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## AGAINST THE GRAIN

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# ATG in a Forest of Pressure

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From today's vantage point on history, we celebrate ATG as a space where the most innovative of filmmakers were allowed to let their collective creative geniuses run free. While it may not mark a "historical break" in and of itself, there is no question that ATG is one of the most important institutions devised to support innovative, independent filmmaking. Indeed, what we often call the "Shōchiku Nouvelle Vague" is in large part constituted by films produced through ATG by filmmakers like Ōshima Nagisa, Yoshida Kijū (Yoshishige), and Shinoda Masahiro *after* they had separated from the studio system. The films produced by these and other directors pioneered novel approaches to narrative structure, dialogue, set construction, sound editing, acting, cinematography, music, and just about every other aspect of cinema one can think of. There is no single thread that unifies this group of films outside of the ATG moniker. Their artistic diversity is truly impressive. However, I would like to call attention to one aspect that runs through much of the ATG catalog.

Even the casual viewer of ATG's cinematic legacy will be struck by the strong documentary look of so many of the films. The photography, whether black and white or color, often displays a gritty documentary look and does not shun the hand-held camera. Actors tampered with their art to create what they felt were close to the natural performances one finds in the nonfiction film. They often circulate between sets and the streets, delivering their performances in the lived world. And most interestingly, many of the films combine the codes of nonfiction with a distinctly experimental sensibility, so it is not unusual to find documentary-like spaces mingling with formalist or even surrealist elements.

In his essay in this issue Roland Domenig outlines three main pillars upon which the edifice of ATG sat: the pink film, the experimental film and the documentary. This essay will look at the latter pillar. In a sense, this is the most fundamental of the three. After all, the experimental cinema in Japan often tapped into documentary aesthetics, tampering

with reality to empower their cinematic visions; and as for the pink film, its very definition is predicated upon what it represents as actual sex acts to its audience, claims that edge it into the territory usually associated with the documentary. I will limit this essay, however, to the structural, industrial relationships between the documentary and ATG's innovative practice.

Furthermore, I will basically delimit my purview to the year or so between 1964 and 1965. Most histories of the postwar Japanese cinema tend to focus on other years, and mostly for the way specific, spectacular incidents impact the film world—for example 1960 (*Anpo* and Ōshima), 1968 (because it's 1968), 1970 (second *Anpo*) or 1972 (Asama Cottage Incident). With the exception of the Tōkyō Olympics, there were few events in 1964 or 1965 that grab one's attention and announce that this time is important, or a new era in cinema has begun. Considering the film world, one notes that the year-long period falls squarely between the 1961 foundation of ATG as a distribution route, and 1967 when they began in-house productions. It is also when Yoshida Kijū and Shinoda Masahiro left Shōchiku for artistic and political independence. In the documentary world, which is what I will explore in depth below, it is precisely when a new epoch in the Japanese documentary begins. The rumbles of change began years before, but the earthquake was in the middle of the decade. And the twin epicenters were Iwanami Productions (Iwanami eiga) and the Image Arts Society (Eizō geijutsu no kai). Without considering this context, one cannot begin appreciate the integration of fiction and nonfiction in the films of ATG.

Before we proceed, one must remember for ATG films to look like documentary, documentary had to look like documentary. This is to say, the ATG filmmakers were replicating the codes of documentary at a certain juncture in history. They would not have made the films they did before the 1960s because, ironically enough, documentary in this earlier era was closer to the fiction film. Back then, filmmak-

ers may have shot on location, but they also worked off a finely wrought scenario that converted the people in their films into actors. The shift from this fictive documentary to something new, something that would provide ATG filmmakers an aesthetic foothold for their own innovations, came especially from one place: Iwanami Productions.

### Iwanami Productions

Iwanami is a prestigious publishing house, and it formed its film division in 1950 with an eye on the considerable amount of money flowing into PR film companies. Its film unit became one of the most successful documentary film companies in the postwar era.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of factors in their success. This was one of the most prestigious publishers in Japan, so the name brand gave the fledgling film unit an unusual visibility. Furthermore, Iwanami had strong ties to the Japan Communist Party, and when the film unit was created it became a haven for intelligent, left-leaning filmmakers, young and old, that had been recently purged from other sectors of the film industry.

