of the Japanese self projected onto Yasu Kōhei cannot be separated from the image of the other. In this context, Guatemalan society serves as the backdrop against which Yasu realizes his ambitions as a proxy for the Japanese self. While Tanabe Saneaki, Yasu's friend who spoke at the farewell party for the Japan-Peru mining expedition in 1889, described Yasu as the perfect guide and mediator in a foreign land, the portrayal of Yasu as a heroic pioneer of overseas migration by Saitō Johei in 1934 reflected an even more ambitious project of Japanese outreach to the world. This shift in representation underscores the evolving narrative surrounding Yasu, particularly as the emphasis on him as a migrant in post-1970s writings highlights the new significance that the history of overseas migration has acquired in Japanese society.

As writers from Iwate who regarded Yasu Kōhei as one of their kind, Oyama and Kikuchi later participated in several events in Yasu's hometown Fujisawa. In the following section, I will describe how civic groups in Fujisawa reshaped Yasu's story to fit their concerns and how amateur historians wove personal memories of Yasu into the public discourse. These efforts bespeak an intriguing evolution in the engagement with Yasu's transcultural biography, which became a symbolic bridge connecting his rural hometown to the colonial town of Antigua Guatemala.

Reconnecting with the Village Genealogy

Despite the strictures of gaining academic recognition for amateur historical writing, texts from Yasu's hometown Fujisawa offer insights into an additional passage in the homecoming of Yasu Kōhei. Here, community members crafted their narrative that reintegrated Yasu into the family and village genealogies. Like the professional publications discussed in the preceding sections, these texts are not free from generalizing historical accounts. In this case, they add to the construction of a coherent discourse on the community's past.

Yasu Kōhei and His Family in Fujisawa

On December 30, 1978, two years after Terada Kazuo published his first text about Yasu Kōhei, Ando Yukio, a businessman from Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture, wrote to the *Iwate Nippo* (岩手日報) about his encounter with the legacy of our protagonist during a business trip to Guatemala. In the text titled "The First *Nikkei* Migrant in Guatemala: Commissioned by Mr. Ando from Hachinohe to Introduce Mr. Yasu (Originally from Fujisawa)," Ando recounts his meeting with the Japanese ambassador and Kojima Hideo, who encouraged him to share Yasu's biography with the people of his hometown.[29] Likely due to his meeting the diplomat and, once again, the expatriate expert in natural dyes, Ando took interest in the first Japanese migrant, "Mr. Yasu from Iwate," and learned about Yasu's accomplishments a century earlier. He expressed his hope that Yasu's relatives could discover his story through the report he shared through the newspaper.

[29] All quotations in this paragraph are from "グアテマラ最初の日系移民—屋須氏藤沢出身の紹介を八戸の安藤氏、託される," *Iwate Nippo*, December 30, 1978.

In February 1979, Ando visited Yasu's family in Fujisawa. He met with Yasu Kiichirō, the grandson of Yasu's younger brother, who was then sixty-six years old. The *Iwate Nippo* reported on the visit in an article that was accompanied by a photograph of the meeting and Yasu Kōhei's portrait.[30] Ando brought with him a set of documents that Kojima Hideo had prepared in Guatemala to help Yasu's descendants learn about their ancestor. This folder likely contained the documents visible in the photograph published with the report on Ando's visit to Guatemala.

Describing how he came to know about Yasu Kōhei, Ando mentioned Hara Fujio, the Japanese ambassador in Guatemala, who, like Ando, was from Hachinohe. While at his posting in Guatemala, Ando reported, Hara used to recommend to Japanese tourists that they take an excursion to Antigua Guatemala to see where Yasu had lived. Ando's account highlights the collective effort made by Japanese residents in Guatemala to promote Yasu's story in Japan, particularly in the northeastern region.

There is no information on how Ando was welcomed in Fujisawa. However, judging by two newspaper clippings that were carefully preserved and shown to me by the descendants of Yasu Kōhei's brother, I feel confident in asserting that Ando's initiative was met with open hearts. The descendants enthusiastically shared their encounters with the legacy of the distant family member who had left generations ago. The family kept a folder that was carefully preserved and filled with images and texts of various genres, including newspaper articles, personal notes, and snapshots. Attached to most of these items were handwritten notes denoting source information.

One collage page contained a collection of pictures: an invitation card for a 1992 photographic exhibition at the Hiranagachobashi Gallery in Tokyo; a photo of Yasu's memoirs; two photos of Yasu's tomb in Antigua; and one of Irma Noriega holding Yasu's memoirs for the camera. Although these images lack captions, they illustrate the layered exchange between the family and their visitors. The art gallery invitation was likely brought by photographer Umoto Masahiro, who purchased copies of works by Yasu from the Fototeca Guatemala (see chapter 8). The photographs depicting Yasu's memoirs and Irma Noriega were likely provided by Tada Isao, who had also captured the photo of Yasu's tomb in Antigua Guatemala.

The collage serves as a subtle point of connection between Yasu Kōhei's two families on both sides of the Pacific. While the Noriegas in Guatemala shared their knowledge with curious Japanese visitors, the Yasu in Japan engaged with the materials brought to them from across the seas. The travelers and expatriates connecting these two intimate, familial spaces through their unsolicited messenger services added their part to this connection.

From Family to Village Genealogy

In a text titled "Yamaki Makoto's Documents," which is kept in the Iwate Prefectural Library, the school teacher and local historian Yamaki presents the material he received from Ando Yukio, including a photocopy of Terada Kazuo's text.[31] Possibly after Ando's visit to Fujisawa, Yamaki developed an interest in incorporating the previously little-known

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30 "The Life of Yasu Kōhei, a Migrant to Guatemala: Remembering His Virtues in His Hometown" (グアテマラ移民屋須弘平の生涯—現地で遺徳しのぼう), *Iwate Nippo*, February 27, 1979.

31 I consulted this document at the Iwate Prefectural Library in Morioka during my visit to Japan in November 2014.

昭和61年(1986) 11月4日 (火曜日) (10)

中南米移住最初の日本人

藤沢町で屋須弘平展

改めて遺徳しのぶ

「自治会」づくりすすむ

屋須家の家系図や年譜も

三氏が夫人同伴で出席

千厩で町勢功労者表彰式

Figure 128: A 1986 news clipping features an exhibition of Yasu Kōhei and his family's genealogy, held in honor of his legacy

Yasu Kōhei into his chronicles of the town.[32] He began to gather information and donated a photocopy of his documents, along with a genealogy of Yasu's family, to the Iwate Prefectural Library.

In 1981, Yamaki published an article about Yasu Kōhei in *The History of Fujisawa Town*. In a chapter on "Others Who Made Contributions to Society," Yasu is portrayed as a "successful person outside the town" who achieved significant accomplishments after leaving Fujisawa at a young age.[33] The text features direct quotations from Saitō and Terada, who emphasize Yasu's roots in Fujisawa, his involvement in the astronomical observations, and his participation in a mining project in Peru. These quotations are seamlessly woven into Yamaki's narrative without explicit source attribution.[34]

Yamaki's opening established a local context for Yasu Kōhei. Information about Yasu's birthplace in a small village was hardly familiar to people outside the region. By providing a regional contextualization, Yamaki engaged readers acquainted with the area's history and notable families. Yamaki further elaborated on the Yasu family's political affiliation with the feudal governor, as well as Shōan's activity as a "Dutch doctor" in Fujisawa. Through the connection to his son Yasu Kōhei, the father Shōan was also recognized as an important figure within the collective past.

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32 In an interview with members of the Yasu family in Fujisawa—Yasu Mikiko and Onodera Kimio—they mentioned their discussions with Yamaki regarding "Kōhei-san." Through the generations, the families Yasu, Onodera, and Yamaki are all connected by marriage. This adds background to Yamaki's recreation of the educational paths taken by Yasu Kōhei and his father Shōan.

33 Fujisawa-chō-shi hensan iinkai 1981, pp. 533–534.

34 The same error found in the works of these previous authors is also present in Yamaki's text. For instance, their interpretation of Yasu's Edo education attributes it to a medical doctor named Murakami Eishin, whose name shares the same pronunciation as the master of Dutch and French studies. However, these authors employ different kanji for Murakami's first name. Instead of 英俊, Saitō and Terada use 栄信, while Yamaki opts for 栄進.

Four years later, Yamaki published another essay on Yasu Kōhei in the local historical journal *Higashi-hanshi History Studies*. Titled "The First and Most Active *Nikkei* in Central and South America: A Biography of Yasu Kōhei," this essay drew again on material from Terada's and Saitō's articles. By incorporating a chronology of Yasu's life in relation to Japanese history, it situated Yasu within the broader historiographical framework.[35] In 1992, Yamaki published another article on Yasu in the same journal. While the structure and content resembled those of his earlier texts, he chose to title this article "Yasu Kōhei who was from Fujisawa," thereby establishing a direct connection to the hometown.[36] In this subsequent text, Yamaki followed the by now conventional narrative arc. He placed particular emphasis on Yasu's education in Japan, as well as his participation in significant astronomical events and the Peruvian mining project.

The efforts made by professional authors and diplomats brought Yasu Kōhei's legacy back to his northeastern home region, where it was utilized by amateur researchers of the local history. This bears striking similarities to Penelope Papailias's discussion on the creation of what she calls "village genealogy" in Greece. Papailias explores how narratives of migration in the 1990s were "(re)patriated and gathered into the corpus of modern Greek history," noting that such "local historical and genealogical texts" were regarded as "a diasporic resource extending and enriching rather than interrupting local and national historical narratives" In a similar vein, Yamaki's rendering of Yasu's biography gathers his trajectory into a multi-layered historical narrative in which Fujisawa plays a significant role.[37]

Sister City: Fujisawa and Antigua

One of the intrinsic aspects of Yasu Kōhei's Japanese biography is his identity as a migrant and his participation in pivotal episodes of Japan's endeavors in the Americas. Within the context of state-promoted internationalism in Japan during the 1980s, Yasu emerged as a cultural symbol, embodying the town's pioneering spirit in its exploration of the outside world and its ventures into uncharted waters.

On November 12, 1986, an event on Yasu was celebrated at the Bunka Koryu Center, a space within the community center of Fujisawa. Titled "Yasu Kōhei, Guatemala and Antigua Meeting," the event was hosted by the city government in collaboration with a civic group known as the Fujisawa International Friendship Association.[38] Despite Fujisawa's remote location, the guest list included several prominent invitees, such as diplomats and journalists from Guatemala, Japanese politicians, and the previously mentioned authors Kikuchi Ikuzō and Oyama Takuya. Following the event, articles were published in both Japanese and Guatemalan newspapers.

Seen from an outside perspective, the "Guatemala and Antigua Meeting" had little more than a local scope. However, it prepared the path for the establishment of the Fujisawa collection of Yasu's objects almost twenty years later. It was not merely a singular event for Yasu and his overseas connections. Rather, it was an illustration of

35 Yamaki 1985, pp. 25–27.
36 Yamaki 1992, pp. 12–19.
37 Papailias 2005, pp. 182–183.
38 The English title of the event is included in the chronological listing of FIFA's activities. The exhibition's Japanese title can be translated as "Knowing Antigua Guatemala, Remembering Yasu Kōhei All Together."

how a historic migrant's experience can become a part of a contemporary agenda in his hometown. Through the event, Fujisawa began to define its own cultural identity in relation to Guatemalan partners, all within the framework of internationalization (*kokusaika* 国際化)—an ideal promoted by the Japanese government from the 1980s onward.[39] Under the *kokusaika* policy, municipalities were encouraged to engage with international communities through various exchange projects. The establishment of Sister City relationships emerged as a primary method of internationalization. To understand the event at the Bunka Koryu Center in all its ramifications, it is essential to situate it within this broader context.

In a discussion of "internationalization" in Japan, John Knight describes the term's significance: "In Japan *kokusaika* (internationalisation) is one of the main idioms in which contemporary international interactions are represented and is now a well-established part of the lexicon of public debate."[40] Knight emphasizes that Japan has always maintained a tradition of learning from others to enhance its own development.[41] During the 1980s, *kokusaidai* became seen as a sign that not only the Japanese were eager to learn about the world, but that the world also wanted to know about Japan.

The conceptualization of internalization as a sign of validation of Japanese culture meant that the initiative was not limited to the metropolitan centers. Small towns in remote areas were also incentivized to participate, albeit in different forms, to invigorate their local economies.[42] In response to the call to participate in the national effort, many projects were proposed, resulting in competition among towns to establish distinctive identities that could be leveraged to market local goods and attract tourists. Within this context, Yasu Kōhei's unique biography, along with his cameras and writings, became redefined as a significant attraction that distinguishes Fujisawa from other towns.

The Fujisawa International Friendship Association (FIFA), which co-hosted the meeting with the representatives of Antigua Guatemala, is an active group in the organization of international exchange activities. Established in 1983 and acknowledged by the Japanese government and counterparts abroad, FIFA's activities focus on promoting language exchange programs.[43] The renewed attention to Yasu Kōhei's biography coincided with the search for opportunities to participate in the internationalization initiative. Seizing related occasions over the following decades, FIFA played a big role in welcoming guests from Guatemala and hosting local activities on Yasu. FIFA's commitment culminated in a public grant for travel to Antigua Guatemala for the purpose of acquiring Yasu's objects and bringing them to Japan.

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39 For a discussion of Japan's *kokusaika* campaign, see, Befu (2003), Davis (2002), Ertl (2010), Goodman (2007), Knight (1993), Mannari and Befu (1983), Nonaka (2020), O'Toole (2001), and Yamaguchi (1988)

40 Knight 1993, p. 203.

41 Ibid., p. 212.

42 Ibid., p. 214.

43 In 1993, to mark their tenth anniversary, FIFA established a sister association with the Australian Duaringa Shire. In 1994, FIFA was awarded the Best Affiliation Award by the Australian Sister City Association. In the subsequent years, FIFA expanded its programs to include a Chinese-Japanese language course and promoted overseas exchange programs for high school students and residents. In 1998, FIFA received a special award from The Japan Foundation, along with awards for Best Sister City Cooperation and Best Single Project from the Australian Sister City Association. In 1999, FIFA was once again honored with a Special Award from The Japan Foundation and recognized for the 10th Anniversary of the Fujisawa Students Homestay Program. For a discussion on FIFA's activities in the sister-city program, see Sato and H. Sasaki (2002).

屋須弘平とグアテマラ ①

明治初期の激動の時代に、世界へ目を向け中南米グアテマラへ渡った屋須弘平。町では、先人の偉業をたたえ、国際性を身に付けるため、同国アンティグア市との友好親善提携へ向けて取り進めています。

今月号では、縁結び役となった屋須弘平と彼が愛したグアテマラについて紹介します。

1846（弘化３年）	藤沢町に生まれる
1861（文久３年）	江戸・横浜で漢学・医学等を学ぶ（15歳）
1867（明治元年）	藤沢へ帰郷し医業に従事（21歳）
1871（明治４年）	弟と共に上京
1875（明治８年）	横浜を出航、メキシコへ入国（29歳）
1878（明治21年）	グアテマラ国移住
1889（明治22年）	一時帰国（41歳）
1890（明治23年）	グアテマラ再入国
1891（明治24年）	結婚（43歳）
1895（明治28年）	アンティグア市へ移住、写真館経営
1917（大正６年）	アンティグア市で生涯を閉じる（71歳）

中南米移住の先駆者

鮮烈な生涯をグアテマラで

マヤ文明の面影を残すグアテマラ国

グアテマラ共和国アンティグア市長から手紙 友好親善へ大きく前進

天ケ沢・木ノ中・吉高

新たに三団地が造成

六十年度分までの造成が完了した下大籠団地

屋須弘平（上）とアンティグア市長からの手紙（下）

JUAN J. DE JESUS YAS
BY DICIEMBRE 1944
FUJISAWA INSTE JAPON
NO ES FRIEND 1917, ANTIGUA

Figure 129: Two pages from the 1989 exhibition brochure, “Exhibition of Five Prefectural Residents Who Contributed to International Friendship,” organized by the Iwate Prefectural Library in Morioka. These pages introduce readers and visitors to Yasu’s migrant biography and include a letter from the mayor of Antigua Guatemala expressing interest in establishing a sister city relationship with Fujisawa

“Fujisawa-Guatemala Friendship Meeting”

In a welcoming address at the “Reunion de la Amistad Fujisawa-Guatemala,” (Friendship Reunion Fujisawa-Guatemala) held in Fujisawa on November 12, 1986, with the objective of establishing a sister city relationship with Antigua Guatemala, Sato Motoru, the town mayor and president of FIFA, outlined the purpose of the meeting. He first situated Yasu Kōhei within the sociopolitical context of Meiji Japan, highlighting the unique mix of skills that brought him to Central America and later to Peru. Sato then underscored Yasu’s contemporary relevance as a subject of historical studies on Latin America and photography. He emphasized the importance of providing Fujisawans the opportunity to learn about Yasu’s and the nature of internationality (*kokusaisei*) through four invited lectures. In conclusion, Sato expressed the hope that the event would “deepen our understanding of Guatemala, Antigua, and Yasu Kōhei,” and “further promote international friendship” (*kokusai shinzen*).[44]

At that time, knowledge of Yasu Kōhei was largely confined to a small circle of specialists with a cosmopolitan outlook. Aside from Yamaki’s brief text on Yasu Kōhei, which thematized this historical figure at the local level, his relevance was hardly acknowledged in Fujisawa. The sudden attention from outside the town regarding this “pioneer of internationalization” likely sparked some intrigue. According to *Iwate Nippo*, the regional

44 Fujisawa International Friendship Association and Fujisawa-cho 1986, p. 1.

newspaper, the "Reunión de la Amistad" was attended by about 400 people.[45] During the four-hour meeting, senator Shiga Setsu gave a lecture on Latin American-Japanese international friendship; the Guatemalan diplomat Jorge Mario Rueda López spoke about Guatemala and Antigua; Oyama Takuya presented an analysis of Yasu's charisma; and Kikuchi Ikuzō recounted his encounter with Yasu's legacy in Guatemala.[46]

Two weeks later, on November 28, an article titled "Fujisawa-Guatemala Friendship Meeting" was published in the Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre*. The author elaborated on the event and its significance to the readers:

> Fujisawa, a small village of 12,000 people in Iwate Prefecture, northern Japan, recently hosted the "Fujisawa-Guatemala Friendship Meeting." The mayor of this town, Mr. Momoru Sato, said allusive words and made special mention of Antigua, because this was the city where the first Japanese emigrant resided in 1878, Mr. Yazi [sic].
> Yazi [sic], the first Japanese immigrant to Latin America, lived in Fujisawa before coming to our continent, so his relatives and descendants still live there.
> The celebration consisted of a whole day dedicated to the memory of Mr. Yazi [sic], his wife, a native to Guatemala, and to Antigua Guatemala.
> Jorge Mario Rueda López, First Secretary and Consul of the Embassy, and José Eduardo Zarco, representative of *Prensa Libre*, attended on behalf of our country.
> On the evening of the 11th of this month, a delegation that organized the friendship celebration between the two cities received Rueda López and Mr. Zarco and then offered a dinner in honor of Guatemala.
> On the 12th [of this month], at 9 a.m., the representatives of our country were taken to the Fujisawa municipal palace, where they were welcomed by the children of the city; each carried a flag of our country.
> After the reception, the event moved to the assembly hall, and mayor Sato spoke to commemorate the day.
> Special guests at the event were Mr. Setsu Shiga, a member of the Japanese House of Representatives; Mr. Takuya Oyama, a high school teacher and author of a novel about Mr. Yazi [sic]; Ikuzo Kikuchi, a journalist from the Asahi newspaper in Tokyo; and Jorge Mario Rueda López, from the Guatemalan Embassy.
> After the mayor's words, each of the guests gave a speech of about 20 minutes; then an audio-visual presentation was made with photographs of Antigua Guatemala and Mr. Yazi [sic]. Finally, the "tea ceremony," a peculiar Japanese way of welcoming guests, was performed, and a banquet was offered to the participants.
> Mr. Jorge Mario Rueda López, Secretary of the Guatemalan Embassy in Japan, thanked the guests with an expressive speech.[47]

In this detailed report on the Guatemalan visit to Fujisawa is the mentioning of the "tea ceremony." As foreign diplomats in Japan are certainly aware, the ceremony is frequently performed as a traditional welcoming gesture. The "peculiar Japanese way" that the mention of the tea ceremony evokes raises questions that resonate with criticisms of Japan's internationalization campaign formulated by academic observers. John Knight considers *kokusaika* a framework that reinforces nationalist identity rather than the opposite, as "it tends to have the effect of reflecting back one's cultural difference as a Japanese." In this

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45 "The First Step in a Great Exchange: Fujisawa-cho and Antigua" (盛大に交流第一歩—藤沢町 アンティグア市), *Iwate Nippo*, 1986.

46 Fujisawa International Friendship Association and Fujisawa-cho 1986.

47 "Reunión de la amistad Fujisawa-Guatemala," *Prensa Libre*, November 28, 1986.

第15・16合併号
（5月1日～31日版）
中南米新聞
LA GACETA NIPPO-LATINOAMERICANA
かけ橋
岩手県 藤沢町
グアテマラ アンティグア市
知られざる明治の傑物
日系移民の先駆者

Figure 130: A newspaper clipping from *La Gaceta Nippo-latinoamericana* reporting on Yasu Kōhei as a pioneer of nikkei emigration

sense, he argues that the internationalization campaign "functions as both a sophisticated form of cultural diplomacy directed at other countries and an ideological campaign aimed at fostering nationalist sentiment among the domestic population."[48].

The assessment of the extent to which *kokusaika* exerts a nationalist influence exceeds the scope of my argument. However, Knight's observation that it functions as a form of cultural diplomacy undoubtedly aligns with the case at hand. A news clip titled "Bridging," which was also included in the pamphlet of the 1986 meeting, reported on the proposal for such a bond between Fujisawa and Antigua Guatemala (figure 130). Published months before the meeting, the article noted that there were already fifty-three sister city projects between Japan and Central and South American countries, many of which were "related to Nikkei migrants." Yasu Kōhei, with his "distinguished achievements," the author asserts, would help establish the link between the town in Tōhoku and the old capital of Guatemala.

The history of the sister-city initiative is recalled in an English article by Oyama Takuya, the high school teacher and local historian. According to Oyama, he had received the first letter on the matter in 1985, a year before the Fujisawa-Guatemala friendship meeting, from the Japanese embassy in Guatemala.[49] Oyama's article quotes the November 13, 1986, edition of *Iwate Nippo*, which summarized the Fujisawa-Guatemala friendship meeting and stated that the next step was "to make concrete the sister-city plan." The quoted newspaper report also mentioned a second event, "a welcoming party to deepen the friendship between the two countries," which was possibly held in Antigua Guatemala.[50] An address given by the mayor of Antigua, "Mr. E. S. Medina," bespoke his enthusiasm to build on the

48 Knight 1993, p. 204.

49 Oyama 1987, p. 12.

50 The second event mentioned by Oyama is perplexing, as the mayor of Antigua was not among the Guatemalan visitors who attended the meeting in Fujisawa. The gathering may have occurred in Guatemala and was linked to the Japanese embassy.

mutual relationship. As quoted in the newspaper , and translated by Oyama, "When we succeed in concluding the Sister City Affiliation, we will suggest that an avenue of Antigua city should be named 'Fujisawa Avenue' in honor of this accomplishment and also that a 'Monument of Yasu' should be erected."[51]

I did not find information on whether the sister city project ever was formally pursued. However, in the mid-1980s, the Guatemalan and Japanese sides both expressed their interest in establishing a bond through their connection to Yasu Kōhei. The involvement of politicians and diplomats, in alignment with the Japanese government's internationalization campaign, suggests a seriousness in the proposal. Although the project ultimately did not come to fruition, possibly because of the changing personnel in the diplomatic and administrative offices, the seeds had been laid for a deepening engagement of Fujisawans with the legacy of Yasu Kōhei had been laid.[52]

In the first stage of the Fujisawan appropriation of the legacy of Yasu Kōhei, information arrived passively through texts and visitors carrying their findings to Fujisawa. In the second stage, local actors became more involved in discovering Yasu, integrating him into local history, and exploring the potential to weave connections around his legacy. For the small town of Fujisawa, located in the remote mountainous region of northeastern Japan, building a collection related to Yasu was not merely a matter of commemoration. Instead, the narrative of Yasu's life as a Japanese pioneer who traveled overseas expressed local visions of connecting the community with other parts of the world. In this context, the Fujisawa International Friendship Association played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose. While the 1986 friendship meeting could be perceived as a gesture that did little more than to register Yasu Kōhei as a cultural token in an attempt at internationalization, it would be misleading to reduce the outcome to a mere reaffirmation of a historical narrative. It was through such public engagement and local historical writing that, more than a decade later, the ground was prepared to claim Yasu's artifacts as cultural property of Fujisawa.

Curating a Preliminary Collection in Guatemala

In my examination of the actors involved in establishing a connection between Guatemala and Japan, public officials and professional authors have so far taken center stage. Diplomats have facilitated the circulation of material resources and information across the Pacific, while researchers proficient in Spanish and Japanese have written essays on Yasu Kōhei. Less obvious is the role of Japanese expatriates residing in Guatemala, who made significant contributions to the homecoming of Yasu Kōhei narrated in this chapter.

Among them, Kojima Hideo and his wife, Kojima Keiko, played an important role in pointing Japanese visitors to the interesting story to be discovered. They were first contacted by Luis Luján Muñoz after the earthquake in 1976, who asked for assistance with the Japanese documents found among the fragile glass negatives. By that time, the Kojimas had been living in Guatemala for about ten years. They entertained close connections to the Japanese embassy. As not many stories about Japanese immigrants in Guatemala were known at the time, they were intrigued by our protagonist. They therefore agreed to

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51 Oyama 1987, pp. 9–10.

52 In 2017, ambassador Takahashi recalled that he planned to collaborate with the mayor of Antigua to facilitate the sister city project, which included erecting a commemorative plaque (記念碑) of Yasu in a park in Antigua and naming a street after Fujisawa. However, this plan was not carried through due to the sudden death of the mayor.

朝日新聞
1985年(昭和60年)10月24日 木曜日

グアテマラで足跡見直し

中南米移住の先駆者 写真師・屋須弘平氏

わが国からの最初の中南米移住者である東磐井郡藤沢町出身、故屋須弘平氏の功績を見直そうという運動が、現地のグアテマラで起きている。屋須氏は百七年前、当地に渡って写真館を営み、成功した人。その先駆者としての功績をたたえて、グアテマラの日本人会がこのほど、現地住む遺族に連絡とともに遺品を保存する展示ケースを贈ったのをはじめ、同氏の写真展も開かれた。また、グアテマラ・アンティグア市と藤沢町の間で姉妹都市を結ぶ話も出ている。

グアテマラ移住当時の屋須弘平氏（左）と妻マリアさん

日本人会が墓碑建立 「遺作展」も開かれる

屋須氏は独学を修め、フランス、スペイン語がたん能だった。明治七年、来日したメキシコの金星観測隊の通訳をしたことが縁でメキシコに渡り、同十一年、グアテマラに移り住んだ。古都アンティグア市が気に入り、独学で写真技術を学び、写真館を構えた。十五年後、一時帰国したが、再びアンティグア市に移り住み、現地の女性と結婚。大正六年に七十一歳で亡くなった。現在孫のマルガリータ・ノリエガさん(34)がアンティグア市に住んでいる。

去年十月、グアテマラに赴任した日本大使館の高橋利巳総領事が屋須氏の半生に関心を持ち、「屋須氏は日本人移民の先駆者。なんとか記念を残したい」と思い立った。現地日本人会に呼びかけてその

日本人会から贈られた陳列ケースの前に立つ屋須氏の孫マルガリータ・ノエリガさん（左）と、その娘さん＝グアテマラ・アンティグア市で

出身地・藤沢町とアンティグア市 姉妹都市の機運も

ための資金約百万円を募った。

屋須氏には跡継ぎがなかったので、まずとし八月、ノリエガ家の墓地に墓碑を建て慰霊した。また、同家には屋須氏によるスペイン製の日記帳、トランク、すりなどの遺品が残されていたので、同じころ、ガラス製の遺品陳列ケースを作り、同家に贈った。ノリエガさんは「屋須の民国の人たちから立派な贈り物をいただき、こんなうれしいことはない」と感激していたという。

また、アンティグア市では、七月から八月にかけて市内の博物館で、屋須氏の撮った写真展を開いた。

さらに最近、藤沢町とアンティグア市の間で、姉妹都市を結ぶ話が持ち上がった。藤沢町は「地元でも、屋須氏のことはほとんど知られていない。アンティグア市に記念碑を建てるなどして足跡を見直したい」と意欲的だ。

高橋総領事は「屋須氏のことは日本では忘れ去られている。移民が始まって一世紀。多くの日本人が海外に出て活躍するようになった今こそ、先駆者の労苦を見つめ直してもいいのではないか」と強調している。

Figure 131: Newspaper clipping about Yasu's "ihin" in Antigua Guatemala. Here Irma Norma is pictured with her mother in front of the on-site archive of Yasu in their home

collaborate with Luján Muñoz and Terada Kazuo on the excavation of information about Yasu.[53]

According to information provided by Kojima Hideo and Keiko, the Japanese Association (Nihonjin-kai 日本人会) in Guatemala played a significant role in promoting exchanges between the two countries.[54] While I did not find more information on the members of the Japanese Association or details about their activities, their role in promoting Yasu's legacy is reflected in initiatives to preserve his personal possessions. In 1985, the Association raised funds, together with the Japanese embassy, to commemorate this "pioneer of Japanese emigration." Approximately one million Japanese yen were collected and used to refurbish the tomb of Yasu and his wife and acquire a showcase, which was donated to the Noriegas to create a preliminary display of Yasu's memoirs, photographs, and other objects in their home.[55] Initiated by the embassy and the association of Japanese residents, a parallel effort to that undertaken by Guatemalan scholars and institutions thus formed around the goal of preserving Yasu Kōhei's legacy. This initiative began with the Kojimas' encounter with Luján Muñoz and Terada. It expressed the incipient Japanese interest in understanding Yasu's arrival and life in Central America. Following the initial contacts, efforts were made to reach out to Fujisawa, Iwate.

The preliminary collection displayed in the showcase donated by the association of Japanese residents comprised family photographs, notes, religious memorabilia, and photographic equipment. In the photo accompanying the *Asahi Shimbun* article from October 24, 1985, Irma Noriega stands beside her mother, Margarita, and the cabinet showcasing Yasu's items (figure 131). In her hands, Margarita holds a framed picture of Yasu and María's wedding. This photograph marks a special moment, as the same items that later moved into public exhibitions are here combined into an on-site assemblage of commemoration within the Noriega family's private household.

It appears that this heterogeneous collection of items, some of which were probably used by José Domingo Noriega after Yasu's death, was of low priority for the experts at Fototeca Guatemala. In contrast, they served as a testament to the Japanese community's forebears and their social lives. Throughout the 1980s, several Japanese travelers, likely suggested by embassy staff, visited the Noriegas to learn about Yasu and his story. As public interest in Yasu's legacy grew, the status of the familial objects evolved.[56] The groundwork for this evolution was laid by Japanese residents in Guatemala who, long before the items were purchased by the Fujisawa municipality, had collaborated with the Noriega family in the creation of an on-site archive of Yasu.

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53 All information attributed to the Kojimas is from an interview with Kojima Hideo and Kojima Keiko, March 31, 2018, Guatemala City. The document they read for Luján Muñoz is the letter sent to Yasu by his nephew Matsutani Eigo. This letter is not in the Fujisawa collection, and only a photocopy exists in CIRMA. It is likely that Luján Muñoz retained the original.

54 According to the Kojimas, the establishment of the Japanese Association was proposed by ambassador Mori Junzo. Their estimate of the size of the Japanese expatriate community in Guatemala was comparative. They offered that in 2018, there were approximately 20,000 Chinese living in Guatemala, 2,000 Koreans, and 200 Japanese, or possibly even fewer. Interview with Kojima Hideo and Kojima Keiko, March 31, 2018, Guatemala City.

55 "Reviewing the footprints in Guatemala: Japanese association erects a tombstone and holds an exhibition of posthumous works" (グアテマラで足跡見直しー日本人会が墓碑建立 遺作展も開かれる) *Asahi Shimbun*, October 24, 1985.

56 Woodham et al. 2017, p. 14.

From Guatemala to Japanese Cultural Property

The "homecoming" of Yasu Kōhei's objects to Fujisawa began in the 1980s. Professional writers, academics, and businessmen provided the initial impulse by transmitting what they learned in Guatemala to people in northeastern Japan. As Yasu's biography was written time and again, a coherent narrative emerged. The acquisition of material evidence became desirable to provide testimony of his exploits, the sentimental bond to his birthplace, and his photographic art (figure 132). In the following pages, I will examine how Yasu's seemingly random heirlooms were extracted from the private and domestic sphere and imbued with meanings relevant to the collective memory of the people of Fujisawa. This analysis aims to illustrate how these objects evolved into public property that reflects a shared past, despite their origins half a world away. This process transformed the personal collection assembled in Antigua Guatemala into a tangible cultural heritage that symbolizes the small town of Fujisawa, Iwate.

The nature of the Fujisawa collection presents a compelling example of what Appadurai refers to as the archive of aspiration.[57] From the outset, Yasu was regarded as an inspiration that brought international recognition to Fujisawa. The acquisition of his objects, along with subsequent events, further reinforced this interpretation. Therefore, I propose, with Appadurai, that we view this archive not as "the tomb of the accidental trace," but rather as 'the material site of the collective will to remember."[58]

Yasu Kōhei no Ihin: Articles Left by Yasu Kōhei

Titled "Yasu Kōhei no Ihin" (屋須弘平の遺品), which translates to "articles left by Yasu Kōhei," the Fujisawa collection includes personal items left behind by Yasu at the time of his death in Guatemala, as well as several positive prints from the CIRMA collection. The title strongly suggests the private nature of the objects on display, and the collection was established as *bunkazai* (文化財), the Japanese equivalent of cultural property or cultural heritage, of the Fujisawa municipality.[59] Given that this collection is financed by a public cultural property fund, the Guatemalan objects have effectively been transformed into a collection of Japanese cultural property.

On April 8, 2004, an article titled "Yasu Kōhei's Spirit Returns to His Hometown" was published in the regional section of the *Iwate Nippo*. The article began with the following paragraph:

> About one hundred and twenty years ago, Yasu Kōhei from Fujisawa town, the first Japanese citizen to travel to Guatemala in Central and South America, ended his life as a photographer in a dramatic time; the things he left behind will return to his hometown. In addition to the exhibition at the Cultural Festival in October, the community will set up a permanent exhibition in the Town Hall so that future generations can learn about the footprints of their predecessors.[60]

The article announced the upcoming events that would bring Yasu Kōhei's collection into existence. About two weeks later, officials from the Fujisawa municipality and members

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57 Appadurai 2003, p. 14.

58 Ibid., pp. 16–17.

59 After Fujisawa was integrated into the neighboring city of Ichinoseki in 2011, the status of the collection changed to Cultural Property of Fujisawa, Ichinoseki.

60 "屋須弘平の「魂」里帰り—グアテマラに渡った藤沢の写真家," *Iwate Nippo*, February 12, 2004.

Figure 132: Three photographs taken at the 1999 exhibition in honor of Yasu Kōhei in Fujisawa, Iwate

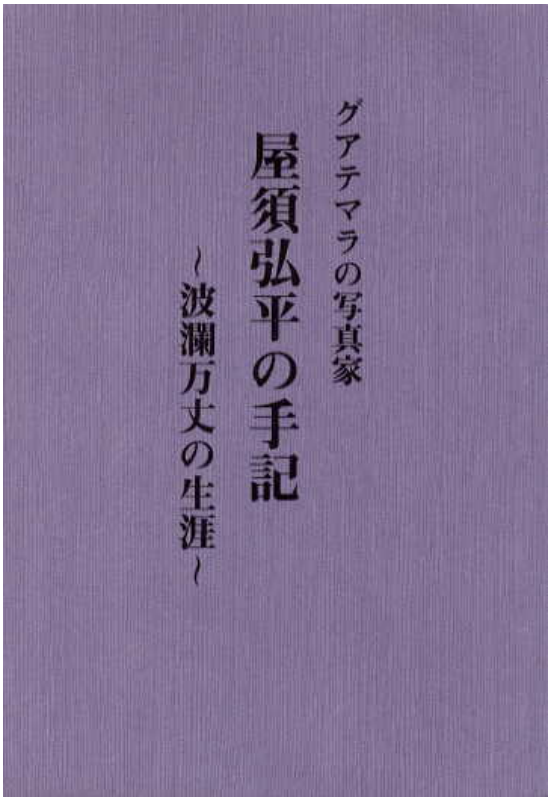

Figure 133: Kosaka Ayako's 2004 Japanese translation of Yasu Kōhei's *Memorias*

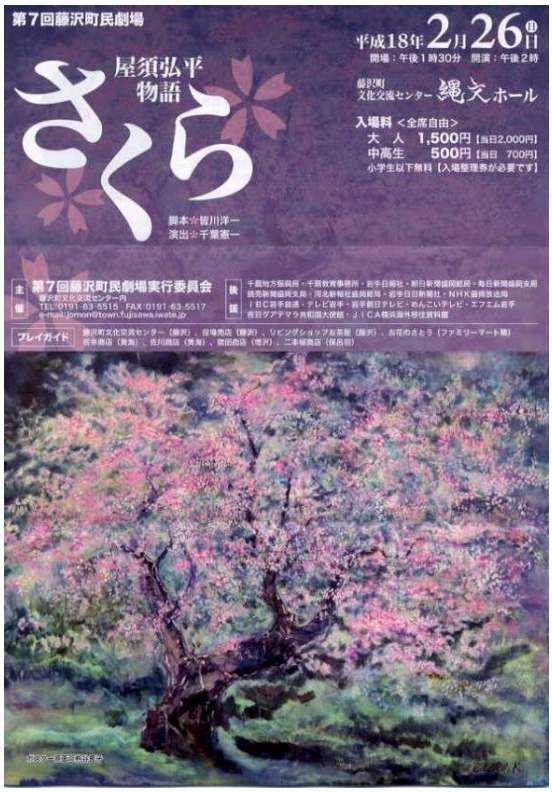

Figure 134: Premiere poster for *Sakura, the Story of Yasu Kōhei*, which was performed by the Fujisawa Community Theater at the Fujisawa Cultural Center in 2006

of the Fujisawa International Friendship Association embarked on their journey to Antigua Guatemala. With the assistance of the Japanese embassy in Guatemala, they finalized the purchase of Yasu's personal possessions from the Noriega family, as well as photographic prints from the Fototeca Guatemala.[61]

In November 2004, the collection was displayed in its entirety for the first time in an inauguration ceremony attended by the Guatemalan ambassador. As shown in the photo accompanying the news article that describes the event, each item was given proper space, and special lighting was used to accentuate the photographs and exhibited objects. Ten years later, on my first visit to Fujisawa, the collection was displayed on a much reduced scale. It occupied a corner of a public building that also housed a library and an auditorium. The collection was the only permanent exhibition in that space, but it was occasionally joined by displays of children's paintings and similar objects. The location and spatial arrangement of the collection visibly reflected the intention to incorporate Yasu Kōhei's material vestiges into a contemporary space where townspeople gather and seek information.

Similar to my analysis of the Fotografía Japonesa collection of photographs at the Fototeca Guatemala, the goal here is to examine how such a collection is materialized, from

61 Interview with Sagawa Shin, May 20, 2014. According to Sagawa, one of the representatives of the Fujisawa municipality involved in this project, he met Fujiwara Toshio and Kosaka Ayako in Tokyo to discuss how to bring Yasu Kōhei's belongings back to Japan. In addition to this interview, I obtained the information presented in this section from the acquisition proposal for the Fujisawa collection, which includes a list detailing the items to be purchased.

the initial thoughts and proposals to applications, selections, negotiations, categorization, and ultimately, its display. While the way that townspeople ultimately came to perceive the collection and the protagonist it presented is very relevant, it fell outside the scope of the research that I was able to conduct.

My understanding of the creation of the Fujisawa collection is derived from a comparative analysis of the pre-purchase list and the final catalog of the collection. As early as 1985, a selection process was already underway, conducted by the Noriega family and the Japanese Association in Guatemala, to identify items suitable for display in the glass case at the family home. However, I lack detailed information about this selection process and insights into what transpired in the subsequent decade concerning these objects and those that remained out of the public eye. My research was made possible thanks to the support of Fujisawa Branch Office of Ichinoseki City Hall and the community center, which provided access to the extensive documentation detailing the process of obtaining items from the Noriega family in Antigua Guatemala and transferring them to the town of Fujisawa.

According to the documents related to the Yasu Kōhei no Ihin collection, the objective was to create a lasting record of Yasu Kōhei as a trailblazer of trans-Pacific connections and to highlight his contributions to international relations. Based on this principle, the collection consisting of 156 items was established, 136 of which were obtained from the Noriega family. The remaining 20 items are photographic prints made at the Fototeca Guatemala. The published catalog accompanying the inauguration of the permanent exhibition in 2004 lists these items, each accompanied by essential reference information. Below is a categorization I have created, following the order that the catalog suggests, of the items selected in Antigua and brought back for preservation in Fujisawa, Ichinoseki:

Table 7.1: Classification of items in the *Ihin* (Fujisawa) collection

Class	**Item No.**
Camera, lenses, and tools related to Yasu Kōhei's photographic practice	1–46, 50, 99, 102–132
Dictionaries and maps published in Spanish, French, and Japanese in the nineteenth century	60–63, 136
Religious objects that may have been used by Yasu	47–49
Papers (writings, business cards, wedding invitations, testament) related to Yasu	53–59
Images (photographic reproductions) pertaining to devotional subjects	52
Photographs of Yas-Noriega family and acquaintances	51, 64–71, 73, 76–77, 84, 101
Photographic positives and positives (ferrotypes, glass plates, mounted cards) of unidentified sitters and landscape	72, 74–75, 78–83, 85–98, 100, 134–135
other objects (wood box, suitcase)	99, 133

Source: Collection catalog

As their tangible cultural property (有形文化財) classification categorizes these items as "Fine Arts and Crafts" (美術工芸品), the selection must conform to specific criteria. A significant portion is marked as related to early photography. Other items provide a visual record of social life in Guatemala.

On permanent display, a smaller number of items are exhibited in three glass cases (figure 135). Arranged neatly inside the boxes, each item is accompanied by the same text published in the catalog. Several photographic prints were purchased simultaneously from Fototeca Guatemala, with eight of them exhibited on the wall behind the glass cases. Reproduced in a larger size and with higher technical quality, these photographs serve

Figure 135: Permanent Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei no Ihin at Fujisawa Community Center in Fujisawa, Ichinoseki, 2014

as a testament to Yasu Kōhei's legacy as a pioneer in photography in a distant country. Compared with the Fotografía Japonesa collection at the Fototeca Guatemala, the Fujisawa collection is of less use for academic research as it offers almost no additional information beyond the size and title of each item. This is understandable, as the collection is maintained by members of a civic group and the municipal employees. Both archives provide very limited information regarding the pre-archival conditions and contexts.

Examining the items that the Noriega family offered along with the final composition of the collection facilitates a better understanding of the rationales that structure the archive. Among the selected items were Yasu's Spanish memoirs and several notes in Japanese, which were subsequently translated by the anthropologist Kosaka Ayako. Most of Yasu's photographic equipment, such as cameras, lenses, wooden racks for glass plates, and various bottles, was also included. The collection also featured Yasu's Catholic reading book, along with dictionaries in Japanese-French and Spanish-French, as well as a world map. These printed items are cultural objects that reflect on Meiji Japan's significant exchange with the outside world and reinforce Yasu's status as a man of letters. Finally, some photographs featuring Yasu with his wife and mother-in-law, as well as a few color prints, made their way to Fujisawa.

Items that were not selected can reveal as much as those that were included. Pondering possible reasons for their perceived lesser relevance or value enables insights into the messages that the archive was intended to convey. Items and photographs that had no clear link to Yasu, along with some letters in Spanish, were rejected by the buyers from Japan. Other items, battered by the earthquake that brought them to light, were in poor material

condition, such as broken albumen prints. Yet others may have been deemed irrelevant to the history that the collection was intended to represent, such as a card sent by Yasu's family in Fujisawa to Irma Noriega.[62]

Beginning in the 1980s and culminating in its establishment in 2004, the creation of the Fujisawa collection involved dedicated individuals and groups who worked to overcome challenges posed by geography and language. Through the lengthy process of negotiating acquisitions and assembling a collection representing an individual who had emigrated multiple generations ago, layers of meaning were added to the objects. The bonds with his Japanese family that Yasu Kōhei had maintained during his lifetime, his suitability for the narration of regional historical events, and the quality of his photography all contributed to his becoming a cultural symbol of Fujisawa, upon the homecoming of his the material vestiges of his life to the town where he had spent his childhood.

