

# Thoughts on the Imperial Household Movies in Early Cinema: Focusing on the Films of the Japanese Prince Takehito Arisugawa Visiting Europe<sup>1</sup>

KAMIYA Makiko

Tamagawa University, Tokyo

**Abstract:** Kyokkō Yoshiyama, a noted film historian, stated in his book *Nihon eigakai Jibutsukigen (The Original Things of the Japanese Cinema Industry)* (“Cinema to engei”-sha, 1933) that the film of Prince Arisugawa Takehito, shot in Britain in 1909, was the first “Imperial Household Movie.” This essay, starting its argument from this statement, clarifies that a foreign film company shot the aforementioned film of Prince Arisugawa during his stay in Britain in 1905. He visited Germany in 1905 and on his way back stopped in Britain, where several films of him were shot, including the one mentioned above. According to contemporary newspaper advertisements and cinema flyers, the films of Prince Arisugawa were shown at the Osaka and Tokyo theaters, and Yoshiyama’s text may have been written based on his memories of this viewing experience. The impact of seeing the Imperial Family on screen must have been significant; therefore, while this film is considered extremely important, I examine the coverage of the Imperial Household in the visual media because its existence has hitherto not been discussed. I highlight the existence of these forgotten films while referring to existing films present in overseas film archives. I also examine the influence of the 1905 film “Prince Arisugawa Visiting Europe Movies” on the 1921 film “Crown Prince Visiting Europe Movies,” and I analyze these films and their historical significance from the viewpoint of “hidden/exposed ‘bodies.’” Subsequently, I conclude that these films are a vital reference point in creating “open” images of the Imperial Household during the prewar period.

**Keywords:** early film, Imperial Household, the Meiji and Taisho eras, visual representation, film archive

## Introduction

When considering the history of Imperial Household Movies (IHM), films about Japan’s Emperor and the Imperial Family, the films made during the trip of Crown Prince Hirohito (future Emperor Showa) to Europe from March 3 to September 5, 1921, were groundbreaking. These large-scale movies were made by several film companies and newspapers in Japan and abroad and covered the entire journey of the Imperial Vessel Katori, from its departure from Yokohama Port to its return. Referring to existing film collections, which I call “Crown Prince Visiting Europe Movies (CPVEM),” preserved by the National Film Archive of Japan (NFAJ), the former

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a slightly revised and retitled version of the following paper in Japanese, translated into English, with a revised title: “‘Bodies’ Hidden or Exposed: Considerations on Early ‘Imperial Household Movies,’” *EIZOGAKU: Japanese Journal of Image Arts and Sciences*, vol.100, 2018, 32–52.

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers JP18K01099, JP21K00149.

National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo: National Film Center (NFC), my paper “Film and the Imperial Household in the 1920s Japan: Analyzing Footage of Crown Prince Hirohito Visiting Europe and Onoe Matsunosuke Films in the NFC Collection as Publicity” (in Japanese), published in the *Bulletin of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo*, No. 20 (2016), is the first to discuss IHM from a film studies perspective.

This paper is based on previous studies and sheds light on the history of the IHM of the late Meiji period, which has not been discussed before. Specifically, I focus on several films made during the visit of Prince Takehito Arisugawa (1862–1913) to Europe in 1905. Since these Arisugawa films have never been examined or discussed, I begin by detailing them empirically. Next, I consider their historical significance. In other words, I examine the role of the films in the Imperial Family’s media strategy in the transition to the Taisho democracy before the movies on the Crown Prince’s visit to Europe. Next, I discuss the role of these films in the Imperial Household’s media strategy in the transition to the Taisho democracy. I also examine how the public’s gaze was directed toward the Emperor and the Imperial Family, the subjects of the films made during the period of the emergence of the Japanese film industry, from the perspective of their “hidden” or “exposed” bodies.

Through the above discussion, this paper will reveal a part of the dynamic transformation of the visual image of the Emperor and the Imperial Household brought about by cinema as a developing art. This is of great significance when considering the changes in the reception of cinema as an art medium in Japan.

## 1. The First Imperial Household Movies

In the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun History of Motion Picture* (1925), published by the Osaka Mainichi Shimbun, which produced the CPVEM, it is written that “the taking of motion pictures of the Imperial Household, which had been strictly prohibited in the past, was allowed, creating an epoch in our film industry.” It is a commonly held belief in previous research on Emperor Showa that the filming of movies featuring the Imperial Household was approved for the first time when the series of CPVEM were produced. In this section, I examine this commonly held belief.

The film historian Jun’ichirō Tanaka cites the film *Komatsu-no-miya Akihito Shin’nō Gosōgi Jikkyō* (*Actual Film of Funeral of Prince Akihito Komatsu*)<sup>2</sup> made by Yoshizawa Shōten on February 28, 1903, as the first documentary film related to the Imperial Family.<sup>3</sup> To verify Tanaka’s statement, I would like to refer to a newspaper article reporting on the circumstances of the shooting of this film:

A motion picture of the late Prince Komatsu’s funeral / Yoshizawa Shōten at Shimbashi

---

<sup>2</sup> The Japanese Romanization is limited to the first appearance, and the English translation is used in subsequent references; the same applies to other translations.

<sup>3</sup> Jun’ichirō Tanaka, *Nihon Kyōikueiga Hattatsushi* (*History of Japanese Educational Film Development*, Kagyūsha, 1979, 18.

was authorized to shoot the funeral of HIH Prince Komatsu because the company had provided magic lanterns for the late HIH before his death. Yoshizawa Shōten shot the funeral procession for the motion picture and magic lantern at two locations by the Marunouchi Military Police Headquarters and Edogawa. These pictures will be distributed in response to orders from local governments, Red Cross societies, and agricultural and health associations [...].<sup>4</sup> (/ means a new line. Same below.)

