

**Kinodrama and Kineorama: Modernity and the Montage  
of Stage and Screen in Early Twentieth-Century Japan**

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### I. Montage of Stage and Screen

On 8 February 1904, the Japanese Navy made a surprise attack on the Russian fleet anchored at Port Arthur. Two days later, the Japanese Government declared war, and the Russo-Japanese War officially broke out. The first surprise attack and the successive battles at Port Arthur were called by the media alternately “The Naval Battle at Port Arthur” (Ryojun kaisen) or “The Great Naval Battle of Port Arthur” (Ryojun Daikaisen), and were featured day after day in photo magazines, newspapers, movie theatres, playhouses, panoramas, dioramas, and traditional *nishikie* wood block prints.<sup>1</sup> A new visual culture from the West emerged in Japan and became increasingly popular at this time. The accelerated circulation of news about the war became the stage for conflict and negotiation between reproducible media technologies and established forms of performance.

It is not surprising, then, that the Russo-Japanese War became a significant turning point in the history of Japanese cinema. The Denkikan or Electric Hall, in Asakusa Park had been renovated as Japan’s first permanent movie house the year before the war started. People visited this movie house to see the curious “moving magic lantern” as long as its novelty would last, but the public gradually lost interest and the promoters often faced difficulties in making a profit. This situation changed after the war broke out, as the war led to a sudden increase in the number of new films released and of moviegoers. However, we must note that the encounter between the Russo-Japanese War and cinema should not be considered a mere chapter in the gradual popularization of cinema in Japan. Instead, the war encouraged combined forms of screening that cannot be situated within a smooth narrative of development. Such admixtures included combinations of cinema and theatrical performance and of diorama

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and film projection. Moreover, they won popularity, in some cases, far beyond cinema itself.

In Japan, two patterns of admixture emerged. On the one hand, admixtures of cinema and theater were called “applied moving pictures” (*ōyō katsudōshasin*) in the late Meiji Period (roughly the 1900s and early 1910s), “chain drama” (*rensageki*) in the Taishō Period (1910s and early 1920s), and “kinodrama” (*kinodorama*) or “talkie chain drama” (*talkie rensageki*) in the early Shōwa Period (from the late 1920s through the 1930s).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the combination of projection and diorama or kinetic miniature devices was called “kineorama” (*kineorama*) and existed from around 1905 through the 1910s, and similar types of performance were called “cinematec” (*shinematekku*) around 1905, and “lightgraph” (*raitogurafu*) around the 1910s.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I use the general terms *kinodrama* and *kineorama* to refer respectively to the former and latter forms of admixture. Although *kinodrama* was a term used only during the Shōwa Period, I use it more broadly to refer to the multiple forms of kinodramatic performance from Meiji through the early Shōwa in order to emphasize the hybrid characteristics common to another mode of admixture, *kineorama*.

Kinodrama and *kineorama* were paid little attention in the early phases of Japanese film and theater historical scholarship. In his *History of the Development of Japanese Cinema*, Tanaka Jun'ichirō described chain drama as a “cheap” form in a “transitional period,” while Akiba Tarō considered them to be “merely a fad.”<sup>4</sup> Contrary to this earlier research, recent scholarship has focused on the uniqueness of these admixtures. Iwamoto Kenji has distinguished between chain drama and kinodrama in Japan and compared those two forms with the theatre of Erwin Piscator in Germany, concluding that “these admixed forms violated the border [between cinema and theatre] and had the potential to activate mutual domains of representation.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, Yokota Hiroshi has pointed out the relations between early cinema and Yamazaki Chōnosuke’s chain drama.<sup>6</sup> Ueda Manabu has examined the reception of cinematec in relation to early news films.<sup>7</sup> Such research does not consider kinodrama and *kineorama* to be immature or transitional forms, but as unique ones to be placed clearly within film history. Relying upon this research, I would like to reexamine kinodrama and *kineorama* in order to better understand their relation to “cinema and modernity.”

Two sorts of discussion dominate how we approach the relation between

the emergence of cinema and the modernity of perception. On the one hand there is the theory of clear rupture, represented by Walter Benjamin, while on the other, theories of successive continuities, such as Jonathan Crary’s understanding of the modern perceptual system that emerged around 1820. According to Benjamin, mechanical reproductions such as photography and cinema made valueless the authenticity of artworks derived from the “here and now of the original.” Lost in this process was their “aura,” a concept for which Benjamin is well-recognized. Nevertheless, we should note that Benjamin did not define aura as an inherent quality of artworks alone in a way that would preclude its existence in mechanical reproductions. Conversely, he emphasized that “the destruction of the aura is the signature of a perception whose ‘sense for sameness in the world’ has so increased that, by means of reproduction, it extracts sameness even from what is unique.”<sup>8</sup> The emergence of mechanical reproductions such as photography or cinema changed our perception, and consequently, it was perceived that aura had collapsed. Furthermore, Benjamin considered cinema as a public training ground for this new perception. “The function of film is to train human beings in the apperceptions and reactions needed to deal with a vast apparatus whose role in their lives is expanding almost daily.”<sup>9</sup> For the above reasons, Benjamin considered cinema to have produced a new condition for perception. In other words, there is a clear rupture in our perception before and after cinema.