The Fujisawa collection illustrates how "material possessions of all kinds, including often quite mundane objects, [are] used to tell and recall stories and memories."[63] While the story unfolded in a place and time to which most contemporary inhabitants of Fujisawa have not had access, it offers a means for individuals to imagine themselves through aspiration and desire.[64] This process of identity formation is supported by the materialization of the collection, which is situated at the community center, at the heart of present-day Fujisawa. However, as I will discuss in more detail in the epilogue, it was through the dramatic reconstruction of Yasu Kōhei's migrant biography in a theater play named *Sakura* that the Guatemalan objects were animated and enacted, thereby contributing to the creation of a collective identity for Fujisawa.

Before describing the integration of the Fujisawa collection into Japan's official cultural property system in the final section of this chapter, I would like to briefly revisit the familial aspect of creating a Yasu Kōhei collection in his hometown. As Penelope Papailias describes, the family archive can be viewed as an institution of memory.[65] Similar to the Noriegas in Guatemala, the Yasu family serves as a meeting point for outside visitors who wish to inquire about Yasu Kōhei. While both families possess documents related to Yasu's objects, they hold different memories, experiences, and artifacts from generations past, leading to distinct forms of engagement. This transgenerational practice of remembrance varies between the Yasu family in Fujisawa and the Noriega family in Antigua.

For instance, Irma Noriega, with her personal connection to the place and to José Domingo Noriega, expressed her sentimental awareness of the value of these objects.[66] In contrast, Yasu's Japanese descendants were two generations apart from those who had met Yasu Kōhei, and they knew little about Latin America. Here, the family memories were anchored by conversations with Kōhei's younger brother Kahei and his children and grandchildren, the generation that witnessed the rediscovery of Yasu Kōhei's photography in the 1970s. For example, Kisaburo, the nephew mentioned in Yasu Kōhei's letters as a newborn, was remembered as always wanting to go to Guatemala to see where the uncle

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62 In one instance, I found a mounted photograph of the panoramic view of Guatemala City, dated by Yasu as 1882. One wonders where these deteriorating images ended up. After two rounds of selection by CIRMA and by the Japanese buyers from Fujisawa, they were rejected for archival re-purposing. in the case of the photograph of the panorama, this was despite its singular quality as a very early example of Yasu's photographic practice.

63 Woodham et al. 2017, p. 9.

64 Appadurai 2003, pp. 24–25.

65 Papailias 2005, p. 203.

66 Woodham et al. 2017, pp. 203–220.

had lived. The letters and photographs Yasu Kōhei sent home were well-preserved, serving as tangible links to his past, representing another collection on Yasu in Fujisawa, alongside that purchased by the town from the Noriega family.

Japanese Cultural Heritage

The Fujisawa collection was planned from the outset to be financed with public funds allocated for tangible cultural property by the Fujisawa municipality. This approach secured the necessary financial resources and enhanced the recognition of Yasu Kōhei's biography and photography at administrative levels beyond the municipality. There are six different categories of Japanese cultural property: Tangible Cultural Properties (有形文化財), Intangible Cultural Properties (無形文化財), Folk Cultural Properties (民俗文化財), Monuments (記念物), Cultural Landscapes (文化的景観), and Groups of Traditional Buildings (伝統的建造物群).[67] Tangible cultural properties encompass items identified as works of art or handicrafts.[68] In this taxonomy, the collection of Yasu's objects was designated as tangible cultural property in the category of arts and crafts. After Fujisawa was merged into the neighboring city of Ichinoseki in 2011, the attribution of the cultural property passed to Ichinoseki City on June 29, 2012, as noted on the website of Cultural Heritage Online (文化遺産オンライン). A selection of objects is presented on the website, along with a brief description of Yasu Kōhei's biography (figure 136):

> [This collection contains] 156 items and 181 belonging to Yasu Kōhei, a native of the former Fujisawa town (now Fujisawa town, Ichinoseki City) who worked as an interpreter and photographer in Central and South America during the Meiji era.
> Among these items are dictionaries, atlases, and memoirs owned by Yasu, as well as valuable photographic equipment from the time he opened a photo shop in Guatemala. The photographs of the inauguration of the president of Guatemala and the cathedral that was devastated by the earthquake in 1976 showcase the high level of his photographic skills.
> Yasu Kōhei is regarded as a representative figure in the human exchanges of modern Japanese diplomatic history, and his belongings are considered valuable in considering modern Japanese diplomacy with Central and South America.

Published on the website of Japanese Cultural Heritage Online, this description highlights Yasu Kōhei's cultural contributions in Guatemala and underscores the importance of his overseas activities within a diplomatic context.[69] This emphasis warrants the inclusion of items that may seem unrelated to traditional Japanese arts and crafts. Although the description is brief, it provides visitors of the Fujisawa collection with an adequate overview of its composition. Accompanying the description is a selection of seven items. These include digital reproductions of three photographic prints from Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA (two depicting the colonial town of Antigua and one featuring Yasu in a kimono); the framed wedding photograph of Yasu Kōhei and María Noriega; the wedding invitation

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67 https://japan-heritage.bunka.go.jp/ja/culturalproperties/classification/

68 For a detailed discussion of the evolution of Japanese heritage, as well as related categories and regulations, see Akagawa (2015, pp. 46–78)

69 https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/detail/260659. Since preparing these lines, this brief description has been further condensed into two sentences: "These items were discovered at the home of Yasu Kōhei's family in Guatemala after the earthquake in 1976. Information from the embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitated their acquisition in 2004." According to the Wayback Machine at archive.org, this change appears to have occurred after 2024.

Figure 136: The page about the "Yasu Kōhei no Ihin" collection on the Cultural Heritage Online website, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan

card; a stamp for his studio business; and Yasu's memoirs.

The Fujisawa collection, "Yasu Kōhei no Ihin," was established as cultural property for the small town of Fujisawa. While its materials are derived from profoundly Guatemalan contexts, Yasu Kōhei's biography, the collective elaboration of various authors since the 1970s, provides a discursive framework for its transformation into the cultural heritage of a Japanese town. As discussed in this chapter, the discursive creation of Yasu as an aspiring Meiji youngster, a great photographer, and a pioneer of Japanese emigration to the Americas was facilitated by the collaboration of his blood relatives and his marital kin, along with Japanese expatriates, diplomats, and several generations of professional writers.

The fact that Yasu's objects now reside at the community center in Fujisawa does not imply their finality. Since their incorporation into the Japanese registry of cultural property, events and exhibitions continue to add to their recognition.[70] As will be discussed in the next chapter, pieces from the Fujisawa collection and prints obtained in Guatemala have been utilized in art exhibitions in Tokyo and Yokohama, as well as in events on Japan's

[70] The general guidelines issued by the Japanese government indicate several ways to utilize cultural properties, including "interpretation and presentation to the public and the establishment of museums, theatres, and other public facilities and centres for cultural properties research" (Agency for Cultural Affairs (2011), cited from Akagawa (2015, p. 61).

emigration history. The community theater group of Fujisawa has developed a play named *Sakura* that was performed at several of these exhibitions. As evoked in Appadurai's call for the archive of aspiration, the *Ihin* collection of Yasu's objects as acquired a new social life in Fujisawa.[71] Through the active engagement of Fujisawans, the collection evolves into a tangible representation of the collective desire to remember and commemorate history.

* * *

Two waves of migration in Japan's history have defined Yasu Kōhei's trajectory. The first wave was the pre-World War II emigration to the Americas, in which Yasu Kōhei was involved as an early participant. The second wave consists of the "return migration" of the descendants of prewar Japanese emigrants, whose movement to Japan in the 1980s prompted society to reevaluate its past of emigration. This chapter has focused on the second wave, during which Yasu's Guatemalan material vestiges were swept back "home" along with his migrant biography.

A common approach to Yasu's transnational biography is to situate him within historical narratives that tend to conform to a national one. The nationalist framework can be applied to the histories of Japanese migration, photography, and modernization, leading authors to focus on his projected nostalgia for his homeland rather than the country in which he spent the productive years of his life. In contrast to portrayals that depict Yasu as a champion of the national narrative, other authors have highlighted his regional ties, constructing him as a figure whose marginality during the Meiji period shaped his trajectory abroad.

The selectivity in the portrayal of Yasu's biography is also evident in the objects chosen to present him as a distinguished son of Fujisawa and a regional intellectual whose spirit of adventure can serve as a model for future generations. The materiality of the archival objects, along with the spaces in which they are preserved and displayed, conditions their translocation from local municipalities to the authoritative institutions of art and education in metropolitan centers.

The contemporary construction of Yasu's biography, or, in Penelope Papailias words, the "migrant's tale," invites readers of his memoirs and viewers of his photography to engage in speculation about their significance.[72] This prompts critical questions regarding which aspects of his life are understated and which elements are emphasized. Such inquiries can also be applied to the appreciation and exhibition of his work, highlighting the complexities of representation and the narratives that emerge from both inclusion and omission.

71 Appadurai 2003.
72 Papailias 2005, pp. 179–225.

Chapter 8

Yasu / Yas on Display

Since the 1976 earthquake brought public attention to Yasu Kōhei, or Juan José de Jesús Yas, his photography and migrant biography have been integrated into broader narratives of the past in both Japan and Guatemala. Throughout the archiving process, Yasu's varied belongings—cameras, photographic negatives, books, and personal writings—were transferred from private ownership to academic and cultural repositories. Yet, their journey did not end with institutional acquisition. Soon after the materials were placed into archival collections, exhibitions were curated to present Yasu's photographs and life to the public. These public displays of material by and on Yasu continue to be held up to the present days.

In Guatemala, the Center for Mesoamerican Research (CIRMA), which houses the Fotografía Japonesa collection, plays a key role in situating Yasu's work within the broader history of photography in the country and in producing a cohesive narrative that highlights his achievements in the nation's visual sphere. In Japan, on the other hand, where his objects are primarily framed by their documentary value for regional and national history, Yasu's migrant biography tends to overshadow efforts to present his works as artistic achievements.

This chapter describes how institutional collections in both Japan and Guatemala engage with the public and shape understandings of the past. Framed by Yasu's transnational trajectory, his objects and photographs become instruments for telling specific histories—of photography, cultural heritage, and migration—while simultaneously supporting particular interpretations of national memory. Accordingly, my analysis centers on the dynamic interplay between the material conditions of the archived collections and the curatorial narratives they generate. These narratives, in turn, influence contemporary perceptions of Yasu's life and work, ultimately shaping how the collections are received, interpreted, and valued.

To anchor this inquiry theoretically, I draw on Elizabeth Edwards's concept of "strongness" to examine how curators, critics, essayists, journalists, and art historians incorporate photographic images into the construction of national historical narratives. Photographs occupy a unique position: on one hand, they have a great capacity to spark the viewer's imagination; on the other, they are often regarded as factual records. As Edwards writes, "It is through this sense of ambiguity and potential that photographs become 'vital signs' of 'strong representation' and 'strong history.' "[1] Since archival materials are, by nature, the result of selective processes, the concept of strongness offers a useful framework for identifying the intentionalities embedded within institutional practices. It also sheds light on how photographs acquire an aura of truthfulness when employed to construct historical accounts.

The Fotografía Japonesa collection of photographs and the Fujisawa collection of Yasu's

[1] Edwards 2015, p. 322.

objects differ in significant ways, despite both originating from the private possessions of the Noriega family. While CIRMA's photographic archive is maintained as a valuable visual resource for the study of Guatemala's past, the Fujisawa collection centers on Yasu's personal identity and his connection to his hometown of Fujisawa. These contrasting institutional orientations are reflected in the form and function of the two archives. The Guatemalan institution's strong affiliations with academic, cultural, and diplomatic entities enable frequent exhibitions of items from its photographic holdings, often curated for diverse public occasions. Yet, these photographs are typically employed to support broader historical narratives that bear little direct relation to the history of Fotografía Japonesa, its practitioners, or their artistic style. In contrast, the objects in Fujisawa collection are presented in a largely static display, emphasizing continuity and personal commemoration over interpretive revision.

This chapter emphasizes two central lines of inquiry. The first involves the impact of varied material forms and the digitization of archival photographs on the ways in which these historical images are evaluated and exhibited. The second examines how the context of reception, shaped by prevailing historical narratives, influences the perception of the same photographs. These issues are particularly significant in relation to Yasu's migrant biography and the ways in which his work may be interpreted or mobilized in the construction of historical narratives.

The role played by prints produced by archivists and professionals at the Fototeca Guatemala division at CIRMA is essential to understanding how Yasu's work is received and interpreted in both Guatemala and Japan. In Guatemala, large-format prints made from original glass negatives offer viewers highly detailed, expertly crafted images. Their scale and clarity enhance the aesthetic experience, foregrounding the artful quality of Yasu's photography. In Japan, comparable reproductions—such as portraits of Yasu in a kimono and scenes of Guatemalan subjects—serve as visual markers of his legacy. Often placed at exhibition entrances and other prominent locations, these prints carry substantial symbolic significance. In contrast, the positives from the Fujisawa collection consist of smaller-format materials, such as mounted cabinet cards and postcards. These materials are exhibited in vitrines as tangible records of his personal and professional life.

The varied deployment of archival photographs across different media, along with the contemporary aesthetic value assigned to them, invites a critical examination of inherent judgments. Archival photographs serve as powerful tools for constructing specific narratives, shaped by the contexts in which they are preserved and displayed. This calls for consideration of which photographic formats are granted greater authority as representations of the past. Understanding the dynamic interplay between archival practices and public exhibition reveals how the valuation of these objects evolves over time. Ultimately, this shifting valuation has the potential to transform the very nature of the archive itself.

If, as Edwards argues, historical photographs enable claims to history that can "legitimate, validate, and authenticate" national and communal identity, then what role does Yasu Kōhei's photography play in his native Japan and his host country, Guatemala?[2] This chapter examines how photographs produced at the studio Fotografía Japonesa are displayed to diverse audiences. It explores the evolution of curatorial strategies and the kinds of messages these exhibitions convey to viewers. It also considers how interpretations of Yasu's photographs shift in response to changes in exhibition structures.

This chapter opens with an overview of exhibitions featuring Yasu's photography,

[2] Edwards 2015, p. 321.

initiated by or emerging from the Fototeca at CIRMA from the 1980s onward. It traces the evolving ways in which historical photography has been framed within Guatemalan academic discourse, alongside shifting interpretations of Guatemalan photographic production within the broader Latin American context. The discussion then turns to exhibitions of Yasu's work through the lens of cultural diplomacy, highlighting the role of Japanese official agencies in facilitating the integration of his photography into Guatemalan artistic heritage.

Building on the emphasis in some Guatemalan exhibitions on Yasu's artistic accomplishments, the chapter next examines the reintroduction of his photography to Japan in the late 1980s. Although, as noted in the previous chapter, there was considerable interest in incorporating Yasu into Japanese history, only a limited number of photographers and critics were involved in positioning his photography within Japanese arts through exhibitions and art criticism. These efforts raise several key questions: Can vernacular photography be considered art? What assumptions underlie the aesthetic frameworks through which Japanese and Guatemalan institutions engage with Yasu's work? Recent scholarship on Japanese photographers working abroad during the same period has employed the concept of "migrant photography" as an interpretive lens. The chapter concludes by exploring how, particularly regarding sponsorship and curatorial strategies, the "migrant photography" framework may enable exhibitions of Yasu's works in both countries while also limiting the scope of their appraisal.

Guatemala Seen Through Yasu's Lens

To be integrated into an extensive collection dedicated to Guatemalan photography, the negatives from the studio Fotografía Japonesa were removed from their original social context—both commercial and familial—and imbued with new historical and aesthetic value within the archival environment. This value was further amplified through their exhibition. Held under the curatorial oversight of one of Guatemala's foremost centers for historical research, choices made to select and display Yasu's work have exerted a significant influence on the broader field of Guatemalan historiography.

Here, I examine how, over the past four decades, Yasu Kōhei's work has become a vital component in the writing of Guatemalan photographic history. The nearly one thousand negatives produced by Yasu and José Domingo Noriega represent the first—and likely the largest—collection of its kind in Guatemala and Central America. As a body of work created by a resident Guatemalan, rather than by foreign visitors, the Fotografía Japonesa collection has inspired scholars and photographers to call for the creation of "our own national collection" of Guatemalan history.

Drawing on texts produced in the context of exhibitions, I examine how Yasu's work has been used to exemplify the development of Guatemalan photography. While early studies embraced a positivist epistemology, presenting photographs as faithful testimonies of history, more recent scholarship has focused on the sociopolitical contexts in which these images were produced.[3] Despite this shift in academic attention, the prevailing interpretation of Yasu's work in Guatemala remains largely anchored in Luján Muñoz's account from forty years ago. His romantic portrayal of Yasu as an emblem of transculturation—further reinforced by framing him as a pioneer of Guatemalan photography—arguably determines

[3] Sekula 2013, p. 18.

the bounds for a full appreciation of the complexity of Yasu's migratory experience.

This section begins with a study of the role Yasu's photographic archive has played in shaping the history of Guatemalan photography. It then considers how his Japanese origin and his work for local, vernacular markets have been represented in exhibitions beyond Guatemala. Several curatorial projects are outlined, highlighting how Yasu's transcultural work has been presented as a symbol of Latin America in international art venues across the United States, Argentina, and China.

Archival Photo as "Historical Document"

In 1982, an exhibition titled "Homenaje: J. J. Yas and J. D. Noriega" was organized by CIRMA in collaboration with several public institutions, marking the first formal tribute to Guatemalan photography. This exhibition served as a prototype for future photographic displays, establishing a model for collaboration among academics, diplomats, and the public sector. It was dedicated to the two photographers behind the "Fotografía Japonesa" collection, the first and foundational acquisition of the newly established Center for Mesoamerican Research (CIRMA) in Antigua Guatemala. The newspaper *Prensa Libre* published several articles to promote the event. One invited readers to "admire the artistic quality and historical interest of the professional work done by these two artists of the camera, to place them in the categories they deserve within the context of the history of photography in Guatemala."[4]

At the time, most of the photographs remained untitled and unidentified. After viewing Yasu's work for the first time, researchers and curators selected one hundred photographs for public display. These images could be categorized into the following groups: outdoor views of Antigua's landmarks; scenes from other Guatemalan cities; coffee plantations near Antigua; portraits of townspeople; and religious images, including saint sculptures and postmortem portraits of young children.

In retrospect, it is difficult to determine precisely how the themes and specific photographs were chosen for public exhibition. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to surmise that the final selection reflected the scholarly interests of the host institution and its curators, as well as the priorities of the sponsoring public agencies. In an interview with anthropologist Kosaka Ayako, Mitchell Denburg, photographer and founder of the photography archive at CIRMA, recalled the goals of the exhibition: "At first, we want to display these works. Secondly, we asked the visitors to write down their names under those photographs. So, we could identify the individuals. Or, about the stories."[5] Visitors were thus invited to contribute contextual information in hopes of identifying the people depicted in the untitled photographs, thereby enhancing the archive's potential as a resource for future research.

The curatorial introduction was written by Luis Luján Muñoz, a central figure in Guatemalan historiography. His biographical study of Yasu, though modest in volume and based on the limited sources available at the time, became a foundational reference for later scholarship on Yasu and his photographic legacy in Guatemala. In this text, he explained that the exhibition "will allow us to have a vision of the characteristics of their photographic style, which will show the testimonial importance of the profession they practice, in which old buildings, characters, simple and ordinary people, religious sculptures, etc. can be

4 "Exhibition in tribute to Juan Yas and Domingo Noriega presented by INGUAT" (Exposición en homenaje a Juan Yas y Domingo Noriega presenta INGUAT), *Prensa Libre*, December 3, 1982.

5 Interview conducted by Kosaka Ayako with Mitchell Denburg in Antigua Guatemala, 1998.

admired."[6]

Throughout the 1980s, Luján Muñoz published essays on photographers Eadweard Muybridge and Alberto Valdeavellano.[7] These works sought to emphasize the importance of historical photographs, valuing them primarily for their contribution to Guatemalan history. His approach to early photography established a chronological framework that has been adopted by subsequent historians of Guatemalan photography. Luján Muñoz framed these images chiefly as historical documents, emphasizing both their "testimonial importance" and "aesthetic quality." As a scholar focused on colonial history, he believed in the fidelity of photographs and expressed enthusiasm for the ways historical studies could benefit from them.

Luján Muñoz asserted that the depictions of colonial architecture by Yasu and Noriega "allow us to study the ruins of this city as they were at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one, that is, without the destruction caused by the earthquakes of 1917-18, 1942, and 1976, as well as before many of them were destroyed around 1943."[8] He expressed similar views regarding the collection of images taken by the Anglo-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge during his brief stay in Guatemala in 1875, noting that the collection "provides an irreplaceable testimony of what Guatemala was like a little more than a hundred years ago, before the influence of Frenchization at the end of the nineteenth century and the earthquakes of 1917-19 radically changed the physiognomy of the city."[9]

He emphasized the importance of understanding the development of photographic techniques to fully appreciate the work of these pioneers.[10] To this end, he compiled information from advertisements and announcements published in newspapers, magazines, and government directories to construct a chronology of the earliest photographic studios in Guatemala. He recounted the challenges of locating details about Muybridge's travels in Guatemala through press sources, noting that such information was difficult to obtain.[11].

In promoting the history of photography, Luján Muñoz sought to guide readers on "what to look for" and "how to look at" the photographs displayed in exhibitions. To inform both readers and visitors, he explained that mortuary portraits, which "may seem a little macabre to contemporary tastes," were "very common, especially for children, whose lifeless bodies were placed between the arms of a sculpture of an angel's frame, symbolizing that the child had been received by the angel who was taking it to heaven, a solution full of sweet kitsch."[12] He provided similar contextual explanations for other genres he identified in the works of Yasu and his contemporaries, including panoramic views of cities and towns, sports photography, color photographs, and images of Mayan archaeological sites.

At the center of his research was the content of the images, which he regarded as essential source material for historical studies. Adhering to a positivist interpretation of national history as a trajectory of progress toward a higher stage of social development, his writings relegated the sociopolitical contexts in which the images were produced, circulated, and utilized to the background. When commenting on Alberto Valdeavellano's

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6 Luján Muñoz 1982a.
7 Luján Muñoz 1984, 1987.
8 Luján Muñoz 1982a.
9 Luján Muñoz 1984.
10 Luján Muñoz 1982a, 1990.
11 Luján Muñoz 1984.
12 Luján Muñoz 1982a.

Figure 137: The opening pages of the catalog for the 1982 exhibition, "Exposición - Homenaje a J.J. Yas & J.D. Noriega," feature portraits of the two photographers

acclaimed series of staged portraits of Mayan people in traditional dress, which formed part of the photographer's repertoire for the tourist market, Luján Muñoz praised the dignity of the indigenous sitters.[13] Given the context of violence and repression against rural populations suspected of collaborating with leftist guerrillas—an issue still current at the time of his writing—his acceptance of Valdeavellano's nostalgic objectification of indigeneity revealed the philosophical tenets underlying his interpretations.

Although Luján Muñoz exhibited certain thematic preferences among the images he discussed, he largely neglected other subjects that might have been equally significant to the photographers' practice. While he enthusiastically highlighted the potential of Yasu's photographs of colonial architecture for historical study, he did not afford similar attention to Yasu's work on sacred sculptures and other religious subjects, which constitute approximately one quarter of the Fotografía Japonesa collection.[14]

In addition to emphasizing the rich historical value of the Fotografía Japonesa collection, the photographers and scholars involved in the 1982 exhibition prioritized introducing the public the biographies of Yasu and José Domingo Noriega to the public (figure 137). This focus is clearly reflected in the curatorial texts authored by Luján Muñoz that accompanied the exhibition. Eight years later, after exhibitions dedicated to Yasu and Noriega in Argentina and France, another text by Luján Muñoz on Yasu appeared in a related photo book, further highlighting these biographical narratives.[15] Although key facts such as

13 Luján Muñoz 1987.

14 The 1982 exhibition included only eight photographs of this type among the one hundred works displayed. A list of the exhibited pieces is provided in an appendix to the 1982 catalog.

15 The 1990 photo book titled *La Antigua Guatemala* is likely a compilation of a series of exhibitions circulated in Argentina and France, promoted by the Argentine publishing house La Azotea, founded by Sara Facio and María Cristina Orive. These exhibitions will be discussed in the next section. The

Yasu's year of birth, which was presented with a certainty not fully supported by the available evidence, remained unresolved, this later work echoed the commentary Luján Muñoz had prepared in 1982. However, the tone of his descriptions became more affective, highlighting aspects of Yasu's life that revealed personal connections to Catholicism and Guatemala. Overall, Luján Muñoz sought to craft a coherent and vivid portrayal of the photographer as an individual.

Luján Muñoz had met José Domingo Noriega in person and discussed Fotografía Japonesa with him. He also approached the Noriega family to obtain Yasu's notes and photographs. Ultimately, he consulted the Japanese anthropologist Terada Kazuo, who published several texts on Yasu in Japan.[16] Luján Muñoz's biographical sketch largely summarizes what Yasu himself compiled in his memoirs. It begins with Yasu's first encounter with Mexican astronomers in Japan, follows his travels to Mexico, Guatemala, Japan, Peru, and back to Guatemala, and includes Yasu's conversion to Catholicism, marriage, and experiences in the photographic trade. Given that Luján Muñoz's writings on Yasu have become a key reference for both the study of Yasu and the history of photography in Guatemala, it is important to examine closely how he constructed this biography and to consider the limitations it entails.

Aligned with his belief in the fidelity of photographs, Luján Muñoz sought to extract historical facts from Yasu's memoirs without critically addressing the selective nature inherent in autobiographical writing. By extensively quoting from Yasu's memoirs, he acknowledged that the text was written late in Yasu's life and from a retrospective perspective.[17] Although he added some background information on Guatemalan history to complement Yasu's recollections, there is little acknowledgment that these memoirs were shaped by particular moods and intentions.[18] This approach transforms Yasu's subjective memory into the factual account presented by Luján Muñoz. As an example, he cites a passage about a visit to Italy as follows:

> [Arriving in Naples], they rested and visited all the interesting sites that they could see, like Pompeii and Mount Vesuvious [sic]. Then they arrived in Rome where they made a visit, which seems to have influenced Yas a lot, concerning his religious convictions, since he was very impressed by the manifestations of Catholicism, having visited numerous churches and pilgrimage centers which he attended in the company of the Mexican delegation.

This passage paraphrases a paragraph from Yasu's memoirs, which begins with his arrival in Naples following a long journey from Japan.[19] Luján Muñoz's paraphrase transforms

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book features forty-eight photographs from the Fotografía Japonesa collection alongside Luján Muñoz's collection of works by Yasu and Noriega. It also includes two accompanying texts written by Orive and Luján Muñoz.

16 Although referenced, the Japanese material plays a limited role in Luján Muñoz's texts and is absent from later Guatemalan publications on Yasu. The specific source—the 1934 biographical sketch by Saitō Johei—was likely obtained through Terada or the Japanese embassy. It remains unclear whether Luján Muñoz worked directly with the original Japanese text or, more likely, relied on a translation or summary provided by Japanese researchers or expatriates.

17 In two footnotes, Luján Muñoz (1982a) notes that the "*Memorias* must have been written many years after the events reported" and that "somewhere in the text it is indicated that it was written very late."

18 Regarding Yasu's permanent stay in Guatemala after his return from Peru, Luján Muñoz noted that Yasu's account might be inaccurate: "Yasu says that he could not return to Japan because the war with El Salvador prevented him from doing so, but this happened in 1902 and 1906, not in 1890 (ibid., note 9)."

19 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 39 ff. A translation of the full passage on Yasu's Italian travel is included

Yasu's retrospective nostalgia, which subtly hints at his later Catholic sentiments, into a decisive impetus that firmly directs him toward religious devotion, thereby establishing a coherent narrative thread in his biography that underscores his faith. Nonetheless, similar expressions of melancholy over departing places where Yasu had experienced joyful moments, along with reflections on locations lacking religious significance, recur throughout his memoirs.

For instance, in Italy, Yasu was equally captivated by European cultural heritage: museums, theaters, historical curiosities, ruins, and landscapes such as panoramic coastal views. As mentioned in Interlude 1, Yasu compared Catholic churches to Japanese Shinto shrines in a letter sent to Japan and viewed the ruins of colonial monasteries as signs of an advanced civilization. As I have mainly explored in chapter 5, Yasu's Catholic devotion was an unquestionable part of his identity and photographic production. However, drawing out the religious sentiment of his final reflections to craft a cohesive narrative of his evolving faith neglects the complex and multifaceted identities he embodied throughout his life. It moreover reflects a particular approach to reading the memoirs as a direct and unambiguous representation of lived experience.

A further illustration of this homogenizing interpretation appears in Luján Muñoz's reading of Yasu's remark about being impressed by the work of Agustín Barroso, the Mexican photographer and member of the astronomical commission in Yokohama.[20] In the absence of corroborating sources, Luján Muñoz speculates that Barroso may have been Yasu's first photography teacher. This assumption is articulated with even greater confidence in a 1990 text on Yasu. However, no evidence supports the claim that Yasu engaged in photography before his arrival in Guatemala, casting doubt on the validity of an interpretation that seeks to impute his early commitment to the trade from retrospective remarks.

A similar pattern emerges in the treatment of Yasu's aesthetics and the extent to which they are framed as distinctly Oriental, an interpretation also found in Luján Muñoz's work. In constructing a somewhat imaginative account of Yasu's Japaneseness, Luján Muñoz contrasts it with a "Westernized" professional trajectory that, in his view, anticipated Japan's entry into the world of modern industry. Across his two texts on the photographer, Luján Muñoz characterizes Yasu as a "curious case of transculturation."[21] Yasu is described as having "intensively Westernized" himself by "adopting the Catholic religion with great enthusiasm, getting married, and practicing his profession as a photographer, becoming a forerunner of one of the most important manifestations of Japanese technology in the contemporary world [...] and establishing himself in Guatemala as the first Japanese subject to live there." At the same time, "he preserved customs and attitudes from his distant Japan."

The supposed connection between Yasu's photographic work in Guatemala and the later rise of the Japanese photographic industry stems from the author's free association rather than from any evidence drawn directly from Yasu's life. The examples of Japanese customs and attitudes cited by Luján Muñoz are collected from Yasu's letters and memoirs. For instance, he highlights Yasu's fondness for "gardening and horticulture.[22] However,

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in chapter 1, page 69.

20 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, line 21 ff.

21 Luján Muñoz 1982a, 1990.

22 Luján Muñoz's emphasis on Yasu's gardening may have been shaped by Terada's interpretation of the same text. In his early study of Yasu, published in 1979, Terada also cited passages where Yasu expresses happiness "having a rabbit in the third patio" and drinking coffee in the morning in his small

in the relevant passages from the memoirs, Yasu himself does not associate the enjoyment of "drinking with the family in the garden" or "planting various vegetables" with his homeland, nor does he express any nostalgic sentiment related to gardening.[23] Rather, these descriptions belong to an account of his somber final years, representing some of the few joyful moments he could recall. This section of the *Memorias* is marked by emotional complexity, as Yasu recounts frequent moves due to changes in property ownership, experiences that brought financial loss and emotional hardship. While Luján Muñoz's portrayal of the "transculturalized" Yasu nostalgically evokes his Japanese roots, it overlooks the specific vulnerabilities that likely shaped his experience as an immigrant and East Asian individual.

Another Japanese characteristic emphasized by Luján Muñoz is Yasu's habit of composing *haiku*.[24] Luján Muñoz may have learned from his Japanese acquaintances about the poems accompanying Yasu's letters to Japan, thereby constructing a connection to modernist Guatemalan poets who later appropriated this art form. As he notes, "Interestingly, this would give Yas the priority of being the first person to produce this kind of poetry in Guatemala, several decades before Flavio Herrera."[25]

A particularly potent trope surrounding Yasu's Japanese identity involves the perceived similarity between the Guatemalan volcano Agua and Mount Fuji in Japan. This motif warrants closer scrutiny, as it reveals much about the interplay between verifiable details and the homogenizing narratives that often emerge in the curatorial process. Luján Muñoz's 1982 article concludes with the observation that "Mr. Yas consummated his emotional commitment to Antigua Guatemala, having fulfilled his wish, for his final resting place is in the cemetery of Antigua, with that spectacular view of the Agua Volcano, which must have reminded him so much of the Fuyi [sic], symbol of his distant Japan."[26] First introduced by Luján Muñoz, the motif recurs in several subsequent texts about Yasu. María Cristina Orive, a renowned Guatemalan photographer, notes in a contribution to the 1990 photo book on the Fotografía Japonesa collection that among the backdrops painted by Yasu, "some screens depict volcanoes which remind us of Agua (Water) volcano in Antigua Guatemala or of his native Fuji."[27] In some of the verses he sent to Japan, Yasu compared a volcano in Mexico to Mount Fuji; however, there is no indication that he regarded Volcán de Agua in similar terms.[28] More broadly, his writings express a longing for Japan chiefly through references to the foods he missed, rather than through nostalgic reflections on landscapes.

Undoubtedly, Luján Muñoz uncovered compelling details that deepen our understanding of Yasu's life in Guatemala. In a footnote to his 1982 text, for example, he notes that the Noriega family referred to the studio sets as *biombos*, or folding screens—a term reportedly introduced by Yasu to his family. Such subtle observations enhance our perception of Yasu, his relationship with his family, and his approach to studio settings. However, reflecting

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garden (Terada and Yamaki 1979, pp. 129, 138).

23 Appendix 9, *Memorias*, lines 946 ff. and 963 ff.

24 Although no *haiku* appear in Yasu's memoirs, some Japanese poetic verses are found in the transcripts of letters preserved in another notebook, a copy of which Luján Muñoz may have acquired from his Japanese acquaintances. It remains unclear whether Luján Muñoz read these Japanese texts by himself or if Terada brought them to his attention.

25 Luján Muñoz 1982a, n.14.

26 Ibid., n.14.

27 Orive (1990). Quoted from the English original in this bilingual publication.

28 See appendix 7.

a certain enthusiasm for the exotic appeal of Japanese culture and perhaps influenced by the sponsorship of the Japanese embassy in Guatemala, Luján Muñoz's portrayal of a "transculturalized" Yasu highlights specific symbolic features to emphasize the essential difference between the two cultures.

This metaphorical use of Japanese elements is also evident in contemporary Japanese interpretations of Yasu's migrant biography. The Japanese journalist Kikuchi Ikuzō, for example, drew a comparison between the volcanoes Fuji and Agua. In his article on Yasu, published in the *Asahi Shimbun* on January 17, 1987, a panorama of Agua taken by Yasu was captioned "The Fuji of Guatemala."[29] In the same vein, as will be discussed in the Epilogue, a theater play produced in Yasu's hometown of Fujisawa employs sakura, or cherry blossom, to symbolize his life abroad and his nostalgia for Japan in his final years.

Juan José de Jesús Yas and the Evolving Perspectives on Photography in Guatemala

On the occasion of the first exhibition of works from the Fotografía Japonesa collection, Luján Muñoz expressed his hope that not only the public in Antigua but also those in "the capital and soon other countries, will be able to share the aesthetic and historical message created by Yas and Noriega, which involves looking at these beautiful photographs, which are also full of great testimonial importance and an emotional sense of evocation."[30] Before examining Yasu's Guatemalan photography within a broader context, including international biennials and cultural diplomacy, the following pages consider his evolving recognition in Guatemala.

In 1997, CIRMA held an exhibition entitled "Picturing Guatemala: Images from the CIRMA Photography Archive, 1870 – 1997." After two decades of incorporating donations and acquisitions from various sources, the archive had become "the most extensive in Guatemala and one of the most important in Central America."[31] Although several thematic exhibitions had been held previously, this was the first comprehensive display of materials from the collections of the Fototeca Guatemala at this research center. Valia Garzón Díaz, the curator of the"Picturing Guatemala" exhibition, opened the catalog by listing the major collections to be presented to the public:

> "The photos selected for the exhibition include images of Juan José de Jesús Yas, the first Japanese subject to emigrate to Central America, and those of his godchild and successor, José Domingo Noriega (the images for which the Archive is best known today); the ethnographic photographs of Emilio Herbruger and Alberto G. Valdeavellano; the intense visual experiences recorded by Eadweard Muybridge on his 1875 Central American trip, and the ladino and Maya-Kichee' clientele of the Italian Tomás Zanotti in Quetzaltenango."[32]

To emphasize the significance of archival photography in relation to the social and art history of Guatemala, Garzón Díaz explained that the exhibited images stood out not only for their "aesthetic quality" but also for their role in enabling the "analysis of complex historical processes," particularly those she identified as "documentary photography."[33]

In their essay for the catalog, anthropologist Tani Adams and historian Arturo Taracena

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29 Kikuchi Ikuzō, "明治の昔、中米に生きて—古い写真," *Asahi Shimbun*, January 17, 1987.
30 Luján Muñoz 1982a.
31 Garzón Díaz 1998.
32 Garzón Díaz (ibid.). This quotation is taken from the English translation in the catalog.
33 Ibid.

Arriola invited readers to use the exhibition and the Fototeca Guatemala more broadly to "explore and rethink Guatemala's reality."[34] Rather than emphasizing the chronological development of photography in the country, the authors proposed a reflective approach, encouraging visitors to consider questions about "the way we see ourselves and others, and the way others see us." In contrast to Luján Muñoz's earlier treatment of the same collections, issues of agency, gaze, power, and resistance became now central to academic engagement with photography in Guatemala.

Regarding Yasu's work, Adams and Taracena Arriola offered several observations that reveal the sociopolitical dimensions of early commercial photography. For instance, they emphasize the significance of the props Yasu kept in his studio to represent the status and profession of his clients.[35] They connected Yasu and Noriega's deliberate compositional efforts in the striking array of postmortem portraits of children to the style of eighteenth-century Latin American colonial painting. Expanding on this, the authors analyzed a series of photographs depicting children and young women of ladino background dressed in Mayan attire. They observed that, although these visual elements carried local religious significance, most of the studio portraits reflected a fashionable cultural appropriation. This phenomenon, which they termed Guatemala's "exoticism," echoes the orientalist aesthetic found elsewhere, revealing intricate dynamics of identity and representation.[36]

Within the context of a comprehensive exhibition featuring photographers whose work spanned more than a century, individual biographies may have had less relevance than in events celebrating a single artist's achievements. Nevertheless, the curator and contributing experts in the catalog emphasized that Yasu was "the first Japanese subject to emigrate to Central America" and, echoing observations by Orive and Luján Muñoz, noted a "a subtle Japanese influence" evident in the backdrops depicting "idealized landscapes" in Yasu's studio.[37]

From 2005 to 2007, another comprehensive exhibition entitled "Imaging Guatemala: Photographs from the CIRMA Collection 1850 – 2006" was presented in several countries across Europe and the Americas. A revised version of this exhibition was later shown in Guatemala in 2006. In contrast to the 1997 exhibition, "Imaging Guatemala" adopted a clearly defined structure that demonstrated the reflexive intentions of both the curators and the organizing institutions. The exhibition was once again curated by Tani Adams, who described it as "a chance to reflect on where we are in the process of developing a 'visual history of Guatemala through photographic images.' "[38]

Acknowledging the stark asymmetries in race, class, and gender representation within the extensive photographic archive, which by that point had grown to include over one million items, Adams addressed the challenges of constructing an archive whose content was "produced entirely by a relatively homogeneous elite in terms of both gender and social class—although relatively heterogeneous in ideological terms."[39] Adams stated that:

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34 Adams and Taracena Arriola 1998.

35 Ibid.

36 Taracena Arriola (2008) has researched Guadalupanismo in Guatemala, highlighting the significant role that photographs from the collections of Yasu-Noriega and Tomás Zanotti played not only as a visual record of the tradition, but also as a means by which photography, particularly studio photography, reinforced its performative nature.

37 Orive 1990.

38 Adams 2007b, p. iii.

39 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from Adams (2007a, p. 1).

> virtually all of the approximately 100 photographers represented in the archive are men. Sixty percent of these are ladino (defined generally as non-indigenous, or mestizo) Guatemalans, and the other 40 percent are foreigners. With notable exceptions, it has been mainly these latter who have photographed the indigenous population. Finally, although indigenous people represent almost half of the population in Guatemala, Fototeca Guatemala currently holds the work of one indigenous photographer. Previous to 1990, the collection only holds the work of one woman, Cristina Orive. who is also a tireless promoter of Latin American photography.

To subvert the historical narratives contained in the archival photographs, the exhibition featured photographers whose work challenged conventions and ideological dominance. The photographs were arranged thematically, beginning with early photography and moving to representations of indigenous peoples from the mid-nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. The exhibition then presented images promoting Guatemala as a destination for tourism and investment at the turn of the twentieth century. This was followed by material from the second half of the twentieth century, including photojournalism of the civil war. Finally, the exhibition highlighted contemporary photographers who address social issues along with the politics of race and class.

Several researchers were tasked with writing essays for the exhibition, each addressing various topics based on the photographs on display. One of these texts, authored by Arturo Taracena Arriola, summarized the first hundred years of photography in Guatemala, encompassing both national and foreign practitioners of the trade. Unlike Luis Luján Muñoz's earlier attempts to construct a national history of photography, which treated images as objective evidence of material reality, Taracena Arriola sought to illustrate "the evolution of photography as a social document."[40] Drawing on Gisèle Freund's reflections on the sociopolitical contextualization of photographic production and circulation, Taracena Arriola examined the photographer's practice in relation to broader social transitions, including the emergence of a middle class, the expansion of capitalist markets, and the rise of liberalism as the dominant political current.

Of particular relevance to the study of Yasu is the relationship between migration and the development of Guatemalan photography. Taracena Arriola connected the emerging postcard market to the increasing number of immigrants in early twentieth-century Guatemala, who used postcards as "an important vehicle for communication among families separated by continents, and to communicate the natural beauty and opportunities for work that the country offered."[41] He also observed that many photographers were immigrants from Europe and North America, some of whom specialized in documenting the community life of their compatriots, as exemplified by the Spanish photographers José García Sánchez (1853 – 1935) and Guatemalan José Manuel Penedo Sarti (?- 1909). Taracena Arriola evaluated CIRMA's photographic collections through a detailed study of their content and by "compar[ing] them with documents of the era."[42]

When considering Yasu's work, Taracena Arriola praised his ability to capture "the magic of colonial monuments, religious images, popular colonial traditions, and the Valle de Pancl10y to the level that his photographic art is considered one of the most sublime in all of Guatemala."[43] However, the experience of non-European migrants remained absent from his inquiry into the social history of photography. This omission reflects the broader

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40 Taracena Arriola 2007, p. 15.
41 Ibid., p. 42.
42 Ibid., p. 15.
43 Ibid., p. 37.

scarcity of scholarship on East Asian immigration. Thus, the study of Yasu's case is particularly relevant in challenging romanticized notions of cultural difference, which is exemplified by the stereotypical tropes of haiku, horticulture, kimono, and Mount Fuji as tokens of identity.

Alongside CIRMA's research and exhibition efforts, another institution based in Guatemala City, La Fototeca, published an extensive compilation in 2018 titled *Lenguajes de Luz: Dos siglos de Fotografía en Guatemala*. This book, which features a large number of high-quality photographic reproductions, can be regarded as a curated exhibition in its own right. Unlike previous exhibitions organized by CIRMA, the volume includes photographs from other institutions, such as La Fototeca itself, La Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, and the Fundación de Paz, along with works by contemporary photographers.

In his article for the publication, titled "The memory is a sepia-colored image" (La memoria es una imagen color sepia), Rodrigo Fernández Ordóñez offered a fresh perspective on the first hundred years of photography in Guatemala. He distinguished between the "foreign gaze" of the initial itinerant photographers and the "eyes that look inside" of resident photographers who established the craft in Guatemala. Along with the chronological structure of his text, his reflections on the imaginations of self and others largely followed the frameworks established by earlier studies of the topic. Fernández Ordóñez introduced several new photographers, whose collections he examined to deepen the understanding of Guatemala's photographic history. As might be expected, given the status of the Fotografía Japonesa collection, Yasu and Noriega continued to be significant figures within this history.[44]

It is noteworthy, however, that despite the evolving theoretical frameworks and diverse methodological approaches that successive authors have employed in crafting a history of Guatemalan photography, the portrayal of Yasu Kōhei (or Juan José de Jesús Yas) has remained remarkably consistent. This enduring image closely mirrors the characterization first introduced in Luis Luján Muñoz's foundational text on the Japanese photographer.

