Independent Filmmaking across Borders in Contemporary Asia

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Published by Amsterdam University Press

Ma, Ran.
Independent Filmmaking across Borders in Contemporary Asia.
Amsterdam University Press, 2019.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/71339.

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Okinawan Dream Show

Approaching Okinawa in Moving Image Works into the New Millennium

Abstract
This chapter deals with the oeuvre of Okinawan filmmaker Takamine Gō and video artist Yamashiro Chikako, with an emphasis on the former’s feature *Queer Fish Lane* (*Hengyoro*, 2016). Taking as a point of departure Gilles Deleuze’s framework of time-image, which underpins his explication of modern political cinema, this chapter examines how Takamine has experimented with textual strategies and forms of expression in configuring the ‘stratigraphic image’ apropos of Okinawa, wherein the boundaries between the actual and the virtual and between the real and the imagined are blurred. Meanwhile, I also turn to Yamashiro Chikako’s recent narrative-oriented video works that have been intricately connected to the legacies of the Battle of Okinawa and the current waves of protests against the US military bases on the islands.

Keywords: time-image, stratigraphic image, modern political cinema, fabulation, appropriation

[...] when it comes to Okinawa, since ‘the Disposition of Ryūkyū’ (Ryūkyū shobun) in the Meiji Era, it is obvious that historical events such as the Battle of Okinawa, US military rule, and the reversion to Japan, together with all the problematics that people have encountered – all of them are closely associated with the ‘place’ called Okinawa and people's identities. Moreover, attention should be paid to the fact that identity is something that has been awakened

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1 Unless otherwise indicated, all Japanese to English translations are mine. My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Kosuke Fujiki for his insightful, sharp comments and revision suggestions for this chapter; I am also grateful for his immeasurable help with some of the precious image resources and for his meticulous, brilliant translations of the *uchinā guchi* materials and proofreading of the Japanese language material.

Ma, Ran, *Independent Filmmaking across Borders in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press 2020

doi: 10.5117/9789462986640_CH05
at the time of crisis, that is, when people are forced to respond to the state of emergency and harsh realities, they need to construct a ‘place’ called Okinawa which they could base their own existence upon.

(quoted in T. Takamine et al. 2018: 25-26)

Okamoto Keitoku

Prologue: Okinawa, Rage, and Tears...

On 15 May 1972, Okinawa was ‘returned’ to Japan after its 27-year rule under the US government – first under the United States Military Government of the Ryūkyū Islands (1945-1950), and then under the United States Civil Administration of the Ryūkyū Islands (Ryūkyū Rettō Beikoku Min Seifu, or USCAR, 1950-1972). For historian Arasaki Moriteru, Okinawa ‘has been a historically and culturally unique place that both is and is not Japan’ (Arasaki 2014: 50; emphasis in original). Sociologist Oguma Eiji points out that studies on the Okinawan people, who have been socially and spatially on the periphery of Japan, contribute to reconsidering the boundaries of Japanese identity. He proposes that “the Japanese” are constructed in concert with the construction of “the Okinawans” and the setting of boundaries between them’ (Oguma 2014: 352).

Waves of anti-base protest movements in Okinawa re-emerged in the latter half of the 1990s (see Oguma), which have their roots in the ‘historical intertwining of Japanese and American imperialism’ (Dietz 2016: 219). Into the new millennium, these undercurrents and movements have been fuelled by the controversial US-Japanese agreement to relocate the Futenma airbase northward to the bay area near Henoko. As part of the ‘solution’, new landfill projects for the US military facilities had been planned and launched.² If, as Arasaki has suggested, ‘the Okinawan problem is the military base problem, especially the US bases’ (Arasaki 2014: 48; emphasis in original), this raises

² Around the turn of the millennium, Okinawa witnessed waves of political eruptions directly resulting from the controversial agreement in 2006 between the US and Japanese governments regarding the relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) from Futenma to the less congested northern bay area in Henoko, a village that currently hosts the US Marine Corps’ Camp Schwab (est. 1959). As part of the relocation plan, the construction of offshore landfill for future US military facilities near Henoko was approved in 2013 by the then governor of Okinawa. Ever since, the protests and demonstrations against the US base have been fuelled not only by the Japanese government’s approval of the Henoko landfill project but also by reports that new helicopter landing pads were scheduled to be built in Takae, a village located at the northernmost tip of the island that hosts one of the US military training grounds.
the question regarding how to better understand the *politics* of Okinawan images, and how Okinawa-on-screen is related to the islands’ history as well as its socio-political urgencies today.

In the Japanese Academy Award-winning ensemble drama, *Rage (Ikari, 2016)* by Lee Sang-il (a third-generation *zainichi* Korean filmmaker), the episode taking place in Okinawa not only features the anti-base protest, the real tragedy happens when the female teenaged protagonist is gang-raped by anonymous American soldiers, while her male friend, who is witnessing her suffering, can only turn his back on the scene because of shock, anger, and fear. Whereas Okinawa and its outlying islands evoke layered traumatic memories profoundly associated with the islands’ entangled history tragically underwritten by the Battle of Okinawa, I suggest that this mystery story only uses ‘Okinawa’ as its background and the crime scene. However, I would also point out that Lee’s approach to Okinawa, though not intended to be controversial, indirectly addresses the actual mass protests about Henoko as well as the crimes of the US Marines and reminds viewers of the inconvenient ‘Okinawan Problem’, which is rarely touched upon in Japanese mainstream media and cinema.

Given how the images of unrest in Okinawa have been carefully mediated, censored and self-censored, and even become absent from mainstream, commercial Japanese films, it is understandable how the controversial issues around ‘Futenma’, ‘Henoko’, and ‘Takae’ have been predominantly featured in documentaries independently produced (and distributed). For instance, *We Shall Overcome (Ikusaba nu tudumi, 2015)* is the third documentary feature by the Okinawa-based television journalist/filmmaker Mikami Chie. Narrated in first-person voiceover (by Okinawa-born singer-songwriter Cocco), the work chronicles the struggles of several local Henoko/Takae protesters and

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3 The Battle of Okinawa (1 April to 23 June 1945) is arguably the most traumatic event in Okinawan history and the most controversial site of remembrance in contemporary Okinawa. According to Andrew Gorden, ‘By the time the United States took the island in June, the fighting had taken 12,500 American lives and left a stunning toll of 250,000 Japanese dead (including 150,000 civilians)’ (Gorden 2003: 223).

4 As Mikami Chie’s 2012 documentary *Targeted Village (Hyōteki no mura, 2012)* showed, even though the anti-base protesters blocked the gate of Futenma base for four consecutive days in 2012 (starting from 28 September), news about the blockage was not broadcast in the national mainstream media (newspaper and TV). For more on the deeply divided stances apropos the base-related conflictual issues between Okinawa’s local news and broadcasters and their Tokyo counterparts, see Gushiken (2017).

5 Prior to *We Shall Overcome*, Mikami’s *Targeted Village* specifically looks at the plight of the village of Takae, where the construction of helipads was scheduled by the Japanese government. Significant documentaries on the Okinawan problem also include but are not limited to John Junkerman’s *Okinawa: The Afterburn (Okinawa: Urizun no ame, 2015)*.
their groups (as well as their families) who have played an active role in the anti-base movement until they celebrated the victorious election toward the end of 2014 of a new anti-base governor of Okinawa prefecture (Onaga Takeshi, who passed away in 2018 while in office).6 Impressive sequences include those captured by hidden cameras and Go-Pro devices that witness how some of the younger generations’ campaigners/activists, during their ‘sit-in-on-the-sea’ on kayaks, were brutally confronted by the Japan Coast Guard (Kaijō Hoan-chō) and forced to retreat. Overall, one sees how this documentary seeks to evoke among its sympathetic spectators a strong sense of identification with the protestors, through close-ups of innocent smiles, clenched fists, and tearful eyes in addition to the emotionally scripted narration.

I argue that it would nevertheless be too arbitrary to assume that Lee's *Rage* is depoliticized, whereas Mikami’s *We Shall Overcome*, characterized by its anti-base sentiments, proffers a better example of dissensual art. To understand the politics of images concerning Okinawa today, one needs to move beyond the facile categorizations of commercial genres and socially engaged documentaries, types that do not exhaust all the varieties and aesthetic styles concerning Okinawa-on-screen. Instead of a comprehensive study on the representation of Okinawa in moving image works from Japan into the new millennium, this chapter mainly focuses on the works of veteran filmmaker Takamine Gō (b. 1948) and video artist Yamashiro Chikako (b. 1976), with an emphasis on the former.

