Messages in a Bottle:  
An Interview with Filmmaker Masao Adachi

Introduction to the Interview

*Harry Harootunian and Sabu Kohso*

In June 2006, we interviewed the Japanese experimental filmmaker Masao Adachi in Tokyo. The interview was arranged and organized by the film critic Go Hirasawa. After creating a number of challenging films, in 1974 Adachi decided to go to Palestine to commit his energies to the cause of the Palestinian Revolution for liberation, whereupon he was imprisoned in Lebanon for activities that were revealed only later and extradited to Japan, where he spent two additional years in prison. In 2007, Adachi brought out his first feature film, *Yuheisha – Terorisuto (The Prisoner)*, after his release. Our interview also marked the celebration of this special occasion.

The importance of Adachi’s resurfacing at this time reminds us of the moment of the 1960s in Japan and the mass mobilizations against

The following abbreviations are used throughout: PLO – Palestine Liberation Organization; PFLP – Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; PLF – Palestine Liberation Front; DFLP – Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; PFLP-GC – Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command; ALF – Arab Liberation Front; JRA – Japanese Red Army.
the signing of the Mutual Security Treaty with the United States, signaling for many Japan's willing embrace of neocolonial status in the American imperium. But it also signifies a truly global moment, initiated in Paris in 1968 and fueled by a militant third worldism prompted by the war in Vietnam. In Japan, a vibrant avant-garde was already formed among artists, filmmakers, writers, dramatists, dancers that looked increasingly to the everyday as the site for cultural production and political practice, as in fact the place of their reunion. This new orientation was a departure from and direct rejection of the world of liberal political intellectuals, who, since the end of the war, had tried to promote a program based on rethinking the terms of a proper and responsible political subjectivity for a new social democracy. But this strategy, hobbled by a habitual distrust of a mass constituency and substantive democracy, was eventually overtaken by the successful restoration of prewar state power and bureaucratic personnel pledged to the quest of economic supremacy at any cost. It was also defeated by the fateful rescuing of the emperor and imperial house from war responsibility and hanging, making possible the return of a model of social structure that would dominate the reconfiguration of postwar Japanese society.

The virtual cultural revolution that exploded in Japan in the 1960s was reinforced by widespread student militancy demanding greater autonomy for universities and colleges in response to government efforts to rein them in and even eliminate crucial campuses. This cultural transformation in Japan inflected a worldwide movement and momentarily promised the prospect of a revolution, which ultimately never happened. And it was in this context that we must understand both Adachi's fervent involvement in cultural productions that aimed to unite with political praxis and his later decision to abandon Japan in the early 1970s to pursue this revolutionary ideal in one of the few places of the third world where the vision of a cultural and political transformation was still an active possibility.

In the Japan of the 1970s, as well as throughout the industrial world, the rumblings of third worldism as the staging ground for world revolution were receding and barely audible, and were steadily being drowned out by the drumbeats of a different kind of transformation that was proclaiming to remake the world into the image of a free, self-regulating market under neoliberal political regimes called “globalization.” Adachi's return to Japan after a long absence of nearly a quarter of a century constitutes an event of complex historical significance that has managed to alter the meaning of one of the most enduring tropes in the modern Japanese rhetorical arsenal. Before World War II, writers, artists, and thinkers constantly called for a
“return to Japan,” which meant the return to some, as yet, unsullied cultural spirit (and the difference of identity) that made Japan irreducibly Japanese and would remain as the self-protective armor against encroachments of the outside world and the contaminations of foreign artifacts, ideas, and things. With Adachi’s physical return to Japan, we have not the recalling of an exhausted, reified spiritual essence but rather one that fully embodies the promise and fresh spiritual energy of an earlier generation and its time and commitment to transforming the political and cultural landscape on a global scale, ironically bringing Japan into that world which the prewar world had tried to hold at arm’s length. It is this message, filtered through the following interview, and especially its hopefulness, that Adachi has brought back with him, as he plunges back into the task of completing unfinished business—now in a new historical register.

On Masao Adachi

Go Hirasawa

Translated by Philip Kaffen

Masao Adachi appeared in the new film movements happening in Japan from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. The New Wave in Japan, including Shochiku’s Nůberu bagu (nouvelle vague) with Nagisa Oshima and Kijū Yoshida, as well as Toshio Matsumoto’s documentary group, is widely known, but simultaneously, in a sphere completely removed from the major film studios and production companies, three independent film currents were born. These three currents are represented by the Student Film Group, with the Nihon University Film Study Club (Nihon Daigaku Geijutsu Gakubu Eiga Kenkyû-kai, sometimes shortened to Nichidai Eiken) as its center, the Arts Film Group (Geijutsu Eiga), which took theories of the avant-garde as its basis, and the group of individual filmmakers, who used 8mm home video cameras. The background to the emergence of these new currents took place as the nation was concluding the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Nichibei anzen hosho joyaku, also referred to as Anpo), the gravest historical situation to emerge in Japan in the wake of the Second World War. The student-centered New Left emerged within the resistance to this treaty, breaking off from the Japan Communist Party, which had, up to that time, been the focal point of the political avant-garde. One could say that the 1968 Revolution in Japan was already anticipated in form by 1960. Within this turbulent period, politics, culture, and the arts all under-
went enormous transformations, with new theories and practices permeating the film world as well. Among these, the current of student films played a major role in terms of both cinematic history and the history of activism, and the leaders of this movement were Adachi and the group of people with whom he worked. Even after the failure to prevent the passage of the security treaty, Adachi and his associates continued to explore various genres and modes of expression, from production methods to screening forms, conducting all manner of experiments that transcended the existing conceptualizations of cinema as such, and thoroughly pursuing the spirit of independent cinema, or what would later be called underground film, and its philosophies.

Subsequently, Adachi himself, through the VAN Film Science Research Center, which had emerged as the successor to the Nihon University Film Study Club, joined up with Kôji Wakamatsu’s production group, Wakamatsu Pro. The genre of “pink cinema” had emerged in 1963, and Wakamatsu took advantage of the characteristics inherent in the genre, including low budgets and quick production times—commonly considered as shortcomings—in order to continue his guerilla-like experiments. Though he began drawing attention as the star of antiestablishment cinema, it was through the participation of Adachi that Wakamatsu Pro became transformed into an even more radical activist organization. The films that emerged from this group, including Wakamatsu’s Okasareta hakui (Violated Angels, 1967), Yuke yuke nidome no shojo (Go, Go Second Time Virgin, 1969), Seizoku (Sex Jack, 1970), Tenshi no kôkotsu (Ecstasy of the Angels, 1972), and Adachi’s works Seiyûgi (Sex Game, 1968) and Jogakusei gerira (Female Student Guerillas, 1969), both anticipated and reflected on the revolution of 1968 and at the same time, in their militant agitations, drew the enthusiastic support of the Zenkyoto activists who were leading the 1968 rebellion. At the same time, Adachi continued to produce his own independent films and, after his collaboration with former Nihon University Film Study Club members on the film Gingakei (Galaxy, 1967), went on to produce Ryakusho: renzoku shasatsuma (A.K.A. Serial Killer, 1969), with the film critic and anarchist Masao Matsuda and scriptwriter Mamoru Sasaki.

This work, which followed the landscapes that must have been witnessed by Norio Nagayama, a nineteen-year-old man who drew much attention at the time as a convicted serial killer, gave birth to the activist theory of fûkeiron, a new key concept that replaced the then popular notion of a situation (jôkyô), provoking considerable debates. The film took Naga-
yama, who had roamed throughout Japan from rural regions to cities as a migrant worker during the period of high economic growth, and made him into a medium through which state power could be witnessed. Paradoxically, the landscapes that greeted him were relentlessly uniform, bearing no signs of individualized senses of place or space, instead displaying a homogenized essence symbolizing the ubiquity of state power. This theory thus nimbly equated state power with landscape and, from 1968, in which massive battles and riots erupted between feuding powers in the streets, launched a more guerilla-like and nomadic battle style that would continue post-1968. This sensibility informed Oshima’s *Tokyo sensô sengeo hi wa* (*The Man Who Left His Will on Film*, 1970) and was further radicalized by the photography of Nakahira Takuma. Moreover, Adachi, along with Wakamatsu, veered off to Beirut on the way back from the Cannes Film Festival, where they completed *Sekigun-PFLP: Sekai sensô sengen* (*Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War*, 1971), a new film in which they shot the “everyday” of Arab guerillas as a text for world revolution. Refusing the existing mode of film screening, and based on the declaration that screening itself is a form of activist movement, Adachi formed the Red Bus Screening Troupe (Aka basu jôeitai). Through this group, the work was screened in Palestine and Europe, becoming a monumental achievement for the notion of cinema as movement in Japan. *Hôdôron* (theory of report-age) has been proposed as a means of elevating the theory of landscape to a critique of the state, but the development of landscape theory, which emerged as a means of signaling and resisting the homogenization of the world, deserves reconsideration in the current moment when the system of post-Fordism is complete.