Beyond the Guatemalan Scope

Over the past four decades, CIRMA's Fototeca Guatemala has organized several displays of the Fotografía Japonesa collection for the benefit of the Guatemalan public. These events showcased the artistic merit and historical significance of Yasu's work through expertly crafted prints produced from original negatives. Accompanying curatorial texts further underscored his cultural contributions, situating his photography within broader narratives of national identity and memory. These exhibitions and publications have shaped a cohesive image of Yasu, presenting him as a pioneering photographer, a devout Catholic, and the first Japanese immigrant to Guatemala, while highlighting his lasting connection to the country.

Beginning in the 1980s, independent curators from both Guatemala and abroad began selecting photographs from this collection for inclusion in exhibitions that engaged with broader geographic and conceptual themes. Exhibitions organized by La Azotea in Argentina and France in the late 1980s featured Yasu's images as representative examples of Latin American photography (figure 138). US-American photographer Wendy Watriss incorporated his religious photographs into events affiliated with the Houston-based FotoFest

44 Fernandez Ordóñez 2018, pp. 24–53.

Figure 138: A postcard created by La Azotea that features a "Couple from Comalapa," part of the Studio J. J. YAS - J. D. NORIEGA collection

platform, framing his work within the broader context of Latin America's colonial legacy. The following pages examine these exhibitions to explore how Yasu's photography, created for the Guatemalan vernacular market, has been re-contextualized within interpretive frameworks that extend beyond the national scope.

In the decade following the first Guatemalan exhibition of the Fotografía Japonesa collection in 1982, the available records mention six international events at Tulane University (1983 and 1984); the University of Texas, Austin (1984); in Buenos Aires and Rosario (Argentina, 1990); and in Paris, France (1990).[45] Limited information is available regarding the three exhibitions held in the United States, which are also absent from the comprehensive list of "Exhibitions Realized by CIRMA" (Exposiciones realizadas por CIRMA). It is possible that selected prints from the Fotografía Japonesa collection were incorporated into university events with a different scope.[46] The three exhibitions held in Argentina and France were curated by two renowned photographers, the Antigua Guatemalan photojournalist María Cristina Orive and the Argentinean Sara Facio, with the

45 Luján Muñoz and Orive 1990, p. 69.

46 For example, *Windows on Latin America: Understanding Society Through Photographs*, edited by Robert Levine, includes two photographs from the Fotografía Japonesa collection without proper attribution to the archival institutions or acknowledgment of the country of origin. The cover image, "Don Florencio Godoy's Movie Camera, 1913," is simply credited to Juan Yas. Another studio portrait, showing a group of men posing in front of a portrait of Guatemalan president Manuel Estrada Cabrera, is mistakenly attributed to the Peruvian photographer Martín Chambi. Both photographs are cataloged as part of the Tulane University Latin American Library collection (R. M. Levine 1987, p. vi).

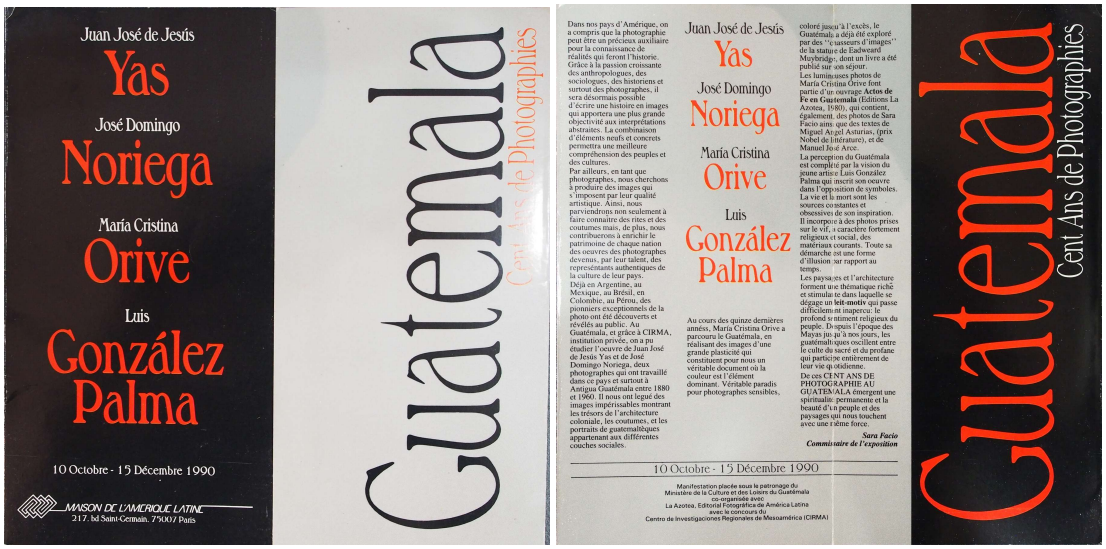

Figure 139: Exhibition brochure for "Guatemala: Cent Ans de Photographies / 100 Años de Fotografía en Guatemala", 1990

aim of showing the history of Guatemalan photography to an international audience.[47]

A book published in 1990 by the art press La Azotea in Buenos Aires with the title *La fotogalería del Teatro San Martín* presents the historical work of Yasu Kōhei and José Domingo Noriega alongside that of contemporary Guatemalan artists María Cristina Orive and Luis González Palma.[48] In it, Sara Facio underscores the importance of establishing national histories of photography in Latin American countries and emphasizes CIRMA's special role in bringing Guatemalan photography to audiences throughout the region. While acknowledging the work of contemporary photographers in capturing Guatemalan religious practices and sociopolitical engagement, the book highlighted Yasu's and Noriega's contribution through a studio portrait of a Mayan couple. This publication celebrated the emergence of an artistic space for photography following Argentina's return to democracy and reflected the growing initiative among researchers and photographers across the continent to develop national photographic archives.[49]

The collaboration between Orive and Facio also brought the work of the same four Guatemalan photographers to Europe. In 1990, an exhibition titled "Guatemala: Cent Ans de Photographies / 100 Años de Fotografía en Guatemala" was held at the Maison de l'Amérique Latine in Paris. Organized by CIRMA and La Azotea, with support from the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture, the exhibition was open from October to December (figure 139).[50] In the exhibition brochure, Facio elaborates that the concept behind the exhibition

47 Although the two Argentine exhibitions are not listed in the "Exposiciones realizadas por CIRMA," they appear in *La Antigua Guatemala* (Luján Muñoz and Orive 1990, p. 69).

48 Facio (1990, pp. 37–39). La Azotea was founded by María Cristina Orive and Sara Facio in 1973 to publish and promote the work of Latin American photographers. Prior to the series of exhibitions featuring Guatemalan photographers, they had published works by Chilean writer Pablo Neruda as well as photographers from various Latin American countries. Many of La Azotea's publications include texts or photographs by contemporary writers such as Neruda, Borges, Cortázar, and the 1967 Nobel Prize winner Miguel Ángel Asturias, among others.

49 Argentina regained its democracy in 1983, and in 1984, Sara Facio (ibid., p. 3) applied to the Teatro Municipal General San Martín for a cultural space dedicated to exhibiting both "national and foreign photography."

50 All quotations in this paragraph are from the exhibition brochure, which is part of the personal collection

was to "contribute to the heritage of each nation with works of photographers who, through their talent, have become authentic representations of their country's culture." Within this framework, the works of Yasu and Noriega are characterized as "imperishable images showing the treasures of colonial architecture, customs, and portraits of Guatemalans from different social strata." In contrast, the works of Orive and González Palma are used to provide views of contemporary Guatemala through sites of popular religious devotion and social life. It is worth noting that the curators selected Yasu's photographs of priests, sculptures, and churches to underscore the peculiarity of his work, which they identified as "his almost mystical religious theme."

According to a list titled "Exposiciones realizadas por CIRMA," compiled by CIRMA to document exhibitions it has hosted or initiated since its founding, the exhibition received 125 visitors. This modest number may refer specifically to the opening event. In any case, the cosmopolitan nature of the Parisian cultural center ensured that the exhibition reached a broader international audience. Among the visitors was the Japanese photographer and critic Minato Chihiro, whose account of his first encounter with "Yas," which I discuss in more detail below, served as a catalyst for the recognition of Yasu's work in Japan.

A detailed reflection on Yasu within the context of the exhibition is presented in Orive's article in the aforementioned photo book *La Antigua Guatemala - J. J. Yas - J. D. Noriega*, which was published around the same time, also by La Azotea. The text, titled "Two Photographers and a City," connects the work of Yasu Kōhei and José Domingo Noriega to the customs of Antigua, whose religious traditions the author deeply valued.[51] Orive's strong ties to Antigua Guatemala and her intimate knowledge of its cultural heritage are evident as she describes Yasu's studio portraits of sculptures of saints.

> He was also attracted by pious imagery: St. Hieronymus, St. Christopher, and St. Joseph. XVI and XVII century carvings from Antigua Guatemala are deservedly famous. Yas paid homage to them, but it must be noted that he undoubtedly took them to his studio to photograph them and there he took care of the surroundings, choosing adequate screens for backgrounds, adding rocks, vegetation, and suitable ornaments to enhance them.[52]

Orive's familiarity with the sculptures enabled her to speculate on the steps Yasu took to create his photographs for the local market of devotional images. She gave equal attention to both Yasu and Noriega, articulating their aesthetic expression and techniques within the broader history of Latin American photography. She identified similarities between the backdrops used by Yasu and those employed by the Mexican photographer Romualdo García. She also compared Yasu's creative use of multiple exposure to the work of prominent photographers from other Latin American countries, such as the Brazilian Valerio Vieira and Alexander Witcomb in Argentina. These cross-national comparisons reflected La Azotea's founding mission to promote the history of photography across the Americas and aimed to engage readers beyond Guatemala.[53]

Another significant contribution of Orive's text was her effort to establish criteria for

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of Fujiwara Toshio, the curator of Yasu's two major exhibitions in Japan. The original language of the brochure is French.

51 Facio and Orive published a photo book titled *Actos de fe en Guatemala* in collaboration with the Nobel laureate Miguel Ángel Asturias (1980). The book combines the photographers' images of Guatemalan ritual practices and performances with short texts by the renowned writer.

52 Orive 1990.

53 Ibid.

distinguishing the works of Yasu and Noriega, whose untitled and undated glass negatives had been grouped together in the Fotografía Japonesa collection. She particularly noted differences in their choice of subject and artistic style. She concluded that:

> "Noriega's portraits do not carry the elaborate stage settings which Yas so liked, nor is he so concerned with background screens. He does care for the models to feel at ease, to pose naturally [...] Both photographers set up the stage for their works, but while Yas adds in, Noriega takes away. The difference also lies in the subject matter: Yas's religious fervor is in contrast with Noriega's interest in Antiguan society at their activities: weddings, family gatherings, the first transportation services, the first automobiles arriving in the city, the celebration of the centennial of the Independence in 1921, the 1934 flood. For Noriega it is important to go out into the street, to get into the houses, to record life."[54]

While Orive's observations carry some assumptions based on the photographers' identities, portraying Yasu as the outsider with artistic rigor and Noriega as the insider with social roots, they nonetheless provide an important entry point for studying these photographers. Moreover, her insights have been formative in shaping how others have approached Yasu's work.

The next significant step in the process of introducing Yasu's work to the international field of photographic art was marked by photographer Wendy Watriss, co-founder of the FotoFest biennial photography festival in Houston, Texas, alongside Fred Baldwin. Since 1992, Yasu's photographs have been included in at least three FotoFest exhibitions in the United States and one in China.[55] Founded in 1983 with an early focus on Latin American photography, FotoFest has since broadened its scope to include the entire globe. In a text reviewing FotoFest's approach to Latin America after its first two decades, Watriss announced its goal of challenging the exoticizing of Latin American photography.[56] In preparation for the 1992 exhibition on Latin American photography, she spent eleven months traveling through nine countries, visiting photographers and local photo archives that had remained "unseen, unknown, and under-appreciated."[57]

More than a thousand photographs by fifty photographers were collected during this visit, divided into historical photographs and those taken by contemporary artists. The criteria for selecting photographs for FotoFest were "the artistic merit; association with important directions in the history of photographic art in Latin America; and intentional connection to important aspects of Latin American history and culture."[58] A series of Yasu's photographs, depicting theatrical portraits of priests and sculptures of saints, as well as the ruins of colonial churches, was included in this selection. Presented under the category title"Religious Photography," Yasu's work was featured as an example of early photography in Latin America, alongside the work of several photographers from other countries. These include Romualdo García (Mexico), Agustín Víctor Casasola (Mexico), Guillermo Kahlo (Germany/Mexico), Benjamín de la Calle (Colombia), Melitón Rodríguez (Colombia), Marc Ferrez (Brazil), Carlos and Miguel Vargas (Peru), Martín Chambi (Peru), Julio Cordero (Bolivia), and Esteban García (Uruguay).

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54 Ibid.

55 See appendix 2.

56 A quotation she cited comes from Jorge Gutierrez, director of the Museo de Artes Visuales Alejandro Otero (1990 – 1994) in Caracas, Venezuela (Watriss and Zamora 1998, pp. 3, 5).

57 FotoFest 2012, p. 221.

58 Watriss and Zamora 1998, p. 5.

FOTOFEST

FACES OF HISTORY-LATIN AMERICA

Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru

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Juan José de Jesús Yas (1844-1917)
Antigua, Gutaemala

In colonial Latin America and for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Spanish Catholicism was more than a religious presence. It constituted the backbone of the government and the basis of social and political culture. Alongside the military and landed interests, it remained one of the richest and most powerful forces in Latin America throughout the 1800s.

In the countries with predominantly indigenous populations, the Catholic Church and its clergy were important purveyors of European colonial values, ritual, and hierarchy. Ornate religious ceremonies and artifacts, the elaborate dress of various levels of Catholic clergy, the elaborate Baroque facades and sheer size of church structures marked the presence of the colonial Catholicism in Latin America and its hold over indigenous peoples.

Archbishop Ricardo Estrada Casanova [*Monseñor Ricardo Estrada Casanova*], Guatemala, c. 1880-1916

There are few photographic studies of the Catholic Church as haunting as the work of this Japanese-born photographer. Juan José de Jesús Yas was born Kohei Yasu in Fujisawa, Japan. He converted to Catholicism after he went to Central America in 1877 with Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, a noted nineteenth-century Mexican astronomer for whom Mr. Yas worked as an interpreter. Through Mr. Díaz Covarrubias, he met a Mexican photographer Agustín Barroso and became fascinated with photography. When he later accompanied Mr. Díaz Covarrubias on a scientific trip to Guatemala, he began to study photography with two well-known Guatemalan photographers.

Mr. Yas set up his own studio, Fotografía Japonesa, in Guatemala City in 1890. After converting to Catholicism shortly thereafter, he moved to Antigua, where he opened a new portrait studio. He developed a lifelong passion for photographing the clergy, churches, and ritual objects. He became well known for his documentation of life in Antigua and for striking portraits of Catholicism in Guatemala.

Mr. Yas did his portraiture work primarily in his studio. He spent much time painting scenes for his studio backdrops and collecting rocks, plants, and ornaments to enhance the environment of his portraits. Today, the Yas archives are part of the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica in Antigua, Guatemala.

Figure 140: Yasu Kōhei on the FotoFest website

The 1990 publication of *La Antigua Guatemala* by La Azotea had drawn Watriss to Yasu's work a year before FotoFest's first exhibition of Latin American photography. María Cristina Orive's criteria for classifying untitled negatives by style and subject became the reference on which Watriss relied to assess the content and artistic merit of Yasu's photographs.[59] The captions accompanying Yasu's work in the 1998 FotoFest publication are identical to those in *La Antigua Guatemala*. In the more detailed biography presented in the 2009 exhibition, Watriss again drew from the same source, asserting that Yasu received his initial inspiration for photography from the Mexican scientist and that he painted his backdrops—claims already made by Luis Luján Muñoz in his 1982 text and repeated in the 1990 publication. Some dates, such as the year of Yasu's arrival in the Americas and the opening of his studio, appear to be misspelled or inaccurate.

Most of the works selected by the FotoFest to represent the early history of photography addressed the drastic social and political changes unfolding in the newly independent Latin American republics of the nineteenth century. In contrast to progressivist photography, which reflected the early disruption of the race-based social order of the colonial period, Yasu's "idiosyncratic" photographs of bishops and priests were chosen to represent the

59 Orive (1992, pp. 76–77) contributed an article on Guatemala's colonial legacy to a FotoFest publication. Referring to Yasu Kōhei as Juan José de Jesús Yas, she provided a brief narrative of the photographer's artistic achievements and the historical relevance of his work for upcoming exhibitions.

"colonial legacy" within the postcolonial conjuncture (figure 140).[60] Watriss found particular strength in the work of photographers who used "their own culture and heritage as primary sources of inspiration or points of departure." Puzzled by the confounding constellation of Yasu's immigrant background and his deep connections to members of the Catholic priesthood, Watriss took Yasu's work as an example of "the problematics of 'reading photography."[61]

Watriss was certainly aware of her privileged position as a curator with access to the resources of the European and North American art worlds, and she did not claim to make a substantial contribution to the historiography of Latin America. However, her description of historical photography paints with broad brush strokes a generalizing background that situates the work of individual photographers within a collective Latin American experience anchored in the colonial past.

In 1998, Watriss concluded her introduction to an anthology on the history of Latin American photography with the following thought, which, seen with Yasu in mind, sounds incongruous: "Latin American photography is no longer an isolated phenomenon in an exotic landscape. It moves within an international continuum integral to the history of Western art. This book intends to support that process."[62] Here, Latin American photographers appear to be rediscovered for a distinctly Eurocentric gaze. Perhaps fittingly, and in contrast to the Guatemalan appreciation of Yasu, his Japanese origin was never acknowledged in the publications that emerged from the FotoFest exhibition contexts. His Japanese name was never used, and his early life in Japan went unmentioned. The nostalgia and symbolic use of landscapes that characterize Luján Muñoz's "transculturalized" Yasu have little in common with the Catholic heritage that Watriss perused in his religious photography.

Photo Archive and Cultural Diplomacy

Yasu Kōhei's studio photography is chosen for exhibitions today because historical photographs provide valuable records of the past. Through public display in diverse venues, his vernacular photography engages varied audiences and conveys multiple historical narratives concerning Latin America's complex histories of colonialism and popular religiosity. Beyond these layered narratives, the well-preserved black-and-white photographs are also appreciated as works of art, as evidenced by exhibitions hosted by La Azotea and FotoFest.

However, during the first decade following the establishment of Yasu's Photo Archive in the 1980s, no solo exhibitions featuring the work of Yasu or Noriega were held. As the Fototeca Guatemala collections grew, major exhibitions tended to showcase the extensive visual material from across Central America rather than focusing on individual photographers. It was not until the mid-2010s that CIRMA organized two exhibitions dedicated specifically to Yasu and his work. These exhibitions, held in 2015 and 2018, highlight Yasu's photographic career and underscore the significance of his contributions to Guatemalan visual history. Both exhibitions received support from the Japanese embassy in Guatemala, continuing a tradition that began with Yasu's first exhibition in 1982.

The Japanese embassy in Guatemala and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have participated several times in creating collections related to Yasu both in Japan and Guatemala.

60 Watriss 2009.
61 Ibid.
62 Watriss and Zamora 1998, p. 15.

In recent years, exhibitions of Yasu's work in Guatemala have been organized to coincide with diplomatic and international events involving Japan and Central American countries. Unlike in Japan, where venues, exhibited works, participating institutions, and curatorial intentions vary from one occasion to another, the Guatemalan exhibitions rely predominantly on CIRMA. This institution not only preserves fragile negatives but also plays a central role in producing research and representing Yasu's work. As an independent research center, CIRMA collaborates with academic institutions, the national tourism agency, municipal governments, and both public and private organizations to mount large-scale exhibitions. CIRMA also partners with foreign government agencies and parastatal entities such as the Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española en La Antigua Guatemala.[63]

The following pages examine the organization of these two exhibitions and analyze the context surrounding the hosting of Yasu's photographic exhibitions after a hiatus of twenty years. I am interested in understanding the curatorial approach and the broader cultural and political environments in which these exhibitions took place. Employing the framework of cultural diplomacy, I aim to explore how intercultural and international relations are established through such cultural events, specifically how Yasu's migrant biography is used to bridge contemporary Japanese and Guatemalan societies.

My analysis unfolds in two interconnected parts. It begins by comparing the curatorial approaches of the 1982 exhibition with those of the recent exhibitions held in the latter half of the 2010s. It considers whether these later exhibitions present similar or divergent perspectives on Yasu's work, focusing on the selection of works and interpretation of his photographic practice. It then shifts to how the "transcultural" image of Yasu, as articulated by Luis Luján Muñoz, shapes cultural activities aimed at fostering mutual understanding within diplomatic contexts between Japan and Guatemala. This includes examining curatorial texts, exhibition schedules, and related events accompanying Yasu's exhibitions. Within the collaboration between CIRMA and the Japanese embassy, the effects of cultural diplomacy are best understood within the broader framework surrounding Yasu's exhibitions. The organization and structure of these exhibitions effectively minimize the risk that such sponsored cultural events might be perceived as government attempts to further political agendas.

Japanese Embassy and Yasu's Collection in Guatemala

Recent scholarship on cultural diplomacy has considered the various issues intertwined within this concept, including heritage diplomacy, public diplomacy, and soft power.[64] With a clear emphasis on cultural events, cultural diplomacy refers to the "diplomatic practice of governments, carried out in support of a government's foreign policy goals or its diplomacy (or both), usually involving directly or indirectly the government's foreign ministry, involving a wide range of manifestations of the culture of the state that the government represents, targeted at a wider population as well as elites."[65] Unlike traditional diplomatic activities, which focus primarily on political and economic aspects, cultural diplomacy aims to foster mutual understanding and exchange between countries. Through these events, the target audience extends beyond elite circles to include broader

63 This Spanish institute is similar to the British Council and the Goethe-Institut, which are described in Goff's introduction to cultural diplomacy (2013, p. 426) as "para-public entities operating at arm's length from the governments of Britain and Germany."

64 Davidson and Pérez Castellanos 2019; Goff 2013.

65 Davidson and Pérez Castellanos 2019, p. 177.

populations.[66] Among such events, exhibitions stand out as effective examples of cultural diplomacy.

As an independent research center, CIRMA has frequently collaborated with diplomatic missions to organize local and international exhibitions. Common collaborations include exhibitions of foreign or migrant photographers that are sponsored by the embassy of the protagonist's home country and inaugurated by its ambassador. This pattern describes not only three exhibitions on Yasu Kōhei in Guatemala but also the 1990 event in Paris, which was organized under the auspices of the Guatemalan embassy in France. Another example is the exhibition of Anglo-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, made possible through the negotiation and sponsorship of the American embassy in Guatemala.[67].

It is worth noting that the involvement of the Japanese diplomatic mission has never been a consistent or continuous effort. As Goff observes, "cultural diplomacy is, by its very nature, contingent and ad hoc."[68] As discussed previously, with the "rediscovery of Yasu" that began in the late 1970s, several diplomats and Japanese expatriates made individual efforts to bring information about Yasu, "their ancestor in Central America," back to Japan. At the same time, the Japanese embassy supported the development of Yasu's photographic collection since the 1980s. Efforts to strengthen ties between the two countries also included facilitating contact between Japanese visitors and Yasu's Guatemalan family, as well as organizing the construction of a new tomb for Yasu and his Guatemalan dependents. Members of the diplomatic staff contributed to establishing a sister-city relationship between Fujisawa and Antigua. Undoubtedly, these efforts encouraged the creation of the Fujisawa Collection, which was established in 2004.

When Yasu's memoirs were made available by his Guatemalan family, Japanese ambassador Mori Junzo provided CIRMA with a transcript of the text. In the following decades, the Japanese embassy supplied equipment and supported the establishment of the basic structure of the Fototeca Guatemala at CIRMA.[69] The Japanese embassy has made contributions for the maintenance of the collection and sponsored several exhibitions, especially on diplomatic occasions. CIRMA and its rich collections have become an important institution for Japanese visitors. Students from Japanese schools and other guests, including members of the royal family, have visited the Fotografía Japonesa collection. Evidently, such cultural diplomacy benefits the Guatemalan institution and deepens Japanese understanding of Yasu Kōhei and his Guatemalan life abroad.

After a first decade of intense cooperation on unearthing Yasu's legacy, the diplomatic support has become more sparse. In particular, the embassy's involvement in research on Yasu diminished from its initial peak in the 1970s and 1980s. In this way, Yasu became primarily a symbol that the diplomatic mission circumstantially uses to construct a richer narrative of the historical and cultural connections between Guatemala and Japan.

Yas/Yasu as Cultural Symbol

The three exhibitions of Yasu's works that were organized by CIRMA took place in 1982, 2015, and 2018. Each of these dates marked a significant milestone: the establishment of Yasu's photographic collection at the Fototeca Guatemala, the anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Central American countries, and the centenary of Yasu's

66 Goff 2013, p. 429.
67 Luján Muñoz 1984, p. 9.
68 Goff 2013, p. 419.
69 Sherer 2010.

Japón - Guatemala, las Historias que Nos Unen

El Primer Inmigrante japonés a Guatemala

Kohei Yasu (1847-1917) de Iwate en Japón, conocido como Juan José de Jesús Yas, después de trabajar como intérprete del grupo de observación de Vénus de México en Japón llegó a Guatemala en 1878 y abrió un taller fotográfico en la Ciudad de Guatemala. En 1895 trasladó su taller a La Antigua, y dejó varias fotografías con un importante valor cultural e histórico de la época colonial de Guatemala.

Kohei Yasu
(Foto: CIRMA)

Los Príncipes Hitachi y el Presidente Arzú

Los Príncipes Hitachi visitaron Guatemala en 1997. En la Ceremonia del Palacio Imperial, la Princesa Hanako escribió un poema acordándose del Presidente Arzú. "Grande fue mi emoción al estrechar la mano cálida y acogedora del Presidente Arzú de Guatemala, que por largo y escabroso camino había conducido a su país a un cese integral de hostilidades en todo el territorio nacional".

Príncipes Hitachi con Presidente Arzú
(Foto: Prensa Libre)

Difusor de la Cultura Japonesa

El escritor y periodista guatemalteco Enrique Gómez Carrillo (1873-1927), visitó Japón en 1905 y publicó 3 obras basadas en su experiencia personal en Japón de la época de transición a la modernización; "De Marsella a Tokyo (1905)" "El Alma Japonesa (1906)" "El Japón Heroico y Galante (1912)". Gómez Carrillo relató en los libros la virtud y moral de los japoneses con ojos penetrantes. Sus obras contribuyeron a transmitir la cultura japonesa al mundo de hispanohablantes.

Edición Japonesa de "El Japón Heroico y Galante"
(Foto: Asociación Enrique Gómez Carrillo)

Kizuna (Lazo de Amistad)

El Gran Terremoto y Tsunami del 11 del marzo de 2011, causaron enormes daños en la región de Tohoku (noreste) de Japón. Instituciones públicas y privadas, así como cientos de guatemaltecos en lo individual, con un fraterno respaldo en oración, esperanza y donativos, ofrecieron una incondicional disposición de ayuda y también fueron portavoz de mensajes de aliento, solidaridad y apoyo para las víctimas. El Primer Ministro del Japón, Naoto Kan agradeció el sinnúmero de mensajes de solidaridad y oraciones, ayudas materiales y donaciones para víctimas y damnificados, enfatizando el lazo de amistad brindado por el pueblo de Guatemala.

Evento benéfico "Arte Fraterno por Japón"
(Foto: Prensa Libre)

Figure 141: Brochure for the 2015 diplomatic event "Japan-Guatemala: The Stories that Unite Us"

death.

Titled "Kōhei Yasu, a Photographic Pioneer" (Kohei Yasu, un pionero fotográfico), the 2015 exhibition was co-hosted by CIRMA and the Japanese embassy.[70] In accordance with the structure of the collaboration, the exhibition underlined Yasu's Japanese background. However, where Luján Muñoz's 1982 exhibition had sought to identify Japanese elements within Yasu's visual content, the focus was more on Yasu's migrant trajectory and his adoption of Catholicism. To place Yasu's work within the historic context, photographs produced by other photographers of his time were also displayed.

Even though it was arranged around Yasu's work, the exhibition was part of the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the Year of Friendship between Japan and the Central American countries.[71] Planned by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a series of events unfolded across Central America. In the fall of 2014, the Japanese royal family visited Guatemala. Alongside official meetings, they made a brief visit to CIRMA, where a small exhibition of Yasu's photography was arranged. Throughout 2015, Japanese and local artists presented cultural events at various venues. A list of notable historical personalities, including Yasu Kōhei was assembled to promote cultural exchange across the Pacific. Another name on the list was Enrique Gómez Carrillo, the Guatemalan modernist writer, whose travelogue about Japan was translated into Japanese and presented during

70 The Japanese embassy published a document on its website featuring photographs of the exhibition venue and the collaboration between the embassy, CIRMA, and the Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española (https://www.gt.emb-japan.go.jp/Amistad_Japon_SICA_2015/Reportes_de_eventos_del_80_aniversario/19.10.2015_KOHEI%20YASU_Antigua.pdf).

71 https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000214464.pdf.

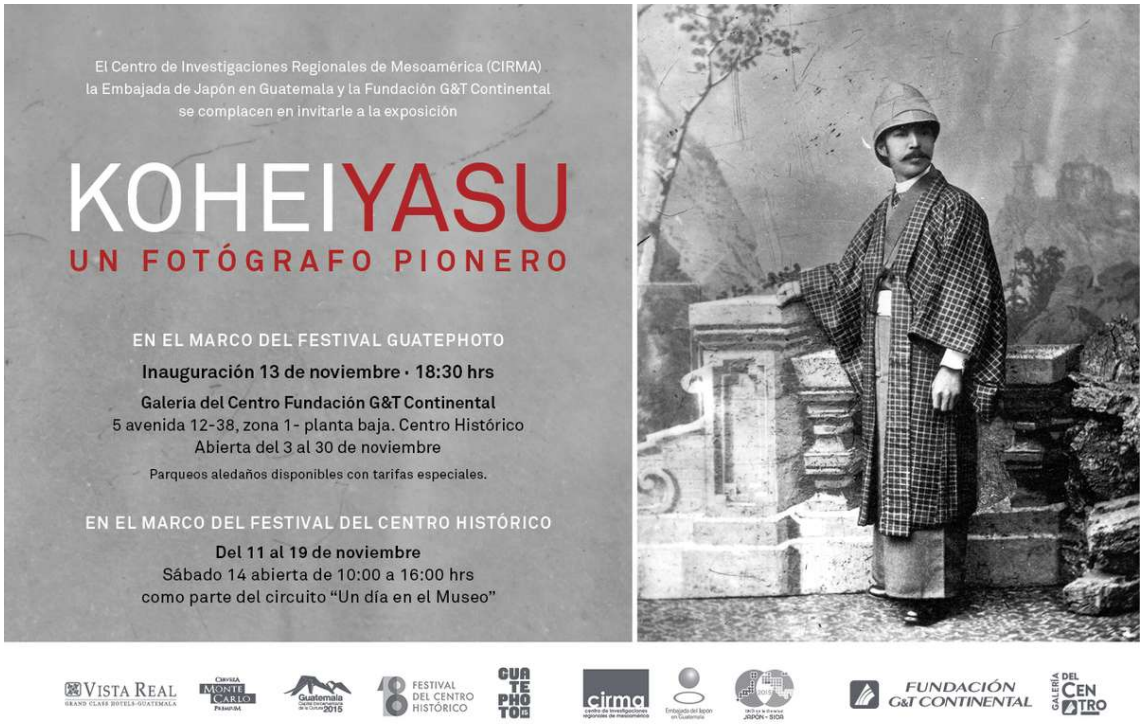

Figure 142: Promotion of the solo exhibition "Kōhei Yasu, a Photographic Pioneer"

the celebrations (figure 141).[72]

The exhibition "Kōhei Yasu, a Photographic Pioneer" featured approximately twenty photographs selected to provide a general overview of Yasu's social life in Guatemala, along with images that best represented his work (figure 142). It was curated and organized by CIRMA, and the Japanese ambassador was invited to attend the opening ceremony and deliver a speech. The exhibition premiered in Antigua, and in the months that followed, it was displayed at two additional venues in the capital city.

Upon entering the exhibition at the Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española, visitors first encountered family photographs of Yasu and the Noriega family, which depicted religious ceremonies and everyday moments in the garden. The following group of photographs presented Yasu's studio environment, including several of the props he used for portrait sessions. Centrally positioned at the far end of the room was a portrait of Yasu in a kimono, accompanied by a brief biographical text. Another section showcased studio portraits of individuals from various social classes in Guatemala, along with images of religious sculptures. The final section featured outdoor photographs of colonial convents and church ruins, which were familiar to many visitors to Antigua and the surrounding region.

Compared to the first exhibition in 1982, "Kōhei Yasu, a Photographic Pioneer" developed a fuller portrayal of Yasu as an individual, including his biography and Catholicism, which were conveyed through the sequence of images. Works by José Domingo Noriega were included in an ancillary role to illustrate aspects of Yasu's life and practice, such as postmortem photography and studio props. Excerpts from Yasu's memoirs were arranged

72 The Japanese translation of his book *El Japón heroico y galante* was translated by Kojima Keiko as Gómez Carrillo (2001), as can be seen on the brosche.

to facilitate a glimpse into his mind.[73]

Three years later, in 2018, CIRMA organized another exhibition of Yasu's work with the support of the Japanese embassy. This exhibition commemorated the centenary of Yasu's death in 1917. Featuring works by Yasu as well as other photographers of his period, the scope of the exhibition was broader than in 2015. All images were from CIRMA collections and arranged to allow visitors to appreciate the evolution of photography in Guatemala. To this end, each photograph was labeled with an approximate date and location, and the display was organized chronologically and thematically. Snippets from Yasu's biography were placed next to his photographs to provide context. As in 2015, the exhibition was held at the Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española en Antigua Guatemala, and the Japanese and Spanish ambassadors to Guatemala both attended the opening ceremony. Among several exponents presenting on early photography in Guatemala in a small lecture series, I was invited to share my knowledge on Yasu.

Before leaving his Guatemalan posting in 2019, the Japanese ambassador Furutani Tomohiko presented CIRMA with an award in recognition of its contribution to the preservation of Japan's heritage.[74] This formal recognition affirmed the significance of CIRMA's efforts to establish the photo archive and underscored Yasu's importance as an index of transcultural connections. Far from providing closure to Yasu's posthumous role as a catalyst for Japanese-Guatemalan cultural exchange, the award added an extra flourish to the cultural diplomacy emerging from the Fotografía Japonesa archive.[75] While on all these occasions, the Japanese embassy was an avid participant, the leading organizational role remained with CIRMA. This reflects what Patricia Goff describes as an ideal constellation in cultural diplomacy, in which cultural institutions are given the liberty to perform their professional work, thus avoiding the risk of becoming mere instruments of political messaging.[76] Although the Japanese embassy maintains a modest posture as a sponsor with little curatorial ambition, its official website emphasizes Yasu's significance as "one of the first immigrants to Guatemala."

The fact that a Japanese individual established a distinguished life within Guatemalan society conveys a positive image of Japan. Although the population of permanent Japanese residents in Guatemala remains very small, Yasu's legacy symbolizes the cultural bond between the two countries. This symbolic connection also relates to Japan's contemporary political and economic relationships with Guatemala and other Central American nations. In a 2002 interview with a local magazine in Antigua Guatemala, the Japanese ambassador Ueno Kagefumi outlined Japanese aid and investments in Guatemala and compared them with contributions made by other countries.[77]

Scholars of cultural diplomacy point out that curatorial frameworks that overtly serve political agendas can lead to detrimental effects.[78] In contrast, the exhibitions discussed

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73 As at that time, I was conducting archival research on the exhibition's protagonist, I was asked to write a brief text in English and Spanish.

74 https://www.gt.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_es/CIRMAReconocimiento2019.html

75 In a book on Japan's cultural diplomacy and heritage conservation, Akagawa Natsuko uses the city of Huế in Vietnam to illustrate how the Japanese contribution can be seen "as a form of cultural diplomacy, by the exercise of 'soft power'. It also reveals how such practice has impacted significantly on the direction of Vietnam's national policies towards enhancing its own cultural identity" (Akagawa (2015, p. 182)).

76 Goff 2013, p. 427.

77 Simon 2002.

78 Goff (2013, pp. 427–428) mentions the censorial nature of an American 9/11 exhibition touring the Middle East as an example of failed cultural diplomacy.

above avoided such strong political intervention. These exhibitions situate Yasu firmly within the local context in which his photographic practice flourished. Although they do not address the economic and political relations between Guatemala and Japan, they embody a mutual recognition of the history of Japanese migration, conveyed through Yasu's biography and photographic lens.

Despite their very positive cultural and diplomatic effects, the exhibitions portrayed in this segment still encourage some critical reflections on the relationship between diplomacy and the politics of culture. An interesting question is why Yasu's Asian and Japanese heritage consistently comes into focus, while the Mexican, German, Italian, or American origins of other photographers receive little attention. Here, the transcultural duality of Yasu's Japanese origins and Guatemalan life raises the question of whether the cultural diplomacy approach highlights the hybrid nature of a migrant identity or, conversely, reinforces cultural boundaries between two societies.

Exhibiting Yasu Kōhei in Japan

Since the 1980s, Yasu Kōhei's photography has been exhibited in Japan in two distinct types of venues: art galleries and museums, or public and community centers. The diversity of these exhibition spaces reflects a broader issue concerning the ways in which Japanese emigration and early Guatemalan photography have been conceptualized in contemporary Japanese society. In photo galleries and art museums, Yasu's photography is held in equal regard with that of other early photographers active in Japan. In contrast, public museums tend to present his images as visual testimony to the singular journey of a pioneering migrant to the Americas.

In the following discussion, I trace the trajectory of Yasu's photography as it returned to Japan. The earliest exhibition occurred in 1986 at an art gallery in Tokyo. Over the years, various selections of his photographs, mainly art prints from CIRMA and the mounted positives from the Fujisawa collection, were displayed in galleries, art museums, regional museums, and migration museums. A key difference from the Guatemalan exhibitions is that Japan lacks both a centralized photographic archive and a dedicated research institution responsible for curating and organizing exhibitions. Most exhibitions in Japan have been organized by individuals with a strong personal interest in Yasu's work and biography.

While by virtue of its standout status us cultural institution, the Guatemalan CIRMA has gained increased recognition for Yasu's work and a deeper understanding of its visual content through periodic exhibitions, Japanese curators encounter greater challenges in convincing a public saturated with the offerings of many more competing institutions and events of Yasu's historical and artistic significance. My analysis focuses on the selection of photographs in each exhibition, the venues where they were displayed, and the accompanying curatorial discourses. These interpretive discourses engage diverse audiences and convey distinct messages. Central to this inquiry is the effort to situate photographs taken in Guatemalan studio settings within the broader national narratives of Japanese photography and migration.

From the Art Gallery to the Art Museum

From February 20 to March 3, 1985, the first exhibition of Yasu's photographs was held at an art gallery in Tokyo. The exhibition was titled "Yasu Kōhei and Umoto: One Hundred Years Old City, Antigua Guatemala 1895-1984" (ある古都の一世紀 アンティグア グァ

Figure 143: Postcard for the Yasu-Umoto Duo Exhibition: Antigua Guatemala, 1895 – 1984

テマラ 1895 – 1984) and showcased the photographic works of Yasu and the contemporary artist Umoto Masahiro by depicting the colonial city of Antigua during two distinct periods (figure 143). He conceived this dual project while working in Guatemala, where he learned about Yasu Kōhei from Japanese expatriates. Drawn to Yasu's work and life, Umoto was inspired to portray Antigua as a tribute to his predecessor.[79] For the exhibition at the Designers Space Photo Gallery (デザイナーズスペースフォトギャラリ) in Ginza, Tokyo, Umoto selected nineteen photographs of the churches and monasteries Yasu had captured. He paired them with his own views of the same architecture taken more than seven decades later.

As Umoto explained during our interview, the intention behind the exhibition was not to present Yasu as an ambitious adventurer but rather to recognize him as a precursor to contemporary Japanese photography. This raises an interesting question. Given that Yasu's photographs were made from Guatemalan subject matter and portrayed local society alongside views of Catholic tradition, how did Umoto establish a connection between Yasu's work and his own through a putative link to the contemporary Japanese photographic art scene? Yasu's work stands apart due to the conspicuous absence of clear Japanese references, even compared to studio portraits created by other photographers in Guatemala, Europe, and North America, which often included kimonos and other oriental elements as exotist props.

The exhibition "Yasu Kōhei and Umoto Masahiro" effectively positioned Yasu as a Japanese expatriate whose work can be appreciated as Japanese despite its foreign context and subjects. As evidenced by the exhibitions curated by the Fototeca Guatemala, the archiving of Yasu's glass negatives bestowed an artistic status on his inherently vernacular

79 Interview with Umoto Masahiro, February 19, 2017, Nakatsugawa, Gifu.

images. This transformation, in turn, enabled Umoto to present Yasu's work alongside his own as fine art. In both Guatemala and Japan, the re-contextualization of early studio photography as contemporary aesthetic objects raises interesting questions about how archiving institutions and specialists in the markets of artistic and historic objects assign new values and interpretations to old materials. In the Japanese appropriation of Yasu's photography as art, this process entails the incorporation of foreign images into the context of Japanese visual content. As it depends on the assumption that Yasu retained a distinctly Japanese way of thinking and being throughout his long life abroad, the artistic elevation of the photographs also distances Yasu from his engagement with vernacular visual regimes.

With this exhibition, Umoto established Yasu's position within the purview of Tokyo's photography critics at a time when photography was gaining recognition as an art form deserving dedicated institutions.[80] This emerging appreciation of photography's artistic potential fostered a comparative reevaluation of the artistry captured in Yasu's black-and-white works. Such attention may explain how Yasu's Guatemalan photographs were included in the core collection of the Tokyo Photographic Art Museum (hereinafter referred to as TOP Museum).

Planned since 1986 and opened in 1995, the TOP Museum was established to collect works by Japanese photographers alongside outstanding contributions from non-Japanese artists.[81] There are forty-nine photographs under the name Yasu Kōhei in the database accessible within the museum. The items are discoverable only through a database search. However, I became aware of their existence through an interview with the director of the Fujisawa Community Theater, who was seeking additional information about Yasu while preparing a play based on his life. The items are from CIRMA's Fotografía Japonesa collection, but no information is provided regarding their acquisition. The available data is limited to Yasu's date of birth and the caption accompanying each photograph. According to the photographer Umoto Masahiro, the collection was assembled by Yokoe Fuminori, then curator of the museum, who took an interest in Japanese photographers working outside Japan.[82] It is likely that, during the initial assembly of the TOP Museum's holdings, Yokoe asked Umoto, who lived in Central America at the time, to approach CIRMA regarding Yasu Kōhei's works.

The selection of photographs invites speculation on the themes that drew the curators' interest in the artistic production of a Japanese expatriate abroad. It comprises ten photographs of colonial churches and convents; one image depicting peasant workers with their cargo on a bridge at the outskirts of Antigua; thirteen photographs of Antigua's cityscape, featuring historical secular buildings, civic gatherings, and the surrounding landscape; two images featuring advertisements and the studio interior of Fotografía Japonesa; and five portraits of Yasu and his wife María Noriega. The remaining photographs include images of priests, saint sculptures, and postmortems of children displayed in the Catholic tradition. Each of the photographs is captioned with brief information comprising references to historical work on the Japanese individual Yasu Kōhei, his family life with María Noriega, his studio, homes, and photographic subjects.