What makes their works significant, I shall argue, is not simply the image-makers’ identities as ‘Okinawan descendants’ – Takamine was born on the outlying island of Ishigaki, and Yamashiro is from Naha, the capital city of Okinawa prefecture. In juxtaposing their works, the intention is not to compare the two; nor do I want to suggest that Yamashiro’s background in contemporary art and the exhibitionary apparatus for her video works (mostly through gallery installations) should be approached in the same way as Takamine’s films, even though the two artists have collaborated together

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6 What cannot be further elaborated here is the social history of modern Okinawa since WWII, and particularly the period from the 1990s into the twenty-first century. Okinawa-based independent journal *Ekkyō Hiroba* published a special issue in November 2018 titled *‘Dokokara, dokoe: Fukkigo Okinawa no tenkanten’* [From Where to Where: The Turning Points of Post-Reversion Okinawa], which used Onaga’s (untimely) death as a departure point to examine Okinawa’s socio-historical and cultural trajectories since 1972. The issues around the relocation agreement, far from being settled, are still featured prominently in Okinawa’s social life today. In February 2019, a referendum was held in Okinawa asking voters whether they approved or opposed the landfill project at Henoko Bay, and it turned out that more than 70% voted no to the base. Refer to *The Japan Times* reports on the referendum (Johnston 2019).
on Takamine’s *Queer Fish Lane* (*Hengyoro*, 2016; I shall refer to the work with its Japanese title in this chapter). It is nevertheless important to point out that Takamine debuted with an 8-mm short film titled *Red Man* in 1970 which reflects the heavy influence of American independent and experimental cinema as well as the domestic trends of experimental, avant-garde cinema/filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s. Particularly, he was inspired by the works of Lithuanian-American avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas (see Nakazato 2007). *Hengyoro*, the film that will be closely analyzed in this chapter, still carries strong experimental momentum. Yamashiro was also an art student who was trained in oil painting. Since finishing her studies, she has been more into photography, performance, video installation, and film. Performance and the artist’s use of her own body feature prominently in Yamashiro’s videos, especially her earlier works (see Suzuki 2008). However, her recent works such as *the Beginning of Creation: Abduction/A Child* (*Sōzō no hottan: Abudakushon/kodomo*, 2015) and *Woman of the Butcher Shop* (*Nikuya no onna*, 2012) were selected by the 2017 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, demonstrating Yamashiro’s ambition to go beyond the conceptual framework in further pursuing narrativity (see Gerow 2017; Yamashiro et al. 2017). In this study, my attention is focused on how Takamine and Yamashiro’s works have contributed to a rethinking of the dissensual politics and aesthetics relating to contemporary Okinawan image and visual culture.

**Okinawa-on-Screen: Beyond Representation**

**Movement-Image, Time-Image, and National Identity**

It is well known that Gilles Deleuze’s thesis on time-image was formulated upon his observations mainly about post-WWII European cinema. In the

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7 The development of Japanese experimental and underground cinema in the 1960s and 1970s cannot be further detailed here. I shall argue that the evolvement of Japanese experimental cinema and underground filmmaking (*angura* in Japanese) intersected with what is often researched as ‘avant-garde’ cinema, and the practices of the former also significantly extended to and overlapped with those in contemporary art (see Furuhata 2013; also see *Japanese Expanded Cinema Revisited* 2017). Film critic Nishimura Tomohiro nevertheless points out that ‘avant-garde’ was used ‘even before the World Wars’. According to him, ‘from around the mid-50s, the term “experimental cinema” emerged [and] about ten years later, the term “underground cinema” became popular’ (Nishimura & Nishikawa 2015: 32–33).

8 Yamashiro also co-directed (with Sunagawa Atsushi) a short film titled *Unju nu hanamichi* (*The Path of Kumiodori*) in 2013, a project funded by the Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCVB).
simplest terms, in movement-image, time is indirectly represented, manipulated, and modified through, for instance, the techniques of continuity editing, wherein the movement is necessarily spatialized and made coherent through the mediation of an acting protagonist’s body. By contrast, time-image envisions a model of time as the ‘labyrinth without centre’, wherein ‘movement is no longer the measure of time and the imagining of time is released from its subordination to the sensory-motor action’ (Maimon 2010: 86). As suggested, this labyrinthine model conceptualizes time in a pattern of infinitely bifurcating, forking paths onto which are closely knitted the actual (the present that passes) and the virtual (the past that preserves itself). As such, the present does not relate to the past or the future in a coherent, causal, teleological manner.

David Martin-Jones has proposed how the two interrelated, interlacing models of time – namely ‘the straight line (the movement-image) and the labyrinth (the time-image)’ – shed light on how national history and national identity can be discursively constructed and aesthetically approached in cinema. Dialoguing with Judith Butler’s early theories on identity, Martin-Jones has turned to Homi Bhabha, who grasped ‘the essential question of the representation of the nation as a temporal process’ (Bhabha 2004: 204; emphasis mine). Bhabha, in his chapter of ‘DissemiNation’ illustrated how the nation is narrated in ‘double time’:

In the production of the nation as narration, there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation (ibid.: 297; emphasis in original).

To put it differently, as Martin-Jones elucidates, the pedagogical discourse of national time ‘aimed to establish one dominant view of national history, and identity’, wherein ‘its linearity is based upon the ability to make the present appear to be a repetition of the past, a repetition of the same that guarantees the status of official history as a singular truth’ (Martin-Jones 2007: 33). Meanwhile, whereas the pedagogical discourse assumes that the population performs the national identity as the repetition of the same (hence the match between the past and the present), the very process of the performance itself is embedded within ‘the scraps, patches and rags of daily life’ that ‘must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture’ (Bhabha 2004: 209). That is to say, paradoxically, it is in everyday life that the resurgence of differences ‘constantly threatens to erupt and unground’ the illusory
coherence and linearity of the narration (Martin-Jones 2007: 34). Therefore, identity undergoes constant renegotiation and re-territorialization to close a disparity ‘between an “us” and a “not us”’ along the axis of temporality, while repeatedly replacing its origin in the past’ (ibid.: 34). Here it may be helpful to look at Bhabha’s ‘double time’, which signifies a process of ‘de- and reterritorialisation of national identity’ (Martin-Jones 2006: 27) in referring to the case of Okinawa. In his socio-historical studies, for instance, Oguma has examined how the Japanese state has approached and articulated ‘Okinawa’ differently in relation to the ‘Japanese’ under different historical contexts, wherein ‘acceptance and exclusion were mechanisms used as a symbolic boundary process that acted to differentiate between “us” and “them”’ (Oguma 2014: 352-353; also see Doak 2007).

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to note that in a different context, Martin-Jones has suggested that to apply the Deleuzian film theories to world cinema or ‘Othered cinemas’ does not mean to perpetuate ‘the Eurocentric conclusions of the Cinema books’ (Martin-Jones 2011: 7). A critical reinvigoration of Deleuze’s works, as he suggests, requires us to go ‘beyond Deleuze’s choice of filmic examples to rethink his conclusions’ so that these ‘Othered films can “talk back” to existing theories’ (ibid.: 8). Specifically, he has underscored the importance of contextualizing the understanding of time-image by situating it within specific national (cinema) cultures and visual regimes. I propose that the emergence of Okinawa’s time-image, while responding to ‘a cultural sense of disorder and unpredictability’ (Rodowick 1997: 16) as other strands of time-image do, indeed draws our attention to Okinawa’s fraught history since WWII, particularly in relation to the traumatic experiences of the Battle of Okinawa, the islands’ socio-cultural movements of independence and reversion in the postwar era, and the persisting problem of the US military base.

Here the intention is not to make the simplistic claim that in contemporary Japanese cinema, Okinawa’s movement-image is merely associated with the commercial, generic productions and the time-image with the arthouse, independent cinema. With the lensing of time-image, I aim to turn to temporality or the question of time as a crucial point of entry to examine Okinawa-on-screen.