The Red Army work provided the opportunity for Adachi to throw himself into the Palestinian revolution, and he left Japan in 1974 to do so. His whereabouts thereafter remained unknown for some time, but after a quarter century in prison in Lebanon, he was extradited to Japan and imprisoned again. However, after his release from prison, he completed his most recent work, *Yûheisha – Terorisuto* (*The Prisoner*, 2006), which focuses on the figure of Kôzô Okamoto, the lone surviving perpetrator of the Lod Airport raid of 1972. Tracing the trajectory of Adachi and his films, including this most recent work, his first in thirty-five years, poses questions about the theory and practice of independent cinema at the current moment; in his effort to grasp for new possibilities, his will to confront the difficult conditions of the contemporary world, Adachi underscores the way these theories and practices must be synonymous with these greater struggles.
Cinema/Revolution: An Interview with Harry Harootunian and Masao Adachi

Transcribed and translated by Philip Kaffen

HH: I want to thank you, Masao Adachi, for providing time and allowing me to speak with you today about your work and the current situation. It was very unfortunate, in fact, that we didn’t have that opportunity at NYU [New York University]. As I remember in the statement you had prepared for us when we first showed some of your films a few years ago, much of your filmmaking has been deeply involved in the encounter with people. In many ways, you were denied that opportunity in New York, as we were denied the occasion of speaking directly with you. It is evident that since the beginning of your career as a filmmaker, your films have consistently disclosed an intimate encounter with people in the cinema movement.

I should say also at the outset that I’m probably the person least qualified to speak about your work or about filmmaking. I am only a film-watcher. I thought, for a number of reasons at the time your films were screened in New York, that it was important for us and students to have at least some encounter or contact with some of the films you made. At that time, I was involved in administering a department at NYU that was a new undertaking, devoted to the study of modern East Asian societies and cultures. It occurred to me in discussion with a number of other people that the opportunity to present your work would provide students as well as faculty with some contact with a living, experimental cultural producer and one whose films really addressed vital political questions.

1. The title of the interview was inspired by the book of the same title, Eiga/kakumei [Film/revolution] (Tokyo: Kawade shobô shinsha, 2003), the first published book of interviews conducted upon Adachi’s extradition to Japan. Adachi discusses in detail everything from his life growing up to his activities with the Nihon University Film Study Club and the VAN Film Science Research Center, his joining of Wakamatsu Productions, his collaborations with Nagisa Oshima, the founding of the second edition of the film journal Eiga hihyô, the production of A.K.A. Serial Killer and The Red Army/PFLP, screening movements, his move to Palestine, his work with the Japanese Red Army, all the way up to his extradition. Subsequently, he also published the collected notes of his three years in prison in Lebanon as Hei no naka no senya ichiya: Arabu gokuchûki [One thousand and one nights behind walls: Arab prison notes] (Tokyo: Aiikusha, 2005). There is also a single volume of collected writings, Eiga e no senryaku [Strategies for cinema] (Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1974). Additionally, two special editions of journals were published, one in 2000 by Production Eigei, Adachi Eiga geijutsu rinji zôkan: Adachi Masao Reinen; and another in 2004 by Jôkyô shuppan, Jôkyô bessatsu: On Adachi Masao Eiga/Kakumei.
As you know, we showed two films—A.K.A. Serial Killer (1969) and The Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War (1971)—and the subsequent discussions were carried out on them in a political context in the United States that was increasingly insensitive to the needs and requirements of the Palestinian cause. At that time, especially in New York after 9/11, there was really a growing hostility toward the Middle East, and especially the Palestinian cause and its aspirations. This was dramatized often brilliantly and polemically with the struggle of Edward Said and, in his last days, his intellectual defense of the Palestinian people’s desire of a homeland.

Your films converge with a longstanding interest I’ve had, especially with reference to Japan and parts of Asia, in the question of how art or culture has intersected with politics. This is especially true in Japan’s modern history, and it has been one of the principal thematic considerations in my own work. I realize that your principal concerns certainly are different from mine and have been occupied in the making of film. With this in view, I was particularly interested in how the form of film itself, especially as it utilizes certain kinds of techniques associated with the documentary, might be the basis for a rethinking of ways to reunify politics and culture.

So I’ll start with a general question, which was already supplied by the last point you made in your video address you had sent to us at the time of your showing, where you say that “my principle is to see politics and media as one and the same thing. I have never separated them in my thinking, and I think it is time to make art again as our own thing without worrying about institutional judgments.” While I agree with the sentiment, it raises the question of why and how does film allow you to engage with a specific social situation as a condition of actually acting upon it?

MA: This is really an enormous question, so the answer may come in a roundabout way. As a person who makes films, I believe that film is basically a product of my own imagination. Those people who watch films also try to see them through their imagination. For cinema, this mutual relation of imagination is everything. I make films following my imagination, and this process itself becomes my thinking or message.

Additionally, when I express my thinking through cinema, there are two possible methods. One of those methods is to try to tell my own private story as honestly as possible. Another method is to project everything that is built up from my imagination. That is to say, to project the memory of reality, the things that we conceive but aren’t necessarily real, to put forth an image of unreality, or what we might call a way of observing the relation-
ship between the antirealistic or antipersonal things of the world and our own reality.

I think it is the task of filmmaking to produce work without categorizing or distinguishing based on these two methods or directions. We normally refer to the first method as that of documentary and the second we call feature film, and make various categorizations based on these and other methods. Yet, on my part, I want to make films, whether documentaries, dramas, or any other kind of film, by focusing on that relationship between the two methodologies. For example, those things that are part of Japan and those which are not, those things that are part of cinema and those which are not, like paintings or novels. I work from a basis of wanting to demolish these categories.

From this basic stance, along with the thought that what we call the political is society itself, it is the form of history itself; in addition, I also feel that film and revolution, or film and arts, or politics and arts, are inseparable. Moreover, in recognizing that, at the same time, I would like to present their inseparability. There are times, depending on the subject matter, when it takes the form of a perfectly normal film [laughter], but the decision is based on the situation in which I find myself. To put it very schematically, the thematic content is the critical relation that happens in between so-called politics and art, without resorting to a theory of cinema.

However, as I said previously, I feel that the problem of imagination is at the heart of everything, so a mere critical relation is finally insufficient. Therefore, while I will continue to think about these and other questions as Professor Harootunian poses them, I would like to explain the basic position and circumstances around making the films A.K.A. Serial Killer and The Red Army/PFLP. With regard to the political conditions at that time, domestically the nation was in the midst of reinforcing the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty\(^2\) that had been in place for ten years [since the 1960s] and

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2. Anpo is the abbreviation for the postwar peace treaty signed between the United States and Japan, Anzen Hoshô Jôyaku (full title: Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan [Nippon-koku to Amerika-gasshûkoku to no Aida no Sôgo Kyôryoku oyobi Anzen Hoshô Jôyaku]). Following on from the initial peace treaty signed in San Francisco in 1951, Anpo was renewed first in 1960 and then in 1970, on both occasions meeting fierce resistance both within the Diet and also out in the streets, where it spurred enormous radical revolts. The treaty essentially made Japan a client in the cold war policies of the United States (who would provide military bases and protection at the expense of the Japanese government, which was otherwise forbidden from military funding) and was passed by Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politicians, including
with it the new political relationship between the United States and Japan. At the same time, it was a period in which the oppressive sociopolitical tendencies to further solidify Japan’s political and economic system began anew. That is only the political aspect, but in fact, Japan possessed a very rudimentary social structure, and when there is some political trend or cultural current, everything else gets pulled into that [prevailing] trend in one fell swoop. That was the character of Japanese society.

In addition to the domestic situation, within the international sphere, there was first the Korean War, and then after that the Vietnam War, which was a continuing current in the social conditions in which we lived. It was within this situation that various cultural and artistic experiments and models exploded with great vibrancy onto the scene. However the vast majority of these experiments were those in which exploiting technological qualities made possible through the development of industrial economics took precedence and had absolutely no direct correlation at the level of content with the contemporary conditions or social trends.

Within the field of film, for example, 8mm film cameras began to spread to the point where anyone could make a private film and conduct all kinds of experiments. It was a time in which the spread of scientific technology on a mass level also began in the fields of art and music, and the flourishing of various experiments using new concepts and methods that broke with classical models. Within such trends, I always held to the thought of seeking a better way at the level of method to tie together these new possibilities with opportunities that were less trained on technology.

