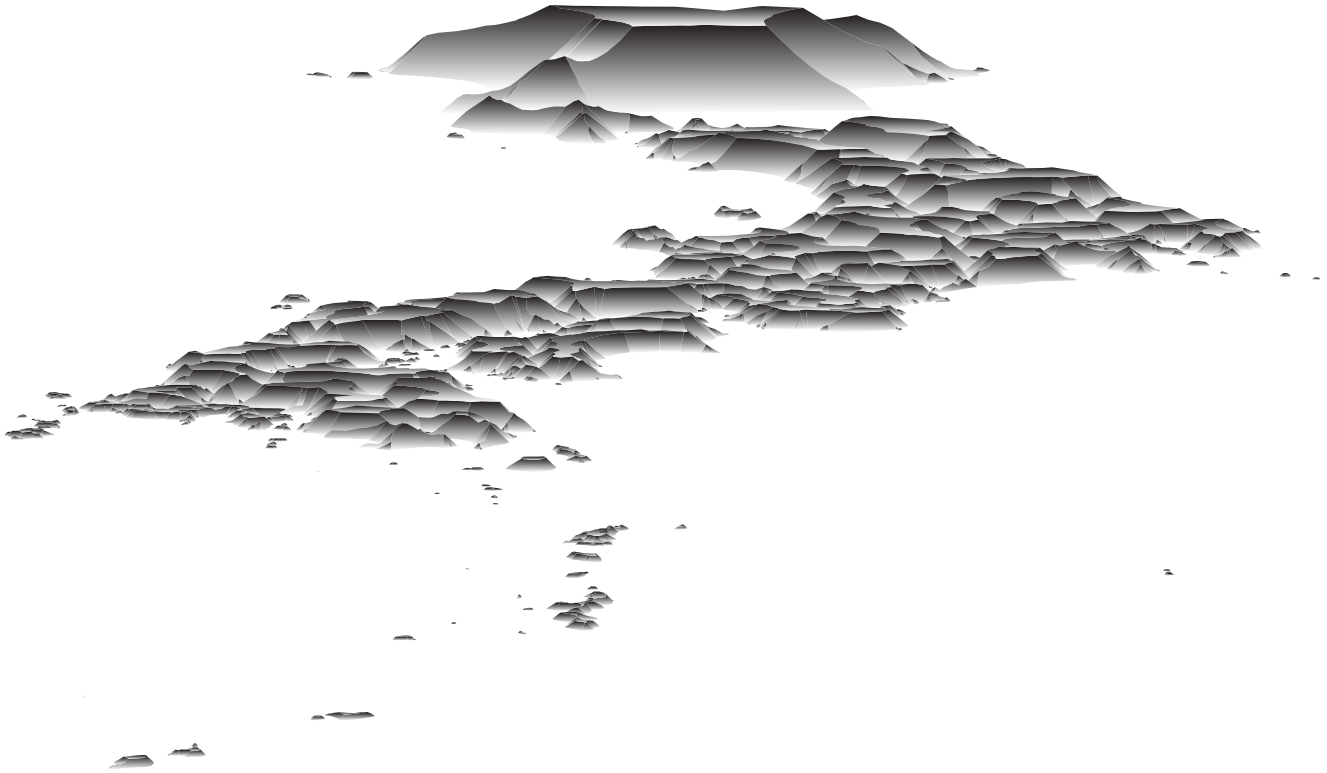
Art Review Oxford

Contemporary Art from Hokkaido and Okinawa



Winter 2025

Issue 11

Editorial Note

This special issue has been full of stumbles. The issue initially set out to look at how the recent indigenous turn in contemporary art in Europe and North America, could be understood in the heterogeneous context of Japan. In particular, how such a concept weaves its way through art on the islands of Hokkaido and Okinawa, and then expanded further. The issue follows artist Mayunkiki through her account of her heritage of Ainu resistance and her own recent turn towards a more outspoken activism. As she recounts of this turn, "The pain will persist whether I act or not, so I have chosen to speak my mind." Researcher Taku Osaka explores the "cognitive void" in approaching Ainu culture and the ongoing tension between self-expression and external representation in the context of exhibitions and museums. ARO editor Jason Waite turns the gaze toward the main island of Japan, Honshu, to look at the indigenous histories on the north of the island and how they contest the historic and contemporary myth of Japan as homogenous ethic space. Haruka Iharada, ARO special Issue editor, frames the discussion of indigeneity through the archipelago of Okinawa to productively expand its conception. Thinking further through intercultural solidarity, artist Yonaha Taichi shares his work Home-Codependency23.2 to look through the shared histories of oppression in Okinawa and Korea. Finally, artist James Jack works through the oceanic geography of Okinawa and its history of resistance in his multifaceted contribution. While UK-based artist Eiko Soga image of a bear endemic to Hokkaido fills the back page with unease. Curator Kyongfa Che reviews the potentially problematic Haniwa exhibition at MOMAT, Tokyo while curator Eimi Tagore unpacks the survey of Asian American art at WE80 in New York.

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Contemporary Art from Hokkaido and Okinawa

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Mayunkiki

SIETOK

アイヌにはアイヌ語という独自言語があり、元々は文字はなく、すべては口伝で語り継がれてきました。しかし、日本からの植民地支配の下で日本語教育が行われ、アイヌ語が語られる機会は減り、私も第一言語は日本語として育ちました。

日本語で全てを考えてしまう私が、文字を持たないアイヌ語のような感覚を、あえて日本語の文字で書き記すにはどうしたらいいか、そう考えたときにできたのがこの作品です。アイヌ語話者が物語を語るように、その瞬間の自分のことを、あえてボールペンを使った手書きで、そして下書きなしで物語りました。

sietokとは「自分の進む前」「自分の行く手」を意味します。
自分の進む先に残すための物語をこれからも私は書き記していくつもりです。

The Ainu people have their own unique language, Ainu, which originally had no written form—everything was passed down orally. However, under Japanese colonial rule, Japanese language education was imposed, and opportunities to speak Ainu decreased. As a result, I myself grew up with Japanese as my first language.

As someone who can't help but think entirely in Japanese, I wondered how I could capture the sensation of a language like Ainu, which traditionally has no writing, using Japanese script. This work was born from that thought. Just as an Ainu speaker tells a story, I narrated my own moment in time—deliberately writing by hand with a ballpoint pen, without any drafts.

sietok means "the path ahead of oneself" or "one's way forward."
I intend to continue writing stories that I can leave behind on the path I move forward.

Sietok refers to a noun indicating a spatial-positional relationship of something in motion—what lies ahead of one's path or course.

私は昭和57年、1982年に北海道旭川市の近文（チカブミ）コタンと呼ばれる場所で生まれました（近文とは元はアイヌ語のチカプニ（鳥、いる、所）であり、鹿でさえも簡単につかんで飛ぶことができる程の巨大な鳥がいたという伝承が残っていることから名付けられ、そのアイヌ語の音に漢字を当てはめたものです）。

私は、父が名付けた麻衣という和名と、自ら名付けたマユンキキというアイヌ語名を持っています。父は八谷恒二、母は小村昌子といいます。

父の父、私の祖父は八谷市郎、父の母、私の祖母は恒子です。恒子の父、私の曽祖父は内野ハウトムテイ、恒子の母、私の曽祖母はトサといいます。私の母、昌子の父、私の祖父は川村カネト、母の母、

私の祖母はトメ、トメの父、私の曽祖父は内野ナンケアイヌ、トメの母、私の曽祖母はハルコロといいます。トメは養子として内野家に入りました。父方の曽祖父ハウトムテイと、母方の曽祖父ナンケアイヌは兄弟であり、二人は上川アイヌの総首長と呼ばれたクーチンコロの孫にあたります。

私の曽祖父達の祖父であるクーチンコロは、上川アイヌ（旭川の神居古潭より上流の石狩川流域に住むアイヌの事）の総首長として、誠意をもってこそ、誠意は還されるものと信じ、和人からの理不尽にも耐えていましたが、あまりにも道理に反した命令に対し、全ての責任は自分が負うと決断した上で、抵抗を示し、上川アイヌの強制移住を食い止めた人です。クーチンコロ以降も、上川アイヌ（近文アイヌ）達は常に和人への抵抗を示して闘ってきていました。私の母の弟である川村兼一も2021年にとくなる直前まで闘っていたんでした。

私は自分が表現活動をする上で、活動家的な側面、政治的だと受け取られるようなこと、抵抗、そういったものを隠していたいと思っていました。そこをわざわざ声高に叫ばず、私の音楽などの表現とは切り離すべきだと、思っていました。実際に、表現活動（音楽）を初めた当初は、SNSなどでもアイヌに関する問題や、納得のいかない事への批判や抗議、抵抗はしていませんでした。