Narrating Okinawa/Japan: Genealogies

Having mapped out a genealogy of Okinawa-on-screen, Aaron Gerow proposed that ‘representing Okinawa in film’ is ‘itself a site of struggle between conflicting forces’, given how Okinawa may function ‘as a productive space
for negotiating identities that have come into crisis in the post-bubble, post-Aum Shinrikyo Japan’ (Gerow 2003: 274). He approaches the filmic representations by analyzing the ‘gaze(s)’ upon Japan’s other, particularly regarding how Okinawa has been approached in ‘the nationalist mode of knowing and the nihilism of detachment’ by Japanese (Okinawan) auteurs. To be more specific, the nationalist mode functions ‘within a dynamic of the sameness and difference of Okinawans and Japanese’ (ibid.: 278). In this strand, Gerow for instance examines earlier works such as The Tower of Lilies (Himeyuri no tō, 1953) by the leftist filmmaker Imai Tadashi9 and Imamura Shōhei’s ethnographical work The Profound Desire of the Gods (Kamigami no fukaki yokubō, 1968), which in Gerow’s view used Okinawa to articulate Japanese national identity, in tandem with films characterized by a ‘touristic vision’ – namely those emphasizing the spectacular otherness of the island. The other mode of detachment, as Gerow attests, is best manifested in films directed by zainichi Korean filmmaker Sai Yōichi and the TV-celebrity-turned-filmmaker Kitano Takeshi (e.g. Fireworks/Hana-Bì; Boiling Point/3-4x10-gatsu, 1990; Sonatine/Sonachine, 1993).10

In her study, Mika Ko looks at films within Gerow’s nationalist and tourist mode with an aim to critique the ‘cosmetic operation of Japanese multiculturalism’ (Ko 2010: 91). In a similar stance to that of Arasaki, Ko suggests that ‘it seems to be problematic both to include Okinawa in Japan and to exclude it from Japan, as, in either case, it is politics that determines Okinawa’s status’ (ibid.: 65, emphasis in original). Here she has specifically explored how ‘Okinawa’ has been ‘otherised’ and consumed in popular Japanese imaginary. For instance, in Japanese commercial films and media works that are set in Okinawa (not necessarily shot on location in some occasions), the islands may be constructed as the places for escape and healing (see I. Hein).11 According to Ko, ‘in order to understand the current

9  *Himeyuri*, or the flower known as the ‘princess lily’, has become integral to the narrative of the Battle of Okinawa. It is always connected to the Himeyuri Corps, a group of over 200 female students from the upper class (they were studying at the leading Okinawa Daiichi Women’s High School and Okinawa Shihan Women’s School) who were recruited into a nursing unit for the Imperial Army. Most of the girls were killed on the battlefield. Imai Tadashi’s 1953 film tells the story of the Himeyuri Corps students (see Angst 1997).

10 Among Sai’s works, many were set in Okinawa, which include Rest in Peace My Friend (Tomo yo, shizuka ni nemure, 1985), Via Okinawa (A-Sain deizu, 1989), Attack (Shūgeki, 1991), and Pig’s Revenge (Buta no mukui, 1999). Sai’s 1984 feature, Someone Will Be Killed (Itsuka dareka ga korosareru) features a diasporic Okinawan. Last but not least, Sai’s Kamui (Kamui gaiden, 2009), though not a film about Okinawa, was filmed there.

11 As Ina Hein illustrates, the 1990s witnessed the so-called Okinawa boom emerging in Japanese popular culture and permeated the national media-scape. And yet, although positive images of
political situation in Okinawa, paying attention to what is not presented may be as important as (or sometimes more important than) paying attention to what is presented’ (2010: 85, emphasis in original). This suggests that the politics of image indeed interrelates with a mode of appearance regarding how to draw and redraw the line between what is visible and what is invisible and for whom. I shall return to this point later.

It is intriguing that in their short historiography of Okinawa’s postwar cinematic representations, both Gerow (2003) and Ko (2006, 2010) have highlighted fictional works such as Untamagirū (1989) and Tsuru-Henry (1998) by Takamine Gō, implying that Takamine’s oeuvre has registered an alternative mode of approaching Okinawa-on-screen. Ko goes further to consider Takemine’s oeuvre in terms of ‘a possible Okinawan cinema’, which invites (national) allegorical interpretations (2006). For Gerow, Takamine's images have successfully challenged ‘the dominant representations of Okinawan identity’ by ‘using representational strategies to contest and reshape definitions of that identity’ (2003: 297). Before I move on to scrutinize Hengyoro to better engage the critiques above, I suggest that Takamine’s works can be approached as time-image that, while having ungrounded the narration of Japanese national identity, has also resisted fixating itself with an essentialized Okinawan identity, as the Other. That is, his works have gone beyond the symbolic signification and authentic ‘representation’ of Okinawa, its people, their collective identities, and the ‘Okinawan problem’, if representation is understood here as ‘a form of thought that is based on notions of resemblance, truth, and identity’ (Maimon 2010: 85).

Here, one cannot help but realize that in his mapping, Gerow refrains from deploying any Deleuzian terms but actually foregrounds a survey of Okinawa’s movement-image regarding how it is characterized by two dominant, sometimes overlapping visual styles (in addition to the detached alternative): a vernacular version of classical Hollywood style and a visually tantalizing and spectacular type. Gerow’s careful analysis of some mainstream works, for instance, suggests that Okinawa's movement-image has not essentially disturbed or redistributed what is visible and speakable about Okinawa/Okinawan people, given how the nationalist mode ‘renders otherness readable, understandable, and part of the familiar world of conventional distinctions between self and other’ (Gerow 2003: 275). And the detached

Okinawa were widely circulated, the sometimes stereotypical and exoticized representations might also have obfuscated how people engage the prefecture’s social discontents into the 2000s (see I. Hein 2010).
style, arguably, while somehow liberating the inhabitants of Okinawa from pedagogical processes or, in Gerow’s terms, ‘from cinematic processes that assume knowledge of Okinawa and tie it into mainland assumptions about cultural essence, homogeneity, and national identity’, actually still risks creating ‘a version of “us” (the viewers) versus “them” (the Okinawans being viewed)’ (ibid.: 296).

To advance the discussion about aesthetics and politics, I also shift the lens to Deleuze’s thesis on modern political cinema, which for the philosopher concerns a situation that ‘the people no longer exist, or not yet [...] the people are missing’ (Deleuze 1989: 216). Deleuze explains how the people no longer emerge and exist as a unified revolutionary subject. Or, as perceptively interpreted by Vered Maimon, ‘what is missing’ is actually ‘the organic formation of the collective, a process that is presented as identical to the teleological unfolding (or progressive linear movement) of history, and more concretely the history of the revolution’ (Maimon 2010: 86). In Maimon’s terms, Deleuze finds problematic classical political cinema’s emphasis on the ‘organic totality and legibility’ (ibid.), regarding how the classical model conforms to ‘the idea that the collective has a pre-given identity as the people are always already there, “real before being actual, ideal without being abstract”’ (quoted in ibid.).

We may return to Mikami’s We Shall Overcome to interrogate the conundrum of classical political cinema. Despite its pronounced political stance in interweaving local memories of the Battle of Okinawa and ongoing waves of protests in Henoko today, in We Shall Overcome, the struggles are portrayed as a highly emotional, sometimes spectacular tug of war between ‘us’ (the ‘Okinawan people’) and ‘them’ (the Japanese state and the American military power). The resistant images of Okinawa have been built upon a teleological narrative about the island’s history of subordination and suppression since WWII, wherein the ‘Okinawan people’ have been represented as an organic, historically consistent collective. Yet what has been only occasionally mentioned if not excluded in the construction of the ‘people’ within Mikami’s oeuvre is Okinawans who do not show up at the mass demonstrations and who even endorse the relocation of the bases (even if their issues and reluctance were briefly brought up in the documentary). When it comes to the ‘people’, how about the ‘internal disparity and discrimination’ within the Okinawans themselves (Oguma 2014: 355)? Wouldn’t the exclusion/inclusion of these non-protesters and onlookers exactly define how a ‘people’ could be configured and imagined (see Inoue 2012)? Not intending to downplay the significance of Mikami’s anti-base series per se, I consider that they have so far mostly satisfied
Japanese leftist filmmakers’ political imagination in envisioning Okinawa as a potential space to contest and a tool to critique state power and American imperialism.

With the above discussions in mind, I shall turn to Takamine’s works, with an emphasis on *Hengyoro*. With the Deleuzian idea of time-image and particularly of stratigraphic image, one could understand how Takamine’s films seek to create an interplay between the actual and the virtual and blur the boundaries between reality, imagination, and memories in falsifying and multiplying – if not disrupting – the singular, teleological narrative of the Japanese nation.

**Okinawan Dream Show**

For cultural critic Nakazato Isao, the works of Takamine Gō do not belong to the category of *Nihon eiga* (Japanese cinema) (Nakazato 2007: 214). In 1969, prior to Okinawa’s ‘reversion’ to Japan, Takamine won himself a scholarship as an ‘overseas student’ to study oil painting in mainland Japan and has since based himself in Kyoto. So far, Takamine has had a majority of his works independently produced, and most of them are not widely circulated or exhibited beyond the domestic arthouse theatres and various film festivals.12

In a piece explaining his earlier works, Takamine expressed, ‘For me, to have my film shot in Okinawa is closely related to my filmmaking. Cinema and Okinawa are like two sides of the same coin. It is not like you only approach Okinawa as a motif or theme, but to film Okinawa in itself should be completely equated with what cinema is all about. For me, there is no cinema without Okinawa, and no Okinawa without cinema’ (quoted in Takamine Gō Eiga Koten Jikkō Iinkai). The filmmaker here is not aspiring for mimetic art, say, in representing Okinawa in its organic totality and authenticity, which for him would run the risk of reducing it to symbols, stereotypes, or in his own terms, motifs or themes. His art is arguably about how to move beyond representation, a tendency that also underlines Takamine’s discussions of landscape.

