Independent Filmmaking across Borders in Contemporary Asia

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4 Li Ying’s Films of Displacement

Towards an Im/Possible Chinese-in-Japan Cinema

Abstract

This chapter turns to a long-term Chinese resident in Japan, Li Ying, and frames two of Li’s earlier documentaries, 2H (1999) and Aji (2003), as ‘films of displacement’. This study situates Li Ying’s independent filmmaking at the conjuncture of Sinophone cinema and diasporic filmmaking. I argue how these documentaries have explored and archived transhistorical and transnational affective connections traversing various Sinophone and diasporic communities within Japan and beyond. We could, therefore, envision a Chinese-in-Japan cinema which, loosely assembling contemporary film and media works by Chinese-in-Japan filmmakers who have arrived in Japan since the mid-1980s, challenges us to question its unwritten historiography and to rethink Sino/PRC-Japanese transnational cinema.

Keywords: Sinophone studies, Chinese-in-Japan identity, accented style, Sino-Japanese transnational cinema

A long-term resident in Japan, Chinese documentary filmmaker Li Ying is mostly known for his fifth documentary feature film, Yasukuni (2007). Prior to the public screening of Yasukuni in 2008 in several Japanese arthouse theatres, there were controversies over how Li handled the sensitive issue of Yasukuni Shrine, where more than two million of Japan’s war dead during World War II are honoured (see Harootunian 1999). In the heated debates

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all Chinese/Japanese-English translations are mine. I am thankful for Dr. Fujiki Kosuke's patient work with the Japanese transliteration and some of the translations of book titles.

2 Li Ying spent almost 10 years filming and producing Yasukuni. In this work, Li approached Yasukuni Shrine (est. 1869) by rethinking its complicated, sometimes ambiguously addressed historical and symbolic significance in relation to the spiritual/religious structure of the Japanese nation and the so-called Japanese psyche. In particular, for Li, Yasukuni Shrine configures
4.1 Poster of Li Ying’s Yasukuni
involving various opinion groups and political factions within Japan, questions arose regarding whether the Japanese rightists’ radical reactions were less because of the taboo subjects that his film highlights than because of Li’s identity as a citizen of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (see Mori, Suzuki & Miyadai 2008). To further complicate the situation, *Yasukuni* was never officially distributed or exhibited in mainland China, even though Li was allowed to appear in Chinese mainstream media talking about this work.

Arriving in Tokyo in 1989, Li Ying belongs to a group known as the ‘new overseas Chinese’ (*shin kakyō*), the preferred label of Chinese migrants (mostly of mainland origin) who started arriving in Japan from around the mid-1980s (see Liu-Farrer 2012, 2013). Unlike the older generations of ‘overseas Chinese’ who arrived before WWII, the inflow of these so-called newcomers was directly related to the PRC’s policies of reform and opening-up (*Gaige kaifang*) since 1978, but it also needs to be examined in light of the Japanese government’s changing immigration regulations, aspects of which cannot be further examined here.

an important site/space not only to examine some of the most controversial and pressing issues apropos imperial Japan’s role in World War II; Li also observed how the shrine became a cacophonous political theatre where veterans of the Imperial Army, rightist politicians, leftist activists/students, common Japanese citizens as well as multi-national foreign visitors gathered and acted out their disparate understandings/memories of the war. Importantly, Li turned his camera to Kariya Naoji, one of the last swordsmiths of the so-called ‘Yasukuni-tou’, a type of *Gunto* or high-quality sword supplied to high-ranking officers in the Imperial Army that was only forged within the Yasukuni Shrine between 1933 and 1945. The documentary also touches upon Japanese Emperor Hirohito’s role in WWII (see Argo Pictures, 2008). The screening of *Yasukuni* (originally scheduled to take place in many domestic theaters within Japan in 2008) encountered unprecedented difficulties and challenges, primarily because of ‘its subject matter, the source of its funding, and the nationality of the director’ (Takenaka 2009: 118).

3 For instance, whereas the rightists were infuriated by the fact that *Yasukuni*, an ‘anti-Japanese’ film in their eyes, was funded by the semi-official cultural body of the Agency for Cultural Affairs/Nihon Geijutsu Bunka Shinkōkai (Japanese yen 7.5 million), the filmmaker pointed out that the work was actually an independent project coproduced/funded by China, Japan, and South Korea. A pitch selected by the Asian Network of Documentary (AND), an inter-festival coalition and funding scheme affiliated with South Korea’s Busan International Film Festival, *Yasukuni* also signified how Li also started to engage with the global film festival’s production and financing cycle of film projects (see Brasor 2008).

4 Speculations include that the Chinese government was not sure whether they could channel the sentiments triggered by the film in such a way as to benefit their foreign policy toward Japan. Most Chinese viewers probably accessed this film through its illegal circulation via pirated videodiscs and online video sharing platforms despite the fact that the film was entered into the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 2008.

5 In her 1997 monograph, Mori Hiromi provides solid data and analysis regarding the various aspects of Japan’s immigration policies (including but not limited to the *Immigration Control Act*, amended in 2014, and the *Alien Registration Law*) and how they impacted upon the inflow
A reductionist reading of *Yasukuni* in terms of Li’s national identity does, on the one hand, turn a blind eye to the documentarist’s border-crossing trajectory as well as his lived experience in Japan for over 20 years. On the other hand, I have deep reservations concerning Rob Efird’s optimism towards how independent film projects like *Yasukuni* might achieve regional integration in proffering ‘foreign perspectives’ for the sake of ‘Japanese revitalization’ (Efird 2012: 179). Although Efird is partly correct in pointing out that to essentialize Li’s Chinese identity also risks ignoring the multicultural, multiethnic potentialities of contemporary Japanese society itself, we should also bear in mind Mika Ko’s warning regarding how ‘contemporary Japanese nationalism is wearing a mask of multiculturalism’ (Ko 2010: 26).

Using theoretical lensing borrowed from Sinophone studies (see S.-M. Shih, 2007; S. Shih et al. 2013; Tan 2013a, 2013b; Bernards 2016) and diaspora studies, this research considers ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ an open and critical identity category. I frame Li’s earlier documentaries *2H* (1999) and *Dream Cuisine* (*Aji*, 2003; I shall use its Japanese title in the chapter) – with a focus on the former – as films of displacement. I specifically situate Li Ying’s independent transnational filmmaking at the conjunction of diasporic filmmaking (see Naficy 2001; Marks 2000) and Sinophone cinema (see Yue & Khoo 2014, 2012), considering how these documentaries have connected Li’s identity of becoming ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ with other displaced subjects who have had difficulty articulating any singular sense of national or cultural belonging. My discussion highlights how these works have examined and archived the transhistorical and transnational affective connections traversing various Sinophone and diasporic communities within Japan and beyond. Building upon Li’s filmmaking practice and his works, I shall turn to several contemporary film and media works by Chinese-in-Japan filmmakers who have arrived in Japan since the mid-1980s, such as Ban Zhongyi, Ren Shujian, and Zhang Liling – all of whom were from the PRC – as well as Lim Kah-Wai (Lin Jiawei) from Malaysia (to name some of the more active and well-known filmmakers) and question whether it is possible to envision a ‘Chinese-in-Japan cinema’.

patterns of foreign workers (registered and unregistered) into Japan throughout different periods of time, especially since the mid-1980s. For instance, as Mori attests, ‘An inflow from the People’s Republic of China showed an enormous increase in 1987 after the partial liberalization of departures put into effect in 1985’ (H. Mori 1997: 72). She also highlighted how Japan’s immigration regulations toward PRC citizens were tightened after it was made clear that many Japanese language schools were actually used by their registered students as concealed channels for illegal labour (ibid.: 22).
Reconsidering ‘Chinese-in-Japan’

Before I move on to examine Li Ying's oeuvre, it is necessary to take the intricate issue of diasporic Sinophone subjects in Japan as my point of departure. Although in this chapter I limit my discussion of ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ filmmaking mainly to film and TV works by Chinese residents of PRC origin, such as Li's, the framing aims to probe into the very identitarian category of ‘Chinese’, as in ‘Chinese-in-Japan’.