Crary, on the other hand, is critical of art historical models of vision and the human subject. According to Crary, such models overemphasize the continuity of a Renaissance-based mode of vision “in which photography, and eventually cinema, are simply later instances of an ongoing development of perspectival space and perception.”<sup>10</sup> In contrast to this continuous model, Crary locates a rupture around the 1820s between the models of perception realized in the camera obscura and perception preconditioned in optical devices such as the stereoscope. Yet, in criticizing one model of continuity, Crary presents another. He points out that modernist painting, photography, and cinema “can be seen as later symptoms or consequences of this crucial systematic shift [of vision], which was well under way by 1820.”<sup>11</sup> For Crary, the shift of perception in the 1820s led to cinema, and in that sense, there was a continuous mode of perception prevailing both before and after the emergence of cinema.<sup>12</sup>

Our notions about the relation between the emergence of cinema and the modernity of perception have often tacitly presumed these two sorts of discussions—clear rupture and successive continuity. Although these

standpoints still carry much value for historical research, we must also consider how the existence and popularity of kinodrama and kineorama in early twentieth-century Japan might reveal the far more complicated nature of “cinema and modernity,” one that cannot be classified simply into either rupture or continuity. If we simplify models of rupture and continuity and apply them to our descriptions of history, then we will lose the complexity and plurality of these admixtures. This article attempts to describe kinodrama and kineorama, the combined forms from before and after cinema, not as immature forms of cinema, but as unique stages that demonstrate clearly the hybridity of modernity. Moreover, we could consider them as early attempts towards establishing a montage of stage and screen, projection and diorama, and illusion and substance.<sup>13</sup>

## II. Kinodrama

Kinodramatic performances have always played a minor role in Japanese film historical studies. In this section, I focus on the forms these performances assumed in the early twentieth century. In the late Meiji and Taishō periods, kinodramatic performance was called “applied moving pictures” (ōyō katsudō shashin) or “chain drama” (rensageki), because film projection was “applied” within a theatrical performance or “chained” to the live performance. Inoue Masao, the famous shinpa (New School Theater) actor, movie director, and chain drama performer, explained “chain drama.”

[A chain drama] is a stage drama with occasional film inserts. Scenes depicting a brawl, a chase, and so on were shot before the opening day because they could not be represented effectively in theatrical performance. When the previous scene of performance ends, a white curtain comes down. The lights in the theater go off suddenly, and a film is projected. The actors hide behind the curtain or in the wings of the stage and just say their lines in the film.<sup>14</sup>

Inoue shows that stage and screen were mutually connected within chain dramas. Inoue’s example suggests a very different form than the separation of stage and screen we know from the work of Benjamin. According to Benjamin, “nothing contrasts more starkly with a work of art completely subject to (or, like film, founded in) technological reproduction than a stage play.”<sup>15</sup> In his notion of clear rupture, film and stage are in striking contrast. Naturally, kinodrama, an admixture of these two forms, has little place in Benjamin’s model. Kinodrama was born from cinema and theater but was either overlooked or regarded as trivial deviation for a long time. Now,

however, we should remember it in order to not only understand its forgotten characteristics but also its importance in early film history.

It is notable that the starting point for kinodrama is the initial battle of the Russo-Japanese War, the Naval Battle at Port Arthur. In the stage performance of *Imperial Army to Defeat Russia* (“Seiro no kōgun”) that opened 3 March 1904 at the Masagoza Theater, shinpa actor Ii Yōhō included film of the naval battle.<sup>16</sup> It is said that this was the first stage performance with film projection in Japan.<sup>17</sup> On 9 March, the newspaper *Miyako shimpō* reported, “With respect to the scene of the Naval Battle at Port Arthur, actual scenes, such as when a torpedo is launched from the Japanese battleship and hits and sinks a Russian battleship, were presented to the audience by applying scenes from moving pictures.”<sup>18</sup> *Imperial Army to Defeat Russia* won great popularity, played to a full house from its opening day, and extended its run. Following upon this success, the Masagoza next produced *This Russian Soldier* (“Kono rohei”), which featured “the novel devices of electricity and of applied moving pictures to show the fierce military battle.”<sup>19</sup> In addition, “applied moving pictures” of a sea battle were used as a stage background at the Shintomiza Theatre.

As we see in the above cases of “applied moving pictures,” film projection was used especially to depict scenes of battles. Much research has shown that war has been a privileged theme of cinema, partly because the perception produced by modern weapons, massive military operations, and spectacular explosions approximates that produced by cinema. In other words, massive and spectacular modern wars could not be satisfactorily represented through traditional theater performance. Admixed forms of cinema and theater were created in order to represent a modern warfare that threatened the codes of Japanese theatrical performance.

Consequently, the following question arises: if cinema is a more suitable media to represent modern war, why would people prefer *kinodrama* to a war film? In order to answer this question, we would need to examine the film projected in *Imperial Army to Defeat Russia*. Although the film was lost, there remains some evidence suggesting it was a mock battle film. Early film critic Yoshiyama Kyōkkō wrote about the film: “Of course, this film didn’t shoot a real war. It applied scenes of massive navy maneuvers from films imported widely at that time.”<sup>20</sup> The testimony of Inoue Masao, who played a role in the film, differs from that of Yoshiyama. “There was a scene named *Attack of Port Arthur*, and we decided to shoot only this scene on film and to show it mutually with stage performance like *teireko*. This

film was taken on the mountain behind the Hakkeien Park in Omori.”<sup>21</sup> Despite their disagreement, these two statements do coincide in the film’s showing a mock battle.

Komatsu Hiroshi argues that at that time, people considered as news films not only “mock news films” but also “constructed news films,” which used stage settings or miniatures and were obviously fake.<sup>22</sup> People expected of news films a spectacular visual experience rather than objective and accurate information. Tanaka Jun’ichirō illustrates the reception of actuality films in the early 1900s Japan: “The most favored among the imported films at the time was a 300-meter-film, *Actual Situation of Firefighters’ Desperate Efforts in a Great Fire of London*. Since it was colored red all over, the entire theatre turned red when it was projected. A clanging fire bell shocked and excited the spectators. Hence, the show was a great success.”<sup>23</sup> In this case, the sensations of color and sound were more important for spectators than news value or the reality depicted in documentary films.

These instances naturally imply that Tom Gunning’s well-known discussion of “the cinema of attractions” could also apply to the Japanese context.<sup>24</sup> According to Gunning, “the cinema of attractions” is characterized as follows. In contrast to narrative cinema, “the cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle — a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself.”<sup>25</sup> As the following testimony about the war films of the Russo-Japanese War suggests, there are numerous parallels: “a scene called the actual battle situation was nothing but a mock battle performed by extras. In particular, the part where our army smashes the enemy aroused our nation’s hostility and gained rousing reception.”<sup>26</sup> Although spectators knew that it was merely a mock battle, they applauded and consumed it as an attraction.