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12 *Untamagirū* might be an exception among Takamine’s independent productions, which was funded by PARCO Co., Ltd., one of the mega retail companies in Japan that has been running its own entertainment branch. *Okinawa Island Songs Echoing in The Parisian Sky* (*Mugen ryūkyū: Okinawa shimauta pari no sora ni hibiku*, 2003) is also an exception, which was produced by and aired on NHK.
Referring to the starting point of his filmmaking, his debut documentary feature *Okinawan Dream Show* (1974), which was shot on 8-mm film, Takamine elaborated:

The question of the Okinawan landscape (*Okinawa no fūkei*) does not concern political issues such as to have Okinawa symbolized, but the *landscape as it is* (*arinomama no fūkei sonomono*, emphasis mine). The landscape does not carry a core of its own, and there is *no hierarchy attached*, so there is no centre (in landscape) either. What has become important is my personal perspective. Leveraging this personal instead of a generalizing perspective, I could take a grip on the non-differentiation/equal value (*tōka-sei*) of the landscape.

For instance, on the one hand, there are the base, the blue sea and the market (a landscape that could be easily symbolized). They are not necessarily my concern, and I think I could turn the everyday and *chirudai* into films. If the everyday time cannot be tapped into, we cannot reach the real landscape. Of course, the Okinawan problem (*Okinawa mondai*) cannot be ignored, and I don't mean that works concerning the problem are no good, but human subjects as well as the politics are already contained in the landscape (quoted in Takamine Gō *Eiga Koten Jikkō Iinkai*).

Underlying ideas such as ‘personal perspective’, ‘landscape with no centre’, and the ‘equal value of landscape’, Takamine’s ‘theory of landscape’ is arguably one that seeks to configure ‘a self-speaking island’ by turning away from the representational tropes consisting of, for instance, ‘the base, the blue sea, and the market’, in order to resist the imaginary of a ‘symbolized Okinawa’, namely the consensual articulations apropos Okinawa-on-screen, such as those of the nationalist and the tourists (including the leftist intellectuals), if we return to Gerow’s mapping. Meanwhile, for Nakazato, the fact that Takamine went to study in Kyoto should also be taken into consideration along with the filmmaker’s translocal movements between ‘mainland’ Japan and his plural ‘hometowns’ (e.g. his birthplace, Kabira in Ishigaki, and Naha, the city where he was brought up) when analyzing his approach to Okinawan landscape (*fūkei*) and his ‘landscape films’ (*fūkei eiga*) (Nakazato 2007: 213-230). In search of the ‘non-differentiation/equal value’ or the *tōka-sei* of the landscape, I shall propose that Takamine has approached ‘Okinawa’ through/in its time-image.

13 Please refer to my explanation later for the meaning of the *uchinā guchi* term, ‘chirudai’.
5.1 8-mm image of an old lady and kids in *Okinawan Dream Show*

5.2 8-mm image of the street view in *Okinawan Dream Show*
Here we may turn to Okinawan Dream Show for better illustration. Takamine reminisced how he was making this documentary feature in the fashion of a road movie: together with his then sound recordist friend Tarugani, they toured around the islands on a Honda motorcycle as if they were the protagonists from Easy Rider (1969). Nakazato nonetheless explains how Okinawan Dream Show, which took Takamine almost four years to shoot and finalize (1971-1974), had been inspired by Jonas Mekas’ essay film, Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania (1972). Therefore, Takamine’s essay take was on the one hand profoundly personal: it cast a nostalgic gaze upon the filmmaker’s native island of Ishigaki and his families there as a way to memorialize his father who passed away around the time of its shooting. On the other hand, Takamine also used the documentary as a way to canvass the Okinawan landscape as it underwent the profound social transformation of the 1972 reversion (see Nakazato 2007: 227-229; G. Takamine & Nakazato 2003).

Grasping Okinawan Dream Show as a ‘landscape film’, Nakazato has however pointed out that the documentary turns to Okinawa’s everyday life without necessarily creating hierarchies between the profilmic objects and subjects. The mode of expression of this documentary is noteworthy in that it is an assemblage of observational long-takes (sometimes long shots) wherein the women, men, kids, the young, and the old appearing on the viewfinder are none other than wanderers, flaneurs, and passengers in life engaging in their mundane routines. Even though the film does capture figures acting whimsically and bizarrely (e.g. a man sitting on the street corner who seems to be talking to himself), the moment of encounter is so brief that it only reaffirms the filmmaker’s interest in the banality and contingency of the everyday. Both the urban view and the rural space in the documentary seem generic (despite the occasional appearance of some typical Ryūkyū-style stone walled villages), wherein one can hardly see any grand-scale, era-defining setting or imaginaries that help to distinguish Okinawa’s ongoing socio-historical transitions or its geopolitical conditions at the time of its shooting. Moreover, devoid of any diegetic monologues or dialogues, Okinawan Dream Show leverages no specific narrative devices to thread together the long takes and render the shot-to-shot interconnections meaningful. For instance, there is a sequence of a black American soldier who seems to be talking to the director, yet no clue is given about his story

14 In one of his earlier interviews, Takamine mentioned that he saw Mekas’ Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania in the fourth year after he started shooting Okinawan Dream Show, which inspired him to see that what he had been shooting for could be considered a film after all (see Nakazato 2007).
(unused part of this footage with the soldier would appear in *Hengyoro*).

Most importantly, as integral to Takamine’s negotiation with Okinawa’s idiosyncratic landscape (Toguchi 1992; Nakazato 2007), the 8-mm images were carefully edited and purposefully slowed down so that a loosened, diluted sense of time is made palpable. The unique rhythm of the film (mainly achieved through the editing) is interconnected with and reinforced by Takamine’s highly experimental soundscape, which assembles together traditional music (with the *sanshin*), folk songs, and multilingual radio tracks (e.g. recorded soundtracks from radio programmes). Accompanied by the mesmerizing soundtrack, what the audience is engaging with is some very contrived temporality – that is, a dream show.

The treatment of time can also be related to Takamine’s 1978 essay film *Okinawan Chirudai* (originally shot on 16-mm film, also known as *Okinawa no seinaru kedarusa* [The sacred lethargy of Okinawa]), a compilation of several stories. In this work, Takamine entertains the idea of *chirudai*, the dictionary definition of which refers to a type of physical, mental condition of feeling down, discouraged, and lethargic (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūsho: 163). But I would agree with what Nakazato suggests in contending that *chirudai* as a specific affectivity also signifies a different conceptualization
of time that is not necessarily delimited by the progressive, teleological temporality of the Japanese nation (Nakazato 2007).

Eighteen years after he made his last fictional feature, Tsuru-Henry in 1998, in 2016 Takamine came back with a new digital feature Hengyoro, which was premiered at the 2016 Aichi Triennale (the largest contemporary art exhibition in Japan). Instead of reviewing and canvassing Takamine’s creative career as a whole, which is beyond the focus of this chapter, I want to use Hengyoro to illustrate how the filmmaker’s textual strategy and form of expression can help us not only to understand his particular auteurist tendencies and trajectories but, more importantly, to rethink the dissensual potentialities of Okinawa’s contemporary images.

Island Voyages: Travelling in Time

It is noteworthy that Gerow examines Tsuru-Henry in terms of its innovative collage style that ‘foregrounds the problem of textuality and representation, thus emphasizing Okinawa as an issue of performance’ (Gerow 2003: 298). The same observations can be applied to Hengyoro, which is not so different from other fictional films by Takamine in showing no interest in conventional storytelling but is structured upon and works with ‘a set of intermeshing texts’ (ibid.). Meanwhile, although Ko has emphasized that Takamine’s persistent use of the Okinawan language (uchinā guchi) is highly political in how it underlines part of the ‘strategy of presenting Okinawa’s struggle, resistance and challenge to the linguistic, cultural and political hegemony of Japan and the US’ (Ko 2010: 92), it is my intention not to deal with uchinā guchi simply in terms of its anti-hegemonic potentiality per se. Instead, I would like to turn now to the performativity and circulation of the voice, sound, music, and so forth.