Around the time of the making of A.K.A. Serial Killer and The Red Army/PFLP, I was also involved with various other films, but the question of how to face the new political and social oppression was always among my biggest concerns. A suffocating sense of enclosure stemming from political oppressiveness underlay these feelings, and this took on an extremely sharp form. The theme of A.K.A. Serial Killer, about the serial killer Norio Nagayama, comes from this, and I was thinking about how to express that feeling of enclosure itself, the problem of how to break that feeling, in

Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, who had been involved in the administration of Japanese colonialism in Manchuria and was imprisoned as a Class A War Criminal. In some ways, the treaty demonstrated just how corrupt and hollow calls for “democracy” sounded at the time even among the general population.

3. Japan’s postwar economic growth was largely augmented by the Korean and Vietnam Wars, whereby the country became a supplier to the American military effort.
various film experiments. For that reason, my own interest was also torn between reality and the negation of that reality. As a result, I myself feel conditions under which I was changing are well reflected in the different methods employed by *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and *The Red Army/PFLP*.

_HH_: You felt torn between that sense of enclosure on the one hand and the political situation?

_MA_: Yes. Consequently, my interest in art and politics, or what we might call the relationship between culture or media and politics, my interest in that relation itself, was escalating.

_HH_: So all the films you were particularly concerned with or making were in some way or another mediated by this concern for the divergence you perceived occurring in Japanese society at that time?

_MA_: That’s right. In the films I completed in my earliest student years, I made films explicitly with the theme of politics or [dealing with] the political environment. However, I did not attempt to express those themes in a political manner. As I said at the beginning, even there, imagination is everything, so I believed it was more important to think about how to work with metaphor.

_HH_: In other words, you are saying that you were responsive to the specific political situation at that moment, but in the films that you made at that moment, their content does not really deal with the situations explicitly. If that’s the case, perhaps it’s the form of those particular films that really speaks to that contemporary situation or alerts us to the force of an immediate political environment.

_MA_: That is definitely one characteristic. Theoretically, I moved toward the “theory of landscape” (*fûkeiron*), and from theory of landscape to news-reel films, and finally reached a point where I was trying to make my own low-budget diary-like films. At the same time, there also appeared another project that envisaged screenings as a movement (*jôei undô*) . . .

_HH_: Some of us called attention to a similarity between French Situationists and the theorization of *fûkeiron*, inasmuch as they were both simultaneous and contemporary with each other [inflecting the same conjuncture], and often shared similar views on how to configure fields of action. Can you speak about how *fûkeiron* was formed among groups of people with whom you were actually working or connected at the time?
MA: The making of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* progressed as we tried to develop a script for the film, traveling around to each area of Japan that Nagayama had lived in while he was drifting about the country. As we did this, there were continuous debates, centered around staff members Masao Matsuda [film critic] and Mamoru Sasaki [scriptwriter], over how to grasp the theme of the movie, in other words, the world view of the protagonist, Nagayama, and then how to put that into visual language. At the same time, I was thinking, from the perspective of film style, about whether we should shoot it as a documentary or incorporate dramatic elements.

When we stood within the landscape that greeted Nagayama’s everyday life, there was something that we could feel was common to every landscape in every town we visited. This was just at the time in Japan when, politically, there began to be all kinds of clamor about casting off the post-war, and, economically, the flames of Japan’s policies for high economic growth were reaching a peak. In every region that we came across, the old towns where citizens had made their daily lives were crushed, incongruous groups of tidy buildings sprouted and shot off into the horizon, the rustic lanes of old villages were replaced with concrete and turned into highways, and even in the landscape of preharvest fields there hovered a suffocating air of efficiency and mass production. When we felt this, we were convinced that Nagayama, however far he drifted, must have been seized by this same suffocating sense of continual oppression. In other words, every place you went in Japan was turning into small urban zones modeled on Tokyo, and even the historic scenery of famous places was transformed into commercialized tourist spots through catchphrases used in television campaigns, like “Discover Japan.” This situation itself, though not in some solidified form, involved the overflowing will of the government and the power of the time. Certainly it was not only Nagayama—rather, the oppression incorporated all the people who lived in these transformed places. So we were convinced that Nagayama, with gun in hand, kept firing at this landscape itself, and that this is how he became embroiled in the serial killing incident. The theme of the movie *A.K.A. Serial Killer* was decided—we resolved to depict the figure of arbitrary power that appeared in the landscape, comparing it with the alienated and threatened sense of existence experienced by Nagayama himself. This was the beginning of the *fûkeiron* debates, wherein the subjectivity of each individual was simply swallowed up by the “reality of landscape being expropriated by power,” and we made the besieged spirit of Nagayama the protagonist. Thus some elevated dramatic factor, as well as even the so-called documentary method, was unnecessary, or, rather,
would be damaging to *fûkeiron*. We created the film by focusing on the continuation of landscape alone.

These *fûkeiron* debates that began during the production of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* soon drew the reactions of friends who were photographers and painters; the debates continued to expand, and all manner of experimental art works from a wide variety of fields was born. However, at that time, we had no direct exchange with theoretical trends or film movements abroad, and so I had no idea that similar efforts were being made in other countries. Instead, we had put out the monthly journal *Eiga hihyô* [film criticism], and the debates, centered on the efforts of creating a new film movement, were advanced there; we could say that the so-called *fûkeiron* was molded by Masao Matsuda’s theorization of this situation. Ultimately, *fûkeiron* was born from and flowed out of the conditions in Japan at that time.

Later, I came to learn of the existence of a confluence of movements and theoretical exchanges in the West through the work of people like Jean-Luc Godard, and I had a strong sense that, “Wow, truly a simultaneous and global movement could happen.” Then I began to look not only to the making of film but also to the importance of screenings as a movement (*jôei undô*). It was at that point that I became a guerilla [laughter].

**HH:** But being a guerilla in this instance means leaving the world of the imagination for acting on it, doesn’t it?

**MA:** Yes, but at the same time I would say I am very much a romanticist. As a very basic standpoint, I went on to make another new film and started my life in the guerilla society with a guerilla lifestyle. So, for me, to be a cineaste and to be a guerilla are almost interchangeable, although people say they are confused; on the one hand a cineaste, and on the other hand a guerilla—but no, through my body they are one and the same thing.

**HH:** So, in other words, becoming a guerilla is also sustaining the imagination?

**MA:** Yes. For instance, even within my lifestyle as a guerilla, in the beginning, I was living far too casually, and I was often scolded, “Mister, what

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4. A reference to Akabasu jôeitai (Red Bus Screening Troupe), the screening group for *The Red Army/PFLP* (1971) inaugurated on September 30, 1971, with its first screening in Tokyo, and that crossed the country in a bright red microbus. Actively rejecting the notion of a “work” associated with the capitalist film production industry, and searching for a screening methodology that would be different from the existing system, they developed a notion of screening itself as its own movement.
the hell do you think a revolution is?" After being there [in Palestine and Lebanon] for twenty-six years, although some Japanese guerillas had come as volunteers and learned to read and write Arabic, I alone was unable to do so. Those days were too full as it was.

*HH*: Right, I kept thinking of that work by Jean Genet, where he goes to Palestine. But I’m not sure whether he ever learned Arabic, either.

*MA*: Once, I saw him in a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. I tried to talk with him, but he never spoke with anybody—Palestinian or non-Palestinian. Many artists and writers came to see him in the hotel, but there were no conversations with him. He was just drinking wine quietly. He said he was very ready to come here and so studied many important things; and he wrote, as a message to all journalists and artists, “I have no chance to talk with all of you” [laughter]. A Japanese critic, Inuhiko Yomota, who had visited Palestine later, was also surprised when I recounted the episode. In Tunisia, he had tried to see Genet to ask him about his stay as an immigrant. Thinking about it now, Genet could never ultimately recognize himself in the place where he actually existed [even when he was sitting in a refugee camp], and I think this may have been an internal problem for him. Yet I wonder if even a single person noticed the deep and overflowing sympathy he held for the Palestinian people that existed within that silence. In later years, he wrote about the silence he maintained at the time. I read his posthumously published reflections, *Un Captif amoureux*, and it was really wonderful.

Just to bring the conversation back, of course, I ordinarily did film work with people like Kôji Wakamatsu⁵ and Nagisa Oshima.⁶ That in

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5. Film director Kôji Wakamatsu was born in 1936. After debuting as a pink film director, in 1965 he established his own production company, hiring various young film people and, taking advantage of the constraints imposed by low-budget genre film, putting out extreme works with a guerilla-like approach. His works include *Taiji ga mitsuryû suru toki* (*The Embryo Hunts in Secret*, 1966), *Okasareta hakui* (*Violated Women in White*, 1967), *Tenshi no kôkotsu* (*Ecstacy of the Angels*, 1972), and *Mizu no nai puuru* (*A Pool without Water*, 1982).