According to the Japanese Ministry of Justice’s annual statistics on the demography of ‘foreign residents’ (zairyu gaikokujin) in Japan (see ‘Zairyū Gaikokujin Tōkei (Kyu Tōroku Gaikokujin Tōkei) Tōkeihyō’ [Statistics of Foreign Residents], n.d.), which categorize each group of foreigners under the ambiguously defined labels of ‘nationality’ (kokuseki) and the ‘area’ (chiiki) they are from, the zairyu (signifying the status of residency) population from ‘China’ has topped the list since 2007 (replacing the category of ‘Korea/South Korea’), reaching a total of 741,656 by the end of June 2018 (‘Zairyū gaikoku ninzū nitsuite’ [Number of foreign residents by the end of June 2018]). However, a closer look at the official statistics suggests that residents from ‘Taiwan’, previously categorized as part of ‘China’ (chūgoku), have been put in a separate category since 2012. In other words, currently, the category of zairyu chūgokujin (Chinese residents) is mostly associated with PRC nationals, including those who are Hong Kong/Macau passport holders. As the initial merging and subsequent split of China/Taiwan in the official data partly demonstrates, if ‘China’ can be used as a sliding classifier that simultaneously crosses over and associates with territory, state sovereignty, and ethnicity – all of which are entangled with the historical contingencies and complexities of Sino-Japanese relations since the period of Imperial Japan (Nagano & Guo 2010) – then the Japanese government’s old and new surveys (and biopolitical control) of zairyu chūgokujin, regardless of whether these include Taiwanese passport holders, have nevertheless failed to recognize and address the messiness and multiplicity of ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ either as an existing body of people intersecting diversified diasporic Sinophone communities or as a concept used to understand the various

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6 Mori illustrated that during 1939-1945, Japan introduced approximately 80,000 workers from China, including Taiwan, ‘who were mostly forced to move to satisfy emergent labour needs caused by the massive military mobilization of the native labour force’ (H. Mori 1997: 34). According to Nagano and Guo, right after WWII, among more than 90,000 Chinese residents in Japan, most were repatriated back to the PRC and Taiwan, with only around 30,000 of them staying behind in Japan, who constituted the main body of zainichi kakyō (Nagano & Guo 2010: 43-44).
modes of identities and subjectivities of theirs. At the same time, with my preferred use of ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ throughout this chapter, I also want to emphasize how this identitarian label is used in tandem with the Japanese term of *zainichi chūgokujin* (literally: Chinese who are residing in Japan, see Note 7). The gap and discrepancies between these two labels are partially tackled in my discussions to follow.7

While a solid, extensive historical investigation into issues about the Chinese-in-Japan in multilingual scholarship is beyond the focus of this chapter, it can be observed that within Japan, most related works are currently from the fields of sociological and anthropological/ethnographical studies, which are often confined to the critical modes of Overseas Chinese Studies and Chinese Overseas Studies, known respectively as *kakyō kenkyū* and *kajin kenkyū* in Japanese academia (see Nagano 2010). In these research areas, discussions addressing the *zainichi chūgokujin* about national/transnational identities and identifications (see Liu-Farrer 2013, 2012) have usually considered continental China as the unproblematic origin or ancestral land underlying the formation and transformation of Chinese migrants’ identity.8

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7 Sonia Ryang has emphasized the conundrum of *zainichi*: ‘the term zainichi, meaning “existing in Japan”, has become common currency for representing Koreans in Japan’; yet she also points out that, despite the fact that the Koreans do not have Japanese nationality, ‘By calling them zainichi, as if they merely “exist” inside Japan, the name obscures their clear disenfranchisement’ (Ryang 2009: 11). Ryang’s provocative discussion also made me think about the inconsistency between the designation of ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ and the term *zainichi chūgokujin*.

8 For instance, Nagano and Guo differentiated *kakyō* (overseas Chinese; Huaqiao in pinyin) from *kajin* (Chinese overseas, Huaren in pinyin), pointing out that legally speaking, the former refers to Chinese citizens who still possess Chinese nationality, albeit PRC citizens living overseas; and *kajin* refers to those who, despite their various connections with China/Chūgoku (e.g. as Chinese decedents), have obtained their citizenship from (other) countries and are given the legal rights of residence. It is important to see how Nagano and Guo also emphasized that the boundaries between the *kakyō/kajin* categories were getting muddy if one took into consideration the lived experiences of different generations of *kakyō* in Japan and also the specific resident statuses of the Chinese immigrants, based on their sociological observations in 2010 (Nagano & Guo 2010a: 26-27). However, in English-language literature, the use of ‘overseas Chinese’ is interchangeably used and interrelating with those of *Huaqiao/kakyō* and *Huaren/kajin*. For example, while Shu-mei Shih uses *haiwai huaqiao* to designate ‘overseas Chinese’ (S.-M. Shih 2011: 710), E.K. Tan approaches Overseas Chinese Studies as *haiwai huaren yanjiu* (Tan 2012, 2013b). In Guo Fang’s Japanese-language monograph on *zainichi kakyō*, for instance, he has narrowed down *zainichi chūgokujin* to residents from the PRC who have not obtained Japanese nationality or permanent residency (Guo 1999). As Guo has noticed in his observations, the so-called ‘old-comers’ actually mixed and collaborated with the newcomers (mostly from the PRC), including overseas students from China and so forth, in configuring a community of *zainichi chūgokujin* in Kobe, in their post-disaster relief and support activities right after the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake (Guo 1999: 191-213).
Symptomatic of the problematic of *kakyō/kajin kenkyū*, studies on the Chinese migrant identity, including research on those *shin kakyō* (newcomers) from the PRC who have arrived since the mid-1980s, have mostly lacked critical reflections over the constructedness of ‘Chineseness’ itself. Such framing has usually pursued a teleological discourse of historical lineage and homogenization (i.e. to envision a collective identity of transgenerational migrants), while also resorting to dichotomous critical grids to mark differentiations within the heterogenous migrant group itself (e.g. the binary division between their status of naturalization and permanent residence in Japan; the categorization of ‘oldcomer’ versus newcomer), without bothering to question the hegemony of ‘China’ or ‘Chineseness’ that underlines the articulations of the *kakyō* or *kajin* identity.

I look at the ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ identity with critical insights borrowed from Sinophone studies and diaspora studies, both of which have arguably problematized the essentialist understanding of Chineseness and Chinese identity as such. These reified identity categories should be also examined by turning to the new trends of population movement and displacement across Asia within the historical-cultural and social conditions of globalization, as suggested in Chapter One of this book.

In her field-defining works for the interdisciplinary Sinophone studies (*huayuyuxi yanjiu*) (see S.-M. Shih 2007, 2011; S. Shih et al. 2013), Shu-mei Shih reinvents the concept of Sinophone (*huayuyuxi*; also translated as *huayifeng* in other related research works) to pinpoint ‘a network of places of cultural production outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness, where a historical process of heterogenizing and localizing of continental Chinese culture has been taking place for several centuries’ (Shih 2007: 4). With the concept of Sinophone, which has been inspired by studies on postcolonial language-based communities like the Francophone, Shih seeks to shift attention from the ‘ethnicity or race’ to the Sinitic languages, their affiliated linguistic communities, and especially to their networks and relations in between. As she suggests in her Forward to the anthology of *Sinophone Cinemas*, what is foregrounded in the critical enterprise of Sinophone then is the ‘audible’, namely the ‘radical soundscape’ of the Sinophone (Shih 2014: x-xi). Film scholar Sheldon Lu also illustrates how

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9 For instance, Liu-Farrer has leveraged analytical perspectives in migration studies and social psychology to explore the ‘new overseas Chinese’ identity, especially regarding Chinese migrants’ preferred ‘partial membership in Japanese society’ (a majority of whom, according to her, chose not to obtain Japanese citizenship/naturalization but applied for permanent residency), and their strategies to mobilize their ‘flexible citizenship’ to connect Japan with the PRC in the ‘transnational economy’ between the two states (Liu-Farrer 2012: 167-168).
'the multiple tongues and dialects used in varieties of Sinophone cinema testify to the fracturing of China and Chineseness' (Lu 2014: 22).

Crucially, claiming that ‘diaspora has an end date’ and ‘everyone should be given a chance and become a local’ (S.-M. Shih 2007: 185), Shih highlights how Sinophone should be grasped as ‘a place-based, everyday practice and experience’ that comprises ‘a historical formation that constantly undergoes transformation reflecting local needs and conditions’ (ibid.: 30). Arguably, Sinophone articulation has found its full manifestation in ‘the expressive act of art and filmmaking’, and understandably, some of the most engaging discussions are from studies canvassing visual media and literature from Sinophone sites (Bernards 2012; also see Chiang & Heinrich 2014; S.-M. Shih 2007; Tan 2013a; Yue 2012; Yue & Khoo 2014). In this study of mine, the Sinophone is introduced to contest Han centrism and China-centric ideology in overseas Chinese studies and Chinese diaspora studies, given that both kinds of studies tend to pay less attention to the ‘strikingly idealist, teleological understanding of the nation-state’ (Brubaker 2015: 127) and thus are unable to ‘recognize Chineseness as a designator for multiple Sinitic ethnicities, not a singular and uniform Han-centric one’ (Shih, quoted in Tan 2013b: 16).