A very similar project introducing a previously unknown photographer to Japanese society is that of Frank Matsura 松浦栄 (Matsura Sakae, 1873 – 1913). An immigrant to Okanogan, Washington, United States, Matsura left a striking body of work capturing

80 Aota and Kobayashi 2014.
81 Tōkyō-to Shashin Bijutsukan 2000, p. 7.
82 Interview with Umoto Masahiro, February 19, 2017, Nakatsugawa, Gifu.

intimate interactions in the American frontier town. Since the 1970s, his photographs have been preserved by the Okanogan County Historical Society and Washington State University in Pullman.[83] In 1982, "upon reading an article on Matsura Sakae," photographer Kurihara Tatsuo initiated a journey to research the biography and work of the "frontier photographer." Kurihara's endeavor commenced around the same time that Umoto and Yokoe became aware of Yasu Kōhei. However, the shared interest in overseas Japanese photographers does not appear to have developed into a collective or sustained project but rather remained the pursuit of individuals.[84] This is reflected in the handling of Yasu's photographic prints at the TOP Museum, where they are stowed away for limited onsite access. In 2000, Yasu was one of 328 photographers featured in a compilation that described the TOP Museum's commitment to preserving and promoting Japanese photography.[85]

In 2013, nearly twenty years after the establishment of the TOP Museum, one photograph attributed to Yasu Kōhei was published in a report on a major project titled "Dawn of Japanese Photography."[86] This albumen print depicts the studio interior of Fotografía Japonesa. Interestingly, the image does not belong to the items purchased by the TOP Museum from CIRMA but to the collection assembled at the communal center of Yasu's hometown, Fujisawa, Ichinoseki.[87] It was among hundreds of historical photographs examined by metropolitan experts during a nationwide survey of municipal collections and subsequently registered under the Hokkaido and Tōhoku regional category.[88]

The text accompanying the preliminary exhibition of the "Dawn of Japanese Photography" project explains, "This exhibition presents photographs from 1853 to 1900 from institutions with exhibition facilities in Hokkaido and Tōhoku, providing an opportunity to view some of the earliest photographs produced in this country." In preparation for this exhibition, questionnaires were sent to 2,384 institutions, including art galleries, museums, libraries, and educational institutions in Hokkaido and Tōhoku. We received 882 responses and were able to identify 115 institutions that had original or duplicate photographs. These were then researched on-site, and the best from 51 institutions were brought together here for this exhibition.[89] Written in both Japanese and English, the brief caption for Yasu's photograph states, "No. 066. Inside view of Yasu studio. YASU Kōhei (Juan José de Jesús Yas). c. 1882-1897 Albumen print Ichinoseki City (屋須弘平写真館内部). 屋須弘平 明治中期 鶏卵紙 一関市)."

There is no information on Yasu's migrant background, beyond the indirect hint contained in his Spanish name. The attribution directs the reader to the institution hosting the photograph but provides no details about Yasu's collection at the TOP Museum. Yasu's albumen print was not included in the final selection of 375 examples of early photography

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83 Wang 2014.

84 Kurihara's book offers a detailed account of this journey, along with the history of Matsura and the community in which he lived and worked. His framing of the historical background that may have motivated Matsura's emigration parallels that of Yasu: both shared familial roots on the side of the shogunate, a legacy that contributed to the difficulties they encountered in pursuing a career in Meiji Japan Kurihara (2011).

85 Fuminori 2000, p. 311.

86 Since 2007, the TOP Museum has hosted four exhibitions on early photographic records discovered throughout Japan.

87 The provenance of the albumen prints in the Fujisawa collection remains unclear. When I visited in 2014, there were obvious signs that the prints had gone through specialist hands, with each bearing a label that identified it as part of the "collection of Fujisawa Elementary School 藤澤尋常小學校."

88 Tōkyō-to Shashin Bijutsukan 2013, p. 52.

89 Ibid.

in Japan, which were presented in a major exhibition accompanied by an international symposium and published in a book.[90]

Migration and the History of Japanese Photography

In 1990, photography critic Minato Chihiro published an article in a Japanese photography magazine. The article reviewed the "Cent Ans de Photographies" exhibition of works by Yasu, José Domingo Noriega, Cristina Orive, and Luis González Palma, which I have discussed earlier in this chapter. Minato had seen the exhibition in Paris and expressed his disappointment that it only featured four photographers. Although he still "enjoyed this interesting exhibition" and was pleased to learn about Yasu, his disappointment reflected the expectations he held for a category as broad as a "national history of photography," which "Cent Ans" 's subtitle announced.[91] The question of how to define Japanese photography arose in the 1980s, when institutions such as the TOP Museum were created to stage the art of photography for public enjoyment and education.[92] Just as in Guatemala, Japanese authors discovered their interest in the national history of photography in parallel with foreign scholars publishing texts on the topic in the English language.[93]

Iizawa Kōtarō, a photography historian and critic, played a key role in incorporating Yasu into the history of Japanese photography. After encountering Yasu Kōhei's work at Umoto Masahiro's exhibition in 1985, he was struck by Yasu's portrayal of colonial architecture and cityscapes. Since then, Iizawa has conducted research on Yasu and collaborated with scholars and curators to present his biography and artwork to the Japanese public (figure 144). At that time, Iizawa regularly wrote about the history of photography in Japan. In 1990, he traveled to Antigua Guatemala with Umoto to visit the Noriega family and the Fototeca Guatemala. A few years later, in 1996, he collaborated with the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) to produce a documentary about his travels to Antigua. During this trip, Iizawa interviewed the Noriega family descendants and visited Yasu's tomb.[94]

Iizawa employed two distinct approaches to situate Yasu Kōhei within the context of early Japanese photography. First, he gave talks about Yasu to audiences at exhibitions featuring the photographer's work. These talks provided visitors, as well as those interested in photography or Guatemalan culture, with information on these subjects.[95] Secondly, Iizawa continued to write about Yasu in photography magazines and books on the history of photography in Japan, analyzing Yasu's work in more detail.[96] For instance, in a 1990 article, Iizawa noted the astonishing visual power of Yasu Kōhei's street photographs and argued that none of Yasu's Japanese contemporaries created comparably striking images of architecture and landscapes.[97]

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90 Tōkyō-to Shashin Bijutsukan 2017.

91 Minato 1991, p. 119.

92 See, for example, the discussion on photographic art museums by Aota (2014); on the establishment of the TOP Museum, see Mizukoshi and Murata (2003) and Tōkyō-to Shashin Bijutsukan (2000).

93 From 1988 to the early 2000s, publications in English and Japanese on the history of photography in Japan include Banta and Taylor (1988), Bennett (1996), Cortazzi and Bennett (1995), Ozawa (1981, 1986, 1994, 1997), Tōkyō-to Shashin Bijutsukan (2000), Tucker et al. (2003), and Winkel (1991).

94 Information about the program can be found here: https://www2.nhk.or.jp/archives/movies/?id=D0009010392_00000.

95 See appendix 2.

96 Iizawa 1986, 1989, 1990, 1999, 2008; Ishii and Iizawa 2003.

97 Iizawa 1990.

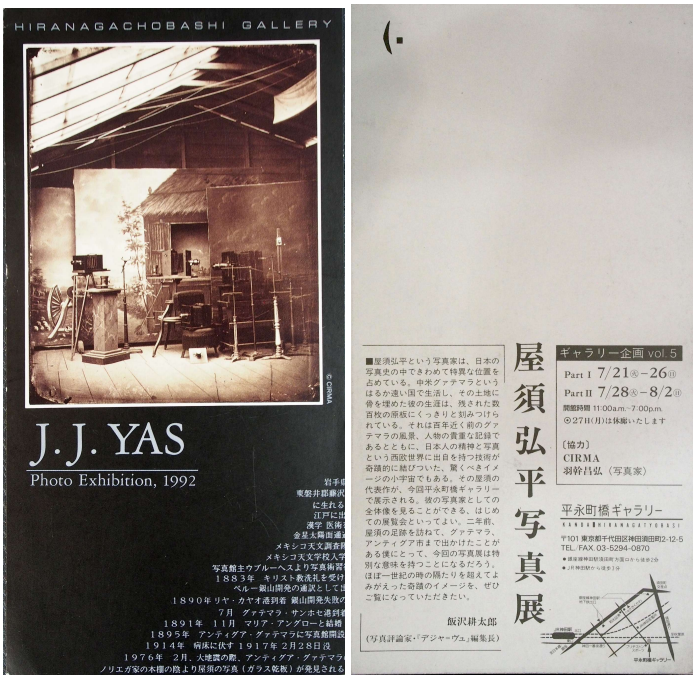

Figure 144: The 1992 Tokyo photo exhibition,"J. J. Yasu-Yasu Kōhei," was a collaboration between CIRMA, Umoto Masahiro, and Iizawa Kōtarō

By including Yasu in his critical work, Iizawa broadened the category of Japanese photography.[98] However, this invites a reflection. Can "Japanese photography" be considered an open category that encompasses artists like Yasu Kōhei, who neither learned from Japanese masters nor produced for the Japanese market? For Iizawa, Yasu's Japanese birth and upbringing were sufficient. His response to the conundrum posed by Yasu's Japanese migrant photography aligns with perspectives offered by other Japanese authors and the TOP Museum's "Dawn of Japanese Photography" project.

The trajectory of Yasu's œuvre, or rather the small portion of it that has entered the realm of Japanese photography, can be traced from Umoto's duo exhibition to the critics writing in photo magazines and the TOP Museum's archival efforts. Yasu's migrant trajectory invites a reconsideration of the meaning of national art. As highlighted by Christopher Morton and Darren Newbury's work on African photography, curatorial hands play a critical role in the establishment of national photographic traditions. As they state, "Archival practices are especially significant [...] since it is through the selective publication, exhibition, and mediation of collections and archives that 'African photography' is created and recreated over time."[99]

98 When I spoke with Iizawa on February 3, 2016, he did not classify Yasu Kōhei as a Japanese photographer. He believed that Yasu's work contrasted with Japanese photographers of that period in that Yasu adopted Western approaches to perspective and composition, as well as to his choice of subjects, such as landscapes. Iizawa used the Japanese concept of *omote-ura* (public versus private) to explain the differences between Japanese photographers working in Japan and those working abroad, such as Yasu Kōhei and Sakae Matsura. Although Yasu had a strong cultural and sentimental bond to Japan, his approach to the subject was very Western. According to Iizawa, Yasu's shifting identity between Japanese and Western is what set him apart from early Japanese practitioners. However, this nuanced qualification does not change the fact that Iizawa included Yasu Kōhei in publications on Japanese photography, thus broadening the category for curators and exhibition goers alike.

99 Morton and Newbury 2016, p. 4.

While essays and articles on Yasu Kōhei, his biography, and his photography were published continuously in Japan, no further displays were organized for the next twenty years after Umoto's show in 1985. It was only after Yasu's Fujisawa collection was established in 2004 that three subsequent showcases were organized. These projects differed from both Umoto's exhibition and the events produced by CIRMA in Guatemala. Whereas these earlier exhibitions had emphasized Yasu's photography and artistic accomplishments, the three events taking place from 2005 onward situated Yasu within the broader history of Japanese overseas migration and highlighted his successful endeavors in Guatemala.

The Fujisawa collection consists of 156 pieces and is on permanent display at the Fujisawa Community Center in Ichinoseki. It is mostly viewed by local and regional visitors. Created under the cultural property framework, the collection allows for further use by public institutions. In 2005 and 2016, the entire collection was loaned to gallerist and freelance exhibition organizer Fujiwara Toshio, who showcased it in two exhibitions in Yokohama City. These two exhibitions, organized in association with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), marked the final step in the gradual transformation of Yasu Kōhei into local cultural property and, subsequently, an exemplary figure in the historical narrative of Japanese migration overseas.

The first exhibition curated by Fujiwara Toshio took place in 2005 at JICA Yokohama Center, in an exhibition space adjacent to the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum (figure 145). This was the first time the Fujisawa collection was displayed outside its home institution. The full title of the exhibition was "Yasu Kōhei - Juan José de Jesús Yas - Photographs and artifacts tell the story of emigration to Guatemala and longing for home" (屋須弘平展・Juan José de Jesús de Yas・写真と遺品が語るグアテマラ移住と望郷). In the following pages, I will refer to this exhibition by the short title "Migration and Nostalgia."

The exhibition had two distinct dimensions. First, as part of the Yokohama International Festival of Photography (横浜国際写真フェスティバ), it presented the full Fujisawa collection, as well as dual displays of exterior photographs by Yasu Kōhei and Umoto Masahiro. Photography critic Iizawa Kōtarō contributed an informative lecture about Yasu's artistic achievements and the sociopolitical context of his work. Second, the adjacency of the exhibition to the Overseas Migration Museum situated Yasu's biography in the context of Japanese overseas migration. This effect was enhanced by the inclusion of Yasu Kōhei's overseas travel registration in a small exhibition of 28 historical documents on Japanese-Central American relations, which the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held simultaneously as part of its celebrations of the "Japan-Central America Year of Exchange 2005" (日・中米交流年 2005).[100] The Ministry's website provided supplemental information encouraging visitors to look beyond Yasu's individual trajectory and develop a broader understanding of the region and the history of Japanese emigration.

Fujiwara Toshio, the curator of "Migration and Nostalgia" owns a small art gallery named ガレリアリブロ (GaleríaLIBRO) in Yokohama. Like Iizawa Kōtarō, he became interested in Yasu after reading Minato Chihiro's comments on "Cent Ans de Photographies," the 1990 Paris exhibition.[101] Fascinated by Yasu's work and story, Fujiwara traveled to

[100] More information on this exhibition is available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/honsho/shiryo/j_latin_2005/index.html.

[101] He read about the exhibition, and learned about Yasu, in the March 1991 issue of *Nippon Camera*. Interview with Fujiwara Toshio in Yokohama on January 26, 2016.

Figure 145: Promotion for the 2005 exhibition, "Yasu Kōhei - Juan José de Jesús: Photographs and Artifacts Telling the Story of Emigration to Guatemala and Longing for Home"

Guatemala to take a closer look. He returned determined to organize exhibitions on Yasu in galleries and art museums, similar to the one created by Umoto in 1985. However, because the Catholic content of Yasu's photographs spoke little to Japanese audiences, and given Guatemala's remoteness, raising funds and scouting venues for such exhibitions proved difficult. In contrast, showcasing Yasu Kōhei in projects related to the thematic framework of Japanese overseas migration emerged as a more viable approach. At institutions affiliated with JICA, the development aid agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yasu's work was presented as a bridge to the world and as evidence of Japan's global connections.

The second event curated by Fujiwara Toshio took place in 2016 at the Kanagawa Plaza for Global Citizenship (Earth Plaza) in Yokohama and was larger than the "Migration and Nostalgia" exhibition in 2005 (figure 146).[102] It bore the title "Yasu Kōhei / Juan José de Jesús Yas: One Hundred and Forty Years of Romance" (屋須弘平—グアテマラ 140 年のロマン) and opened on January 23, 2016. While waiting for families and schoolchildren to arrive and enter the exhibition space, Fujiwara explained to me that the translation of "romance," rendered in Japanese as "roman," does not carry the same connotations of love and chivalry as it does for English speakers. "It implies a quest or a longing, a desire to find something new," he said.[103] Similar to 2005, Yasu's personal belongings and photographic equipment were on display at the venue. The Umoto-Yasu duo photography series was featured for a second time, allowing visitors to view the work of the two photographers side by side. Scholar and critic Iizawa Kōtarō again gave a lecture on Yasu's photography in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Guatemala. Fujisawan members of the Yasu

[102] Earth Plaza is the abbreviation for Kanagawa Plaza for Global Citizenship. It is associated with the Japan Overseas Cooperative Association (JOCA), an affiliated with JICA.

[103] Interview with Fujiwara Toshio in Yokohama, January 26, 2016.

family were also invited to attend, and the community theater group performed a play created in Yasu's honor and that of their town.

The Earth Plaza differs from the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in both its focus and target audience. It addresses schoolchildren and young families and places a strong emphasis on multiculturalism in its permanent exhibition. In this context, "One Hundred and Forty Years of Romance" featured traditional Mayan indigenous food and costumes, offering visitors insight into Guatemala and its peoples. In juxtaposition to the multicultural display of peoples and traditions regularly available at the Earth Plaza, the objects that once traveled with Yasu across the seas offered visitors a taste of the past.[104]

As one of the first ports opened to foreign contact in the mid-nineteenth century, Yokohama, where both Fujiwara Toshio's exhibitions were held, is a pivotal point of connection in the process of inserting Yasu's biography into Japanese historical accounts. After all, it was in Yokohama where Yasu studied French and medicine, met the Mexican scientist Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, and departed for Europe and the Americas. When Yasu's photographs were rediscovered in the late 1970s, the phenomenon of *nikkeijin*—descendants of emigrants who returned to Japan in search of work—began to acquire a large social relevance. As Shigeru Kojima notes, the government funded educational projects on the histories of other cultures and societies to better prepare the local population for the returning *nikkeijin*.[105] The Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, the Kanagawa Earth Plaza, and similar facilities in port cities like Kobe played a vital role in this public education.

Sponsorship from government agencies for international aid situated Fujiwara Toshio's exhibitions within the framework of the national discourse on migration and international relations. The titles "Migration and Nostalgia" and "One Hundred and Forty Years of Romance" reflected the emphasis that both exhibitions placed on Yasu Kōhei's youth in Meiji Japan, his enthusiasm for exploring foreign lands, and his emotional attachment to his homeland. Yasu's photographs of Catholic motifs and traditions were presented as indicators of his successful integration into another culture, offering visitors a view of both that culture and Japan's place in the wider world.

Despite the similarities of the two exhibitions, "One Hundred and Forty Years of Romance" afforded Fujiwara greater curatorial freedom. He broadened the exhibition's scope to include subjects such as Catholic post-mortem depictions of children, a genre popular in Guatemala and Mexico. To support this expanded approach, Fujiwara enlisted art historian Kobayashi Annu to contribute an essay titled "The *Angelito* Photography in Latin America," and he selected additional images from Yasu's œuvre to be displayed alongside the Fujisawa collection. I also wrote a short essay exploring the aesthetic dimensions of Yasu's work. These diverse contributions underlined the heterogeneous elements of the exhibition and accentuated the multilayered narratives that converged within the venue.

Photographs, especially historical images, are widely used to convey a collective story about the past. In diplomatic contexts, photographs also play a crucial role in shaping a preferred narrative. This narrative may differ from official policy or serve as a counterpoint to opposing views. In this way, cultural diplomacy can "offset negative, stereotypical, or overly simplistic impressions arising from policy choices or from hostile portrayals. It may

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104 This resonates with Crooke's (2014, p. 191) finding that, in the migrant museum, "[t]he tangible presence of the suitcase as an artifact became the means to enable a journey to new places and a new life, and provided an opportunity to reflect upon that transformation."

105 Kojima 2011.

Figure 146: Exhibition venue for "Yasu Kōhei / Juan José de Jesús: One Hundred and Forty Years of Romance" at the Earth Plaza

also fill a void where no stories of any kind exist."[106] This is how from an idiosyncratic assemblage of objects retrieved from the storerooms of a Guatemalan family, which was subsequently transferred to Yasu's northern hometown, a story eventually emerged of an individual migrant establishing himself in a foreign country—a story apt to stand for the national history of migration to Latin America on a much larger scale.

When I last conversed with Fujiwara Toshio, he remained committed to creating further events on Yasu Kōhei. He expressed a desire to raise funds for a project that would focus more explicitly on Yasu's photographic achievements. Although he proposed a framework for collaborating with public entities that highlighted Yasu's role as a cultural bridge and migrant figure, Fujiwara himself was more interested in the artistic merits of the photography. Our conversation prompted me to reflect on the broader context of representing Yasu Kōhei's photographic legacy in Japan. Unlike the recurrent presentation of the Fotografía Japonesa archive in Guatemala, which revisits similar themes, formats, and settings, exhibitions in Japan reveal a wide range of interpretations that respond to various institutional interests and curatorial approaches. This multiplicity shapes distinct narratives about Yasu's life and work, influencing the messages conveyed to audiences. The choice of venue, the composition of the viewership, and the integration of items from the Fujisawan and Antiguan collections all contribute to how Yasu's story is told. As diverse actors engage with Yasu in shifting contexts, the meanings attributed to his photographs reflect evolving viewpoints within a multifaceted cultural and political landscape.

* * *

In both Japan and Guatemala, Yasu Kōhei's photography and migrant life distinguish him as a unique individual. His complex and productive biography prompts individual actors, cultural institutions, and diplomatic entities on both sides of the Pacific to weave narratives of exchange and cross-cultural solidarity. Yasu's photography is generally presented as a positive example of a transcultural experience and the ability to adapt to a new life while preserving one's origins.

In this context, his photographs offer rich material for examining cultural imaginaries of self and other in exhibitions that often evoke a collective past. Key questions arise: How do Japanese and Guatemalan institutions and individuals imagine the past by situating their respective nations within the geopolitical constellations of both Yasu's time and the present? Most scholarly work on photographic archives in the postcolonial world focuses on the European visual appropriation and the potential to challenge the colonial gaze from subaltern positions. Yasu's case is entangled in the politics of representing cultural otherness. However, at least at first glance, it does not center on Europe. As a migrant along the margins of the Eurocentric world, Yasu Kōhei's story invites us to explore how two societies, unconnected by a shared colonial history, perceive one another.

[106] Goff 2013, p. 421.

Epilogue

Sakura, a Tale of Fujisawa

In the fading darkness, a frail figure stands in the background. Suddenly, light and shadow flicker, revealing a vast ridge, trees, and a winding river. Emerging from the dense shadows, a man steps forward. He wears a blend of Japanese and Western attire, the only visual clue to his previously unknown identity. He raises his head and gazes into the distance. After a long pause, he turns to a young man standing beside him, inquires about the distant cry of a bird, and begins a monologue marked by an anguished tone:

> Whenever I miss my hometown of Fujisawa or face difficulties at work or at home, I come here to speak with the Quetzal [...] The bird, once emerald green, was forever changed when the great chief Tekun fought the whites and placed a piece of his heart upon the chest of Quetzal, the patron goddess of Tekun. Since that moment, Quetzal's chest has remained red [...] You can never live in captivity, oh Quetzal. Listen to me, have I been happy? Forty years after leaving Fujisawa, I found work here in Guatemala and was blessed with a family. I have earned social status and honor. Yet, there remains a vast emptiness in my heart. What is this feeling, Quetzal?[1]

This scene, depicting Yasu Kōhei in the final days of his life, is the third-to-last scene in *Sakura*, a play dedicated to our protagonist by the townspeople of Fujisawa. It contrasts his life abroad with that of his family at home, beginning with his return from Peru in 1890 and concluding with his death in 1917. In this scene, the old and ailing Yasu receives a fictional young visitor from Japan, the miner Shōta, with whom, as the play reveals, he worked in the Peruvian mine. Together, Yasu and Shōta walk through the remarkable volcanic landscape of Antigua Guatemala. A shimmering projection casts shadows on a backdrop depicting a Guatemalan small town and a Japanese village, two sites of nostalgia from his life.

In 2016, *Sakura* was performed during the exhibition "One Hundred Forty Years of Romance" at the theater hall of Earth Plaza in Kanagawa, the same venue hosting the exhibition. On that cold winter evening, I saw *Sakura* for the first time. Sitting in the audience, I was struck by the theatrical portrayal of the vast distance across the Pacific and the ineffable, untranslatable sense of belonging that the theatrical Yasu felt for both sides of his family. By that time, I had read Yasu's memoirs and various publications about him. Still, I was surprised by the intimate portrayal of his personal life, which writings focused on broader historical narratives elide.

Despite Yasu's fulfilling life in Guatemala, the play seeks to convey that, ultimately, his deepest affection remained with his birthplace. According to Ise Tokurō, who played Yasu Kōhei, this explains why people from Fujisawa and those who cherish the town

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[1] "In the Mountain Agua," the fifteenth Scene. "The Story of Yasu Kōhei: Script for the 2009 Public Performance in Yokohama" (屋須弘平物語 さくら : 脚本 (横浜公演)). Authored by Minagawa Yōichi. Henceforth, *Sakura Script*.

collaborate to create plays about its history, culture, and notable figures.[2] As Minagawa Yōichi, the writer and director of *Sakura*, explained in the epilogue at Earth Plaza, the play was dedicated to Yasu Kōhei's memory, but its primary aim was to foster a reunion among those who left Fujisawa to work in the big cities. Minagawa and his company of amateur performers collaborated to craft their version of Yasu's travels. To some extent, this rendition bypassed the authoritative narratives shaped by public and academic institutions that oversee most venues displaying Yasu's works. For the people of Fujisawa, Yasu's migrant experience resonates not with national rhetoric, but with the intimate act of reconnecting with the town's lost sons and daughters.

The production and performance of *Sakura* invite reflection on the motivations behind the townspeople's decision to create a play centered on the story of an individual from the past. This amateur dramatization offers a distinct portrayal of Yasu, one that diverges from the image constructed by experts and scholars in recent decades. Unlike the biographies and essays explored in the previous chapters, which closely align Yasu's fate with that of Japan, *Sakura* focuses on his private life and the fragmentation caused by linguistic and religious incommensurability. Through its overlapping scenes and narratives, the play seeks to present a definitive, reconciling version of Yasu's immigrant biography.

Fujisawa and Its Community Theater

The small mountain town of Fujisawa is in southern Iwate Prefecture. Since the Meiji period, it has undergone a series of administrative changes. Starting in the 1970s, amid Japan's economic boom, the town's demographics shifted markedly as many residents left to work in major cities such as Tokyo and Yokohama.[3] In 2011, Fujisawa was merged with Ichinoseki. When I first visited in 2014, the town had a population of approximately nine thousand, with agriculture and animal husbandry serving as its main economic activities.

Founded in 1999, the Fujisawa Community Theater aims to "revitalize and culturally enrich the local community" through plays "written, directed, cast, and run entirely by residents."[4] It is one of many community theaters (*chominengakijo* 町民劇場) that have emerged in villages and towns across Japan over the past two decades.[5] The Fujisawa Community Theater brings together students from local schools, small shopkeepers, civil servants, housewives, farmers, and craftsmen. Lighting and makeup teams are formed, and alongside the director, an amateur himself, and all the actors, they work for months to bring their productions to life.

Since its founding, the theater has written and produced more than ten plays performed at the Jōmon Hall of the Fujisawa Bunka Koryu Center.[6] The dominant themes of these

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2 Interview with Ise Tokurō on November 8, 2014. Fujisawa, Ichinoseki.

3 In a 2006 interview conducted by Ōmoto Keino, Saitō Mamoru, who had served as mayor of Fujisawa since 1979, reflected on the onset of this period. He explained, "Because everyone has gone to work (*dekasegi*), the firefighting team (消防団) is unable to function. For this reason, fire drills are held on New Year's Day, when the firefighters return to their homes" (Ōmoto 2006, p. 165).

4 http://www.chiiki-dukuri-hyakka.or.jp/cgi-bin/profile/data.cgi?number=415

5 One example is examined by Sakurai (2013, p. 83) in his study of a theater group in Nanpuhara, Okinawa. He notes that the town "has developed a perspective of war sites 戦争遺跡 (negative legacy 負の遺産) as 'town assets' (町の財産), that is, cultural assets, ahead of other prefectures and the national government."

6 藤沢町文化交流センター縄文ホール. The Jōmon Period refers to Japan's prehistoric era, spanning from 14,000 to 300 BCE. In front of Jōmon Hall in Fujisawa, adjacent to the public library, stands a sculpture by artist Tarō Okamoto dedicated to the region's prehistoric culture. This sculpture has

plays are based on local legends and history. Among these, *The Cross Disappeared in the Forest* (森に消えた十字架), which recounts the story of local Christian martyrs during the Edo period, gained popularity as it was performed eight times at various venues, including locations beyond Fujisawa. Set in the early Edo period, when the shōgun, the military dictator, sought to suppress the spread of Christianity in Japan, the play portrays the massacre of three hundred suspected Christians in Fujisawa in 1639, an incident less widely known than the 1597 martyrdom of Christians in Nagasaki.

In 2004, when Yasu's collection was designated a cultural property of Fujisawa and placed on permanent display, the theater began preparations at the suggestion of the Fujisawa Municipality. The goal was to revive Yasu's story as a complement to the exhibition. This effort culminated in the premiere of *Sakura: The Story of Yasu Kōhei* (屋須弘平物語 さくら) in February 2006. That same year, the local magazine *General Information Magazine of Our Town: Fujisawa* published a special issue on Yasu's biography, the collection, and the play. It explored his national and international significance through interviews with diplomats, essays by historians and photo critics, and conversations with Japanese relatives and municipal officials involved in acquiring the collection. The magazine also featured theater members, directors, actors, and staff sharing their enthusiasm for the play and empathy for Yasu as an emigrant.[7] Beyond performances in Fujisawa and Iwate Prefecture, *Sakura* was staged twice in the Tokyo metropolitan area over the next decade. The first metropolitan performance, held in 2009 and coinciding with the 135th anniversary of Yasu's departure from Yokohama on his journey to Mexico, commemorated the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Port of Yokohama.

The community theater's work extends beyond script production, actor training, and performances. It also involves technical support from outside experts and participation from local farmers and small shopkeepers. Municipal officials contribute to organizing the events. On some occasions, such as the 2016 performance in Yokohama, many townspeople take part in diverse roles. A group of actors, municipal employees, officials, and shop owners traveled together by long-distance bus from Fujisawa to Kanagawa. On the day of the event, they set up a small fair featuring local products at the venue's entrance. Visitors were welcomed with an array of regional specialties, such as tofu, *doburoku* (an unrefined sake), sausages, and traditional pastries, before entering the performance hall. This blend of cultural celebration and local commerce promotes Fujisawa's history and provides an opportunity to carry local products to wider markets. At the end, the fusion of nostalgia for a shared past and hometown pride with economic initiative reflects government efforts to help with revitalizing rural communities.

Sites of Recollection

The play *Sakura* is not the first text about Yasu written by people from Fujisawa. As discussed in earlier chapters, Saitō Johei published his *Biographical Sketch* of Yasu Kōhei in 1934.[8] While Saitō's purpose was to encourage the locals to emigrate by presenting the story of Yasu, *Sakura* appears to pursue an opposite aim. For several decades, younger generations have left the region for larger cities, initially to obtain an education and later in

become a symbol of Fujisawa, and every summer a Jōmon festival is held beside the hall.

7 "*Sakura*: The Story of Yasu Kōhei," *General Information of Our Town: Fujisawa* (まちの総合情報誌 Fujisawa), March 2006.

8 J. Saitō 1934.

pursuit of employment. As Minagawa's epilogue to the performance at the Earth Plaza suggests, what connects Yasu to most contemporary residents of Fujisawa is that they, too, are migrants with biographies marked by movement.

Today, only one branch of the Yasu family lives in Fujisawa. Before the establishment of the Fujisawa collection, not all townspeople were aware of Yasu Kōhei. As discussed in chapter 7, the creation of this collection framed his belongings as cultural heritage, a classification that may have ensured their place in the shaping of local history. However, it is the performance and viewing of *Sakura* that forges the connection between Yasu and the townspeople. Prior to this production, none of the participants had ever visited Guatemala. Through their collaborative engagement with Yasu's story, they produced a version of it that blended historical facts with culture and imagination.

Minagawa wanted to spark the townspeople's interest in a remote land and a historical figure from a distant past. He looked for narrative elements in the newly established collection and consulted Yasu's family. He also scoured the Japanese translation of Yasu's *Memorias* and other previously published texts. Yet, he did not consider strict historical accuracy to be the central objective. For him, the play was not intended as a factual reconstruction of history but as a story honoring a distinguished son of the town. The outcome was the seventeen-act *Sakura*. While certain historical events serve as a background, most scenes focus on his interactions with family. To illustrate the trans-Pacific connections, the narrative shifts between Japan and Guatemala. Several fictional characters were introduced to bridge the geographic gap and to flesh out the story of the final thirty years of Yasu's life.

The play employs the landscape to convey nostalgia and a sense of distance. Volcanoes serve as potent symbols in this expression. In the scene that opens this epilogue, the characters underscore the resemblance between Yasu's two hometowns. Volcán de Agua in Antigua and Tateyama (Mt. Tate) in Fujisawa are juxtaposed through dialogue or by alternating background projections. Yokohama, Fujisawa, and Antigua Guatemala function as three sites of memory, evoking the distinct phases of Yasu's life. In the foreign settlement of Yokohama (although it should have been Tokyo), a mother awaits his return; in Antigua Guatemala, the focus is on Yasu's photography business and the Noriega family. In Fujisawa, a brother and younger family members maintain the connection to him. These three focal points of Yasu's biography form the framework through which his life is interpreted.

An example of how the play elicits affective identification is the depiction of Murako, Yasu's mother, in her final years. She is portrayed as living in a Catholic convent in Yokohama. Although the corresponding religious establishment in Tokyo is mentioned in passing in Yasu's memoirs, the play re-imagines it as an alien space within Meiji Japan. Within this setting, kind but foreign nuns care for young girls, presumably orphans or students at a Catholic school (figure 147). The audience witnesses Murako waiting anxiously for news of Yasu. She learns that he has chosen to remain in Guatemala. In the background, Yasu's niece, the young Tamaki, teaches a nursery rhyme to other children at the convent.

The portrayal of Fujisawa in *Sakura* is more detailed. Among the characters are Yasu's brother and sister, whose presence is supported by letters that Yasu sent home. His young niece and nephew also participate in the dialogue. The brother's resentment is portrayed as understandable, given that he had to remain behind to fulfill family obligations. In contrast, Minagawa's depiction of Eigo, the nephew, is that of a boy captivated by his uncle's adventures. Already as a child, he is so absorbed by the exotic stories that other

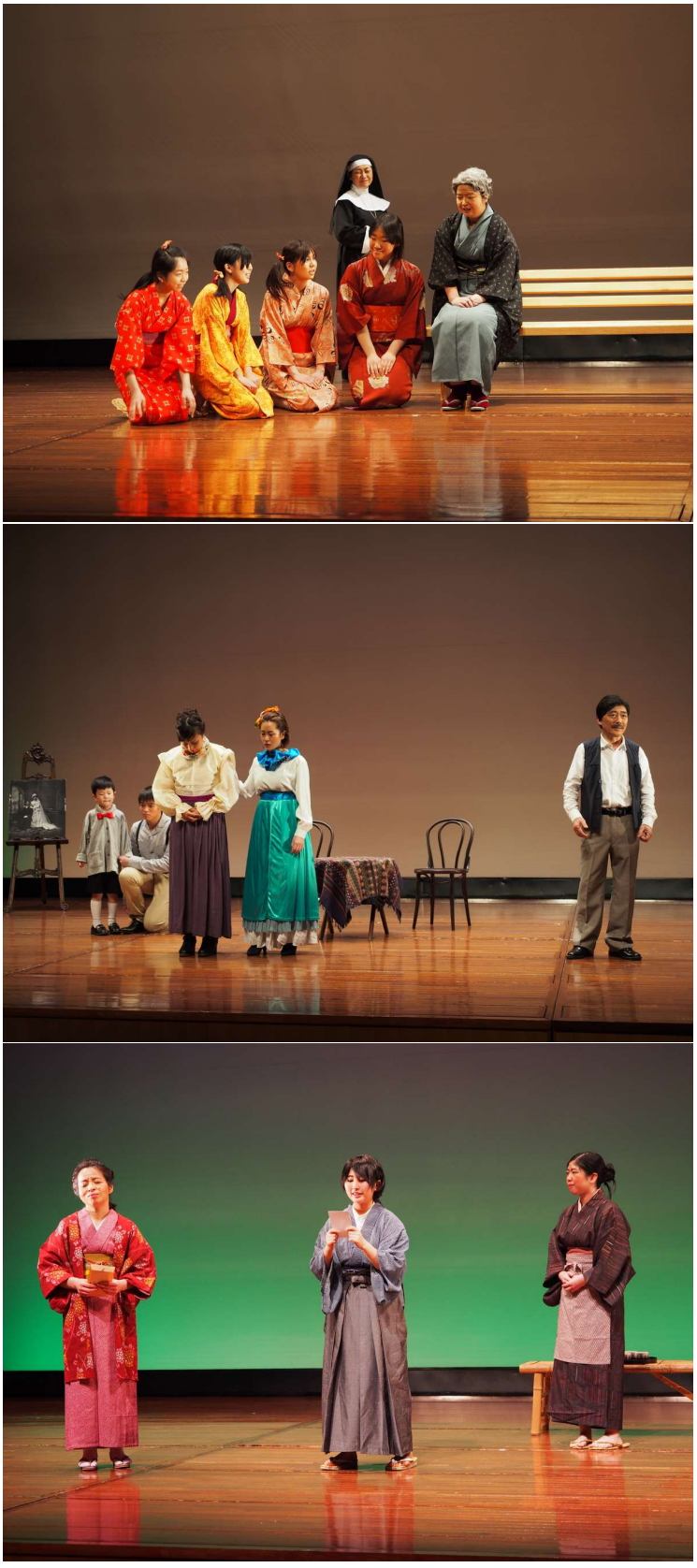

Figure 147: Three scenes from *Sakura*: From top to bottom: 1) Yasu's mother at the French convent in Yokohama; 2) Yasu (far right) with his Guatemalan family in Antigua Guatemala; and 3) younger members of Yasu's family in Fujisawa

family members remark he is "just like Yasu."[9]

The twelfth scene presents the end of Yasu's life. In this scene, Eigo, now a young teacher, receives a letter from Yasu and shares stories about his long-absent relative with the children gathered around him.

> Kiichiro: Uncle Kōhei in Guatemala, ah... Uncle Eigo, have you ever met Uncle Kōhei?
> Eigo: Ah, a few times when I was little. Then my uncle [Yasu] went to Yokohama to study, and later he worked as an interpreter for the Mexican scientists who came to Japan to observe the transit of Venus. After that, he traveled to Guatemala with them and learned photography. He has now had his own studio for about ten years...
> Kiichiro: What kind of person is Uncle Kōhei?
> Eigo: How to put it... I think he is very eager to study, yes, and he is very energetic in research and curious about everything.

To convey Yasu's connection to Fujisawa's history, Minagawa created anecdotes not found in Yasu's own writings. In particular, the sentimental dialogues among family members foster an emotional bond with the protagonist.

As an audience member who is neither Japanese nor Guatemalan, I am especially interested in what *Sakura* communicates about the Central American country. I am drawn to the depiction of turn-of-the-century Guatemala, where Yasu spent the final part of his life. The members of the theater group have never visited this place, which is distant in time and space. Yasu's archival photographs become the primary material through which the group constructs an imagined other and links it to Fujisawa's past. Here, Elizabeth Edwards' thoughts on "the power of photographs" come to mind as it alludes to how photographic archives become vested with strong claims of realism while highlighting only one alternative way of interpreting the past.[10]

With no first-hand experience of Guatemala, Minagawa and the theater members constructed their version of Guatemala using Japanese materials and Yasu's photographs. They followed the literature about Yasu to name the main characters—Yasu's wife María, María's sister Margarita, his godson and collaborator José Domingo Noriega, and his adopted son Esteban. The characters are dressed as they appear in Yasu's studio portraits. The women wear blouses, long skirts, and shawls over their shoulders, while the men wear trousers, leather shoes, and hats either on their heads or in their hands. The highlight of the Guatemalan setting is the wedding of Yasu and María. As a crowd of guests dances and drinks in their home, a photograph of the bride and groom is displayed at the back of the stage, reminding viewers of Yasu's Guatemalan identity as a married man and photographer. Curiously, Yasu's Catholicism does not play a role in the portrayal of his Guatemalan life.

Due to the scarcity of material and the limitations of the genres in which they were written, most Japanese publications about Yasu have not focused much on the social milieu in which he lived and worked. The form of the play, however, allowed greater freedom to imagine what Guatemala might have been like more than a century ago. Some scenes in *Sakura* do not involve Yasu directly but emphasize transcultural encounters through humorous dialogue. One scene presents the imagination of Japan from a Guatemalan perspective, as envisioned by the townspeople of Fujisawa. Several scenes paint vivid pictures of social environments and describe Yasu's status. In the tenth scene, "In the City

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9 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from *Sakura Script* 2009, pp. 48 – 49.

10 Edwards 2015.

of Antigua," two men stand on the street and look with curiosity at Yasu's studio. One of them is named Luján, like the Guatemalan art historian who wrote the first texts about our protagonist. Luján initiates a conversation.

> "Do you know that a *shashinya* (photographer, photo studio) recently moved into Ortega's house?"
> "Juan José de Jesús Yas?" replies his friend Pelén.
> "Do you know what *shashin* (photograph) means?" Luján asks again.
> "I haven't eaten it yet," Pelén replies.[11]

As the conversation continues, Luján explains photography to Pelén. Meste, another character, enters the scene, amused by Luján's explanation. "You two have no idea what *shashin* is?" he asks, then tells the fourth character, Pedro, to clarify. In this brief moment of cross-linguistic confusion, Minagawa has his Guatemalan characters echo nineteenth-century Japanese translations of the word photography. Interestingly, Luján uses the term *nigaoe* 似顔絵, which refers to a sketch of a face, portrait, or likeness.

Later in the same scene, another playful exchange reflects the reciprocal relationship between Japan and Guatemala. As a growing group of men lingers outside Yasu's studio, the landlord, Ortega, comes out and asks them not to interfere with the business.

> Meste takes the opportunity to ask Ortega, "The photographer's name is Mr. Yas?"
> "Yes, Juan José de Jesús Yas. He is from *Nihon* (literally Japan in Japanese)," Ortega replies.
> "*Nihon*...where is that?" Pelén asks. Once again, Luján mocks Pelén's question. Now Meste asks Pedro to show the two men a map of the world.
> "Uncle, this is *Nihon*," Pedro tells Luján.[12]

Finding Japan on a map prompts these Guatemalans to reflect on their place in the world. Luján asks Pedro to locate Antigua, and Pedro shows him: "Here is Antigua, on the other side of the globe."[13] For a brief moment, the Guatemalan characters are portrayed as thinking about Japan.

Seeing all this play with language and misunderstanding, I was reminded of a phrase Minagawa shared with me during my first visit to Fujisawa in 2014. Reflecting on his approach, free from academic constraints, he said, "I am not a historian."[14] A tofu maker by trade, Minagawa has been involved in Fujisawa's community theater since its inception. His approach to Yasu's biography translates Japan's past and the realities of distant Guatemala into everyday language. The freedom of amateur theater allows for imagining the other and, simultaneously, re-imagining the self. Through this articulation of Yasu's two homes, Minagawa dramatizes Yasu's longing and homesickness using the mythical Quetzal, Guatemala's national bird.

Cherry Blossom in Fujisawa, A Story of Our Own

The monologue that opens this epilogue can be read as Minagawa's commentary on Yasu's overseas biography. After the final word, Yasu falls to the floor. When the curtain is

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11 *Sakura Script* 2009, p. 37.
12 *Sakura Script* 2009, pp. 39 – 40.
13 All quotations in this paragraph and the next are from the tenth scene of *Sakura Script* 2009, pp. 39 – 42.
14 Interview with Minagawa Yōichi on March 20, 2014. Fujisawa, Ichinoseki.

drawn back, the audience sees Yasu lying on the bed, accompanied by his wife María, José Domingo, and his much younger adopted son Esteban. The dying Yasu mumbles a few Japanese words: "Saku...Tateyama...." Unsure of what Yasu has said, his wife asks if he is referring to cherry blossoms. Domingo replies, "Uncle Yasu still longs for Japan. He told me that the sakura is the national flower of Japan. It blooms for a very short time. For Uncle, the most special cherry trees are those planted on Mount Tate."[15]

But what does Noriega know about the names of the mountains and rivers in Fujisawa, which Yasu misses so dearly at the end of his life? For the Japanese audience, the Guatemalan family's bewilderment, which alienates them from the dying protagonist, contrasts with Yasu's eloquent narration of the colorful Quetzal bird, an embodiment of colonial history and mythical reference. The futile attempt to understand Yasu's last word reinforces the sense of isolation and nostalgia that the play ascribes to the protagonist after living in a foreign land for nearly half a century. In the production of the play, *Sakura* inscribes Yasu's longing for his hometown (*furusato* 故里) and delineates an insurmountable boundary between the two worlds he inhabited.

As a community theater production centered on the highly localized biography of Yasu Kōhei, *Sakura* takes its name from Japan's most iconic national flower. The play's emphasis on local identity rather than a broader national historical discourse is evident in its use of the multivalent symbol of the cherry blossom, which Minagawa weaves into this landscape of nostalgia. As sakura is widely recognized as a symbol of Japan, employing it to tell the story of a Japanese migrant might seem straightforward. However, as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney has noted, sakura serves as a metaphor for both the transience of life and the nationalistic spirit of Japan. During the early Meiji period, sakura was appropriated by "both the people and politicians, all trying to define new or modern Japan."[16]

In Minagawa's play, the cherry blossom represents not only Japanese origins, but also the passage of a life lived abroad and Yasu's deep sentimental attachment to Fujisawa. Minagawa introduces several nuances that reveal a layered narrative of imagined landscapes and identities. While Guatemalan viewers might see memories of Mount Fuji in the volcanoes depicted on Yasu's studio sets, Minagawa's topographical references point instead to the landscapes of Iwate, the northern province where Yasu was born. Likewise, he emphasizes that the sakura Yasu longs for is specifically that of Mount Tate (Tateyama).

