Photography and Deformation:
Between "Art Photography" and "New Photography" in 1920s

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There is a thing called - "deformation" to one of photographic expression. This is a technique that deforms images by utilizing the characteristics of the lens, operating the printing paper. The term "deformation" in art, in general, is described as what emphasizes the subjectivity of the artist by modifying the real object. However, in the age of modernism, it was insisted that a photo was used to record things objectively as the "eye of the machine". Under such a photographic view, the technique, deformation, might seem something out of place in a photo. It follows that in Japan, objectivity and machinery of photographs were emphasized in the early Showa period, but on the other hand, the technique "deformation" often appeared in some photo magazines at the time, Art Photography Research or Phototimes, as one of the expression in "Art Photography". "Art Photography", in which the subjectivity of the photographer was focused on, was considered as the old-fashioned photography among "New Photography" movement, which put much value on objectivity and machinery of photography.

However, it is difficult to consider the technique "deformation" in the scheme "Art Photography" versus "New Photography". Because they describe the "deformation" as it uses the characteristics of the photography as a mechanical device in the process that produces the distortion and deformation as well as expresses the inner feelings and subjectivity of the photographer.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify what was expected in the technique at a time when new photographic idea was sought by focusing on the technique called "deformation" that occurred in the late Taisho and early Showa period and by examining photographic images and texts in those days.