Nevertheless, having elucidated the ideological underpinning of Shih's Sinophone as ‘anti-Sinocentrism', Sheldon Lu has stressed how it ‘sounds like a theory of Chinese diaspora that does not privilege ancestral home' (Lu 2014: 21). What Lu and probably other critics of Sinophone (see Ng 2018; Tan 2013a) have found insufficient if not problematic is how the theoretical enterprise is ‘predicated upon the exclusion of China in the same way francophone is built on the exclusion of France' (Lu 2014: 22). I suggest that the interrogation of Sinocentrism and Han-centric ideology does not necessarily mean that Sinophone shall be configured upon the radical exclusion of or disengagement from ‘China’ (as the empire, the colonial power, and especially the spectacular rising superpower in the contemporary setting if we follow Shih’s take). Neither shall Sinophone be simply celebrated as a ‘better’ articulation of ‘everything Chinese’ (if not an oppositional concept), since that may potentially enact a new set of dichotomous logic. After all, as E.K. Tan reminds us, ‘even when discussing the importance of the Sinophone, Shih cannot avoid referring to Sinophone cultures as the “local translation, revision, and reinvention of Chinese culture”’ (Tan 2013a: 36; emphasis in original). In his survey of Chinese-language cinema studies, for example, Lu advocates the inclusion of mainland China ‘within the range of Sinophone’ (Lu 2014: 23). Taiwan-based Chinese-Malaysian writer Ng Kim Chew has provoked a more radical stand: he argues that ‘Chinese’ can be approached
as a discursive terrain as well as a set of everyday practices that intersects aspects such as culture, language, identity, and so forth; it should not be narrowly understood as being only related to ‘China’ (*Zhongguo*) in the first place. Meanwhile, when translated into other languages, differentiations between the PRC or mainland China and other Sinophone places shall be foregrounded depending on the various contexts (Ng 2018). In other words, ‘Chinese’ is not one, either; arguably, it is capable of multifarious manifestations and therefore can be leveraged to engage Sinophone identities and discursive articulations, as ‘versions of Sinophone’ (Tan 2013a: 35) that extend beyond the delimited designation of *zhongguoren*/*chūgokujin*, and to also interrelate with the concept of *huaren*/*kajin*.

My use of ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ in my survey of Li Ying’s films is premised upon a broadened understanding of the Sinophone in taking into consideration mainland China, while I also illustrate that the use of either ‘Sinophone’ or ‘Chinese’ should always be contextualized given the different emphasis embedded in each term. Admittedly, to find an accurate translation of ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ into the Japanese language is challenging, but for the sake of my discussions in this chapter, the idea of ‘Chinese’ itself shall intersect with both *chūgokujin*, *kajin*, and *kakyō*, given how in the Japanese context the boundaries between these latter categories are already become quite murkey. In so doing, my aim is also to open up the very labels of *chūgokujin*, *kajin* as well as *kakyō* to discursive interrogations while taking into consideration their historical complicacy and contingency.

At the same time, keeping in mind Shih’s critique of diaspora, I would like to consider how it can be engaged productively (see L.L. Chen 2015). Diaspora studies could potentially break away from the rigid analytic framework in *kakyō*/kajin kenkyū that works with a teleological narrative about *luoye-guigen* (a return to one’s roots) or its reverse version signifying full assimilation (*zhancao-chugen*). Instead we could conceive a more productive model of *luodi-shenggen*; namely ‘growing roots when the [overseas] Chinese land’, if we refer back to Wang Gunwu’s critical agenda (quoted in Tan 2013b: 7–8). For E.K. Tan, the approach of *luodi-shenggen* indeed ‘restores agency to overseas Chinese communities, whose constituents can now speak for or of themselves, at the very least, academically in the study of Chinese diaspora’ (Tan 2013b: 8). Debating what diaspora studies might contribute to ‘revamping overseas Chinese studies’, Tan points out that ‘It is more urgent for one to endorse the Chinese diaspora as a process that involves the struggle and negotiation between the myth of return and the acculturation to local realities than it is an essence’ (ibid.: 9). Without discarding the diasporic angle, in light of the Sinophone, Tan has retooled
'Chineseness' as a discursive sphere to mean production with an emphasis on the local situatedness (Tan 2013a; also see Tan 2013b) rather than a reified, essentialized, ahistorical category signifying the characteristics and delimitations of being/becoming Chinese.

The Chinese-in-Japan identity could, therefore, be approached as an opened-up, fluid assemblage of multiple Sinophone articulations, a thorough exploration of which is to be accomplished in future projects. Not dissimilar to Tan, Rogers Brubaker has pointed out that diaspora as a ‘category of practice’ actually ‘does not so much describe the world as seek to remake it’ (emphasis mine). Shu-mei Shih illumines how Sinophone culture ‘even in its strongest expression of nostalgia or longing for a mythical China or the actual one, is place-based and is of the place where it is produced’ (S.-M. Shih 2011: 714-715). The emphasis of my inquiry is also on the agency of the diasporic Sinophone subjects, specifically in relation to their situatedness within the Japanese socio-historical contexts and cultural formations. One needs to therefore pay more attention to their unfolding narratives and lived experience in Japan, regarding how they have engaged in the dynamic process of negotiation in positioning themselves within the variously layered networks of national, regional, ethnic, and local identities, as Tan has forcefully illustrated. Accordingly, we should approach the Chinese-in-Japan communities (kyōdōtai) in their plurality and understand that these communities/entities are themselves highly heterogeneous, inconsistent, and contingent networks of Sinophone subjects, whose modes of identifications are highly diverse and sometimes contentious, which include cases of accusation, avoidance, and total denial of ‘Chinese’ as the (sole) identity label.

In reconsidering the ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ identity, the diasporic lensing carves out space to examine the zainichi chūgokujin identity horizontally by juxtaposing it with other zainichi ethnic groups in Japan, including but not limited to the zainichi Koreans or Koreans-in-Japan. Furthermore, the issue of being (or becoming) Chinese-in-Japan could be surveyed in relation to other Sinophone diasporic experiences of living across and beyond Asia. Moreover, the reconceptualization allows us to engage in questions of identification with regard to Japanese repatriates back from China since the end of WWII (like the female chef Sato Hatsue featured

10 This chapter cannot further explore how the discursive perspective borrowed from Sinophone studies regarding how we may rethink ‘Chineseness’ vis-à-vis the ‘Chinese-in-Japan’ identity, indeed interrelates with Oliver Dew’s analysis of a “post-Zainichi” moment in his studies on ‘Zainichi cinema’ (see Dew 2016: 19–20).
in *Ají* and in particular Japan’s war orphans (*zanryū koji*), stranded war wives (*zanryū fujin*), and their descendants who returned to Japan since the normalization of relations between the PRC and Japan in 1972 (Efird 2010, 2004; Chan 2011).¹¹

On the other hand, the Sinophone perspective enables us to intervene in and debunk the consensual narrative that usually situates the diasporic Chinese within the multifarious ‘Sino-Japanese’ connections and frictions in socio-cultural, political, as well as economic realms, but never critically interrogates the inherent tension of the ‘Sino’ and what is actually made (in) visible through the consensual categorization and discourse surrounding the ‘Sino’. We could explore how the Chinese-in-Japan prism actually intersects with diasporic subjects who have become or have been made stateless in Japan (such as General Ma Jinsan in Li Ying’s *zH*).¹² These people are caught in between and are struggling to engage with the various modes of identification prescribed less by the Japan/China dichotomy than by the very multiplicity and complexity of ‘China’ itself, wherein the PRC (a socialist state founded in 1949), the Republic Of China/Taiwan (a nation striving to become a state after it lost its legal status in the United Nations in 1971), and Hong Kong (a former colony returned to the PRC as a Specially Administrated Region in 1997) have become the overlapping yet competing sites of meaning-production.

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¹¹ In his Ph.D. thesis, Robert Arther Efird has pointed out that ‘war orphans’ refer to ‘people of Japanese parentage who were stranded in China as children at the end of World War II’. The Japanese expressions used to ‘identify these people translate literally as “remaining orphans” (*zanryū koji*), “remaining Japanese” (*zanryū hōjin*), or “repatriates from China”(*chūgoku kikokusha*) (Efird 2004: 1). Efird has helpfully highlighted that ‘the terms and conditions under which war orphans and other repatriates have been identified in the post-war period suggest the ways in which the ethnic categories of “Japanese” and “Chinese” are constructed, maintained and contested in Japan, particularly with recourse to “blood” descendants and historical suffering’ (ibid.: 2). In her take on *zanryū hōjin*, nevertheless, Yeeshan Chan clarifies that, according to the definition by Japan’s Kōseishō (the former Ministry of Welfare, Health, and Labor), ‘persons under the age of 13 on August 9 1945 were officially labelled zanryū-koji or abandoned war orphans. Persons over the age of 13 on that date were mostly women who had married Chinese men for survival but had been considered by the Japanese state to have stayed in China by their own choice’ (Chan 2011: xix). The latter group has been identified as *zanryū-fujin*. Since China’s Reform and opening-up policy in the 1980s, there has been no lack of films and television dramas created about the issue of *zanryū-hōjin*, some of which were collaborations between the PRC and Japan (see Kirsch 2015; DeBoer 2014).