The above article shows that the film's subject was the funeral procession, not the figure of Prince Akihito Komatsu. In other words, Prince Komatsu was not the reason for shooting the movie. On the other hand, Kyokkō Yoshiyama, a film historian, observes the following:

The first movie about the Imperial Household was probably a British documentary in Meiji 42 (1909) when HIH Prince Takehito Arisugawa attended a garden party, accompanied by HIH Princess, at the Great Exhibition to commemorate the accession to the throne in England.<sup>5</sup>

According to Yoshiyama, the first member of the Imperial Family to be the subject of a film was Prince Takehito Arisugawa. He writes that it was in 1909, but this description is inaccurate. As for Takehito, all his official duties during his life were recorded in detail in *Takehito-shin'nō Kōjitsu* (*Prince Takehito's Behaviors*) in 1926. In this book, there is no record of Takehito's visit to Britain in 1909. However, he did attend Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Indeed, several films on Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee are in the British Film Institute's (BFI's) collection, and we cannot rule out the possibility that Takehito would be in one of them.<sup>6</sup> However, there is no record of the films being released in Japan. Yoshiyama also states the following:

In this film, the late HIH wore a frock coat and a silk hat, and the Princess was dressed in pure white Western attire with a white parasol. The movie consists of three scenes, from the time HIH, accompanied by Ambassador Tadasu Hayashi and Duke Hirokuni Ito, gave a bow politely to each of the ladies and gentlemen in response to their greetings, to the time they entered the tent at the rest area. Of course, the appearance of Their Imperial Highnesses in the film was only in full view.<sup>7</sup>

When Prince Takehito Arisugawa went to Europe in 1897, his wife, Princess Yasuko, did not accompany him,<sup>8</sup> and therefore it is clear that the film Yoshiyama saw was not shot in 1897.

<sup>4</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Feb. 28, 1903, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Kyokkō Yoshiyama, "Kōki no Son'ei Hōsha (Filming Noble Figures)," *Nihon Eigakai Jibutsukigen* (Original of Things in Japanese Cinema Industry), "Cinema to Engei"-sha, 1933, 71.

<sup>6</sup> Research on the films of the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (including whether Prince Takehito is in the film or not) is an issue for the future.

<sup>7</sup> Yoshiyama, op. cit., 71.

<sup>8</sup> *Takehito-shin'nō Kōjitsu* (*Prince Takehito's Behaviors*), last vol., edited by Takehito-shin'nō Kōjitsu hensankai, 1926, 5–32.

Here, I would like to take up the image depicted in Fig. 1, which appeared on May 20, 1905, in *Die Woche*, a weekly magazine published in Germany. This photograph shows Takehito in his military uniform and Princess Yasuko in Western clothes, with people behind him looking out through a window and other onlookers. The caption says that the photograph was taken in Rome, but under what circumstances was the photograph taken? According to *Prince Takehito's Behavior, Last Volume*, Prince Takehito visited Germany with Princess Yasuko in 1905 to attend the wedding of Crown Prince Wilhelm of the German Empire on June 6, 1905. Thus, the photograph (Fig. 1) was taken of Takehito and Yasuko when they stopped in Italy before visiting Germany.<sup>9</sup> Takehito served as Crown Prince Yoshihito's educator and advisor from 1898.

There are more reports of Takehito in Germany. *Das Echo* of June 8, 1905, published a photograph of Takehito and his party inspecting German soldiers on a parade ground (Fig. 2). Since no other attendee was featured in the paper except Crown Prince Wilhelm and his bride, it could be said that Takehito's visit to Germany attracted considerable attention. *Taisho Ten'no Jitsuroku (Annals of Emperor Taisho)* reported that Takehito left the Shimbashi depot on April



Fig. 1. *Die Woche*, 20, Mal, 1905.



Fig. 2. *Das Echo*, 8, Juni, 1905.

<sup>9</sup> During his European stay, Takehito described driving as “convenient and fast” and “suitable for a physical workout.” So, on his return to Japan, he imported the latest automobile from France and drove it around the Imperial Palace with Crown Prince Yoshihito (the future Emperor Taisho). Kōrin, “Arisugawa-no-miya Denka no Jidōsha Gotōjō (HH Prince Arisugawa’s automobile boarding),” *Seirin (Pure Circle)*, October. 15, 1905, 1.

1, 1905, and boarded the German steam vessel, the “Prinz Heinrich” from Yokohama Port.<sup>10</sup> It is an impressive historical anecdote that Takehito and Yasuko visited Europe aboard the “Prinz Heinrich,” a large cruiser launched by the German Navy in 1900. According to *Das Echo* of June 8, 19190505, Takehito was sixth in rank after Crown Prince Wilhelm, indicating that he was treated as a guest with relatively high standing in the German Empire.<sup>11</sup>

In *Prince Takehito's Behavior, Last Volume*, there is a commemorative photograph of Takehito and his party in Berlin (Fig. 3). In this photograph, we see Yasuko, Hirokuni Ito (Prince Arisugawa's administrator, at the time his name was Yukichi) and Tadasu Hayashi (Japan's first ambassador to Britain), with Takehito in the center. They all feature in the movie Yoshiyama refers to, but was the film shot in Germany? After Germany, Takehito also visited Britain. Takehito had studied at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich from 1881 to 1883, so Britain was familiar to him. As he had studied in Britain, Takehito must have enjoyed a level of name recognition in Britain, and British newspapers reported daily on his visit. Before PRIN Arisugawa's arrival (June 27, 1905), *The Times* was the first to report on their visit to Britain (June 24, 1905). A few days later, *The Tatler* published an article (June 28, 1905) with their portraits (Fig. 4). The portrait in *The Tatler* is probably based on a photograph published in the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* on April 2,



Fig. 3. *Prince Takehito's Behavior, Last Volume*.



Fig. 4. *The Tatler*, June 24, 1905.

<sup>10</sup> *Taisho Ten'no Jitsuroku (Annals of Emperor Taisho), Revised Edition No. 2*, edited by the Imperial Household Ministry Library, edited and revised by Yoshimitsu Iwakabe, Yumani Shobō, 2017, 197–198.

<sup>11</sup> *Das Echo*, June 8, 1905, 1841.



Fig. 5. *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, Apr. 2, 1905.

1905 (Fig. 5), but is much clearer. Perhaps this suggests not so much a difference in printing technology but in the awareness of the portraits of the Imperial Household in the foreign and Japanese media.

Their visit to Britain was also reported in *The Illustrated London News* (Fig. 6) on July 2, 1905. The setting is a garden, where we see Takehito in a frock coat lifting his silk hat to greet people. He is accompanied by Yasuko, wearing a parasol, with a tent in the background. In other words, this is the same scene that Yoshiyama describes as the first film about the Imperial Household. The caption indicates they were at a garden party held by the Japan Society at the Royal Botanic Gardens on June 27, 1905. A photographic version of this scene was published in *The Sketch* on July 5, 1905, which shows that the image is closer to Yoshiyama's description (Fig. 7). The scene of Takehito's trip abroad was also reported in Japan. However, the photograph published is one of the "Prinz Heinrich" entering the port of Singapore (Fig. 8). The impact of the film Yoshiyama saw was immeasurable.

