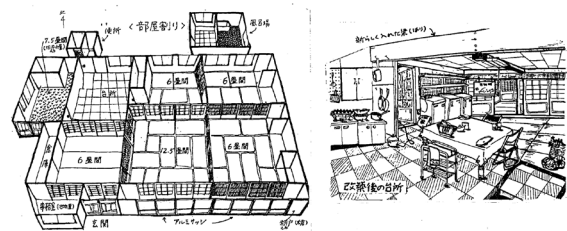




- T This is something you observed through your work in the different villages and communities?
- O Yes, far too many times. It's like a cycle of nature. Unnatural but they do disappear. My role as a documentary filmmaker is to make a permanent record of these disappearing communities. I feel it's something I have to do. People do everything they can to live. Even when it's difficult, they've got to live. That's why no one can be disinterested in death. Furthermore, when there are meaningless deaths one after another—the anger also runs deep. Regret. Resentment. Understanding “death” means the same as understanding “life.” “That’s why we have to live!” We want our camera to evidence this.
- T How do you manage the expenses?
- O It isn't easy. We earn some money renting our films. Some supporters make loans to us, others donate money. Frankly, it's quite a tough life over here.



- T Has your perception of the working conditions in rural areas changed since you started doing this kind of films focusing on agriculture and village time as opposed to the Sanrizuka series that focused more on the protesters voice and the imposed annexation of the land that has now turned into Narita Airport?
- O I want everyone to know how bold farmers are. It can be a scary business sometimes. Like making films. So I guess I'm the farming type.



- T ... and that is something the villagers has passed on to you, isn't it?
- O One thing I always like to say is: Other filmmakers may envy our methodology, the way we make our films. Some may even be jealous of us. Others may scoff at the way we work, but we're filming what is important to us, and we're doing it our way. I doubt we'll end up in Nirvana, on a lotus, when we eventually pass on. One thing I drill into the crew is; if we follow my methodology, and don't end up in hell, we've failed. We're fated to go to hell to compensate for our methodology. I'm a man of the moment. I see heaven now, while I'm alive. There's no way we'll go to heaven after this.
- T Who, then, would you then like to watch your films?
- O First of all, my crew, and the people who have financed our work. Those sympathetic to our ideals, the ones who've given us support for years.



- T Going back to disappearing communities. You yourself died in 1992, but with the help of Chinese director Peng Xiaolian and some members of Ogawa Pro they managed to complete 'Red Persimmons' in 2001!
- O ... yes. As a part of my Magino Story series filming for what became Red Persimmons first began back in 1984 and was completed after my death by the other members in June 2001!
- T Thank you!

Ogawa Shinsuke quotes from following sources:
 - Ogawa Pro_Red.Persimmons.2001.DVDRip.XviD-MNAUCE(2001).avi
 - A Visit to Ogawa Productions, Jun'ichiro Oshige, Japan 1981
 - Barbara Hammer. Devotion - A film about Ogawa Productions (2000)
 - The Theater of a Thousand Years, Abé Mark Nornes.
 - Markus Nornes (2007) Forest of Pressure - Ogawa Shinsuke and Postwar Japanese Documentary, The University of Minnesota Press

TERRASSEN 7. + 8. DECEMBER 2019
 OGAWA PRODUCTIONS
 CINEMATEKET — BIO BENJAMIN

SATURDAY 7.12

- 16:45 Sanrizuka: Heta Buraku (1971, 150 min)
- 20:00 Nippon-koku Furuyashiki-mura (1982, 210 min)

SUNDAY 8.12

- 16:45 A Visit to Ogawa Productions (dir. Oshige Jun'ichiro, 1981, 61 min.)
- 19:00 Sennen Kizami No Hidokei – Magino-Mura Monogatari / The Sundial Carved with a Thousand Years of Notches – The Magino Village Story – (1987, 222 min)



EXTRA

Devotion: A Film About Ogawa Productions (dir. Barbara Hammer, Japan, 2000, 82 min.)