Hengyoro starts with the lines from Okinawan folk singer Kadekaru Rinshō’s song The Passage of Time.¹⁵ In the film, the two ageing protagonists, Tarugani (Taira Susumu) and Papajō (Kitamura Saburō), are good friends. Papajō runs a ‘film plastic surgery lab’ and keeps himself busy with surgeries on villagers as well as on damaged, ruined celluloid films (with sea snake soup, though!). Both friends work at a place called Wifē-pataijō where they

¹⁵ Kadekaru Rinshō’s lyrics goes like this: ‘From a Chinese to Japanese era / From a Japanese to American era / From an American to Japanese era / From a Japanese to Okinawa era / This Okinawa belongs to nobody / This Okinawa, will things work out somehow?’. Translation is taken from the film’s English subtitles.
treat the villagers of Patai Village, all of whom have been constantly troubled by a strong will to die after a mysterious yet long-forgotten incident known as the Shima Pshoo (Shima pushū; shima means ‘island’) took place.

A few more words on the ‘treatment’ provided by Tarugani and Papajō: the villagers first experience the ‘plastic underwater explosion’ operated by Tarugani, for which they go through a ritual-like procedure of body casting and have their plaster exploded by some bizarre-looking, balloon-like installation apparatus. The next step is to visit Papajō’s lab to have their faces ‘changed’, wherein the audience sees how the operation involves having images of other people’s faces projected onto the patients in order to accomplish the face-swap.

One day, however, Tarugani is wrongly accused of being a thief after he mistakenly takes a fictional aphrodisiac named ‘Tottorō B13’ (a variation of which also appeared in Untamagirū) from a shop owned by a local businessman, Seitoku. After learning that Seitoku sends out his three bibijū wives, namely nymphs always in wet, dripping clothes, to chase after them and threaten to cut off their ears, Tarugani and Papajō set out on their road trip to escape. While being tracked by the bibijū, the two good friends wander around the island to show itinerant ‘chain plays’ (renageki), a hybrid presentation of film segments and stage performance, which I shall explain later.

If one approaches Hengyoro as a ‘road movie’, as its publicity materials want the spectators to believe, it is necessary to see how the roaming does not seek to bring the audience any new refreshing experience of sightseeing, say, via the exploration of a specific geographical landscape (in spite of the location shooting in Okinawa), but is in itself an unfolding of a distended temporality that is non-linear and acausal. That is, the protagonists are travellers in time. If we return to the two bus rides heading for Patai Village (the three bibijū wives are among the passengers), for example, they are not about the characters’ journeys across the island per se but a manifestation of the mesmerizing loop of time (at an unimaginable interval of fifteen years!) wherein the passengers and ticket conductor might be travelling in their own reveries, dreams, or memories.

It is, however, worth noting that Hengyoro takes place in an abandoned, haunting place called Patai Village,16 where the villagers are suffering from the aftermath of the ‘Shima Pshoo’, experiencing symptoms in which ‘the head goes empty’, expressed in Okinawan language as muduruchun. Instead

16 In Hengyoro, Papa Hijā (played by the filmmaker himself) reminds us that Patai Village does not exist; according to Takamine in his interview, patai in the Philippine’s Tagalog language means ‘death’. 
of taking action and pushing the story forward, these villagers are indeed characters who are entrapped in their own conditions of amnesia and impossibility. Nakazato points out that it is the memories of the Battle of Okinawa that propel the ‘unconsciousness’ of Tarugani and Papajō, and in his view ‘Shima Pshoo’ is none other than the island’s traumatic war experience (Nakazato 2017).

Unlike Takamine’s previous works, wherein the 1972 Okinawa reversion was repeatedly re-enacted and re-imagined as a crucial point of reference, Hengyoro’s temporal-spatial setting becomes even more ambiguous if not evasive. In Tsuru-Henry, for example, the intricate issue of Okinawan identity is brought up through the story of James, the young protagonist whose mother is Okinawan (the protagonist of the film, Tsuru), and whose father is presumably the high commissioner of the USCAR. Also, archival footage of the legendary 1970 anti-American Koza Riot is shown, with James’ voiceover confessing his ‘lack of identity’: ‘I am not an American. I am not a Japanese. I might not even be an Okinawan’ (Gerow 2003: 300).

Regarding Hengyoro, Takamine has repeatedly emphasized in his interviews that he is mostly interested in capturing the ‘smell’ (nioi) of the land/island and the ‘steam’ (yuge) of Okinawa, evoking an image that is abstract, intangible, and fragile while avoiding any straightforward political rhetoric (Takamine & Tsurusaki 2017). It seems that any direct references to the Ryūkyūs or Okinawa, regarding its historical problematics and the intricate issues of identities, have become uncertain, if not absent from this film. Nevertheless, Nakazato has proposed that what is intriguing about Hengyoro is a diegetic world devoid of visible reference to any power entanglements – whether related to Japan or America (see Nakazato 2017). He therefore contends that Takamine leverages Patai Village to envision how ‘Okinawa’ would be like when it ‘belongs to nobody’. I shall argue that the imagined ‘state of independence’ – or a temporality the Okinawan people do not have yet could have had – interlinks with what according to Mika Ko is ‘a process of constant interpretation and re-interpretation in the present of what has happened, what did not happen, and what could have happened’ (Ko 2010: 99). As such, Hengyoro is not an experimental work that can be easily dislocated from the shifting socio-political context of Okinawa in the 2000s. As Wakabayashi points out, the arrival of the 21st century and the so-called era of globalization has posed challenges requiring us to rethink the place called Okinawa and the issue of identity (see T. Takamine et al. 2018). In Hengyoro, to be more specific, the ‘state of independence’ is not explored through a specific dramatized plot or through action but is rendered precisely through time-image.
Loops of *Rensageki* (Chain Play): Toward a Stratigraphic Image

Here we can take a closer look at the mode of expression or stylization of *Hengyoro*. Shot and edited digitally, the film constitutes a multi-layered meta-project synthesizing heterogenous media texts (e.g. contemporary art installations, painting, photography, documentary footages, experimental fragments, digital animation) and cultural genres (e.g. folk music, theatre, dance, rock ’n roll, film). Accomplished when Takamine was in his seventies, *Hengyoro* could be considered an archive of his own creative universe, wherein archival footage from his earlier films, drawings, posters, family photo albums, soundtracks, recording clips, and so forth are recycled and reassembled. The filmmaker himself also emphasizes how he enjoyed the creative liberty brought about by digital filmmaking (Takamine & Yomota 2017: 70-71). The work has specifically utilized the possibilities brought about by digital technologies to overlay and superimpose one type of image upon another, usually through the creation of multiple, overlaying screens within the film (see webDICE 2017). Nonetheless, I suggest there is no specific differentiation or degree of veracity assigned to the various visual formats or medium. While Takamine does lament the fading of analogue materials/images, he nevertheless experiments with how the seemingly incompatible media and images may revive each other and thus generate new modes of expression, similar to what Papajō’s surgery of face-swap has magically achieved. With the collaged-images and overlayed-screens, however, the cinematic narrative has been complicated by the heterogeneous temporalities they have registered and evoked.

According to Japanese film historian Donald Richie, *rensageki* (joined drama) refers to ‘an early twentieth-century form of drama, part film, part stage presentation’ (2005: 301). Discussing the use of *rensageki* performance in *Tsuru-Henry* in association with the hybrid genre’s historical development in Okinawa, Gerow reminds us how in *rensageki*, the ‘staged scenes’ and ‘scenes on film’ played by the same actors would be ‘presented alternately in a kind of “chain” (the “rensa” of *rensageki*, which is sometimes translated as “chain drama”) to compose a single story’ (2003: 302).17 It is noteworthy that there are several roughly similar *rensageki* or ‘chain play’ segments

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17 Gerow mentioned that *rensageki* ‘was quite popular on the mainland in the 1910s until theater fire regulations, which banned the showing of films (which were made of flammable stock in those days) in stage theaters unequipped for motion pictures’. He pointed out that, although *rensageki* was waning on the mainland, ‘the form continued well into the 1960s in Okinawa, and it was one of the few kinds of film produced locally’ (Gerow 2003: 302).
reappearing throughout *Hengyoro*, including those at the very beginning and at the end, when Tarugani and Papajō are seen rehearsing/playing their roles with makeup and costumes. Importantly, not only is the *rensageki* performance integral to the film narrative in *Hengyoro*, I would argue that the format/structure of *rensageki* itself is leveraged by the filmmaker to configure and channel the free flow of time-image. The film therefore becomes highly self-reflexive of its own use of hybrid cultural media and genres, especially with regard to the performativity of images and their intertextuality (see Takamine & Tsurusaki 2017).