These smart young filmmakers were also given a remarkable degree of independence within the strictures of the sponsor's PR film, making it a creative space with fascinating similarities to ATG. This is probably due to the leadership of veterans like Yoshino Keiji and Kobayashi Isamu. Tokieda Toshie, one of Japan's few women directors of note, felt that Kobayashi's creativity had something to do with his wartime experience as a documentary filmmaker:

Only later did I start to understand why Kobayashi said we shouldn't call our films "culture films" or "science films," but simply "documentary" films instead. Before Japan lost the war, Kobayashi was caught and arrested through the Maintenance of Public Order Act because of his publications, in what was called the Yokohama Incident. From that experience he learned that books and text could be censored or crossed out, but you can still find a way to communicate even if you say less... in other words he believed that there were ways to express what needed to be said without getting censored. I think that was accomplished in some of the Iwanami films and Iwanami Photographic Publications books.<sup>2</sup>

The Iwanami management was keen on nurturing new talent across the board and making good films. To that end, they created a work atmosphere that was among the most egalitarian and non-sexist

spaces in the Japanese film world, particularly when compared to the rigidly hierarchical and authoritarian structures propping up the mainstream feature film. The film department quickly became a hotbed of creative filmmaking. Building room to maneuver within the structure of what was essentially a public relations firm, the managers allowed their filmmakers the (relative) freedom to stretch the limits of the PR film.

This process began with the work of Hani Susumu, whose documentaries set the film world off-balance. These were the kind of seismographic film-events that André Bazin describes, where the river of cinema begins carving new routes after the equilibrium of their bed is upset. Although Hani is best known for feature films like *Furyō shōnen* ("Bad Boys", 1961), *Kanojo to kare* ("She and He", 1963) and ATG's *Hatsukoi jigoku-hen* ("The Inferno of First Love/Nanami", 1968), he started his film career with documentaries that decisively revealed the conventional rigidity of the dominant style. He made his first film in 1954, and it was entitled *Kyōshitsu no kodomotachi* ("Children of the Classroom"). This was a Monbushō-funded education film designed for people who were interested in becoming teachers. The initial idea was to make a documentary in the usual fictive manner, using a child actor to play a problem student. However, this is an extremely difficult role for a child, so Hani began to consider using a real school and real children. Everyone thought it was impossible, but he went to a school to find out. In the first half an hour his presence agitated the students, but after two or three hours they forgot about him.<sup>3</sup>

Audiences were stunned by the spontaneity captured in *Kyōshitsu no kodomotachi*. Close to direct cinema,<sup>4</sup> which it predates, this was actually much smarter filmmaking. While American filmmakers like Richard Leacock and the Maysles brothers initially clothed their work in the rhetoric of objectivity, Hani used observation to approach the subjectivities of the individuals he filmed. This is the decisive difference between the postwar conception of documentary in Japan and that of the Euro-American traditions. It was this core difference that Tsuchimoto Noriaki and Ogawa Shinsuke would elaborate in their subsequent work, and which was embodied in these first films of Hani Susumu. For example, his second film, *E o kaku kodomotachi* ("Children Who Draw", 1955), simply shows children interacting in an art class. As we begin to recognize different personalities, Hani cuts to the paintings they are in

the process of creating. This jump from apparently objective, observed phenomenon to vivid representations of the children's inner worlds is accompanied by an astounding shift from black and white to brilliant color. Far from the stodgy realism of his contemporaries, Hani's films won international awards and were distributed across Japan through Tōhō Studio.<sup>5</sup>

Hani's stunning work attracted the attention of a number of young filmmakers, who joined Iwanami and would make it one of the epicenters for change in the era of the New Wave. A typical example is Tsuchimoto Noriaki, who recalls,

"I had never entertained a thought about becoming a filmmaker, but when I saw Hani's films I was amazed—so this kind of thing is possible in documentary!—and I went to Iwanami."<sup>6</sup>

Hani's Iwanami colleagues followed with impressive projects, particularly Tokieda Toshie's *Machi no seiji – Benkyō suru okaasan* ("Town Politics – Mothers Who Study", 1957), Haneda Sumiko's *Mura no fujin gakkyū* ("School for Village Women", 1957) and others.