- Part 1: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7ot9t1>
- Part 2: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7ot9tt>

Terrassen is a roving cinema in Copenhagen that engages with the social life of film. All screenings are free and open to everyone. For information on past and future screenings visit terrassen.bio

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STATENS KUNSTFOND JAPANFOUNDATION



LET'S MOVE IN WHEN THERE IS NO DRAMA.
 LET'S PURSUE THEM IN CLOSE-UP

Sometimes I wonder if this Ogawa Shinsuke really existed. – Shiraishi Yoko, Ogawa's wife, 1999



Interview with Ogawa Shinsuke (1935 –1992)
 By Terrassen. Copenhagen, 2019.

TERRASSEN: You must be Director Ogawa!
 OGAWA SHINSUKE: Pleased to meet you!

- T When we initiated OUR film group and parasite cinema, you and your Pro collective were one of our absolute 'must shows', you know that?
- O Thank you, I'm honoured.
- T Ogawa Pro is such an incredible size. How would you describe it?
- O Ogawa Pro was a collective of around 125 people, and when it folded there were only three or four left. Most of these people did not announce they were leaving. One night you would go to sleep next to someone, and

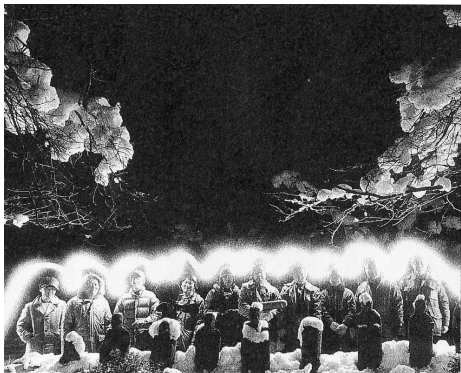
in the morning you'd wake up and they were no longer there. They would just disappear without saying, "I quit," let alone "Sayonara." It is like certain love relationships; the only way out is to run away. Some stayed only a few days or weeks before disappearing. Others stayed for decades. It was a crazy, unusual group. Impossible to describe.



- O OK... We're making a movie here!
- T Oh, we can see you are filming dried persimmons?
- O Yes, this village is famous for that.
- T What's he doing (points to another member of Ogawa Pro)?
- O ... we're shooting the various angles of sunlight and wind on the fruit. Time lapse. In this case 8 hours of shooting gives 30 seconds of film.



- T Right.
- O That will show very clearly how the sun and clouds change during the day:
- T Oh, we see. A bit like what Griffith said at the end of the forties, just before he died. "What's missing from movies nowadays is the beauty of the moving wind in the trees". The founding father of the blockbuster spectacle saw the medium of cinema as related to sensing a physical reality...



- O Griffith?...
- T Is this how you approach your work always?
- O In moments of drama, the coolness of the camera has an intensely focused eye that spreads and stretches across space. One takes in that drama, embracing it and creating it anew as an independent space. However, what do you do when there is no such drama? In such a time, if there is no effort on our part to do something about it, that coolness will create coldness and boredom. Let's move in when there is no drama. Let's pursue them in close-up.



- T How does this materialize?
- O I still feel it's important to record village life. I have often been asked why I choose this theme after shooting my Sanrizuka series. At first, embarrassingly, I couldn't answer!
- T Why do you think that is?
- O The real reason came up recently. I wanted to record a village like Furuyashiki. Japan still has rural villages like this, I thought we should make a record of them. But I only realized that while filming the village...



- T ...and then you discovered the aspect about the rice there?
- O As I learned about rice I began to like the village.

- T You live here on location? You've lived and filmed here for 8 years?
- O Yes, I felt I needed to. My crew, also. That's why we moved here. We really knew nothing about growing rice. Our first efforts were to learn what we could. All films require some sort of pre-production, for this film, that alone took four years. Then it was a process of trial and error. In the first four years, I insisted that the crew disregard what has been written on the subject. I said to just try, feel, touch the rice. Never be embarrassed because of ignorance! That was my method. It took a long time.