しかし、日々アイヌだと公言した上で人前に出たり、発言をするようになっていくにつれ、これまで闘ってきた、私のすぐうしろにいる先人たちの言葉や動きが身に沁みるようになっていきました。時代が変わっても、和人とアイヌの間にある不均衡さは変わらず、植民地支配というのは終りがないのだと思い知らされました。それでも、マユキさは活動家になったと言われたりするのが嫌で、でも我慢し続けることもできず、何年も苦い思いを腹の中に抱えていました。

2023年、去年の11月に、札幌市にある北海道新聞本社前で、杉田水脈議員の人権を守ろう、という街宣活動が行われている所に偶然遭遇してしまいました。国旗を掲げながら乱暴な主義主張をする様子を見て、この人達はアイヌに関することにも言及するのではないかと思い、近くで聞いていました。すると案の定、アイヌにもでした。言及しだし、その内容はとても聞き流せるものではありませんでした。これまでなら、無視してしまっていたかもしれない、何か思っても、後になってSNSで文句を言うだけにとどめていたかもしれない、

だけど、札幌市内中心部で、私以外のアイヌにも見えるかもしれない
やり方で、誰も直接何も言ってこないだろうと高を括ったような
発言がどうしても許せず、声をかけてしまいました。声をかけた
様子は今でもネット上に残っていて誰でも見られるので省きます。
気になる方は調べてみてください。でも、おすすめはしません。嫌な嫌な
気持ちにしかなりません。

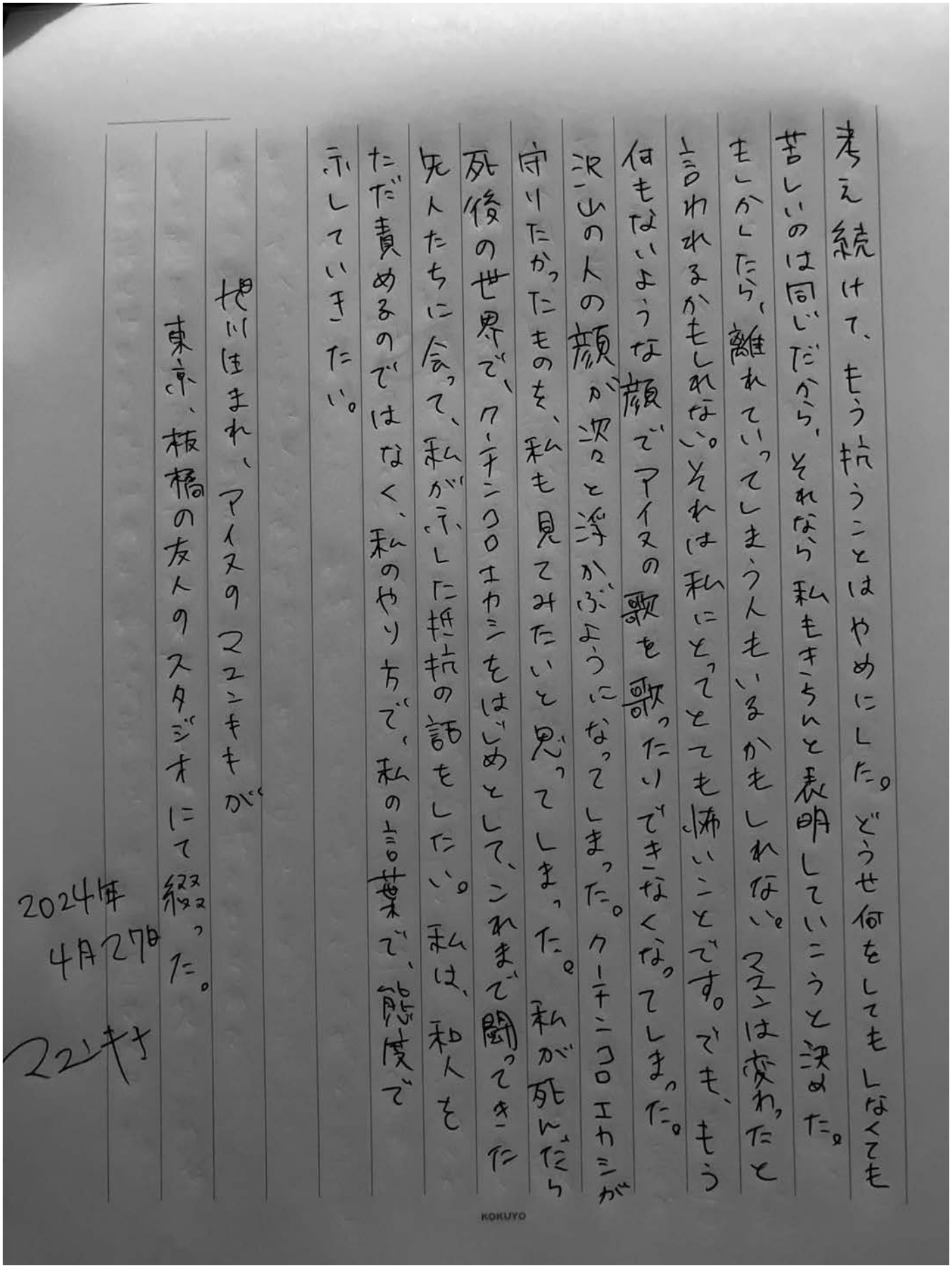
街宣に声をかけたことで、SNS上にも拡散され、今年の1月に札幌
法務局に人権救済申し立てをし、3回には申し立てについて公開する
記者会見までひらく流れになりました。

11月から3日の間、私の頭にあったのは、闇、てきた先人達の
ことでした。クーチンコロの時代は、上りアイヌ達がこれまでのように、
アイヌとして、アイヌらしく(自然と共にとかでなく)生き続けるために、
仲間達を守るために立ち上がり、その後の世代の先人たちは、
クーチンコロのような人達が守ろうとしたけれど、無理矢理変えられた、
捨てさせられた、うばわれた数々のものを取り戻すために!

これまでの先人達、そしてこれからのアイヌの仲間達のために、自分が矢面に立ち続けていた。私は、いつだって人からどう見られるのか、自分の評価、面倒な人に思われたくない、ということばかりを気にして、何もしてこなかった。私は自分がアイヌだと公言しているからまだいい。何かがあっても、仲間達にぐちを言ったり、文句を言ったり、相談をしたりできる。でも、今もまだ自分がアイヌだと明かせない人もいる。沢山いる。そういう人々は、アイヌと聞くだけで体が固り、自分に話かけられないように願ったり、その場を去ったり、笑顔でアイヌへの否定的な言葉を投げ飲めたりしている。それも分かっているのに、私はなぜ何も言ってこなかったのか。私のすぐうしろに、沢山の人がいて、その闘いのおかげで私がいるのに。私と直接血のつながりのある人々のおかげなのに。私は、何を守って、大切にしたいのか。人の目よりも気にすべきことは沢山あったのに。本当はずっと、分かっていた。

旭川の近文コタンでは生まれて、抵抗と闘いの地では生まれて、その歴史を知ろうとすれば、文献でもなんでもすぐに見つけられる。

血の話にはしたくないけれど、私の背景には、抵抗の歴史があった。



考え続けて、もう抗うことはやめにした。どうせ何をしてもしなくても苦しいのは同じだから、それなら私もきちんと表明していこうと決めた。もしかしたら、離れていってしまう人もいるかもしれない。マユは変わったと言われるかもしれない。それは私にとってとても怖いことです。でも、もう何もないような顔でアイヌの歌を歌ったりできなくなってしまった。沢山の人の顔が次々と浮かぶようになってしまった。クーチニコロエカシが守りたかったものを、私も見てみたいと思ってしまった。私が死んだら死後の世界で、クーチニコロエカシをはじめとして、これまで闘ってきた先人たちに会って、私がやした抵抗の話もしたい。私は、和人をただ責めるのではなく、私のやり方で、私の言葉で、態度で示していきたい。

2024年4月27日

北川はまれ、アイヌのマユンキが東京、板橋の友人のスタジオにて殺った。

22才

Sietok

シエトク

場所名詞

（移動する何かの空間的な位置関係を示し）

自分の進む前，自分の行く手．

I was born in 1982, in Showa 57, in a place called *Chikabumi Kotan*, *Asahikawa City*, *Hokkaido*. The name "*Chikabumi*" originates from the Ainu word Cikap-un-i (チカプニ, "the place where birds are"), derived from a legend of a giant bird so large it could carry deer away with ease. The name was adapted into kanji to reflect the Ainu phonetics.

I have two names:
the Japanese name "***Mai***," given by my father,
and the Ainu name "***Mayunkiki***," which I gave myself.

My father's name is ***Tsuneji Hachiya***,
and my mother is ***Masako Kawamura***.
My paternal grandfather was ***Ichiro Hachiya***,
and my paternal grandmother was ***Tsuneko***.
Tsuneko's father, my great-grandfather, was ***Hawtomtey Monno***, and her mother, my great-grandmother, was ***Tosa***.