### Blue Group

A key factor in this scenario was one of the most unusual research groups in the history of documentary, Iwanami's "Blue Group" (*Ao no kai*). After censorship problems with two of Tsuchimoto's films, it formed spontaneously in 1961 to explore and explode the conventional boundaries of the sponsored documentary. Tsuchimoto's films were issues of a series on the geography of various prefectures of Japan. Upon completion the television network that ordered the films demanded revisions that the company acquiesced to. Tsuchimoto stood by his original version and arranged in-house screenings to show the films to other Iwanami filmmakers and discuss the merits of each side. A heady debate ensued, and it was clear that other filmmakers were having similar problems. The discussion naturally enlarged to include other issues, and transformed into regular meetings. An identity formed around these meetings and they started calling themselves Blue Group.

They met about once a month. Its membership reads like a roster of the best directors and cinematographers in Japan: Ogawa Shinsuke, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, Kuroki Kazuo, Higashi Yōichi, Tamura Masaki, Iwasa Hisaya, Suzuki Tatsuo, and a couple dozen more. They met formally and informally at bars—particularly the tiny Shinjuku snack called

Narcisse—racking up enormous tabs, and holding raucous discussions that lasted four, five hours, even through the night. Kuroki Kazuo recalls,

At first, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, then an assistant director, was brought there by cameraman Segawa Junichi. Then, one after another, Higashi Yōichi, Suzuki Tatsuo, Ōtsu Kōshirō, Iwasa Hisaya, Ogawa Shinsuke and I trickled into the bar. It was as if we'd set up camp in the bar every night after finishing work in Tōkyō's Jinbochō district. The beautiful, determined proprietress had opened shop amidst the ruins immediately after the end of the war. It was known for as the favorite meeting place of young literati like Noma Hiroshi, Inoue Mitsuharu and Haniya Yutaka. We filmmakers were newcomers raising a commotion in the crannies of this narrow space, and thinking about it, I'm impressed that such impoverished young filmmakers were able to drink at such a place. It would have been unthinkable without the kind and generous heart of the proprietress, who put aside her business mentality for us... Even after its members retired from Iwanami Productions, the Blue Group continued to meet with this bar as our headquarters. On some days, we'd rent out the whole bar and have meetings from morning to night. Even Miyajima Yoshio, Kamei Fumio, Matsukawa Yasuo and Matsumoto Toshio showed up from time to time. It's no exaggeration to say that the ideas for films such as *Tobenai chinmoku* ("Silence Has No Wings", 1965), *Assatsu no mori* ("Forest of Pressure", 1967), and the Minamata series were born at Narcisse.<sup>7</sup>

Aside from their meeting style, their agenda was also highly unique. Instead of discussing famous films, they would use the time as a laboratory for their own life as filmmakers. Members would present projects that were still on the drawing board, the stage where anything is possible because it is mostly in people's heads. They wrestled with the merits, problems and possibilities of these ideas. They would look at rushes or rough cuts, analyzing what they saw and debating in highly technical terms. What was the cameraman thinking when he made that shot? Why use that lens? What kinds of meanings are produced by the cameraman's pan at that particular moment? How could a certain scene be re-edited? What would happen if the editor put these two shots together? The discussions were spirited, contentious, and alcohol-driven. Today, everyone that participated in them looks back at Blue Group with fond nostalgia as a formative moment in their careers. They assert that the experience made them

better filmmakers, and there is evidence that they might be right. When these filmmakers quit Iwanami they scattered into various parts of the documentary and feature film industries and had a deep impact on Japanese cinema of the 1960s and beyond—an influence that has yet to be adequately charted and accounted for.

The efforts of these young Iwanami filmmakers brought the PR film to unusually spectacular levels, deploying interesting montage, narration and even 35 mm cinemascope color photography! Nevertheless, their subject matter was restricted to steel factories and construction sites—a limit on their ambitions that would soon intersect with other pressures. Working within an industrial context forced the filmmakers to aestheticize the human-made, industrial spaces created by the high growth economy. Riding the coattails of Japan's spectacular rise of economic power proved problematic for this group of filmmakers because of their sympathies with those social elements bringing capital and government under critique. While Iwanami filmmakers made industrial strength commercials for some of the most corrupt, polluting corporations in Japan, social movements of every sort were taking to the streets. Chafing under the weight of these contradictions, the members of the Blue Group abandoned Iwanami for a politicized, independent cinema, both in fiction and in documentary. Thus, in a delicious twist of irony, Iwanami's biggest contribution to postwar cinema may be the fact that its best filmmakers quit.