- T But you didn't only just film the rice, did you?
- O At least two thirds is about the villagers, there are almost too many good stories to choose from. While we are filming the villagers we do our best to get to know them. Letting them know what we're doing is 80% of our job. and that really takes a lot of work.



- O What was the villagers' reaction when they first met the Ogawa Pro people?
- T The kids called me 'Uncle Movie'!
- T ... so 8 years went by fast?
- O Yes, this year we're concentrating on filming, so we're not farming. It's not just weather that affects the crop. Geographical conditions, topography, water conditions, proximity of trees. So we noted

hours of sunlight, wind, frost, water temperature, ambient temperature, everything that influences the crop. Every single day we recorded these factors and it shows the delicacy of the environment. To us, those observations are very important, they have allowed us to grasp "rice language." Because of the stress we put on recording this data, those four years passed very quickly.

- T Making films and growing rice seems like a perfect harmony?
- O Yes, that's our ideal. but as we learn more we do realize that the two are by no means perfectly harmonious. For example, when filming this field we worked alongside the owner here. We all learnt much, even he did. as I said before, the crop is of the essence. He had much to teach us about rice. For farming and filming were in some harmony.



- T ...and you would even adapt the local dialect of the village?
- O Yes, I started doing that, I noticed. Like many, this village has only 5 or 6 houses. No bus service in winter and fewer in summer. Prices are 20% higher than elsewhere. I'd say that the village has been left behind.
- T Like an eerie wind of the valley?
- O There are thousands of villages like this in the Northern districts. And one day, just like a candle waning, another village disappears. I know of many that are now ghost towns.



shoes that had been handed down to them from the time. They helped with the hairdo and even hid objects in her sash that never made it on screen. In the Itsutsudomoe Shrine scene, the document that the judge (a professional actor) shows to the rebel leader (a Magino villager) proving his guilt was actually signed by the original rebel leader and used in his trial. Many years later, Kimura Michio wrote about the importance of the Itsutsudomoe Shrine scene for the people of Magino:

The film shoot was amazing. What exactly was amazing is difficult to express. But any rate, within the village, it had been some 240 years — since that insurrection itself (Enkyo Era 4) — since the people of the village came together as one like that, since they felt the possibility of unity, the capability of united ac- tion, or the assembly of great power. We embraced these feelings to the degree that everyone felt like they had participated in a rising. The villager actors that played the five leaders naturally felt that way, as did the ones with bit parts. But those whose faces did not appear on screen — the housewives’ association, which provided the food, the young wives’ association, the volunteer firemen who directed traffic, the men who cut and hauled the firewood used for camp-fires, the people who made torches — there wasn’t a single person from Magino Village who wasn’t caught up in the film production in one form or another. The Buddhist song group featured at the end of the rising scene involved over 60 people. This orchestra — with everyone from graceless, gossipy housewives in their 40s to graceful old women in their 70s — was a bit self-indulgent, but it was the best part. Because of this the entire village, young and old, male and female, participated in the filming. Wartime programs like “patriotic cooperation” (hokoku itchi) are pale shadows of this kind of village esprit de corps.

Ogawa Pro was not isolated from the changes that were transforming Japanese documentary from a collective spirit to the private film. And neither were the farming communities isolated from the urban filmmaking centers. Indeed, these sweeping changes in Japanese society deeply affected the filmmaking of Ogawa Pro’s Magino period. Iizuka Toshio recalls showing the Sanrizuka films across northern Japan, and everywhere he went, the work was greeted with passionate, sym- pathetic responses. The young people of the village watched the plight of Sanrizuka carefully in those documentaries, and the films sparked honest discussions about their own local situations. They deeply identified with the Sanrizuka farmers and were inspired to think through ways of protecting their own village and its way of life. By the time Iizuka carried *The Sundial Carved with a Thousand Years of Notches* to the same villages, those young people were now in their forties and had installed themselves in the seats of village power. While the San- rizuka Series went straight to their hearts, their response to *Sundial* was, “Huh, so Ogawa Pro could make that kind of film.”