There is no doubt that the film described by Yoshiyama was shot on June 27, 1905, when Takehito visited the Royal Botanic Gardens in Britain. Information on this film is also included in *The British Film Catalogue, 1895–1985*, which catalogs British films from the early days of cinematography.<sup>12</sup> According to this catalog, two films were shot at the garden party. They are the two works entitled *PRIN Arisugawa* that were shot by Gaumont and Robert W. Paul, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, according to *IMDbPro*, there was also a Warwick Trading Company version.<sup>14</sup>

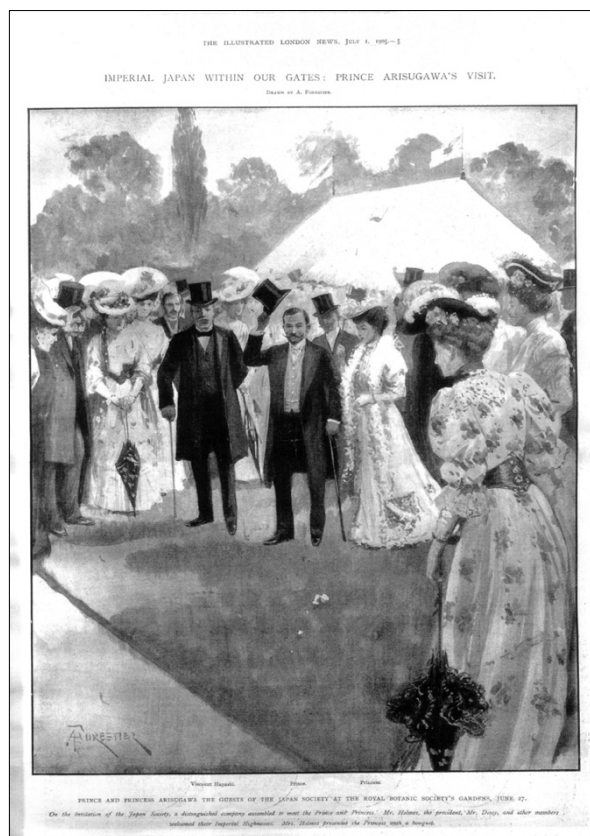


Fig. 6. *The Illustrated London News*, Jul. 1, 1905.

<sup>12</sup> Denis Gifford, *British Film Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1895–1985: A Reference Guide*, Fitzroy Deraborn Publishers, 2000. Routledge, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Robert W. Paul, the inventor of early film cameras and a pioneer in the British film industry, also produced the film of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1897, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>14</sup> *IMDbPro*, [https://pro.imdb.com/title/tt3206208/?ref\\_=instant\\_tt\\_1&q=Prince%20Arisugawa](https://pro.imdb.com/title/tt3206208/?ref_=instant_tt_1&q=Prince%20Arisugawa), last accessed in December 30, 2022.

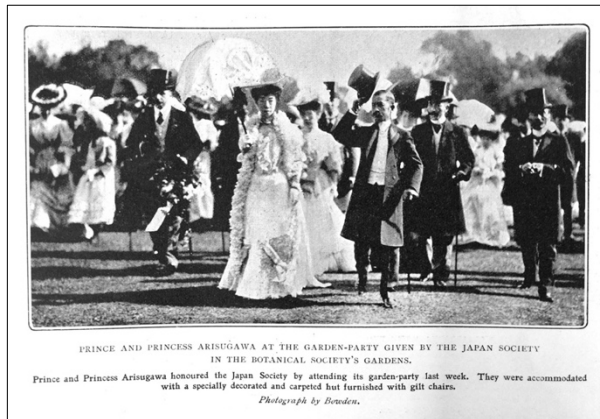


Fig. 7. *The Sketch*, Jul. 5, 1905.



Fig. 8. *Taiyō (The Sun)*, November 1, 1905.

A catalog published by Yoshizawa Shōten in 1906 also lists a film titled *Arisugawa-no-miya Ryōdenka no Eikoku ni Okeru En'yūkai no Jikkyō* (*Actual Film of TIH PRIN Arisugawa's Garden Party in Britain*).<sup>15</sup> This catalog says that the film is a record of Takehito's visit to the British Royal Family on his way back from attending a celebration for the German Emperor the year before. The British Royal Family hosted a garden party to welcome him. Therefore, there is no doubt that Yoshizawa Shōten imported and released the film *PRIN Arisugawa*, which was produced by one of the foreign companies, and that Yoshiyama must have seen this imported film. Given the scale of its distribution, I assume it was Gaumont's film.

## 2. Prince Arisugawa Visiting Europe Movies (1905)

The previous section confirmed that the film *PRIN Arisugawa* shot in 1905, was one of the very early films taken of the Imperial Household as the subject since the image of Prince Takehito Arisugawa and Princess Yasuko at the garden party depicted in *The Illustrated London News* matched perfectly with Yoshiyama's recollection.

In addition to the movie shot in the Royal Botanic Gardens, there are six versions of the so-called "Prince Arisugawa Visiting Europe Movies" (PAVEM). Organizing these six versions chronologically based on their itinerary, the movie in Berlin was the first. This movie, introduced as *Arisugawa-no-miya Denka Dō-hidenka Berlin Gochakukangeikai no Seikyō wo Satsuei-seshi Shashin* (*Picture of the Welcome Party for TIH PRIN Arisugawa at Berlin*), was shown at the Imperial Motion Picture Party held at Ichimuraza in Tokyo.<sup>16</sup> Other details are unknown.

The second film, *Arisugawa-no-miya Denka London Gotōchaku no Kōkei* (*Scenes of the Arrival of HIH Prince Arisugawa in London*), was screened at the Ebisu-za in Kyoto on August 22, 1905, before the one shot in Berlin by Kyoto Motion Picture Association. On September 1, 1907, a film titled *Arisugawa-no-miya Denka Eikoku Gochaku no Kōkei* (*Scenes from the Arrival of HIH Prince Arisugawa in England*) and distributed by Yokota Shōkai was screened at the

<sup>15</sup> "Katsudōshashin film mokuroku (Moving Picture Film Catalogue)," *Meiji 39-nen 4-gatsu Kaisei Katudōshashin-kikai Dō Film Renzokushashin Teikahyō* (Revised in Apr. 1906, *Motion Picture Machines, Films, Continuous photographs, Price List*), Yoshizawa Shōten, 1906, 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, September 1, 1905, 6.

Denkikan in Osaka.<sup>17</sup> At the time, movie titles were not standardized in advertisements, so it is unclear if they were the same film. However, since Kyoto Motion Picture Association refers to Yokota Shōkai, it could probably be considered the same work.