On my mother's side, my maternal grandfather was ***Kaneto Kawamura***,
and my maternal grandmother was ***Tome***.
Tome's father, my great-grandfather, was ***Nankeaynu Monno***,
and her mother, my great-grandmother, was ***Harukoro***.
Tome was adopted into the Monno family.
My paternal great-grandfather, ***Hawtomtey***,
and my maternal great-grandfather, ***Nankeaynu***, were brothers and grandchildren of ***Kucinkoro***, the paramount chief of the ***Kamikawa Ainu***.

Kucinkoro, the grandfather of my great-grandfathers, was the leader of the ***Kamikawa Ainu***—a group of Ainu who lived upstream along the *Ishikari River* from *Asahikawa's Kamuikotan*. As he believed deeply that sincerity begets and sincerity, he endured unreasonable treatment from the Wajin. However, when confronted with orders that were utterly unreasonable, he decided to take full responsibility and demonstrated resistance, ultimately stopping the forced relocation of the *Kamikawa Ainu*.

Even after ***Kucinkoro's*** time, the ***Kamikawa Ainu*** (including the Chikabumi Ainu) continued to resist and fight against the Wajin. My mother's brother, ***Kenichi Kawamura***, also fought until he passed away in 2021.

In my creative endeavours, I've tried to distance myself from activism, politics, or resistance, preferring not to associate these aspects with my work. When I first began my artistic activities (music) I avoided raising my voice about Ainu issues or protesting injustices, even on social media.

However, as I began to openly identify as Ainu and speak in public, I became increasingly attuned to the words and actions of my ancestors who stood just behind me, and those who have continued to fight. Despite changes in times, the imbalance between the Wajin and the Ainu remains, and I realized that there is no end to colonial oppression. Even so, I disliked being called an activist. But suppressing my feelings became unbearable, and I carried this bitterness for years.

In November 2023, I happened upon a street demonstration in front of the Hokkaido Shimbun headquarters in Sapporo, advocating for the protection of the human rights of a politician, Mio Sugita. Observing them waving the national flag while making extreme statements, I suspected they would mention the Ainu. As expected, they did, and their comments were impossible to ignore.

In the past, I might have stayed silent, perhaps venting later on social media. But in the heart of Sapporo, where other Ainu might see and hear their behaviour, I could not let their words go unchallenged. I spoke up. My actions at that moment were recorded and remain available online. While I don't recommend looking it up—it will only make you upset—those interested can find it.

After confronting them, my actions spread on social media. In January 2024, I filed a human rights relief petition with the Sapporo Legal Affairs Bureau, and by March, I held a press conference to publicise the case.

Between November and March, the thoughts of my ancestors who fought weighed heavily on my mind. In Kucinkoro's time, the Kamikawa Ainu rose to defend their community, their way of life as Ainu—not in a simplistic sense "in harmony with nature," but in a distinctly Ainu way. They stood up for their comrades and future generations. Later generations of ancestors stood on the front lines, fighting to reclaim what had been forcibly taken, discarded, and lost—everything the likes of Kucinkoro had tried to protect.

As for me, I had always been concerned about how others perceived me—whether I was liked, not wanting to be thought of as a troublesome person—and I had done nothing.

I am fortunate to be open about being Ainu. I can vent, complain, or seek advice from friends I trust. But many others cannot reveal their Ainu identity. They freeze at the mention of the word "Ainu," silently pray that the conversation doesn't turn their way, or they leave the room. They may even smile while enduring disparaging remarks about Ainu. Knowing this, why have I done nothing? Right behind me, I can sense countless people—their struggles have paved the way for me to stand here today. I owe my existence to my direct ancestors and their resistance. What is it that I truly wish to protect and cherish? There were so many things that mattered more than the gaze of others. Deep down, I've always known.

I was born in Chikabumi Kotan in Asahikawa, a land of resistance and struggle. Its history is readily accessible in documents. Although I don't want to reduce this to bloodline alone, resistance is undeniably part of my heritage.

After much thought, I decided to stop ignoring. The pain will persist whether I act or not, so I have chosen to speak my mind.

Some people may distance themselves from me. Others may say, "Mayun has changed." That scares me deeply. But I can no longer sing Ainu songs with a facade of indifference.

The faces of so many people now appear vividly in my mind. I want to see what Kucinkoro-ekasi fought to protect. When I die, I want to meet him and the ancestors who fought before me and tell them about my own acts of resistance. I want to express—not by blaming the Wajin but in my own way, words, and attitude.

Born in Asahikawa, Ainu Mayunkiki
Written at a friend's studio in Itabashi, Tokyo
April 27, 2024
Mayunkiki

Taku Ōsaka

The Void in the "Recognition" of Ainu and Museum Art Museum Exhibitions

[Excerpt]

2. The "Past" and "Present" of Ainu in Exhibitions—The Exclusion of "Modernization" and Everyday Life

2.1 The Fragmentation and Reconstruction of the "Past"

There have been numerous critiques regarding Ainu exhibitions in museums, particularly concerning their overwhelming emphasis on "traditional culture" (Honda & Hazuki, 2006, among others). Anthropologists who have studied Ainu since the modern era have not sought to document the actual lived experiences unfolding before them but have instead selectively extracted elements they perceived as "unique" in order to construct cultural descriptions (Kosugi, 1997: 405). Within this framework, Ainu were depicted as a people on the brink of extinction, thereby justifying the urgent need to preserve records of their "unique customs." At the same time, their experiences of modernization were predominantly framed as a process of "assimilation" into Wajin (ethnic Japanese) society. Consequently, the Ainu representations displayed in museums became increasingly disconnected from the lived realities of contemporary Ainu life.

> First, one may examine the section of the Ainu display, where various artifacts, clothing, and items related to their customs are exhibited. However, upon visiting an actual Ainu village, or kotan, and witnessing present-day reality, one finds oneself utterly perplexed. While it is true that traditional houses, ornamental weapons, and ritual implements exist, none of the other objects seen in the museum can be found in the village—they are entirely different. It would thus seem that the museum does not display actual Ainu artifacts used in everyday life. Rather, it appears to have selectively gathered relics of the past, curating only those deemed exotic or curious, and displaying them as antiquities for the sake of curiosity. The extent to which museum exhibits diverge from the material culture of contemporary Ainu life is staggering. (Hatta, 1926: 3–34)

Saburō Hatta (1865–1935), who authored this passage, served as the director of the Faculty of Agriculture Museum at Hokkaido Imperial University. Though primarily a zoologist, he maintained a strong scholarly interest in Ainu people. Hatta was well aware of the stark disconnect between the "reality of everyday life" and the "museum exhibits." However, his response to this realization was framed by a sense of urgency toward preserving a culture that was "gradually being forgotten," leading him to advocate for "the creation of photographic records that meticulously documented the uses and methods" of traditional objects "while there was still time" (Hatta 1926: 37).

During the 1930s and 1940s, Hiromichi Kōno (1905–1963) and Takemitsu Natori (1905–1988) significantly expanded the documentation and collection of "ritual and ceremonial objects." While their efforts were driven in part by the anthropological interest of the time in elucidating kinship structures, they were also facilitated by a key methodological factor: as cultural transformation made it increasingly difficult to conduct research in many areas of scholarly interest, it remained possible to rely on the memories of elderly Ainu born in the early modern period for research and collection. As a result, many of the materials gathered in this period, despite being contemporary productions, were classified and exhibited as "artifacts of the past."

The 2000 exhibition *Ainu-Northern People and their World, Baba and Kodama Collections* is a striking example of museum displays constructed through such collected artifacts. Within this exhibition, a representation of "traditional" Ainu culture was presented without a clearly defined temporal framework, thereby reinforcing a static and ahistorical vision of Ainu heritage. Simultaneously, the exhibition celebrated the contributions of two Wajin collectors, portraying them as figures who, in the face of an "existential crisis," dedicated their lives to "preserving Ainu culture for future generations through research and the collection of everyday tools." While ethnographic descriptions do capture certain aspects of reality and thus differ from the purely imaginary representations of Ainu culture promoted by activists of the Mingei movement such as Sōetsu Yanagi, the underlying structure of these narratives remains remarkably similar. The framework in which Wajins are positioned as saviors who recognise and preserve their cultural value, focusing exclusively on an enclosed "past" of the other ultimately echoes the narrative structure of *The Beauty of Ainu Handwork* exhibition.