¹² For more on Taiwanese subjects’ citizenship before and after World War II, and specifically the socio-historical context underlying the two ‘Chinas’ – the People’s Republic of China/PRC and the Republic of China/ROC – in relation to Japan’s shifting diplomatic policy, which is key to grasping the conditions of becoming *mukokuseki* (stateless), refer to Chen Tien-shi’s ‘Minorities “in between” China and Japan: Complexity of Legal Status and Identity’ (2007).
Cinema of Displacement

Before migrating to Japan, Li Ying worked at China Central Television in the department of television documentary production, with his own documentary work (about Tibetan ethnography) already entered for an international documentary film festival. Lured by the cosmopolitan, multicultural image of Tokyo, Li joined his then-wife for her language studies in Japan and arrived here in March 1989, at a time when the nationwide democracy movement – the largest in modern Chinese history – was in full swing back in the PRC (Li 2009: 18, 24-25). Even though he dreamt of finding jobs related to image production and making his own films in order to make ends meet, Li spent years doing typical menial jobs held by foreign migrants – jobs characterized by the three Ks – *kitanai* (dirty), *kiken* (dangerous), *kitsui* (tough). It was not until 1993 that Li founded his own image production company *Dragon Films (Longying)* in Tokyo, together with another new migrant from China, Zhang Yunhui (or Zhang Yi, who later became Li’s producer).¹³ *Dragon Films* mostly collaborated and coordinated with Japan’s television broadcasters such as NHK and Asahi for China/Hong Kong-related TV documentary projects (Li 2009). Since his debut documentary, *2H*, Li’s independent projects have been mainly supported by his business activities at *Dragon Films*, which often had Japanese TV stations as co-producers.

*2H* and *Aji* are films of displacement not simply because Li directs his camera to displaced subjects like himself. Li Ying has leveraged his diasporic filmmaking to interrogate the Chinese-in-Japan identity to not only envision it as an assemblage of layered, heterogeneous, sometimes conflicting modes of identification and positioning but also to see how it intersects and entangles with other diasporic identities and experiences.

Meanwhile, the Deleuzian discussions on the minor as well as on minor literature have underlined how we may rethink the cinema of displacement apropos its politics. For now, it is instrumental to point out that for Gillez Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a majoritarian mode of difference and one that is minoritarian have proffered different ways of drawing distinctions. Whereas in a majoritarian mode, the opposition is grasped as ‘already

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¹³ For comparison/reference, it is worth pointing out that it was in 1990 that Lee Bong-ou's independent film company *cine qua non* was founded. It was to become a crucial entity in producing, circulating, and screening works related to the *zainichi*/Koreans-in-Japan issues and support the creative activities of some *zainichi* filmmakers. Oliver Dew suggests that *cine qua non* could be considered a ‘mini-major’: ‘independent (“mini”); and yet a vertically integrated producer, distributor, and exhibitor (with its own chain of six boutique screens in Tokyo, Kobe and Seoul), organised like the major studios had been in their heyday (“major”)’ (Dew 2016: 15-16).
given and based on a privileged and original term’ (Colebrook 2001: 104), a minoritarian mode ‘does not ground the distinction on a privileged term, and does not see the distinction as an already-given order’ (ibid.). Instead, it functions through the creativity and contingency of ‘becoming’, which proffers crucial insights into how we may further engage Deleuze’s take on identity. For instance, in the socio-cultural terrain of contemporary Japanese society, a majoritarian mode designates the differences between the Japanese and non-Japanese, the latter of which include the zainichi, a distinction that could be traced back to the discourse about a quintessential Japanese identity as we may find in nihonjinron (i.e. the ideology/discourse of Japanese identity) (see Ko 2010). A minoritarian mode of difference, however, may depart from ‘becoming-zainichi’ in for instance ‘becoming-zainichi Koreans’ or ‘becoming-zainichi Chinese’, which does not simply seek to oppose or negate Japanese identity as such, since that would still be working on the ‘privileged term’, with its foundation on the authenticity of ‘being Japanese’. Rather, ‘becoming-zainichi’ may open up new possibilities for considering non-Japanese identities without subscribing to any pre-given order or norm, and therefore it can envision an identity that is provisional and always ‘in the process of creation’ until it becomes majoritarian, in expressing ‘being zainichi’ as such in constituting a new standard by which to include/exclude those who do (or do not) fall into such defining characteristics.

Therefore, I shall contend that it is not that works by zainichi Chinese filmmakers like Li Ying have proffered the defining, authentic representations of Chinese-in-Japan persons and their communities, since in making such claims we are assuming that a pre-given norm and standard exists for one to pin down and delimit the ‘Chinese-in-Japan’, as if films as such only function to inscribe the already existing group. Rather, as a critical heuristic, this ‘cinema of displacement’ seeks to engage ‘a people to come’, the identity of which ‘is always provisional, in the process of creation’ (Colebrook 2001: 118). If I could borrow the way Colebrook highlights works by Australian Aboriginal poet Mudrooroo, I shall propose that Li Ying’s works are minor ‘not by being a pure representation of some origin’ but by ‘creating a specific territory’ in which being Chinese-in-Japan ‘is presented as a process of becoming and negotiation, incorporating and transforming images from without through its own mode of work’ (ibid.).

Furthermore, I will underpin the politics of Li’s filmmaking by exploring how his works have approached the multiplicity and complicacy of the Chinese-in-Japan identity and subjectivity in interrelating with various aspects of affectivity. At the textual level, one could grasp Li’s documentary aesthetics by turning to what Hamid Naficy has framed as an emergent mode
of ‘accented style’, which is ‘rooted in the filmmakers’ profound experiences of deterritorialization’ and manifests as ‘dislocatory feeling structures’ (Naficy 2001: 26-27). As such, accented films not only feature themes of ‘sadness, loneliness, and alienation’, they are also populated by ‘sad, lonely, and alienated people’ (ibid.).

It is also important to locate the examination of the structure of feeling at the extra-textual level. Jie Yang has explained how affects might be experienced and articulated differently in accordance with individuals’ multifarious ‘ways of existence’, thereby underpinning the formation of subjectivity, namely in contributing to the understanding of ‘oneself and others as subjects’ (Yang 2014: 10). Meanwhile, in his survey of minority affects, John Erni has indicated that these can be grasped as ‘a lived experience of intensity that engages – and creates – an individual’s corporeal responses ... shapes their social actions, and constitutes a different kind of power relation underpinned by (subtle and surprising) social passion’ (Erni 2017: 3). Agreeing with both Yang and Erni regarding how affect needs to be ‘contextualized and examined culturally, historically, and politically’ (Yang 2014: 10), I explore how Li Ying’s auteurist documentaries have interconnected in between the diasporic subjectivity as a specific mode of lived experience of intensity and the socio-historical and political contexts within which such affective formations have been generated, circulated, and contested.

Naficy’s discussion of the accented affective formation has assumed a difference in the diasporic experiential mode from that of the exilic, and thus the ‘chronotopical configuration’ in the accented style approaches the homeland as ‘utopia and open’, contrasting with the ‘dystopia and claustrophobic’ exilic (Naficy 2001: 27). Whereas Naficy suggests that both the diasporic and exilic subjectivity are contingent upon a sense of belonging and being oriented towards the ‘homeland’, his thesis has been problematized by Wang Yiman in her historical re-examination of Sinophone diasporic filmmaking. Wang notes how diasporic filmmakers are not simply emotionally invested in the ‘homeland’ toward its ‘there and then’, namely in a vertical manner; rather, they have simultaneously reterritorialized their identification with ‘homeland’ into more fluid, multifarious strands of affective, political engagements with ‘home’ (Wang 2012). Therefore, the diasporic Sinophone subjects – including both diasporic filmmakers and the characters in their diegetic world – need to constantly redefine and rearticulate their sense of belonging through what Wang has termed ‘homing’ imaginaries and tactics, so that it becomes possible for them to conceive a type of ‘togetherness’ either imagined or situated in the ‘here and now’ of the Sinophone communities. Also, the ‘homing’ strategy helps to negotiate the
diasporic persons’ relations with a homeland (China) that is ‘never a static “past” to be related to vertically’ but rather ‘the ever-present’ and ‘constantly changing’ (Wang 2012: 544), and thus to continuously question its meaning.