As mentioned in the previous section, the third film was shot at the Royal Botanic Gardens. The fourth film will be discussed later. The fifth film was shot at the Katori's launching ceremony (July 4, 1905) at the Vickers shipyard in Barrow, England, which Takehito attended. *The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985* lists two films that seem to correspond to it. One is the *Launch of the Japanese Battleship* by Gaumont, and the other is *The Launch of Japan's New Battleship* by Robert W Paul. The reason behind Takehito's visit to Britain during the Russo-Japanese War was likely a critical military mission to foster a closer Anglo-Japanese alliance against Russia.

One of their important missions was to participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the launch of the battleship Katori that Japan had commissioned Vickers to build. Yasuko's ribbon cutting to break a bottle of champagne over the bow of the Katori (in Britain, it was an established custom at that time for a woman to perform the launching ceremony) was covered widely in *The Times*, July 4, 1905, along with a recap of Takehito's speech after the ceremony. A drawing of the scene was also published in *The Illustrated London News* on July 8, 1905 (Fig. 9).

A film of the launching ceremony, titled *Arisugawa-no-miya Dō-hidenka Goshi'nrin Sinzō-sentōkan 'Katori' Shinsuishiki no Jissha* (*Actual Film of TIH PRIN Arisugawa Presence at Launching Ceremony of Newly Battleship 'Katori'*), was shown at the Kagayaza in Fukui along with a film of the Russo-Japanese War. It is unclear which version it was. This record of the screening is based on a flyer (NFAJ collection), which also includes a film titled *Eikoku Dai-keiba Kōkei no Shashin* (*Picture of Spectacle of British Great Horseracing*), with the caption, "This is a film of great horseracing held in London's Central Park by the British monarch, an ally of Japan, as an entertainment to welcome HIH Prince Arisugawa." It does not indicate the year in which the film was shown (only the month and day are recorded). However, according to *Kinema Junpō: Separate Volume, Japanese Movies Encyclopedia Vol. 1* (1960), the same film was also screened in Kobe on October 1, 1905. In chronological order, this horseracing movie is the fourth PAVEM. This film was probably shot on June 29, 1905, when Prince Arisugawa was invited to the Royal Agricultural Show at Park Royal (the information on the flyer about "Central Park" is probably wrong) to watch several equestrian events.<sup>18</sup> By a flyer (NFAJ

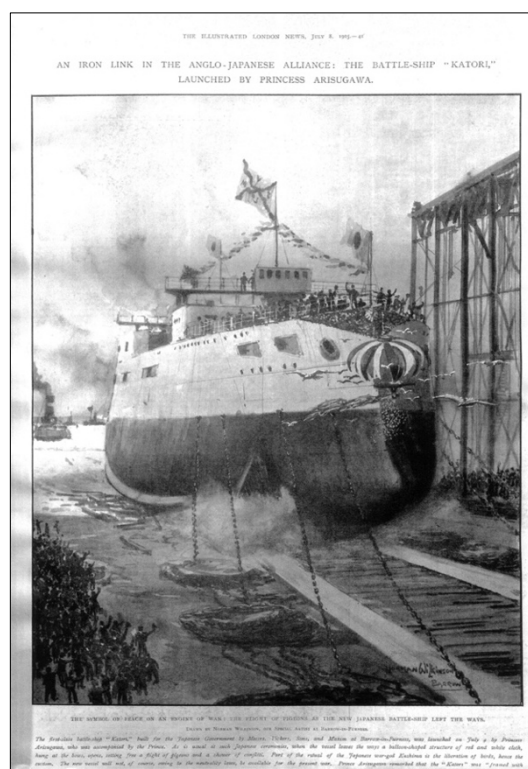


Fig. 9. *The Illustrated London News*, Jul. 8, 1905.

<sup>17</sup> *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, September 2, 1907, 7.

<sup>18</sup> *The Times*, June 30, 1905.



collection) the showing of the film took place at Daikokuza in Kobe on October 1, 1905. It may have been shown together with the film of the Katori's launching ceremony.

The sixth film is *Departure of PRIN Arisugawa*, taken by Hepworth, a British film company. This was certainly taken when Prince Takehito Arisugawa and Princess Yasuko left Britain on July 12, 1905. The table below shows the chronology of their visit.<sup>19</sup>

The table: The List of the “Prince Arisugawa Visiting Europe Movies”

	Title	Location	Filmmaker	Date of filming	Release in Japan / Distributor	Reference
1	Picture of the Welcome Party for TIH Prince and Princess Arisugawa at Berlin	Germany	unknown	1905.5	1905.8.31	Tokyo Asahi Shimbun
2	a Scenes from the Arrival of HIH Prince Arisugawa in London (Assumed to be identical to the work in the lower row) .	UK	Hepworth	1905.6.26	1905.08.22 (Kyoto)	Osaka Asahi Shimbun
	b Scenes from the Arrival of HIH Prince Arisugawa in England (Assumed to be identical to the work in the upper row) .	UK	unknown	1905.6.26	1907.9.1 (Osaka)	Osaka Asahi Shimbun
3	a Prince and Princess Arisugawa	UK	Gaumont	1905.6.27	Unknown	BFC IMDbPro Yoshizawa catalog
	b Prince and Princess Arisugawa	UK	RW Paul	1905.6.27	Unknown	BFC
4	The spectacle of British Great Horseracing	UK	unknown	1905.6.29	1905.10.1 (Kobe) 1905.11.22 (Fukui)	A Flyer in the NFAJ collection
5	a Launch of the Japanese Battleship	UK	Gaumont	1905.7.4	1905.10. (Kobe) ? 1905.11. (Fukui) ?	BFC IMDbPro
	b The Launch of Japan's New Battleship	UK	RW Paul	1905.7.4	Unknown	BFC IMDbPro
	c Launching of Japanese Battleship Katori	UK	Hepworth	1905.7.4	Unknown	IMDbPro
6	Departure of Prince and Princess Arisugawa	UK	Hepworth	1905.7.12	Unknown	BFC IMDbPro

Abbreviation Description: BFC= *The British Film Catalogue*, Yoshizawa catalogue= “Motion Picture Film Lists,” *Meiji 39-nen 4-gatsu Kaisei Katudōshashin-kikai Dō Film Renzokushashin Teikahyō* (Revised in Apr. 1906, *Motion Picture Machines, Films, Continuous photographs, Price List*)

### 3. The “Holy” and “Living” Bodies of the Emperor and Imperial Family

Were the series of PAVEM we have mentioned so far the first IHM, as Yoshiyama claims? As shown in section 2, the *Actual Film of Funeral of Prince Akihito Komatsu*, which Tanaka cites as the first IHM, was released two years before the PAVEM.<sup>20</sup> However, based on the content of *Yomiuri Shimbun*, dated February 28, 1903, it is unlikely that the image of Prince Komatsu himself was captured in the film. So, I would like to examine when the first film featuring the

<sup>19</sup> To prepare the table in this paper, I referred to film catalogs published by film companies in the early 20th century, which are the reference sources for *The British Film Catalogue*, magazines, and newspapers that could be accessed, and information on Internet. However, it should be noted that this may not be an exhaustive list. I would like to thank the BFI Reuben Library for their cooperation in my research.