However, rather than only explaining that the film included in *Imperial Army to Defeat Russia* was a cinema of attractions, we should focus on the fact that the cinema of attractions was included within the narrative structure of theatrical performance. Akiba Tarō said that this show was “not a so-called full-scale chain drama that connected live performance and film projection mutually.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the characteristics of early chain drama (applied cinema) were the admixture of and conflict between the cinema of attractions and the narrative structure of a stage performance.

It is notable that the films included within the category of chain drama

gradually came to have narrativity and systematic linkages with stage performance. Yoshiyama penned the following about the chain drama *Female Samurai* (“Onna samurai”) performed at the Miyakoza Theatre in 1908.

The final scene of revenge on the Arashiyama-Togetsu Bridge in Kyoto was shot on the Takahata Bridge in Tokyo in August. They shot the scene of revenge and arrest on the bridge and the dry riverbed, and projected it on stage. A live performance reopened halfway through the scene on the dry riverbed, and the show came to an end with a fight scene of revenge and arrest.<sup>28</sup>

In this *Female Samurai*, the same actors performed in the film and on stage, and the scenes in both were continuously linked. Moreover, this revenge film was later projected as a stand-alone film in the Denkikan movie theater. If chain drama was the admixture of and conflict between the cinema of attractions and the narrative structure of stage performance, it also became the scene of various negotiations in style between two types of representational systems, namely, stage and screen.

There were not only stage-centered but also screen-centered chain dramas. In *General Kusunoki* (“Kusukō”) performed in 1909, a film was projected on one half of the stage while actors performed in front of a black backdrop on the other half, with the actors’ performances lit from the side. In addition to screen-centered chain drama, there emerged in the late 1910s a mode of performance comprised of an almost full-length film with live performance only at the climax. For instance, as one critic reported, “chain drama inserted one or two scenes of live performance in a film projection,”<sup>29</sup> such as those performed at the Mikuniza Theater in 1916. In this type of show, even scenes of live performance were shot separately, and after the run, films were edited together into one long dramatic feature which was projected subsequently in movie theaters. Through processes of conflict and admixture with stage performance, some films used in chain drama came to have their own independent narrative structures.<sup>30</sup>

Gunning has described how a “true *narrativization* of the cinema” occurred in the period from 1907 to about 1913. In this period, “film clearly took the legitimate theater as its model, producing famous players in famous plays. The translation of the filmic discourse that D. W. Griffith typifies bound cinematic signifiers to the narration of stories and the creation of a

self-enclosed diegetic universe.”<sup>31</sup> The situation that Gunning called “a synthesis of attractions and narrative” had appeared in the Japanese context within the process of kinodrama’s transformation.

Chain dramas won great popularity in the 1910s; however, they were challenged by both cinematic and theatrical rivals. Because of the unpopularity of *shinpa* drama, *shinpa* actors appeared in chain dramas. In particular, the appearance of sixteen actors, including Inoue Masao, in chain drama at the Asakusa Theatre made a great impact on *shimpa* circles. This event led to a new pact among the actors. They denigrated chain dramas as “commercially driven” in this agreement and decided upon the purging of those actors from *shinpa* circles who would appear in chain drama.<sup>32</sup>

Chain drama was also criticized in cinematic circles, especially by the Pure Film Movement (Jun eigageki undō) in its “efforts to change the production and exhibition practices of the Japanese film industry during the 1910s.”<sup>33</sup> In 1917, Kaeriyama Norimasa, a founder of this movement, began his book with the following paragraph: “Theater and cinema are completely different. People might think things shot during stage performances could be called cinema. However, true cinema has characteristics completely different from a stage performance, and we should distinguish cinema from theatre.”<sup>34</sup>

The Pure Film Movement, which considered film as a purified art form, focused on an autonomous form of expression that would differ from stage performance. According to Kaeriyama, within the ideal form of cinema “that can be fully understood with the eyes,” *benshi* narrators, accompanying musical scores, and even titles are redundant. From the standpoint of “Pure Film,” chain drama is nothing more than an immature and impure form of cinema. Kaeriyama declared: “I object strongly to the so-called chain dramas. People who watch and delight in things like chain drama do not know what is true cinema. Chain drama is a serious corruption of the cinema.”<sup>35</sup> He was not the only person who had such an opinion. According to Yoshiyama, “cinema enthusiasts of the educated classes, who considered cinema heretic when it strayed from the precedents of Western cinema, drove out chain drama as a disabled and deformed cinematic offspring.”<sup>36</sup>

Admixed forms of stage and screen were criticized as a “deformed offspring” by both *shinpa* drama, which aimed for a modern theatre, and the Pure Film Movement, which sought an autonomous cinema. In spite of such

objections, however, their popularity did not decline. Rather, in striking contrast to these protests, neither *shinpa* drama nor Pure Film could challenge the success of chain drama. The terms of the newly instituted *shinpa* described above, which eliminated actors who performed in chain dramas, were most certainly withdrawn because they could not prevent actors from rushing over to join chain drama productions. *The Glory of Life* (“Sei no kagayaki”), a film directed by Kaeriyama, became popular among a small number of elite fans, but was a failure within the business. It was chain drama, rather than *shinpa* or Pure Film, that won great popularity at the time.

Against this backdrop, we can understand that the admixed forms of theater and cinema had a characteristic attraction for spectators in early twentieth-century Japan. If we allow ourselves to be blinded by the concept of a rupture between theatrical performance before the existence of cinema and post-cinematic performance, we will miss this dualistic characteristic. The spectators of kinodrama were attracted by the hybrid status of perception derived from the various forms of admixture. In the admixture of styles between stage and screen, we are presented with an opportunity to understand the process of conflict and negotiation between two types of representation that characterizes modernity. Kinodrama is not a “deformed offspring” in film history, but a unique montage of stage and screen.