Most of these filmmakers quit in the twelve-month period from mid-1964 to the summer of 1965. This was the year that Japan Communist Party forces led by Yoshimi Yasushi successfully wrested power from the Noda Shinkichi–Matsumoto Toshio Group within the Association of Documentary Filmmakers (Kiroku eiga sakka kyōkai). Disaffected filmmakers fled to form the Image Arts Society. Its core leadership included Kuroki Kazuo, Matsumoto Toshio, Nagano Chiaki, Noda Shinkichi, Matsukawa Yasuo, and Tsuchimoto Noriaki. Another group devoted to independent and experimental cinema formed; Film Independent (Firumu andepandan) included people like Adachi Masao, Donald Richie, Iimura Takahiko, Ōbayashi Nobuhiko, and others. In this same short period, the few Blue Group members still under contract with Iwanami—including Higashi Yōichi and Ogawa Shinsuke—quit the company and Blue Group naturally dissolved. Ogawa started preproduction on his first film. Tsuchimoto made his first important independent films, including the first

installment of the Minamata series. The sum of these developments resulted in the redefinition of nonfiction cinema.<sup>8</sup>

### **The troubles around Kuroki Kazuo's *Aru marason ranā no kiroku***

This yearlong interlude began with the troubles surrounding Kuroki Kazuo's *Aru marason ranā no kiroku* ("Record of a Marathon Runner", 1964) which came to a head at the beginning of the summer.<sup>9</sup> This issue resonated institutionally against a struggle between Old and New Lefts ensuing within the Association of Documentary Filmmakers, especially because the public, postproduction phase of the incident was provoked a request from Blue Group to screen Kuroki's film at an Image Arts Society event. Actually, the incident started long before that. Kuroki had been asked by Tokyo Cinema to make a film on one of the competitors for the upcoming Olympics and his relationship to his coach. Kuroki accepted the job on the condition that he would receive artistic freedom. There were conflicts between Kuroki and the management of Tokyo Cinema (which included Yoshimi), but things came to a head when Blue Group asked to borrow the film for a 4 May 1964 screening. It was clear to Blue Group that *Aru marason ranā no kiroku* and two other films by the group—Tsuchimoto's *Dokumento: Rojō* ("Document: On the Road", 1964) and Higashi's *Kao* ("Face", 1965)—were breaking new ground for the documentary and this would be a chance to make these developments public in a forceful way. Tsuchimoto and others approached Fuji Film (the sponsor) and Nikkatsu (the distributor) for permission to show *Aru marason ranā no kiroku*, which was granted. However, Tokyo Cinema subsequently declined the request in a rather rude fashion and went out of their way to ensure that other organizations did not cooperate either. In obstructing the screening, they made it clear that their motives were directly related to the troubles between the Association of Documentary Filmmakers and the Image Arts Society, or what was provisionally being called the Documentary Arts Society (Kiroku geijutsu no kai) at this formative moment. From the perspective of the Tokyo Cinema management, they felt no obligation to cooperate with a group that they did not recognize. The show went on, only in place of Kuroki's film they held a symposium featuring speeches by Kuroki, Higashi, Tsuchimoto, Matsumoto, Ōshima and others.<sup>10</sup>

There were a number of major planks in the protest. After the first screening of a rough cut, the

sponsor asked for changes. The production company acquiesced, making the changes on the sly without consulting Kuroki. The sponsor claimed the voice-over was obscure; Yoshimi, the original screenwriter, wrote a new narration behind the director's back. They unilaterally changed the title, dropping the word "Youth" (*seinen*) because of its close association with the student movement and the recent political turmoil over *Anpo*. When Kuroki and others got wind of these machinations, they raised vigorous protests. Tempers flared as the producers refused to preview the film, even for those who worked on it. And finally, perhaps as a kind of retribution, Tokyo Cinema cut all the staff credits and substituted a commercial for the sponsor. This was the form in which it was distributed.