<sup>20</sup> Tanaka, op. cit., 18.

Emperor and the Imperial Family appeared in public. Here, I do not distinguish between foreign films and Japanese films.

A film magazine, *Kinema Junpō: Separate Volume, Japanese Movies Encyclopedia Vol.1* (1960), lists a film called *Kuni-no-miya Denka, Kuroki Taisho no Ikkō Kōdai [sic] yori Saka e Keiseikaishin no Jikkyō* (*HIH Prince Kuni and General Kuroki's party headed for the frontier with caution from Kōdai [sic] to Shahō (Saka)*). The magazine states that the film was released on April 11, 1905, at the Daikokuza in Kobe, which is several months earlier than the PAVEM. The man referred to as Kuni-no-miya Denka is Prince Kuniyoshi Kuni (the father of Princess Nagako, who became Empress after marrying Emperor Showa), who joined General Tamemoto Kuroki's troops in the Russo-Japanese War. This film, which is one of the Russo-Japanese War films, is similar to the film shown at the Denkikan in Tokyo on February 16, 1905, under the title *Saka Sayoku Kokkōdai no Gekisen* (*Fierce Battle of the Left-wing of the Shahō (Saka), Kokkōdai*).<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, on February 17 of the same year, a film titled *Saka Kaisen yori Kokkōdai ni Itaru made no Shin-Shashin* (*News Film of the Battle of Shahō (Saka) to the Battle of Kokkōdai*) was shown at the Tokyoza<sup>22</sup>, and on March 14–25 of the same year, a film titled *Saka Sayokugun Senkyō Katsudōshashin* (*Motion Picture of the War Situation of Shahō (Saka) Left-wing Army*) was shown at the Yokohama Kirakuza.<sup>23</sup> This inconsistency in the titles shows that the idea of giving uniform titles to films had not yet taken root. In the catalog published by Yoshizawa Shōten in 1906, there is a film titled *Saka Sayokugun Kokkōdai fukin no Teki wo Gekitai no Jikkyō* (*Actual Film of Shaho (Saka) Left-wing Army near Kokkōdai Repelling the Enemy*); the above-mentioned film probably refers to this. However, what matters here is that Kuniyoshi's name cannot be found in any advertisement or article on the same work in the same period. The records in *Kinema Junpō: Separate Volume, Japanese Movies Encyclopedia Vol.1* are not from the same period. It is well known that the portraits of the Emperor and the Imperial Family were treated with respect, and their circulation was controlled. It was also extremely difficult to obtain even photographs of the Emperor and Imperial Family, so if they were depicted in a movie, it would have been a major topic of conversation that would have been covered in all the newspapers.

Incidentally, a photograph of Kuniyoshi was published in a newspaper report (Fig. 10) on the Battle of Shahō (Saka). Although the photograph is unclear due to problems with the printing technology, I would like to draw attention to the photograph's caption. It is noteworthy because it refers to



Fig. 10. *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, Apr. 1, 1905.

<sup>21</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, February 16, 1905, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, February 17, 1905, 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, March 14, 1905, 7.

Kuniyoshi only as “a certain Imperial Highness.” In times of emergency, images of the Imperial Family on a battlefield were considered more crucial than in peacetime, as they presented a public image of a “sacred” war situation. The image of Kuniyoshi published in the press after his return to Japan was depicted in a vague illustration, although this time, his name is mentioned (Fig. 11). This is an example of creating distance between the viewer and the image by making the image obscure as if it were to make an audience watch a noble person through a bamboo blind, thereby guaranteeing the “sacredness” of the image.

In the photograph taken when Kuniyoshi and General Tamemoto Kuroki went to the Imperial Palace to report their return to Japan to the Emperor, the two figures in the carriage appear small and as shadows (Fig. 12). It is not possible to say for certain that no film exists; however, even if Kuniyoshi were in a film, his image would likely be only slightly recognizable. It can be hypothesized as follows. When a film was shown in urban areas, it was lumped together with films on the Russo-Japanese War that were also being shown, so they went unnoticed and were not regarded as a film about the Imperial Family. However, as the movie was screened in local cinemas, rumors spread that Kuniyoshi was in the movie. Consequently, it became a means to attract people when it was shown at the Daikokuza in Kobe two months after the *Denkikan* in Tokyo. However, this is only a hypothesis.

One more example is the film *Nichirosensō Kiroku* (*Records of the Russo-Japanese War* (1904), made by Joseph Rosenthal (NFAJ collection). It probably included the scene on the location of Emperor Meiji’s return to Japan, but the scene was not included when the film was released. Instead, a shot of the Imperial Chrysanthemum Crest was inserted in place of Emperor Meiji’s figure. This example of staging in the film suggests that other media reports may also have been staged to imply the presence of the Emperor and the Imperial Family instead of showing them directly.

In the same way, *Actual Film of Funeral of Prince Akihito Komatsu* (1903) was a film of only the funeral procession. It was almost impossible for the Emperor and the Imperial Family to be filmed freely, even after the film industry penetrated Japan. It is said that the Meiji Emperor

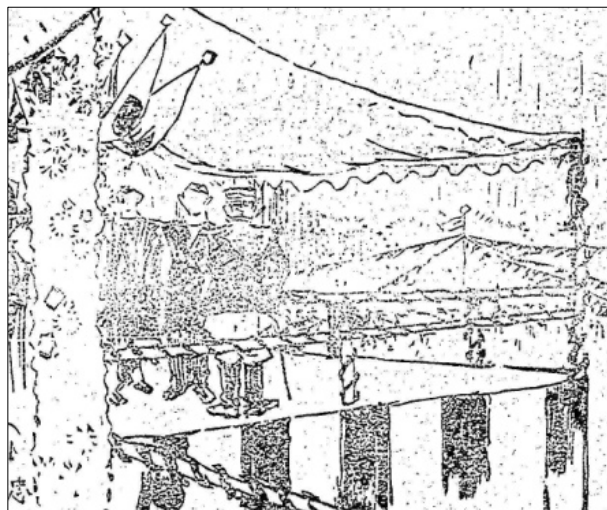


Fig. 11. *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, Dec. 18, 1905.