6. Film director Nagisa Oshima was born in 1932. Occupying the central position in the Shochiku Nûberu bagu, Japan’s version of the New Wave, Oshima established his own production company, Sôzôsha (later Oshima Nagisa Productions), in 1961. As the flag bearer of independent film movements, he put out experimental works in collaboration with young filmmakers and cultural producers in a variety of genres. Representative works include *Nihon no yoru to kiri* (*Night and Fog in Japan*, 1960), *Kôshikei* (*Death by Hanging*, 1968), *Shinjuku dorobô nikki* (*Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, 1968), and *Ai no koriida* (*The Realm of the Senses*, 1976).
itself was exciting, but somehow I felt my involvement was kind of limited. Wakamatsu could understand my feelings in that regard, but Oshima was extremely critical.

*HH:* Why so?

*MA:* He was of the opinion that if you don’t bring everything into the film, all your anxieties and thoughts, then you are not a director. I think Oshima is a very fine documentarist, and sometimes his narrative cinema is also of a very high level, politically and humanistically. But, at the same time, he wanted to put everything within a frame. I said no: the frame will be there, but, at the same time, the audience should decide. It is fine for the filmmaker to put all his feelings into the work, but he should make films where the audience can watch it more freely as well.

*HH:* I like that particular metaphor, because the framing represents the control of the author or director. So, the framing actually puts the director at a distance from the audience. You want to close the distance so that what you are saying goes back to your earlier view and desire to leave it open for the audience to determine their own framing.

*MA:* I think that each audience member should make his or her own frames, insofar as that is how directors can begin to close the distance between themselves and their audiences.

*HH:* When you were speaking this way, I kept thinking of Brecht, who always leaves his plays open for some kind of audience participation.

*MA:* I have been influenced by people like Brecht and Beckett.

*HH:* They did it with plays, and you’re doing it with film, where it becomes a much more complex problem, or certainly a different one, perhaps.

*MA:* A more complicated explanation is possible, and at the same time, there should be a more active stage of experimentation between director and audience in the cinema. At that time [the 1970s], there were various happenings and performances.

*HH:* I understand that, but what makes it more complex from my layman’s view is that a film is presented as a completed production, but you are proposing that as only the beginning, that a film can then continue to interact with different audiences, and they will contribute to its completion on their own.
MA: That’s right. I also screen for people films that have frames. Through screening, by meeting with an audience, this process enables me to objec-
tify myself, or to be able to see myself in the films. This relation, “a certain
kind of relation,” as I said earlier, brings about a repetition and continuity.

HH: More importantly, you came upon some idea of interaction long before
the age of so-called computer interactivity.

MA: Methodologically speaking, I was an experimental filmmaker, experi-
menting, in various ways, with different methods of screening at that time.
In those film screening experiments, from the late 1960s to the early 1970s,
there were various cinema-related people who were participating along
with us, but there were also even more artists from other fields who were
simply willing to work with the materials and in the field of cinema.

As I said before, a trend toward depoliticization emerged, and this
was unbearable to me. There were various experiments happening in vari-
ous artistic fields, but the majority of these were depoliticized.

HH: I think that the historical moment is very important still, because a
lot of visual art today is very conservative. That needs further historical
scrutiny.

MA: Yes, and it was at that point that art became a form of media. At that
time, the films made in Japan or globally grew to be polarized within an
extremely narrow sense: whether to become political or to move toward
depoliticization. Within these conditions, the people who were relatively
good were Wakamatsu and Oshima.

And in the same sense, I was very interested in Shinsuke Ogawa7 in
Japan, who documented the Sanrizuka farmers’ struggle8 for decades, and
Godard in France. But they themselves were also affected by this split.

7. Film director Shinsuke Ogawa was born in 1935. After working at Iwanami Films, in
1968 he established an independent production company. Continuing after his record of
the Sanrizuka Airport struggles and the Zenkyoto radical leftist movements, he lived in
an isolated village in Tohoku and worked to open the Yamagata Documentary Film Fes-
tival. He died in 1992. His key works include Assatsu no mori (The Oppressed Students:
Forest of Pressure, 1967), Nihon kaihô sensen: Sanrizuka no natsu (The Battle Front for
the Liberation of Japan: A Summer in Sanrizuka, 1967), Nippon koku: furuyashiki mura

8. This was a movement among farmers, beginning in the mid-1960s at Sanrizuka, to
defend land that the Japanese government tried to expropriate through force for the con-
struction of Narita Airport, just outside of Tokyo. Because plans to construct an airport on
farmland were made in secret and without consulting the farmers of that land, much criti-
Since you are a scholar, I would like to turn the tables and ask you a question. For those people who haven’t given up and keep working, how do you sustain yourself?

_HH_: That’s a difficult question. I think the split is a sign of a revolution that never happened. What occurs is that you get a divergence where a lot of these art producers, filmmakers, or artists use experimentation and put it to the service of art and art alone. What this really represents is a drift away from politics to culture. And as to what happens to those who remain true to some kind of political mission or vocation, I think that is a more complex problem, but a lot of them disappear, in the United States, at least. Some of them drifted to the universities [laughter].

_MA_: Like you [laughter]?

_HH_: Would you speak about Palestinian life as you were able to observe it in Lebanon, Tunis, and Palestine? Would you also give us some ideas about how Palestinians actually viewed their enemies? Moreover, it would be of great interest to readers to hear you address the complicated relationships of factions in the PLO [Fatah, PFLP, PLF] and the less organized radical groups, and describe how you were able to negotiate your way through them.

_MA_: The Palestinian people I had joined up with in 1974 were those living in refugee camps. There are said to be over three million of them, coming from Arab countries as well as several other countries. At that point, I was planning to produce a continuation of _The Red Army/PFLP_, the piece I had made three years prior. In Lebanon at that time, Palestinians in the mountainous areas away from the cities, for example in Sabra Shatila in Beirut, in Sayda’s [Sidon] Ein el-Hilweh, in Sur, and Tripoli [Tarabulus], had built and were living in areas packed so tightly that they were practically on top of each other. The massacre and exile of “Black September” in Jordan in 1969 and 1970 forced a doubling of the refugee population on a massive cism and enmity was aroused nationwide. Various activist groups also joined the struggle on the side of the farmers, and the site became one of the central points for social movements in postwar Japan. Riot police were brought in, as farmers constructed elaborate tunnels and trenches to wage a long-term struggle. Ogawa made a series of films in the 1960s and 1970s documenting the conflict that have become among the most important postwar representations of documentary and radical filmmaking practice in Japan. Even though the airport was finally built in 1978, it remains incomplete and mired in controversy as the struggle continues decades later.
scale in Lebanon. Lebanon from the start had a state-structure based upon a divided domination among different religious sects, where the average citizen could accept living together harmoniously with fellow Arabs, but the government and the state institutions, in the new climate, became cautious about the enormous population of Palestinian refugees, and especially outside of the border zone with Israel, began to apply severe rules according to status. Thereby the Palestinian people were forced en masse into poor refugee camps.

I believe I don’t need to get into the details of the history of the Palestinian people during the 1970s and 1980s. But the major part of my communal life with them involved trying to survive in the refugee camps as we were showered with bombs during the state of civil war. While continuing a war on two fronts, against Israel and Lebanese right-wing militant groups, I continued to see the steady restoration in the refugee camps from the damage wrought by Israel's campaign of annihilation. With the withdrawal of the PLO from Beirut in 1982, a tremendous social change was brought to the Palestinian people as all the men—both young and old—disappeared from the refugee camps. In the women- and children-centered society created by the breakup of the families and the absence of men, an intense and wretched battle for survival was waged by the fierce power of those women.

At that time, Arabs and Palestinians were united in a moving belief in family and national consciousness, enabling them to rebuild from scratch, repeatedly, the decimated family and social structures, even as human life and existence itself was threatened and lost. To me, the figure of their tenacity remains burned into my eyes as a true model for life force even today. There still remains a connection between neighbors and what we could call the power of family ties, which is lost in today’s Japan, something that united with the consciousness of the wish to restore the homeland. In this kind of situation, the problem that cannot be solved by the people operating only within the refugee camps has become the education of a new generation. Free education from kindergarten through junior high school is largely guaranteed by UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency], and within the system, where each organization or movement provides basic military training for the youth who are over thirteen, a solid national education has also been achieved. However, when going from high school to college, the high fees that cannot be paid become a big problem, and with discrimination against refugees, job opportunities are narrow; the majority wind up continuing military training and then become guerillas,
or setting out to earn a living by relying on connections of acquaintances from other Arab nations. Of course, the PLO’s effort was poured into higher education, and each year, over two hundred young men and women were sent abroad to study. But it was mostly the socialist countries who provided the funding free of charge. The Arab countries, well aware of this situation, employed an exclusionary and discriminatory policy, in which they made the finest graduates of the medical departments of socialist countries take the national test in their own countries again in English, and if they did not pass it, they would not be granted a medical license. Nonetheless, the work of Palestinians—not only doctors but also teachers, people in political administration, and other white-collar professions—up until the first Gulf War, was so successful that it could have convinced anyone that the potential to rebuild the Palestinian state was gaining little by little. Following the withdrawal of the PLO from Tunis in 1982, those experiences within Lebanon were used to plant suspicion toward the PLO in Arab countries; at the same time, the refugee camps in each area were isolated as Palestinian concessions. Within that reality, Arafat’s administration in the PLO had no option but to open up a game of compromise with Israel through the Oslo Accords in 1993.

