Acknowledgements

This book would have been unimaginable without the stimulating conversations, encouragements, and generous support from the various academic communities that I have been fortunate enough to be a part of. In particular, I want to share how excited I am with my colleagues at the Graduate School of Humanities at Nagoya University, a place where I started my first teaching job. It happens that I belong to two faculties at the same time, but it is the luckiest thing in the world to be able to work together with Fujiki Hideaki, Joo Woojeong, and Ogawa Shota in the program of Cinema Studies (Eizogaku), and they have always been patient enough to listen to my ideas and give me immediate responses. Also, my academic life in Japan would be less productive and less enjoyable without the companion of my colleagues at the Global-30 programme of ‘Japan-in-Asia’ Cultural Studies (JACS), Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt and Nathan Hopson. I must also express my thanks to all the young people attending my classes and seminars, together with whom I have learnt about contemporary image politics.

This book is partly funded by JSPS Kakenhi under the project titled ‘East Asian Film Cultures in the Post-Cold War Era: Film Festivals and their Transnational Network’ (No. 15K16665, 2015-2017), and partially funded by Sinophone Imaginaries in Contemporary Asian Visual Cultures (No. 18K12263, 2018-2021). My research would not have gone smoothly without the aid of these two major sources of funding, and I am deeply grateful for the institutional support I have received from my university.

This book project has benefited from my translocal engagement with several small research groups. My talks and exchanges with Akiyama Tamako, Markus Nornes, and Nakajima Seio – members of our tiny Chinese independent cinema research group – made me realize where my foothold was at times when I was not sure where I was headed. I thank the lovely colleagues and friends at the Okinawa Cinema Society (Okinawa eiga kenkyūkai), who always welcomed me every time I visited. I also owe my insights to my late supervisor Dr. Esther Cheung and film scholars Gina Marchetti, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, Kim Soyoung, Zhang Zhen, Wang Yiman, Kiki Tianqi Yu, Lydia Wu Dan, Jennifer Coates, Yan Ni, Han Yanli, Aaron Gerow, JungBong Choi, Zhang Xianmin, Victor Fan, Chris Berry, Luke Robinson, Dong Bingfeng, Sing Song-Yong, and Yang Beichen. I must mention Cindy Hin-yuk Wong and Kitamura Hiroshi, two scholars whom I also regard as trusted friends – they were patient enough to review my half-baked ideas in the first place and gave me very constructive advices.
on several occasions. My deep gratitude also goes to Dogase Masato (who was not annoyed by my repeated requests for reviews), Zhou Chenshu, and Fujiki Kosuke, who spent lots of time and energy reading through my chapters and giving me their honest, brilliant comments. I cannot forget how Yin Zhixi took hours reading through the abstract theories by the Nihon Documentarist Union together with me; Natori Masakazu, Wang Wenyi, and Pan Qin were kind enough to help me with some of the Japanese translations whenever needed. Wen Hao and Zhang Shihao also helped with the editorial and image-processing matters. Special thanks go to Elaine Wing-Ah Ho, Liu Xi, Yu Xuying, Pan Lu, Bobo Wong, and Wang Bo, who, while being my best friends from my early days as a PhD student, have always remained by my side, cheered me up, and kept me motivated.

I still clearly remember how it felt when I watched Midi Z’s Return to Burma (Guilai de ren) for the first time at the 2012 International Film Festival Rotterdam and started to ponder why the Burmese folks in the film were actually speaking accented Yunnanese, the dialect of my hometown. That, I believe, planted the seed for this book, and I owe everything to the independent filmmakers and artists whose works have profoundly inspired me along this unforgettable journey. Without their trust and precious time for interviews and meetings, this book would not have been realized in the first place, and my thanks go to the Nihon Documentarist Union and its member Inoue Osamu; Zhang Lu and his colleagues at Lu Film; Tomita Katsuya and Aizawa Toranosuke of Kuzoku; Ohno Atsuko of Flying Pillow Films; Li Ying; Takamine Gō and his producer Hama Haruka; Yamashiro Chikako and Chiba Yumiko Associates; Midi Z/Zhao Deyin and his colleagues at Seashore Image Productions; Matsue Tetsuaki; Oda Kaori; and last but not the least, Tan Chuimui and Liew Seng-tat, who were working together at DaHuang Pictures and were kind enough to accompany me when I visited Kuala Lumpur.

I am greatly indebted to Hata Ayumi, the programmer of the Yamagata International Film Festival. Some of the material and contacts could not be obtained without the help of the warm-hearted film expert Yasui Yoshio and his colleagues at the Kobe Planet Film Archive as well as the Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival and its programmers Wood Lin (Lin Mucai) and Chen Wanlin, Wu Fan. I am also amazed by the versatile Kaneko Yu, who basically knew everybody that I wanted to get in touch with in Japan(!!). I also want to express my gratitude to the Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum, where I was able to view some of the precious image materials from Okinawa. I am grateful to Gertjan Zuilhof, a brilliant programmer who has brought many exciting titles to me at various film
festivals. And my thanks also go to Penny Lam of the Macau International Documentary Film Festival, and Feng Yu, the curator of the Fringe Film Festival (yisuiyingzhan) in Shenzhen, both of whom seem to share overlapping interests in these border-crossing films and auteurs. I appreciate the good care and professional support I received from Luo Ting, Yunxia, and their colleagues at Screen and Stage Review (Xiju yu yingshi pinglun), a journal by Nanjing University; Artforum China and its editor-in-chief Du Keke; and also Davide Cazzaro, the editor-in-chief of the Asian cinema magazine NANG – they have given me wonderful opportunities to test some of my ideas via different formats and through various platforms.

Finally, I hope my parents and my grandparents like this book as a belated gift. Without their unconditional love, I would not have felt strong enough to pursue what I really enjoy doing. I hope they feel my love, too, and that they rest in peace.