Fig.12. *Fūzoku Gahō*, Jan. 1, 1906.

only stood three times in front of a camera during his lifetime.<sup>24</sup> Although Hirobumi Ito, the Minister of the Imperial Household, was often asked to have his portrait taken, he rejected it, saying, “I did not like to be photographed.”<sup>25</sup> There was no way that Emperor Meiji would be the subject of a movie. As numerous previous studies have shown, the government intended to make state power visible to the people only after the Meiji Restoration. The Imperial Portrait (*Goshin'ei*) of Emperor Meiji, based on a photographic image, was certainly utilized as something essential for forming and maintaining the Emperor-centered state.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of Emperor Meiji's funeral, many publications reported on it, and there was a huge publishing boom in interest in the Imperial Family. Among them, I would like to focus on a photograph of the coffin of Emperor Meiji (Fig. 13). Although the photographic collection does not include Emperor Meiji's image, the clear image of the coffin containing his remains made the public more aware of the Emperor Meiji's (once-living) body. On the other hand, a print titled *Meiji-Ten'nō Gotaisōgi Gyōretsu Shōmitsuzu* (*Detail of the Funeral Procession of Emperor Meiji*) portrays the coffin and the famous portrait of Emperor Meiji, painted by a foreign artist, Edoardo Chiossone, are based on a photograph and shown as a pair.<sup>27</sup> In this struggle between the visible and invisible body (images), we can read an intention to make the statutory power of Emperor Meiji visible while maintaining the “sacredness” of his body. Here I would like to refer again to the film of Takehito. He was not only a member of the Imperial Family but also a close adviser to Emperor Meiji. Even if we discount this, how the image was distributed was highly flexible compared to the case of Prince Kuniyoshi, which I mentioned earlier. Presumably, the film of Takehito was shot overseas by foreign filmmakers, and thus outside the restrictions of Japanese society, Yoshiyama vividly remembered the movie's content in which Takehito took off his hat in the garden to acknowledge the crowds. The fact that the prince's entire body was projected onto the screen was probably a shock to him.

The relaxation of restrictions on the press during Emperor Showa's trip to Europe in 1921 due to the influence of foreign media is discussed in my paper “Film and Imperial Household in

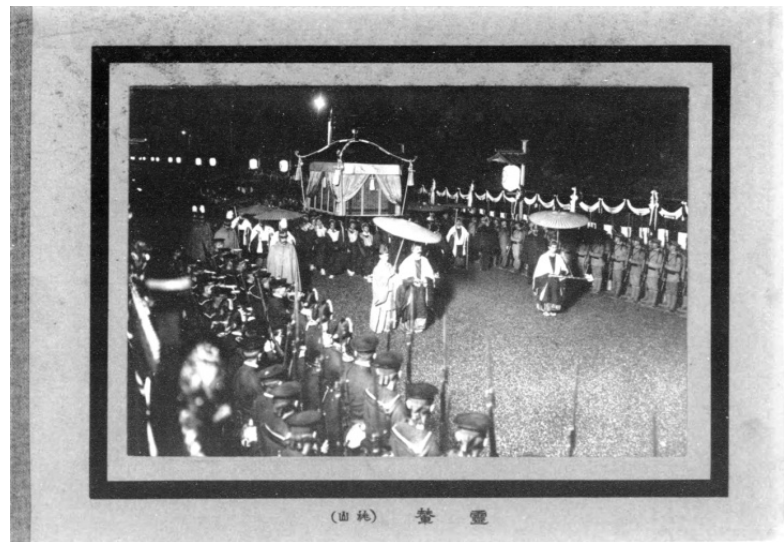


Fig. 13. Photoalbum of the Emperor Meiji's Grand Funeral and Imperial Procession, Ichida Shashinkan Honten, 1912.

<sup>24</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, September 14, 1912, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Suguru Sasaki, “*Goshin'ei* wo meguru Monogatari (The Narrative of “Imperial Portrait”),” *Iwanami Kōza: Ten'no to Ōken wo Kangaeru* (*Iwanami Lecture: Considering the Emperor and Kingship*) vol. 6, Iwanami Shoten, 2003, 149.

<sup>26</sup> Kōji Taki, *Ten'no no Shōzo* (*Imperial Portraits of the Emperor*), Iwanami Shinsho, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Masayuki Okabe, “Meiji Ten'no Taiso Emaki (Emperor Meiji's Funeral Picture Scroll),” *Teikyo History Studies*, Teikyo University, 2012, 252–253.

the 1920s Japan,” introduced at the beginning of this paper.<sup>28</sup> In this paper, I would like to point out that the relaxation of press restrictions on the Imperial Family was already underway in the press coverage of Takehito’s trip to Europe in 1905.

A film titled *Launch of the Japanese ‘Katori’ Dreadnought Battleship at Barrow-in-Furness* is preserved in Huntley Film Archives in Britain. Viewing a digitalized copy of the film on their website is possible.<sup>29</sup> The video on the website is considered a film that falls



Fig. 14. *Launch of the Japanese ‘Katori’ dreadnought battleship at Barrow at Barrow-in-Furness, 1905.*

under 5-a, 5-b, or 5-c in the table. It is approximately 27 seconds long and consists of four shots: (1) the presentation of a bouquet to Princess Yasuko; (2) she cuts a rope connecting the battleship to the champagne, and the champagne hits the ship’s hull; (3) a decorative paper ball opens; and (4) the battleship slides out to sea. Although the video has a low resolution, we can see the Prince and Princess in formal Western clothing at the center of the video (Fig. 14).

Here again, I would like to discuss the film of Takehito’s attendance at the English garden party. Yoshiyama says the following about the images of Takehito in the movie, “Of course, the figures of TIH were only full [long] shots, even from the closest distance.” However, I should add that films were mainly shot in a tableau style at the time, and close-ups were exceptions to the rule. Yoshiyama’s statement probably reflects the feelings of Japanese people at the time, namely that a close-up of the Imperial Family would never be possible. We can infer that the film Yoshiyama saw was shot in the same situation and with the same composition as Fig. 6 and Fig. 7 in section 2. Note that in 1905, when this movie was produced and released, the film industry in Japan was booming with several documentaries about the Russo-Japanese War. However, Japanese film companies were still in their inception, and most films shown in theaters were imported from Europe and the United States. The PAVEM are also imported works. Although Japanese film companies did not shoot the movies, and the figures of Prince Takehito Arisugawa seem limited to long shots, the fact that the living bodies of the Imperial Family were projected onto large cinema screens was an extremely groundbreaking event. The showing of the PAVEM (1905), that is the first shoot of the “body” of the Imperial Family, may have had no small influence on the way media coverage of the Imperial Household has been conducted since then. Films featuring the Emperor’s “body” were made after 1926, when Hirohito succeeded to the throne, but I would like to discuss this theme in another paper.