2.2 Collaboration with Ainu Living in the "Present" and its Limitations

By the late 20th century, debates surrounding Indigenous exhibitions in North America had been widely introduced into Japan (Yoshida 1998), bringing increased awareness of the need to reflect Ainu voices into museum displays. In response to this shift, the 2002 exhibition *A Scottish Physician's View: the Craft and Spirit of the Ainu from N.G. Munro Collection* integrated seven Ainu artisans into the project midway through its development. The effort to reconstruct a historical archive was presented paired with their interview, thereby expanding the scope of the exhibition beyond "traditional culture" of a "past" to include the "present."

In the 2003 exhibition *Messages from the Ainu: Craft and Spirit*, Ainu artisans were involved from the planning stage, with the museum playing a primarily supportive role in exhibition development (Yoshida 2003). The exhibition featured not only artifacts that faithfully adhered to "traditional culture" but also numerous works that reflected "contemporary" artistic expressions. This approach helped normalise the participation of Ainu artisans in exhibition curation as a conceptual standard (Yamazaki 2009: 93), marking a significant shift in museological practice.

Similar efforts unfolded in art museums around the same period. Whereas the 2006 exhibition *The Beauty of Ainu Patterns: The Life of Lines, Forms that Breathe presented only artifacts representing the "past," the 2012 exhibition AINU ART: Storytellers of the Wind* was structured into two sections: the first displayed Ainu collections from the 19th and 20th centuries, while the second showcased "Storytellers of the Wind—the World of Contemporary Artists." By strategically placing carved wooden bears as a bridging element between these two temporal realms, this exhibition was realised arranging "time on the vertical axis and the expansion of artistic expression on the horizontal axis" (Igarashi 2012: 6).

The 2017 exhibition *Emerge, Life of the Universe: The World of Woodcarver Fujito Takeki* centered on a single contemporary artist of extraordinary skill. The fact that this exhibition was held at both the Sapporo Art Museum and the National Museum of Ethnology indicates that the boundary between art museums and ethnographic museums has become increasingly blurred in the representation of the Ainu "present." However, this development also revealed a critical limitation. The Ainu individuals collaborating with researchers in these types of exhibitions were exclusively full-time artisans or those directly engaged in craftwork, leaving no space for the participation of Ainu who did not have a special connection to such practices. The ability to host the same kinds of exhibitions at both an art museum and an ethnographic museum was made possible by their common structural inclination—namely, a shared issue that recognises only craftsmanship as the defining element of the Ainu "present."

2.3 The Scope of "Ainu Culture" That Is Acknowledged

The exhibitions discussed above were all organized as part of the *Ainu Craft Exhibition* initiative, led by the Foundation for Ainu Culture Promotion and Research. The foundation itself was established on the basis of the 1997 *Act on the Promotion of Ainu Culture*, which defines "Ainu culture" as follows:

> "'Ainu culture' refers to the Ainu language, as well as the music, dance, craftsmanship, and other cultural products that have been transmitted among the Ainu people, along with cultural products derived from these traditions." (Article 2 of the Act)

Among the elements explicitly enumerated in this definition, "music" and "dance" have historically been performed on various occasions, including inspections by shogunate officials in the early modern period. Even after many Ainu traditions were denigrated as "outmoded, bad customs" during the modern era, on occasions when there was an audience to support them, the residents of certain settlements were mobilized to perform, thereby sustaining and preserving the so-called "ancient traditions." Similarly, "craftsmanship" had long been appreciated by Wajin society as *Ezo souvenirs* since the early modern period, and this practice persisted into

the modern era with the production and sale of Ainu crafts as popular goods from Hokkaido (Saito 1994). From the 20th century onward, the tourist industry flourished in areas such as Shiraoi along the railway lines and Chikabumi in urbanized Asahikawa. What emerged in these regions was a continuation of practices dating back to the early modern period—public performances of music and dance for Wajin spectators, as well as the professionalization of *Ezo souvenir* production as part of everyday economic life. It is crucial to recognize that these cultural elements, which have long been appreciated by Wajins, are precisely the ones that have been sanctioned by contemporary Japanese society as traditions the Ainu ought to preserve. The fact these elements have been enshrined in law as the principal components of "Ainu culture" eligible for state-supported promotion should not be taken lightly.

Meanwhile, outside the framework of this state-sanctioned "cultural promotion," a far graver reality unfolds. The sacred site of *Poroshiri* (Mount Poroshiri), where Ainu communities of the Hidaka region had long imposed strict prohibitions against trespassing, has been opened to the public as one of *Japan's 100 Famous Mountains*, now welcoming large numbers of hikers. This portrays a current situation in which numerous cultural assets that unquestionably fall under the category of "cultural products transmitted among the Ainu" are being irreversibly damaged. Despite official rhetoric promoting "ethnic coexistence," what is recognised as "Ainu culture" remains confined within the parameters of what does not conflict with the interests of the Wajin society. The vast, profound losses suffered by the Ainu people continue to be untold, slipping further into oblivion with each passing day.

Ōsaka Taku is a researcher and historian focusing on Hokkaido and Ainu culture.

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大坂拓(*2024*年)「アイヌに対する「認知」の空白と博物館・美術館展示」, 岸上伸啓(編)『北太平洋の先住民文化ー歴史・言語・社会』, 東京:臨川書店, *pp. 238-256.*

Countering Imperial Japan:

The Indigenous Emishi People of Tohoku

The diverse past and present of confederated peoples across archipelagos around present day Japan, is obscured by the myth of homogeneous origin and a myth of homogenous peoples centred around the large island of Honshu. Unsettling this past and present myth of single peoples and single culture helps to open the national imaginary to the reality of difference that has existed across Japan presently and historically, even on the island of Honshu.

Jason Waite

The phrase *michi no oku* or the "end of the land" comes from the pre-colonial name of Fukushima and northern Honsu island in the seventh century. The phrase was given by the southern imperial court, to that northern half of Honshu which was self-governed by the indigenous Emishi people which had a different society and culture than today. This distinction alludes to the fact that the present hegemony of a monoculture in Japan has not always been in place, and perhaps also alludes to the fact that something else can emerge. The phrase is also embedded in a colonial myopia. From the southern imperial perspective we can see that the notion of land equates to a dominion of imperial control and knowledge, and thus land ended at the imperial border, and on the other side of that border—Fukushima and Tohoku—was termed "the end of the land." So while the horizon of the ground continued beyond that border of control, we can surmise from the title that little was known about the area, its inhabitants and their ways of life. Beyond the imperial notion of the land lay a different relationship with the ground, the environment, and its human and non-human inhabitants, so much so that it could not be considered "land."At the finitude of land, lay a different ground.

Up until the ninth century CE, Fukushima and Tohoku were separate from the nascent imperial south and inhabited by the indigenous Emishi people.[2] The Emishi were distinct from the Ainu—the indigenous people of Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and Kurils—whose culture, while under threat, still exists today. The name Emishi is likely a transliterated homonym of what the Emishi called themselves; however, it has been translated to mean "hairy people" in Japanese, underscoring how the imperial south viewed the Emishi as "barbarians." As such the name could be seen to have negative connotations, but I utilise the name because it was also a name that was used by the Emishi in describing themselves to individuals outside their group.[3] They maintained their autonomy in Tohoku and Fukushima, undertaking a lifestyle that revolved around hunting as well as agriculture. The Emishi developed various technologies including horse husbandry and a form of equestrian combat unique in Japan which included archery and the development of curved swords.[4] This technology and their use of it in combat kept the area autonomous for centuries, as evidenced by later travellers referring to the area as the "Scotland of Japan" due to its landscape and fierce independence.[5]

In the seventh century CE, the Yamato empire in the south of Honshu Island was looking to expand its territory northward to conquer Tohoku. The imperial army had imported and adapted Tang dynasty Chinese military methods, which included large formations of soldiers moving together in heavy armour.[6] This was successful in

the plains of the south, but the hilly geography of Tokoku, combined with the mobility and flexibility of the Emishi combat technology, allowed the Emishi's smaller numbers to resist southern colonisation for 150 years. Thus it was the technology developed through the close relation between the Emishi and horses which both secured their autonomy and through its appropriation ultimately lost their independence.

There were a number of different factors in the territorial conquering of the Emishi including bribing some groups of Emishi, settling other groups of Emishi elsewhere in Japan for assimilation and then sending these assimilated groups back to fight.[7] However, it was not until Imperial forces adopted indigenous Emishi technologies that they were able to fully subjugate Fukushima and Tohoku. It is this appropriation of Emishi technology, in particular, the curved sword, lighter more mobile armour, and the practice of horse-mounted archery, that was crucial for the colonisation of the north.[8] These technologies were not only integrated into the north armies but also come down to us today wholly intact as constitutive components of the iconic figure of the samurai.[9] While the samurai are often considered the archetype of Japanese culture, complete with their curved "samurai sword," a number of these core components are actually the embodiment of certain Emishi technology. The appropriation of Emishi tools into symbols of the imperial Japanese state is indicative of what would become an extractive internal colonial relationship between Tokyo and Fukushima. A relationship wherein resources, bodies, energy, and technology are transferred to the south, often losing this connection to Fukushima, in order to become metabolised into Tokyo.