VILLAGE TIME (IN THE MEMORY OF FUKUDA KATSUHIKO)

In my memory the road from *Winter* to *Sanrizuka: Heta Village* pursued a consistent theme. What did we want to film? I think you could call it “village time.” Making “time” the theme probably made us opt for the “waiting” method of diction and a style of editing that avoided montage techniques. Ogawa wrote . . . that when people say, “I’m here,” “here” is the natural climate, and “am” is a form of dialogue. *Forest of Oppression* depicts an inherent dialogue of “hatred,” but not a “here.” When portray- ing the peculiarities of Sanrizuka, the larger theme of the village’s own time, one held in conjunction with the natural climate came to the surface. After coming up with the theme of “time,” the desire for synchronous sound recording equipment came up as a matter of course. . . .

The Beaulieu [which we initially used] was equipped with a 200-foot magazine capable of nearly six minutes of filming. In order to grasp “time,” we began experimenting with a “long take” shooting style combining the capture the Beaulieu and the EM-2. Our stance was to capture the leisurely drawl of the farmers during village meetings, so we mostly let go of the trigger when the talk ended. But by a strange coincidence we then discovered “village time.” When we were doing a long take, the talk would sometimes end and there’d be less than a minute of film left, so we’d keep it running and not release the trigger. When viewing the rushes, we happened across such a scene. At a village meeting, one of the farmers finished having his say. Usually, we’d then close the shot, but this time we had kept it running. There, we were shown an unexpected mode of behavior. The farmer who had finished talking lightly scanned the other participants with his eyes as if to ascertain the degree to which his ideas had sunk in. The other farmers were fully aware of that glance and there played out with him a heated, but voiceless, dialogue.

This was a find. That delicate flow of time was, I think, what Ogawa had in mind when he later said that, “There’s something in village time that attracts me,” or what Tamura was talking about when he said that, “I had the feeling I wanted to join the people there.” For me as well, that time — a flow of time accustomed to circulating though that village — was something “nostalgic” located somewhere in my memory. Unfortunately, we subsequently discovered that putting the “village time” into images, given our equipment, was something we were unable to fulfill in *Winter*. Yet to develop the flow of time we experi- enced on screen was what we longed for. Our desire was finally fulfilled in *Heta Village* by getting a hold of a noiseless camera, the Eclair (which can film a lot longer than the Beaulieu: nearly 12 minutes), and a Nagra tape recorder, and using that combination to perfect the dual methods of synch sound and long take photography.

A MOUNTAIN PASS

Passes are places of decision.
The familiar melancholy of parting drifts at passes. Squeezing the mountain road

the ridges loom over your exposed body
and before long you put them behind you.
Two views are woven together there.
Without losing one world,
you cannot enter the other, separate one.
Only by enduring a great loss
does a new world unfold.
When standing on a pass
the path you’ve passed is a charming memory
and the path unfolding below is pleasing.
Paths do not answer.
Paths do nothing but invite.
The sky above the pass is as sweet as a dream. Even if you know the route there
you must abandon one world.
To hide such feelings
the traveler stops to pee
pick some flowers
enjoy a cigarette
and take in the view as far as the eye can see.