This study leverages Wang Yiman’s interventionist reading in seeing how the diasporic filmmakers have kept a coeval yet tension-filled relationship with both ‘home(s)’ and ‘homeland(s)’ and how the auteurs have worked with the lived experiences and imaginaries negotiating with such formations. Specifically, I look at how Li’s documentaries connect the diasporic Sinophone communities in a metaphorizing Japanese society with a rapidly transforming China (especially given Li’s mainland origin) spanning from 1989 to the 2000s, illustrating what Lionnet and Shih have proposed as ‘minor transnationalism’ (see Chapter One). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in de-territorializing/re-territorializing the imaginaries of the homeland, Li has turned his camera to protagonists such as the stateless citizen General Ma in 2H and a Japanese repatriate, Sato Hatsue, in Aji.14 The former, living alone in Tokyo, had not only alienated himself from three Chinas but also distanced himself from his families dispersed overseas. And the latter, a Japanese citizen in her seventies, dreamed of leaving Tokyo and ‘returning’ to her birth city of Jinan in mainland China, a place that she considers her ‘hometown’ (furusato) (Sato & Sato 2002: 120).15 These are diasporic subjects whose migrant trajectories and modes of identification have nonetheless complicated and enriched the ‘homing’ imaginaries and tactics as mapped out by Wang Yiman.

2H: Becoming Chinese-in-Japan Toward the Fin-de-Siècle

‘A Certain Kind of Community’ in Post-1989 China

In his debut documentary feature film 2H, Li purposefully avoids boisterous street views of Tokyo (except at the film’s beginning and ending) and patiently observes how General Ma (Ma Jinsan, or Chongliu), a former Kuomintang (KMT) high-ranking officer (as Sun Yat-sun/Sun Zhongshan’s military consultant), spends his last days in his claustrophobic, dark-lit Tokyo apartment. Most of the time, it seems, the old man is accompanied only by

14 It is also noteworthy that in the documentary film Yasukuni, the Sinophone subjects foregrounded are actually a group of aboriginal people from Taiwan.
15 In her autobiographical novel, Sato Hatsue considers Jinan her ‘hometown’ (furusato), while she sees Japan as the ‘alien country’ (ikkyou) (see Sato & Sato 2002).
a television set and Li’s camera. Despite his legendary past in which he led the KMT army to fight against the Japanese imperial army during WWII, after the KMT was forced to retreat from the mainland, Mr. Ma refused to follow General Chiang Kai-shek’s echelon to Taiwan. He also did not reunite with his family dispersed overseas (many of whom had emigrated to the US) after the war ended. It is intriguing that even though he opted for Japan as his last stop (he relocated to Japan in 1953), Ma chose to become stateless (mukokuseki) by refusing to acquire any nationality.

Another thread of the documentary traces a younger female artist named Xiong (Xiong Bingwen), who has befriended the ageing general and often spends time with him in his apartment. The filmmaker also follows Xiong back to her place in Tokyo – seemingly a deserted, spacious house she has adopted as her makeshift studio. Throughout the film, Xiong’s background as a new migrant is never explored, and she rarely tells her own story. Mostly the audience sees Xiong, an indoor creature too, either working on her own painting (given her identity as an artist) or posing meaninglessly in front of the camera, being highly performative. The voyeuristic camera also sneaks into one of the bedrooms and observes how Xiong erotically interacts with
a male artist named Zhang (Zhang Qikai), also a migrant from the PRC. Although it is hinted that they are simply asked to act out their intimacy (Xiong is married), it is never made clear to what extent Li had scripted their on-screen romance.

One needs to turn to a broader socio-historical context within which 2H was produced to see how the documentary mediates between Li’s own decades-long diasporic experience of becoming Chinese-in-Japan and the transformation and diversification of Chinese-in-Japan communities in the aftermath of China’s 1989 pro-democracy movement (hereafter simply referred to as the Movement). It is noteworthy that the Movement contributed to carving out and making visible a diasporic public space through which Li, then a total stranger to Tokyo, was able to gain insight into the Chinese-in-Japan people and their communities, as he started to join the gatherings and demonstrations in town to support the Beijing democracy protests.16 It was also through these gatherings that Li got to know Mr. Ma (the two met in 1991) and a group of people who admired and followed the old man. However, it was only around 1997 that Li decided to turn his camera to Ma and start this documentary project (personal interview with Li).

As much as the 1989 Movement opened up space for trans-generational diasporic subjects like Ma, Xiong, and Li to connect with each other and to emerge as a collective, the very failure of the Movement disrupted, if not crushed, the illusion that their togetherness could be articulated through ‘a unified and unquestioned Chinese identity … represented by the socialist state’ (Dirlik & Zhang 1997: 4). Instead, the sense of togetherness was built upon their shared yet enhanced experiences of loss, fragmentation, and void. Li admits how confused he was around the time of the 1989 Movement, burdened by questions like ‘where I am going to and whether I have a place to return to’. He confesses, ‘I cannot figure out where is my own country (kuni), or where is my own home (ie) anymore … my feeling at that time might be quite similar to that of the exiles’ (Li 2009: 24).

Li has pointed out that although he had no previous understanding of the communities/collectives (kyōdōtai) of Chinese-in-Japan people, he did witness how, throughout his eight-year-long relationship with Ma (dating from 1991 until Ma’s death in 1998), the individuals surrounding the gentleman had actually formed ‘a certain kind of community’ (isshu na kyōdōtai), regardless of where they were from (Li & Jinno 2000: 236). Li thus believes

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16 For instance, Li Ying admitted that during the time of the 1989 Movement, while participating in the events and gatherings, he was ‘surprised to learn about the fact that there are so many Chinese people in Japan, and they are dispersed in so many different places’ (Li 2009: 24).
that 2H has documented how, despite the crumbled, fragmented image of one’s nation and family, the displaced people were still envisioning and striving for the alternative communities/kyōdōtai to come, even though their experiments were doomed (ibid.: 236-237).

**Accented Style and Haptic Images**

Returning to the film text, it is important to approach how Li has underscored the diasporic structure of feeling of displacement, alienation, and loneliness through an accented style. Here one can turn to how the filmmaker has blended his cinéma vérité aesthetics with highly stylized mise-en-scène composed of hand-held camerawork, sepia-toned and monotonous colour, and claustrophobic spaces as well as the extensive use of close-up shots and long takes, wherein the documentarist’s physical presence and intervention are clearly made known to the viewer. Li admits that, during the process of making the documentary, he experienced great difficulty in relocating Ma back to the historical situation from which he had been exiled. The filmmaker came to realize that his interviews of Mr. Ma contained nothing more than different versions of ‘lies’ (uso) – that is, the interviewee’s subjective and partial reconstructions of the past (Li & Jinno 2000: 236). The hybridized cinematic style was arguably intended by Li Ying to problematize mainstream film and television documentaries’ claim to progressive teleology when approaching the legendary life of a great man, thereby distancing his own take from the conventional biographical historical documentary genre.

Understandably, Mr. Ma’s legendary past is only backdropped in 2H. Instead of using archival footage and ‘talking heads’ interviews with the ageing general to suture the latter within an orthodox narration of the Chinese nation, Li places Ma in his ‘here and now’ by meticulously documenting and observing the 90-year-old’s everyday routine, mostly through long observational takes. It is telling that it is not until the end of the film that the audience is allowed to gain more insight into the old man’s historical role, when Ma showcases to Li his military medals awarded by the US government that, according to him, were given only to ‘presidents and heads of states’. Nevertheless, in the sequence that follows, when Ma is encouraged by Li to comment on his own role and valuable ‘historical experiences’ (lishi jingyan),

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17 Regarding the linguistic aspect of the accent in 2H, the documentary is multilingual, with its protagonists mostly speaking a mixture of Chinese local dialects. Ma mostly spoke Yunnan (Dali) dialect.
the old man only sneers at the thought by cursing, 'What's history? It's all shit!' (Shenme lishi? Doushi goushi!). It is curious that Li has refrained from corroborating Ma's narrative about his glorious past with any photographic evidence. It is only towards the last five minutes of the film that the audience
sees a portrait photo of the general dressed in military uniform decorated with medals. It is also in these precious photographs that the viewers see, for the first and only time, a younger, stern-looking Ma surrounded by his extended family or standing tall among KMT high-ranking officers, including the Generallissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

For Naficy, one affective dimension integral to the accented style emphasizes how the experiences and sensibilities of displacement are embodied through ‘tactile optics’, namely the films’ ‘nonlinear structure’ that is ‘driven by the juxtaposition of multiple spaces, times, voices, narratives, and foci – the montage effect’, and especially a filming style that redistributes the senses in emphasizing the spectatorial engagement with the ‘tactility’, which can be triggered by ‘nonaudiovisual ways in which displaced people experience the audiovisual media’ (Naficy 2001: 29). As a way to extend Naficy’s discussion of ‘tactile optics’, Laura Marks has usefully proposed the concept of ‘haptic visuality’ in her discussions of intercultural cinema, namely ‘a visuality that functions like the sense of touch’, to rethink and critique visual mastery (Marks 2000: 22). Marks focuses on the cinematic mechanism through which the audience engages the ‘haptic images’. These are images that invite haptic looking that ‘moves on the surface plane of the screen’ to privilege the perception of the materiality and texture of the images, and thus to establish a direct relation between the perceiver and ‘the sensuous object’. Under such circumstances, the audience is encouraged to ‘contemplate the image itself instead of being pulled into the narrative’, throughout which they engage in participatory spectatorship in resorting to ‘his or her resources of memory and imagination’ (ibid.: 163).