At the very beginning of the film, for instance, a male voiceover (probably Tarugani’s) explains to the audience what is expected of a *rensageki* performance. What is simultaneously shown to us is the black-and-white film scene from Tarugani and Papajō’s itinerant show, wherein the two good friends are seen playing their roles based on a well-known Okinawan folklore story about the *mimichiri bōji* (in *uchinā guchi*, literally translated as ‘a monk whose ear is cut off’). The story is about an evil monk known as *Kurukani zāshi*, who, after his death due to his tragic defeat by Prince Chatan (a.k.a. *Chatan ōji*), has returned as a spectre to haunt the locals and especially the descendant of the prince, out of hatred.18 The *rensageki* in *Hengyoro* highlights the scene in which, during their confrontation

18 Across Okinawa, each local place may add a different twist to story of the *mimichiri bōji* (see ‘*mimichiri bōji*’).
at a session of Go (Japanese chess), as the folktale has it, Kurukani zāshi, played by Papajō, has his ear cut off during a sudden attack by Chatan ōji, impersonated by Tarugani. Tarugani and Papajō’s rensageki programme and the story of mimichiri böji have added one important layer onto the film’s intertextuality, as the plot of ‘ear-cutting’ is further pursued if we consider the mission of the three bibijū ladies who are chasing after the two friends throughout the film.

Intriguingly, in the next sequence, Takamine shows how the rensageki is exhibited: together with several audiences of theirs, we see Tarugani and Papajō watching the film clips projected onto the wall in a rundown house, throughout which images of anonymous characters (including a cameo by Takamine himself) surprisingly pop up and superimpose upon each other. As part of the rensageki film scenes projected on the wall, for example, the black-and-white footage featuring a long-haired character impersonated by Okinawan rock musician Kawamitsu Katsuhiro (a.k.a. Katchan) is played. Audiences who are familiar with Takamine’s cinematic oeuvre may find this particular footage of Katchan’s uncannily nostalgic: it was originally from the 16-mm Okinawa Chirudai (1978) and has also been re-edited and used in other works by Takamine such as Paradise View (1985).

In the next shot, however, the audiences see how a digital, coloured sequence featuring the same character is suddenly superimposed upon the black-and-white one, wherein a long-haired, well-dressed yet conspicuously older Katchan, recognized later in Hengyoro also as a rock musician called ‘Missiler’ (Misairā), is observing the image of his ‘younger self’ projected in
the background. Seemingly, ‘Missiler’ is trying hard to demonstrate what is presumed to be his signature performance of a ‘train dance’ to compete for more attention from the crowds. The opening suggests how the film is highly reflexive of its own *mise-en-abîme* structure in operating with and channelling in between the different layers of diegesis and more crucially, in between the disparate layers of time-image. As such, *Hengyoro* has forcibly evidenced Patricia Pisters’ observation of ‘the contemporary image culture’ wherein ‘all images (actual and virtual) refer to other images (actual and virtual)’ (Pisters 2010: 204).

In considering a new analytic of the image following the collapse of the sensory-motor situation, Deleuze envisions how time-image becomes ‘stratigraphic’:

> In this sense, the archaeological or stratigraphic image is read at the same time as it is seen [...] Not in the sense that it used to be said; to perceive is to know, is to imagine, is to recall, but in the sense that reading is a function of the eye, a perception of perception, a perception which does not grasp perception without also grasping its reverse, imagination, memory, or knowledge (Deleuze 1989: 243).

The lensing of stratigraphic image, then, in foregrounding ‘a free play between reality and imagination, memory and knowledge’ (Pisters 2010: 210), helps to grasp *Hengyoro*’s mode of expression, through which the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, original and copy, and subjective and objective are constantly defied, blurred, and redefined (see Rodowick 1997).

Crucially, if we return to Tarugani and Papajō’s treatment, and specifically their quirky gadgets and procedures for ‘surgeries’, these have arguably turned out to be the technologies and apparatus of editing, remoulding, and collaging that are utilized to mediate the circulation between the virtual and the actual, to facilitate the operations *on* images as well as *on* time. Little wonder that film scholar Yomota Inuhiko considers Tarugani and Papajō to be like two therapists who have repeatedly shown in front of our eyes the forsaken and damaged images of Okinawa. For Yomota, both characters perform the operations not only to restore the deteriorated images (however anonymous and humble their origins are) but also to cure the people who are in possession of these images (Yomota 2017: 9), which I believe underlines at the same time the significance of Takamine’s authorial intervention through/with *Hengyoro*.

Also, it is necessary to point out that the format of *rensageki* has laid a basis for and allowed for diverse narrative viewpoints and multiple voices (including
singing voices) to interlace with each other and flow freely in between the disparate diegetic layers, illustrating how the stratigraphic structure also concerns the acoustic/the audible. Whereas Tarugani and Papajō take up their roles as a duo of storytellers who navigate the spectators both within and beyond their rensageki shows as narrators, other known or unknown narrators’ voices whose gender and age remain unrevealed also participate and offer their monologues and perspectives in an indeterminate manner.

What corresponds with the stratigraphic images is ‘stratigraphic reading’, because to grasp the former ‘requires a considerable effort of memory and imagination, in other words, a reading’ (Deleuze 1989: 245; emphasis in original). What makes a work like Hengyoro highly political, I contend, is how it avoids designating any fixated ways of reading on the part of the spectators – because the audience is not interpellated in an apparatus working with the mechanisms of identification. As Rodowick has pointed out, ‘The spectator is no longer included in an expanding totality constructed by the narration, and thus must provide the relation himself or herself’ because the relation between the spectator and the film becomes ‘indeterminate’ (Rodowick 1997: 150). We can argue that Okinawa can also be liberated from its own representations given how the audience is mobilized to read Okinawa in as many ways as possible, also with the help of ‘memory and imagination’ (ibid.).

Art of Fabulation

For Deleuze, according to Maimon, the situation wherein ‘the people are missing’ redefines the role of modern artists and filmmakers alike, whose task is no longer about how to represent the people as unified but to address a people ‘who do not yet exist or whose existence is precisely what is at stake’ (Maimon 2010: 86). This daunting yet liberating task is achieved through ‘fabulation’, namely narration or storytelling that leverages the ‘power of the false’. By ‘falsifying narration’, as Deleuze believes, the real is not negated but strengthened and enriched, given how the fabulating power ‘poses the simultaneity of incompossible (sic) presents, or the coexistence of not-necessarily true pasts’ (Deleuze 1989: 131).

Deleuze further explicates that fabulation can be achieved through the speech act of ‘double-becoming’, wherein ‘the author takes a step towards his characters, but the characters take a step towards the author’ (ibid.: 222), and thus it becomes difficult to differentiate the auteur’s speech from that of diverse characters/narrators, with the boundaries between both becoming
ambiguous. Scrutinizing Deleuze’s thesis in his *Cinema* books, Rodowick articulates that ‘double-becoming’ concerns how ‘both the representer and the represented, the individual and the collective, are caught up in an indiscernible or undecidable relation where each stands in for the other as intercessor’ (Rodowick 1997: 160). Hence, double-becoming is to make visible and address the virtuality of a people before it becomes real and envisions it as ‘collective without unifying’ (ibid.: 154), which also brings us back to Deleuze and Guattari’s discussions on the ‘minor’ examined in Chapter One. Throughout this process, importantly, the filmmaker ‘does not give a voice to the people in the sense that he doesn’t speak for them’ but rather creates the space to allow the people to take the stage and speak (Frangville 2016: 114; emphasis in original).

One could further argue that, within the context of Okinawan image works, the labour of fabulation not only disturbs or falsifies the linear and teleological time that underlines the dominant narration(s) of Japanese national identity or an Othered Okinawan identity. New subjectivities can also be introduced and envisioned when previously marginalized or repressed histories and identities are (re-)incorporated and (re-)examined in relation to the present, without being assimilated into and tamed by pedagogical time, as Bhabha defines it.

In *Hengyoro*, as with his earlier films, it is noteworthy that Takamine has cast a collective of Okinawa-based performers and artists, himself included, who are closely associated with the diverse repertoire of vernacular filmic, artistic materials and cultural genres deployed in the film. These are the transgenerational creators and successors of Okinawa’s sound (such as folk singers Ōshiro Misako and Kadekaru Rinshō and rock musician Kawamitsu Katsuhiro), and performing art and image (veteran performers/actors Taira Susumu and Kitamura Saburō; photographer Ishikawa Ryūichi; and as a contemporary artist, Yamashiro Chikako works as the film’s art designer).