Tracing the history of the horses in the region reveals not only an indigenous past but how this relationship developed technology that enabled the indigenous residents to maintain their autonomy and collective agency. Yet to overcome this autonomy made by the bond between the more-than-human and human residents, the imperial system itself would have to change—a transformation that would have profound effects on the entirety of Japan. It was not just these essential resources and technologies from Fukushima and Tohoku that contributed to the growth of Tokyo and Japan, but also the creation of the position of the shogun who would go on to create the *bakufu*—the military warlord system of governance which would dominate Japan for seven centuries. As historian Hidemichi Kawanishi highlights, due to the resistance of the Emishi in the seventh through the tenth centuries CE, the Imperial court created the position of a shogun, a central military leader, to wage this lengthy campaign.[10] Ultimately, the power of the shogun would boomerang back south, usurping the emperor and the court,

with the shogun becoming de-facto ruler and the centre of power in Japan. Kawanishi underscores that it was the imperial desire to subjugate Tohoku and Fukushima which ultimately led to the undoing of the power of the emperor and the court, and it in its place came a feudal system with the shogun at the top.[11] While the initial colonisation campaign of Tohoku and Fukushima finished around 950 CE, there would be continuous rebellion in the region continuing through the nineteenth century. It would be this feudal system and its implementation of an internal colony of Tohoku which would eliminate collective agency and institute a durational precarity that would produce disastrous results. This preacarity caused by external colonisation of the southern empire can still be felt today and resonates in Tokyo Electric Power Company deciding to build the Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Plant that would create one of the largest nuclear disasters in human history.

However this history of the Emishi people also underscores that were diverse and heterogeneous peoples and cultures in present day Japan and on the island of Honshu. This important history helps demystify such homogeneous origin myths and make space for the reality of diversity that has always been the case in the archipelago.

[1] Sherry D. Fowler, Accounts and Images of Six Kannon in Japan, 1st ed. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 21.; Egami Namio, The Formation of the People and the Origin of the State in Japan, 23 (Memoirs of the Tokyo Bunko, 1964).

[2] Kazuro Hanihara, "Emishi, Ezo and Ainu: An Anthropological Perspective," Japan Review, no. 1 (1990): 35–48.; Hirofumi Matsumura and Yukio Dodo, "Dental Characteristics of Tohoku Residents in Japan: Implications for Biological Affinity with Ancient Emishi," Anthropological Science 117, no. 2 (2009): 95–105.

[3] Mark Hudson, Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 224.

[4] William Wayne Farris, Heavenly Warriors: The Evolution of Japan's Military, 500-1300 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 81-92.

[5] Nathan Hopson, "'Christopher Noss' Tohoku and "Survey of Rural Fukushima": Portraits of Tōhoku a Century Before March 11, 2011.,'" Asian Cultural Studies, no. 42 (March 2016).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Karl F. Friday, "Pushing beyond the Pale: The Yamato Conquest of the Emishi and Northern Japan," Journal of Japanese Studies 23, no. 1 (1997): 1–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/133122.; and Hudson, Ruins of Identity.

[8] Farris, Heavenly Warriors, 81-92.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Hidemichi Kawanishi, Tohoku: Japan's Constructed Outland, Regional Spaces, Cultures and Identities of East Asia, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), xix.

[11] Ibid.

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Haruka Iharada

‘Indigeneity’ as a Method: Towards a Framework of Something that Includes Okinawa

Let me start with something very basic, ”Okinawa” is the name of the southern most archipelago and sea area of Japan and the name of one of the nation’s 47 prefectures. What is often overlooked in terms of geography is that Okinawa the name of both the densely populated main island as well as the territory of the prefecture that extends over a vast sea area with some 160 islands. Only 37 of these are currently inhabited. We also need to acknowledge that each island has its own natural features and cultural originality.

From the fifteenth century until around the time of the establishment of the Meiji government in the 1860s—which can be seen as the modernisation of Japan—Okinawa had a 450-year history known as Ryukyu, a kingdom separate from Japan. The Ryukyu kingdom was a prosperous trading hub between China and Southeast Asia. In Ryukyu, People and land formed their own culture influenced by the forms and materials brought to them by the sea. It is the land where a hybrid culture was created or improved to suit people's lives based on the nature of the archipelago which is subtropical, surrounded by the sea, and has a historically significant position as a crossroads in the Asian maritime area. This background is a basic premise for tracing the cultural specificity of "Okinawa." For example, textiles and figurative handicrafts, paintings that use a sense of color and techniques, and performances such as dance, song and music, with all of its incorporated various cultural practices, are the roots of what we call "art" today. Their formative processes in Okinawa show "indigeneity" as a historical hybridity premised on geographical characteristics.

For this special issue of Art Review Oxford, when I was asked to share examples what might be understood as "indigenous" practices or texts on Okinawa, I recommended two artists, James Jack and Taichi Yonahaha, and asked them to write essays.

James Jack takes an approach that rethinks the mediating perspective of the sea using the space of "islands" including Okinawa or the plants that grow in them as clues. He wrote a short essay about his artistic approach in the work/text entitled "Teatsu Resistance." Jack combines the artistic techniques of textiles derived from the nature of Okinawa as an island and the attitude of "resistance" that Okinawan society continues to show. His expression and thoughts provide clues to the question—"What connects things that take root?" The artist Taichi Yonaha was born and raised in Okinawa and is primarily a painter. His paintings that are a canvas frame that shows the realities rooted in the land of Okinawa that he is inspired by, but these canvases also the future and hopes on the other side of these realities. His paintings and the episodes of exhibitions he experienced in Okinawa are the words that can only come from his artistic expression an activity that shows in one landscape-like frame the will that has indeed taken root and been cultivated in "this" land.

What people simply imagine as "Indigenous Art" may be, for example, an artistic technique that presents a unique cultural practice that was born out of the daily practices reflected in the Ryukyu Kingdom or from the natural environment that has been cultivated since before the formation of the modern nation. However, in the context of this issue I feel the contributions are sympathetic in the ideas, connecting points, and thoughts and attitudes that weave the artistic practices of these two artists each of whom represents this different approach. I think of this process as *indigeneity as an sociopolitical attitude*. Or perhaps it is also indigenous as a method. I spent a long time in Okinawa during my childhood. However, now that I have left Okinawa and am living in an urban area of Japan, I would like to continue my research and curatorial practice of art on political issues in Southeast and East Asia and continue my attempt to question the geopolitical concept known as Inter-Asia. Therefore, I am not specialising in art rooted in Okinawa or the art currently developing there, but in the practical political-artistic activities of artists in other Asian countries which are closer to Okinawa than to Japan. I can therefore assert that I am aware that the motivation to face this political issue in Asia to set it as an objective in my own artistic practice and to collaborate with artists who face these difficulties has its roots in the land of Okinawa. For me, "indigeneity" is a sense of empathy that constitutes solidarity in the face of politics and difficulties, or rather a perspective that positions the framework as a question or method. Why do we question it?

Finally, I would like to note the positioning of Okinawa as indigenous or the dangers and criticisms of this framework. There is a word "Do-jin 土人". In Japanese Kanji, this word is written as "Soil-Person" meaning "a person who lives in a certain land and lives there in an indigenous sense". In English this might be similar to an understanding of a "native person" for example. In Okinawa, especially in the past decade, there has been an ongoing conflict between the residents and the builders over the construction of a new

U.S. military base. In response to the construction of a new U.S. military base that includes destroying part of the sea of Okinawa, local and community members have been staging sit-ins and nonviolent protests to stop them. In 2016, police officers from the interior (outside Okinawa) who were deployed to prevent and eliminate such resistance called the protesting residents "Do-jin" and abused them. This discriminatory behaviour and stance has drawn much criticism, and it has hurt and angered the people of Okinawa. There is clear malice in this action. But these events, which are shown as such malicious and attacking to be framed as indigenous or native, are still going on today. And it is triggered in the political space of Okinawa, which is an actual place. Who and how one identifies "indigenous" to those who live in Okinawa or are aware of their local roots, I hope that the framework in art will never be next to such a discriminatory framework but will function as a method of hope.

1 Okinawa Prefecture, "Overview of the Remote Islands," https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/shigoto/kankotokusan/1011671/1011816/1011834/1011854.html

2 In Naoki Onaga's description of postmodern Okinawan art, he mentions "cultural originality" as a characteristic of Okinawan art, which may be paraphrased as indigeneity. Naoki Onaga, Okinawa Art Theory: Expressions of Boundaries 1872-2022 [沖縄美術論 境界の表現 1872—2022](Naha: The Okinawa Times, 2023).