Film critic Jinno Toshifumi has stressed how, by transferring 2H to 35-mm film, the screen presence of Mr. Ma is made impressive because of the felt ‘graininess’ of the celluloid molecules. Jinno also points out how the photogenic quality blurs the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, which echoes Laura Marks’ observations regarding how the haptic images ‘may raise ontological questions about the truth of photographic representation’ (ibid.: 172). 2H has proffered examples of haptic images par excellence. Particularly, Li uses close-ups to ‘bring vision as close as possible to the image’ (ibid.: 159), which has the effect of enlarging Ma’s thick eyeglasses and the deep wrinkles on his face, hands, and feet as if to recognize his weakening, dying body as the only site for the filmmaker and the audience to get in touch with him, an exile from history.

Nevertheless, the film deviates from Marks’ examples of first-person intercultural video works that tend to mobilize personal narrative and bodily performance to interweave a rich tapestry of sense memories about
4.4 From the Japanese promotion brochure of 2H, where Ma sees through the camera eye; Li is also introduced here as a ‘China-born, Tokyo-based’ filmmaker.

displacement. Li’s long takes, which are often fixed close-up shots, can be discussed in terms of the Deleuzian time-image as suggested by Marks, which sheds light on the spectatorial engagement with direct ‘sense perception’.
Importantly, in watching time go by and observing how characters simply wait ‘not necessarily for anything to happen’ (S.H. Lim 2014: 20), the long takes foreground alternative mode(s) of experiencing time that Chinese-in-Japan subjects such as the stateless Ma or new migrants like Li, Xiong, and Zhang have struggled to articulate and contend with.

For instance, it is telling that in a high-angle long take overlooking Ma’s living room, the old man is seen watching the TV broadcast of the handover ceremony of Hong Kong in a dark corner, far from both the camera and the TV set. The handover is a significant ceremony that closed the historical lacunae narrating the Chinese nation in the 20th century. Nevertheless, with only his facial contour lit up by the TV set, it is quite difficult for the audience to identify with the protagonist, as it is difficult to tell whether Ma is emotionally reacting to the event and in what way, particularly when the host of the ceremony comments (in Japanese via the simultaneous interpreter): ‘From this moment on, Hong Kong is once again part of China’. This may be the only moment in this film referring to a specific date, namely 1 July 1997 (the handover took place at midnight). However, the TV programme’s indexability can be highly unreliable without any further historical registers to fixate its meaning – it can be merely a recorded or replayed segment. Therefore, instead of situating and synchronizing Ma and Li with the historical time of the PRC, the long take foregrounds Mr. Ma’s everyday condition of ennui and loneliness in only recognizing him as a distant onlooker who is marginalized by the grand narrative of the Chinese nation, which is symptomatic of Ma’s paradoxical condition of statelessness as a mode of belonging detached from the very context within which it is produced and situated.

Fin-de-Siècle Metaphor

2H arguably constitutes a fin-de-siècle metaphor for the Chinese-in-Japan identity, which can be leveraged to imagine the ‘difference-in-togetherness’ among the diasporic Sinophone individuals (see Ang 2001). The work approaches the emerging collective/community (kyōdōtai) that the filmmaker participated in in Japan’s social sphere as contingent, fluid affective formations that were generated, performed, and rendered visible and audible through the long takes archiving Ma’s everyday life as well as the intervening dramatized confrontations into the latter half of the documentary, with the outbursts of anger and tears. Paralleling the conflicts between Xiong and Ma, who fight over how the ageing general could be taken good care of without being sent to a home for the elderly or without caretakers being
summoned to his home, the sequences of intimacy between Zhang and Xiong are reenacted to foreground their failed attempt to have sex, indicating how Xiong was deeply troubled by her desperate loneliness and the desire of having a baby of her own.

As reminded by Li, on the other hand, the only truth that he has captured in 2H is Mr. Ma’s death. It could be argued that the film itself is structured in such a way that it can be seen as a long goodbye to the general. In remembering and mourning the loss of a loved one, the documentary also witnesses the dissolution of the kyōdōtai of these displaced people. One day after the filmmaker returns to Ma’s apartment, he is told that Ma’s body was found in his toilet, already dead for days. Here Li inserts a haunting, purposefully muted long take shot of when Ma was still alive in which the camera, as if consciously keeping distance from its filming subject, looks in the direction of Ma’s bedroom and watches how the old man is getting himself dressed at an excruciatingly slow pace. After he puts on everything, Ma is seen moving closer to a mirror, seeming quite satisfied to look at himself in the mirror, and appears ready to take off. Shot against the light so that the old man is only visible as a dark contour, this long take – stylistically not so different from other observational takes of his daily routine – performs a ritual of commemoration in imagining how Ma is preparing for his own departure from this world, gracefully.

One can also recall how Li uses the general’s last will, handwritten by Ma himself, to end the documentary. The will reads, ‘I was born on December 26th 1902 in Yunnan. For nearly 100 years, I faced the world’s turmoil and disorder in China, doing what I could and enduring much’. It is a poignant comment on all the displaced Chinese persons who drifted away from their home and homeland in the 20th century. We may contend that General Ma’s statelessness registers one of the most radical, paradoxical forms of becoming Chinese-in-Japan: as an important witness and participant of an exciting, tumultuous century in modern Chinese history, he decided to escape from it in a gesture of self-exile; as a cosmopolitan Sinophone subject who connected with three Chinas, he didn’t celebrate his nation (‘homeland’), nor did he seek company with his family (‘home’).

In her examination of the interrelation between diasporic subjectivity and the film apparatus in transnational diasporic first-person films, Alisa Lebow emphasizes that ‘the camera is not simply a recording device that captures the experiences of the displacement, it can be a symptom of that very displacement’ (Lebow 2012: 230-231). It is intriguing that on several occasions, Li has emphasized how he considered Ma’s ‘lonely figure’ to be potentially an image of his ‘future self’ (Li 2009: 25). Coming to realize
the significant role that his DV could play as the ‘diasporic apparatus’, however, Li does not locate the dynamics in the ‘back and forth movement’ of transnational migration within a contemporary, digitalized environment. Instead, revolving around the aesthetics and style of cinéma vérité, we need to consider how Li as a filmmaker and member of the kyōdōtai participates and intervenes in the unfolding story through his shaky, mobile camerawork, point-of-view shots, and sporadic conversations with his subjects. Although 2H is not a first-person documentary per se, we need to pay attention to how Li has also intended this to be a documentation of his own diasporic subjectivity. Mr. Ma’s exilic, stateless experience has prefigured and interconnected with Li’s diasporic trajectories and ‘cultural homelessness’ (Marks 2000: 4), which were underpinned by the filmmaker’s personal conditions of alienation and disorientation trapped in between a post-bubble Japanese society and a post-socialist China undergoing market-oriented transformations at the turn of the millennium. Such affective connections are trans-generational and trans-historical, and the filmmaker believed that it is through his documentary-making that he himself and the general had become ‘one community’ and ‘one family’, even though they had no clue where they were headed (Li & Jinno 2000: 236-237).

Aji: Tastes Like Home

Aji (Dream Cuisine) follows a Japanese couple known as the Satos (wife Hatsue and her husband Kōroku) who ran a restaurant in central Tokyo named ‘Jinan Hotel’ (Chinan Hinkan, est. 1969; closed around 2006) that was famous for its authentic Chinese/Shandong Cuisine (Lucai). Their star chef, Hatsue, was born in Jinan in 1925, the capital city of Shandong province in the Republic of China era, and grew up there. Before Hatsue was forced to leave China in 1948, she had the rare chance of getting trained at a renowned Shandong cuisine restaurant (Taifenglou) and learned lots of recipes from the master chefs there. Into the 2000s, in her late seventies, Hatsue, already accredited by the Shandong government for her contributions to lucai, was thinking of realizing her dream of opening a restaurant in Jinan and passing down her lucai recipes to young chef trainees at a local Chinese culinary school (also see Sato & Sato 2002).