The strongest connection *Sakura* establishes between Yasu's biography and local history lies in the play's approach to interpreting the historical events surrounding Yasu's life. Unlike academic publications that aim to produce authoritative accounts of public events, *Sakura* presents history from Yasu's perspective—that of commoners inadvertently caught in larger historical constellations beyond their control. In the sixth act, Shōta, the fictional character inspired by Yasu's photographs, tells Murako that her son has decided to remain in Guatemala. Referring to the failed attempt to launch a Japanese mining operation in Peru, the young visitor assures the elderly mother, "The guilty one is Takahashi Korekiyo, not Yasu. He broke his promise. Yasu and we, the miners, were deceived by him!"[17]

Like other productions by the Fujisawa Community Theater, *Sakura* features the stories and individuals that are too small for official history. It employs vernacular language to explore who Yasu Kōhei was. By interweaving impressions of the local landscape with imaginative portrayals of his life in Guatemala, the play transforms expert knowledge

15 *Sakura Script* 2009, pp. 65 – 66.
16 Ohnuki-Tierney 2015, p. 5.
17 *Sakura Script* 2009, p. 24.

into a simple and playful language that chimes with the people of Fujisawa. Its creation and performance demonstrate how Yasu's migrant biography, commonly used as source material for broader narratives on the history of photography and migration, also holds significance within the local context. Through collectively re-imagining Yasu's life, the participants create a shared past that fosters unity among community members, both those who left for the cities and those who remained at home.

Figure 148: Poster featuring Yasu's kimono self-portrait for the play *Sakura*, performed by the Fujisawa Community Theater in Yokohama on January 30, 2016

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Chronology

Dates in square brackets are estimates. Dates without brackets are confirmed by documentation. If the exact date is known, it is given in day/month format. If the exact date is unknown, the numbers refer to the month or range of months in which the event occurred. The Japanese timeline focuses on Yasu's education and social connections until 1874; his involvement in events following his first voyage to Central America; the growth of Japanese imperialism; and the history of Japanese migration to the Americas. The Guatemalan timeline emphasizes major political and social events, the evolution of immigration policies, and the development of photography from 1871 to the 1920s.

Year	Yasu Kōhei	Relevant Events
[1846]	12/27: Born in Usuginu, Higashiyama (now Fujisawa, Ichinoseki, Iwate).	1847–1855: Chinese indentured laborers arrive in Cuba, Peru, Panama, and Costa Rica to replace African slaves, whose trade was banned after the 1830s.
1851–1859	Studies Dutch, Japanese, and Chinese classics with his father and local teachers.	1851: First waves of European immigrants (mostly Germans) arrive in Guatemala. 1859: Opening of the treaty port of Yokohama.
[1860]	Travels to Edo to study French with Murakami. May also take medical lessons from his great-uncle Kaorigi Motomichi.	
1864–1868	Moves to Yokohama to study French, probably with Pierre Joseph Mourier, for several years. Later enters the French school. Returns to Fujisawa at the beginning of the civil war. Runs a medical clinic in his hometown for about four years.	Jan 1868 to May 1869: Civil war that ends the Edo shogunate, beginning of the Meiji period.
1871–1874	Returns with his youngest brother to Yokohama. Continues to study French. Later works as an interpreter.	1871: Liberal Revolution in Guatemala. 1872: The Guatemalan government plans to legalize the arrival of Chinese immigrants. 1873: The Meiji government lifts the religious ban.
1874	12/8: Assigned as French interpreter for a group of five Mexican astronomers, led by Francisco Díaz Covarrubias, visiting Yokohama to observe the transit of Venus.	1874–1875: The Mexican government sends a scientific commission to Japan, headed by Francisco Díaz Covarrubias.
1875	11/18: Arrives in Mexico City.	
1876	1: Attends the Escuela Nacional Preparatory, where he studies for two years. Yasu's family appeals to the government to free Yasu from military recruitment.	The Guatemalan government commissions photographer Agostino Someliani to take pictures to promote international investment.

Year	Yasu Kōhei	Relevant Events
1877	Leaves Mexico for Guatemala with Díaz Covarrubias.	Sociedad de Immigración is founded in Guatemala. 12: The Guatemalan government allows Chinese workers to be imported.
1878–1879	Begins his apprenticeship with the photographer Emilio Herbruger (the son).	1878: The Liberal government's first official immigration project brings Italians and Irish to Guatemala. Paris World Fair with a section of the Republic of Guatemala in the Central and South American Pavilion. 1879: Guatemala issues the Ley de Inmigración.
1880–1883	Yasu opens his photo studio, Fotografía Japonesa (exact date unknown).	1880: First national census in Guatemala. 1882: Guatemalan official announces that Chinese workers will never be welcome. 1880–1900s: Anti-Chinese campaigns in the U.S. and Peru.
1883	12/27: Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation in the Cathedral of Guatemala City. On this date, at the latest, he changed his name to Juan José de Jesús Yas.	There are at least three other photo shops in the area around Yasu's studio: Fotografía Central (Herbruger), El Palacio de Artes (Kildare), Fotografía Souvenir (Girón & Uribe).
1884		1884: The railway that connects the Pacific port of San José with Guatemala City is inaugurated.
1885	11–12: On 25 days, Yasu buys advertisements in the newspaper. They are often published next to those of the American photographer Kildare. 7/23: Reply to his sister. Decides to return to Japan when his studio lease expires. 7: On the occasion of his inauguration as archbishop, Yasu produced several portraits of Casanova y Estrada in his studio.	2/4: Justo Rufino Barrios dies in El Salvador. Manuel Lisandro Barillas assumes the presidency. 7/25: Ricardo Casanova y Estrada assumes the position of Archbishop of Guatemala. A year later, he was forced to leave the country for about ten years (until March 13, 1897).
1888		11/30: Japan-Mexico Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation.
1889	The *Directorio del Viajero en la República de Guatemala* (1889) lists Yasu's address as 8 Av S., 53 (same location since 1885). 5/15: Leaves Guatemala for Japan. 6/26: Arrives in Yokohama. 6/31: Reunites with his mother Murako, whom he takes to his nephew Tamaki at Tsukiji in Tokyo. 11/16: Leaves for Peru with Takahashi Korekiyo.	5–10: Paris World Fair. 1889/11–1990/7: A group of Japanese technicians and workers live in the Peruvian highlands for the Japan-Peru Mining Company, financed by Japanese and Peruvian entrepreneurs. Yasu works as an interpreter and is responsible for the Peruvian and Japanese workers.

Year	Yasu Kōhei	Relevant Events
1890	1/7: Arrival in Lima. Yasu is asked to take a group photo at the home of German-Peruvian investor Oskar Antonio Federico Augusto Heeren. 2/12: The Japanese travel to Yauli, where they plan to open the silver mine. 2/25: The Japanese hold an inauguration ceremony at the mine. 3/2: Yasu suffers from altitude sickness and submits his resignation. 7/4: Yasu and other Japanese leave the mine as Takahashi concludes that the mining project was a shameful fraud. 7/17: Departure from Peru. 8/7: Yasu bids farewell to his Japanese travel companions in the Guatemalan port of San José.	6/22–8/21: The first Totoposte War between Guatemala and El Salvador. According to Yasu's letter to a friend in Japan, the war prevented his application to return to Japan.
1891	11/26: Marriage to María Nicolasa Noriega.	
1893		Second national census in Guatemala. 5/28: *Guatemala Ilustrada* publishes Kildare and Valdeavellano's photo of the "Discovery of the New World" celebration. 7–8: About 200 Japanese workers arrive in Guatemala to work on plantations. 8: Disputes between Japanese workers and Guatemalan employers.
1894	*Primer Directorio de la capital y Guía General de la República de Guatemala* (1894) lists Yasu's address as 7 Av. N., 24.	1/3: Officers of the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco arrive in Guatemala to settle the dispute. The *Primer Directorio...* lists 17 photographers in Guatemala City, including Yas. 7/25: Sino-Japanese War
1895	1–2: Moves the photo studio and his family to Antigua. 3–4: For Lent and Easter, he takes sculptures of Jesus to his studio to create studio portraits of the venerated *imagenes*. For the Sino-Japanese War, Yasu recorded a list of donations from fifteen other Japanese subjects living in Guatemala City.	4/17: End of the Sino-Japanese War. 5/24: An opinion piece in the *Diario La República* argues that Guatemala should reject the bad Chinese immigration and invite the Japanese. 5/27: Another article in Diario La República concludes that Asian migrants (both Japanese and Chinese) are not good for Guatemala.
1896		1896: New Guatemalan immigration law does not recommend Chinese immigration. 8/1: First issue of *La Ilustración* Guatemalteca, whose illustrated photographs are mostly by Kildare and Valdeavellano.
1897		3/13: Archbishop Casanova y Estrada returns to Guatemala. 3: The first Central American Exposition. Three photographers participate in this event: Kildare, Valdeavellano, and H. R. Hanna (representing the USA).
1898		8: Manuel Estrada Cabrera elected as president. *Directorio nacional de Guatemala* (1898) lists 10 photographers based in Guatemala City. 10/29: The first festival of Minerva, the festival of the students.

Year	Yasu Kōhei	Relevant Events
1900 – 09		Guatemala's ruling and literate classes promote anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiments, leading to a strict regulation of Asian immigrants.
1904 – 05	About the Russo-Japanese War, Yasu makes a list of the naval battles between Japanese and Russian ships.	1904/2/8–1905/9/5: Russo-Japanese War. First re-election of President Estrada Cabrera.
[1906]	José Domingo Noriega marries María Esperanza Morales.	5: El Salvador invades Guatemala.
1907	8: An advertisement shows that Yasu's studio is located at 2 Calle O. y 3 Av. N. 10/2: Yasu becomes godfather to Manuel María (Noriega).	
1909	3/15: An advertisement shows Yasu's studio is relocated to 6 Av. N., 48, next to Camposeco.	4: The new immigration law imposes stricter rules on East Asian immigrants, including Malays, blacks, and Mongolians.
1910	9/9: Yasu writes about the visit of Giovanni Cagliero, the papal delegate in Guatemala, to Antigua.	Second re-election of the President Estrada Cabrera.
1911		5/13–15: More than 300 Asian Mexicans (mostly Cantonese, some Japanese) are killed in the Torreón Massacre on the Mexican-American border. Anti-Chinese sentiment worsens in the 1920s.
1913		California Alien Land Act of 1913. 14/4: Death of Guatemalan Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada. Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto is appointed his successor (1914–1920).
1915	5/5: *Diario de Centro América* announces Yasu's illness. 5/14: Yasu writes about the apostolic visit of the newly appointed Archbishop Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto.	Several Cantonese merchants are listed in the Blue Book of Guatemala (*Libro Azul del Guatemala*), an official publication for foreign readers.
1916	12/2: Yasu writes his testament in which he names his godsons as successors to the studio and to take care of his wife María Noriega. During this year, Yasu sends several letters to his cousins in Fujisawa.	Third re-election of the President Estrada Cabrera.
1917	2/28: Yasu dies in Antigua. 3/20: Requiem Mass for Yasu at San José Catedral.	11: Earthquake in Guatemala City (lasting until the end of January 1918).
1919		The Guatemalan press continues to attack the Cantonese and Asians in general, emphasizing competition and their inferiority in hygiene and integration compared to Europeans and North Americans.
1924		G. Francisco Juárez publishes 15 postcards of Yas and Noriega under the title "Antigua Guatemala."
1936	José Domingo Noriega, Yasu's godson and successor, announced the relocation of the Fotografía Japonesa studio to 5 Av. N., 18 in Antigua.	
1950s	José Domingo Noriega continues the photographic studio Fotografía Japonesa until the 1950s.	
1973	José Domingo Noriega dies in Antigua.	

Appendix 2: Events and Publications on Yasu Kōhei (1889–2019)

This table provides an overview of publications and exhibitions related to Yasu from his first mention in the Yomiuri Shimbun to the final stage of my research in 2019. Japanese titles are provided with provisional English translations. For detailed publication information, please refer to the bibliography. The number after the year indicates a specific month, while numbers separated by a hyphen indicate a range of months.

Year	Exhibition / Performance / Publication
1889	24–26/11 [News] 屋須弘平氏. 讀賣新聞 (“Mr. Yasu Kōhei,” *Yomiuri Shimbun)*
1934	齋藤恕平. 郷土の生める海外進出の先駆—屋須弘平氏略伝 (Saitō Jōhei. *The Overseas Expansion Pioneer from Our Town: Biographical Sketch of Mr. Yasu Kōhei*)
1976	6/12 [News] 寺田和夫. ある明治移民のドラマ 中米グアテマラに生きた写真家．屋須弘平. 日本経濟新聞 (Terada Kazuo. “The Drama of a Meiji Era Immigrant - Yasu Kōhei, the Photographer who Lived in Guatemala, Central America.” *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*)
1977	寺田和夫. ある明治移民のドラマ—写真家．屋須弘平. アンデス一人歩き (Terada Kazuo. “The Drama of a Meiji Era Immigrant - Photographer Yasu Kōhei. In *Walking Alone in the Andes*)
1978	12/30 [News] グアテマラ最初の日系移民—屋須氏藤沢出身の紹介を八戸の安藤氏、託される. 岩手日報 (“Introduction of the First Japanese Immigrant in Guatemala - Entrusted to Mr. Ando of Hachinohe.” *Iwate Nippo*)
1979	1/29 [Manuscript housed at Iwate Prefectural Library] 寺田和夫. 屋須弘平．グアテマラへ最古の日系移民 (Terada Kazuo. “Yasu Kōhei, The First Japanese Immigrant to Guatemala”) 2/27 [News] クアテマラ移民屋須弘平の生涯—現地で遺徳しのぼう. 岩手日報 (“The Life of Guatemalan Immigrant Yasu Kōhei - Tracing His Achievements on site.” *Iwate Nippo*) 菊地育三. 地震で発見された高橋是清同行者の足跡. パンパスのちぎれ雲：祖国を捨てた日本人 (Kikuchi Ikuzō. “The Footsteps of Takahashi Korekiyo’s Companion, Discovered in an Earthquake” In *Scattered Clouds of Pampas: Japanese who Abandoned Their Homeland*)
1981	小山卓也. 駆ける群像. 遙かなる北の青春 (Oyama Takuya. “Dynamic Bunch of Pioneers.” In *Youth in the Distant North*) 藤沢町史編纂委員会. 屋須弘平 第六章—その他社會貢獻者. 藤沢町史本編（下）(Fujisawa Town Historical Compilation Committee. “Yasu Kōhei. Chapter 6 - Other Social Contributors.” In *Fujisawa Town History Book, Part 2*)
1982	[Exhibition] Exposición - homenaje a j.j. Yas (Juan J. Yas) & j.d Noriega (J. Domingo Noriega)：Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA)
1985	2/20–3/4 [Exhibition] 屋須弘平．羽幹昌弘写真二人展．ある古都の一世紀 アンティグア グアテマラ 1895–1984. 東京 デザイナーズスペースフォ トギャラリ (Yasu Kōhei & Umoto Masahiro Dual Exhibition: A Century of an Ancient City: Antigua, Guatemala 1895–1984. At Tokyo Designer’s Space Photo Gallery)

Year	Exhibition / Performance / Publication
	八巻信. 中南米で活躍した最初の日系移民 屋須弘平伝. 東磐史学 (Yamaki Makoto. “The Life of Yasu Kōhei, the First Japanese Immigrant Who Acted in Central and South America.” *Toban Historical Studies*)
	[Exhibition] 遺作展. グアテマラ日本人会 (Posthumous Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei. Japanese Association of Guatemala)
	10/24 [News] グアテマラで足跡見直し 日本人会が墓碑建立 遺作展も開かれる. 朝日新聞 (“In Guatemala, the Japanese Community Reviews Footsteps, Builds Tombstones and Holds Posthumous Exhibition.” *Asahi Shimbun*)
1986	11/12 [Event and Exhibition] グアテマラ，アンティグアを学び—屋須弘平を偲ぶ集い. 藤沢町国際親善協会 (“Learning about Guatemala and Antigua - A Gathering to Remember Yasu Kōhei.” Fujisawa International Friendship Association)
	11/13 [News] グアテマラへの理解を深めよう- 藤沢 屋須弘平しのぶ集い. 河北新報 (“Deeper Understanding of Guatemala - A Gathering to Remember Photographer Yasu Kōhei in Fujisawa. *Kahoku Shimpō*)
	nd [News] 屋須弘平をしのぶ集い 四氏が記念講演町民ら四百人参加. 岩手日々 (“Gathering to Remember Yasu Kōhei - Four People Give Memorial Lectures, Four Hundred Citizens attend.” *Iwate Nichinichi*)
	11/28 [News] José Eduardo Zarco, “Reunión de la amistad Fujisawa - Guatemala,”*Prensa Libre*
	飯沢耕太郎. 屋須弘平．羽幹昌弘写真二人展．ある古都の一世紀 アンティグア グアテマラ 1895–1984. 日本カメラ (Iizawa Kōtarō. “Review of Yasu Kōhei & Umoto Masahiro Dual Exhibition: A Century in an Ancient City Antigua Guatemala 1895–1984.” In *Japan Camera*)
1987	1/17 [News] 菊地育三．明治の昔、中米に生きて—古い写真．朝日新聞 (Kikuchi Ikuzo. “In Meiji Era, Living in Central America: Old Photographs.” In *Asahi Shimbun*)
	小山卓也, “Rejoicing to Have Been One of the People of the Earth.” 岩手高教研英語部会報 (Koyama Takuya. In *English Department Report of Iwate High School Research Society*)
	nd [News] 小山卓也. ホワン．ホセ．ヘス—ス．ヤス (Koyama Takuya. “Juan José Jesús Yas.” *Unknown publication*)
	8/13 [News] “Periódico japonés publica una historia de Kohei Yasu,” *Prensa Libre*
1988	多田功. 中米に没した 日本人屋須弘平、その光と影. 移住研究 (Tada Isao. “Lost in Central America: The Light and Shadow of Japanese Photographer, Yasu Kōhei.” In *Migration Studies*)
1989	飯沢耕太郎. 十二都物語—グアテマラ. *On the line: the global communication magazine from KDD* (Iizawa Kōtarō. “A Tale of the Twelve Cities - Guatemala”)
1989	8/10 [News] 仙台に 100 年前手紙の 4 通. 国際人の先達屋須弘平. 河北新報 (Four 100-Year-Old Letters to Sendai: International Predecessor Yasu Kohei.” *Kahoku Shimpō*)
1990	柴田真知子. グアテマラの写真師. 屋須弘平. 知識—明治の洋行特集 (Shibata Machiko. “A Photographer in Guatemala: Yasu Kōhei.” In *Knowledge - Meiji's Voyage Special Edition*)
	La Antigua Guatemala: J.J. Yas, J.D. Noriega, 1880–1960（Luis Luján Muñoz：La Azotea）
	飯沢耕太郎. フットライト 日本の写真—7—グアテマラの写真家 屋須弘平波瀾の一生. 芸術新潮 (Iizawa Kōtarō. “Footlights Japan Photos - 7 - The Eventful Life of Guatemalan Photographer Yasu Kōhei.” In *Geijutsushincho*)
	12 [Exhibition] Guatemala: Cent Ans de Photographies 100 años de fotografía en Guatemala: José Domingo Noriega, María Cristina Orive, Luis González Palma y Juan José de Jesús Yas, by CIRMA, Editorial La Azotea y Embajada de Guatemala en Francia：Maison de l'Amérique latine Paris, France
1991	港千尋. 写真舘の小宇宙. 日本カメラ (Minato Chihiro. “Microcosmos of Photo Studio.” In *Japan Camera*)
	上野清士, フワン．ホセ．ヘスス．ヤス. 潮 (Ueno Kiyoshi. “Juan José Jesús Yas.” In *Shio*)

Year	Exhibition / Performance / Publication
1992	3/7–4/5 [Exhibition] Wendy Watriss (curator) “FotoFest 1992.” Houston, Texas, USA 八巻信. 藤沢出身の屋須弘平氏. 東磐史学 (Yamaki Makoto. “Mr. Yasu Kōhei from Fujisawa.” In *Toban Historical Studies*) 上野清士. 日本写真館主人ヤス—屋須弘平の生涯. ア．ハードデイズ．ナイト (Ueno Kiyoshi. “The Owner of Japanese Photography Studio Yas: The Career of Yasu Kōhei.” *A Hard Day’s Night*) 7/21–8/2 [Exhibition] 屋須弘平写真展ー東京平永町橋ギャラリー (“Photo Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei.” Hiranaga-cho-bashi Gallery) 久門易. 屋須弘平写真展ー東京平永町橋ギャラリー. 日本カメラ (Kumon Yasushi. “21/7-2/8 Photo Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei at Hiranaga-cho-bashi Gallery.” *Japan Camera*) 屋須弘平写真展より. 日本カメラ 613 (From the Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei.” *Japan Camera: 613*) 久門易. 屋須弘平の巻. 日本カメラ 616 (Kumon Yasushi. “Chapter on Yasu Kōhei.” *Japan Camera: 616*)
1996	駒井健. 屋須弘平. 東磐井郡人物史：小学校．中学校社会科資料 (Komai Takeshi. “Yasu Kōhei.” In *Historical Figures of Higashi-Iwai-gun: Social Studies Materials for Elementary and Junior High School*s) [TV Program] 飯沢耕太郎. 世界．わが心の旅．グアテマ１００年の哀惜．日本人写真師の生涯．旅人．写真評論家飯沢耕太郎. NHK (Iizawa Kōtarō. “World Journey of My Heart. Guatemala One Hundred Years Sorrow: The Career of a Japanese Photographer. Traveler: Photo Critic Iizawa Kōtarō.” NHK: Japan Broadcasting Corporation)
1998	*Guatemala ante la lente. Imágenes de la Fototeca de CIRMA, 1876–1997*, CIRMA
1999	[Exhibition Talk] 両磐美術展特別展「屋須弘平年展」屋須弘平展講演會. 両磐地区文化祭第 13 回 (“The Annual Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei” at Ryoban Art Exhibition Special Exhibition.” 13th Ryoban Area Cultural Festival) [Talk] 飯沢耕太郎. グアテマラの写真家—屋須弘平波瀾の一生. 屋須弘平展. 藤沢町文化交流センター (Iizawa Kōtarō. “The Eventful Life of Guatemalan Photographer Yasu Kōhei.” Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei. At Fujisawa Bunka Koryu Center) 飯沢耕太郎. 屋須弘平—グアテマラに生きた写真家. 日本写真史を歩く (Iizawa Kōtarō. “Yasu Kōhei: A Photographer Lived in Guatemala.” In *A Walk through the History of Japanese Photography*)
2003	大垣貴志郎. 明治時代の写真館—グアテマラの屋須弘平. 京都外国語大学付属図書館報 (Ogaki Kishiro. “Photo Studio in Meiji Era: Guatemalan: Yasu Kōhei in Guatemala.” *Kyoto University of Foreign Studies Library Bulletin*)
2004	上野清士. フアン．ホセ．デ．ヘスス．ヤスと呼ばれた 日本人写真家、屋須弘平. *Latina: Musica Contemporanea del Mundo* (Ueno Kiyoshi. “Yasu Kōhei, the Japanese Photographer known as Juan José de Jesús Yas.” *Latina: Musica Contemporanea del Mundo*) [Exhibition] グアテマラの写真家 屋須弘平特別展. 藤沢町文化交流センター (“A Photographer in Guatemala: Special Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei.” At Fujisawa Bunka Koryu Center) 小坂亜矢子 (訳). グアテマラの写真家屋須弘平の手記. 藤沢町文化振興課 (Kosaka Ayako, translator. Memoirs of *Guatemalan Photographer Yasu Kōhei.* Fujisawa Cultural Promotion Division) 角山幸洋. 第 II 部：グアテマラ最初の移民. グァテマラの染織: マヤ文明後継者たちの生活 (Tunoyama Yukihiro. “Part II: The First Migrant to Guatemala.” In *Dyeing and Weaving in Guatemala: The Lives of the Successors of the Maya Civilization*)
2005	Tani Adams, Rosina Cazali, Miriam Legarreta y Arturo Taracena, *Imágenes de Guatemala:1850–2005. 57 fotógrafos de la Fototeca de CIRMA y la comunidad fotográfica guatemalteca*, CIRMA

Year	Exhibition / Performance / Publication
	10/4–11/6 [Exhibition] 藤原敏雄. 屋須弘平 Juan José de Jesús Yas～写真と遺品が語るグアテマ ラ移住と望郷～. JICA 海外移住資料館 (Fujiwara Toshio, curator. "Yasu Kōhei / Juan José de Jesús Yas - Guatemala Emmigration and Nostalgia Told Through Photos and Belongings." At JICA Overseas Migration Museum)
2006	柳沢保正. 平成写真師心得帖 (13) グアテマラの日本人写真師屋須弘平へのオマージュ. 写真工業 (Yanagisawa Yasumasa. "Reflections of a Contemporary Heisei Era Photographer 13: Tribute to Japanese Photographer Yasu Kōhei in Guatemala." In *Photo Industry*)
	2/26 [Theater] 藤沢町民劇場. 屋須弘平物語さくら. 藤沢町文化交流センター (Fujisawa Community Theater. *Sakura, the Story of Yasu Kōhei*. At Fujisawa Bunka Koryu Center)
	特集：第 7 回藤沢町 町民劇場 - 屋須弘平物語さくら. まちの総合情報誌 626 (Special Edition: The 7th Fujisawa-cho Citizen Theater. *Sakura: The Story of Yasu Kōhei*. In *General Information Magazine of Our Town: Fujisawa* No. 626)
	小坂亜矢子. 第 62 章 屋須弘平—一〇〇年前にアンティグアに暮らした日本人写真家. グアテマラを知るための 65 章 (Kosaka Ayako. "Chapter 62: Japanese photographer who lived in Antigua 100 years ago." In *65 Chapters to Know Guatemala)*
2007	故郷を発信する町民劇場. まちの総合情報誌 638 ("Community Theater that Shares with the Hometown." In *General Information Magazine of Our Town: Fujisawa*. No. 638)
	9–11 [Exhibition] Imagining/Imaginando Guatemala: Fotografías de la colección de CIRMA – 1850–2006, by Tani Adams, Rosina Cazali, Miriam Legarreta y Arturo Taracena：CIRMA. Washington, D.C., United States
	7/12 [Talk] Arturo Duarte. 異文化交流を通して見るグアテマラ入門. 平成 18 年度 大使リレー講義 ("Introduction to Guatemala as Seen through Cross-Cultural Exchange." Heisei 18: Ambassador's Lecture)
2008	飯沢耕太郎. 屋須弘平. 日本の写真家 101. (Iizawa Kōtarō. "Yasu Kōhei." In *Japanese Photographers 101*)
	首都圏の応援団古里支援を誓う：在京藤沢郷友会第１２回総会. まちの総合情報誌 652 ("Support Group in Capital Area Vows to Support the Hometown: The 12th General Assembly of the Tokyo Fujisawa Townspeople Association." In *General Information Magazine of Our Town: Fujisawa*. No. 652)
2009	藤沢町民劇場横浜公演: 屋須弘平物語さくら. まちの総合情報誌（660）("Fujisawa Community Theater in Yokohama. *Sakura: The Story of Yasu Kōhei*." In *General Information Magazine of Our Town: Fujisawa*. No. 660)
	1/31 [Theater in Yokohama] 屋須弘平物語さくら (Fujisawa Community Theater. *Sakura: The Story of Yasu Kōhei*.)
	屋須弘平縁の地：横浜から古里の文化発信. まちの総合情報誌 661 ("Yasu Kōhei's Place of Origin: Transmitting the culture of the old hometown from Yokohama." In *General Information Magazine of Our Town: Fujisawa*. No. 661)
	[Exhibition] Wendy Watriss (curator), Changing Imagery, 3rd Guangzhou International Photography Biennale
	四之宮平佑. 写真家. 屋須弘平とグアテマラ—19 世紀末 20 世紀初頭にかけて日本友好礎築日本人. 季刊海外日系人 (Shinomiya Heisukei. "Photographer Yasu Kōhei and Guatemala: A Japanese Laid the Foundation for Friendship in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.)
	熊田忠雄. 第一話：グアテマラ/アンティグア身に付けたスペイン語が縁で 中米まで流れた東北人. すごいぞ日本人！ (Kumada Tadao. "Chapter 1: Guatemala / Antigua A North-easterner who Went to Central America Because He Spoke Spanish. In *Amazing Japanese!*")
2010	村田明. 外国に写真館写真館った男—屋須弘平. 写真文化 (Murata Akira. "Yasu Kōhei: The Man who Established Photo Studio in a Foreign Country." In *Photographic Culture*)
2011	6/9–9/2 [Exhibition] Wendy Watriss (curator) "Juan José de Jesús Yas," FotoFest 2011: Faces of History: Latin America Bolivia, Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru. Houston, Texas, USA

Year	Exhibition / Performance / Publication
2012	9/14–9/16 [Exhibition] Wendy Watriss (curator) "Latin American Photography 1880s - 1940s: FotoFest at the Huston Fine Art Fair." Houston, Texas, USA
2013	三井圭司. 66 屋須弘平写真館内部. 夜明けまえ 知られざる日本写真開拓史 北海道．東北編 (Mitsui Keiji. "No. 66 Interior of Yasu Kōhei's Photo Studio." In *Before the Daybreak: The Unknown History of Japanese Pioneers in Photography, Hokkaido and Tōhoku Edition*) 木原知己. 第 20 話 明治初期、海外渡航者の人気業種ベスト 3 - 写真師、屋須弘平の波瀾万丈. 波濤列伝—幕末．明治期の "夢" への軌跡 (Kihara Tomomi. "Chapter 20 Best Popular Careers for Overseas Travelers in the Early Meiji Era 3 - Photographer: The Turbulent Life of Yasu Kōhei." In *Waves of Succession - Dreams of the Late Edo and Meiji Periods*)
2014	高橋武司. 屋須弘平遺作品取得事業: 終焉の地．古都アンティグアを訪ねて. 交流の歩み 藤沢町国際交流協会設立 30 周年記念誌. (Takahashi Takeshi. "Acquisition of Yasu Kōhei's Works Project: The place of demise: visiting the ancient city of Antigua." In *The Progress of Exchange: 30th Anniversary Memorial Magazine of the Establishment of the Fujisawa International Friendship Association.*) 五味篤. 銀嶺のアンデス : 高橋是清のペルー銀山投資の足跡 (Gomi Atsushi. *La primera inversión japonesa en el Perú 1889*)
2015	[Event] 東北文化の日. 南米グアテマラの写真家屋須弘平の遺品. 一関市藤沢市民センター (Tōhoku Culture Day. The Belongings of Guatemalan Photographer Yasu Kōhei. At Ichinoseki-Fujisawa Community Center) 8/20–10/11 [Exhibition] Kohei Yasu: Un Fotógrafo Pionero, CIRMA
2016	1/23–3/27 [Exhibition] 藤原敏雄. 屋須弘平—グアテマラ 140 年のロマン. あーすぷらざ 神奈川県立地球市民かながわプラザ (Fujiwara Toshio, curator. "Yasu Kōhei: 140 Years of Romance in Guatemala." At Earth Plaza, Kanagawa Prefecture Earth Citizen Plaza) 1/26 [News] 山田祐一郎. 明治のグアテマラに刻んだ写真家の足跡：屋須弘平の作品、遺品展示. TOKYO Web 東京新聞 (Yamada Yuichiro. "The Photographer's Footprints Carved in Meiji Era Guatemala: Exhibition of Yasu Kōhei's Works and Belongings") 1/27 [News] 7 年ぶり横浜公演へ 一関藤沢市民劇場. Iwanichi Online ("Performance in Yokohama after Seven Years: Ichinoseki-Fujisawa Community Theater") 2/14 [News] 明治人が見た中米: 移住写真家の足跡たどる．神奈川新聞社 ("Central America seen by Meiji Era People: Tracing the Footsteps of A Emigrant Photographer." *Kanagawa Shimbun*) 2/28 [Theater Play] 一関藤沢市民劇場第 17 回 屋須弘平物語さくら, Kanagawa Earth Plaza あーすぷらざ 神奈川県立地球市民かながわプラザ (Ichinoseki-Fujisawa Community Theater, 17th Performance. *Sakura: The Story of Yasu Kōhei*. At Earth Plaza, Kanagawa Prefecture Earth Citizen Plaza) 3/6 [Talk] 飯沢耕太郎. グアテマラで生きた写真家屋須弘平. あーすぷらざ 神奈川県立地球市民 かながわプラザ (Iizawa Kōtarō. "Photographer Yasu Kōhei who Lived in Guatemala. At Earth Plaza, Kanagawa Prefecture Earth Citizen Plaza)
2017	07/29 [Exhibition] "100 Años de J.J. Yas," CIRMA y Aporte para la Descentralización Cultural (Adesca) 11/16–2018/01/28 [Exhibition] "100 Años de J.J. Yas," CIRMA y Aporte para la Descentralización Cultural (Adesca)
2018	小坂亜矢子. 第 63 章 屋須弘平—一〇〇年前にアンティグアに暮らした日本人写真家. グアテマラを知るための 67 章 (Kosaka Ayako. "Chapter 63: Japanese photographer who lived in Antigua 100 years ago." In *67 Chapters to Know Guatemala)*
2019	8/27 [Event] "Homenaje a CIRMA." Embajada del Japón en Guatemala (在グアテマラ日本国大使館)

Appendix 3: Photograph Identification

The two tables below offer more detail about the authorship of the works in the Estudio Fotografía Japonesa collection. My inquiry is based on examining and comparing the items depicted in the photographs. As mentioned in the introduction, I first created a database of photographs from this period using the open-source program DigiKam. Then, I added information about individuals and events from the CIRMA catalog and compared it with related archival documents and publications. From there, I could futher identify the studio props and backdrops used in the pictures to determine the range of studio settings and their time frame. This method is most efficient for studio portraits, which are an important part of my work, but it is less applicable to photographs taken outside the studio.

Overall, a clear distinction emerges between Yasu Kōhei's early years practicing photography in Guatemala City before 1889 and his subsequent photographic production after returning from Peru in 1890. Based on his memoirs, I date the studio portraits taken in the capital as early as 1883. For the first few years, he sold reproductions of photographs to make a living. Later, he could afford to purchase backdrops, camera equipment, and props. This difference is evident in his subjects, such as images of saint sculptures, as well as in the studio equipment he used after the journey to Japan and Peru. For instance, I identified some photographs formerly attributed to Yasu's second phase as having been taken between the early 1880s and 1889.

Classifying the photographs by subject is crucial because they arrived at CIRMA without dates or titles. However, determining authorship with certainty can be challenging in the absence of reference material. Based on an understanding of Yasu's religious fervor, photographs of churches and ruins are attributed to Yasu, while some other outdoor shots are attributed to Noriega. For this reason, I believe this classification is essential for further research on the photographic practices of Yasu Kōhei and José Domingo Noriega, as well as the role of studio photographers in Guatemala's visual economy at the turn of the twentieth century. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the circulation of equipment and the evolving dynamics between photographers, whether cooperative or competitive, can enrich Guatemala's historical narrative beyond the content of the images themselves. Photographers' associations with the wider social and political milieu can also contribute to this history.

The first table lists the number of photos attributed to Yasu and Noriega, respectively, in each of the thematic groups established by Fototeca Guatemala.[1] The second table lists my identification of the authorship, focusing on photographs taken between the 1880s and 1910s. My identification contributes to further analysis in two ways. First, for photographs already attributed to Yasu Kōhei, I determined their approximate time and place of creation. This is evident in the categories related to the Catholic community (GT-FG-005-P05) and religious practices (GT-FG-005-P06 and GT-FG-005-P10). Second, I identified those taken by Yasu from the studio portraits of individuals (GT-FG-005-P08), groups (GT-FG-005-P04), and everyday objects (GT-FG-005-P09) using the aforementioned method.

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[1] Source: http://cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php?title=ISADG:GT-CIRMA-FG-005.

Code	Title	Total	Yasu	Noriega
P01	Churches and convents of Antigua Guatemala and its surroundings	61	61	0
P02	Farms of Antigua Guatemala	42	3	39
P03	Architecture and streets of Antigua Guatemala	88	3	85
P04	Group portraits	102	16	86
P05	Portraits of priests and Catholic customs	152	152	0
P06	Religious imageries	207	207	0
P07	Guatemala City, Chimaltenango, Quiché, Sacatepéquez and Sololá	32	0	32
P08	Individual portraits	142 [141]	10	131
P09	Daily life	33	3	31
P10	Mortuary portraits, weddings, baptisms and babies	80	2	78

The following table lists the Fototeca reference codes and total numbers of photographs taken by Yasu Kōhei, as attributed by the author.

Code	Guatemala City (1880–1895), Antigua (1895–1915)	Numbers
P01	—	—
P02	—	—
P03	—	—
P04	6 taken in Guatemala City: 001, 019, 028, 029, 031, 101 21 taken in Antigua: 002, 009, 013, 014, 018, 021, 023, 025, 027, 037, 044A, 052, 058, 061, 066, 073, 079, 080, 087, 091, 098	27
P05	84 taken in Guatemala City: 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007, 008, 016, 009, 010, 011, 012, 105, 013, 014, 017, 030, 084, 018, 102, 019, 022, 027, 028, 037, 038, 039, 040, 041, 042, 043, 044, 045, 046, 047, 048, 049, 050, 051, 052A, 053, 054, 055, 056, 057, 058, 059, 060, 061, 062, 063, 064, 065, 066, 070, 078A, 023, 026, 071, 085, 101, 106, 109, 031, 032, 033, 035, 096, 034, 036, 079, 107, 081, 097, 099, 100, 104, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116A, 116B	—
P06	30 taken in Guatemala City: 042, 044, 045, 052, 078, 062, 094A, 097, 190, 074, 076, 077, 081, 173, 090, 116, 124, 194, 099/100, 101, 110, 114, 123, 125, 153, 157, 158, 179, 212	—
P07	—	—
P08	9 taken in Guatemala City: 042, 080, 081, 082, 083, 084, 091, 104, 108 4 taken in Antigua: 003, 032, 052, 078	13
P09	1 taken in Guatemala City: 012 15 taken in Antigua: 005, 006, 007, 008, 009, 011, 013, 014, 015, 016, 017, A-019, B-019, 020, 021	16
P10	2 taken in Guatemala City: 047, 050 1 taken in Antigua: 075	3

Appendix 4: “Mr. Yasu Kōhei”

This is my transcription of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (読売新聞) article “Mr. Yasu Kōhei” (屋須弘平氏), published from November 24 to 26, 1889. I accessed the online archival document at the Japan Foundation in Osaka in 2016. Words that could not be deciphered are shown as “●.”

◎ 屋須弘平氏

今般が高橋是清氏南米秘魯國に於て一大鑛業を起さんとて去る十六日同國へ向け渡航せらる●に際し氏の事業を助くる爲め同行せし屋須弘平と云ふ人の履歴につさ氏の同郷人●る警視廳記録課長田邊實明君が送別會の席上に於てなしさる演舌を聞くに其大要は左の如し我が友愛なる屋須弘平君は本月十六日を以て高橋是清君に隨ひ將さに南亞米利加に渡航せんとす蓋し高橋君は南米秘魯に一大鑛業を興さんとそろものにして屋須君は其業務を輔佐するの依囑を受けられさるなり夫れ高橋君のでぞさは世人皆已に之を知る獨り屋須君に至りては之れと知るもの甚ざ稀●り余は其親友●る故を以て默止するに忍びず聊か君が経歴の一班を述べ以て滿場諸君と共に両君の成功を祈んとす抑々屋須君は仙臺舊封内東山薄衣村の產にして余と其郷里を同くす父正安君は嘗て江戸に遊び宇田川榛齋翁の門に入り蘭學を修め活潑有為の人そりしが惜哉体質薄弱にして其志しを遂けざりしと云ふ君幼より其遺志を繼ぐを以て深く心に契ひ年齢甫めて十四江戸に出で村上英俊先生の門に入り佛蘭西學を修め又横濱に抵り佛人ムリー氏にひ深く其學を研究そろ事數年戊辰兵馬の事起り已を得ぞ郷里に還り明治四年再横濱に遊び常に海外を周遊し文明の實況を視察せんと欲せしも固より一介の窮措大むれん其費用の出ろ所無に苦み空しく恨を飲んで僅に佛語の通辨を以て糊口の業とむしに時機の至らん事を待ちをる內空しく三さびの裘褐を替へ明治七年に金星太陽を通過そる事ありさる時恰も好我國ん丁度其觀測の地位に適せしを以て歐米諸國の天文博士等相踵で來り墨西哥國の星學博士フランしシコデアース氏も亦測量士五名と共に來航そ其時君通辨に傭はれ業を執る事頗る丁寧深切むりしくんデアース氏大に君を愛し歸途に臨み其國に伴ひ行さ學術修めしめんと告しくん君躍上りて素志うぃ貫くべさ時機の至悅び且つ深く其厚誼を謝し直ちに海外旅行券を請ふて横濱を解纜す實に明治八年二月一日をりし（未完）

◎ 屋須弘平氏の履歴（承前）

佛京巴里に至りしをさ本邦より先さに留學せし諸子皆君の能く佛語に通ずる以て切に足を其地に留めんてとを請ひしも君は既にデアース氏に許せし身をれば肯ぜず其儘轉じて伊太利の那波耳府に赴又さ此地よ墨哥國に至り高等中學校に入り專ら西班牙語を學び旁ら諸學課を終むること殆ど二年餘にして大に成績を顯じ一千八百七十七年我明治十年の頃該地に於革命の戰爭起りしがデアース氏は此時全權公使にて大統領と共に敗北せり是に於て君身を寄する所なく中央亞米利加の瓜地馬拉國に逃れさり君既に英佛及西班牙等の諸國語に通じ天文學を修め兼て理化學に精しければ姑らく寫真師とれって生計の業とれし●に大に好評を得さ若干の資產を有するに至れ

り嗚呼君や少壯の身を以て遠大の志しを立海外異域に獨立營業をれすに至しは蓋し忍耐力の致す處れりと雖とも亦其志ざしの剛毅する者に非ざれば能ざるなり君橫濱解纜後十有五年の久しさ故國の音信も偏安の地鴻雁便りそ缺さ本年に至りて始めて故國の返信に接し父及び姉氏の既に物故せしを知りしぐ幸ひに母堂の獨り安全するそ喜び望鄉の念切に起り遽かに旅袋を整へ家產を知己朋友に分與し十二年間寄寓せし地を去りて米國桑港に至り茲に始めて同國兄弟に面接せり左●ど十餘年間曾て用ひ本國語を俄に使用する事すれば談話大に困難ありしと是を以て君が單身異域に留まるの久しさを知るべし六月二十八日東京に着し初めに余の家を訪はれしも十余年間一の音信もすく且つ知友の海外に行くもの有る每に君の所在を知らせんてとを托せしも曾て其報に接しさるてとをければ余は既に此の世にれさ人の數に入りしれらんと思ひ居りしに突然相見て大に驚さ唯手を握りて其無事を祝するの外又他に一言を發するを得ざりし是に於て先取敢ず故鄉に報じ尋で東山の故宅に歸へらる君の母は當年七十有三の高齡を保ち君は丁度二十四才を以って家を出で本年方に四十二才をれば親子相見えざる殆んど二十年むりし此度母氏を奉じて上京し會高橋氏の此の行有に際し君力を合せて從事するの良策れらんと思ひ余は頻理に両氏の間に入りて周旋せしに幸ひに余が言を容れ遂に此度同航する事とはありね（未完）

◎ 屋須弘平氏の履歷（承前）

高橋氏は海外萬里の異域に入り一大鑛業を興さるの事やれば諸般の準備はすまでもやく充分整ひさるべさも彼の地の風土を暗ん能く彼の國語に通する者に至って恐くは其人を缺くの憾ありしやらん然るに今計らず君を得られされば定め高橋氏も滿足せられしやるべし特に両君は二十年前橫濱に在て同學の友やりしに今高橋氏が遠大の志しを抱さ南米地方に於て一大工業を企圖するに先ち君は十數年前早くも彼地に涉り其風土文物を究め此行の案內者とあるに至りしは幸福を彼我のに得さるものと云ふべし始め君が氏デアース氏の眷顧を受て海外に遊學するの機を得さるや天上星學の測量に出でしが今回高橋氏その再航の擧は地下銀鑛の工業因る諺に曰く天地其体を－にし金銀其用を同府スト果して然る方今歐米の地に遊ぶ者年一年より多しと雖も大抵彼の地風俗政治を視察し究理公益を研究するに止まれり或ひは龍動の花に耽り巴里の月に醉ふのみにて歸る者又そさにあらずと聞く中に其能く彼の土を蹈んで實地の興業を企つる者實に高橋氏に創る氏は今屋須君の補翼を得て拮据從事せば如何やる至難の木工業と雖ども必ラズ能く其效を奏するを得る蓋じ數年を出でずるべし夫れ勞の在る處は榮の存する所やり今回の擧其成効を奏するに至ラベ獨り両君の榮の宮良ず實に一國の盛事と云はざるラズ茲に一言を述べ刮目して其の成功の日を竣さん云（完）

Appendix 5: Biographical Sketch of Yasu Kōhei, by Saitō Johei

This is my transcription of Saitō Johei's 1934 booklet, Biographical Sketch of Yasu Kōhei (郷土の生める海外進出の先駆屋須弘平氏畧傳). Historian Tsunoyama Yukihiro made a similar attempt in his 2004 compilation on "Nikkei Migrants" (日系移民), which focuses on Yasu and the official attempt to survey Central America as a potential destination for Japanese immigration in the early 1890s.