A petition handed out at the May 4 screening hints at the larger issues behind the controversy. Listing some of the events of the incident, they write,

"In the world of common sense [any of these reasons] would be nothing but an unfathomable madness. However, that madness represents the fear of filmmakers making individual, artistic works, and the fear that those works will be shown publicly to spectators and provoke a deepening interchange between filmmakers and spectators. It is clear these people's plan is based on the intent to threaten we creative filmmakers' livelihoods and rights through the power of management."<sup>11</sup>

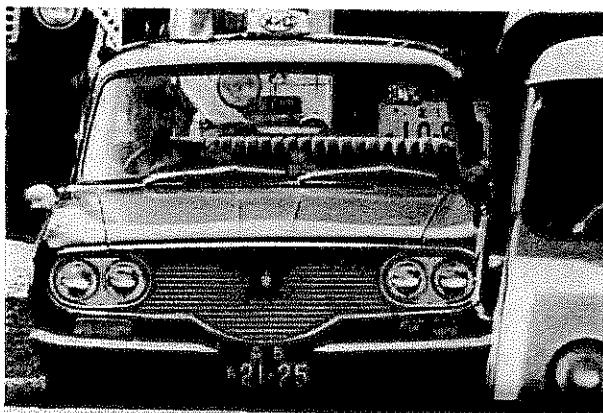
The word "management" in this case is tipping the hat to the political struggle generating the conflict. The unilateral control being exercised by the leadership in Tokyo Cinema—which also happened to be the leadership of the Association of Documentary Filmmakers—was seen as clear-cut evidence of the Stalinist tendencies of the older generation of filmmakers. At the symposium, Matsumoto Toshio said that if one were looking for the most essential problem here, it is simply that "there is a Communist Party."<sup>12</sup> Theirs was a style that demanded acquies-

cence to top-down directives and central planning. The association itself became involved in the incident mid-way, and issued a controversial response in their newsletter entitled, "The Rights of Filmmakers and Their Social Responsibilities," which sided with the company.

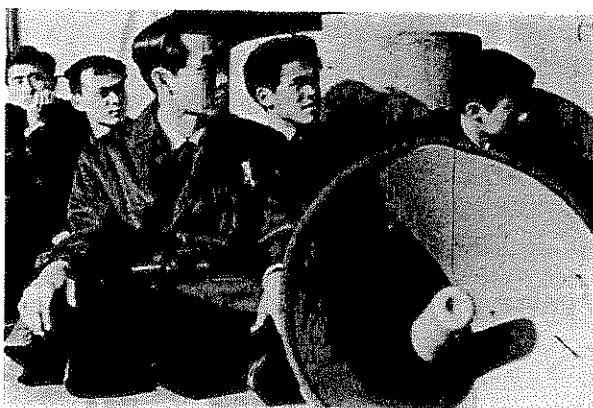
### Tsuchimoto Noriaki

Among all the other signs of change between the summers of 1964 and 1965, one can point to the efforts of Tsuchimoto Noriaki and Ogawa Shinsuke as emblematic of the incipient transformations—which we might render spatially as a movement from outside to inside. As they quit Iwanami, Blue Group filmmakers began recrafting their careers for a life outside the relatively secure position of salaried filmmakers. Of the cohort, Tsuchimoto and Ogawa forged the most unusual, and in the end, most influential routes; Tsuchimoto took the first step, and on his lead Ogawa took the plunge. This new approach to documentary reaches its most refined and profound development in the *Minamata* and *Sanrizuka* series, but the two directors' films at this early point in their careers reveal the actual shift from one mode to the next. This was increasingly an era where being on the inside meant something—perhaps everything.

With Tsuchimoto, we may chart the shift in three of the major films he made up to this point (Tsuchimoto had worked as an actual Iwanami employee for a bit over a year, from 1956 to 1957, but many of his films were produced for the company). In *Aru kikan joshi* ("An Engineer's Assistant", 1963), Tsuchimoto took the position of the typical documentary filmmaker of the era, who comes to a topic from an external position from which he never substantially departs. The film is remembered primarily for its impressive photography and editing. Tsuchimoto moves closer to his object in *Dokumento: Rajō*, building a strong sense of sympathy—in the strongest sense of the word—with the daily frustra-



Tsuchimoto Noriaki – *Dokumento rajō*



Tsuchimoto Noriaki – *Ryūgakusei Chua Sui Rin*



Ogawa Shinsuke – *Seinen no umi*



Ogawa Shinsuke – *Assatsu no mori*

tions of the taxi driver he portrays. His relationship to the driver is qualitatively different than the train engineer of the previous film, who appears overly aestheticized (and thus objectified) in comparison. Finally, Tsuchimoto completes the movement inward with *Ryūgakusei Chua Sui Rin* (“Exchange Student Chua Swee Lin”), which he completed in June 1965.