3 The Inter-Asia referred to here is a geopolitical framework that relies on the academic movement of Inter-Asia Cultural Studies. Kuan-Hsing Chen, Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)

4 "Editorial: Government Responsible for Structural Discrimination Behind "Dojin" Remark, Ryukyu Shimpo, 20 October 2016, https://english.ryukyushimpo.jp/2016/10/25/25930/.

Interwoven Narration

I was born and raised on the island of Okinawa in 1967. Since I relocated to mainland Japan in my twenties, I have been working as a painter across Japan, Okinawa, Korea, and other parts of Asia for over thirty years.

The quintessential representations of an ethnic group's indigeneity are often found in customs such as rituals, and traditional cultural artifacts. My work does not directly address these elements. Therefore, in writing this article, I have chosen to shift my perspective.

Yonaha Taichi

Translation by
Tyuki Imamura

The “indigeneity” of an indigenous people becomes apparent only in contrast to other ethnic groups. As such, it is frequently subjected to observation and sometimes admiration, but it is equally exposed to the gaze of curiosity. This very indigeneity can serve as a rationale for discrimination and oppression by dominant powers. For Okinawa, the symbol of discrimination and oppression is the fence surrounding U.S. military bases. While numerous U.S. military bases exist across Japan, over 70% of them are concentrated in Okinawa. This disproportionate presence stems primarily from the 27-year U.S. military administration that effectively severed Okinawa from Japan after World War II. However, it is also rooted in Japan’s long-standing dominance over Okinawa, which began in the 17th century and culminated in the formal annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879.

I would like to present one of my works here. This piece, depicting a fence, was exhibited at the Interwoven Narratives exhibition in 2024 at the Sakima Art Museum in Okinawa, as part of a cultural exchange with the city of Gwangju. I hope that discussing my commentary on this work, the exhibition venue, and the collaborative efforts between Okinawa and Gwangju will help express something deeply rooted in the history and culture of the place where I was born and raised.

The Sakima Art Museum was established to permanently exhibit The Battle of Okinawa, a series of paintings by Iri and Toshi Maruki. This series depicts the harrowing reality of the Battle of Okinawa—Japan’s only major ground battle of World War II, which claimed the lives of a quarter of Okinawa’s civilian population. The museum’s director successfully reclaimed their ancestral land, including family tombs, from U.S. military occupation through direct negotiations, and repurposed it for the museum. Standing like a wedge driven into the U.S. military base, the Sakima Art Museum faces the imposing fences.

While The Battle of Okinawa captures the horrors of war, the museum aspires to be a space for contemplation—a place where visitors can engage in mourning and introspection, cultivating a desire for peace. The uniqueness of the museum lies in the fact that it carries out this mission under the shadow of the very machinery that perpetuates war and violence.

The Interwoven Narratives exhibition, organized by the Gwangju Museum of Art, brought together contemporary art that reflects on Korea's democratisation movement, a subject the museum has continuously introduced to international audiences since the 1980s. Gwangju Biennale, held in the city, serves as a global platform for disseminating Gwangju's democratic values and culture while seeking to heal the collective trauma inflicted by the brutal suppression of the city's 1980 democratization movement through the power of art.

Interwoven Narratives came to be realised through years of ongoing exchange between artists and curators from Okinawa and Korea. Our initial encounter occurred a decade ago with artists from Jeju Island, who remarked, "The relationship between Okinawa and Japan is similar to that of Jeju and the Korean Peninsula." Both regions share histories of domination by powerful states and resistance by marginalised communities. Furthermore, this resistance to oppression is connected to the May 18, 1980 Gwangju Uprising, which marked the beginning of South Korea's democratization movement. At that time, it was not only suppressed by the South Korean military regime but also implicated by the United States. This structure mirrors the colonial dynamics of Imperial Japan's occupation of Korea, which began in the late 19th century.

Those referred to as "indigenous peoples" have walked a different historical path from those who designate them as such. In sharing Interwoven Narratives, we seek to explore how art can address and heal these collective historical traumas.

Finally, I present my commentary displayed alongside my artwork:

"The fence, depicted with heaps of paint on the screen, is a symbol of what divides the world. The fence as an entity exists only a few dozen metres from this fence, tinged with a history of war, discrimination, humiliation and resistance. It is created by the huge system of the state and the military, and exists solely to maintain the system. The painted fence was created by a single person who doubts the system. It is ephemeral, but it has a

View of Sakima Art Museum
[The green area beyond the fence is the US military Futenma Air Base and the runway can be seen in the distance.]

certain power. Not only does it denounce the violence of the system, but it also has the power to freely configure the world behind and in front of the fence. If we do not turn away from the present causticity that exists in front of the fence, it is not impossible to see a glimmer of hope in the future behind it, even if it entails difficulties. What do I see behind the golden fence that separates the world? I still do not despair of that future."

Home-Codependency23.2-, acrylic on canvas, 210 x 327cm, 2023

Taichi Yonaha is a painter who works with the theme of light in painting and has been actively exhibiting in countries throughout Asia, in 2019 and 2020, he was involved in organizing exhibitions on the theme of Okinawa.

Teatsu Resistance

テアツ・レジスタンス

James Jack 2024

Mother Furuya Chiaki's overflowing love of plants connected me to a lineage of vegetal ancestors from Tokunoshima (徳之島, Island of Benevolence). Aunt Toshi Setsuko's stories opened the rich colors dyed into the silk fibers of Oshima Tsumugi (traditional textiles) in the Amami archipelago. Uncle Fujioka Yoichiro taught me how to cut the bark of *Teatsu* (テアツ, Tēichigi, 車輪梅, Sharinbai, Japanese Yeddo Hawthorne, phaphiolepsis indica var umbellate). Cousin Fujimaki Shuichi shared in stocking, kindling and tending the fire while we boiled the bark throughout the night.

Teatsu Resistance weaves placards that resist militarism together with patterns that resist dyes to paint a bright future. Here "resistance" has two layers of meaning, one from the *kashirii* (kasuri, dye patterns)[1] that are utilized to weave multivalent meanings into fabric for approximately 13 centuries. In sericulture traditions, these patterns are achieved by selectively dyeing segments of fabric to express motifs ranging from sea life such as urchins, botanic shapes including wisteria and toy windmills from everyday play.

The second layered meaning of "resistance" refers to the spirit of islanders to protect the island's natural heritage and relaxed lifestyle. *Teatsu Resistance* weaves placard signs that resist militarism together with patterns that resist dyes together toward the aim of creating non-violent futures. Tokunoshima poet and politician Izumi Hōrō's vision, "Let's go non-violently. Let's resist with non-resistance."[2] began during the Postwar reversion movement and continues today. For example, in 2010 more than half of the island's population assembled in Kametoku Port to demonstrate against the proposed U.S. base relocation from Futenma.

Seeds nourished in "small" places[3] such as Tokunoshima can heal wounds of war and have expansive impact through vast networks of archipelagic solidarity. Art can share non-violent methods to care for human and more than human species in the face of American and Japanese aggression. Continuous efforts of islanders to cherish rich ecological plant species culminated in a successful bid for World Heritage status in 2021. Creativity sustains resistance in the long term in colorful, engaged and imaginative ways.

This work is part of my hope to share diverse forms of resistance with children, students and generations to come.

[1] Tokunaga, Yoshimi. "Research on the Patterns and Design of Oshima Tsumugi" *Kasuri: Textiles Across the Seas vol.04*, Tokyo: Art Printing Co., 2007.

[2] Kagoshima Prefecture School Education Materials, https://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/ba04/kyoiku-bunka/school/kyodo/documents/4990_20130604171211-1.pdf [Accessed 26 Jan. 2025]

[3] Toshi, Genichiro. *Hora fuki jinsei ("Joke Through Life")* Kagoshima: Minami Nihon Shinbun Kaihatsu Center, 2014.

Teatsu Resistance
テアツ・レジスタンス

James Jack

2024

sharinbai clippings
offered by uncle yoichiro
kaneku stains in 2018

family process
reconnecting hawthorne
with today

boiled deep in todoroki
mixing with the stars
hints of coffee maker

carried by ship to naha
with six-month old noa
bodies always close

cherished in pandan
slowly experimenting
degrees of wetness

pencil tracing
placards from 2010
one by one

surviving circuit breaker
with ink in clementi
13 centuries of process

back at the studio
weaving kasuri
discovering 日米

Returning for library
dialogue with Tokunoshima
community, March 2024

hand carrying to tokyo
while all the other things
come by ship 2 months later

writing stories on shōdo
family love for botanics
bonds across borders

contemplating in ōkubo
sharing with trusted kin
poised for power

carrying by ferry to shōdo
caretaking like a child
yeddo dreams

now in flight
with tēichigi aboard
wondering where

returning to listen
ancestral voices now
placards live on

free space
in the library entry
sharing artworks

allowing waido
rediscovering
resistance within

James Jack

Teatsu Resistance (*Five/Rice*). 2024

Handmade yeddo hawthorne ink from Uncle Yoichiro's garden on paper.