<sup>28</sup> See also the following paper: Ryō Koyama, *Taisho-Showa-Senzenki no Nihon ni okeru Shikakumedia to Kōshitsu: Satsueikitei no Settei to sono un’yō wo Chushin ni (Imperial Family as Appeared in Visual Media during the Taisho and Pre-WWII Showa Periods, with Special Reference to Press Restrictions)*, Meiji University, 2016, PhD thesis.

<sup>29</sup> Huntley Film Archives, <http://www.huntleyarchives.com/>, last accessed December 30, 2022.

#### 4. The Exposed “Bodies” of the Emperor and the Imperial Family

In this section, I would like to discuss the historical significance of the PAVEM. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Japanese government, after the Meiji era, essentially promoted the authority of the state by presenting visual images of the Emperor and the Imperial Family to the people. The government promoted this “visualization” by focusing on *Gyōkōkei* and *Junkōkei* (the Imperial tour or visit) until the mid-1880s, and after that, by granting people opportunities to see *Goshin’ei* (Imperial portraits that were photographic reproductions of paintings). This strategy gave people visual access to the “bodies” of the Emperor and the Imperial Family, which had been hidden before.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, in the early 1900s, even photography was still a relatively new concept, and filming a movie was out of the question. The following citation from a document dated July 1921 describes the restrictions on photographing the Emperor, the Empress, and the Crown Prince during their *Gyōkōkei* and *Junkōkei*:

This matter was inquired (secrecy no. 1937) about in September 1916, to which a reply (secrecy no. 10) was given in October of the same year, and an inquiry (from government no. 309) was also made in May 1917. / Photographing of the Imperial visit of Their Majesties Emperor and Empress shall be permitted only when they are in horse-drawn carriages, / and of the Imperial visit of the Crown Prince shall be permitted only in the case when he is in horse-drawn carriages or rickshaws. Even with a portable camera, they must never be shot. In particular, motion pictures shall not be made under any circumstances on the occasion of the Imperial visit or the occasion of the visiting of each member of the Imperial Family. In particular, even if some spectators escape surveillance and take pictures of them walking or riding a horse [by the Emperor or the Imperial Family], the owner or representative of the company should be strictly warned so that the pictures will not be published in newspapers.<sup>31</sup> (my emphasis)

In other words, this document expresses that since 1916, capturing the Emperor and the Imperial Family on film was prohibited under any circumstances. It is also possible that in 1905 when the PAVEM were shot, regulations on photography and cinematography were not yet in place. In 1911, there was an incident where Emperor Meiji’s review of military exercises was secretly photographed. However, the fact that the series of the PAVEM, albeit British movies, was produced and shown in Japan, even though he was not the heir to the throne, may have been extremely pioneering in terms of the history of the media coverage of the Imperial Family. In

<sup>30</sup> The political nature of exposing the Emperor and the Imperial Family to the public gaze has been widely discussed in previous studies. The following are representative references: Kōji Taki, op. cit., T. Fujitani, *Ten’no no Pageant (Pageant of the Emperor)*, NHK Publishing, 1994; Iwanami Kōza: *Ten’no to Ōken wo Kangaeru (Iwanami Lecture: Considering the Emperor and Kingship)* vol. 10, Iwanami Shoten, 2002; Takeshi Hara, *Kashika sareta Teikoku (Visualized Empire)*, Misuzu shobō, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> “Gyōkōkei no Robo Satsuei sonota ni Kansuru Shōkai (Inquiries about Filming of the Imperial Procession and other Related Matters),” National Diet Library, Constitutional Law Collection, Documents related to Nobuaki Makino, Documents section: 4–7.

addition, Prince Takehito Arisugawa served as the nominal representative of Emperor Meiji when Tsar Nicholas II visited Japan in 1891. He also served as Emperor Taisho's educator and adviser. In other words, he was one of the most important members of the Imperial Family to Emperor Meiji.

Takehito was the one who made large-scale *Gyōkei/Junkei* (Imperial visit of Crown Prince Yoshihito)" possible despite the opposition of others<sup>32</sup> since he was a relatively progressive thinker in the Imperial Family. For Takehito, the *Gyōkei/Junkei* was expected to improve Crown Prince Yoshihito's health. However, it was also a vital pageant to visualize the "sacred" image of the Imperial Family before the people. Takehito's proactive attitude toward *Gyōkei/Junkei* was probably not unrelated to his tolerance for being the subject of visual media such as movies. In other words, the movies of the Imperial Family may also have functioned as pageants, like the *Gyōkei/Junkei*. In addition, even though a physical body was not present on the screen, the film provided the public with images that were more vivid and impactful than the physical body, as the history of films tells us.

The stance that Takehito took in bringing about the large-scale *Gyōkei/Junkei* of Crown Prince Yoshihito was such that Erwin von Bälz, a German doctor who at the time was teaching at the Tokyo Medical School (now the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tokyo), wrote that people around him complained that he was "heavy-handed and too powerful." Despite such criticism, Takehito's intention in promoting the *Gyōkei/Junkei* was to allow Crown Prince Yoshihito to observe ordinary citizens by positioning the tours as simple unofficial trips.<sup>33</sup> The policy of "commoditization" of the image of the Imperial Family in the 1920s has been clarified in previous studies.<sup>34</sup> However, we can see that in the early 1900s, Takehito was thinking about bringing the Imperial Family closer to the "common" people.

Here, I refer to a portrait of Crown Prince Hirohito that appeared in a newspaper in 1921 (Fig. 15). This portrait was originally published in a French newspaper and reprinted in *Asahi Shimbun*. It is very different from the illustration of Prince Kuniyoshi Kuni mentioned in the previous section (Fig. 11). It is rare for a portrait in which his facial features are so well depicted to appear in the newspaper. At this time, Hirohito was traveling in Europe, and reports with photographs were published daily. However, this illustration exposes more details of Hirohito's face than the photographs in newspapers, which would not have been possible in earlier reports. This phenomenon was probably influenced by the deregulation of the media coverage of the Imperial Family, as discussed in sections 2 and 3. After the



Fig. 15. *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, Jul. 13, 1921.

<sup>32</sup> Takeshi Hara, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, May 11, 1902, 2.

<sup>34</sup> There are numerous studies; for example, Yukio Ito, "Taisho Democracy to Rikkenkunshusei (Taisho Democracy and the Image of the Imperial Family)," *Taisho Ten'nō to Rikkenkunshusei no Hōkai (The Emperor Showa and the Collapse of the Constitutional Monarchy)*, Nagoya University Press, 2005, 406–478.