◎ 郷土の生める海外進出の先駆屋須弘平氏畧傳

氏は弘化三年十二月二十七日を以て藤澤に生れました。父は尚安といふ医師で、我が東磐井郡で最も早く長崎に出て蘭学を修めた先達の士であります。弘平氏は父に肖て穎敏であり長ずるに従って膽力にも富み風采堂々、意気凜然人を凌ぐものがありました。五六歳の頃より父に就て蘭学を学びましたので父子の蘭書音讀を戸外から聴いた親戚の者が父子一時に気が狂ったと早合点し他の親戚を走り廻って知らせたといふ珍話ものこつてゐます。地方篤学の士によって漢学も学びましたか、文久二年十七歳を以て家を出で、江戸に上り父の伯父醫師芬木玄達氏に就て醫學を研究し傍ら和漢の學を修めました。

元治元年十九歳の時父親病歿に會しても歸郷せす更に深川小松町真田信濃守の侍醫村上榮信氏に隨身して醫術を學いて後横濱に出て佛人エームリエ氏に就いて醫學、天文學を修めました。師の信望頗る篤く屋須ムリスといふ名を貰ったとのことです。後エームリエ氏歸國するに及んでは廣く全國を歷遊して修業に資し特に京都土佐には最ま長く足を留めました。而して時は戊辰の戰爭に際し海內騒然たるを以て一先歸國せんことを思ひ立つていての途に就きましたが會々藤澤邑主奥山氏一個小隊の兵を率るて官軍醍醐參謀を護衛して二本松に居られたのに遭遇し暫しの間仙台屋敷に滯留すること、なりました。この遭遇は實に偶然のことで奥山氏の部下である藤澤家中の屋須氏を知る者どまが休憩してゐた時洋服の男が道を過ぎ去ったが或る一人は今の男はどらま屋須弘平氏によく似てゐるとて、このことを奥山氏に話したら、呼び戻して見よとの命があつたので屋須君屋須君と呼びつ、毛ました、驚いたのは氏です、此處で邑主や知人に會ふだらうとは夢想だにしなかつたので非常に喜び話し合つたとのことです。これがため邑主の紹介に依つて藩主に謁見し專ら傷病兵治療の任に當りました。佛語が達者なので暇めいは名取郡中田の書生某に之を授けたさうです。仙台藩が官軍に力を合せて會津を討たうとしたのは三好清房の力說に因るものでそれは一寸のことでした。忽ち藩論一變、官軍に抗する事になりましたが薩長の兵に當るには力が足らぬからメジコの應援を求めようとて岩ケ崎邑主中村宗三郎氏（藤澤の古い邑主中村日向の子孫八千石）を使とし屋須氏はイスパニヤ語にも通ずるので通辯にすることに密議が進められたつたとの事です。

戰亂鎮定後即ち明治元年、二十三歳の時歸郷し母氏に見之ましたが郷人に抑へられて三四年在郷し医業に從ひました、水薬使用、断髪洋風の矯矢であります。

明治四年廿六歳を以て再び上京し同伴の弟安平氏を芬木氏及村上氏に托し己れは横濱に赴いて佛學校に入學いたしました。次で安平氏も佛學校に入りましたが明

治六年十七歳を以て病歿しましたので弘平氏は甚之を悲しみましたけれどやがて奮勵遂に海外遊學を志すに至りました。

一度海外進出を決心した彼れは時の登米縣令增田繁幸氏に面會しその援助を申入レましたが增田氏は大に之に贊意を表し百方盡力をして呉れましたので明治六年二十八歳にして海外渡航を外務省より免許せらる、に至りました。然るに偶メキシコ國星學士長官フランシスコ、ヂアース、コワルヒアース氏金星經過測量のため渡來しとの通辯官に採用されたので出發を延し、コワルヒアース氏歸國の時はれて佛船ボルガ號に乘じ。

明治八年二月二日三十歳の時横濱を出帆し伊、佛、英の諸國を歷遊して今年十一月十六日メキシコ府に到著しました、しばらくコワルヒアース氏宅滯住の上明治九年一月三十一歳を以て天文學校に入學し苦學研究を重ぬること二年にして業を卒へ明治十一年一月、三十三歳にして瓦天滿良國グワテマラ府に移居しましたが老母を慕ふの餘り歸國を思ひ立ち旅費及歸國後の企業費蓄積のため明治十七年より同地に日本写真館（當時府內に写真館四あり皆外人なく獨て人、スパニス人、米國人、屋須氏）を設け明治二十二年に至り歸朝いたしました。早速鄕里藤澤にと旅を急いで十數年振りで八十餘歳の老母を慰問め故山の自然と知人とに接することを得ました。やがて東京に写真館を開業すべく計畫を樹てましたが、たまく南米秘露國銀鑛採掘事業起り我が國人が多數渡航するので氏は高橋是清氏等の推薦により通辯に雇はれ同年再び渡米することとなりました。然るに鑛山事業は全く失敗のため日本人續續歸國するま獨り彼地に殘留しグワテマラ府に止まつ元の写真業をみ遂に同地に於て歿しました。

彼氏が再度渡米した時鄕土への便りにも高橋氏の懇篤なる斡旋によつて出立するを得た旨が報ぜられてあク、高橋氏が田邊實明氏（薄衣出身、斎藤實子と關係深き人）に宛てた書翰（田邊氏に血緣ある津谷川小野寺氏藏）にも屋須氏に旅費を斡旋し汽船も上等室に乘達せて出發させる事にしたから安心あれといふ事や、仙台人送別會に屋須氏同伴せよとの趣なるが同氏轉居に月今日中に通知しがたし。などの事が記されてありふら高橋氏に就いてきかば屋須氏の天文學や外國語についの造詣の程度などがよく判ること、思はれます。

参考のため屋須書狀の二三を掲ぐ。[See Letter 1, Letter 2, Letter 7 in appendix 7]

右に掲げだもの外屋須氏の書簡並に寫書等は数通令甥松谷氏許に保存されてありますが何れにも故國の老母、親戚、旧知を思ふの情が切々として述べられてあります。若し氏にして今少しく早く歸朝せられてあったなら邦家のため相当重要なる貢献をなされたでありませう。今や我が國民は満州に、南洋に將又南米の地に進出発展を要とするの時比較的酬えられずに終わった海外渡航先駆者屋須弘平氏に對し追慕の情の禁じ難きものがあります氏の雄図に感激して海外発展者の此の鄕土より出でんことを祈つて筆を擱すること、致します

昭和九年十二月十九日藤澤小學校にて

佐伊東生敬記齋藤怒平

Appendix 6: List of Yasu Kōhei's Japanese Correspondence (1876–1916)

The table below provides an overview of the correspondence that Yasu Kōhei maintained with his relatives and friends in Japan from April 1876, during his time in Mexico, until October 1916, several months before his death.

The Japanese letters originate from two main sources. The first three letters that Yasu sent to Fujisawa during his first decade abroad were cited in Saitō Johei's 1934 biography. Seven letters were transcribed by Yasu into the *Notes*. Five of these were sent to his nephew, Matsutani Eigo, in 1916; one was sent to his nephew, Yasu Kisaburō; and one was sent to a friend in Tokyo.

The Archivo Histórico at CIRMA also has a photocopy of Matsutani Eigo's response to Yasu. The whereabouts of the original letter are unknown.

While conducting research in Fujisawa, Iwate, I found four additional letters written by Yasu to his friend, Tanabe Saneaki, between 1889 and 1891. In these letters, Yasu asks Tanabe to take care of his mother in Tokyo while he travels to Peru. Tanabe Junko, a descendant of Tanabe, donated these letters to the Fujisawa archive in 1989. She provided transcriptions of the original letters and their modern Japanese versions, which are numbered 3 to 6 in this appendix. In 1886, before the donation took place, she gave the letters to the Sendai City Museum to be deciphered.

The sources for each letter are listed as follows: A—Saitō Johei's Biographical Sketch (1934); B—Yasu's *Notes*, Fujisawa collection, No. 53 (Fujisawa-Cho, Ichinoseki), C—Reference of Yas, Archivo Historico at CIRMA; D—Letters to Tanabe, Relative Collection of Yasu Kōhei (Fujisawa-Cho, Ichinoseki).

No.	Recipient / Location / Date / Summary	Source
1	April 10, 1876: Yasu (Mexico City) to Matsumoto Seishiro and Tatezawa Toyosaburo (Fujisawa) Report on his sojourn in Europe and studies in Mexico, with a brief text about Mexico and its recent military coup.	A
2	August, 8, 1886: Yasu (Guatemala City) to Oyasu (his sister in Fujisawa*) Report on his photography business in Guatemala City, announcing to go back to Japan in a few years.	A
3	October 28, 1889: Yasu (Fujisawa) to Tanabe Saneaki (Tokyo) Asking Tanabe to take care of his mother and niece.	D
4	November 3, 1889: Yasu (Fujisawa) to Tanabe Saneaki (Tokyo) Report on his travel to Fujisawa via river transport, asking to meet Tanabe in Tokyo.	D
5	December 1, 1889: Yasu (on the sea) to Tanabe Saneaki (Tokyo) Report on his voyage to the Americas, asking Tanabe to take care of his mother and niece	D
6	August 29, 1890: Yasu (Guatemala City) to Tanabe Saneaki (Tokyo) Report on his recent life in Guatemala, explaining the delay of returning to Japan due to the war between Guatemala and El Salvador	D

No.	Recipient / Location / Date / Summary	Source
7	January 1, 1891: Yasu (Guatemala City) to Saitō Gonpei and Chiba Masatane (Fujisawa) Greetings, report on the reasons he decided to stay in Guatemala and not go directly back to Japan	B
8	February 28, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Matsutani Eigo (Fujisawa*) Thanks to Matsutani for his postcards and photographs; report on his illness; asking Matsutani to inform the relatives about his illness; explaining the arrangements for his photo studio after his death.	B
9	16/5, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Matsutani Eigo (Fujisawa*) Report on his illness; the disappointment of not receiving letters from the family; asking Matsutani to inform the family about his illness and approaching death.	B
10	June 7, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Matsutani Eigo (Fujisawa*) Report on his illness, anticipating further replies from Japan; ask Matsutani to inform the family about his illness; greetings from María.	B
11	June 25, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Yasu Kisaburo (Fujisawa) Listing the recent letters sent home without reply; report on his illness and loneliness; greetings from María to the family; attached a list of ancestors of the Yasu family.	B
12	July 16, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Kawakami Hōtatsu (Tokyo) Report on his life after his meeting with the Kawakami family in 1888; asking about the present condition of other relatives; photographs and a description of Antigua appended.	B
13	*August 19, 1916: Matsutani Eigo (Fujisawa*) to Yasu Kōhei (Antigua) Explaining the delayed arrival of the letters; considering the disadvantages (language, uncertainty, lack of financial security) to give up his job as a teacher to travel to Guatemala and work under José Domingo Noriega.	C
14	October 4, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Matsutani Eigo (Fujisawa*) Report on his recent illness; the pleasure of receiving letters from Japan; explaining how Matsutani would be able to come to Guatemala and work with José Domingo Noriega; the list of Japanese foods he wished to eat; seven poems appended.	B
15	October 4, 1916: Yasu (Antigua) to Matsutani Eigo (Fujisawa*) Report on his recent condition: illness, regret that he never met his Japanese relatives.	B

Appendix 7: Transcription of Japanese Letters

I have made the transcriptions provided here with the help of outside references, where available, to clarify the text. Regarding the letters presented in Yasu Kōhei's *Notes*, I consulted the typed version displayed in the permanent exhibition of Yasu's personal belongings in Fujisawa. Kosaka Ayako provided invaluable assistance in transcribing the Tanabe Saneaki letters and helped me better understand their content.

Letter 1: April 10, 1876

[松本斉四郎、館澤豊三郎外数氏に寄せたるもの]

飛船便ヲ以テ一翰奉呈候然バ昨年四月認ノ書面佛国巴里府ヨリ奉呈候處定テ相達シ御披見被成下候事ト推量致居候得共為念再度申上候

偖テ小生事増田令君ノ御盡力ヲ以テ速ニ外務卿ヨリ海外遊学免許下シ賜リメクシコ国星学士長官フランシスコ、ヂアース、コワルヒアース君ト同伴佛船ボルガ号ニ乗ジ昨年二月二日早天横濱港ヲ発シ支那、印度、亜剌比亜、阿弗利加ノ数港ヲ歴第三月十八日欧州伊太利亜国ナップル港ニ着、同所ヨリ上陸同国内ローマ、フロランス、ピース、ゼース、チュラン等ヲ遊歩シ第四月九日佛国パリー府ニ着滞在スルコト殆ト六ヶ月、第九月十八日同所ヲ発シ廿一日同國サンナセール港ヨリ再ビ乘船大西洋ノ数港ヲ歴第十一月十六日北亜米利加洲メクシコ共和国ベラクルス港ニ着此所ヨリ上陸同十八日夜六時メクシコ府ニ着シ漸ク安意ヲナシ右同人方ニ止留罷在去ル第一月ヨリ入校日々苦學シ第三月ノ試験モ首尾ヨク終リ候間乍憚御安神ノ程奉願候次ニメクシコ府ノ地理大畧可申上候

メクシコ府ハメクシコ渓谷ノ中央ニ坐シ府ノ中央緯線赤道ノ北十九度二十六分十二秒、経線英国緑威偏西九十九度七分九秒ニ当ル府ノ地方大凡一里半人口二十万大小街衢断続建家美麗万民商買相錯テ之ニ居ル実ニ共和国第一ノ都會地ト云フベシ府ノ中央ニ大統領ノ居城アリ九省アリ学校アリ美麗ノ大寺数多アリ又ラメタ、ソーカロ等ノ逍遥ノ地アリ府ノ北方一里ノ地ニ小町アリ、グハダルペト云フ東方二里ノ地ニ大湖アリテスコ湖ト云フ大凡十二里方、西南一里ノ地ニ古城アリチャポルテペクト云フ今政府此所ニ天文台ヲ置キ子午線ヲ定ム、又チャポルテペクヨリ半里西南タクバヤノ小町アリ、メクシコ渓谷ハ土地最高シ海面ヨリ二千二百六十メートル（メートルハ我邦ノ三尺三寸ニ当ル）アリト云フ土質甚乾燥ナリ然レトモ豊饒ニシテ五穀能ク熟ス年ニ三度穀物ノ豊熟ヲ見ル耕ストコロ穀物ハ玉蜀黍、大角豆、小麥、大麥等多シ國人日々玉蜀黍、大角豆ヲ食ス 又プルケト称スル飲料アリ、我邦ノ濁酒ニ等シ我邦ニ絶テ見サル珎果数種アリ年中花アリ草木落葉セズシテ常ニ青シ、メクシコ渓谷ハ地気温和ナレトモ大平洋大西洋ニ臨メル國々炎熱 燃ユルガ如シ然レトモ夏時天多ク雨ヲ降ス雨少キ時ハ人民多ク熱病ヲ患フト云フメクシコノ人民二種アリーニハエスパニア植民ーニハ印度人種、エスパニア人種ノ者ハ富貴ニシテ印度人種ノ者ハ貧困ナリ

次ニーツノ珍事アリ去ル二月頃ヨリメクシコ近國ノ人民大ニ沸騰シメクシコ府ニ迫リ大統領ヲ伐ントス故ニ政府大軍ヲ出シ攻ムレトモ賊軍勢強ク官軍屢々敗レ未

ダ落着ヲ相知不申候故ニ府内ノ居民大ニ動揺スルトモ小生ハ外人ナレバ少シモ恐ル、ニ不足候間必御心配被成下間敷候干時久シク諸君子ノ御左右ヲ不承候得共定テ御一統様益々御安躰ニ被為渉候半ト當メクシコヨリ奉賀上候降テ小生横濱出船以来身体肥満益強壮十七八歳ノ壮士ニモ不劣勢ニ御座候間御安意ヲ乞フ小生数年来海外遊学志願致居漸ク願望成就シ満喜ニ不絶候へ共数年間老母弟妹ヲ打捨諸君子ノ御厄介ニ預リ実以テ御申譯無之心根ニ徹シ難有奉謝候

男子一度志ヲ決シテ不能止候間御考察ヲ可賜何レ琢業ノ上帰朝仕リ万牛ノ一毛タリ共奉報恩候間小生歸朝迄存命ニ被居候様老母弟妹へ御諭告賜リ度奉願候（後畧）

明治九年丙子第四月十日屋須弘平百拝

Letter 2: August 8, 1886

[令妹ニ寄セラレタル書状グワテマラ府ニ於テ写真館経営状況ノ一端ヲ明ニスルタメ一部ヲ掲グ]

明治六年横濱出発以来佛国パリー及メキシコ府ヨリ数度書通致候へ共更ニ故郷人ノ返書無之我ガ愛並弟妹ノ安否ヲ知ラズ十有余年間心中不穏、日夜憂苦致居候處明治十九年六月二十八日認ノ御書通同七月二十三日来着速ニ拝受讀見スルコト数次然ルニ母上様並ニ皆々御生存之由喜悦ノ思ヲナシ十有余年ノ憂苦一時ニ消散セリ今母上ノ御安泰ヲ知ル上ハ一時モ早ク歸朝致シ世界遊歩ノ一片談話致シ数年来ノ御心労ヲ慰メン（召し）モノヲト存候へ共速急旅行決定スル能ハズ如何トナレバ吾レ五ヶ年前ヨリ当府内ニ一屋ヲ借リ写真館ヲ造立シ其費用金千円余昨年七月迄仕業致居候處同年八月轉居致シ右家主ト三ヶ年ノ條約ヲナシ新ニ写真館ヲ造作シ諸機械等ヲ買求其費價大凡三千円ニ及ベリ今我レ帰国致サント欲セバ向二ヶ年間ノ借料ヲ無益ニ拂（払う）フ事ヲ要ス又写真館及諸器械並種々ノ有要物所持ノ價金ヲ算スルニ大凡四千円ニ及ベリ之ヲ賣却致サントスルモグワテマラ府ハ我東京府ニ比シ十分ノ一ニモ至ラズ人口凡五万ニ不及一小府ナレバ速ニ買人ヲ得ルコト難シ歎息ノ至ニ御座候（後畧）

西暦一千八百八十六年八月八日認
中央アメリカグワテマラ府内日本写真館屋須弘平
当国ノ気候至テ温和ニシテ草木落葉セズ年中花アルヲ以テ

春夏と秋と冬と分へたてく
花見てくらすぐわてまらの国
鶯の声をきかずばぐわまらに
春の来ぬるをいかでわかたん

Letter 3: October 28, 1889

Transcription of the original letter by Tanabe Junko

委托狀一迂生事今回南米伯留国へ渡航ニ付留守中一切之事貴君へ委託候ニ付てハ諸事可然様、御取計可被下仍て委托狀如件
明治二十二年十月廿八日屋須弘平
田邊實明殿

Modern Japanese translation by Tanabe Junko

委任状私事、今回、南米ペルー国へ渡航につき、留守中の一切の事、貴君へ委託いたします。ついては、諸事、然るべきよう、とりはからい下さるべく、委任状、件

のごとし。
　明治二十二年十月廿八日屋須弘平
　田辺実明殿

Letter 4: November 3, 1889

Transcription of the original letter by Tanabe Junko

拝呈陳ハ迂生事一昨夜之郵書ニ申上候通り旅中無異塩釜港ニ着セリ昨日早天出港可致之處東京内國通運會社より去月廿九日差出シ候荷物不着ニ付意外ニ候へ共昨夜も同港ニ泊セシ候處昨夜七時之汽車ニテ漸ク右之荷物来着候け今日早天塩釜ヨリ乗船候へ共此川蒸気船七日町ニ直行セズ石巻港ニ今晩投錨之由ニテ吾輩も無處一泊シ明日午時ニハ七日町ニ着スベシ塩釜ト東山迄之僅ノ距離之處ニ三泊ヲ要スルトハ實に不都合極リ候何レ両三日ニハ登京拝顔萬々可申述候先ハ右之御報知而已草々頓首。
　明治二十二年十一月三日屋須弘平拝
　愛友田邊實明様階下

Modern Japanese translation by Tanabe Junko

拝啓、陳ぶれば、私事、一昨夜の郵書に申上げた通り、旅中異無く、塩釜港に着いた。昨日、早朝、出港しようとしたところ、東京内国通運会社より、去月廿九日、差し出した荷物が届いていないので、意外に思ったが、昨夜も塩釜港に泊まろうとした処、昨夜七時の汽車で漸く右の荷物が届いたので、今日、早朝、塩釜より乗船したけれども、この川蒸気船は七日町に直行しない。石巻港に今晩投錨するということで、私もよんどころなく、一泊し、明日昼には、七日町に着くだろう。塩釜と東山迄のわずかのきょり（距離）のところに三泊を要するとは、実に不都合なことである。いずれ両三日には登京し、会ったのち、お話します。先は右のお知らせのみ。
　明治二十二年十一月三日屋須弘平拝
　愛友田辺実明様階下

Letter 5: December 1, 1889

Transcription of the original letter by Tanabe Junko

謹而疎簡拝呈時下酷寒之砌其御地尊體御健全日々御繁務之御事ト不堪雀躍ニ候随而当方ニテモ高橋田島之両君并ニ迂生迄横濱出船以来海上安穏船中無變皆身體強壯ニテ今二十九日も既ニ消光セリ乍憚御体神アリタシ何レ来十二月一日ニハ北米桑港へ着スベシ倅僕数年海外ニアリ今年帰朝シ君ニ再會マルニ兄旧友之情を忘レズ愛憐ヲ垂し我親属兄弟ニ勝リ懇切ニ被成下殊ニ今回南米行之事件ニ付テハ精神ヲ悩マシ身體の勞サせ種々御周旋被成下君之仁恵之施行我カ心魂ニ感通セリ此大恩ヲ謝スルニ言語ヲ以テ盡シ難シ唯ダ之レヲ忘レズ我存生中ハ胸中ニ貯置スル而已又兄之他人ヲ愛憐スルノ徳行ニは天主ヨリ此ノ報謝トシテ無盡無終ナル永久之福祥ヲ与へ給ハランコトヲ希望ス御両親并ニ御愛閨様方へ宜御鳳言（鳳声）アリタり横濱出発以来大平洋航海之事情ハペルー着之上巨細可申述候愚癡ラシキユト申上ルニハ及バズ候へ共僕ノ不在中ハ老母ト愚姪之事ニ付萬事宜敷様依頼候ナリ
　次ニ乍失禮別書二通郵便ヲ以テ名宛之所迄御送達被成下度候先ハ右ノ歎願并ニ一言ノ謝ヲ申述度成陋翰候頓首謹言
　明治二十二年十一月廿九日午後三時十六分屋須弘平拝

大平洋（ゲーレック）船中ニ認愛友田邊實明様階下本書ニ申上候通リ今日六時ニ桑港ニ無變安着候。乍憚御休神アリタシ高橋君ヨリ兄へ宜敷ト加筆相托サレ候余ハペルー着之上萬々可申述候頓首

明治二十二年十二月一日

Modern Japanese translation by Tanabe Junko

謹むで手紙をさしあげます。時下酷寒のみぎり、そちらの皆様、御健全で、日々お忙しいことと、およろこび申上げます。当方も高橋、田島の二人、ならびに私まで、横浜出船以来、海上は安穏で、船中は変わりなく。皆、身体は強壮で、今日もすでに終わった。ご安心下さい。何レ来る十二月一日には、北米サンフランシスコへ着くであろう。さて、私数年海外にいて、今年帰朝し、君に再会したところ、旧友の情を忘ず、愛憐を下されわが、親族兄弟よりも懇切はして下さった。ことに、今回、南米行の事については、お心を悩まし、身体か労させ、種々御周旋下されて、あなたの仁恵には、たいへん感激いたしております。この大恩を謝するに言いがたし。これを忘れず。私の存生中は、胸中にとどめるのみ。まだあなたの他人を思りやる徳行には、きえとより無尽無終の永久の福祥を給わらんことを希望する。御家族の方々にもよろしく、お伝え下さい。横浜出発以来、大平洋航海の事情は、ペルー着いた上、申上げたい。ぐち（愚痴）らしことを申上るには及ばなりが。私の不在中は、老母と姪のことを宜しくお願い致します。次ニ失礼ながら別に二通の郵便をあこ名の所へお送りいただきたい。まずは、右のおねがいとお礼を申上げたく、お手紙をあげました。

Letter 6: August 29, 1890

Transcription of the original letter by Tanabe Junko

稍久御疎遠ニ打過シ失禮之余実ニ恐縮千萬ニ御坐候不信者と御立腹アルモ當然之理なれど旧友之情ヲ以愛憐ヲ垂レ給ヒ此不敬之罪平に御解答被下度奉願候然レバ追々秋冷相加く候へ共其御地高舘倍御清栄ニて賢兄御健全日々御勤務之御事と遠察シ欣喜奉雀躍候扨迂生秘魯國滞在中嘉樂和久良鑛山開業之始末并共和國當今之形勢巨細御報知可申上心得之處種々不都合成事出來不能其意大ニ延引致シ居候中今回東京日秘鑛業會社ヨリ秘魯出張之雇員等

并坑夫一統引拂帰朝可致命有之候ニ付去七月四日嘉樂和久良鑛山ヲ下リ里馬府ニ十二日程滞在シ同月十七日カヤヲヨリ智里の郵船ラウタロ号ニ乗シ同廿三日一統無事ニテ巴那馬港に着同所ニ七日滞留同卅日米船ユリマ号ニ乗シ本月六日早朝中央亜米利加我天滿良共和國の一港サンホセーニ着セリ僕事ガテマラ府内之親友等ヲ訪ひ度旦又同所々々何ニか一事業ヲ起シな目的ニテ本國人等と別ヲ告右サンホセー港ヨリ上陸シ翌七日我天滿良府ニ着久々ニテ親友等ニ再會互ニ欣喜之思ヲナセリ然ルニ折悪ク今時隣國サンサルワトル共和國ト戦争アリテ國内大ニ動搖人氣不穏金銀之融通も悪ク百事不能為実ニ歎息ニ御座候就テハ小生直〇十六日之郵船ニテ帰朝致心得ニテ外務省へ旅行券ヲ願出候處外務大臣之被申ニハ戦争中ハ内外之人ニ係ハラズ誰ニテモ國境ヲ出ルコトヲ禁ベキ今回政府之命有之〇ヘバ乍氣毒旅券相渡事不叶トノ義ニ付無處滞留仕居候然ルニ本日和睦ヲ取結ベキ風說有之候へバ他分（多分）来月七日之郵船ニテ出船致事可叶と存候何レ十月中旬ニハ其表ニテ拝顔之幸ヲ得萬々可申述候御両親様并ニ御愛閨様へ宜御鳳声アリタシ又別呈致兼候間甚以恐入候へ共川上邦士千葉良三之両君并ニ我老母へ書中ノ一宇御報告被成下度奉願上候余不遠對顔萬々可申述候草々頓首敬白

八月卅九日屋須弘平

田邊賢兄階下

二伸乍失敬高橋是清様ニモ宜敷御鳳声願上候次ニ僕之醜写像名當之方御配へ當被成下度是又願候也

Modern Japanese translation by Tanabe Junko

ご無沙汰いたしてあります。不信者と御立腹のこと、当然の理ですが、旧友の情をもって愛憐を下されて、この不敬の罪を、平におや事下されたくお願いいます。しかれば追々、秋冷加加わっていますが。そちらも、ます〇すご清栄のこと。あなたも御健全に日々御勤務のことと察し、喜んでおります。さて、私、ペルー国滞在中、カラワクラ鑛山開業の始末、ならびに、共和国のこのごろのことをお知りせいたそうと思っておりましたが、不都合なことがありできませんでした。大変遅れておりましたが今回東京日秘鉱業会社から、ペルー出張の之雇員など、ならびに坑夫、全員引払い帰朝すべき、命令があたので、去る七月四日、カラワクラ鉱山を下り、リマに十二日ほど滞在し。同月十七日カヤヲ港より、チリの郵船ラウタロ名号ニ乗り同二十三日、全員無事にて、パナマ港に着き、同所に七日滞留し。同三十日米船ユリマ号ニ乗って、本月六日早朝中央アメリカ、ガテマラ共和国の一港サンホセーに着いた。私ガテマラ府内の親友なとたずねたく、かつまに、同所になにか一事業をおこしたい目的で、本国人などと別れをつげ右サンホセー港より上陸し、翌七日ガテマラ府ニ着いた。久々に親友など再会し、互に欣喜いたしました。しかし、折悪く、今、隣国サンサルワトル共和国と戦争があって、国内大ニ動揺し不穏です。金銀の融通も悪く、百事不能となく。実ニがっかりしております。ついては、私十六日の郵船で帰朝するつまりで、外務省へ旅券を願い出たところ。外務大臣のいうには、戦争中は、だれであっても、国境を出ることはできない。今回、政府の命令があっても、気の毒ながら、旅券を渡すことはできないということにつき、なんどころなく滞留しています。本日、和睦をとりむすぶという風説があるので、たぶん、来月七日の郵船で、出船できると思います。いずれ、十月中旬には、そちらで、お会いし、お話しいをしたい。ご家族へよろしくお伝え下さい。また、別にさしあげられないので、申しわけありませんか。川上邦士、千葉良三の二人並びに、母へ、書中のことを、お知らせ下さい。遠からず、おあいして。おはなしいたします。草々頓首敬白

八月廾九日屋須弘平

田邊賢兄階下

失敬ながら、高橋是清様へもよろしくお伝え下さい。私の写真お送りいたしました。

Letter 7: January 1, 1891

斎藤権平、千葉昌胤外数氏ニ宛テタル書簡（再渡米後）

換暦之御佳祥五大洲中一般目出度申納候先以其御地賢兄等倍々御多祥御健在ニ被加鶴亀之齢候半ト不堪雀躍候随而当方平穏無異加年候間乍憚御放念被成下度候

先ハ歳始ノ御祝詞申上度捧疎簡候頓首

西暦一千八百九十一年第一月一日屋須弘平

敬テ呈疎簡候追日春暖増加シ其御地四方山之梅花満開鶯声山野ニ響キ嘸々賑々敷事ト存候扨テ一別以来絶テ御疎遠ニ打過シ不信ノ至恐縮千万ニ御座候陳者一昨年帰朝在村中ハ萬々御厚意ニ預リ奉多謝候実ハ在秘魯ノ際謝文呈上仕度候ヒシモ種々困難出来其意能ハズ大ニ延引候中間モ無ク鑛業會社破滅シ日本國人一統秘魯国引揚ノコトニ相成自然ト御無音ニ打過不敬ノ餘ニ候へ共旧友ノ愍憐ヲ思與セラレ御寛恕

被成下度奉願候扨テ南米秘魯国銀山採堀企業ハ東京諸新聞記者ノ前言ニ違ハズ悪人等ノ奸畧ニ落入リ会社破滅シ株式諸君大ナル損害ナルノミナラズ一般皇国人ノ汚名ナリ此レ皆田島技師ノ罪タルヲ知ル扨テ迂生モ十六ヶ年振ニテ帰朝シ諸賢兄並ニ八十老母ニ無異ニテ再會シ未ダ其喜悦終ラザル中此事業ニ関係シ再度諸君老母ニ別離シ本國ヲ離シ萬里ノ波濤ヲ航シ南米秘魯ニ至リ會社ノ為又我ガ後来ノ幸福ヲ計ラント世ニ名高キアンデス大山脈（海抜二万尺ヲ数フ）ノ側ニ座セルカラワクラ鑛山ニ在リテ不順ノ気候ハ不及申種々艱難困苦スルコト難盡筆紙候處不幸ニシテ間モ無ク会社破レ労シテ功ナク此困苦水泡ト相成坑夫並ニ其他ノ本國人一統秘魯国ヲ引揚中米ノ一港サンホセー迄同船致候迂生熟々思考スルニ男子一度志ヲ立テ鄕里ヲ去リ数千里ノ洋ヲ航シ今空シク帰国スルモ遺憾至極ニツキ新世界ノ地ニ於テ尚一両年奮発シ幸福ノ方法ヲ設立仕度希望ヲ以テ右サンホセー港ニ於テ本国人等ニ別レ当今グワテマラ府ニ居住罷在候府内ニ日本商品ノ一小店ヲ開設スレバ大利ヲ得ルコト眼前ニアレトモ其資本ヲ得ルニ良策コレナク候ヲ以テ例ノ写真業ヲ行ハント存ジ前郵信ニテ北米紐育港へ写真器械並ニ有要物品註文候故一ヶ月位ニテ当府ニ到着可仕事ニ存候（後畧）

Letter 8: February 28, 1916

千九百拾六年二月二十八日ノ郵便ニテ左ノ書ヲ松谷送ル西紀一千九百拾五年三月一日ノ郵便ニテ誠ニ奇麗ナル藤澤尋常高等小學校ノ葉書一枚次ニ拾数枚ノ写真入ノ御尊書又當年二月十日ノ郵便ニテ御尊書来着欣喜トメ難在拝讀仕候又其内ニ三十四名ノ賢君方ヨリ和歌御恵送成下是又難与受納仕候然ルニ如何シテ此高大ナル御進物ヲ報訴スベキヤ願クハ愚叔父ニ代リ愛甥ヨリ宜シク右御禮被成下度願上候扨先

便ニ申述候通リ一昨年中新タニ写真館ヲ造立シ開業致シ居候處重病ニツキ職業スル能ハザレバ我養子等マスエルトドミンゴ業ヲ取リ吾ヲ救助スルナリ就テハ我写真館ヲ譲リ候我所持セル写真業諸器械ノ價ヲ皆計算スレバ実ニ高大之金貨ナリ又我所持ノ他ノ物品皆他人ニ残シ置我本国ニ送ル能ハズ実ニ歎息之至候又其後昨年七八月頃ヨリ病気益々ハゲシク病床ニ止リ死ヲ待而已夭ニ付テハ我家族ヤ諸親類知己ノ方々ニ暇乞致度ク甥ヨリ御送リ成下り写真ヤ賢君方ノ和歌叔父死去ノ上ハ皆紙屑ニデモ投棄スルヲ思ヒヤリ此度ノ郵便ニシテ戻シ上候間御落手成下度候又右等ノ御返答致シ度ク病床ニ苦痛ヲ堪忍ンデ認メ居ルヲドミンゴニ写真致サセ送呈（呈送）致シ候間我信紙トシテ御受成度り

先ハ申述度事種々候へ共苦痛ニ堪ザレバ是ニテ止ム唯愛甥ノ御家内皆無變安穏ニ御暮候ヲ祈ル

屋須弘平藤原吉晴百拝

西紀一千九百十六年二月二十三日

我愛甥松谷英吾君貴下

Letter 9: May 16, 1916

(1916 el 16 de Mayo escribí al Matsutani Eigo)

西紀一千九百十六年二月廿八日

病床ニ筆執リ疎簡（書簡）ヲ認メ捧呈仕候シニ今以テ何ノ御返書之ナク大ニ心配致シ居候扨愚老事先便ニ申述候通リ引續大病ニテ病床ニ平臥シ日夜困苦致シ居候ニ天主ノ御憐恵ヲ以テ未タ（未だ）存生ハ致シ居候へ共日增ニ全體大ニ衰弱シ當今ハ骨髄而已ト相成總身苦痛甚シク身體ヲ動カス事能ハズ日夜病床ニ困苦シ只不遠死去スルヲ待而已ナリ就テハ（就いては）死去スル前ニ我愛甥ヨリ今度御尊書落掌致

度念願ニ御坐候又先便ニ申述候通リ十数写真入ノ御尊書并ニ賢君方ヨリ御恵送ノ高大ナル詩歌ノ集書僕死去ノ上ハ紙屑ニデモ投捨ラルルヲ悲レ御戻シ候先ハ申上度事種々御坐候得共苦痛ニ堪ザレバ此所ニ筆ヲ投ズ願クハ愛甥ヨリ屋須家ノ親類ノ諸賢氏并ニ我旧友知己ノ諸君へ別呈致兼候間愛甥ヨリ宜シク御傳声アリタシ若シ未（未だ）存生致シ居候へ次便ニ御報知致へク候草々頓首

屋須弘平百拝

西紀一千九百十六年五月十六日

我愛甥松谷英吾君貴下

Letter 10: June 6, 1916

El diez de Junio manté por envio la carta a Matsutani Eigo

再度之郵便ニテ疎簡啓呈（敬呈）致シ候シニ更ニ御返書落掌不致大ニ歎慨（慨歎）致シ居候扨愚老事天主ノ御憐恵ヲ以テ未ダ存生ハ致シ居候へ共日増ニ身體疲勞シ日夜病床ニ困苦致シ居候願クハ死スル前ニ今一度愛甥ノ御返翰拝讀仕度念願ニ御坐候此度ハ別呈致兼候間我親類ノ賢君方并ニ旧友知己ノ諸君へ愛甥ヨリ宜敷御傳声奉願候頓首敬白

西紀一千九百十六年六月七日屋須弘平百拝

我愛甥松谷英吾君貴下

再伸愚老事未タ存生致候ハバ次便ニ可申述候愚妻マリアヨリ甥ノ御家内留世女并ニ静子達子及屋須喜三郎氏千年女并子供等ニ宜敷々御傳声被成下候

El 28 de Febrero de 1916
El 16 de Mayo de 1916
El 7 de Junio de 1916
Escribi a Matsutani

Letter 11: July 16, 1916

「我尊愛スル川上邦達君」

数年間御尊父様ニ音信不通ニ打過シ其罪言語ニ申難ク候御同人ニ非常ニ御世話様ニ相成シヲ一千八百八十年日本へ帰国致セシ候時御見舞致シ度候へシニ其間モナク日比鑛業會社ニ依頼サレ止ヲ得ズ二度渡米シ南米ペルーニ至リ七ケ月間同國ニ居リ候日比鑛業ニ居リ其後鑛山ニ着セリ右鑛山ハ大ナル坑有スレ共スパニス時代ニ坑堀セシ鑛山ナレバ今會社大金ヲ費シ坑堀スレ共存外ノ利益ヲ得ル能ハザルト決心シ右會社ト離レ皆鑛山ヲ引揚へ日本へ帰國スルノ命アレバ速ニ其用意ヲナシカヤヲ港ヨリ乗船致シ候小生事ハパナマー港ニテ皆々ニ別レグハテマラ共和國ニ立奇リ次ノ船ニテ帰國致シ所存ノ候處其節隣国サンサルハドル共和國ト戦爭アリテ外務省ニテ旅行ノ切手ヲ与へザレバ止ヲ得ズ當国ニ止リ居候其内ニ私所有ノ旅費金皆費シ候ニ付止ヲ得ズ當国ニ止リ二度開業致シ居候其後當舊グハテマラニ轉住致シ居候シニ一昨々年頃ヨリ愚老事大病ニテ身體疲勞シ骨髄而已ト相成リ身體ヲ動ス事能ハズ唯死去スルヲ待居而已ナリ夫ニ付テモ病床ニ筆ヲ執リ御尊父様ヤ母上様未ダ御壮健ニ有セラレ候ヤ窺奉リ度候尊君ヨリ宜シク御禮申下上被度候次ニ御面倒様ナガラ私ノ親族小野寺甲太郎ノ安否御知ラセ被下度願上候先ハ申述度事種々御坐へ共苦痛ニ堪へザレバ此所ニ筆ヲ投ズ艸々不備

西紀一千九百十六年七月十六日認ム屋須弘平百拝

二伸當舊グハテマラノ写真ト其ノ略記呈送致シ候間御覽被下度候

「大日本帝國東京下谷

中徒町一丁目五十五番地」
「旧瓦天満良」
當旧瓦天満良ハ墨失哥国征服軍總督「エルナンコルテス」氏ノ從士官「ペードロアルバラド」氏中央亜米利加州ヲ征服シテ噴水山楚ニアル「アルモロンガ」ト云所ニ千五百二十五年七月廾五日西班牙植民ヲ置シニ其ノ後千五百四十一年噴水山ノタメニ全ク崩頽セリ今此跡ヲ「シウダービエハ」ト云其後西班牙人等此所ニ轉移シ都府ト定メ然ルニ二度千七百七十三年七月廾九日ノ大地震ノタメ崩頽セルナリ其後一千七百七十四年當今ノ都府ニ轉移セルナリ今其時代往昔ノ神社ノ跡ノ存在セリ其ノ建築ノ美麗ナルヲ見其時代進歩盛大ナルヲシル又同所ノ位置云ハンニ南方ニ噴水山西方ニ噴火山及「アカテナンゴ」ノ火山アル東北ニ小山アリテ四方取圍マレ我郷里用ユル味噌摺リ土器ノ底ニ位置スル如クナリ又海面ヨリ四千九百五十尺ノ高ニ位置スレモ気候至テ温和ニシテ我日本ノ春季ノ如ク年中花アリ又人民モ夫ニ順ヘ温順憐恵ノ良心ニシテ貧人ヤ不幸者ヲ救助スルナリ又飲水最モ稈多ニシテ純粋透明ナリ夫ニ三ケ所ニ温泉アレバ府内ノ佐居人民殊ニ外国人等属々来り健康ヲ求ム
當所ノ人又千八百七十四年ノ調ニ一万五千人現在ハ三万人至ルベシ
南方ニアル噴水山ハ海面上ヨリ一万二千三百尺西方ニアル噴火山ハ一万二千八百二十尺「アカテナンゴ」火山ハ一万三千十二尺ナリ又當所ノ位置ハ北緯十四度三十分西経九十度四十分ニアルナリ

Letter 12: June 25, 1916

（El 25 de Junio 1916 escribí a Yas Kisaburo）
千九百十六年六月二十五日屋須喜三郎ニ書ス
西洋紀元一千九百十六年二月八日ト同年五月十六日并ニ同年六月七日三度ノ郵便ニテ我愛甥松谷ニ疎簡呈送（送呈）シ候ヘシニ更ニ返書ナク大ニ歎慨（慨嘆）致居候扨愚老事未（タ）存生致シ居候ヘ共引續キ大病ニテ身體大ニ疲勞シ日夜病床ニ困苦致シ居候然ニ我家内ノ者一人モ我枕邊ニ未リ介抱致シ呉候者獨モナク哭泣致シ居候夫ニ又愛甥松谷ノ家内留世ト静子ヤ達子并ニ我最愛スル喜三郎子ヤ千年ト子供等ニ未ダ一度モ面會セズニ死スルトハ實ニ歎息ノ至ニ候先ハ申述度事種々候ヘ共苦痛ニ堪ヘザレバ此所ニ筆ヲ投ズ若シ生存致シ居候ハバ次便ニ可述申候次ニ愚妻「マリア」ヨリ家内一統ヘ愛情ヲ以テ宜敷々々御傳声アリタシ艸々不備
屋須弘平
西紀一千九百十六年六月廾六日認
我最愛スル屋須喜三郎子ニ送ル
再伸六月七日書面ニ「屋須家ノ先祖」并ニ其他ノ人々ノ姓名取調送リ上候間承知被致度候

Letter 13: August 19, 1916

[Sent to Yasu Kōhei by Matsutani Eigo]
詳細之書面ハ後便ニテ奉呈可仕候ヘ共先以テ一刻モ早ク本紙面之伯父上ノ御尊眼ニフシメ奉ラント早急簡略ニ申述候
西紀一千九百十六年二月二十七日御差出ノ御尊翰及当地ヨリ送リ上シ（のぼる）手紙及和歌写真等ノ及戻品今年四月六日着便（此ノ日数三十九日間）御病床ニテ御執筆ノ光景ヲ御撮影送與ニ接シ悲シサヤルセナキ（遣る瀬無い）モ後ニ耻（恥）ヲ残シ故手紙ヲ送ルナトノ御意ナラント察シ上ゲ残念ナガラ其儘ニ仕リ居候處今年六月七日御差出シノモノガ七月二十八日着便（此ノ日数五十一日間）今年五月十五日