Photo by Jing Kai

Exhibited at Sakima Art Museum,
沖縄を見つめた表現者たち 展 2024年3月28日〜6月10日
2024

断固 反対 Firm Opposition	車輪 Wheel	切り株	ぜったい 反対 Total Resistance	- NO BASE
藤 Fuji Wisteria	反対 Resist	基地 反対 Resist Base	怒 Anger	車輪 Wheel
米軍基地 移設反対! Oppose Relocation of U.S. Base	のんきに くらしたい Want to Live Carefree	ツガナガジュウ Tsuganagajū	ぜったい 反対 Total Resistance	格子 Lattice
イゲタ Water Well Character Shaped Pattern	十の字/ ナガジュヌジ Cross/Long Cross	政府よ島の魂 金では売らぬ Hey Goverment, Island Spirit Won't Sell for Money	基地 反対 Resist Base	銭柄 Coin pattern
移設反対 Oppose Relocation	ウニ/ガシチ Sea Urchin	基地 反対 Resist Base	井の字絣 Water well letter shaped kasuri pattern	断固反対 Firm Dissent

Teatsu Resistance
テアツ・レジスタンス
James Jack
2024

James Jack

Teatsu Resistance (*Four*/*Sun*). 2024

Handmade yeddo hawthorne ink from Uncle Yoichiro's garden on paper.

Photo by Jing Kai

Exhibited at Sakima Art Museum,
沖縄を見つめた表現者たち 展 2024年3月28日〜6月10日
2024

28 March - 10 June 2024

米 Rice	のんきに くらしたい Will to Live Carefree	基地 反対 Resist Base	日米柄 Pattern of Sun and Rice, Japan and America	反対 Resist
カザモーシャ. カジャマシャ 風廻静止 Toy windmill (still)	銭 Coin	ナガ絣/ ヨコナガ Long kasuri/ Long horizontal	ガギ Key	魚目/ イェンム Fish eye
未来へ!! For/Towards the Future!!	怒怒 Anger Anger	ツガジュウ Tsugajū	うやほうがなし が怒っている! Ancestors are Angry!	移設反対 Oppose Relocation
ウニ/ガシチ Sea Urchin	子宝と長寿の島 徳之島に基地は いらない. 徳之島から京都 左京から日本を Change Tokunoshima, island treasuring children & longevity, doesn't need base. Change Japan from Tokunoshima & Sakyo, Kyoto	ツブ柄 Tsubugara	斜め矢車 Slanted arrow wheel	ガギ Key
絶 Absolute	ヒバ Hiba	断固 反対 Firm Opposition	花 Flower	Agricultural Labor Union Kagoshima Prefecture

Teatsu Resistance
テアツ・レジスタンス
James Jack
2024

Teatsu Resistance
テアツ · レジスタンス

James Jack 2024

Fujimaki Shuichi

Fujioka Heiwa

Fujioka Yoichiro

Furuya Chiaki

Furuya Mihoko

Georgette Chen Art Foundation

Ho Hui Yan Kristen

Noa Sora Furuya Jack

Matsuoka Rieko

Minobe Mutsumi

Mizuno Meika

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Review

Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures

The National Museum of Modern Art,

Tokyo

Kyongfa Che

Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures at the *National Museum of Modern Art*, Tokyo, opened with a photograph of an excavation conducted on the museum premise. The image captured a large-scale archaeological dig conducted between 1979 and 1980, prior to the construction of a new basement storage facility. Layers of historical remains, spanning from the Jomon period (c. 14,000–300 BC) to the early modern era, were unearthed and transferred to the *National Museum of Japanese History*. Across the photograph, some of the unearthed objects were presented in a vitrene, as well as a poster from the 1954 exhibition of the museum Today's Focus: On the History of Japanese Art. The Japanese title of this exhibition, translated as *Contemporary Eye: From the History of Japanese Art*, reflected its aim to reinterpret cultural objects of the past through a contemporary lens. This opening section established the exhibition's reflexivity — exploring museums as apparatuses that mediate the dynamics between material objects, historical discourse and the gaze of the viewer.

Building on this foundation, the exhibition featured the ancient figures—*haniwa* (tomb guardians from the Kofun period, c. 300–600 AD) and *dogu* (humanoid figures and vessels from the Jomon period). Rather than focusing solely on the objects themselves, the exhibition examined the shifting currents of aestheticization, ideologization and popularization of *haniwa* and *dogu* from the late 19th century to the present. Artworks and archival materials—including exhibition posters, publications, photographs, and films—were presented in three chronological chapters: pre-WWII, wartime, and post-war Japan.

The discovery of ancient clay figures coincided with Japan's early modernization as a nation-state and the introduction of modern archaeology by foreign advisors. Detailed sketches of *haniwa* by Yoshimatsu Goseda (1855–1915), commissioned by Heinrich von Siebold (1852–1908), emphasized precise, objective documentation, offering a stark contrast to the scroll paintings by the antiquarian Minomushi Sanjin (1836–1900), where *haniwa* and *dogu* were casually arranged with other antique objects. However, the acceleration of excavations was not solely brought about through the introduction of modern archaeology by foreign advisors. The early Meiji government also ordered the excavation of mausoleums to validate and proclaim the "unbroken imperial line"[1] both within Japan and abroad. The archaeological knowledge gained from these artefacts was appropriated to depict Japanese mythologies from the *Kojiki* (An Account of Ancient Matters) and *Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan), as seen in *Gallant Man* (*Emperor Jimmu*) (1935) by Busan Kimura (1888–1938), which adopted the clothing and weaponry of *haniwa* to represent Japan's mythological first emperor.

In the early 20th century, as Japan pursued imperial expansion, *haniwa* became a potent symbol of nationalism. The display of archival photographs, postcards and publications highlighted two key moments: the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 and the 1940 celebration of the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese Empire. For the Imperial Mausoleum of Emperor Meiji, a new set of four *haniwa* figures was created after more than a millennium. The image of *haniwa* became widely disseminated through newspaper reports on the construction of the mausoleum. The 2600th anniversary celebration was steeped in wartime propaganda. Numerous adaptations of *haniwa* and *haniwa-esque* figures of Emperor Jimmu appeared on posters, postcards, and various goods, often emblazoned with the political slogan "Hakkoichiu" (All the Eight Corners of the World Under One Roof).

The beauty of *haniwa* as a source of morale for the Empire's expansion was increasingly celebrated within the echo chamber of wartime propaganda, amplified by archaeologists, philosophers and artists. For instance, the painting *Heaven's Warrior* (1943) by Fukiya Koji (1900–1975) depicted a semi-abstract *haniwa-esque* warrior holding a sword and a fallen pilot, symbolising sacrifice and imperial ideals. Numerous publications and articles on haniwa extolled its beauty of simplicity and tenderness, going so far as to celebrate the fine craftsmanship and spiritual strength of its makers as reflections of the nobility of their ancestors.

After World War II, the Emperor-centered educational system was swiftly dismantled by the Allied Occupation forces. *Haniwa*, once a symbol of the unbroken imperial line, was relegated to

obscurity, only to be rediscovered as an artefact of Japan's ancient tradition, alongside *doki*. The film *Tsukinowa Tumulus* (1954) suggested this radical shift. It documented the excavation of the tumulus in Okayama conducted by local residents, symbolically marking the transition of historiographical agency from the Empire to the nation, and reflecting the nation's renewed aspirations for cultural identity within post-war geopolitics. Nearby, the 1949 painting *Museum: People Watching Ancient Artifacts* by Seiji Nojima (1906-1994) showed brightly lit vitrines of clay vessels from Yayoi era and young female visitors, signaling the reformation of museums and their role in rewriting the discourse of archaeological objects.

The shift was contextualized through the archival display. The Tokyo Imperial Household Museum was renamed the National Museum in 1947, transferring its authority from the Ministry of the Imperial Household to the Ministry of Education. Between 1947 and 1952, it hosted diverse exhibitions ranging from Western modern art to Japanese antiques, prior to the inauguration of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. *The Henri Matisse* exhibition and the *Exhibition of Ancient Japanese Culture* in 1951 attracted large crowds, igniting debates about affinities between modernist abstraction and traditional Japanese culture. Such debates were not entirely new. Modernist painters such as Saburo Hasegawa (1906–1957) attempted to attribute avant-garde art to Japanese antiquity during the war, as seen in his 1940 article *Classics Is Ours* in the journal *Free Art*. Hasegawa continued to produce paintings inspired by *haniwa* and *dogu* after the war, suggesting their potential to bridge the dichotomy and hierarchy between the East and the West.