My relations with various Palestinian organizations began with the collaborative production with the PFLP on *The Red Army/PFLP*, and my actual collaborations with them extended over a broad range of activities. In particular, I tried to learn about the struggles within the PLO over the policy of constructing a Palestinian state as well as the experiences of divisions within the organization and general accounts of the movements, but it proved quite challenging. The reason I tried to work civilly with the mainstream faction Fatah; the DFLP; the PFLP-GC; the ALF, which had broken from the PFLP; the PLF, which had broken off from the PFLP-GC; and other groups was partly because of learning about the contemporary state of the Palestinian revolution. But more fundamentally, it was because of learning about the overall situation of the factional struggles and coalitions within the PLO, which had become the representative group of the Palestinian people as the united front in the armed struggle.9

Here I will sketch a rough and biased account of the various Palestinian organizations. The ground of the factional struggles of PLO-related

9. Here, Adachi suggests that the PLO taught him about the importance of a united effort, as it is evident he is specifically referring to the problems of division within the Japanese New Left movements.
organizations, the split within Fatah or the split between the DFLP and the PFLP, who followed the path of Marx/Leninism, was one based on a difference of opinion over how best to deal with the liberation of Palestine and the path of nation building. One of the bases that can’t really be called a basis, in an extremely everyday expression, is the overemphasis of self-assertion of all the people in leadership positions saying, “I’ll do it,” or “We’ll do it my way,” and refusing any points of compromise with others. That each of the groups was supposedly on the same path and joined in the same armed struggle and yet unable to reach agreement with other groups was due to the strong manifestation of each of these people’s self-assertion. However, a more serious basis was the question of which group of refugees the organization would be based on, as these greatly reflected the conditions of home-regions of each organization’s members. For example, the mainstream Fatah faction, whose constituents stretch across the entirety of occupied lands, instigated no major internal antagonism even with the supposedly compromised path of the mini-nation state plan. However, the antimainstream Revolutionary Council faction of Fatah shares a common point with the PFLP, PFLP-GC, and other antimainstream factions, which is that by the terms of the Middle East Peace negotiations, the overwhelming majority of their members were considered to be not within the occupied territories but rather within “Israeli land” as determined by the 1948 line. None of them was ever eligible to return to their homelands according to the mini-nation plan. This difference is not everything, but it is the basis for the decision of whether to take the path of the liberation of all lands en masse or whether to start from the path of partial liberation and the building of a mini state. This point also had sizable repercussions since the possibility remained that mass numbers of refugees would become displaced persons who could never return to Palestine because of where they were born.

However, after the Oslo Accords in 1993, the problem within the PLO of constructing a nation was hemmed in by the degree to which there should be compromise with Israel. The antimainstream faction’s demand for “the complete retaking of all occupied territories” was drowned out by the U.S.-fabricated mood of an international “Middle East Peace” and completely lost. On the other hand, in the refugee camps in each Arab land, the state of crisis in which the actual displaced people lived was reaching higher and higher levels. Due to their continually being locked into the situation of the “Middle East Peace” plan, which would not return any homeland even within Palestine, the PLO leadership, as well as some organizations within it, incurred the disillusion of many, which occasioned a definite sense
of estrangement amongst public opinion. The eruption of this mistrust led to some beginning to seek a new axis of organization elsewhere, and even within my own experience of communal life in refugee camps, there was a certain sense of historical inevitability to the emergence of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah [the party of God]. In the self-government zones of the Palestinians, several organizations outside of Fatah continued to be fodder for Israel's extermination campaign, and the fact that not enough of a mass movement could be created invited a lag in the reform of the general body of the PLO and each organization. That they could not keep up systematically with the flow of public opinion or the conditions there appears to have accelerated this trend.

On the occasion of creating the Japanese Red Army in 1976, I was establishing collaborative relations with several Palestinian organizations outside the PFLP; additionally, there were collaborations and meetings between people involved in liberation struggles from several Middle Eastern, Asian, and African nations. In the way of life of the Kurds, Armenians, Iranians, and other organizations aiming for the liberation of their native lands, a mountain of suggestive learning points not only to the contemporary conditions of the struggle for national liberation, but enough even to force Japanese activists to reassess their own historical consciousness and grasp of contemporary conditions. This was also very fruitful for my own way of living in refugee camps.

HH: In this connection, readers would also be interested in learning about what you were doing in the camps, how, in fact, you were making your way, and the specific kinds of work you were performing in these years of exile.

MA: I can break up my activities into a few major periods. In the early stage, at the beginning, I was working on a sequel to *The Red Army/PFLP* and, while there, deepened my relations with Japanese activists who were working as international volunteers at each place I went; that exchange developed into the creation of the organization Nihon Sekigun [Japanese Red Army], and during that time, we started to actually strengthen the organization. However, at the same time, while I was doing these activities, a campaign in Japan was started, in which I was called “the spokesman for the Japanese Red Army,” and so began the second period of my activities, in which I was compelled by necessity to adopt an underground lifestyle. At that time, Palestinians in Lebanon were right in the middle of civil war, so how to survive and continue activities under the conditions of civil war had become a big task. In collaborating with the cultural activities of the
Palestinian organization, I ultimately started to live in military camps as a guerrilla of the Japanese Red Army, and then we started doing activities to open up cooperative relations between different organizations. In the third period, from 1982 until I was arrested in 1997, we collaborated with subjects in the struggle for liberation and organizations in countries en route to revolution. But as a principle of the Japanese Red Army, we made it a point to keep our distance from any organizations that held any position in state power. At the same time that we were continuing to collaborate with the stateless Palestinians, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, accompanied by full-scale globalization, called for a violent tempest which rained down on small group organizations like ours, and so we began to reorganize the Japanese Red Army itself. We were labeled as a “terrorist organization” by the United States, and international activities became something like a league in which all the poor and small organizations throughout the world rubbed shoulders in a kind of nagaya [tenement house], overwhelmed by taking on the collaboration of each organization’s survival and dealing with further underground organizing. Nonetheless, this gave birth to a great sense of camaraderie among those fellow activists who shared the difficulties of living within these struggles and also brought me the joy of living in reality according to the internationalism which privileged helping out those who are suffering the most.

In each of these three periods, in the field of culture I participated in such activities as organizing the Palestinian Writers Conference, making my own preparations for feature filmmaking, and starting up again documentary filmmaking. But with the 1982 attack by Israel, and then the air raids on Bekaa Valley, all the materials for filming and the archives were lost. So, I continued in the experience of searching out film activities, always “starting over again from zero,” just as the Palestinians did with the figure of the lost fortress they had finally erected.

**HH:** This is a personal question, but it also comes out of my own political interest. I thought about it when I watched *The Red Army/PFLP*. I thought that in many ways this is not as much about art as about politics and strategy, and what caught my attention was the attempt to fuse a politically radical coalition devoted to some conception of world revolution with a national liberation movement.

I realize that these various groups that came to Palestine—the Japanese Red Army [Sekigun], the Irish revolutionary groups—represented a mix that was really quite different from the majority of Palestinian freedom
fighters, not necessarily Marxists who weren’t Palestinians, like George Habash and people like that, but the PLO, for example. Was this ever an issue that you considered or thought about while you were there? In the end, Edward Said was, first and last, a nationalist.

*MA*: I don’t agree with that. In my opinion, if I can sum it up, in the case of Edward Said, he was very radical in turning away from being a cosmopolitan to a nationalist. However, he was finally unable to become a nationalist, and he died right before making the transformation.

I had many debates with political activists and artists there. They were nationalists, but their enemies were not at the level of ethnicity, so they were pulled to the border of nationalism and internationalism, a border they transcended to establish their own position. Meanwhile, I was at a point where I was thinking how it would be possible to revolutionize Japan. In order for me to join the struggle with them, it was necessary to straddle two stages [the national and the international level]. At the same time, in the thought of most Japanese revolutionaries, in spite of their strong nationalist tendencies, they called themselves internationalists. For example, the Red Army Faction debated the strategy of world war rather than just making declarations, and they called for things such as the establishment of a global Red Army. But these were merely suggestions, while the real problem they were facing at that time was how to develop the student movement into a national movement. At that time, such a movement had not yet been realized, and I went to Palestine, where there was active cooperation with the national movement at an international level. This was because the enemy was at an international level. So this was a completely new situation for me.