The popularity of chain drama declined by 1920. Tanaka explains this decline as an effect of production limitations and legal regulation.<sup>37</sup> Since the component film of each chain drama was produced for just one theater and one company, there emerged production limitations that precluded screenwriters from enjoying an unbounded creativity. Chain dramas grew monotonous, and spectators gradually tired of them. In addition, “Rules for Cinema Regulation” were promulgated by the Metropolitan Police Department in 1917. Architectural codes within these rules meant that small theatres and movie houses were banned from showing chain drama, since chain drama relied upon the use of flammable film within the small theater’s wooden architecture.<sup>38</sup> An admixed form of stage and screen was later revived as an avant-garde form by modernists who praised the montage of different media, but that is another story.<sup>39</sup>

### III. Kineorama

The poetry of Miyazawa Kenji remains surrounded by unsolved mysteries and interpretations. In his unfinished manuscripts, there are fragments entitled *Sketches of Winter* (“Fuyu no suketchi”).<sup>40</sup> There, Kenji

moves back and forth between describing a movie theater and its screen. Yet, within this description, he suddenly inserts the following lines.

Just then  
In preparation for kineorama  
A violet phosphorescence flies across the stage<sup>41</sup>

In this fragment, “kineorama” is represented as a “violet phosphorescence,” which interrupts the narrator’s devotion to the screen.<sup>42</sup> In his encyclopedic work, *Origins of Things Meiji* (“Meiji jibutsu kigen”), Ishii Kendō writes about kineorama: “The thing that moves cutouts backward and forward, supports them with various kinds of lights and sound effects, and makes spectators feel as if it were real is called kineorama.”<sup>43</sup> A more detailed description from 1911 appears in *Collections of Modern Entertainments* (“Gendai goraku zenshu”).

Dioramas and panoramas are created to show scenes in a lifelike way though their very structure and the use of lights, but kineorama shows us even a rainy or sunny sky, hot or cold weather, or the transition from an evening scene to a night view thanks to the use of electric lighting. . . . Recent kineorama, which is offered with moving pictures, uses a film projector instead of electric lights.<sup>44</sup>

As this description makes apparent, kineorama used film projectors, in contrast to dioramas where electric light effects were used to create a realistic illusion. Kineorama was an admixed form of projection and diorama.<sup>45</sup> Novelist Inagaki Taruho, who was fascinated by kineorama as a child, repeatedly mentions the following in his essays:<sup>46</sup>

In our youth we enjoyed kineorama as an entertainment in the movie theaters. . . . The front of a stage had an ordinary white curtain (not a solid screen), and when the movie program ended, this curtain would be rolled up, and a miniature landscape behind it appeared.<sup>47</sup>

From Taruho’s description, we can understand what is meant by Kenji’s phrase, “preparation for kineorama,” that appears suddenly in *Sketches of Winter*. During the movie, Kenji could see through a gap in the curtains the preparations for the kineorama set to be shown after the projection, just as a “violet phosphorescence” traversed the stage.

Records of the Provincial Exposition held in Nagoya in 1910 tell us that a *Naval Battle at Port Arthur Pavilion* (Ryojun kaisen kan) was built for the Exposition and attracted more than 360,000 spectators.<sup>48</sup> Taruho wrote that, as a child, he longed to see the kineorama performance held there. According to Taruho’s essay, kineoramas depicting views of the naval battles in the Russo-Japanese War appeared around 1910, and, under their influence, kineorama suddenly became popular in movie houses nationwide.

Another novelist, Edogawa Rampo, was deeply fascinated as a boy with the *Naval Battle at Port Arthur Pavilion*.<sup>49</sup> He wrote about it later with some nostalgia.

After the rise of the curtain, an ocean appears on the surface of the stage. A shrill whistle is blown, the *benshi* gives a general explanation, and after that, the fleet of General Togo bravely plows through the waves from one side of the stage. The Rising-Sun waving in the wind, a dense cloud of black smoke; on the panorama-style stage, a toy battleship becomes real . . . After that, it turns into the scene of night battles. The moon appears. Using the effects of what’s called kineorama, clouds pass by the surface of the moon. Ships are lit with sidelights and a lighthouse twinkles. It reflects off the water, sparkling on waves. Red, straight-line sparks appear every time firearms are shot. Beautiful fire at sea!<sup>50</sup>

It is notable that even the first kineorama showed the naval battle of the Russo-Japanese War as had done kinodrama.<sup>51</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Film Works* (“Nippon eiga sakuhin taikan”) quotes the following newspaper article about “Kineorama of Russo-Japanese War” performed in the Kabukiza theater.

Differing from usual moving pictures, [kineorama] shows wind, rain, thunder, and so on as if you were there. Especially powerful are the effects for the scenes of naval battles. . . . [Kineorama] represents clearly scenes that could not otherwise be represented through ordinary panorama or cinema, scenes of natural phenomena such as wind, rain, lightning, a passing cloud, and the transition from day to night, or battlefield scenes. We feel as if we are there, watching. The scene of ‘The Naval Battle in the Sea of Japan’

is the best in the show.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, an advertisement for kineorama printed in the newspaper *Yomiuri shinbun* termed kineorama “a great device which uses electricity and the effects of machinery and lights to represent natural phenomena—such as wind, rain, snow, thunder or sunrise, moving trains and steamships, artillery battles with batteries and battleships, up to the explosion of torpedoes and the sinking of enemy ships.”<sup>53</sup> Around the same time, cinematec, employing electric lights and kinetic miniatures, was also used to perform the Naval Battle at Port Arthur in Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, and Yokohama.<sup>54</sup>

As mentioned previously, the Russo-Japanese War, especially the naval battles for Port Arthur, resulted in kinodrama precisely because cinema could represent the characteristics of modern warfare that could not be completely expressed in theatrical performance. But, it was also because, conversely, war films could not adequately represent the spectacle of battle. Actual or mock war films in those days were not capable of convincingly real portrayals of “wind, rain, snow, thunder or sunrise.” In addition, they could not sufficiently represent the “red straight-line sparks” or “beautiful fire at sea” that so affected Rampo. Hence, moving dioramas and lighting effects were called up in order to reinforce the film projection’s realities and attractions by adding actual movements and special effects in front of spectators. Thus, is it adequate to consider kineorama as nothing more than an epiphenomenon to cinema’s infancy?