Other influential figures of the 1950s were Taro Okamoto (1911–1996) and Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988). Having seen and inspired by ancient objects of *haniwa* and Jomon and Yayoi-era *dogu* in museums, they produced a series of ceramic and terracotta sculptures presented in this exhibition. Okamoto, in particular, played a pivotal role in positioning Jomon culture within Japanese art history through his extensive writings on aesthetic interpretations of Jomon artefacts.

The exhibition then revisited the *Today's Focus* series, initially referenced in the opening section, through the display of posters, catalogues, and the museum's journals. The caption in this section conveyed the curator's critical perspective: "'Focused Eye' was about departing from the perspectives of the past, which also meant erasing the memory of the 'beauty of haniwa' during war-time."[2] After exploring the permeation of *haniwa* and *dogu* imagery from art to sub/mass cultures from the 1960s onward, the exhibition concluded with a photograph from *Kakera* (2022–2023) series by Masaru Tatsuki (b. 1974). This series captures the details of *dogu* pieces and old newspapers that wrapped them, unfolding and adding layers of time and intertwining historical moments. The artist's gesture echoes that of the curators', which subtly questions the enduring presence of nationalism navigating through the shifting ideological manipulation of ancient objects and repeated rewriting of history.

[1] "Unbroken Imperial Line" refers to the belief and political doctrine that the imperial throne has been passed down exclusively through a single male lineage, without exception, from the first, mythical Emperor Jimmu. The concept was incorporated into the Meiji Constitution in 1889, which established the emperor as the sovereign ruler of Japan. It was further emphasized to justify Japan's imperial rule in the early twentieth century up until World War II. Today, it continues to be used as a rhetorical tool for Japan's national identity and cultural continuity, particularly among nationalist and conservative groups.

[2] Wall text at Modern Images of Ancient Clay Figures, exhibition at The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Tokyo, 1 October, 2024 to 22 December, 2024.

Eimi Tagore

Legacies:
Asian American Art Movements in New York City
(1969–2001)

Review

80WSE Gallery,

New York

The Woolworth, Municipal, and Transportation buildings have towered over City Hall Park in Lower Manhattan since the early 20th century, showcasing the history of New York's rapid growth over the last hundred years. Framed from above, these early skyscrapers appear small in stature in Kunié Sugiura's pioneering photo-painting View from World Trade Center (1979). The photo emulsion on canvas constitutes half of the composition—another canvas, painted in solid black acrylic and slightly recessed, is attached on the right. The curious diptych forms a set of startling oppositions: photograph against painting, representation against abstraction, minute detail against total absence. The field of black creates a quiet void, one that decades later has taken on a spectral quality as a shadow behind a view of New York that can never again be captured.

Sugiura's subtly masterful piece in the ambitious exhibition *Legacies: Asian American Art Movements in New York City (1969–2001)* felt unexpectedly emblematic of the decades-long proliferation of artists of Asian descent based in New York. As an example of lived history, the photo-painting demonstrates how Asian American artists have not only been an active presence, but integral to the city's history over multiple generations: carving out space for themselves amidst exclusion, displacement, and violence. The two canvases affixed together evoked the inherent doubleness of being an "Asian-American"—partaking in every aspect of American life while simultaneously marked as the "forever foreign," the "model minority," or the "good immigrant." Perhaps because Sugiura identifies as a New York artist above all else, the Japanese-born artist's nod to her chosen home remained an anchor in my mind as I explored the extensive show.

Bringing together the work of 90 artists and art collectives, *Legacies* mapped more than thirty (highly productive!) years of art activities beginning in 1969—soon after "Asian American" was coined as part of student strikes for ethnic studies curricula on the West Coast. Fitting to the on-campus origin of the term, *Legacies* was held at New York University's 80WSE Gallery. Although far from linear, the show was organized chronologically through 80WSE's five galleries, offering a diverse survey that traced Asian American identity as it has been, and continues to be, negotiated as a site of autonomy and cultural agency.

The breadth of work included in *Legacies* laid bare the limitations of the identifying label "Asian American" while also historicizing continuities between the three artist collectives at the forefront of institutionalizing the term in the arts on the East Coast during this period: Basement Workshop (1970–1986), Godzilla: Asian American Art Network (1990–2001), and the Asian American Arts Centre (1974–Present). With a research-driven approach led by curator Howie Chen, the exhibition impressively forged a legible record through decades of entangled networks, political strategies, and internal discord to offer audiences a window into the Asian diaspora's struggle for self-determination at a time when both individuals and collectives were doing everything they could to assert their presence within New York's art scene.

Despite its title, the exhibition destabilized a racial marker now institutionalized and inherited—demonstrating the way that the term can flatten the complexity of those it seeks to neatly define. "WHAT IS TOKENISM?" demanded a 1987 flyer by the anonymous collective PESTS on view in the exhibition. "When you've seen one artist of color and think you've seen ten." Generational, geographical, and historical specificity are erased under the myth of a homogenous Asian America, a deficiency that has been well discussed in the model minority discourse. Urgent politics of visibility and invisibility at work within Asian American circles led to landmark curatorial correctives, but even as racially grouped exhibitions increased representation they also led to reinforced notions of Asian American art as distinct from, rather than integral to, a broader American art canon. Battles against exclusion, discrimination, and displacement soon evolved into skirmishes with tokenism, essentialism, and bracketing.

While some might argue that *Legacies* is another bracketing for the sake of representation—perhaps what Gayatri Spivak might call "strategic essentialism"—the individual engagements of more personal works like Sugiura's *View from World Trade Center* (1979) allowed Chen's exhibition to deftly move beyond any assumption of a stable category. As a first-generation immigrant, Sugiura's work blurs the distinctions between Asian and American, drawing attention to the place that binds all the artists in the gallery—New York. Including multiple generations of Asian/Asian American artists, *Legacies* complicates the national discourse around belonging in the US—at what point does an immigrant, settler, refugee, or adoptee consider themselves an American?

The exhibition's greatest strength was not only to demonstrate the power of collective identity as a form of institutional critique, but also to highlight the depth of difference within a racial marker that has evolved into something simultaneously too large and too small. By presenting a selection of artwork resisting these frameworks, Legacies confronted the socio-political stakes of visibility

as well as the myriad ways individual artists have interrogated the institutionalization of identity-based art.

In David Diao's screen-printed piece *Imperiled* (2000), the artist harnessed the pervasive "Chop Suey" pseudo-calligraphic typeface to deliver a biting critique of how stereotypical Asian-ness has long been conveyed to western consumers. A bright yellow background evokes the "yellow peril" rhetoric weaponized in the US against Chinese labourers in the late 1800s and the Japanese during World War II. The spinning arms of Sung Ho Choi's mixed media installation *Korean Roulette* (1992) further shifted focus from Asian solidarity, instead confronting fraught intersections of capitalism, race, and violence in the US. Fan blades ending in bloody white gloves rotated like the Wheel of Fortune, spinning above various "prizes" found in Korean-owned grocery stores, from fruits and vegetables to a handgun—referencing the violent confrontations between Korean and Black communities in Los Angeles and New York in the early 1990s. Viewers were reminded of the US military's role in the creation of new waves of Asian American immigrants in An-My Lê's *Untitled, But Thap, Viêt Nam* (1996). She took the wistful photograph after returning to Vietnam for the first time after fleeing from Saigon with her family in 1975, living as refugees in US military bases across the Pacific before settling in California. Albert Chong's ethereal self portrait *The Buddha* (1998) explored the cultural hybridity of his Afro-Asian roots. At the same time, the artist has expressed fatigue about audience expectations for his work to reflect his mixed ancestry, as well as the need to contextualize and connect layers of colonial histories for viewers to make sense of his background—a sentiment familiar to many mixed-race Asians in America.[1]

The multiplicity of the Asian diaspora in the US has largely been rendered visible through tenacity and care from within our own communities. In the anthology Best! *Letters from Asian Americans in the Arts*, Christopher K. Ho and Daisy Nam observed that although Asians and Asian Americans have been active in every corner of postwar contemporary art in the US, we often remain invisible—even to ourselves.[2] Legacies was a timely reminder of the importance of self-historiography, a practice centred in the exhibition as much as the art. As Chen himself has noted, "Even when opportunities are granted, the quality of visibility is more important than the sheer amount of exposure—to be on display is not as valuable as the ability to appear on one's own terms."[3]

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[1] "Pugliese, Gina. "Artist Profile: Albert Chong - The Sound of Trumpets and a Choir." Daria. 14 May 2024. Retrieved 20 January 2025. https://www.dariamag.com/home/albert-chong.

[2] Ho, Christopher K. and Name, Daisy. Eds. "Editors' Letter" in Best! Letters from Asian Americans in the Arts. Paper Monument: Brooklyn, 2021. Pg 2.

[3] Chen, Howie. "Godzilla: Critical Origins" in Godzilla: Asian American Arts Network. Brooklyn: Primary Information, 2021. Pg 12.