Collaborating with these performers, musicians, and artists (some of whom have worked with him on several film projects), Takamine does not necessarily recruit them for their personal stories in real life as a neorealist filmmaker might prefer to do. Neither does he aim to celebrate any essentialist or elitist understanding of an ‘authentic’ Okinawan culture, although he has been fascinated with folk singers such as Kadekaru Rinshō and Ōshiro Misako and celebrated their art and life by shooting documentaries about them.¹⁹

¹⁹ Takamine also made musician-centred documentaries such as *Kadekaru Rinshō: Uta to katari* [Kadekaru Rinshō: Singing and Talking] (1994) as well as *Okinawan Shimauta Queen: Ōshiro Misako* (2007). Also, Kawamitsu was the main feature in Takamine’s *Wild Umaku: Okinawan Condition Green* (1979).
Instead, through a method of participatory improvisation and collage, as emphasized in his interview (Takamine & Tsurusaki 2017), Takamine has recruited these artists to engage with the stratigraphic space so their bodies, performance, and affective labour (including the *uchinā guchi* speaking ability of the older generations’ artists) would interweave with Takamine’s art of fabulation, complementing the latter while also modifying it with the incommensurable temporalities, memories, dreams, and imagination their artistic intervention evokes. For Takamine, what *Hengyoro* renders is not ‘a personal story’ nor ‘an impersonal myth or an “ethnography” of the “authentic” people’ (Maimon 2010: 90). It is a collective enunciation testifying Patricia Pisters’ proposition that a political cinema ‘does not represent reality, but instead operates as a performative speech act that plays a part in constructing reality’. Its power does not lie in whether the cinematic images have achieved ‘accurate representation in or as reality’ but rather in how it does ‘something (if only to affect us and cause debate) to reality’ (Pisters 2010: 208; emphasis in original).

I believe another perspective can be suggested to consider Takemine’s art of fabulation. Jacques Rancière leverages the idea of ‘the labour of fiction’ as a way to engage ‘the framing of the dissensus’. He illustrates that ‘fiction’ should not be understood simply as the construction of ‘an imaginary world’ nor as oppositional to the ‘real’. Rather, for Rancière, ‘fiction’ comprises ‘a way of changing existing modes of sensory presentations and forms of enunciation; of varying frames, scales and rhythms; and of building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective’ (Rancière 2010: 141). I propose that within a context discussing artistic intervention including that of cinema and visual art, the labour of fabulation can be also examined in terms of the framing of the dissensus, and its politics concerns how to modify and rearrange the mode of appearance regarding how the image works can be leveraged to ‘make the invisible visible or to question the self-evidence of the visible; to rupture given relations between things and meanings and, inversely, to invent novel relationships between things and meanings that were previously unrelated’ (ibid.).

The brief discussions regarding how the labour of fabulation interrelates with the labour of fiction also help to elucidate what I mean by ‘appearance’. In light of Rancière’s articulation of ‘fiction’, I also grasp ‘appearance’ as the framing of the dissensual: it is where the disruption of ‘commonsense’, namely a disagreement, may occur pertaining to how the boundaries between the visible and invisible may be drawn and redrawn in the fashion of a ‘permanent guerrilla war’, if we borrow Rancière’s wording. As Vered Maimon proposes, ‘To stage an appearance thus does not mean
to reveal a “secret” through contradictions, but to make incompatible claims – rational and irrational – with regard to what is perceived to be communally shared’. Hence, an event of appearance involves how to ‘delimit new realms of intelligibility and visibility in a way that moves beyond any “rational” notion of “common sense”’ (Maimon 2009: 96). The framing of ‘appearance’ will also enlighten how we approach Yamashiro Chikako’s video works.

How to Remember the Battle of Okinawa?

The creative momentum and trajectories of Takamine Gō and Yamashiro Chikako could be grasped by looking at the different socio-historical situations they have been engaging with and emplaced within. Whereas Takamine is usually considered part of the ‘Okinawan diaspora’ living away from the islands, Yamashiro still mainly bases her activities in Naha. She belongs to a younger generation that has been distanced from the memories of war as well as the 1972 reversion, the latter of which was repeatedly brought up in Takamine’s earlier films, as I have mentioned previously. Whereas this study does not seek to highlight the transgenerational gaps between the two artists, it should be noted that Yamashiro’s generation grew up witnessing how Okinawa has been transformed into the ‘island that lives by the three Ks (kankō = tourism, kichi = bases, and kōkyō jigyō = public works’ (Oguma 2014: 346), illustrating how Okinawa has been relying on subsidies from the Japanese government while negotiating with the continued presence of US military bases. On the other hand, on the artistic-cultural front, the early 1990s not only saw a globalizing Japanese popular culture that was integral to Okinawa’s urban imaginary, the era also witnessed how ‘a downright Okinawa boom took hold of Japanese popular culture and mass media’ (I. Hein 2010: 180).

Analyzing how Harun Farocki works with archival footage that include memories of the Holocaust, Thomas Elsaesser explicates appropriation as ‘the transfer of knowledge, cultural memory, images of symbols from one generation to another, or as the making one’s own what once belonged to another’ (Elsaesser 2009: 60–61). Believing that ‘it was impossible to understand any of the issues faced by Okinawa unless you understand

20 In a public talk at Kyoto Seika University on 19 July 2018, Yamashiro mentioned that in 1992, still a high school student then, she was so impressed by popular singer Miyazawa Kazufumi’s ‘Shimauta’ (1992), that it awakened an early consciousness in her about Okinawa’s ‘own music’. 
the significance of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945’ (Yamashiro, quoted in Yamashiro Chikako Artist File, 2017), Yamashiro has shown great interest in exploring how Okinawa’s war memories and experiences could be passed down and shared not only transgenerationally but also translocally and transregionally. Her interventions through ‘appropriation’ arguably concern reinventing the ways of remembering, for which I mainly look at the forms of expression deployed in works such as Your Voice Came Out Through My Throat (Anata no koe wa watashi no nodo wo tōtta, 2009; Your Voice hereafter), and Mud Man (Tsuchi no hito, 2016).

One major incident that cannot be ignored when looking at the socio-political context of Your Voice is the controversial announcement in 2007 by the Ministry of Education that ‘all references to military coercion in the compulsory mass suicides (shūdan jiketsu) of Okinawan residents during the Battle of Okinawa were to be eliminated’ (Masaaki 2008: 1). Yamashiro described how in 2008 she grasped an opportunity offered by the local media to start a workshop interviewing senior citizens at an Okinawan day care centre, where the artist came to realize that many of the ageing survivors of the Battle of Okinawa were ‘unable to talk about the painful tragedies’ (Yamashiro, quoted in Yamashiro Chikako Artist File, 2017; also see L. Hein & Jennison 2011; Jennison 2017, 2014). Based on her interviews at the day care centre with a survivor who witnessed, at the age of nine, how his mother and sister committed suicide during the fierce battle at Saipan, Yamashiro created a 7-minute video, the last video work where she plays a role herself.21

In this video, we see that the artist in a white shirt is framed in a typical ‘talking head’ style against a white background. Looking away from the camera into the off-screen space, she tries to lip-sync the interviewee’s traumatic memories. What the spectators hear is the testimony given by the survivor in his own voice, word by word, acted out by Yamashiro with a slightly perceptible delay. As she goes on, the lip-syncing becomes difficult. One sees how the artist is obviously getting more emotional and involved in her telling as the survivor himself starts to pause when describing how he saw his loved ones ‘jumped off the cliff and killed themselves’. Here Yamashiro stops her lip-sync and becomes silent, trying hard to withhold her tears. In the next sequence, the camera seems to wander its own way around what seems to be an archive or library, where documents are piling

21 In Your Voice, the survivor himself is one of the Okinawan diasporas who migrated to Saipan during the early 1930s to 1945, and therefore his experiences of the Battle of Saipan (1944) are also considered relevant to the memories of the Battle of Okinawa (see Jennison 2017: 172).
up. Then, the camera returns to Yamashiro's lip-sync. As the interviewee's 'talking head' projected onto the artist's face, she is finally speaking in her own voice.

Working on *Your Voice*, Yamashiro admitted, ‘To a certain extent, I was able to empathize with the stories they narrated, but in the course of the interviews, there were definite moments when I felt that it was impossible for me to share their experiences’ (Yamashiro, quoted in Yamashiro Chikako Artist File, 2017). I contend that the artist has illustrated the potentiality and dilemma involved in the work of appropriation through her performance, via her own voice and body. A crucial aspect underlying Yamashiro's gesture of appropriation starts from ‘a position of not knowing’ (Elsaesser 2009: 74), which is not to say that she is ignorant about history but rather concerns ‘a process of reflexive identification and self-implications’ (ibid.: 61) regarding how the artist uses performance as a methodology of remembering or at least to demonstrate how to learn to remember.

