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Early instruments of the Japanese Imperial land survey

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The former Japanese geographical agency began triangular survey in the middle of 1870s using instruments introduced from Britain. Besides, the Japanese army imported instruments made in France and produced color maps in French style. Afterward the nationwide survey in Japan was unified to the Imperial land survey in the army, where the German surveying system was adopted. Almost all the rest instruments were put on the shelf, scattered and lost. The National museum of nature and science preserves the some early surveying instruments imported by the general staff office of the army around 1880. Among those, French, US and German theodolites could have been treated as the memorial objects in the Imperial land survey. On the other hand, notes attached to the German theodolite and the French level state these were used until 1920s, however, this description seems questionable. The course of utilize in the surveying instruments of 1870s and 1880s of Japan are not necessarily elucidated due to lack of documents partly because of frequent changing in organization of Japanese government in the early Meiji era.

Keywords: theodolite, level, Japanese Imperial land survey