Initially planned as another television documentary, it reports the predicament of the title character. He was a Malaysian student studying abroad, but ran into political trouble for his participation in the Malaysian independence movement while in Japan. The British colonial government asked for his return—he was traveling on a British passport—and the Ministry of Education acquiesced, revoking his scholarship and putting him on notice. The subject matter was controversial, and Tsuchimoto’s documentary was sympathetic to Chua Swee Lin’s plight. Halfway into the production, the network pulled out, leaving Tsuchimoto high and dry. He responded by stepping firmly onto the side of the support movement. The activists canvassed production funds for completion and the documentary became, financially and stylistically, centered precisely within the subjectivity of the movement. With this film there is no question that its textual voice is centered on Chua’s own voice on the soundtrack. At a basic level, the fact that Tsuchimoto severed ties to institutionalized structures of production and distribution was decisive. This enabled him to build the film soundly on the subjectivity of the student. There is little question that the film belongs to its *taishō* (“object”) in ways that had not been seen in Japanese documentary up to this point.

### Ogawa Shinsuke

At this very moment, Ogawa Shinsuke was taking a similar step, and we can find an analogous transformation in his first two films. After meeting no

success with his post-Iwanami scenario writing, he turned to distance learning as a possible subject for a television documentary. Actually, this amounted to more of a *return* to the subject, since he initially discovered the topic as an assistant director on Iwanami’s *Wakai inochi – Hōsei daigaku no gaku-seitachi* (“Young Life – Hōsei University’s Students”, 1963). For his new project, he chose a highly unusual approach to preproduction. Beginning in February 1965, Ogawa began gathering young Hōsei students around him, meeting with them at coffee shops and proposing to collaborate on a television show on distance learning. Together they formed a group with the remarkably awkward name of “‘Daigaku tsūshin kyōikusei’ no kiroku eiga o tsukuru kai” (The Organization for Creating a Documentary Film on ‘Distance Learning Students’).

By May 1965, their plans began exceeding the framework of television documentary in terms of both, time and content restrictions, a development relatively independent of Tsuchimoto’s coincident experience with the Chua Swee Lin film.<sup>13</sup> This turn of events was, in retrospect, fateful for the future of Japanese documentary. Ogawa was hardly the organizer and political activist, especially compared to those around him. Tsuchimoto, by way of contrast, has participated in the formation of Zengakuren at Waseda in 1948. But Ogawa was, at heart, a film fanatic, so it is quite easy to imagine a very different, very conventional career in PR and television had this first film been produced for television as initially planned. Instead, it became the first of Ogawa Shinsuke’s films made by and for political activists. From this first step, Ogawa would go on to make the definitive “movement cinema” for the next decade.

As their plans developed, the Hōsei and Keiō University students around Ogawa came to organize themselves and expand their ambitions. In the summer, they changed their name to “Jishu jōei so-shiki no kai” (Independent Screening Organization),

or Jieiso for short. As the name suggests, this was probably an outgrowth of discussions about where to actually show their film upon its completion. As they produced their films, their ambitions grew to network organizations committed to the distribution of independent films. This organization would soon transform into Ogawa Productions.

Presumably, the decision to forego television broadcast for Ogawa's *Seinen no umi* ("Sea of Youth", 1966)—by far the most lucrative and influential distribution route—was deeply connected to the desire for a production context unconstrained by the narrow conventions and political spectrum acceptable to the networks. Giving this up must have been both liberating and daunting. While it freed them to craft the film to their desires and ambitions, it also committed them to the hard work of finding and producing their own audiences. It may be that their direct critique of Monbushō and their engagement with the sensibilities and life experiences of working class correspondence students precluded its broadcast on national television. What remains perplexing is the film's style, which—despite the unfettered path they chose—is conventional by any measure. One cannot look to the staff to explain this, as it featured the eminent talents of Ogawa's Iwanami colleagues like Okumura Yūji, Ōtsu Kōshirō, Tamura Masaki, and Kubota Yukio on sound. The straightforward style is doubly curious considering Ogawa's ties to the Image Arts Society, which gave Jieiso office space, and the innovative documentary being pioneered by people like Tsuchimoto and Matsumoto at this very time. Ogawa had yet to completely escape the confines of the PR film.