So I decided to follow the Palestinian national revolution and, through that study, to make a new cinema, and I continued to do so. This is what I have done for twenty-five years! At the same time, Edward Said himself became a leader of the nationalist movement, or one of the important activists within the PLO, by trying to revolutionize the PLO as a nationalist movement. But, in the case of Arab nationalist movements, there is no need to say, for instance, that it’s an international communist movement, because the nationalist movement among Arabs itself is already internationalist. As you know, he became very radical inside the national leadership of the PLO. But, the two-step policy of strategy toward the goal of national interest was going on, and he could not agree with it, so he took a more radical position within the PLO. Finally, after some political struggles, he suddenly
gave up his position within the leadership because the nationalist strategy and rightist political line could not cooperate with him, and he started to criticize these policies as part of the conservative bureaucrat line.

**HH:** Your insight into the nationalist movement, which points to the waging of a struggle at a broader international level, is a really interesting idea. I guess I would have seen it in a different way, but it comes to the same thing: this is basically an anticolonial level. But with Said, one of the things that struck me about his thinking was a conception of politics, which was always about the Palestinian struggle, juxtaposed to, and really at odds with, a view of culture rooted in high European bourgeois culture.

**MA:** Yes, he criticizes “Orientalism,” imperialism, and conservative nationalist movements. But, at the same time, he could never be dependent on the real national Palestinian movement itself. This is one of his weak points.

In my case, at that time in Japan, the tendency of revolution was almost dead. But in Said’s case, the reality of the Palestinian national movement was going on. As an artist, poet, and musician, all his senses should come together in his body and thought, but all the time he was trying to achieve a balance with his politics. As a political critic he was strong. The idea of his work was very radical. But, I feel, when he was involved with music, he became very weak.

**HH:** And that is where he diverges from you, Mr. Adachi. Your interest in culture derives from your encounters with various groups and various people. And their everyday life is very crucial, but for the completion of whatever film you make. His—Said’s—was always separated from that grounding in the everyday, until the very last, and then he began to worry about land settlements in Palestine. But by then he had little time left.

**MA:** After I went over [completely] to the Palestinian side, as an international volunteer I tried to mobilize artistic work, especially in the cinema field, but there was so much cultural conservatism within the movement. For example, they never accepted *The Red Army/PFLP*, and they wanted more classical propaganda films. I was fighting and fighting—OK, we don’t need a propagandist to be a cinema director. Some ordinary man or woman should create the propaganda, I thought, and I tried to support them. At the same time, the cinema department of the PLO started a campaign, so I tried to cooperate with them, but in this one dimension.

For example, I had a screening of *The Red Army/PFLP* in a refugee camp, but when they saw it, they just searched for their dead relatives who
appeared in the film, and they would cry, touching the screen because they were missing the dead. *The Red Army/PFLP* is about how to be based in a mass movement, but in Palestine already the armed struggle was operating as a mass movement. So it was not necessary for them to see this film. This is one point. Another point is that they had very conservative ideas about what they wanted to see in art at that time. More recently, there are nice experimental new models, but at that time they were mostly conservative. After my collaboration, some directors could get gold prizes in Moscow for their achievement in making classical propagandist cinema.

**HH:** One of the things you touched on earlier, and I wondered if you could give more detail about, is your utilization of conceptual tools such as *fûkei-ron*, newsreel, and ultimately, propaganda. I know that some people have tried to suggest carryover from one concept to another, but I see a real differentiation between these various techniques, and that's what I'm interested in. What I understand about *fûkeiron* is that what gets positioned is a landscape that is filled with signs of state power and violence. I saw that in *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. As a result of this, the landscape becomes essentially the subject of the film; it determines who we are. We are all effects, so that the landscape is in the foreground.

But when you get to *The Red Army/PFLP*, I think everything is shifted. You've returned to the centrality of human agency as the subject. And therefore the effect is that there is now a distance between the camera and what it is narrating or portraying. Whereas with *A.K.A.* you get the effect of identification, as if we are all a part of this landscape. But we are not part of it, because the landscape in *The Red Army/PFLP* is really human.

**MA:** I'm very happy to hear that viewpoint. In fact, hearing you talk right now, you have made clear exactly the point upon which I was so conflicted at that time. The reason that I wanted to foreground the landscape originally is that power manifests itself there. Power does sometimes appear in a human figure, but in general, power is the system itself. For example, people say that power is located in the state as a mechanism of violence along with the military or police apparatus that guarantees that power, but this is only a small portion of power, a piece of the system. The point of landscape theory was to say that landscape itself is a reflection of the omnipresence of power.

I tried to shoot from this same perspective in Palestine but was finally unable to complete the project. The reason, as I said earlier, was
that the struggle for Palestinian liberation had already been established as a movement for national liberation, and, in fact, armed struggle had been waged for many years. In this situation, only the results of that struggle, the traces of its past, could tell the story; the reality itself could never be captured. After all my anguished reflection, regardless of enemy power, I began to think that landscape was decided in the relations among guerilla fighters. Therefore, one of the conclusions I reached was that it was necessary to look at the situation of the structure of power of the guerrillas in their struggle against the structure of the enemy power, that structure which could be found in the landscape. In order to speak about this dual structure, I proposed newsreel film as a semantic ordering. Therefore, in *The Red Army/PFLP*, I prepared three different types of scenes to capture this situation. The first phase would be scenes of guerilla fighters; the second would be scenes of radical armed revolutionary movements in Japan; and the third would be of the televised scenes of the battles at Sanrizuka shot by Shinsuke Ogawa and the others.

It was my position, through presenting the variations shown by these three different types of scenes, to propose the landscape as a space that could illuminate the contrasts between these three separate layers. An explanation of my real position is the following: the easiest thing would have been to show *A.K.A. Serial Killer* together with the Palestinian images only, but I could not; I thought that, as a Japanese person, I should show the second and third dimensions. I was criticizing the Japanese radical movement and, to a lesser extent, the farmer’s movement at Sanrizuka as well. My basic position is close to the Palestinian side, and at the same time, I cannot stop criticizing the Japanese side. So I needed to find out what’s going on at the time and what’s going on, on the Japanese side. I tried to find some balance with these critiques, and I tried to say it was merely news and not [an expression of] landscape. What we need to do is to stand more radically.

*HH*: Is that the meaning of propaganda for you, then?

*MA*: I believe so. *The Red Army/PFLP* was made as a declaration and not as a documentary. The screening itself was my cinema movement. By conducting screenings throughout Japan, I met so many people and activists, and I talked with them. They said they wanted to see some text on how to fight or how to kill the enemy. They expected my newsreel to show such tactics and techniques. But I am saying, “No, at first, we should know who we are.” So there was much quarreling after the screening. The argument
itself is my aim and allows me to say this is a newsreel, not a landscape. I think my situation and our Japanese situation at that time should have shown more clearly the differences between landscape and newsreel. After seeing it, people were disappointed, because my newsreel is not a textbook for killing the enemy, or not supportive of the Red Army Faction. I argued that we should look back seriously at our understanding about the situation and political line. And that is why the Red Army Faction started to refuse my film.

The more important thing is, how can I continue my cinema? Even after the theory of landscape and newsreel, my position as cinema director never changed, because I myself have only one existence. So I collaborated with the Japanese Red Army—not with the Red Army Faction. After all, whether I collaborate with the JRA or not, I will use cinema to explain myself more and more, but it will be criticized by Mr. Harootunian, as he has done with Mr. Said.

HH: No, I’m not criticizing you. I was asking—I’m interested in your own artistic movement from one particular problematic to another, because I happen to think that the way you dealt with landscape in A.K.A. Serial Killer is close to the way we live our lives. The work on Palestine is interesting as something about struggling against colonial power, a struggle that still continues, but in many ways it is one that seems doomed. You’ve already shown the reasons why, in A.K.A. Serial Killer, it is bound to end badly. I didn’t mean to criticize you at all, because in many ways, especially now, our situation . . . is comparable.

MA: That’s right. I agree with you. We need to start again from that point. We should go back to A.K.A. Serial Killer and restart.

10. For one reading of the factions of the Red Army, see Patricia Steinhoff’s “Hijackers, Bombers, and Bank Robbers: Managerial Style in the Japanese Red Army,” Journal of Asian Studies 48, no. 4 (November 1989): 724–40. Steinhoff’s analysis of the links between the organizational attributes of radical groups and corporate management is provocative and open to argument, but the essay supplies a detailed and focused history of the various splits within the Red Army, culled from the literature of the groups and interviews with the members.

However, it is important to add that the Red Army Faction was a faction of the Communist League (aka Bund), which began as a student-centered movement and came to advocate an armed revolt as the form of radicalization. Meanwhile, the Japanese Red Army consisted of those individual activists who voluntarily went abroad to support the Palestinian struggle. Although the members of those groups had certain personal relations, they should be considered as separate movements.
HH: I agree with you. It is an important starting point, or a second starting point, in understanding how we perceive. We aren’t going to perceive by being guerilla fighters. We know what that does. And especially in the United States, that has acquired really dangerous associations in public opinion.