Specifically, in projecting the witness's face upon her own, which is strikingly reminiscent of Papajō's face-swapping surgeries, Yamashiro is struggling to get access to things that ‘could not be put into words’ or ‘could not be talked about’ for her interviewee(s), without pretending that she could relate to them by simply listening and interviewing. Hence the point of the artist's lip-sync is not about how perfectly the performance could be in 'matching' the gesture with contents (a heart-wrenching personal
narrative about the war memories) but is precisely about making visible and audible the incommensurabilities between the virtuality of history and memory and the actuality/presence of the survivor. Hence, it is little wonder that the survivor/witness himself indeed remains ‘absent’ from the video: when the audience of the video work hears him, they cannot see him (only to see Yamashiro doing the lip-sync), and when they do see him (with the projected image), they cannot hear him (as Yamashiro uses her own voice to repeat his testimony).

Analyzing how Chris Marker’s Level Five (1997) confronts the gap between the survivors in Okinawa and ‘those who learn about it afterwards’, Catherine Lupton indicates that ‘this acknowledgement of historical distance between past and present registers a contemporary shift in cultural perceptions of World War Two at a moment when the fragile burden of remembrance is palpably shifting from survivors to public museums, archives, recordings, and broadcasts’ (Lupton 2003: 59). Yamashiro’s video somehow argues for a different perspective to grasp the shift toward musealization and memorialization apropos of the Battle of Okinawa. The seemingly abrupt sequence of archives in Your Voice therefore also has the effect of questioning the very limitations of musealization, which may risk knowing the war from the too-well-narrated, neatly preserved tropes that invite its very forgetting.

Using her body as a surface to mediate the unspeakable trauma, Yamashiro makes her role interchangeably connected to that of a viewer’s, a position that no matter how emotionally engaged is still distanced from the memories/past experiences of the survivor(s). Her performance, then, in dynamizing and staging the process of appropriation, is about the split roles of the ‘self/selves’ that registers the perpetual, fluid position/role-shifting in between that of an enunciating subject and that of an embodied spectator, between not-knowing and knowing, moving in between the past, the present, and the future. It is also through such uncertainties and suspension of any fixed positions that the positioning of the spectators of this video is implicated and challenged.

Secrets of Time

Yamashiro’s 2016 video work, Mud Man, is a more ambitious attempt to experiment with the narrative form. The work has usually been exhibited as a three-channel screen installation at museums/galleries, but here I mainly look at its 26-minute theatrical version. The video sketches a group
of ‘mud men and women’ who have discovered in the droppings of birds from faraway places the seeds of poems, through which they learn about the stories from ‘other people who also lived similarly in a place they cannot see and in the past’ (Yamashiro, quoted in Yamashiro Chikako Artist File, 2017). Arguably, Jeju Island in South Korea was chosen as one of the major filming locations because people on the scenic island have also been protesting against the construction of Korea’s military base that is designed to play a vital role in the US’s regional deployment. Also, Jeju is similarly haunted by ‘the long-suppressed national trauma inflicted by the post-WWII authoritarian state’ (Lee 2015: Kindle Locations 4281-4282), namely the Jeju Uprising in 1948, during and immediately after which many innocent islanders were massacred.

As evidenced by *Your Voice*, Yamashiro’s works emphasize the use of sound and voice. Whereas *Mud Man* starts with the quotes from Takahashi Yūji’s poetry, recited by unknown narrators, what accompanies the images throughout the work are almost-indiscernible murmuring voices in Japanese (and *uchinā guchi*) and Korean (Jeju dialect), the meaning of which is difficult to pin down.

Following the sequences wherein the mud men/women are seen circulating the seeds of poems and whispering the messages to each other, they fall into a deep tunnel and find themselves re-emerging from a ditch in darkness. However, their surroundings are unexpectedly turned into a virtual/theatrical battlefield, the visual effect of which is enhanced with the

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22 I was reminded that Yamashiro might have gotten her inspiration from the traditional folk ritual known as *Pāntū* of the Shimajiri district of Miyako Island, one of the Okinawan outlying islands. It is said that during the ritual, three visiting gods (*Pāntū*) covered in mud would roam around the town, splashing mud on people, houses, and cars to help banish evil spirits.

23 The imaginary of the cave/tunnel in *Mud Man* is impressive, which can be further historicized, although I cannot offer a more detailed analysis here. It is well known that the Jeju Uprising consisted of a series of armed uprisings and counterinsurgency actions that occurred between 1947 and 1954 in Jeju Province, when Korea was under US-backed military rule. As Hun Joon Kim points out, ‘The counterinsurgency strategy was extremely brutal, involving mass arrests and detentions, forced relocations, torture, indiscriminate killings, and many large-scale massacres of civilians’ (Kim 2012: 727). In his debut film, an independently produced feature entitled *Jiseul*, which was shot on location mainly with the locals, Jeju filmmaker O Meul was inspired by one particular story about ‘a group of villagers [...] who fled into hiding in a huge mid-mountain lava tube cave only to be discovered by troops and executed in December of 1948’ (Lee 2015: Kindle Locations 4286-4287). In Okinawa, some ‘*gama*’ (the term for natural caves in *uchinā-guchi*) were historical sites where Okinawan civilians committed mass suicide during the Battle of Okinawa. For instance, relics such as the Himeyuri Cave, part of today’s Himeyuri Memorial Tower (est. 1946), have become important sites for the memorialization and musealization of the Battle.
The mud men and women, trapped in the tunnel, are showered in the light and sound of the moving images of the Battle of Okinawa

light and smoke created by fireworks (added onto which are the digitized stage effects of lighting and shadow). What the audience sees on the screen are anonymous villager-looking soldiers who have shown up from nowhere, crawling forward. Their presence also shocks the mud men/women, who are observing them while being entrapped in the tunnel.

Seemingly placed within a dispositif similar to the apparatus of a movie theatre, the mud men/women have been turned into a group of entrapped spectators. What they see then, as is directly shown to the video’s audience, is the fast-edited montage sequence composed of archival footage of the Battle of Okinawa projected in front of them, each capturing one specific yet similarly framed historical moment of the Battle, with battleships firing, an aeroplane crashing, and the landscape being scorched. The rhythmed sound effect accompanying the montage compilation – including the sound of bombing and gunfire – is done through human beatbox, a technique often used in hip hop music to mimic various sound effects.

With their faces bathed in the reflected light from the montage sequence projected in front of/onto them, the mud men/women appear mesmerized if not shocked by their close encounter with the secrets of time, which were supposedly sealed in the seeds of poems carried by the birds from far away. As Wang Ban illuminates, though in a different context addressing

24 Yamashiro has used around ten segments of archival footages, most of which were shot by the filming crew of the US (such as clips in the Naval Photographic Center collection).
the use of montage in modern Chinese cinema, ‘The broken mirror that montage holds up to history is a veritable experience of flux, fragmentation, destruction, and reconstruction, a history going to pieces, broken to its foundation with catastrophe, war, and revolution’ (Wang 2004: 87). As part of his critique of modernity, Wang therefore suggests that it is impossible to ignore how the spectators engage montage through their visceral, sensorial responses, partially in disorientation but also as something transformative (ibid.). Here I focus on the dispositif of showing and viewing and argue how it becomes a vital aspect of Mud Man. The production of meaning regarding the montage, however, is less about Sergei Eisenstein’s pedagogy in indoctrinating the spectators to produce a third image retrospectively based upon the juxtaposition of the two; rather it is contingent upon the tension between the cinematic dispositif within the video work, which highlights the conditions of the spectators-cum-mud men/women, and a different layer of screen dispositif that emphasizes the position of us the audience vis-à-vis the video work.

It is therefore possible to realize how, when they are trapped in the tunnel/cave, the mud men/women are positioned not only within a dispositif of vision but also one of affect, which operates on and circulates in between the stratigraphic layers of image and sound, simultaneously interconnecting with Okinawa’s historical memories of war and trauma (in particular, the memories of mass suicide associated with the cave/gama) and its precarious present of various struggles. Toward the end, as the mud men/women emerge from the underground and the darkness, what they and the audience see
and experience are sequences of contemporary images assembled from heterogenous sources, including that of Okinawa’s American military base, a kamikaze suicide plane, an unknown surveillance tower, and, importantly, scenes of protest against the Japan Coast Guard captured from the perspective of sit-in protestors, reminiscent of Mikami Chie’s *We Shall Overcome*. A new flow of affectivity is created by the fast-edited sequence that reaches its apex with the uplifting clapping of hands rising high up from the extensive fields of white lilies, namely, the *himeyuri*.

Through this nameless collective of mud men/women, whose identity remains ambiguous, Yamashiro is also able to move beyond the local experiences of either Jeju or Okinawa and to situate both experiences within a translocal, transnational socio-historical context in suggesting how an inter-Asia collective is to ‘become’ by configuring itself upon the circulation and intersection of transregional memories and affectivities. It is exactly through these operations, I would contend, that Okinawa’s ‘new politics of images’ has been experimented with and achieved.

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