By Makabe Jin

VILLAGE OF SPEARHEADS, VILLAGE OF SHELLS

The hill overlooking the red riverbed
An earthenware shard with Jomon designs Shattered by a spearhead
Came from the barren field
Sparks fall in the dirt
I stopped plowing
Placed on my palm
It was a flint spearhead
My sister and I
Cried in surprise
I slipped it in my sleeve soaked with sweat My sister blushed
With hands covered with dirt
She brushed her breast
Back then, I was just a boy
From a charcoal kiln
A shell fossil came
In my village
No one made charcoal
In the villages near the mountains
Charcoal was a way of life
The shells turned to stone
Must have lived back
20,000,000 years 30,000,000 years
No, much older
Shells on the seafloor
Near a deep trench
Surrounded by forests of seaweed Okhotsk’s seasonal current
Cold water flowing south from far, far away Never dreaming of dying out
It survived
Flowing down the mountain valley
Once the deep sea trench
The White Souther
Like wind
But not wind
Not cloud, nor fog
In silence, ridges disappear
Enveloping all without limit
A hidden existence in-between
Together with the flying birds
Humans pierce through
Boars Bears Blue boars
The White Souther
The day our village was created
Is fresh in our memory
The day the White Souther cleared
People plowed the land
Burned trees
Hoed with stone spades
Sowed chestnuts, barley, wheat
They nourished life
Carrying quivers
And drawing arrows
They also entered the mountains
They lived with the beasts
Lives intertwined and overlapped
Blood Flowed thickly
Through the village It ran
Humans live
Beasts become human
Beasts live
Humans become beasts
Like the mountain face
The skin of the villagers endured the cold winds Humans speak the language of beasts

By Kimura Michio

Excerpt from THE THEATER OF A THOUSAND YEARS by Abé Mark Nornes in volume 4, Issue 2 of The Journal of The International Institute, 1997.
LONG AGO - IN A VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. . . . (FURUYASHIKI VILLAGE), THE MAGINO VILLAGE STORY and VILLAGE TIME (IN THE MEMORY OF FUKUDA KATSUHIKO)
are all excerpts from Markus Nornes’ *Forest of Pressure - Ogawa Shinshuke and Postwar Japanese Documentary*, The University of Minnesota Press (2007).

THE THEATER OF A THOUSAND YEARS

How could one think of watching a film that is so intimately tied to this place — both its space and its time, its rhythms, sights and its smells — in a dilapidated movie theater or high school gymnasium? This thought crossed the minds of both the filmmakers and their admirers in Osaka, where the readers of *Eiga Shinbun* (Film Newspaper) had been tracking the films progress. Indeed, finding a place to show such a film had become exceedingly problematic. So they built their own theater.

A publicity flier for The Theater of a Thousand Years describes the motives behind building a temporary exhibition space for a single film:

Welcome to the Theater of a Thousand Years! Considering the freedom of cinema, should not the places cinema is shown have that freedom as well? This is the conception of The Theater of a Thousand Years. From the end of production to the screening of the film, most filmmakers entrust their films to the hands of other people, but here this activity is being handled from the filmmakers' side.... It's the romance of cinephiles that a theater could be devoted to a single film. This Theater of a Thousand Years is the first embodiment of what cinephiles have long dreamed of. To be specific, it could be said that this film is utterly wrapped up in the world of Magino Village in Yamagata Prefecture. The space of this theater is surely the same, and the embodiment of that dream entirely sweeps away one's feelings toward the movie theaters of today.

This “embodiment” involved an enormous amount of sweat, all volunteered. Through the efforts of Eiga Shinbun's staff, the filmmakers borrowed an empty construction site in Kyoto. A young architecture student helped plan the building, using traditional designs and methods of construction. Seven hundred logs were used for the framework. Three thousand bundles of grass were brought in from the countryside for the thatched roof, along with 50 tons of mud for the walls. Next door, a famous Butoh dance troupe erected their own temporary theater — one with a modern, industrial design — and held dance performances throughout the run of the film. Ringing the outside of the theater were the tents and tarps of a local matsuri, or fair, featuring plenty of food and trinkets from the countryside. Occasionally, singers and acoustic bands entertained the audience arriving for the screenings. Rows of tall, traditional banners — as used for sumo wrestling and kabuki theater — lined the perimeter. At the theater entrance, spectators could browse through photographs of the production, examine some of the props from the film, and buy fried noodles and home cooking from Yamagata in lieu of popcorn. The theater itself held 140 spectators, all of whom sat on pillows on the floor. Before the large screen was a hole in the ground with the ancient Jōmon pottery unearthed in the film placed as though they had come once more to light. The theater was air conditioned, but it seemed as though the cool air was rising from the hole in the ground. With the blessing of a Shinto priest, the screenings were underway.