御差出シノモノガ八月十八日着便（此ノ日数九十五日間）其後二回沾モ御手紙ニ接シ小生ガ不實ノ罪ニ徒ラニ御病体ノ御伯父上ニ御苦痛ヲケ奉リンヲ只管恐懼措ク能ハズ存居候併シ先便ガ却後着スルハ不思議ト局印ヲ検査仕リニ東京ヤ藤澤ニハ變リシ事ナキモ航海中ノ変動ラシク候

屋須家ニモ松谷家ニモ何等ノ異變モ無之御安下サレ度候愚甥モ金力アリ職務ガ許ス者ナレバ早急亜米利加ヘ渡航仕リ御存命中ニ一目ニモ御面會仕リ度存後ヘ共意ヲ達シ得ハス始ント困入候是レガ若シ東京位ニ御出ノ事ナレバ如何ナル心配仕リ愚甥モ教員ノ職務ハ訓導ト相成リシ後十五年以上ナレバ年数ノ多少ニ依シテ退職仕リ候フテモ一生涯恩給金ヲ賜ハル事ニ相成居候處中途ニシテ五ケ月ニテモ三ケ月ニテモ退職仕リ候フ時ハ中断セラルル為メ再就職ノ時ヨリ新ニ起算スル事相成居候ヘバ中途退職モ誠ニ残念、マ次方ニ候併シ寫真術ヤ外國語学デモ教ヘラルルモノナレバ教員ヲ全ク断念仕リ其方ニ熱心可仕候シカシ渡米仕ルトシテモ航海中若クハ着米後万一伯父上　御死去ノ事アリテハ誰ニ便ランスベモナク途方ニ呉レ迷子トナリ旅費ハ借金トナリ一生浮ム瀬モナキ困遇ニ陥入リ申シベク若シ伯父上万一御死去ノ事アリテモ御家督ドミンゴ様ヘ伯父上ヨリ堅ク御賴ミ置下サレ候上ニ來テモ宜敷イトイフ御手紙ガアレバ旅費等及留守中ノ家内ノ生計等如何様ニカ工夫仕リ

今ニモ渡米可仕候如何トナシバ伯父上万一御死去ノ事有之候フテモドミンゴ氏ニ就イテ写真術修業ノ上借金返済之方法モ講ジ得ラレル事ト存ズル故ニ候伯父上ヨ愚甥ノ願ヒハ今ニモ渡米仕リ御看病ノ御手傳申上御存生中ニ多年御薀蓄ノ御学問ヲ学習仕リ度且ツ其節ハ日本ヨリ種々ノ珍品御土産トシテ持参仕ルベクドミンゴ様ヘ堅ク賴ミ置キタレバ安心シテ來イトイフ御手紙ガケ一本頂戴仕リ度候委細ハ後便ニト申残シ乱筆ニテ申上候恐々拝白（拝啓）

西紀一千九百十六年八月十九日松谷英吾百拝

我ガ最モ愛慕シテヤマヌ（病ます）屋須弘平伯父ギシオンモト（御許）ニ

Letter 14: October 4, 1916

西紀一千九百十六年二月二十三日ト同年五月十六日ト同年六月七日并屋須喜三郎氏ヘトノ四通ノ疎翰呈上致シ候シニ一向ノ御返書ナク大ニ心配致シ居候處當年九月二十日ニ御尊書来着誠ニ有難ク歡喜雀躍シタ讀誦仕ヘシニ其御家内様皆々御無變ノ由欣喜ノ至ニ御座候扨愚老事未ダ死去ハ致共候ヘ共日増ニ身體疲勞シ骸骨バカリ不遠死去スルヲ待而已ナリ夫ニ付テハ今一度我親類知己ノ諸君氏ニ暇乞致度病床ニ筆ヲ執リ端書ヲ認メ呈送（送呈）致候又先便ノ御手紙ニヲレバ近頃甥ノ第三ノ女子出生ノヨシ（由）御目出度　御悦申上候之ハ男子ナラバ甥ノ喜ビ優ナルベ（勝れる）ケレ共天主ノ御尊意ニアラズ（非ず）ドアキラムベス又先便ニ申サルニハ若シ旅費金有るナラバ當地ニ来リ我家督ドミンゴノリエガニ写真業ノ相手ヲ無し又暇ノ有るトキ（時）ワ愚叔父ヲ介抱致シ下サレ度ト申サレ共今甥ノ家内悪クシテ之ヲ棄置ワケニナラザレバ在難候ヘ共相成ルベカラズ又若シ當地ニ来ルナラバ日本食品御持来ルト申サレ共愚老歯ナケレバ我望ノハ。。醤油ニテコシラヘシ柔かなる（噛む）物ヲ望ナリソバ（蕎麦）切リ。豆腐。トロロ（薯蕷）。柔かなる（噛む）野菜物メウガ。茄子。キウリ（胡瓜）。ナツナ。蕨。ミフ。蕨。。ヤクリ。茸ルハ魚類。果物。。葡萄。李。栗。杯ナし共今此世界ニテ食スル能ハザルバ生レカヘリテ我日本ニ行テ食スベス當地ニテハ毎日同ジ物ヲ食シテ何モ変わるナケレバ実ニ悲しきコトニ候次ニハトミンゴヤ我愚妻マリア并ニ愚老ヨリノ名ヲ以テ留世女ヤ静子達又喜三郎氏千年女ト子供等ニ慇懃愛情ヲ申サレタシ又死去ノ上何カドミンゴニ用アル時ハエギリスカフランス語ニテカキ上書ハ写真館ノ名ニ御送被下ベス

西紀一千九百十六年十月四日屋須弘平百拝

我愛甥松谷英吾君御貴下

次ニ七ノ歌ヲ呈送（送呈）致シ候間御笑ヘ被度下候

こノよをバ ミなたびじとぞ おもえかれ
たらまがはらに 己がくにぞ何る
わかるるは いまかなしきと 思えども
またあふコトハ いかに楽しき
みハたとえ がてまらくに にのこるとも
こころハきみとことなからん

明治二十三年正月元日赤道航海中左ノ句ヲ詠ム

あきらかに おさまるみよの はたりまつ
みとせのはるを いわひことぶく
あらたまの なみじ志づかしにたびひとの
にぎわいいわう ゑかとるのくに
うぐへすの こへをきかねば わだつみに
はるの来つるを なみかぜぞつぐ

メキシコノ東方ニアル「オリサワ山」ハ我富嶽ニ似タルヲモテ左ノ句ヲ詠ム

めきしこの おりさり山を みるごとに
わがひの本を おもうでにけり

Letter 15: October 4, 1916

西紀一千九百十六年十月四日ニ申述候通リ先便ニ呈送（送呈）セシ三度ノ書簡ト屋須喜三郎氏ニ送シ書ト皆無事ニ由誠ニ欣喜ノ至ニ候扨僕事先便ニ申上候通、未死去、致サズ候へ共日増ニ身體疲勞シ骸骨斗リト相成り當今ハ左ノ膝ニ疵ヲ生ジ動カスヘ能ハズ日夜苦痛致シ其クルシミ（苦しみ）言語ニ述ガタク（難く）候ハ然レ（ば？）共今一度愛甥ニ暇乞シタク（仕度）疎簡呈送（送呈）致シ度病床ニ筆ヲ執リ相認メ申候願ハクハ愛甥ヨリモ今一度御尊書クダ（下）サレ候ハバ僕ノ欣喜最大ナラン扨僕死スル前ニ我最愛ノ留世ヤ子供等ト喜三郎氏ト千年子供等ニ逢見サルトハ實に歎息ノ至ニ候愚老ノ念願ハ此世界ヲ旅行センコヘヲ物語リ彼等ト楽シク候へ共迚モ我望ニ及バザレバ唯天国ニテ逢コトヲ楽ニ待而已夫ニ付モ天主様ニ日々愚老ノタメニ拝禮致サレタシ先便ニ申述候最笑ベキ歌ノ如ク

Appendix 8: Outline of Yasu Kōhei's Memoirs

I transcribed the memoirs of Yasu Kōhei (Juan José de Jesús Yas) based on the original notebook, which is now preserved in Fujisawa, Ichinoseki. This transcription restores two missing pages that were left out of Mori Junzo's transcription.

Mori's transcription from the late 1970s remains the primary reference for Yasu's memoirs. At that time, Mori was the Japanese ambassador to Guatemala, and his transcription of the original held by the Noriega family was a valuable resource for studying Yasu's life. A photocopy of Mori's transcription is available at the Archivo Histórico at CIRMA, and anthropologist Terada Kazuo brought a copy to Japan.

Title	Summary
Notes from My Voyage to America and Europe (*Apuntes de mi viaje á América y Europa*)	Transit of Venus (1874); voyage to Europe via the Suez Canal; Italy and France; Mexico (study and coup); visit to Villa de Guadalupe; and departure for Guatemala with Francisco Díaz Covarrubias.
Notes from My Voyage back to Japan (*Apuntes de mi viaje de regreso al Japón*)	From Guatemala to Yokohama, via San Francisco and Hawaii (May 15–June 30, 1889). Detailed notes on his land and sea travel (to the hour) and his reluctant feelings of parting from his godfather Rafael Angulo.
The Sad Farewell to My Beloved Mother (*La tristisima despedida á mi Amada Madre*)	His departure from Japan to Peru, mentioning his original plan to live with his mother, the mining project that interrupted his plan, and how he asked Tanabe and the French sisters to take care of his mother and niece.
Notes from My Second Passage to America (*Apuntes de mi segundo viaje á América*)	The longest section, with a detailed schedule of his travel from Japan to the Peruvian highlands and a brief visit to Guatemala along the way. The Christmas Mass in Panama. The difficult living conditions at the mine and the frequent fights between Japanese and Peruvian miners.
Photographic Studio Established for the Second Time in Guatemala (*Establecimiento Fotográfico establecida segunda vez en Guatemala*)	In August 1890 he separated from the Japanese mining company in Guatemala. He had to reopen a studio to earn money to travel to Japan. The business went well at the location next to the Church of Concepción in Guatemala City.
In memory of My Baptism (*Recuerdo de mi Bautismo*)	He was baptized in 1883 and received four sacraments on the same day in the Cathedral and the Archbishop's Palace.
Gratitude to the Dearest Godfather of My Baptism (*Gratitud á queridísimo Padrino de mi Bautismo*)	Two clergymen are mentioned, Fray Bernardino, who instructed Yasu for his baptism. The presbyter Federico Virto composed a poem for Yasu.
Memory of Our Marriage (*Recuerdo Nuestro Matrimonio*)	Receiving the Sacrament of Matrimony at the Cerro del Carmen. Yasu enjoyed the panoramic view.

Title	Summary
Move to Antigua Guatemala (*Trasladación a la Antigua Guatemala*)	The family moved to Antigua in 1895, where over the years he rented several locations for his business.
Notes about My Sad Situation in Guatemala (*Apuntes de mi triste situación en Guatemala*)	The first 10 years of his career as a photographer (1870s–1880s), the apprenticeship with Herbruger, and the establishment of his studio in Guatemala City.

Appendix 9: Transcription of Yasu Kōhei's Memoirs

Apuntes de mi viaje a América y Europa

El año de 1874 en la edad de 29 años, salí del Japón con una comisión científica que el gobierno de Méjico envió al Japón para observar el paso de venus sobre el disco del sol. La dicha comisión componían de cinco personas. Dos astrónomos, dos ingenieros y el secretario. El primero astrónomo Señor Don Francisco Díaz Covarrubias y el segundo astrónomo Don Francisco Jiménez y los ingenieros Señores Don Agustin Barroso y Don Manuel Fernandez desembarcaron á Yokohama y construyeron dos observatorios para los trabajos. Uno en la colina de Nogueyama y otro en la colina de Honmura.

Este año los astrónomos de los principales países de Europa llegaron al Japón. Los astrónomos franceses estuvieron en Nagasaki.

El gobierno en obsequio colocó en el observatorio el aparato de telegrafiá con un telegrafista para el servicio cuando quiere hablar á los astrónomos de otras naciones.

El Señor Don Francisco Díaz C. estuvo en Nogueyama con Sr. Barroso (y los Señores Don Francisco Jimenez y don Manuel Fernandez en la colina de Honmura) y yo estuve en calidad de su intérprete. Al terminar los trabajos yo supliqué al Señor Díaz para que me hiciera favor de llevarme á Méjico donde quiero acabar mi estudio. Pues él me aceptó mi súplica con mucho gusto.

Tenía que dirigir á los carpinteros por la construcción del observatorio. Yo tenía que interpretar a los estudiantes de la astronomía de Tokio que venían á visitar al Señor Covarrubias. Pues el día del transito los astrónomos ha tenido muy buen éxito en sus trabajos. Sr. Covarrubias hizo muchas observaciones en ese día y Sr. Barroso sacó 14 contactos muy hermosos porque el día estaba magnífico. También él era muy buen fotógrafo. Pero los astrónomos franceses no resurto bueno porque en la entrada del primero contacto se nubló el sol. Cuando hacía la observación preparatoria tenía que estar con Señor Covarrubias por lo que ofreciera. Pues en la media noche cuando pasa la luna al meridiano muchas noches hizo su observación para determinar la latitud de Nogueyama. Una ves se cayó su lente de su mano por que hacía mucho frío como era la estación de frío. Yo le tenía mucha lástima por tanto trabajo (pues Señor Barroso erá muy buen fotógrafo). El día de la observación del paso de Venus sobre el disco de Sol estuvimos ocupadísimos. Pues Señor Barroso estaba encargado de sacar la fotografiá del paso de Venus de la entrada y salida del disco. Pues él sacó 14 contacto, los negativos, salieron muy hermosos. Gracias á Dios hoy hizo muy hermoso día en Yokohama. Pues supimos que los franceses en Nagasaki no fui bien porque al tiempo de entrar Venus al disco de Sol se nubló. Pues nosotros tuvimos muy buena fortuna. Si alguno viera la obra de Señor Covarrubias allí verá hermosa fotografiá de 12 contactos del Venus al disco del Sol.

Partimos de Yokohama y pasando las costas de China y de las Indias y pasamos a los puertos de Honkon [Hong Kong], Saigon, Filipinas, Ceylan [Celan] y Aden. Después atravesando el Canal de Suez y entrando al océano pasando las costas de Grecia. Llegamos

al puerto de Nápoles de Italia tan deseado. Desembarcamos y en el hotel estuvimos descansando las fatigas de tan larga navegación. Y visitando las curiosidades de los museos, los lugares de los paseos y los teatros etc. etc. Yo paseaba todos los días las orillas de la mar para contemplar las preciosas panoramas de las islas y las Costas. También fuimos visitar las ruinas de Pompeya que es muy grande donde se vé cosas maravillosas y curiosidades de las antigüedades. La erupción del volcán de Vesubio causó la ruina. Y después de despedirnos de este puerto muy triste y llegamos á Roma en donde estuvimos algunos días y visitamos los principales lugares muy interesantes como S. Pedro y sus hermosos museos, el observatorio, la Iglesia de San Pedro donde degollaron su cabeza etc.

En este tiempo Su Santidad Papa Pio Nono estuvo de grave enfermedad. Y después despedí de Roma con mi alma llena de tristeza aunque yo no he sido todavía cristiano. Después de visitar varias ciudades notables como Florencia, Miran, Génova y Trino y después atravesando el túnel de Alpes de la frontera pasamos á Francia, al fin llegamos á muy deseado Paris donde estuvimos más de seis meses. Aquí sí yo estuve muy contento y gocé muchísimo viendo tantas cosas maravillosas, es imposible que pueda yo aquí enumerar todo lo que he visto. El primero estuvimos en el hotel, pero después alquilamos una casa cerca de la Iglesia de Magdalena. Al fin despedimos de Paris con mucho sentimiento y embarcamos otra vez en el puerto de Sannazaire para dirigir á Méjico. Y después de pasar varias islas de Antillas visitando Habana. Al fin gracias á Dios sin novedad llegamos el año de 1876 á Méjico. Desembarcamos a Veracruz y de aquí en ferrocarril á la capital de Méjico. Y estuve en la calle de Alcaeceria en la casa de Don Francisco Díaz. Visité al Presidente Señor Lerdo Tejada en compañía de Señor Covarrubias para saludarle y presentar mis respectos. Fui con el vestido japonés porque él deseaba verlo. En este tiempo hubo la gran revolución promovida por el General don Porfirio Díaz por eso Señor Tejada huyó de noche dejando su mando y al día siguiente entró triunfante Señor Don Porfirio Díaz y tomó la Presidencia. Y así pues la capital se volvió todo tranquila.

El Señor Lerdo Tejado erá la persona muy instruida y muy sabio. Por lo mismo él interesó mucho enviando al Japón una comisión científica para observar el paso de Venus sobre el disco del Sol haciendo enorme gasto. Pues él salió secretamente y escondió y después fue á Los Estados Unidos dejando el mando de la Presidencia para evitar el derramamiento de sangre en la capital. Porque el General Don Porfirio Díaz estaba muy cerca de Méjico para invadir la ciudad y él entró muy triunfante en la ciudad sin el derramamiento de sangre. Pues yo fue á la estación a ver la entrada del Señor general Díaz. Así la capital se volvió la tranquila.

El nuevo gobierno nombró al Señor Don Francisco Díaz Covarrubias con el carracter del Ministro Plenipotenciario de Guatemala y por eso estuvimos haciendo activamente los preparativos del viaje. Pues de Méjico al puerto de Acapulco teníamos que emplear 10 días de muy penoso camino pasando muchos ríos y subiendo y bajando las cuestas de las montañas muy elevadas. Pues el gobierno para honrar al Señor Ministro nos mandó un cuerpo de caballería para acompañarnos el camino. (Dejando aquí un momento lo del viaje) yo contaré mi penoso acontecimiento hé aquí: yo muy cercano de nuestro viaje un día fuimos á pasear con Don Enrique segundo hijo de Señor Covarrubias á la villa de Guadalupe visité la iglesia y Saludé á la Santísima Virgen que es la misma Imagen que quedó impresa al lienzo de Juan Diego. Y después subimos á la colina que queda atrás del Santuario y de allí contemplamos la vista de la panorama de la Ciudad que se ve muy preciosa se divisa hasta el Castillo de Chapultepec. Después visitamos á la casa de antiguo cochero de Sr. Covarrubias, Francisco Menocal que queda muy cerca del Santuario. Este Menocal tenía un caballo muy hermoso y el patio muy grande. Pues niño Enrique antojó

montar al caballo. Me asusté porqué sí sucediera algo á él, que puedo yo decir á su papá. Pues por eso yo dije que primero probaré para saber su modo del caballo y monté en pelo y hice una vuelta sin novedad pero en segunda vuelta ya no quiso andar le dí un chicotaso. Entonces se levantó sus dos patas delanteras cerca de una pared baja como de una vara quería sostenerme. Pero fui inútil porque tenía tantas fuerzas. Me arrojó al otro lado de la pared enseguida se cayó sobre mi dándome tan terrible golpe á la cabeza y al pecho. Afortunadamente, no me tocó el casco. Si hubiera tocado el pecho, hubiera quedado en pedazos. (Yo perdí el sentido. Todos llegaron para llevarme al corredor tapando con la sabana para que me dé el aire. Después de largo rato me volví en si, pero con los dolores agudos) Entonces Menocal me dijo que hiciera una vuelta á pie para desvanecer el golpe y cogió mi brazo hicimos una vuelta. Me llevaron otra vez al corredor. Me curaron al llegar al corredor. Me desmayé el golpe dándome algunos remedios. Así estuve recostado gran rato. Pero como ya erá muy tarde dispuse regresar á la ciudad con la tranvía que estaba llena de gente. Yo supliqué á la persona que está sentada en la esquina que me cediera su lugar porque no podía sentado sin apoyo. Pues así llegué á la ciudad y al llegar á la casa. Luego entré á mi cuarto para acostarme. Por fortuna Señor Covarrubias estaba ausente sí no hubiera disgustado mucho mi travesura. Pues así pasé como tres días en cama sin poderme mover el cuerpo, pero después de pocos días sentí la mejoría. Yo creo firmisímamente que la Santísima Virgen de Guadalupe que se dignó salvar la muerte segura de un pagano. Pues con toda mi alma dí á la Santísima Virgen las gracias por el inmenso favor que me ha dispensado antes de ser el cristiano.

Durante la permanencia dos años en Méjico no he predicada ni un momento de tiempo. Yo estuvieran la escuela preparatoria de gran edificio de dos pisos muy hermoso tiene tres departamentos con tres patios muy grandes. El director de la escuela fue el señor don Gabino Barreda, era el cuñado de señor Covarrubias. Pues estuve estudiando, tenía que repetir lo que aprendí en el Japón, la matemática, la física, la química. Como no podía hablar bien español todavía me costo mucho para dar las clases. Por eso antes de ir á la escuela tenía que estudiar mucho en la casa con el diccionario español y Frances. La clase de física estuvo buena porque usaba la obra francesa de Ganot. Si hubiera continuado á estudiar en Méjico sin venir á Guatemala yo hubiera aprovechado mucho en mi estudio. También estuve en la clase de dibujo en la universidad. En el primero año tuve muy buena calificación pues me ofrecieron año siguiente á darme la clase de pintura aunque el reglamento tenía que aprender durante tres años el dibujo. Pero por la venida á Guatemala perdí todo. (pues cuando yo estuve en Paris mis amigos que estaban en la legación del Japón me aconsejaban quedar en Paris para estudiar. Pues yo hubiera aprovechado no acabar la vida como un pobre fotógrafo porque tenía que cumplir mi palabra al Señor Covarrubias.

Al fin Señor Covarrubias me anunció de nuestro viaje. Los niños Enrique y Abel acompañaban á su Papá. Pues somos sido cuatro y los soldados que nos acompañan para guiarnos el camino. Pues el primero día salimos en ferrocarril hasta el pueblo de Casapalca y aquí pasamos la noche en el hotel. Yo todavía sentía malo, pero así emprendí el viaje. Pues esa primera noche me sucedió una cosa. Pues me cayó de la cama al moverme el cuerpo, pero el golpe no fue mucho. Desde el día siguiente, comenzamos á caballo. Yo sentía ya cada día la mejoría. Yo estuve muy contento y alegre el viaje porque divirtiendo y jugando con las caballereas que nos acompañaban que carreriabamos los ganados cuando encontrábamos en el campo.

En todos estos pobres pueblos no había el hotel ni buenas casas para descansarnos nuestras fatigas del día. Muchas veces dormíamos en el rancho en el petate sobrepuesto en las cuñas o la tabla sucia. Así hicimos la penitencia sin nuestra voluntad. Pues Señor

Covarrubias se cayó dos veces del caballo una vez en el riachuelo otra vez en el camino. Pero por la gracia de Dios no le sucedió nada. Pues así con muchos trabajos al fin llegamos al puerto de Acapulco donde descansamos las fatigas del penoso viaje esperando el vapor para dirigirnos á Guatemala. Mientras tanto visitamos las ruinas de la fortaleza y otros lugares que causó por el combate para defender á los franceses. Yo estaba ya enteramente bueno. Al fin llegamos al puerto de S. José de Guatemala y desembarcamos luego y seguimos el viaje á la capital con la dirigencia. En aquel tiempo no había todavía el ferrocarril. Al fin llegamos á la capital y bajamos á una casa de dos pisos que queda en frente del Jardín de Concordia porque estaba ya preparada para recibirnos. Pero después de unos meses pasamos á una casa hermosa de dos pisos que queda en la esquina del mercado central y de la calle de Santa Rosa (que erá la propiedad de Don Benancio Barrios el hijo del Señor Presidente Barrios) para establecer en ella la legación de Méjico, donde está establecido actualmente "el Gran Hotel" de Marinelli. Aquí termino la narración de mi primero viaje á América.

Apuntes de mi viaje de regreso al Japón

(1889) El 15 de Mayo á las 8 de la mañana salí de Guatemala con el tren de ferrocarril para el puerto de San José. Á las 11 llegamos á la estación de Escuintla. Aquí almorzamos con mi padrino y descansamos 1/2 hora. Y como á las 2 y 1/2 llegamos al puerto de San José y fuimos á alojar al Hotel Americano que está en la playa y estuve aquí hasta el día 17 esperando la llegada del vapor San Juan procedente de Panamá. Durante la permanencia aquí sufrí por el calor espantoso tenía que mudar cada momento la camisa por el sudor que me molestaba. Sentía desmallarme sin fuerza. Bañamos todos los días en la playa con mi padrino. Pues ese día pasé mil penas porque él fue visitar muy temprano otro vapor para conocer pero por la ida en la canoa se mareó sólo fui pasar trabajo. Yo sin saber por lo que pasó esperándole pero nunca volvía. Al fin hasta la noche regresó. Yo tenía que arreglar cosas de Aduana. Como á las 8 de la noche el vapor San Juan se acabó de recibir las cargas y equipajes pero yo sin poder embarcar porque ya no había la canoa para conducirme. Por fortuna esa hora el ministro americano iba embarcarse á otro vapor y me ofreció la bondad de pasar á dejarme al vapor San Juan. Pedí á mi padrino su última bendición y abrazos embarqué. No podiar detenerme las lágrimas por la profunda tristeza que me sentía. Pues así el vapor zarpó á las ocho de la noche. (Antes de seguir la narración del viaje, aquí pongo de la despedida de mi hospitalaria y querida Guatemala) Pues me ha causado profundísima tristeza en mi alma porque pensando ya no volveré á ver más. Él ha sido para mi más que mi patria ó más bien mi verdadera patria porque en ella renació mi alma despejando las densas y tenebrosas nubes del paganismo con la brillante luz de la aureola. Pues en la capital ha tenido muchas personas muy distinguidos quienes me dispensaba mucha amistad y aprecio. De entre ellos un religioso recoleto me mostraba verdadero afecto quien erá muy virtuoso y ceroso padre á causa de Dios y ganar el alma de los progimos quien no era otra sino Muy Reverendo Padre Fray Bernardino de la Concepción á quien debo después de Dios la conversión de mi alma al Cristianismo. Él sacrificó mucho por mi, me instruyó la materia de la religión. Y después de instruirme, el año de 1883 el día 27 de Diciembre, el día de San Juan Evangelista, recibí los cuatro Sacramentos en el mismo día en la Catedral con mucha solemnidad haciendo votos á Dios mi fidelidad con mi propia boca guardando el precepto de Nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia Apostólica Romana. (Aquí dejo la pluma para continuar lo del viaje porque tengo solemne fiesta de mi Bautismo escrito aparte en otro libro.)

El día 18 á las 7 de la mañana llegamos á Champerico y salimos de aquí á las 6 de la tarde. El día 21 á las 4 de la mañana llegamos al puerto de Acapulco de la República de Méjico y salimos de aquí á la 1 de la tarde.

El día 23 á las 11 de la mañana llegamos al puerto de "Manzanillo" y salimos de aquí á las 5 de la tarde.

El día 24 á las 2 de la tarde llegamos al puerto de "San Blas" y salimos de aquí á las 11 de la noche.

El día 27 llegamos al puerto de la Magutian á la 1 de la tarde y salimos de aquí en la misma noche.

El día 28, desde hoy sentimos mucho frío. El 29 hoy amaneció con mucho más frío.

El día 30 á las 10 y 1/4 de la mañana pasamos cerca de la isla de "S. Benito." Hoy escribí á mi padrino y á mi amiga Chuz Salazar.

El día 31 á las 6 de la tarde pasamos el golfo de San Diego.

El día 1o de Junio á las 8 de la mañana pasamos entre dos islas de Santa Rosa y de Santa Cruz.

El día 2 á las 2 de la tarde llegamos al puerto de San Francisco Cal. y desembarqué de "San Juan" y fui alojarme al "Occidental Hotel." Aquí estuve hasta el día 4. Visité el consulado japones y la oficina del Banco de Yokohama etc. etc.

El día 4 embarqué de nuevo al vapor "City of Pekin" para regresarme al Japón. Esta noche sentimos gran movimiento del buque porque la mar estaba muy agitada por el gran viento que hacía. En el camarote no podía estar sentado ni parado. Me acosté con el vestido, pero despertándome cada poco por el gran sacudimiento del buque. Tenía que agarrarme algo para no caerme de la cama.

El día 5 amanecimos con el viento más fuerte por eso el movimiento del buque era mucho más fuerte que ayer. No podíamos tomar el café tranquilo en la mesa todo caía al suelo. Muchas personas se marearon particularmente las señoras que tenían la cara de muerto. Pero yo gracias á Dios no he mareado, solamente sentía poquito mal estar en el cuerpo. Dios me ha concedido el antiguo valor de la edad de 15 años.

El día 6 amanecimos muy contentos porque la mar estaba calma y menos frío.

El día 7 amanecimos también muy contentos porque el día estaba muy hermoso. Hoy sentimos más calor que ayer y mucho más en la tarde.

El día 8 hizo el tiempo muy bueno. En la noche lloviznó.

El día 9 hacía el día muy nublado en la mañana estuvo lloviendo. Pero hizo buena tarde. En la noche otra vez llovió. Hoy en el abordo murió un chino que estaba trabajando en el canal de Panamá para regresar á su país de Canton.

El día 10 hoy amaneció lloviendo pero desde las 8 compuso el día. Pero desde las 12 llovió otra vez.

El día 11 amaneció muy hermoso y vimos muchos pescados volantes en la mar también unos pájaros blancos que revoloteaban al rededor del buque para anunciarnos que estamos ya cerca de la tierra. Esta noche la luna estuvo muy hermoso.

El día 12. muy hermoso tiempo. Á las 5 de la mañana pasamos cerca de una isla de Sanroebi del Océano pacifico y como á las 9 y 1/2 llegamos al puerto de Honolulu que es la capital del Reino de Java. Qué alegría me sentía al ver la tierra después de nueve días de navegación sin ver más que la mar y el cielo. Por eso á esta isla yo puse el nombre de Oasis de Océano pacífico. Desembarqué á la ciudad para divertirme un poco. Aquí tuve el gusto de encontrar á muchos Japoneses. Se dice que están aquí siete mil japoneses cultivadores contratados tres años á los propietarios de las fincas de azúcar y de arroz. Esta ciudad se parecía muy fea mirando de abordo, pero me admiré al bajar á la tierra porque

viendo las calles muy buenas y hay muy grandes almacenes y las tiendas. Á las 5 de la tarde salió de aquí el vapor. Se supe que noventa y nueve japoneses cultivadores embarcaron á "Pekin" para regresar al Japón, entre estos japoneses había un masón que es de la provincia de Yamagata-ken. Pues me daba mucha repugnancia y disgusto hablar con este hombre porque se veía muy bien con aspecto criminal y de mal corazón y la mirada despreciativa. Pues Dios tal vez me enviaría este disgusto como el principio de combate para estarme preparado á encontrar á defender á los enemigos de nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia.

El día 13 estuvo buenísimo el tiempo, hacía el calor insoportable. Hoy á las 12 estuvimos al latitud de 21°17m. hacía el viento N.O.

El día 14 hacía muy hermoso día y mucho calor. El viento estuvo muy favorable por eso el vapor caminaba más ligero. Se dice el capitán del buque que llegaremos al puerto de Yokohama el 25 de este mes. Dios quiera que sea cierto porque ya estoy muy fastidiado y cansado de tan largo viaje. Mañana hace un mes salí de mi querida Guatemala.

El día 15 hoy hace un mes salí de Guatemala pero todavía estoy en el Océano. Estoy cada día más triste recordando de mis buenos amigos, no hay la noche que no los vea en el sueño, pero no pierdo la esperanza de volver á verlos.

El día 16 hace muy buen tiempo. Se dice que esta mañana se murió otro chino ya van dos. Yo por la voluntad de Dios N.S. estoy bueno y así me permita llegar al Japón sin novedad á ver á mi amada madre y demás familia llevando la buena nueva de mi Buen Dios y de su Madre Maria Santísima.

El día 17 el tiempo amaneció muy nublado. Llovió anoche. Á las 8 comenzó llover pero mucho calor aunque no había el sol.

El día 18 el tiempo muy hermoso con el viento de N.O.. Hasta ayer el viento siempre ha sido de N.E. el calor muy fuerte. En la noche llovió.

El día 19 amaneció muy nublado. Á las 8 llovió. la dirección del viento como de ayer N.O..

El día 20 amaneció muy hermoso.

El día 21 amaneció muy hermoso, la mar muy calma, pero mucho calor.

El día 22 amaneció muy hermoso, la mar bien calma parecía estar sobre la alfombra ó en el petate pero mucho calor. El viento S. O..

El día 23 amaneció muy hermoso el viento S.O., la mar un poco agitada el viento bastante fuerte. En la noche llovió.

El día 24 amaneció lloviendo, la mar más agitada por el viento fuerte N.O.. Como á las 10 compuso el tiempo, calmó el viento. Hizo muy buena tarde. Hoy estamos en el latitud 33°. 10m.. En la noche llovió.

El día 25 amaneció mal día, la mar muy agitada por el viento muy fuerte. Hoy pasamos muy fastidioso por mal día y la tardanza del buque.

El día 26 amaneció muy mal día como ayer, la mar muy agitada por por el viento muy fuerte. Toda la mañana había muchas neblinas particularmente como las 11 no se veía nada á la distancia de una cuadra al rededor del buque por la muy espesa neblina. Por eso se piteaba cada momento para evitar el peligroso encuentro del otro buque. Como las 12 comenzó á desaparecer la neblina y compuso el tiempo. Hizo muy buena tarde y la mar se calmó. Todos los pasajeros ya están muy fastidiados por la navegación tan larga. Yo mucho más porque ya estoy cerca de un mes y medio en la mar desde que salí de mi inolvidable Guatemala. Pues se nos engaña diciendo llegaremos mañana y mañana pero no hemos llegado todavía. Quien sabe si llegaremos á Yokohama como se nos anuncia. Como á las 4 y 1/2 de la tarde divisamos las costas de la provincia de Civa y á las 7 entramos á la bahía de Musashi. Pero sentí mucho de no poder ver los paisajes de las costas por que la noche

estaba muy oscura. Qué alegría y gozo sentía en mi alma á ver las costas de mi queridísima patria después de ausentarme durante 15 años. Al fin gracias á Dios como á las 11 de la noche llegamos al puerto de Yokohama y desembarqué. Luego tomé Dginrikisha dirigí al Hotel Tsukuiga.

El día 30 á las 5 y media salí de Yokohama con el ferrocarril á Tokio y llegué a las 6 y 5 minutos y me fui alojarme al Hotel Tsukuiga de la misma compañía del de Yokohama.

La tristísima despedida a mi amada madre

El año de (1889) el 15 de Mayo salí de Guatemala y regresé al Japón. El 31 de Junio del mismo año sin novedad gracias á Dios y encontré buena á mi amada madre. Y estuvimos viviendo muy contentos en Tokio en el cantón de Tsukidji cerca de la catedral de los misioneros en una casita muy cómoda en compañía de mi sobrinita Tamaki muy tranquilamente los tres. En ese tiempo Señor Takahashi me llamó á su domicilio y me dijo que tenía que hacer el viaje á America por una comisión y me contó todo por el objeto de su viaje. ¡He qui! Los japoneses piensan formar una sociedad de minería con el Señor Heren de Perú. Pues este señor como ya hace dos años mandó al Japón las muestras de minerales muy ricas solicitándoles si querían formar la sociedad con él. Pues por eso envió un ingeniero de minería Señor Tashima para analizar minerales y observar bien el aspecto de las minas. Pues señor Tashima después de analizar minerales y observar las minas envió al Japón un cablegrama diciéndoles que no pierda la buena ocasión de arreglar pronto con Señor Heren porque las minas muy buenas y tienen grandes vetas. Con esto decidieron enviar una comisión para arreglar con Señor Heren y hicieron la elección de dicha comisión. Pues Señor Takahashi tocó la suelte de la comisión. Me rogó mucho para que yo le acompañara al viaje. Pero yo le contesté diciendo que no podía disponer sin consentimiento de mi madre porque como bien sabe us[tedes], he ausentado mucho tiempo dejándola abandonada. Por eso quería estar á su lado para ver su última hora y pasar tranquilamente. Entonces Señor Takahashi mandó una persona para convencer á mi madre diciendo si camina bien esta empresa en primer lugar será mayor honra del Japón, en segundo grandes provechos de todos de la sociedad. Al fin venció á mi madre, y ella consintió obligándome aceptar el viaje sin la mucha voluntad. Ahora para eso tenía que dejar arreglada mi madre. Pues no quise mandarla á la casa con mis hermanos porque mi deseo erá convertir a cristiana. Yo la recomendé por eso á la superiora de la escuela de niñas de las muy Reverendas Madres francesas que queda cerca de la catedral. Suplicándolas que se sirva instruir bien la materia de la religión y la conversión al cristianismo con mi sobrinita Tamaki. Dejé los gastos y mensualidades para algunos meses. Además dejé aparte dinero al Señor Tanabe encargándole para que haga favor de dar á mi madre por lo que pidiera. Y dispuse mi viaja y despedí á mi madre con mi alma llena de tristeza porque ya consentía á mi corazón ya no volveré á verla más en el mundo. Pues así fue realmente. Y después de algunos meses al recibir en la mina la carta de la Reverenda Superiora el aviso de que mi madre y Tamaki habían recibido el Santo Bautismo. Me alegré en el alma dando las gracias á Dios por su bondad hacia las paganas y también mandé las gracias á la Superiora por su celo y actividad con ellas. Despedí á mi amada madre muy triste tomé la djinrikisha para dirigir á la estación de ferrocarril de Shiba para ir á Yokohama para juntar con Señor Takahashi. Aquí termino la narración de mi triste despedida á mi muy amada Madre.

Apuntes de mi segundo viaje a América

El año de 1889 los socios de la empresa minera "Nipikoguio-Kaisha" de Tokio dispusieron enviar á Lima un representante con el objeto de arreglar con el Señor Heren las negociación. Los personajes de la comisión son como sigue:

Señor Takahashi, el representante

Juan José de J. Yas, el secretario y el intérprete

Tashima, el ingeniero de minería.

La salida de Yokohama

El año de 1889 el 16 de Noviembre á las 10 y 1/2 de la mañana nos embarcamos al vapor inglés Galicia con destino á San Francisco California y como á las 12 zarpó el vapor de Yokohama.

En el primero viaje salí de Yokohama lleno de contento para conocer el mundo y en este segundo viaje á America salí muy triste de mi querido Japón porque ya me presentía de que ya no volveré á ver más. Sólo me animaba con la esperanza de que Dios me permita á parar á Guatemala ver a mis queridos amigos. Los días 17, 18, y 19 la mar estuvo bien calma.

El día 20 la mar comenzó ajitar á causa del mucho viento que hacía y comenzamos sentir mucho frío.

El día 21 hizo muy mal día con la lluvia acompañada con el muy fuerte viento

El día 22 hoy también hizo muy mal día.

El día 30 á la una y 1/2 de la noche llegamos muy felizmente á la bahía de San Francisco Cal. y pasamos la noche en el abordo.

El 1º de Diciembre á las 8 y media desembarcamos á la ciudad y dirigimos al Hotel Palace para tomar nuestro alojamiento.

El día 3 de Diciembre á las 12 embarcamos al vapor Acaplco con destino á Panamá. Gracias á Dios, el tiempo muy bueno y sentimos más calor.

El día 7 amanecimos con más calor.

El día 8 como á las 12 al golfo de California y sentimos gran movimiento del buque porque la mar embraveció mucho a causa de gran viento. Pero en la tarde se calmó un poco la mar.

El día 9 á las 3 de la mañana llegamos al puerto de Mazatlan y á las 8 bajamos á la tierra á divertirnos un poco y bañamos y almorzamos con mucha apetencia.

El día 10 á las 12 el vapor zarpó de aquí. Hizo mucho calor.

El día 12 á las 3 de la mañana al puerto de Acaplco llegamos y fuimos á la ciudad para pasar un poco. Yo mandé á mi padrino Don Rafael Angulo de Guatemala un telegrama para anunciar mi venida á America. Á las 12 salimos de aquí. Hoy sentimos mucho más calor.

El día 13 á las 10 de la mañana al golfo de Thuantepeque. Desde medio día sentimos gran movimiento del buque á causa del viento tan fuerte. Así siguió en toda la noche.

El día 14 hoy amaneció muy calmada la mar, pero mucho calo. Y á la 1 y 1/4 llegamos al puerto de Ocós de la República de Guatemala y salimos aquí á las 5 y 3 minutos.

El día 15 á las 8 llegamos al puerto de Champerico y á las 5 y media salimos de aquí.

El día 16 á las 6 de la mañana llegamos á San José de Guatemala. Anoche no pude cerrar mis ojos toda la noche por la mayor alegría que sentía con la ansia de ver pronto mi querida y inolvidable Guatemala. Pues al momento de anclar el vapor los oficiales de la

visita al buque me dijeron que desembarque pronto porque su padrino y sus amigos están esperando en el muelle. Pues yo no esperaba tanta dicha de hacer una visita á Guatemala. Pues por la divina providencia el vapor permanecía hasta la media noche del siguiente día. Por eso decidí hacer un viajecito á la capital con el mayor gusto de saludar á mis amigos. Pues salí con el tren de las 9 y media acompañado de mi carísimo padrino y un amigo suyo y á las 11 llegamos á Escuintla y almorzamos bien. Á las 3 y media llegamos á Guatemala y al bajar de la estación encontramos á la Señorita María Angulo en su carruaje para honrarme á recibir mi llegada y acompañarme á la casa de mi padrino. ¡Que placer sentía yo! Volver á ver á mis amigos después de largo tiempo de ausencia. Y después de la comida hice la visita á algunos amigos acompañado de mi padrino principalmente al Señor Gobernador, Señor Don Rafael Angulo y á la familia de mi amiga Doña Jesús Salazar y pasé una noche muy contento entre los amigos. Pero amanecí muy triste porque ya sabía dentro de pocos momentos tenía que despedir de nuevo. Pero gracias á Dios primero oí la misa porque no tuve la dicha de oír la misa desde que salí de Guatemala. Y durante la permanencia en el ono tuve la dicha de recibir la sagrada eucaristía. Despedí de nuevo á mis amigos y llegada la hora dirigí á la estación acompañado de mi padrino y los amigos dándoles mis últimos adiós y abrazos. Y á las 7 y media del día 17 de mi querida Guatemala con el corazón entristecido. Y á la una de la tarde al puerto de San José y á las 3 regresé abordo de Acapulco despidiendo á mi padrino muy triste y pidiéndole su última bendición. Pues me arrepentí de haber pasado á Guatemala para hospedarme sólo una noche porque la tristeza de nueva separación me ha aumentado más y más. Al llegar al vapor Acapulco subí inmediatamente á la cubierta y permanecí largo rato fijando la vista á la playa con el anteojos de larga vista con la esperanza de divisar todavía la sombra de mi querido padrino. Pero todo en vano. Dios no me permitió á mi ultimo deseo. Bajé tristemente á mi camarote llorarme solo. En esa noche no podía dormir toda la noche por la profunda tristeza me causaba á dejar de nuevo mi querida Guatemala. Por fin el vapor Acapulco zarpó á media noche de San José.

El día 18 á las 6 de la mañana el vapor fundió al puerto de Acajutla de la vecina República de Salvador y á la media noche salió de aquí.

El día 19 á las 6 de la mañana llegó al puerto de Libertad y el vapor zarpó media noche. El día 20 á las 11 de la mañana el vapor entró al puerto de Corinto de Nicaragua y zarpó de aquí á las 6 de la tarde.

El día 21 á las 8 de la noche llegamos al puerto de Puntarena de Costa Rica y permanecimos aquí un día y una noche y salimos de aquí el día 23 á las 9 de la mañana.

El día 24 á las 7 de la mañana pasamos muy cerca de la isla de Ceiba. Esta noche en que se alegran los ángeles en el cielo y los hombres de buena voluntad en la tierra. Esta noche pasé muy triste recordando la noche buena de Guatemala donde celebra muy solemne la misa de Gallo para honrar al Divino Niño recordando este grande misterio.

El día 25 á las 5 de la mañana el vapor fondeó á la bahía de Panamá y á las 8 menos 1/4 desembarcamos á la ciudad. (yo antes de ir al hotel separando de mis compañeros dirigí a la catedral con el ardiente deseo de visitar al Niño Dios recién nacido. Pues gracias á Dios llegué muy buena hora he tenido la dicha de oír la misa muy solemne con dos cuerpos de guardias de soldados colombianos con mucha reverencia al santísimo sacramento. Cuánto gusto sentía en mi alma á ver estos buenos soldados. No podía detenerme las lágrimas de mis ojos por el gusto. Porque ni en Guatemala no he visto nunca asistir la guardia de soldado. Sólo yo oí decir el tiempo de Señor Presidente Carrera asistía la guardia de soldados pero cuando llegué á Guatemala el gobierno había cambiado enteramente su política.