However, the course Tsuchimoto had charted in 1964–65 is finally evident in the differences between *Seinen no umi* and Ogawa's next film, *Assatsu no mori* ("Forest of Pressure", a.k.a. "The Oppressed Students", 1967). *Seinen no umi* was close to the international norm for pre-*verité* documentary, with its rhetoric of distance and "sly" employment of fiction for the sake of argumentation. *Assatsu no mori* also centered on a group of students and their discussions about education and movement politics. However, the film has a new raw quality, as if shot under the gun. It does not spin a subtle web of fiction through its structuring, which probably accounts for its rough edges. The rough hewn quality is partly stylistic. The look is unmistakable today, and while one can trace it back through the Sunagawa series to Prokino in the 1930s, it really achieves the status and identity as a distinct aesthetic at this point. Make

no mistake, the directors longed for synch sound and finer equipment, but the jagged style unquestionably announced their difference from the norm as well as their resolve to make films no matter the obstacles. Many first-time viewers of the films of Ogawa and Tsuchimoto enter the theater expecting smoothness and completeness. Being familiar with the film's prestige, they are often shocked by what they see. Those familiar with the codes of *verité* easily forgive the handheld, rough and tumble cinematography. However, most new viewers are vexed by the soundtrack, which is not synched to the lip movements of speakers. The lack of synch sound equipment did not stop these filmmakers from making long discussions and speeches a central part of their cinema. Rather than hiding what conventional documentary marks as deficiency, Ogawa and Tsuchimoto made these rough-hewn qualities the sign of their independence from the demands of capital. The films' coarseness increased according to the degree the filmmakers approached their embattled and powerless *taishō*.

### The Art Theatre Guild

*Assatsu no mori* was released the same year that ATG began producing films, and the similarities and connections between the documentary world and ATG are striking. For one thing, there are the sheer numbers of personnel that migrated to ATG from the documentary. They include Hani Susumu, Matsumoto Toshio, Kuroki Kazuo, Higashi Yōichi, Suzuki Tatsuo, and Kubota Yukio. At the same time, there are also other ATG artists that began in fiction film but made significant documentaries, such as Ōshima Nagisa, Yoshida Kijū, Adachi Masao, and others.

Furthermore, both Jieiso and ATG grew out of efforts to pioneer new methods of distribution. It was obvious to those involved that the established routes for trafficking films from one audience to another severely restricted what was possible on the production end. The system could not handle the innovative and experimental energies that were exploding on the film scene, and it also rejected the politics of the younger generation of filmmakers. Jieiso and ATG discovered that audiences hungered for new kinds of cinema and, with the creation of a new circuit between those spectators and the filmmakers, the promise of a inventive, director-centered cinema could be made good on. The creation of these kinds of networked free spaces allowed filmmakers creative autonomy to engage the social passions on the streets: the new human needed a new film art



and this required new film institutions as well. This explains why, unlike most “film movements” of this era, “movement cinema” was centered on the reception context. ATG, like the efforts of filmmakers such as Ogawa Shinsuke or Adachi Masao, was ultimately a screening movement.