Cinema has often been understood as a development of diorama-based light illusions. Wolfgang Schivelbusch argues that panorama, diorama, magic lantern, and finally, cinema were “completely new media” born in the nineteenth century “in which light was the most important element in the creation of illusion.”<sup>55</sup> He also points out that “the main difference between them and the theater was that they created a pictorial instead of a spatial illusion. They were an extension of painting rather than the stage.”<sup>56</sup> From his perspective, the diorama as a pictorial light illusion is connected with cinema developmentally.

Furthermore, Crary discusses diorama as evidence of the modernity of perception. “Unlike the static panorama painting that first appeared in the 1790s, the diorama is based on the incorporation of an *immobile* observer into a mechanical apparatus and a subjection to a predesigned temporal unfolding of optical experience.”<sup>57</sup> According to Crary, this characteristic of

diorama is parallel to the modernization of vision or “the ‘uprooting’ of vision from the more inflexible representational system of the camera obscura.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, the diorama is a symptom of modern vision that leads to the emergence of cinema.

These opinions suggest that kineorama enabled a smooth transition from diorama to cinema and the process of becoming “phantasmagoric.” Contrary to these notions, it should be noted that kineorama’s characteristics refused such a smooth continuity. The attractions of kineorama were derived from the curious double vision of projection that overlapped with the miniature devices.

Ishikawa Takuboku wrote the following in his diary on 21 August 1908: “I saw what they call kineorama. In the scene of the great waterfall at Niagara, water rushes swiftly carrying cool wind. Thunderstorms finish, and it turns into a sunny evening with a mauve cloud covering the waterfall. The moon rises, a tower on the riverside lights up every window. It is almost childish, and yet, I felt a deep pleasure.”<sup>59</sup> In addition to Takuboku, Rampo described kineorama affectionately. “It is merely a spectacle, but how deeply it charmed us.”<sup>60</sup> Both remarks coincide in the opinion that the kineorama is attractive albeit childish. What was the nature of these attractions? In order to answer this question, we should examine the descriptions within Taruho’s novel *Astro-philia-syndrome* (*Tentai shikō shō*) in detail.

With its artificial scenery that came into sight more strangely and clearly than true nature, with its electric lights that gave us evening or a lightning storm, is there any need to specify how attractive the kineorama was? In fact, rather than the white-screen illusion that struggled against reality, we visited repeatedly to see “the marvelous view of Malta” or “the Alps” made by tinplates and paint that would appear from behind the wind-up screen. Soon, we began talking about making a small tabletop kineorama from a cardboard box.<sup>61</sup>

In the above descriptions, the narrator was attracted by “the artificial scenery that came into sight strangely and more clearly than true nature.” He was first interested in the artificial illusion of kineorama. However, it should be emphasized that he spoke about his addiction for kineorama rather than “the white-screen illusion that struggles against the reality.” For this reason, he repeatedly visited to see not the cinematic illusion but

kineorama, the admixture of projected illusion and miniatures “made by tinplates and paint.”

In other words, Taruho’s fondness for kineorama derived from not only the artificial illusion but also the substantial miniatures involved. We can confirm this by the fact that Taruho tried to make a “tabletop kineorama” in imitation of the *Naval Battle at Port Arthur*. It is remarkable that even Rampo confessed that he had made his “tabletop kineorama.” On the next day, after seeing *The Naval Battle at Port Arthur Pavilion*, Rampo made the miniature in his room with his friend: “We put a handle on a toy battleship, and controlled it by hands from under waves. The sidelight was an incense stick, smoke was made by a cigarette, the sound of gunfire was toy pistol, moon was a flashlight, and fire on a ship was cotton soaked with alcohol.”<sup>62</sup>

From Taruho’s and Rampo’s “kineorama on the table,” we understand that the characteristics of kineorama are not to be found in the processes of increasing illusion, but in the admixture of illusion and materiality, projection and miniature devices. Such a characteristic will be missed from a standpoint that simply regards before-cinema and after-cinema as two steps in a seamless narrative of ever-increasing illusion. The dualistic status of perception derived from the double vision of projecting upon miniatures strongly appealed to the spectators of early twentieth-century Japan. Kineorama is not an immature or illegitimate form of cinema in the process of the modernization of vision, but rather a unique montage of projection and kinetic devices.<sup>63</sup>

#### IV. Infancy of Cinema

In this article, I have examined kinodrama and kineorama, two forms that combined the attractions of cinema, theater, and diorama and that were produced by the encounter between cinema and the Russo-Japanese War. We can draw the following conclusions.

First, kinodrama became the stage on which the cinema of attractions conflicted and coexisted with the narrative structure of theatrical drama. Later, films included on stage came to have their own narrative continuity, and even screen-centered performances appeared. This transition was a process of negotiation between early cinema and traditional theater, attractions and narrativity. This admixed form was criticized by both *shinpa* drama and the Pure Film Movement; however, it won great popularity and the support of its many spectators. The characteristic attractions of kinodrama were derived from various forms of montage of screen and stage.

On the other hand, kineorama developed as an admixture of diorama and projection produced in order to reinforce the shortcomings of early documentary film with spectacular effects. Furthermore, it became the stage on which the illusion born from projection and the materiality of kinetic miniatures overlapped and produced a unique attraction. Rampo and Taruho’s addiction to kineorama showed a dual attraction to a montage of projection’s illusion and the diorama’s materiality.

It should be noted that the unique quality of kinodrama and kineorama lies in the hybridity created by the complicated admixture and continual conflict between stage and screen, illusion and substance, and performance and projection. By understanding the before and after of cinema through a framework that sees either rupture or continuity in perception, we miss what were the hybrid attractions of kinodrama and kineorama. In order to contribute to the diverse and complicated understanding of “cinema and modernity,” we have to begin a more detailed examination of these types of admixed forms that have appeared repeatedly but which are hidden from film history. Comprehensive research on kinodrama and kineorama would provide a rich opportunity to reconsider our current media environment and reconstruct an alternative history of its creation at a time when various new attempts at montage among stage, screen, and devices are emerging.<sup>64</sup>

Mizukoshi Shin emphasizes the importance of media’s infancy in the research of media history.<sup>65</sup> This is because media carry wide-ranging possibilities in their infancy that preexist their institutionalization in media histories. To recall the forgotten infancy of media and situate it in history serves as a means to reconsider recent media forms; diversify the connections among society, media, and ourselves; and rearrange their existing relations. Kinodrama and kineorama show us such possibilities from the infancy of cinema.