Después me fui al hotel que está en frente de la catedral donde mis compañeros me esperaban. En la ciudad sólo pasamos una noche y el siguiente día regresamos al mismo vapor que nos ha traído del norte para esperar el otro vapor que sale á America del Sur. Porque mis compañeros tenían las enfermedades estandose en la ciudad por el espantoso calor que hace allí, (pero yo tenía mucha voluntad de quedarme para pasar el día de mi patrón San Juan Evangelista pero Dios no me permitió. El diciembre 27 es para mi más feliz y más memorable del todo el año porque este día me hace recordar cada año aquel dichoso día del 27 de Diciembre del año de 1883 en que he tenido la particular gracia de recibir la Bendita agua del Bautismo y he sido agregado al gremio de la Santa Madre Iglesia Católica apostólica Romana llamándome hermoso nombre de Cristiano aunque soy más indigno de todas las criaturas del mundo. ¿Quien será el autor de esta mi dicha y felicidad? ¡Quien pude ser sino mi carísimo padrino muy Reverendo Padre Fray Bernardino Aceytuno!

El día 30 al vapor Santa Rosa que va al sur embarcamos á las 8 de la mañana y á las 5 de la tarde zarpó el vapor.

El día 3 de enero de 1890 á las 5 de la tarde llegamos al puerto de Guayaquil de la República de Ecuador y bajamos á la tierra por el deseo de conocer la ciudad ecuatoriana y para distraernos un poco el fastidio del viaje. La ciudad de Guayaquil es mucho más grande que Panamá también se nota mucho más movimiento del comercio. Hay muchos grandes establecimientos comerciales. Todas las calles tienen sus portales á causa del mucho calor que hace aquí. Sin embargo almorzamos con buena apetencia en el magnífico hotel que está en la plaza mayor. En mi vida nunca he sentido como ese día tan fuerte calor. Al regresar á Santa Rosa el dolor de cabeza mucho más agudo. No podía dormir toda la noche. El vapor zarpó á las 4 de la tarde.

El día 4 á las 11 de la mañana llegamos al puerto de Paita de la República de Perú y salimos de aquí á las 4 de la tarde.

El día 6 á las 2 y media de la mañana entramos al puerto de Sarravoy y el vapor zarpó á las 3 de la tarde.

El día 7 á la 1 de la tarde gracias á Dios llegamos sin ninguna novedad al puerto de Callao donde se termina nuestro viaje marítimo. (El día 7 de Enero de 1890 llegamos á Lima) Al momento de echar la ancula al buque Señor Heren y sus empleados vinieron abordo para saludarnos. Desembarcamos á la ciudad de Callao y después de arreglar nuestros equipajes en la aduana. Dirigimos á la estación de ferrocarril para tomar el tren de las 5 acompañado con Señor Heren.

Á las 5 y 40 minutos llegamos muy feliz á la deseada Ciudad de Lima. Al bajar á la estación nos esperaba el coche para conducirnos á la huerta que está situada á espalda de Santa Clara. El Señor Heren es un caballero que se presenta como de cincuenta años. [El] es elegante y alto tiene la mirada inteligente y grave. Él es el originario de Alemania. Se dice que hace 15 años se casó con una señorita muy virtuosa y noble pariente del Expresidente Pardo. Ahora él es casi como ciudadano peruano. Se dice que antes de venir á Perú él estuvo en el Japón varios años por eso tiene las amistades con los distinguidos personajes del Japón. Hace mucho tiempo él había pensado el proyecto de formar una sociedad minera con los japoneses. Pues con ese objeto que hace dos años pasado mandó al Japón con una persona á solicitar su proyecto llevando algunas muestras de minerales más ricas. Entonces naturalmente se enamoraron á las personas que tienen el conocimiento de minería admirando de los metales tan ricos. Por eso los japoneses enviaron á Perú un ingeniero de minería para que analice bien los minerales y observar bien el aspecto de las minas. Y después de poco tiempo analizando los minerales á su completa satisfacción y gustando las minas que tienen grandes vetas. Por eso el ingeniero mandó inmediatamente

un cablegrama diciendo conviene pronto formar la sociedad. No pierdan la ocasión de ganar las inmensas fortunas y una vez ya formalmente arreglado entre Señor Heren y Señor Takahashi. También á tiempo llegaron los mineros japoneses acompañados con los Señores Yamaguchi y Koike.

Pues señor Takahashi mandó hacer los preparativos del viaje á la mina de Carahuacra de Yauli de la provincia de Junin. De las personas del viaje como sigue:

Señor Takahasi

Pidro, Basombro, Yamaguchi

Koike y Yas y 14 mineros.

El año de 1890 el día 12 Febrero á las 7 de la mañana salimos de la estación de Monserato de Lima y á las 9 y 30 minutos llegamos á la estación de Chosica donde almorzamos con buena apetencia. Este pueblo la altura sobre el nivel del mar tiene 2832 pies. Y á las 2 de la tarde llegamos al puente de Aguas de Verrugas. Pues este puente está sobre muy profundo barranco, pero actualmente está caedo ó roto del centro. Por eso ahora provisionalmente han formado en las dos orillas del barranco poniendo las maquinas de vapor y en las dos orillas del barranco poniendo las cadenas de hierro muy fuerte colgando el asiento ligero de cuatro personas como el especie de jaula y tiran muy fuerte con el vapor en la orilla opuesta. Así pasan también los equipajes pero con otro aparato, pasando otra orilla toma el tren para continuar el viaje. (Cuardo pasan los viajeros la parte del puente roto espiando la profundidad del barranco se asustan y mudan el color de la cara como los muerto por el miedo.)

Á las 5 de la tarde llegamos á la estación de Matucana y dirigimos al Hotel de Matucana. En esta noche sentimos más frío por la más elevación que hay aquí. Este pueblo tiene la altura 7788 pies sobre el nivel del mar.

El día 13 á las 8 salimos de aquí y á la 1 de la tarde á la estación de San Mateo y alquilamos dos casas una para nosotros y otra para los mineros porque en este pueblo no hay el hotel. Esta noche sentimos mucho más frío. Este pueblo tiene la altura de 10530 pies sobre el nivel del mar.

El día 14 á las 9 salimos de aquí y á las 4 de la tarde llegamos á la estación de Chicla nos alojamos al hotel Tarasandino y para los operarios alquilamos otra casa. Y quedamos aquí dos días porque Señor Takahashi se enfermó por la repentino cambio del temperamento a causa de la elevación tan enorme. Aquí se cuenta 12220 pies de la altura sobre el nivel del mar. Se dice que estos lugares de tanta elevación todos los extranjeros que viene á visitar por aquí padecen generalmente una enfermedad que se llama Soroche causado por el repentino cambio del temperamento y atmosférico tan ligero. Los síntomas de esta enfermedad siente el dolor de cabeza muy fuerte, la calentura, la inapetencia y la dificultad de la respiración etc. etc.

El día 16 á las 12 salimos de aquí á caballo porque desde aquí ya no hay el ferrocarril. Y á las 4 de la tarde llegamos al pueblo de Casapalca que está al pie de la cordillera de los Andes. Esta población tiene 13840 pies de la elevación.

Tomamos nuestro alojamiento en el Hotel Italiano. Esta noche sentimos mucho más frío. Entre los mineros habían algunos atacados de Soroche.

El día 17 á las 10 salimos de aquí. Pues el viaje de hoy estuvo muy penoso porque tuvimos que pasar la célebre cordillera de los Andes que tiene 20000 pies de altura. Sentimos el frío espantoso porque toda la cordillera estaba nevada. Pero gracias á Dios Señor Koike y yo y los mineros llegamos felizmente sin ninguna novedad á las 3 de la tarde al pueblo de Yauli. Y estuvimos en el Hotel Italiano de Francisco Borletti esperando la llegada de los Señores Takahashi y Yamaguchi. (El día 17 de enero 1890 llegamos á Yauli). Teníamos

mucha pena porque tardaron mucho al llegar. Al fin llegaron á las 6 á Yauli y asustamos al oír decir por lo que sucedió Señor Yamaguchi. Pues en el paso de la cordillera se calló con su caballo al barranco recibiendo muy fuerte golpes. Inmediatamente llamamos un facultativo del pueblo para asistir al enfermo y después de examinar bien los golpes el medico dijo que afortunadamente los golpes no son tan graves. Pues estará bueno por algunos días de reposo.

El día 19 á las 11 salimos de aquí. Señor Koike y yo y los mineros para la mina de Carahuacra dejando á Yauli Señores Takahashi y Yamaguchi. Y llegamos á las 2 de la tarde á la mina sin ninguna novedad gracias á Dios. (Llegada á la mina. Se dice que desde Yauli á la mina de Carohacra hay 2 leguas y 1/2 de distancia. Este pueblo tiene la altura sobre nivel de mar [4090.6]. El día 19 de enero de 1890 llegamos á la mina de Carohacra.)

* * *

La mina de Carahuacra tiene la elevación de 18000 pies sobre el nivel del mar. Por eso hace mucho frío en todo el tiempo. En los meses de diciembre, enero, febrero, marzo, abril y mayo se caen la nieve y el granizo todos los días. Y los meses de junio, julio, agosto, septiembre, octubre y noviembre son el tiempo de séquia ó verano. Pero en las noches hace el frío más intenso que los meses de invierno. El aspecto de las montañas se presentan muy triste sin los arboles ni las yerbas. Aquí todo el año no se puede ver las flores ni se puede oír el canto de los pájaros solamente en el silencio de la noche se puede oír el triste murmullo de las aguas del los riachuelos. Pues todo los cuartos que habitamos están construidos con las piedras sin labrados y cubiertas con las laminas de zinc. Por eso en el día cuando hay el sol se siente mucho calor y en la noche mucho frío. Pues yo estuve durmiendo todas las noches titiriteando de frío, porque el viento tiene la libertad de pasar á todas partes. Cuando cae la nieve y el granizo entran á dentro. Me despierta de repente sintiendo frío en la cara. También me dispirtaban de repente por la sofocación de la respiración por la falta de atmosférico. Esto sucedía no sólo una vez sino cada poco. Pues el frío no me dejaba de escribir ni leer tranquilamente. Por aquí los combustibles son muy escasos, no hay los leñas ni el carbón. Por eso se usan para cocinar las raises y yerbas secas que hay en la pampa. Este combustible se llama Chanpa. Se coge en el verano de la pampa torasando ó cortando el suelo la forma de ladrillos ó la forma que quiera pero debe ser gruesa despegando ó rancando del suelo con raises y se secan y almacenan. También hay otro combustible que se llama Taquia que no es otra cosa sino el excremento de un animal que se llama Yama [llama] que abunda en estos lugares.

Pues ahora me ha confiado muchos más cargos el primero. Tengo que atender la planilla de los mineros para hacer las cuentas de sus trabajos de semimensual y pagar sus sueldos cada quincena y darles sus víveres como carne, arroz, azúcar, café, sal y papas etc. etc. Pues la carne tenemos siempre la gran cantidad en el cuarto aparte cargadas ya preparadas. Aquí puede conservar mucho tiempo por el frío que hace sin alterar. Mando diariamente despachar al cocinero chino que tenemos. Pues cada quince días recibimos de Yauli el carretón de carne para nuestros consumos.

El almacén está provisto con gran cantidad de los artículos que manda de Lima para nuestros consumos diarios más necesario como las conservas de todas clases en gran cantidad, los diferentes dulces, las galletas, chocolates, los quesos de varias clases, las mantequillas, los pescados secos, los vinos, los licores, los pasteles, las frutas secas, harina y los cigaros etc. etc. (Más: arroz, azúcar, manteca, sardina, fósforos, té, bacalao, nueces, fideos, valas, pasas, goma, ostiones, langostas, salmón, mortadela, aceites de comer) Aquí no puedo enumerar la infinidad de artículos alimenticios que hay y tengo que despachar

cada poco la correspondencia a Lima: en el almacén tengo gran cantidad de las hojas de coca que consumen diariamente los mineros peruanos. Pues los indigenas mascan las hojas de coca mescrado con un poco de cal risa y dicen que es un calmante muy eficaz. Cuando tenga en la boca no se siente el frío, el sueño, la hambre ni la fatiga en el trabajo. Pues tengo otras muchas cosas en mi cargo. También tenía que hacer la visita de cuando en cuando al rancho de los mineros japoneses que está tres cuadras más arriba de la oficina para que estén con perfecta orden. Yo pasé tanto trabajo para llegar al rancho. Tenía que descansar cada poco en el camino porque me tapaba la respiración por falta de aire por la elevación tan enorme. Pero es deborde que yo hacía este sacrificio porque nunca, nunca están con buena armonía entre ellos ni con los mineros peruanos. Pues el Jueves Santo en la mina huyo un desorden con la discordia entre los mineros japoneses y peruanos resultando dos heridos. El Sábado Santo tenía que hacer un viajesito á Yauli para presentar á la gobernación para arreglar el asunto judicial. Pues ya estoy muy fastidiado con los mineros japoneses cada poco con los pleitos y discordias. También recibí de Lima la noticia muy desagradable. Pues un minero que estaba en la huerta por la enfermedad recibió un baraso al costado por un muchacho el sirviente de la huerta quien se huyó después de cometer este delito robando el reloj de minero y algún dinero de Sr. Bhan el empleado de la huerta. (Se dice que pelearon los dos en estado de ebriedad.) También otra vez aquí hace cuatro días dos mineros japoneses se riñeron resultando un herido. Pues al contrario entre los mineros peruanos no hay pleito ni discordia. Tienen mejores sentimientos pero muy ignorantes y flojos.

Pues ahora tenemos muy mala noticia, de que el negocio de la empresa minera no marcha bien. Pues Señor Takahashi salió de Lima el día 10 de abril para regresar al Japón con el objeto de discutir los demás socios si quieren continuar ó abandonar la empresa porque no se sacará la utilidad ventajosa empleando enormes gasto y tantos sacrificios personales. (Es verdad las minas tienen grandes vetas pero ya es muy vieja porque el tiempo de los españoles escubaron.) Por eso se opina esto es la culpa del ingeniero Tashima por qué no ha examinado bien ni hizo bien el cálculo antes de hacer la contrata. Se cree que en el primer viaje que hizo convino con Sr. Heren con la condición de si los japoneses acepta esta empresa le daría el honorario tanto por eso ahora aunque desee la contrata él tendrá el dinerito. Pues Tashima salió de Lima antes que Señor Takahashi, encaminó huyendo y embarcó en Callao secretamente. Pero toda esta misteriosa opinión de las gentes no puedo creer. Señor Takahashi llegará al Japón al principio de Junio. Quizá muy pronto tendremos la contestación por el cablegrama. Yo quería renunciar el empleo pero no quiere diciéndome que esperará hasta que venga la contestación del Japón. Ojalá que pueda salirme pronto del cautiverio de la mina. Pues Bendito sea Dios quien se dignó conceder á mi deseo, al fin recibimos de Lima la orden de regresar. Por eso hicimos el preparativo del viaje y después de arreglardos todas las cosas de la mina con todo orden. Mandé á los mineros que adelanten y Señor Koike y yo después á caballo. Así emprendimos nuestro viaje. Yo despedí de mina! ¡¡Diciendo adiós Carahacra, adiós!! (La Salida ó despedida de la mina de Carahuacra fue como el día 14 de julio de 1890.) Porque yo había tomado algún cariño aunque padecí tanto aquí. Despidiendo también á los mineros peruanos que me querían y respetaban.

Aquí apuntaré algunas cositas que no llaman la atención para las personas insensibles. Pues en estos lugares muy triste porque no puede pedir el ausirio espiritual. Aquí no hay la iglesia. Aquí no puede cumplir el precepto de la iglesia. Por eso los pobres mineros si mueren sin ningún ausirio. Se entierran en la pampa sin la caja mortuoria como un perro y las animales pisotean el sepulto para buscar sus alimentos. Pues yo asistí a un

minero moribundo desamparado dí todo este llamaba Juan Espinosa. Yo le pregunté que su alma está tranquila dándole cariñosamente algunas consoladoras palabras. Me dijo que sí estoy tranquilo. Yo llevé el crucifijo para que lo besara y pidiera el perdón de todos los pecados que cometió durante su vida. Después pocas horas entregó su alma al Señor muy tranquilamente. Y después yo resé al lado del difunto la recomendación de su alma acompañados de algunos indígenas.

Ahora voy á contar (mi devoto mes de María). Pues hice un pobre altalcito en el almacén, un rinconsito para consagrar este hermoso mes a la nuestra Madre María Santísima para pedir su misericordia. Pues aquí resé sólo honrar muy triste porque no había ni una persona que me acompañara á resar. También no podía conseguir ni una flor sólo con flor espiritual de cada día. Pues un día de domingo salí andar para buscar las flores para ofrecer á Maria Santísima. Pues subí al cerro que está en frente de la mina, y he empleado tres horas. Para llegar hasta la punta tenía que pasar dentro de la nieve que llegaba hasta la rodilla. Aquí el burómetro que yo llevaba estaba marcado cerca de 20000 mil pies de elevación sobre el nivel del mar. Pues gracia á Dios aquí hallé una planta parecida á pino y otra desconocida y las traje a la casa para ofrecer á la Santísima Virgen como una prueba de mi verdadero amor. Pues estuve muy contento sólo con la Virgen ofreciéndole todas mis penas y trabajos por su amor. La concursion del mes estuvo á muy alegre. Pues mandé llamar á todos los mineros con sus mujeres y criaturas repartí á todos los panes y copitas. Yo dije un discursito para acabar el mi devoto mes de Maria Santísima. Pues todos muy contentos llegaron á besar la Imagen de la Virgen. (Esto es muy grato recuerdo de mi devoto mes en la mina de Carahuacra el año de 1890.) El día de la concursíon del mes de Maria fue el día 2 de junio de 1890.

Yo había pasado mis trabajos viaje á pie el camino tan penoso.

Pues un carpintero quedó con migo para acompañarme. Cuando llegamos al pie de cordillera vimos un minero echado en el suelo. Le pregunté que tiene. Entonces me dijo ya no puedo andar. Por eso pié y le di mi caballo diciéndole que cuando llegas á Casapalca dejas en el hotel mi caballo. Después seguimos nuestro viaje á pie con mil trabajo. Cuando llegamos al cumbre de la cordillera estaba nevada seguía cayendo muy copiosas nieves. Yo tenía hambre pero no traía ningún alimento creyendo que llegaría muy temprano á Casapalca. Por fortuna pasaba un indígena llevando los huevos, mandé comprar el carpintero y comimos los huevos crudos. Así seguimos nuestro viaje cuidando de no caer al barranco.

Al fin gracias á Dios llegamos sin novedad á Casapalca muy cansados por el penoso viaje. Pues ese minero que presté mi caballo marchó a la estación de Chicla con mi caballo sin considerarme. Ese hombre tan bruto. (Estuvimos en Perú desde el dia 7 de 1890. El mes de Enero hasta El dia 17 de julio de 1890.) Pues después de comer y pagando las cuentas de todos los japoneses emprendimos nuestro viaje con mi compañero. Pues ya era tarde. Pronto entró la noche por la mala fortuna sin luna. Pues en mi vida nunca hice tan peligroso y penoso viaje de noche si hubiéramos sabido no había la luna, hubiéramos conseguido un farolito. Pues de Casapalca á Chicla sólo hay cinco legua. Pues caminamos muy despacio porque cada poco tropezábamos á la piedra ó al palo que hay en el camino. Por eso teníamos que encender los fósforos cada poco. El camino está mayor parte á las orillas de profundo barraco, por eso teníamos que mayor cuidado de no precipitarnos á la profundidad de abismo. Pues Dios tan misericordioso con los afligidos librando el inmenso peligro. Al fin llegamos cerca de las 12 muy cerca de Chicla, esa hora unos mineros venían encontrarnos trayendo un caballo para mi. Pero ya no quise montar sino llegué á pie al hotel de Chicla. Y después de tomar un poco de alimento luego me acosté para descansar la fatiga del penoso viaje porque el día siguiente tenemos que continuar nuestro viaje con

el tren de ferrocarril.

Á pesar de haber pasado la noche tan fatal gracias á Dios amanecí bueno. Continuamos nuestro viaje hasta llegar á Lima y hicimos con mucha actividad el preparativos de nuestro viaje de regreso al Japón. Pues el 17 de julio á las 8 de la mañana salimos de la estación de Viterbo de Lima para Callao y llegamos á las 8 y media á este puerto. Inmediatamente embarcamos al vapor chileno Lautaro á destino á Panamá y el vapor zarpó á las 3 y 1/4 de la tarde.

El día 18 á las 2 de la tarde llegamos al puerto de Salaverry y á las 5 meno 1/4 de la tarde salimos de aquí. El día 19 á las 2 de la tarde llegamos al puerto de Payta y á las 5 salimos de este puerto. El día 20 á las 12 llegamos al puerto de Guayaquil y salimos de aquí á las 9 de la noche. El día 21 se amaneció muy nublado.

El día 22 buen tiempo.

El día 23 se amaneció muy feo día llovioso y á las 11 y 1/2 de la noche llegamos á la bahía de Panamá

El 24 á las 10 de la mañana desembarcamos al puerto de dicha ciudad y tomamos nuestro alojamiento en el Gran Hotel y aquí estuvimos siete días.

El día 31 de julio á las 2 de la tarde salimos de Panamá con el vaporcito Bolivar para embarcarnos del vapor Colima y á las 5 de la tarde salimos de este puerto.

El día 1 de agosto amaneció con lluvia y en la noche hubo gran aguacero acompañado de truenos.

El día 2 muy hermoso día.

El día 3 también amaneció muy hermoso día.

El día 4 á las 6 de la mañana llegamos al puerto de Libertad de la República de San Salvador y salimos de aquí á las 12 y 1/2. Y á las 5 y 1/4 de la tarde llegamos al puerto de Acajutla.

El día 6 á las 7 de la noche salimos de este puerto.

El día 7 á las 4 de la mañana llegamos al puerto de San José de Guatemala y á las 8 desembarqué acompañado de señor Koike, Ogura y Katsumura hasta la aduana donde despidiéndoles muy triste y prometiendo llegaría al Japón un vapor después. Á las 4 de la tarde salí de aquí con el tren de ferrocarril hasta la Escuintla. Me alojé al hotel de estación.

El día 8 á las 6 y 1/2 salí de aquí y llegué á Guatemala á las 12. Ese tiempo huyo la guerra con Salvador promovida por el Presidente Don Justo Rufino Barrios con el deseo de formar la unión centro americana pero sin lograr su deseo se murió en la batalla. Pues yo pedí al ministerio varias veces el pasaporte para regresar al Japón pero no me lo despachó. Así me dificultó el viaje. Por eso decidí quedarme en Guatemala y establecer otra vez la fotografiá para reunir el dinero porque gasté todo el dinero que tenía para el viaje del regreso al Japón. Por eso decidí mandar pedir á Nueva York las maquinas y ingredientes más necesarios para los trabajos. Mandé también traer los tubos al Japón. Así me quedé aquí hasta la presente. Aquí termino la narración de mi segundo viaje á América.

Establecimiento fotográfico establecida segunda ves en Guatemala

Después formalmente establecí la fotografiá en la esquina de Concepcion construí la galería con mucha comodidad para los trabajos. Consiguiendo más máquinas y los cosas de útiles más precisas. Arreglando la tienda decentemente. Poniendo el mostrador de caoba muy bonita y las estanterías. Así estuve trabajando. Y gracias á Dios no han faltado los trabajos. Á parte de los retratos particulares yo saqué las principales Imágenes de las iglesias. Así pues no faltado nunca la entrada al establecimiento. En esta casa recibimos el sacramento

de matrimonio en el año de 1891 el día 26 de noviembre. Yo estuve aquí muy contento, pero un día visité esta pintoresca ciudad, pues me gustó mucho el clima y las costumbres de las personas de aquí. Por eso decidí trasladar mi establecimiento de fotografiá en el año de 1895.

Recuerdo de mi bautismo

El año de 1883 en el día de San Juan Evangelista tuve la gran dicha de recibir cuatro sacramentos de la Iglesia en el mismo día.

La Confesión
El Bautismo
La Comunión
La Confirmación

El Bautismo en el Sagrario de la Catedral recibí de la mano del muy ilustre Señor Dr. Arroyo con la mayor solemnidad. Conforme al reglamento de la Santa Iglesia Romana haciendo votos á Dios N.S. de mi propia boca de mi fidelidad por lo que manda la Iglesia. Siendo de padrino muy Reverendo Padre Fray Bernardino de la Concepcion Aceytuno. En seguida recibí la Sagrada Comunión con el mayor afecto y con la fe viva del sacramento después de dar á Dios N.S. las gracias por su infinita bondad y misericordia hacia á un pobre gentil admitiendo al gremio de su Iglesia.

Regresé á mi domicilio con mi alma henchida del gozo. Y hallé preparado el almuerzo para ofrecer á los padres que me honraron á acompañar en este día. Pues pasé muy contento por la tanta dicha y felicidad de mi nueva vida. Y después encaminé al Palacio Arzobispal á recibir de la mano del muy Ilustrísimo Señor Gobernador Raul el Sacramento de Confirmación para fortalecer mi alma más y más y confirmar por lo que prometí á Dios nuestro Señor en el Bautismo la verdad que manda la Santa Iglesia. Siendo el padrino muy respetable Señor Don Rafael Angulo.

Hoy recibió la Confirmación en el niño José Domingo Noriega. Siendo yo su padrino. Pues tengo la dicha de tener mi primero ahijado.

Gratitud a queridísimo padrino de mi bautismo

No sé cómo agradecer á mi queridísimo padrino Fray Bernardino por su tanto celo por mi conversión al cristianismo y la felicidad espiritual de mi nueva vida que ha sacrificado muchísimo. Solamente pido á Dios N.S. para que se digne corresponder en mi lugar y recompensar centuplicado por el inmenso favor que me ha dispensado. Pues á él tengo muchos títulos:

El Confesor
El Padrino
El Maestro
El Bienhechor

Yo antes de ser cristiano asistía á la misa en la Iglesia de Santa Clara para aprender á servirla y algunas veces ayudaba la misa. Pues padre me decía que ya está instruido suficiente la materia de la religión recibanse pronto el Bautismo. Pero yo le contestaba todavía no porque quiero instruirme más bien. Yo estudiaba todas las noches repasando los principales libros más interesantes porque en el día tenía que trabajar mi oficio de fotografiá. Pues al fin llegó el gran día de mi felicidad espiritual que Dios Nuestro Señor se

dignó convidarme por su infinita misericordia á recibir el Santo Bautizo el 27 de diciembre de 1883. Si no hubiera tenido la penosa enfermedad estuviera vivo todavía mi padrino. Pues él sufrió tan largo tiempo. Pero con mucha resignación y paciencia sin quejarse el agudo dolor que atormentaba sólo esperando la Santa voluntad de Dios. Al fin se falleció muy tranquilamente el 3 de enero de 1909. Dios Nuestro Señor se dignaría ya recoger su alma en su seno y estará gozando la bienaventuranza eterna en la patria celestial en recompensa de tantas virtudes y con gran celo en la vida ha trabajado mucho para bien de la Santa Madre Iglesia y de los prójimos. Aquí termino la narración de mi Bautismo.

* * *

En el día de mi Bautismo mi estimado Padre Presbítero Virto me obsequió el verso para felicitarme.

* * *

Al neófito Don Juan Yas en el día más feliz de su vida

¡Feliz! Feliz mil veces! ¡Oh neófito querido!
Mil veces te bendice la vos de laud
A nuestra Iglesia Santa hoy vienes convertido
La gracia del Bautismo te tiene revestido
De la dealmada verte de la eterna salud
Mil veces hoy sonaron las liras celestiales
Pulsados por las manos del bello querubin
alsaban en su acorde los himnos inmortales
acompañado en su eco la voz de los mortales
Que con tus voces llegan al cíclico confín
Dejaste ya otras creencias buscando para tu alma
La Paz en que rebosa desde hoy tu corazón
La Iglesia del Cristiano te ofrece ya esa calma
y te prepara un trono, un cetro y una palma
en la feliz morada de la celeste Sion
¡Dichoso si mil veces! desde ahora tu ventura
La encuentras en la Iglesia bendita del Señor
Conserva para siempre estola blanca y pura
que te ha servido ahora de nueva vestidura
conservarla cual prenda querida de tu amor
Desde ahora que has tomado la insignia del Cristiano
Desde ahora, ya no deves volver tu vida atrás
De todos los cristianos veniste á ser hermanos
¡Que Dios en tí conserve! benigno con su mano
La fé con las virtudes que Dios te dé la paz
Allí en tu frente llevas el signo verdadero
De aquel que en el calvario por ti su vida dio
Tuviste entre tus labios la carne del cordero
y lleva en tu pecho un cielo todo entero
¡Hermano! tanta dicha cantar no puedo yo!

La Iglesia te salda de gozo conmovida
La Iglesia que es la madre benigna para ti
ayer estabas muerto, pero hoy ya tienes vida
Porque hoy está tu alma de nuevo allí nacida
¿Cual otra dicha puedes buscar jamás aquí?
Camina hacia adelante con esa vida buena
Que lleva por divisa la gracia y la virtud
así verás tu alma de gozo y dicha llena
Te doy mi más cumplida cordial enorabuena
¡Salud hermano mío! ¡Salud! ¡Salud! ¡Salud!
Federico Virto
Pbro.
Guatemala Diciembre 27 de 1883

Recuerdo nuestro matrimonio

El año de 1891 el día de los Desposorios del Señor San José recibimos el Sacramento del Matrimonio en la pintoresca Iglesia del Cerito del Carmen. Siendo nuestros padrinos Señor Don Caytano Maraga, Señorita Maria Angulo y Señora Doña Josefa F. de Penedo y los testigos Señor Don Manuel Ortega, Señor Don Federico Morales y Señor don Vicente Espinala. Pues por derecho nos tocaban recibir el sacramento en la parroquia de San Sebastian. Pues sólo acceder á los deseos de nuestro muy Reverendo Padre Fray Salvador Medrano quien tenía particular gusto de hacer la fiesta en su parroquia de Candelaria. Por eso estuvimos disponiendo irnos á su iglesia. Pero en la media noche nuestro padre se dignó tomar la molestia de venir á pie tan lejos desde Candelaria á Concepcion donde estaba situada mi casa diciéndome ya no podemos hacer la ceremonia en mi iglesia, porque hay el inpodimiento por el motivo inesperado. Por eso vengo avisar para que esté sabido de que he dispuesto hacer en el cerito de Carmen. Por eso hicimos los preparativos para irnos allí. Pues me gustó mucho la nueva disposición del padre porque la posición de la histórica iglesia me encanta. Al fin amanecimos el día 26 de noviembre de 1891 con el hermoso día. Pues encaminamos al cerito en cuatro carruajes. Al llegar allí subimos muy despacio. Al rededor del cerito contemplando la preciosa panorama de la ciudad y dando las vueltas llegamos á la iglesia. (Yo en mi interior decía que voy al cielo á recibir al mismo Dios el sacramento.) Al fin llegamos á la puerta de la iglesia. Bajamos del carruaje y entramos á dentro y recibimos el Santo Sacramento hacienda á Dios Solemnes votos con nuestra boca conforme lo que manda nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia Romana. Después dando las gracias a Dios N.S. y también á Nuestro Padre Fray Salvador. Salimos de la iglesia y subimos al carruaje. Bajamos con mayor orden y regresamos á la casa y encontramos ya preparada la mesa para ofrecer á los señores padrinos, testigos y demás convidados el almuerzo. Y pasamos muy alegres durante el almuerzo. Y después nuestros padrinos y testigos y los convidados comenzaron á bailar muy contentos; pues yo nunca había visto que nuestra madrina niña Maria Angulo á bailar. Pues ese día se bailó muy contenta con la admiración de todos. La fiesta siguió hasta muy entrada de la noche. El día siguiente en la turna boda pasamos muy alegres todo el día bailaron muy contentos. Esto es el recuerdo de nuestro enlace.

Trasladación a la Antigua Guatemala

El año de 1895 trasladé a Antigua G.. Y estuve durante 7 años poco más ó menos en la casa de Don Florencio Salazar que queda en la esquina del Carmen. Pero entre estos 7 años los últimos dos años perteneció a Don Francito Martínez quien compró la casa. Por eso la contrata con Dn. Florencio resulta sólo cinco años. Construí la galería fotográfica para los trabajos.

Estuve más de dos años en la casa de Doña Catarina Luna de Gandara muy propia para la fotografiá. Aquí también construí la galería fotográfica bastante grande y muy cómoda porque la casa prestaba mucho con su buena luz (ahora pertenece a Don Manuel Agúrdia).

El año de 1907 trasladé á la casa de Don Mariano Solis que queda en la esquina de Campo Seco donde estuve hasta 1912. Aquí gasté enorme cantidad de dinero. Compré más maderas para construir la galería fotográfica más grande y cómoda para los trabajos. También el lugar erá muy bueno para los negocios. Pues estuve muy contento. Además la casa tenía el sitio bastante grande. Pues yo para distraerme un poco compuse el terreno limpiando hasta el último rincón quitando todos los pedazos de ladrillos poniendo en un lugar. Así preparado el terreno. Sembré todas clases de verduras como rábanos, asergas, remolachas, perejil, yerbabuena, pepinos, cebollas, nabos, lechugas, zanahorias, tomates. Sembré un poco de trigo negro para probar. Pues resultó bien y otras tantas cosas que no puedo enumerar más por las otras cosas que habían particularmente daba el gusto ver las maravillas de tantos huisquiles y caibas. Y hice un jardincito al rededor de un limonar que había en el sitio y compuse al rededor de este árbol, la mesita rústica de cañas donde yo muy contento tomaba mi café todas las mañanas sentando al asiento de piedra que puse al rededor de la mesita que daba la sombra aunque haya buen sol. Pues cuando había alguna fiesta todos juntos comíamos y bebíamos muy alegue y contento. Pero como vendió la casa sin remedio teníamos que desocupar. Pues desasimos la galería con enorme pérdida después de tanto sacrificio sin sacar ninguna utilidad y también el sacrificio que hice en el sitio quedó sólo el provecho del dueño de la casa. Por eso en adelante á la casa agena jamás haré esta clase de trabajos. Al fin entregamos la casa. Estuvimos aquí hasta 1912 los dos últimos meses pagué el alquiler á Don Juan José Pellecer.

Pasé á la casa de Doña Rafaela Morales porque no encontrábamos la casa apropósita para establecer la fotografiá y propuse á ella hacer la contrata de la casa. Pero no quiso diciéndome aunque no hacemos la contrata no pediré la casa yo fiando su palabra al fin tomé la casa. Hicimos inmenso gasto para construir la galería fotográfica más grande y cómoda para los trabajos porque la casa prestaba mucho por su amplitud con muy buena Luz y abundante agua. Estuvimos desde el mes de Junio de 1912 hasta el mes de Mayo de 1914. Y también tenía el sitio muy grande pero muy mal terreno con muchos ladrillos y las piedras. Pues me caí á la tentación de sembrar algo sin refreccionarme por lo que me pasó en la casa del Campo Seco. Pues compuse el terreno con mil trabajos y sembré muchos clases de verduras más necesaria estuve muy contento esta casa. Pero un día menos pensado de repente me mandó avisar de que ya está vendida la casa á Don Santiago Panamá. Pues me disgusté mucho por la falta de su palabra. Pero no había otro remedio más que desocupar la casa y descaí la galería con enormes pérdidas y entregué la casa. En los últimos dos meses pagué el alquiler a Don Santiago Panamá.

No hallando de pronto la otra otra casa á propósita para establecer la fotografiá y también por estar muy cerca pasamos sin remedio á la casa donde estamos ahora aunque la casa muy reducida y incómoda. Tomamos la casa desde el mes de Junio de 1914 en donde estoy ahora enteramente postrado por la grave enfermedad sólo esperando la voluntad de

Dios Nuestro Señor quien es el autor de mi existencia después de haber hecho más de una vuelta al mundo por último Dios me envió á esta pintoresca Ciudad de Antigua G. pidiendo la hospitalidad en los siglos de los siglos y para toda la eternidad.

Apuntes de mi triste situación en Guatemala

El tiempo es muy breve pasa sin sentir ya no vuelve más. Por eso estuve muy afligido estar en compañía con Señor Covarrubias en la legación de Méjico porque ni podía continuar mi estudio sólo estar de pasa tiempo sin ningún provecho. Por eso yo deseaba regresar al Japón, pero él no me daba el gasto del viaje. Por eso tenía que buscar un destino para ganar el gasto del viaje y decidí separar de él. Un día pasé hablar con el Señor Herbruger el propietario de la única fotografiá que había en aquel tiempo en Guatemala y vivía en frente de la legación de Méjico. Le conté mi situación muy triste y supliqué si me admitiera en su fotografiá para aprender el oficio. Entonces me aceptó muy gustoso mi súplica. Por eso supliqué al Señor Covarrubias que me dé su recomendación al Señor Don Emilio para que no tenga la desconfianza en mi persona. Pues el Señor Covarrubias me dio muy buena recomendación contando de mi buena conducta con él desde cuando estuve en el Japón, en el viaje en Europa y durante la permanencia en Méjico y la presenté a Don Emilio y se quedó muy satisfecho. Yo le dije que no pediré nada hasta que aprenda bien el oficio. Pues así pasé á la fotografiá y me dio un cuartito. Dentro de poco tiempo ya aprendí bien la impresión y entonar yo arreglaba diariamente el cuarto de trabajo y el cuarto oscuro con todo buen orden porque estaba con mucho desorden. Dentro de poco tempo me dejó enteramente el trabajo del positivo á mi cargo. Pues tenía que preparar diariamente muchos papeles albuminado 30 pliegos hasta 40 o 45 pliegos cuando tenía que hacer los grandes retratos en la cámara solar. Yo trabajaba hasta la noche y levantaba muy temprano porque tantas trabajos tenía que hacer. Además de hacer los retratos tenía que dejar gran cantidad de planchas limpias para los negativos y el cuidado del desarrollo y la limpieza de galería con buen orden de los muebles etc. etc. Yo hacía la práctica de sacar los negativos y estudiaba las obras de fotografiá.

En ese tiempo tenía que hacer la gran cantidad de los retratos grandes del Señor Presidente Barrios y de la Presidenta en la cámara solar. Pues Don Emilio ya me daba el sueldo mensual como le antojaba pero yo no decía nada porque mi interés erá principalmente aprender bien pronto el oficio. Pues Don Emilio mandó a traer un retocador á San Francisco Cal.. Señor Don Eduardo Kildare porque no alcanzaba el sólo el retoque. Pues en esos días Don Emilio tuvo gran disgusto porque en la vecindad estableció la competencia de fotografiá un americano Warferstein. Por eso día y noche no podía estar tranquilo hablando sólo este acontecimiento. Pues cómo no se murió por la cólera.

En la tienda estaba un español Don Luis de la Riva encargado del manejo del negocio de la fotografiá también. Cuando no tenía que hacer en la tienda me ayudaba trabajar conmigo. Muchas veces desberabamos hasta muy tarde de la noche. Pues hemos sido muy buenos amigos. También estuvo muy poco tiempo en la fotografiá para sacar los negativos Señor Don Felise Muñis Cano.

Después de algún tiempo Señor Warferstein vendió su establecimiento al Señor Kildare quien separó de Dn. Emilio y pasó á su fotografía. En la tienda estaba Don Alberto Valdeavellano también hacía la impresión. Pues Señor Kildare diariamente me llamaba para que pasará con él. Pues como Dn. Emilio no me aumentaba mi sueldo sin considerarme que yo hacía muchos trabajos para bien de su fotografiá. Por eso decidí pasar con Señor Kildare porque no me alcanzaba para el gasto ordinario con lo que me pagaba ni menos

juntar el dinero para mi viaje al Japón aunque estuviera trabajando mil años con él. Por eso pasé con Señor Kildare y estuve trabajando todo lo que me mandaba como la impresión, el tono, los trabajos de cámara solar y los arreglos del baño de negativos etc. etc.

Así estuve trabajando, pero no me adelantaba mi suelte. Por eso reflexioné de no podré hacer nada sino trabajará independientemente. Pues así decidido poco á poco conseguí las maquinitas y demás útiles para los trabajos. Al fin separé de Señor Kildare y pasé al callejón de Cristo en una casita donde comencé á trabajar aunque sea en el patio sin galería. Pues aquí no fue mal el negocio y después pensé hacer gran cantidad de los retratos del Señor Presidente Barrios entarjetar con el precio módico á vender á los soldados de los cuarteles de la guardia de honor y de San Francisco y desquitar de los sueldos. Así reuní algún dinerito con esto compré más máquinas y demás útiles para trabajar formalmente. También compré á Dn. Emilio un tuvo americano Golden Gate que estamos sirviendo todavía. Pues después de algún tiempo pasé á 8 avenida Sur en la casa muy amplia que queda á la vecindad de Padre Montenegro donde levanté la galería de dos pisos de 15 metros de largo y 8 metros de ancho con mucha comodidad: con la escalera de para manos bien pintada, el cuarto de retoque en la galería y el cuarto oscuro, el cuarto de tono y el cuarto de lavado en el abajo con otra escalera y el cuarto de impresión en el segundo patio y para preparar los papeles y demás trabajos en un cuarto muy amplio. [Para establecer en esta casa la fotografiá gasté gran cantidad dinero pues compré mucha madero, los vidrios y demás cosas necesarias para la construcción.] Teníamos cinco fondos del campo, de la ventana, del cañón, del mar y de la sala y la tienda con mostrador de caoba muy bien hecho los cuadros para las muestras de retratos y las estanterías y el roturo grande corgado en volante. En esta casa la honra de recibir Emo. y Rmo. Señor Arzobispo de Diócesis de Guatemala Don Ricardo Estrada para hacer sus retratos de varias posturas después de su consagración. También hice mayor parte de los retratos de los padres de la capital y algunos de los departamentos. Pues yo formé como un socio en los trabajos con Dn. Alberto Valdeavellano porque yo no alcanzaba el tiempo para cumplir el compromiso yo sólo. Pero no duró mucho tiempo el contrato con Señor Valdeavellano porque no me convenía ninguna manera porque no apraba los trabajos. Pues el venía tan tarde dejándome sólo á mi. El retoque estaba encargado de un quezalteco Cayas. En el tercero patio teníamos muchos conejitos divertíamos mucho con ellos. Pues estuve trabajando muy contento y tranquilo en esta casa. Y también gracias á Dios compré á un fotógrafo alemán que se murió, varias máquinas de todos tamaños de muy buena clase y de otros útiles con los tubos franceses muy finos. Pero un día menos pensado, me mandó pedir la casa la dueña. Pues como no tenía el contrato sin remedio tenía que desocupar la casa. Pues decise la galería con enorme pérdida y la entregué con mucha tristeza porque aquí tenía muy buenos negocios con muchos trabajos. Ahora no hallando muy pronto la casa á propósito para establecer la fotografiá. Pasamos á la casa de Padre Ortega que queda al lado sur de la escuela de beatas de belén en donde levanté la galería de dos pisos con bastante cómoda. Pues estuve muy contento porque no faltaba los trabajos, yo además de los retratos en los papeles yo hacía los trabajos de ferrotipos en todos los tamaños desde las miniaturas hasta el salón. Pues las gentes no me dejaba ni tomar los alimentos porque tantas gentes que llegaban á un tiempo para pedir los ferrotipos porque el precio era más cómoda que los de retratos en papel. También que salían momentáneamente. Pues muchas personas de muy distinguidas familias llegaban á hacer los ferrotipos. Pues así estuve muy contento en nueva casa porque no faltaban los trabajos. Solamente la casa algo reducida pero aguantó las algunas incomodidades. Pues voy á contar mi aventura en un año. Pues sembré en el rincón del patio el huisquil haciendo el oyo en el empedrado. Pues yo no esperaba buen

965 resultado. Pero Dios nos favoreció. Pues muy pronto creció y subiendo encaramar al tejado
966 de la galería que había. Pues dio miles de huisquiles maravillosamente.
967 Esta casa es para mi mucho recuerdo porque estando aquí la dicha de recibir el Santo
968 Bautismo y otros tres sacramentos en el mismo día con mucha solemnidad en el Sagrario
969 de la Catedral y en el Palacios Arzobispal. Pero aquí no continuo la narración de mi fiesta
970 porque aparte tengo escrita en otro libro.