The thing that caught my attention is that you were really trying to provide a criticism. Even though you were misread, and people had expectations for you to be a propagandist of some sort—I’m trying to separate newsreel from propaganda now, but the problem with the newsreel that you present is that in ordinary terms, a newsreel isn’t supposed to be critical, is it?

MA: This is the tragedy of newsreel. I tried to say that the audience should be the creator of newsreels. So I showed three dimensions in The Red Army/PFLP, but I came under harsh criticism from political power, the party, and the audience, because at that time in Japan things were very dark after the affair of the United Red Army tragedy. Everyone left the movement of students and workers, but at the same time, some of them could not stop—they needed to continue. But now I am saying there is no need to use arms. Please examine your position, and then, through that, create a new way. This is my ultimate message in The Red Army/PFLP.

11. The tragedy referred to here is the Asama Lodge incident (Asama Sanso Jiken), which took place in February 1972. Five radical activists of the Red Army Faction and the Keihin Area Struggle Committee, calling themselves the United Red Army, following a brutal internal purge that left many dead, seized a lodge in the mountains of Nagano prefecture and took the lodge owner’s wife as hostage. A siege operation was put in place by the government, with self-defense forces assigned to bring down the radicals. Much of the proceedings was aired on TV and became an enormous media event. Shoot-outs erupted, and people on both sides were killed. In the initial stages, many supported the radicals. After the incident, it was well publicized that, in fact, the activists had already started killing one another within the compound. Although this information was known early on, the purpose of the timing was to discredit the Left as a whole and was extremely successful, so much so that many now claim that this was the end of radical movements in Japan. It would be senseless to deny the brutality and idiocy of the violence on the part of those radicals, but some reflection is required in light of the overwhelming discourses that have congealed around the event as a sign of the end of radicalism in Japan. Many radical movements continued right through the incident (including Sanrizuka, the Minamata antipollution group, day-workers unionizing movement, etc.) up to the present day. It should also be noted, against the standard reading of the inevitability of internalized violence, that the extremism on display is completely inseparable from the greater pressures exerted by the reigning powers.
HH: In A.K.A., the making of the film and how the film really attempts to negotiate a point of divergence, a wonderful observation on your part—it’s a point of criticism, and one that grows out of a particular political situation, the sixties, Anpo, and so forth. But in The Red Army/PFLP, that critical moment gets obscured. The reason prompting my interest is because right before I came here I saw a film by Marco Bellocchio called Good Morning, Night [Buongiorno, Notte, 2003], and it was about the Red Brigades in Italy and the kidnapping of Aldo Moro. I think it was basically a reactionary film. In the end, you get the sense that Bellocchio was saying none of this was worth anything, but in so saying, he soft-pedals the role of the state.

MA: Yes. Ultimately, Moro was killed by the state. This should be the beginning.

HH: In The Red Army/PFLP, the critical moment was obscured, maybe because it was presented or seen as a newsreel. But it was a much more complex situation because there were people who thought that Mr. Adachi was going to do something else.

MA: That was the biggest shortcoming. Criticism, the critique of a certain target, should have been made clearly. One of the problems was that although we went to the trouble of using a lot of Japanese subtitles to imbue the work with a critical spirit, their usage wound up making the criticism vaguer. Another problem was the use, as a keyword, of the quote of the writer Ghassan Kanafani, “The best form of propaganda is armed struggle.” This caused more problems.

Of course, my position at the time was that it was important to fight back against the enemy through armed struggle, but at the same time, use armed struggle to mobilize the Palestinians themselves and wage an international political campaign. That kind of struggle was right for the Palestinians. At the same time, however, that approach has no applicability when we think about the case of Japan. The Red Army Faction in Japan then saw me more as a propagandist than as a film director. That’s why they were so frustrated with The Red Army/PFLP. It begins with a hijacking scene, but beyond that the content was merely critical, they said. They criticized me: “Why don’t you make more propaganda films?” “Why don’t you put out something that negates the present conditions?” Propaganda is something that destroys the present conditions. “If you’re going to make propaganda for the people, then do it,” they said.

This is the most important point. While critically making these two
points about propaganda, they don’t emerge clearly. Although I was making a “news film,” I was after all, being slightly evasive, and that emerged. Therefore, whatever method I follow, I needed to make clear the people’s struggle. With this in mind, I went to Palestine to make the next work and start over.

HH: In fact, you were making a lot of films there.

MA: Yes, shooting film and video footage. But I couldn’t produce any documentary cinema or narrative cinema. So I will continue now.

HH: As you said earlier, all the footage was destroyed in the war, right? That’s amazing.

MA: They were missing or lost in the war. In guerilla life, the first thing is a weapon. So the question becomes how to defend or position the anti-aircraft weapons in the Palestinian bases. But, as a result of air attacks, I ended up empty-handed.

I think up until now, it was still possible to continue through this, even though I was empty-handed. At the same time, some Palestinians said OK, we will find something for us to do. They promised, but nothing came of it yet.

HH: Doing the work that you did, was there any follow-up by the Palestinians themselves, for them to shoot their own struggles?

MA: The point was that the films were not supposed to be made by me, so I had to figure out how to mobilize them. They did not follow my suggestions only; they started so many films. But for me, these were just one-sided films, which they had already been making, based on the original novels. So I tried to say to my friends who were fighters, “You yourself should make films.” Some of them started, but unfortunately, some of them were killed during fighting.

HH: That’s a really interesting observation, and, again, I find your notion of collaboration really important. What you are saying to these Palestinians is that they have to write their history.

In the Japanese context, many people compared you with Godard: both Masao Adachi and Jean-Luc Godard engaged in Palestinian struggles. For Godard, this was the time of the Dziga Vertov Group, and then he

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12. This is the revolutionary film production group formed by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin in the wake of revolution in Paris in May 1968. Their radical mixture of praxis
returned to France maybe because of problems involved in producing the films, while you, Mr. Adachi, remained there doing screenings.

**MA:** The PLO refused Godard’s policy, and this ended his attempt to make a film [later called *Here and There*] with them. So after 1972, after the Palestinian attack at the Munich Olympics, he could state his standpoint more clearly. Then he prepared to make *Here and There*. He built up his own text, but it was not sponsored by the PLO.

In my case, from the beginning, I spoke with the PLO and PLF about whether my idea was right. Then, as the person responsible for the information bureau in the PFLP, Ghassan was very understanding. So I could continue my production of *The Red Army/PFLP*. But, in time, the contents changed more and more, only as I rethought the project. Godard’s work also changed from *Victory for the Revolution* to *Here and There*. With this new idea he could say more clearly what he wanted about the Palestinian struggle and express his own standpoint on it. In my case, there was no change in cooperating with the Palestinian side, and I continued to make newsreels. This is a relation between Godard and me—what is the difference? From the beginning, my position has been not to collaborate with any policy, neither with the PLO nor PFLP nor the Japanese Red Army Faction. So if you can compare *Here and There* with *The Red Army/PFLP*, I believe the difference is not so significant, but he needed the time to make *Here and There*, which wasn’t completed until 1974.

**HH:** But still I think there is a significant difference, insofar as Godard assumed a European audience, while you tried to work toward a Palestinian audience.

**MA:** Yes, I never differentiated between audiences, but I particularly wished to show the Palestinian side.

**HH:** I think there is another difference, and it was brought out in something you said earlier. While both of you have been experimental workers or filmmakers, Godard was always, because of the New Wave and the emphasis on auteurism, deeply embedded in capital. In the end, when you say that he made his film for European audiences, this suggests that it had something to do with market, something to do with audience, an audience removed

from the scene. Your whole work was about involving the Palestinians in the making of films.

**MA**: Yes, Godard lost his direct interest in Palestinian problems. He didn’t lose the very nice counterpart represented by Edward Said. Why they didn’t cooperate, I don’t know.

**HH**: That’s a good question. The real difference, therefore, is expressed in your notion of the cinema movement, and the promise of illuminating insights from that cinema movement is the promise to return film back to a world audience. It’s almost a way to make films and make sure they are shown outside of some kind of market system. There is something utopian in this. Though the films have much in common, it separates you from Godard from the very beginning.

**MA**: He did try to break through the system through the Dziga Vertov Group, but he was completely defeated, I believe. Oshima said to me before going to the Palestinian front, “Don’t go to Palestine. If you go as a cineaste, you’ll be destroyed by the cinema capitalist syndicate.” But so far, I’m very happy, because I’m staying in the Far East and receive little discrimination by the cinema syndicate compared to what people go through in Europe or the United States [laughter]. This is a great opportunity for me.

**HH**: By the way, we have heard that even while in Palestine in the 1970s you were in contact with Japanese radical cultural producers, such as the artist Genpei Akasegawa and the theater director Juro Kara, who, in fact, brought his own theater troupe there. This calls attention to a connection between you and your work and radical artists in Japan, who were willing to supply support to the Palestinian cause. Would you elaborate on this connection and the nature of your collaboration?