Among the more literary poetry of Miyazawa Kenji, there is a poem titled *Military Chain Drama* (*Gunjin rensa geki*). The poem is said to be a developed form of *Sketches of Winter*.

Kineorama, in the midst of freezing-sky-light, threw away his cigarette,  
Above the sleeve of a first class private, dawn sky in the background  
where clouds fly across one after another.  
At that moment, the laundryman at the corner sheds  
his tears thoroughly,

His tears dry up little by little, and finally his squinting eyes staring ahead, he straightens up the collar of his overcoat.<sup>66</sup>

We might be surprised that this poem begins with the word “Kineorama” despite its title of “Military Chain Drama.” Did Kenji mistakenly write kineorama when he actually meant chain drama? If we examine the history of chain drama, we can find records for *The Captain’s Wife* (“Senchō no tsuma”), a chain drama performed in the Kumamoto-Taishoza theatre that included kineorama on stage as a special feature. “Using kineorama, it showed the scene where a Japanese trading vessel was attacked and sunk by a German submarine. The scene got a good reputation, and on each of the five days of performance, the chain drama played to a full house.”<sup>67</sup>

*The Military Chain Drama* written by Kenji might be another of those rare instances when kineorama was included within kinodrama. In this case, it was an admixture of cinema, theater, and diorama. We could guess that the “first class private” who “threw away his cigarette” performed on stage or screen, and that the “freezing-sky-light” and “dawn sky in the background” where “clouds fly across one after another” were shown by kineorama. This mysteriously fragmented poem and its fable-like story refuses to be situated simply into the unity or rupture of a “before” or “after” cinema. It is evidence of the unique montage of stage and screen, the modernity of the state of hybrid admixtures, and of the latent possibilities conceived in the infancy of cinema.

#### Notes

After the publication of the Japanese version of this article in *Eizōgaku* 80, Iwamoto Kenji pointed out the ambiguity of my terminology in *Image Arts and Sciences* 145. Therefore, in this English version, I have added explanations to clarify my use of the terms “kinodrama” and “kineorama.” I would like to thank Iwamoto for his valuable comments. I am also grateful to Jonathan M. Hall for his support in improving my translation, and for his kind and valuable advice.

In this article, Japanese names are given family name first. In the case of novelists or artists, their names are often abbreviated to their writerly or artistic “first” names (e.g. Miyazawa Kenji as Kenji, Tokugawa Musei as Musei).

1. In Japan, the first panorama was built in 1890; panoramas reached the peak of their popularity in the period between the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and the opening of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. They lost

their appeal gradually across the 1910s. Photo-magazines became popular at the time of the Sino-Japanese War because of the introduction of half-tone technology. By the Russo-Japanese War, major newspapers had also come to use photography. While oil painting, panorama painting, and the photography of war scenes transformed the visual experience of reality, traditional *nishikie* prints of the war were also popular until the 1900s.

2. According to Iwamoto, kinodramatic performances were sometimes called “jitsubutsu ōyō,” “katsudōshashin ōyō rensa,” and so on, therefore the terms were not necessarily fixed from Meiji to Taishō periods. See Iwamoto Kenji, “Rensageki kara kinodorama e” [From Chain Drama to Kinodrama], *Sairento kara tōki e* [From Silent to Talkie] (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2007), 61-81. See also Iwamoto Keiji, “From Rensageki to Kinodorama,” tr. Lippit Yukio Mizuta, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 5 (1998): 1-13.
3. In this article, I translate Japanese historical terms (such as “rensageki”) into English (such as “chain drama”) in consideration for this article’s English readers.
4. Tanaka Jun’ichirō, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi 1* [History of Japanese Film Development 1] (Tokyo: Chuōkōron, 1975). Akiba Tarō, *Meiji no engeki* [Theatre in Meiji] (Tokyo: Nakanishi Shōbō, 1937), 127.
5. Iwamoto, “Rensageki,” 81. Iwamoto distinguishes between “chain drama” and “kinodrama.” The former was an admixture of the silent era in which stage and screen were performed one after another. The latter was an avant-garde performance attempted by Kinugasa Teinosuke after the arrival of the talkie era, in which theatrical performance and film projection coexisted on stage.
6. Yokota Hiroshi, “Yamazaki Chōnosuke no rensageki” [Yamazaki Chōnosuke’s Rensageki: Banzuke (programs) in Ikeda Bunko archives], *Engekigaku ronshū* 44 (2006): 161-179. See also Yokota Hiroshi, “Rensageki no kōgyō to sono torishimari” [Rensageki in Tokyo, Its Production and Censorship], *Philokalia* 25 (2008): 31-66.
7. Ueda Manabu, “Kankyaku no tomadoi: Eiga sōsōki ni okeru shinematekku no kōgyō wo megutte” [The Embarrassment of the Spectator: the Exhibition of Cinematec in the Early Film Era], *Art Research* 7 (2007): 129-139. Tamura Chiho has emphasized the important role of chain drama in the prehistory of film actresses in the Japanese context. Tamura Chiho, “Katsudōshashin no joyū towa dare ka: ‘Jōen’ to ‘Jōei’ no aida, aruiwa eigajoyū zenshi” [Between Presentation and Representation: ‘Katsudo-actresses’ in Early Japanese Cinema, or the Prehistory of Film Actresses], *Journal of Mass Communication Studies* 74 (2009): 115-132.
8. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproduction: Second Version” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 105.
9. *Ibid.*, 108.
10. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 4.
11. *Ibid.*, 5.
12. Of course, Crary carefully examines the complexity of the history of perception after the 1820s in later work. Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, (Cambridge, MA:

- MIT Press, 2001).
13. In March 1923, Sergei Eisenstein directed *Enough Simplicity for Every Wise Man* at the Moscow Proletkult theatre and included film projection on stage. Eisenstein wrote a well-known essay titled "The Montage of Attractions" on this stage/screen performance. Today, we usually consider it in the context of film history; however, it is important to remember that Eisenstein first used this term for a theatrical montage that included screen and stage. Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage of Attractions," in *Writings, 1922-34*, ed. and tr. Richard Taylor (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 33-38.
  14. Inoue Masao, *Bakesokoneta tannuki* [Raccoon Dog that Failed to Transform], (Tokyo: Ubunsha, 1947), 162.
  15. Benjamin, "Reproduction," 112.
  16. Ueda Manabu points out that *Imperial Army to Defeat Russia* might have begun from 2 March 1904. See Ueda, "Kankyaku," 138.
  17. Yomota Inuhiko suggests that Ii Yōhō already had attempted to use film projection experimentally in his stage performance in 1897. Yomota Inuhiko, "Nihon eiga hyakunen shi" [One Hundred Years of Japanese Film] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2000), 44.
  18. *Miyako shinbun*, 8 March 1904.
  19. *Miyako shinbun*, 10 April 1904.
  20. Yoshiyama Kyokkō, "Nihon eigakai jibutsu kigen" [Origins of Things in Japanese Cinema], in *Katsudōshashin no sōsōki 29* [The Beginning of Japanese Cinema 29], ed. Makino Mamoru (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2006), 33.
  21. Inoue, *Bakesokoneta*, 88. *Teireko* is a term used in kabuki used to indicate when two different stories are included within a single script. The idea of showing stage performance together with film scenes might have come from the kabuki tradition.
  22. Komatsu Hiroshi, *Kigen no eiga* [Cinema of Origins] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1991), 307.
  23. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga*, 109.
  24. Some may object to the direct application of the notion of "attraction" to the Japanese context. Of course, traditional Japanese shows called *misemono* or traditional theatre such as kabuki are completely different from the notions of "attraction" or "spectacle" used by Eisenstein or Gunning. However, we can stress their common features such as their "exhibitionism" or their interest in soliciting "the reaction of the audience." We should recall that Eisenstein found "attraction" a quality in kabuki. Sergei Eisenstein, "An Unexpected Juncture," in *Writings, 1922-34*, ed. and tr. Richard Taylor (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 117. Eisenstein wrote later, "This characterization of the Kabuki theatre was to prove prophetic. It was this method that lay at the basis of the montage for *The General Line*." He found the "attraction" in kabuki useful in constructing his theory and practice of montage. Sergei Eisenstein, "The Fourth Dimension in Cinema," in *Writings, 1922-34*, ed. and tr. Richard Taylor (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 181.
  25. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 58.
  26. Yoshiyama Kyokkō, "Nihon eigashi nenpyō" [A Chronology Table of

- Japanese Film History], in *Katsudōshashin no sōsōki 29* [The Beginning of Japanese Cinema 29], ed. Makino Mamoru (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2006), 95.
27. Akiba, *Meiji*, 121.
  28. Yoshiyama, "Nihon eigakai," 34.
  29. *Katsudō no sekai* 1.12 (1916): 150.
  30. In his discussion of stage-centered and screen-centered dramas, Yokota suggests the difference between two is derived from the places they were performed, either movie houses or theaters. Yokota, "Rensageki," 38-39.
  31. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions," 60.
  32. Hijikata Masami, "Inoue Masao no rensageki jidai" [Inoue Masao in the Age of Chain-drama], *Higekikigeki* 357 (1980): 51-52.
  33. Joanne Bernardi, *Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 13.
  34. Kaeriyama Norimasa, "Katsudōshashingeki no sōsaku to satsueihō" [Creation and Shooting of Photoplay], in *Katsudōshashin no sōsōki 25* [The Beginning of Japanese Cinema 25], ed. Makino Mamoru (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2006), 1.
  35. Kaeriyama Norimasa, "Katsudōshashingeki kyakushokujō no kenkyū 1" [Research on Dramatization of Photoplays (No.1)], in *Fukkokuban Kinema record* 1.3 (27) [Reprint of Kinema record 1.3 (27)], ed. Makino Mamoru (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1999), 3.
  36. Yoshiyama, "Nihon eigakai," 40.
  37. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga*, 245-246. See also Hase Masato, "Ken'etsu no tanjō: Taishō no keisatsu to katsudō shashin" [The Birth of Censorship: Policing and Motion Pictures in the Taishō Era], *Eizōgaku* 53 (1994): 128-131.
  38. In contrast to Tanaka's explanation, Yokota Hiroshi points out that these regulations were never put into effect, and that chain dramas continued to be performed in the Mikuniza Theater. He notes that chain drama could not be realized without stage performance in 1913; however, in 1917, a program made up only of films could stay in business. Therefore, "we could think that film history in Tokyo entered a new phase, for this reason, chain drama had declined." Yokota, "Rensageki," 64.
  39. Later, chain drama was popularized in Okinawa and Korea, where it gained wide appeal from the late 1910s through the early 1930s. See Sera Toshikazu, "Eiga Gosamaruseichuroku to Okinawa no rensageki" [The film Gosamaru Seichu Roku and rensa-geki of Okinawa], *Engekigakuronshū* 46 (2008): 63-76. Dong Hoon Kim, "Segregated cinemas, intertwined histories: the ethnically segregated film cultures in 1920s Korea under Japanese colonial rule," *Journal of Japanese & Korean Cinema* 1.1 (2009): 7-25.
  40. Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933) was a poet and a writer of children's stories, as well as a Buddhist.
  41. Miyazawa Kenji, "Fuyu no suketchi" [Sketches of Winter], in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 3 [The Complete Writings of Miyazawa Kenji, Volume 3] (Tokyo: Chikumashobō, 1996), 304.
  42. In *Shows of London*, Richard Daniel Altick wrote the following about kineorama: "In July 1841, Charles Marshall's Kineorama at 121 Pall Mall, a combination panorama and diorama showing views of Turkey, Syria, and Egypt, caught fire during a matinee." Richard Daniel Altick, *The Shows of London*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), 168. However, there were