A month later there was nothing left but the wind.

LONG AGO - IN A VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. . . . (FURUYASHIKI VILLAGE)

Well, it's, you know, a story I heard from m'grandmother. 'Bout 100 years back, or 200 years back, don't exactly know. When she came up to the mountains to become a bride, my family's gramma. The feudal lord took taxes, so they say she came up from her hometown, from the valleys, to where life was comfortable. Back at her hometown taxes were high. Life's miserable, 'cause they'd take one bottle of sake per window. But then, if she came up to the mountains, there're no taxes. No taxin'. Go to the mountains as a bride, there's no tax 'n you could live comfortably, so she left. So she came, but the peppers didn't turn red . . . she'd grow peppers, but they wouldn't turn red. “A place're peppers don't turn red's nowhere to live,” they [her parents] said. But she tried comin' as a bride anyhow. Gradually, more people came, I think, lots, the number of people grew, and for some reason it got warmer. Maybe 'cause they're cuttin' the trees. An' the peppers got red. Everybody started livin' well. That's that.

THE MAGINO VILLAGE STORY

For example, one scene tells the story of an ancient stone god that sits next to the god of the mountains in a Magino shrine, a tale originally related to Ogawa by his neighbor Inoue. Ogawa has the farmer reenact the story of his deceased father digging up the ancient god — a large stone phallus, to be specific — shortly after World War II. Embarrassed, he apologized to the god and promptly returned it to the earth of their field. As Inoue, playing the role of his father, fills up the hole, Ogawa's bemused narration explains that when the father returned home, he couldn't stop laughing and wouldn't tell anyone why. Curious about what the father could have found out in that field, the young Inoue struck out with his wife to dig it up. Now Inoue and his wife play themselves as a young couple several decades in the past. They dig in the hole surrounded by mulberry bushes, giggling in their self-consciousness before the camera. Finally, they strike something hard with their shovels. Pulling out the big phallus from the earth, they embellish their reenactment as they would any good story: “Wow, take a look at this. It's spectacular!” says Inoue to his wife, “Hmmm, anatomically correct. Here, grab a hold!” He unexpectedly changes his tone and adds, “We better pray.” He sets it proudly upright at the lip of the hole and they offer their apologies to the god in prayer, and then Ogawa reverts to traditional storytelling methods. Inoue explains how his father did not want to show the phallus to his children, but he was also hesitant to return it to the earth after being buried for thousands of years

— that would be rude! So his father hid the phallic god under the house. Then returning to reenactment, Inoue once again takes the role of his father and performs the conclusion of the story. He and another villager tie a sacred straw rope around the stout shaft of the phallus and marry the god to the goddess of the mountain. The two sit side-by-side in her shrine to this very day. This is just one of the stories that provide the present-day scenes in Magino a powerful resonance with village history. Although there is absolutely nothing extraordinary about Magino, Ogawa impresses upon us the extra behind the veil of the ordinary. After seeing this film, one never looks at a Japanese village in quite the same way. One assumes that every stone monument and shrine, no matter how small or neglected, hides a wondrous history. Every village must have as rich a past as Magino, a history that ties all the people inhabiting the houses and working the fields to all the people and all the gods in their collective past.

Ogawa recreates two other stories that effectively politicize that link between past and present, while pushing the limits of documentary reenactment. The first of these comes after Satake's story about the digging of the dam and its ditch a thousand years past. Satake's traditional mode of storytelling segues to the reenactment of a tale circulating in the village that taps on changes in the village economy and the postwar flight to urban metropolises. The story is centered on a shrine next to the sluice, where the beauti- ful young woman who helped divert the water is worshipped as a mountain goddess. Her image sits in the shrine, carved from a stone pulled from the ditch. Ogawa relates the story of her shrine, a tale that places four genera- tions of a single family against the backdrop of modern Japanese history.