**MA**: The time when I started making films, around the end of 1959 and the beginning of 1960, was during a transitional time, when conceptual art was on the rise and transforming into anticonceptual art and then shifting again into myriad directions. Around that time, I myself was involved in trying to start up VAN Eiga Kagaku Kenkyûjo [VAN Film Science Research Center], as I moved from creating student films to living in a group with a communal lifestyle. VAN became a kind of salon, a space of exchange in which film-related people and all sorts of artists from different fields met and engaged in debates, where information flowed about exhibits and events in each field. And so whenever anyone was doing anything, anywhere, we would go
out as a group, expanding the sphere of exchange so that it transcended such separate realms as film or painting or literature.

I met Genpei Akasegawa at an exchange with some people from the Neo-Dada Organizers and found his works very appealing. I later oversaw his “happenings” with the group Hi-Red Center. His prominence had advanced, from the exhibition of the Thousand Yen Note to the issuing of the Cherry Blossom Republic Currency; he had proposed a plan whereby if one bought enough cherry blossom currency with Japanese yen, the former would automatically overtake the latter. In fact, many people across the country bought his Cherry Blossom Republic Currency, and in his room, increasing amounts of Japanese yen piled up as wastepaper, stuffed into cardboard boxes. Around that time, when I had him design the poster for The Red Army/PFLP, the PFLP, as coproducers of the film, had praised the power of the poster. They invited him to accompany me to Lebanon for a year and be in charge of designing their posters and other propaganda materials. But unfortunately, Akasegawa was held up in Japan, having to deal with various problems, including the prosecution by the Japanese government in the charge of counterfeiting the Thousand Yen Note, and could not get out there.

As for Juro Kara, he had founded his theater group, Jokyo Gekijo [The Situation Theater], based in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo. With the new style of temporarily building a tent in the unused public space, he shoved off vigorously into the modernist-centered conventional theater world [the so-called Shingeki (New Drama)] of the time. Since his practice was contemporaneous with the underground film movement, an exchange began. The “theory of privileging the body” [Tokkenteki Nikutai-ron] that he so freshly proclaimed at the time was a new theory of making theater/performance. With it, he claimed that certain uses of the performer’s body itself could generate human power that causes social change. I felt tremendous sympathy with the way he was seeking to develop theater as social movement and the theoretical magnetic field he was creating therein. Later on, his theater troupe expanded its tour route not only throughout Japan but to overseas cities in such countries as South Korea and Brazil. At one point, before I left Japan, I saw his production of Kara ban: Kaze no matasaburō [Matasaburo of the Wind: Kara version], which was a performance based on a piece by the poet Kenji Miyazawa. We came to talk about how tan-teisha, a private detective agency, which had been one of the thematic pillars of theatrical development, was exactly like the Mossad, and the conversation developed to the extent of bringing it to Palestine to do a special
version *Paresuchina ban: Kaze no matasaburô* [Matasaburo of the Wind: Palestine Version]. What was amazing about Kara is that once he thought up a project, he threw his whole self into it, doing his best to quickly put the plan into action and present it. His objective domain was not limited to the events on the stage, but included the entire event of the tour for the creation of theatrical situations. The seriousness of commitment was shared by all the troupe members. When he did itinerant performances centered in the refugee camps of Lebanon and Syria, the performers who played the Mossad characters continued to be pelted with rocks by the kids who came to see the play, even after it was over; they were troubled with wounds [laughter]. During the tour, I used to engage in talks with Kara over the pathos of revolution that should be expanded, as in “the border crossing of those who create” and “the sublimation of the soul in the struggle for liberation.” Speaking of both Akasegawa and Kara, even now—thirty-five years later, as the years pile up—they continue to be at the forefront of creative activities. This is more encouraging to me than words could ever express.

*HH:* Finally, I wonder if you could say more about your conception of cinema movement in terms of your more recent work or your future work. The reason I’m mentioning this is because there are all kinds of people talking about forms of consumption and consumerism as forms of resistance, which I think is absolute nonsense, an alibi for the absence of action.

*MA:* Yes, in Japan there are so many talented directors, and half of them think they should make program pictures or else they cannot create something new. In my case, I don’t mind using video or digital, and if there are only two or three in the audience, that is enough for me. So there is no need to make a program picture. But if you need a bigger audience, you need to have access to your own cinema theater, which is a part of the system. Again, I will go back to the sixties and I will start a bus tour to screen my new film work.

*HH:* Regarding your declaration to go back to the sixties to start over, I have two questions. Your audiences now are different, and you’re dealing with a whole new generation, and I wonder what you plan to do about that.

*MA:* Now, I believe, the younger generation can understand my works better than audiences could during the sixties. And, at the same time, there is more and more flexibility among this generation about the different modes of expression in cinema, as in the works I have created. So I have a big opportunity to talk with them. Cinema should continue to do things this
way. I am making one film now, and it is my plan to try to make four more picture screenings in theaters in my life. But I now have a free hand, and I'm planning to make anything I wish, to continue making films in this way or another at different levels. So I am trying to collaborate with the younger generation but without using some big-frame cinema.

*HH*: When you say that today’s generation probably understands *A.K.A. Serial Killer* more perceptively than the older generation, I think you’re right. The movie is kind of prophetic when we look at it now, both in its depiction of the city and the nature of the violence itself.

*MA*: For example, I’m so happy to see someone like Go Hirasawa as a young cinema scholar, who is showing various points of view through cinema archives. Through showing his opinion as a cinema scholar, he can open up a wider view to so many young people. Anyway, he is showing many radical and underground works at theater archives, enabling the younger generation to see older films and to collaborate with filmmakers by giving that point of view. It should be a critics’ movement. Before, there was a critics’ movement, but now he is starting this role anew. So I myself should respond to his position through new possibilities and new cinema. The more technology develops, such as the digital camera, the easier it is to get the opportunity to see and create works, promote screenings, and meet the people. So why can’t we use this opportunity more and more?

*HH*: The second question relates to the way you keep going back to the sixties. I wonder if you could talk about your own autobiography, and what was going on in your own life?

*MA*: I think of my own experience as a valuable resource. By making that the starting point, and through mutual inquiry over differences and similarities on various points, the bodily ideals we have of our own reality, that is, the mutual questioning of the perception of the times, I believe we can carry on a conversation with young people through various means and at different levels.

*HH*: I would like to know, though, from a more personal standpoint, what was going on.

*MA*: As I said at the beginning, the 1960s was a time when art and politics were felt simultaneously, with no separation into different categories. One could say that even as I exist as an individual, my existence is one in which
I make a commitment to the age itself. Therefore, from here on, as well, I want to live as one who raises questions for the people of this generation.

*HH:* But what was it about that moment that made you feel hopeful? What aspirations did you have for Japanese society?

*MA:* Within that period, the consciousness raised by living with your own agonizing problems was such that it could be possible to transform society or the world through your own struggles and, in that sense, see yourself and society as a single organism. Rather, that was the only way you could see things. It was in no way overly optimistic but rather the common sense shared by so many young people living so vigorously. I don’t believe that this was simply a matter of the environment or atmosphere of the times. Isn’t it the case that no one expects the current generation to see this age in a similar way, to experience a similar way of being or way of life? I wish they would simply take a look at themselves in this regard. For that reason, the contemporary environment is much more difficult than it was in the past; the effort to grasp this society or world through your own body, in any way that works, must be mobilized more and more.

Therefore, we are losing the need for such things as educational films or documentaries. Instead, we must start making films from some place that is not yet established, perhaps. Therefore, if I am asked where an intervention should be made, I think the answer is that it must be made at the level of the personal.

*HH:* You mentioned a “personal” approach, but I think you also have a populist aspect. You believe that art can be made by anyone and everyone, don’t you?

*MA:* Because I believe that, I start at the level of the individual.

*HH:* That makes perfect sense. What you are saying is that art has to be made with everybody. People have to be involved with the making of art just as they have to be involved with the making of their own politics. We live in societies where we merely talk about democratic politics, but that kind of politics hasn’t existed for a long time. These are just names.

*MA:* Michael Moore or Spielberg—I respect them, but they have created nothing that is necessary, have they?

*HH:* Thanks very much for your time and candor.
In the summer of 2006, Sabu Kohso, an independent writer, translator, and activist, and Harry Harootunian, a historian at New York University, interviewed the prominent filmmaker and political activist Masao Adachi. The occasion for the interview was the completion of his first film in Japan after years of imprisonment in Lebanon and Japan. Adachi’s career and activities spanned the crucial decades of the 1950s and 1960s, perhaps the most intense period of radical protest in Japan’s postwar period. His experimental work constituted a significant intervention in these years of revolutionary promise and failure. After the failed revolution in Japan, he spent almost a quarter of a century in exile in Lebanon and Palestine, often working for Palestinian organizations.