CPVEM, it became possible to shoot films in Japan if “permission is obtained from the controlling authorities and the instructions are strictly observed.”<sup>35</sup> It should be noted, however, that the once relaxed restrictions on filmmaking were being replaced by a system of control and regulation (i.e., the establishment of a censorship system) as the film industry transformed into a medium that the government could not ignore. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that with the initial deregulation, the representation of the

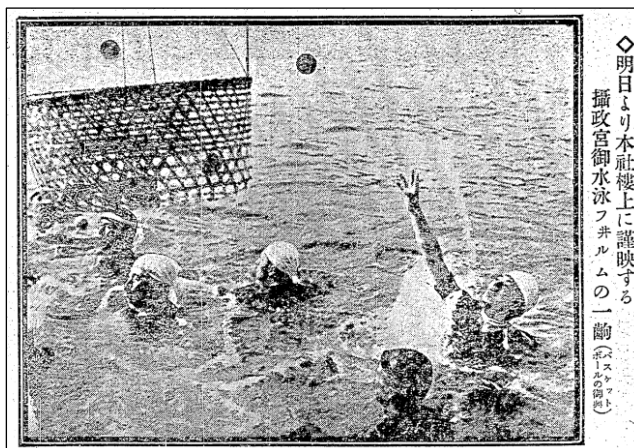


Fig. 16. *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, Sept. 8, 1922.

Imperial Family changed drastically and eventually turned into something that allowed publications and films to expose the bodies graphically.

Figure 16 shows a frame from a film shot of Hirohito, who had just assumed the position of Sesshō (Prince Regent), swimming in Hayama. This film was shown at the office building of Tokyo Asahi Shimbun under the title of *Sessyō-no-miya Denka Gosuiei Eiga Jikkyō* (*Actual Film of HIH Prince Regent's Swimming*). It is said that the audience applauded when Hirohito appeared on the screen wearing a swimsuit and a swimming cap.<sup>36</sup> This film, which required advance registration, was so well received that the screening period was extended due to the rush of applications.<sup>37</sup>

The following is an anecdote about Hirohito and movies. It was about the time when he participated in a military camp in the autumn of 1921. According to a cinematographer's testimony, permission was denied to the photography team but granted to the film crew. When the cinematographer went to Hirohito's camp, he was forbidden to shoot the film by a military officer who did not understand the intention of Hirohito. However, Hirohito took the trouble to permit the shooting, and filming became possible.<sup>38</sup> This anecdote, which shows that Hirohito believed the influence of movies, was too significant to ignore.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I clarified that the first IHM mentioned by Kyokkō Yoshiyama was the film of Prince Takehito Arisugawa shot in Britain in 1905 when Takehito traveled around Europe to

<sup>35</sup> “Gyōkōkei no Setsu Robo Satsuei...” op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, September 7, 1922, 5. In addition, the Ministry of Education also filmed Hirohito swimming at Hayama, and a film titled *HIH Crown Prince Swimming at Hayama Beach* is registered in the following document: *Mombushō Seisaku Katsudōshashin Film Mokuroku* (*Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced by the Ministry of Education*), Ministry of Education, General Education Bureau, Social Education Division, January 1926, 56.

<sup>37</sup> “Gosuiei Eiga Kōkai Hinobe e (Screenings Period of the Swimming Movie is Going to be Longer),” *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, September 9, 1922, 2.

<sup>38</sup> “Sessyō-no-miya to Satsuei gishi (Prince Regent and Camera Operator),” *Nihon Shōnen* (*Japanese Boy*), October 1922, 44–45.



attend the wedding of the Crown Prince of Germany. I also revealed that this film belonged to the series of PAVEM.

Previous studies have identified the CPVEM as the first IHM; however, it is clear from this discussion that the PAVEM made in 1905 are the earliest films shot of the Imperial Family. This fact is crucial in considering the history of the media coverage of the Imperial Household.

PAVEM (1905) were epoch-making movies about the Imperial Household in that they included footage of the Imperial Household in their daily lives. Of course, shooting these films was only made possible because the shooting was conducted in foreign locations, outside the reach of Japanese government restrictions. However, I consider the fact that Takehito himself had an open mind about the media strategy of the Imperial Household was also one of the reasons these films were made. The strategy of Takehito, the educator of Crown Prince Yoshihito (Emperor Taisho), was to actively expose the Crown Prince to the public by daring him to make large-scale *Gyōkei/Junkei*. Those around him regarded Crown Prince Yoshihito as having a serious problem with charisma as a future monarch, but Takehito was more proactive in exposing his figure to the public. However, like the Crown Prince, Takehito had a frail constitution, and due to illness, he entered a period of rest in 1909 and passed away in 1913. Emperor Taisho was crowned in 1912, but nine years later, he was replaced by Prince Regent because of his poor health. The existence of PAVEM is, nevertheless, significant regarding the history of the Imperial Household's media strategy.

As pointed out in previous studies, Crown Prince Hirohito's trip to Europe was a critical media strategy for the smooth generational transition from the Taisho to the future Showa era. The CPVEM were made as a result of "deregulation" overseas and largely due to the intervention of foreign media. However, the PAVEM preceded foreign-made films on the Imperial Household. These films, like the CPVEM, were screened in public venues as a visual medium to promote the "popularization" of images of the Imperial Household. The fact that these films were distributed together with films on the Russo-Japanese War is also significant. The images of Takehito on the big screen with the royalty of Germany and Great Britain, both powerful countries, were fitting for the Japanese government that was pursuing an imperialistic policy.

Crown Prince Hirohito traveled to Europe on the battleship Katori, which Prince Takehito Arisugawa had launched. This symbolic coincidence indicates a media strategy in the image of the Imperial Household, which was carried over from the PAVEM to the CPVEM. It represented a shift in the Imperial Household's image from a "hidden body" to an "exposed body," or at least a struggle between the two. However, the "exposed body" also hindered the sanctification of the image. Furthermore, in the Showa period, the issue of Emperor Showa's total control over the military also arose. Then, it is natural to expect a backlash from the "exposed body" to the "hidden body" and conflict between the two.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, I would like to discuss the representation of IHM in the Showa period on another occasion.

---

<sup>39</sup> I would like to introduce an interesting example of the transformation of the presentation of portraits of Emperor and members of Imperial Family from the Taisho to the Showa periods. According to Yōsuke Naitō, postcards with portraits of Emperor and members of Imperial Family were issued by the government during the Taisho period but were no longer issued after the Showa period. *Kōshitsu Kite (Postage Stamps of Imperial Household)*, Heibonsha, 2005, 121.