Produced in collaboration with NHK and a more professionalized team, the style of Aji is conventional and more narrative-driven. Probably not unlike other NHK TV documentaries about contemporary China, Aji seeks to get a glimpse of a rapidly changing Chinese society by turning to the
transformations occurring in the culinary tradition of *lucai* into the new millennium. It is telling that the documentary begins with archival footage of China’s Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), with scenes of mass parades and the Red Guards’ violent raids destroying antiques and brand signs of old shops. While this suggests the extent of the disruption, – if not eradication – of time-honoured traditions resulting from the political turmoil in the socialist era, it also prefigures how China’s fast-paced modern development and marketization are built exactly upon such disruptions of traditions, against which Hatsue’s new episode with China unfolds and twists.

Li Ying leverages Japanese repatriate (*hikiage-sha*) Hatsue’s diasporic experiences to examine how displaced subjects negotiate the meaning of ‘homeland’ and ‘home’ in between China and Japan, which arguably interrelates with Li’s own changing self-positioning as a Chinese-in-Japan. Referring to Wang Yiman’s discussions of ‘home’ and ‘homing’ imaginations, it is important to see how *Aji* juxtaposes the Sato family’s restaurant *Jinan Hotel* (also the old couple’s residence, only open to reservations as a restaurant) with a Jinan city mostly preserved in Hatsue’s memories of her youth, which laid the basis for the documentary’s tripartite narrative segments starting with the Satos’ debates over relocating their restaurant to China (the husband Kōroku believes it would be difficult for him to get used to life in a foreign country at such an old age), and climaxing with their trip to Jinan, which is followed by their return.

Hatsue is displaced not simply because of her experiences of repatriation but also because of her nostalgia for a ‘hometown’ that was out of reach for decades.18 Crucially, her affective linkage with Jinan is trans-historical (temporal) and trans-national (spatial) in that it has interwoven together the disjunctive, fragmented experiences of modernity in the Republic of China of the 1940s and the People’s Republic in the 2000s, which are significantly mediated by Hatsue’s own struggles in postwar Japan for almost four decades. *Jinan Hotel*, therefore, registers a time-space disjuncture that is out of sync with the ‘here-and-now’ of either Japan or Jinan. Rather, Hatsue used *Jinan Hotel* as a site to keep her connections with the ‘there and then’ of China alive through the cooking, tasting, and sharing of *lucai*. Understandably, the restaurant is characterized by the mise-en-scène foregrounding a sense of enclosure, tranquillity, and stasis that seems to be isolated from the larger socio-cultural context of Japan. For the old couple, preserving the authenticity of the cuisine (the basic rule of which is to use no addition of

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18 Sato Hatsue was not able to visit the PRC until 1981, which she called ‘going back to my home country’ (*kikoku*) (Sato & Sato 2002: 177-178).
extra seasonings, such as sugar) is about valuing and preserving the tradition, in resisting the erosion of changes.

However, for the Satos, their trip to fulfil Hatsue’s wish to return to her birthplace (for which she chose the Japanese word of *kaeri*, or ‘returning’, instead of *iku*, namely ‘going’) proves to be a disappointing ‘homecoming’ journey. As much as Hatsue is eager to guide her husband Kōroku around Jinan, in sharing with him her favourite landscape and people, she has little ‘evidence’ to offer besides the details pieced together from her fading memories. When she is standing side by side with one of her former chef colleagues (from Jinan) on the top floor of a tall building and looking over the transfigured city view, she is seen pointing at somewhere and laments, ‘you see, my (old) home is gone. I cannot find it’.

More importantly, originally envisioning a trip to impart her recipes to younger Chinese chefs and to open a restaurant serving authentic *lucai*, Hatsue comes to understand that the ‘original’ taste they are so proud of is actually considered outmoded. Her authentic cuisine is being challenged, though mildly, by local practitioners who passionately advocate the taste of *xinlucai* (New Shandong Cuisine), one of fusion, rich flavoring, and always changing in order to cater to customers in the new age – a symbol of the new mode of modernity. Therefore, the culinary school’s schoolmaster cautiously expresses his dissatisfaction with the Satos’ stubbornness by calling their culinary practice *huashi*, namely ‘fossil’. Hatsue, who has no interest in collaborating with the culinary school in opening their branch back in Tokyo, came to realize that their *Jinan Hotel* could not be relocated to Jinan after all. Uncannily, it evidences Wang Yiman’s illustration of the ‘diasporic paradox’ that, ‘for a home to remain a home, it must exist elsewhere as an idea evoked and desired through letters, phone calls, and imagination’ (Wang 2012: 547).

With Hatsue, *Ajī* opens up a critical terrain to historicize the diasporic subject’s intricate positioning in relation to home and homeland, posing no less powerful questions about a static, reified conceptualization of national and cultural identity. The work closes with one of Li Ying’s signature long takes, with Hatsue and Kōroku bidding farewell to the filmmaker at the entrance of Jinan Hotel, the camera gazing at the door until the couple slowly disappears from the viewfinder. As much as Li uses such an everyday scenario to suggest that it is exactly the old couple’s persistent love and understanding that give meaning to Jinan Hotel as a ‘home’, their stand-alone togetherness also adds a sentimental footnote to Hatsue’s dream about an unreachable hometown (toward the end, the documentary suggests that the old couple had to succumb to their failing health while coping with the
changes in Tokyo itself, however gradual). This is probably why Hatsue’s favourite Chinese song, ‘When Will You Come Again’ (*Heri jun zailai*, in Mandarin), originally performed by the legendary film star/singer Zhou Xuan from Shanghai, is played as the ending theme. The song is about regrets of missed encounters with loved ones, lamenting the constant changes and the transience of life. It is a tune of unhappiness if we agree with Ackbar Abbas that unhappiness is not a state of mind but ‘describes the structure of a space and time that is out of joint’ (Abbas 2010: 25).

Towards a Chinese-in-Japan Cinema

In the BBC documentary *100 Years of Japanese Cinema* (*Nihon eiga no hyaku nen*, 1995), Japanese filmmaker Oshima Nagisa ends his expansive yet provocative observation of the cinematic century by commenting that ‘the greatest visible change with modern Japanese cinema is the emergence of non-Japanese who reside in Japan’. Drawing on the *zainichi* Korean filmmaker Sai Yōichi and the latter’s *All Under the Moon* (*Tsuki wa dochi ni dete iru*, 1993) as his final example, Oshima even predicts that ‘as the number of non-Japanese in this country continues to grow at an astounding rate, this change would undoubtedly have a profound effect on Japanese cinema’.

Here it is worth recalling that after Li Ying’s *2H* won the Asian Film Award from NETPAC (The Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) as a Japanese entry in 1999, the filmmaker was shocked that the Japanese mainstream news report about this work hardly mentioned the fact that the film was directed by a *zainichi chūgokujin*, with *zainichi chūgokujin* as protagonists, and speaks the Chinese language/dialects (Li 2009: 26–27; also personal interview with Li). Li saw this ignorance itself as a further indication of how little Japan was interested in other Asian cultures and their people, even when these foreigners were already playing active roles within Japan’s socio-cultural sphere. It was Li’s puzzlement over how Japan has distanced itself from ‘Asia’ that led to his next project *Yasukuni*, a film profoundly connected with Li’s own diasporic positionality.

It is important to point out that this chapter does not approach Chinese-in-Japan cinema as if it is already a well-established body of film practices as well as discourses as diverse and rich as *zainichi* cinema (see Dew 2016; also Ko 2016). The aim is not to argue for a similarly ‘comparable’ strand of *zainichi chūgokujin* cinema per se. Rather, ‘Chinese-in-Japan cinema’ is tentatively proposed here as a critical heuristic to survey an array of diasporic Sinophone filmmaking practices as well as discursive articulations.
that are closely associated with the Chinese-in-Japan subjectivity and their diasporic experiences.