Simply told, at the very beginning of Japan's modern era in the mid-nineteenth century, a man named Yonosuke was one of the first in the area to defy convention by refusing to make charcoal. He grew cedar trees as a cash crop instead. By planting the trees, he made the land his possession, this at a time when Japan was opening up to the world and trans- forming itself into a modern power integrated into the nation-state system and capitalist conceptions of private property. Yonosuke's grandson cut the cedar in the 1890s when wood was in great demand in the burgeoning cities and used the profit to introduce silkworms to the village economy. The village cash crop suddenly went from a thirty-year to one-year cycle. However, Yonosuke squandered the family fortune for *sake*, women, and gambling; his son, Yoki, took after his father's unfortunate vices. By the mid-1930s, the family fortune was depleted, and Yoki's wife left him. He went insane and started living in the shrine next to the sluice, taking care of the moun- tain goddess for the rest of his life. By 1965, their village was dead. No one lives there anymore, and what buildings are left are pathetic ruins.

[...] As one enters Magino Village from Kaminoyama City, Itsutsudomoe Shrine is a prominent structure on the left-hand side of the road. Mount Zao rises to the sky above, and a row of nearly identical bodhisattva sculptures are lined up along- side the shrine. These sculptures represent the villagers who stood up to the oppressive taxes of the local ruler. They led a revolt that was eventually put down, its five leaders executed.

The shrine commemorates their sacrifice, which ensured the continuity of Magino to the present day. Every New Year's Eve, the villagers open up the shrine, and enter its inner sanctum where the ashes of the martyrs are preserved. Each villager makes a visit that evening, offering a prayer, and partaking in some sake. Ogawa was impressed by the way this space served as a site for binding the villagers to each other and their collective past. He saw how the media for this “bind- ing” involved a combination of ritual and storytelling, and he recognized that what this shrine represented was the link between sleepy, swampy Magino and the uprising at Sanrizuka. This shrine revealed what Ogawa Pro was missing during the Sanrizuka Series. Thus, in their most elaborate reenactment for *Sundial*, the filmmakers staged the trial of the martyrs using the shrine as their location. An on-screen narrator reads from an old scroll explaining the incident. Veteran *jidaigeki* stars brought in from Tokyo, including Ishibashi Choichiro, Kawarazaki Renji, and Shimada Shogo, play the local officials. The villagers staging the revolt, however, were played by their real descendants. In a preface to the sequence's scenario, Ogawa writes,

The documentary we have been shooting for the last seven or eight years hopes to recreate the natural features — rice, earth, water — and recreate the sto- ries sleeping in the hearts of the villagers. Itsutsudomoe Jinja Daihokai is, in this film, what could be called a (as if it were a) film within a film. I use the word “theater,” but on this stage where everyone participates and there is not a single spectator, we consider it a vivid ceremony that exceeds the framework of simple drama. With our camera, we want to shoot Itsutsudomoe Shrine — the drama that will unfold there — as a space where souls come into contact.

To this end, they used a special writing method that brought the villagers into the process. These were stories they had heard many times over the years. A typical documentarists would simply sit a villager in front of the camera for an interview: “So tell us about the time you pulled a penis out of the ground.” Ogawa told Regula König what they would do instead:

We started the discussion saying: “Yasu-san, we think it would be interesting to film that story, but where do you think would be the best place to start from?” So Yasu said, “Well now . . .” and began to think seriously about the plot and the lines that would best express his own feelings. All of the scenes where the farmers played themselves were done that way. We and the villagers would come up with an idea together, discuss it, plan it together, and make it together. We didn't want to reenact the story so much as we wanted to document the soul of the person telling the story.

The villagers took their task seriously. They helped construct the scenarios. They showed Ogawa Pro the actual spots where each story took place, taking props and old clothes from their barns that had taken part in the events being represented. For example, villagers whose mothers or grandmothers knew Miyashita Junko's character lent the actress clothes and