- some differences between kineorama in London and that in Japan.
43. Ishi Kendō, *Zōtei Meiji jibutsu kigen* [Origins of Things Meiji (Revised Edition)] (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō, 1926), 627.
  44. *Gendai goraku zenshū* [Collections of Modern Entertainments], ed. Editorial Department of Seikōkan (Tokyo Seikōkan, 1911), 395.
  45. In early versions of kineorama, the shows might have been almost the same as in dioramas. Iwamoto points out that the difference between the two began when "kineorama could be more kinetic" in addition to its use of a movie projector. See Iwamoto Kenji, *Gentō no seiki: Eiga zen'ya no shikaku bunka shi* [The Centuries of the Magic Lantern: A History of Visual Culture on the Eve of Film] (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2002), 195.
  46. Inagaki Taruho (1900-1977) was a futurist and an author of avant-garde literature.
  47. Inagaki Taruho, "Ryojun kaisen kan to Edogawa Rampo" [The Naval Battle of Port Arthur Pavilion and Edogawa Rampo], in *Inagaki taruho zenshū 11* [The Complete Writings of Inagaki Taruho Volume 11], ed. Hagiwara Yukiko (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2001), 247.
  48. The City of Osaka, *Kansai fuken rengō kyōshinkai chōsa hōkoku 10* [Research and Report of the Exhibition Held by United Prefectures in Kansai Volume 10] (Osaka: The City of Osaka, 1910): 57.
  49. Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965) was a critic and author of mystery and detective stories.
  50. Edogawa Rampo, "Ryojun kaisen kan" [The Naval Battle of Port Arthur Pavilion], in *Edogawa Rampo zuihitsu sen* [Collected Essays of Edogawa Rampo], ed. Kida Jun'ichiro (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994), 24-25.
  51. On 28 April 1900, *Miyako shinbun* reported a "Great Moving Picture of the Anglo-Boer War and the Spanish-American War (Panorama Device)." The newspaper reported that it "shows moving pictures with a panorama device or an artistic device of new design." Tanaka explains this article as follows: "This 'panorama device' was a device for the special effects of projection, an attempt to decorate a monotonous screen and theater with a landscape or stage setting containing devices on both sides of the screen." See Tanaka Jun'ichirō, *Nihon eiga shi* [History of Japanese Cinema] (Tokyo: Saitō Shoten, 1948), 108.
  52. Kinema Junpōsha, *Nihon eiga sakuhin taikan* [Encyclopedia of Japanese Film Works] (Tokyo: Kinema junpōsha, 1960), 39.
  53. *Yomiuri shinbun*, 22 June 1905. However, reviews of this kineorama in the Kabukiza Theater differed between two newspapers, the *Yomiuri* and the *Yorozu*. On 25 June, *Yomiuri shinbun* affirmatively reported "it applied light by using electric and mechanical devices, and made the spectators feel they were at the very spot." On the other hand, *Yorozu Chōhō* offered a more damning review on 27 June: "it showed silly things that were beyond reason" with "nothing worth affirmation." This criticism might not be an exaggeration. The manager of Yoshizawa Company testified that they had made a two-meter model of the Japanese battleship *Mikasa* but the *Mikasa* model was sunk instead of the enemy ship, and the show was a confusing one even in its opening performance. See Tanaka Jun'ichirō, *Nihon kyōiku eiga hattatsu shi* [History of Japanese Educational Film Development] (Tokyo: Kagyūsha, 1979), 20.
  54. Ueda, "Kankyaku", 130.

55. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, tr. Angela Davis (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 213.
56. *Ibid.*, 213.
57. Crary, *Observer*, 112-113.
58. *Ibid.*, 113.
59. Ishikawa Takuboku, *Ishikawa Takuboku nikki 2* [Diaries of Ishikawa Takuboku, Volume 2] (Tokyo: Sekai Hyōronsha, 1948), 274.
60. Edogawa, "Ryojun," 25.
61. Inagaki Taruho, *Tentai shikōshō* [Astoro-philia-syndrome] (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō, 1928), 4.
62. Edogawa, "Ryojun," 25.
63. Earlier research has left vague the question of the longevity of the kineorama. However, there is valuable testimony testifying to its decline. Tokugawa Musei, one of the famous *benshi*, wrote in his autobiography about a "lightgraph" performed in 1914 under the title *Great Naval Battle at Jiaozhou Bay*. Musei's testimony clearly indicates that a stage similar to kineorama existed at least in 1914. However, the lightgraph was a commercial failure, unlike kineorama in the 1900s. Musei regarded lightgraph as "a fake." His recollection is somewhat cynical because he was completely familiar with all parts of the backstage. This is in clear contrast to the nostalgic reminiscences of kineorama by novelists. Tokugawa Musei, *Musei jiden Meiji Taishō hen* [Autobiography of Musei, From Meiji to Taishō] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1978), 312-316.
64. In Gunning's well-known phrase, combined forms like kinodrama and kineorama do not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather go underground, as certain avant-garde practices like modernists' kinodrama in the 1930s and as an accompaniment of narrative films like *benshi*'s performance with projection. Moreover, we find that even our recent lives are lived on what is like a "stage with screens."
65. Mizukoshi Shin, "Jōhōka to media no kanoutekiyōtai no yukue" [Destination of Informatization and Latent Possibilities of Media], in *Media to jōhōka no shakaigaku* [Sociology of Media and Informatization], ed. Inoue Shun [et al.] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 177-196.
66. Miyazawa Kenji, "Gunji rensageki" [Military Chain Drama], in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 4* [The Complete Writings of Miyazawa Kenji, Volume 4] (Tokyo: Chikumashobō, 1996), 119.
67. Shibata Katsu, *Jitsuen to eiga: Rensageki no kiroku* [Live Performance and Cinema: A Record of Chain Drama] (Tokyo: Shibata Katsu, 1982), 15.