Several problems have foregrounded my critical engagement with Chinese-in-Japan cinema. First, Chinese-in-Japan cinema raises the question of representation and self-representation regarding the film images of Chinese-in-Japan, if we refer to Oliver Dew’s useful agenda in his studies on zainichi cinema (Dew 2016: 1). Historical studies in Japanese, English, and Chinese highlighting film works by the Manchurian Motion Picture Production and Distribution Co. (Manshū Eiga Kyōkai, or Man’ei) have provided fertile ground to survey the representation of the colonized Chinese/Manchurian people as imperial subjects (see Baskett 2008; Ryū 2011, 2016). Griseldis Kirsch might have proffered one of the most comprehensive accounts regarding the screen representation of Chinese-in-Japan characters in Japanese TV dramas and films (mainly fictional) during the period spanning from 1989 to 2005. She has categorized, somewhat too neatly, these zainichi chūgokujin characters into her quartet of representational patterns, each of which indexes how Japan has been imagining ‘China’ against a backdrop of changing Sino-Japanese power relations as the PRC gained increasing socio-economic leverage since the end of Cold War. Nonetheless, with no interest in examining the very constructedness of ‘China’ from historical and geopolitical perspectives, Kirsch seems to have invented these patterns to only allow the on-screen zainichi character roles to contest ‘Japanese homogeneity’ as another homogenous collective itself, namely as the Other. She has failed to examine whether Japanese TV and film productions have approached the ‘Chineseness’ differently when they engaged the zainichi from the three Chinas and beyond.

Second, and more importantly, despite my focus on several Chinese-in-Japan filmmakers/image-makers who have ventured into independent film and TV productions in Japan from around the mid-1990s and have followed disparate creative trajectories, the historical genealogy of Chinese-in-Japan filmmaking has not been comprehensively studied. Regrettably, little is understood regarding the history of image-making by previous generations of kakyō, kajin, or other Sinophone groups prior to the emergence of the

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19 According to Kirsch, in the first pattern, the Chinese are represented as the marginalized group in need of help and support; A second cultural trope highlights China as the ‘vision of horror’ (Kirsch 2015: 55); the third pattern nevertheless responds to the PRC’s miraculous economic growth and Japan’s economic downturn in the 1990s, which in turn registers China and its tradition as the source of salvation and energy. Finally Kirsch looks at characters who are of rather mixed ethnic/national identities and whose international backgrounds could potentially create heterogeneous cultural space for Japanese society.
'new overseas Chinese' filmmakers like Li. It would also be crucial to see whether, as is the case with several Chinese-in-Japan filmmakers mentioned above, their zairyu status can be sometimes transitional and fluid so that they do not necessarily have to base themselves in Japan to continue their filmmaking careers.

It is with the above-outlined limitations in mind that I turn to several examples of contemporary Chinese-in-Japan films (including TV productions) as part of my concluding remarks. It should be stressed that the emergence of these independently produced works coincided with – and should be situated within – the post-studio era of Japanese cinema, wherein independent productions have become the ‘norm’ in the film industry since the 1990s, with major film studios shifting their roles and reshuffling their infrastructural configurations and industrial agendas (see Wada-Marciano 2012). Among these independently produced Chinese-in-Japan works, there are also films similar to Li Ying’s diasporic, accented filmmaking. For instance, Ren Shujian (b. 1975) came to Japan in 1998 and studied filmmaking at the Japan Academy of Moving Images (Nihon Eiga Daigaku). His debut feature, *My Lyrical Times* (*Watashitachi no jojō tekina jidai*, 2009), which won him two awards at the domestically run Pia Film Festival in 2009, looked at the zainichi chūgokujin community from the perspective of an overseas student from the PRC, Zhao, which also juxtaposes stories about migrants from other Asian countries. In *Summer Vacation in North Korea* (*Kitachōsen no natsuyasumi*, 2005), a diary film narrated by the filmmaker himself in Mandarin, Ren joins a group tour with northeastern Chinese tourists and records his everyday encounters along their North Korean trip.

Li Ying is not an exception among Chinese-in-Japan filmmakers who have turned to people like the Japanese repatriates, including zanryū kojin, zanryū fujin, and their second (nisei) or third (sansei) generations, whose senses of belonging are arguably caught ‘in between’ China and Japan, despite their Japanese nationality (Kirsch 2015: 118-120). Among the auteurist-oriented zainichi chūgokujin filmmakers, one could also mention Ban Zhongyi, whose documentaries such as *Gaishanxi and Her Sisters* (*Gaishanxi he tade jiemei*, 2007) and *Give me the Sun* (*Taiyo ga Hoshii*, 2016) have evidenced

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20 In Feng Yan’s 1997 TV documentary *A Long Journey Back Home: Stranded War Wives and Their Families’ Journeys* (*Kokyō karukani: Chūgoku zanryū fujin kazoku no tabiji*), produced and broadcast by Kansai Television, for instance, she turned her camera to families of the stranded war wives and war orphans who returned to Japan from a remote town in Heilongjiang province (in former Manchuria). Another filmmaker who was studying in Japan was Ji Dan (between 1988-1992). Also refer to Sato Ken’s discussions on both female filmmakers (in Japanese) (K. Sato 2019).
his decade-long efforts collecting and archiving the verdicts of Chinese ‘comfort women’ (wei’anfu).  

On the other hand, there are more commercially viable works, such as A Guide of the Sleepless Town (Kabukicho annaijin, 2004) by Chinese-in-Japan filmmaker Zhang Jiabei, a film that is loosely based on Chinese migrant Li Xiaomu’s semi-autobiography about his own ‘success’ story in transforming himself from a ‘newcomer’ from South China into a veteran ‘Kabukicho guide’ in Japan’s most infamous red light district of Kabukicho in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Meanwhile, directed by the Chinese-in-Japan TV director Zhang Liling, Persisting with Tears in Eyes (Hanlei huozhe; Japanese title: Nakinagara ikite) chronicles the 15 years of struggle of its protagonist, Old Ding (Ding Shangbiao) as an illegal migrant in Japan, separated from his family in Shanghai and working hard to earn money for his daughter’s overseas studies. Highly acclaimed by domestic audiences in Japan when it was aired on Fuji TV, Persisting with Tears in Eyes had its theatrical release in Japanese theatres in 2009 (Wang 2012).  

Labelling himself as a ‘film drifter’, Lim Kah-Wai (Lin Jiawei, b. 1973), a Chinese-Malaysian filmmaker, has exemplified a more flexible, fluid positioning travelling in between China (Hong Kong and Macau), Malaysia, and Japan to have his projects produced and therefore located. Having majored in engineering at Osaka University, after graduation, Lim quit his job at a Japanese company and studied filmmaking at Beijing Film Academy before deciding to return to Japan (see K.-W. Lim 2014). Before his commercial attempt with Love in Late Autumn (Aizaishenqiu, 2016) with Hong Kong’s Emperor Film Production, Lim was closely associated with the Japanese independent cinema circle (see Kotzathanasis 2017). In his earlier low-budget features, such as After All These Years (Qihou, 2010), New World (Shin Sekai, 2011), and Fly me to Minami (Koisuru minami, 2013) – three films that he calls the ‘ Stateless Trilogy’ (mukokuseki sanbusaku) – Lim seems to show interest in exploring the romantic encounters of young urbanites

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21 For more, refer to Ban Zhongyi’s monographs (Ban 1992, 1996).  
22 As an annaijin, Li usually escorted customers to ‘bars, restaurants, strip shows, night clubs, porn shops’; and since he made his own annaijin stories known through the publication of a series of (semi-)autobiographies, for instance (see Asakura 2002), Li has been often featured in news reports, television interviews, and so forth. A 2016 documentary I Want to Run for Office (Senkyo ni detai) by Chinese filmmaker Xing Fei (who got her MA degrees in Japan and the UK) chronicles Li Xiaomu’s new challenge in life campaigning for the Shinjuku Ward Assembly election as a politician, for which he had become Lee Komaki, after being naturalized as a Japanese citizen.  
23 The finale was released in 2009 under the same title.
who are from different national, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds in Asian cosmopolitan cities such as Osaka, Hong Kong, and Seoul.

I believe the emergence of Chinese-in-Japan cinema in the contemporary setting is not simply indicative of the inherent yet often underestimated heterogeneity and diversity within ‘Japanese cinema’ itself, as predicted by Oshima decades ago. Crucially, it also opens up Japanese film culture to the various assemblages of regional and global film cultures. Moreover, as E.K. Tan has illustrated, the Sinophone’s ‘dialogue with the national, be it China or the settler societies, cannot be overlooked, even in a postnational, deessentialized, non-China-centric discourse’ (Tan 2013b: 21). This project of mine then seeks to contribute a different perspective to the ongoing debates on Sinophone cinema studies vis-à-vis Chinese-language cinema studies (see Zhang 2016; Yue & Khoo 2014; Shih et al. 2013; Lu 2007). I use the dialectics of ‘im/possibility’ to explore the minor status of Chinese-in-Japan films and filmmakers in the studies of Sino-Japanese transnational cinema and film cultures in order to draw attention to the absence of a Sinophone perspective in the historiography of Sino-Japanese film exchanges (DeBoer 2014; Ryū 2011, 2016b). This book hopes to spark such discussions.

Works Cited