As these filmmakers sought to distance themselves from cinematic aesthetics associated with fantasy and bourgeois taste, they “naturally” turned to the documentary as one source of inspiration. I put this word in quotes because, in moments of social and political crisis or transformation, the World would seem to exert a strange *force* on the cinema—the “forest of pressure” from Ogawa’s title. However difficult this pressure is to measure, it is striking that in times of upheaval one finds documentary encroaching upon the territory of the fiction film. Think of the early Soviet cinema, the Japanese war cinema, Neorealism, the French Nouvelle Vague, the post-revolution Cuba, and any number of new waves from Taiwan to Iran. In their first films, the Shōchiku Nouvelle Vague filmmakers kept documentary codes contained in discrete sequences that hardly affected the narrative-driven sections—a prototypical example is Ōshima’s *Seishun zankoku monogatari* (“Cruel Story of Youth”, 1960). It was only in an institutional setting like ATG that filmmakers could allow documentary, the experimental film and the fictional narrative to freely mingle, resulting in great films like Ōshima Nagisa’s *Kōshikei* (“Death by Hanging”, 1968), Hani Susumu’s *Hatsukoi jigokuhen* (1968) or Yoshida Kijū’s *Erosu + Gyakusatsu* (“Eros plus Massacre”, 1969). It is as if the creative filmmakers that flocked to ATG embraced the pressure the World exerted on them, leaving a trace of this embrace on the celluloid of the ATG archive.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Iwanami went out of business in 1999, surviving longer than most documentary film companies that formed to take advantage of the 1950s industrial film boom. Their massive film collection was purchased by Hitachi. The massive electronics company announced plans to convert the films to digital media, but nothing seems to have come of it.

<sup>2</sup> Imaizumi Ayako, “Documentarists of Japan, #19: Interview with Tokieda Toshie,” *Documentary Box* 21 (<http://www.city.yamagata.yamagata.jp/yidff/docbox/21/box21-1-1-e.html>).

<sup>3</sup> Hani Susumu, “Jisaku o kataru,” *Kiroku to eizō* 5 (16 August 1964), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* are often confused. *Verité* was the approach developed in France by Jean Rouch, one in which the camera is used not only to capture spontaneously unfolding events but also instigate happenings that would not have otherwise taken place had a camera not been present. Filmmakers developing the American version, direct cinema, would follow

people around for extended periods, attempting to avoid intervention in the world before them (the fly on the wall approach). Initially, they cloaked themselves in a rhetoric of objectivity, a position from which they quickly retreated upon criticism. Hani’s work predates both styles.

<sup>5</sup> Hani’s films were international hits on the documentary and educational film circuits, so they were purchased by quite a few American libraries. The University of Michigan has a print of *E o kaku kodomotachi*, and a search of research libraries that rent films would probably turn up a print or two.

<sup>6</sup> Interview, 27 May 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Kuroki Kazuo, “One Place, One Era,” *Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival* main catalog (Yamagata: YIDFF, 2001), 17.

<sup>8</sup> This was also the year of Ichikawa Kon’s *Tōkyō Orinpikku* (“Tokyo Olympiad”, 1965), which objectively attracted much more attention than anything I’ve listed in this paragraph. For those interested in learning more, look to a round table in James Quant’s book on Ichikawa (Abé Mark Nornes, Eric Cazdyn, James Quant, Catherine Russell, and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, “Tokyo Olympiad: A Symposium,” in James Quant (ed.): *Ichikawa Kon*. Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario 2001, 315–336). It is reprinted as an extra in the Criterion Collections DVD of the film. Aside from a number of interesting perspectives on the film, my contribution to the discussion includes explanations of the controversies that surrounded the production. Thanks to these controversies, it was by far the highest profile documentary since the prestigious propaganda films of World War II. However, in terms of its relevance to postwar documentary in Japan, it merits nothing more than a footnote.

<sup>9</sup> Kuroki offers a day by day account of the conflict from the first discussions about the film in Kuroki Kazuo, “Jijitsu o kataru,” *Aru marason rannā no kiroku jiken no shinjitsu*. Tōkyō: Shinjitsu Inkaï, August 1964, 4–14. A synoptic explanation of the events behind the incident gives Sasaki Mamoru, “Kiroku eiga-kai no daisōdō o megutte,” *Eiga Geijutsu* 202 (July 1964), 81–84.

<sup>10</sup> The preparations for the screening are documented in Etō Kō, “Eigakai: Gogatsu Muika,” *Aru marason rannā no kiroku jiken no shinjitsu*. Tōkyō: Shinjitsu Inkaï, August 1964, 26–34.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34.

<sup>12</sup> Matsumoto Toshio, “Jiken no honshitsu wa nani ka,” *Eizō no hakken*. Tōkyō: Sanichi Shobō 1963, 98.

<sup>13</sup> This is judging from the narratives of this period offered by both Tsuchimoto and Ogawa.

