

# A Drama of Superimposed Maps: Ozu's *So Far From The Land of Our Parents*

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Until fairly recently, Ozu Yasujiro's attitude toward war and his activities during the "China Incident" and the ensuing Pacific War have received scant attention from film scholars. At least part of the reason is of course the almost universal esteem for his postwar oeuvre and an equally universal reverence for Ozu as one of the preeminent artists of cinema. In his prewar films depicting ordinary Japanese families, however, one can often discern a somewhat passive, war-affirming subtext. Even his postwar films feature a scattering of scenes in which characters remember the war with nostalgia or ambiguous regret. Such textual evidence (along with his own pronouncements published in the wartime era press) make it clear that, while he was never a war monger, he was never a member of the pacifist party.

In the past decade or so, new research – most prominently that of Tanaka Masasumi (*Ozu Yasujiro to Senso*, Misuzu Shobo, 2005), as well as certain modest contributions from myself—has begun to penetrate the *cordon sanitaire* of "delicacy" which kept this subject veiled in obscurity during much of the postwar era. The results of this research hardly create the grounds for an assault on Ozu's personal reputation; there is no credible evidence to depict him as a craven, undiscerning collaborator with the proto-fascist regime of the "Fifteen Year's War" era. On the other hand, there is more than sufficient evidence to depict him as having been patriotically convinced of the essential rightness of his nation's cause during the war and that this opinion created a strong motivational force both in his films and in his activities within the film industry of the time. This paper will focus on one little-known detail of his career in the early part of the Pacific War—the writing of a script for a war film which he apparently was quite eager to make—which demonstrates the manner in which he mobilized his talents in service to the war effort.

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Ozu was drafted on September 9, 1937, and sent to the central China front two weeks later as a corporal (*gocho*) in the Second Regiment of the Konoe Infantry

Division (gas warfare section). As one of Japan's most prominent cultural figures serving in the army at the time, he was frequently sought out by reporters from the national press. In early October, a correspondent for the Tokyo Asahi found him in the outskirts of Shanghai, directing military traffic with the small Japanese flag presented to him by his colleagues at Shochiku Ofuna. Inscribed on the flag were such slogans as "Fight for the honor of the film world!" along with the signatures of Shochiku's top stars--Saburi Shin, Sano Shuji, Uehara Ken and Iida Choko.<sup>1</sup> In another article published a few days later, Ozu was quoted as declaring, "War is an ennobling experience...I am confident I can make a vivid (*ikita*) war film based on my experiences here."<sup>2</sup>

Twenty-two months later, after seeing action at Nanjing, Hsueh and elsewhere, Ozu was sent back to the homeland and officially de-mobilized on July 16, 1939. In numerous subsequent interviews and *zadankai* (round-table discussions), he used his authority as an actual veteran to theorize on the nature of war film and to comment (often critically) on the quality of those being made in Japan. He also reported that he was under intense pressure to make a war film of his own. His public comments on the topic showed great ambivalence, swinging from detailed plot ideas to expressions of despair at ever being able to put them on film.

The days immediately after his return from China found him in a negative frame of mind: "I made rough notes on my experiences at the front and how to use them, but then I went and left about half of them behind, so I still have no [clear plan]."<sup>3</sup> Several weeks later, he put a different spin on things: "Nothing's decided yet...but of course I'll be making a war film."<sup>4</sup> In a long dialogue with Tasaka Tomotaka (director of the epoch-making *Five Scouts*) in August 1939, he announced that his first post-return film would be "a New Years comedy." When Tasaka probed him about his war film plans, he promptly sketched out the following story idea: "A detachment of soldiers is waiting for orders to break out of an enemy encirclement...[By the time they break out], their numbers have been reduced to a quarter their original strength. The conclusion [will stress] how all this loss of life had not been in vain... I just don't see myself making a film about some big victory. The good old films, like *Beau Geste* and *Bengal Lancers*, all have this sort of smell of defeat."<sup>5</sup> In September, however, Ozu was blowing cold again, claiming that, "at the front, I never thought about film[making]. It never crossed my mind."<sup>6</sup> In November, we find him commenting with acid irony that "only people who have never experienced the real thing can actually make a war film."<sup>7</sup>

Ozu's "New Years comedy" turned out to be *Ochazuke no Aji* (similar to, but not identical with the film released in 1952). The script, however, was rejected by pre-production censors in February 1940 and the film was never made. In an interview that same month, he seemed to sign off on any further war film plans: "Under present-day restrictions it is virtually impossible to make war dramas; that'll have to wait until the [China] Incident is wrapped up."<sup>8</sup> Thereafter he lapsed into silence on the issue for almost two years.

In mid-1942, the press section of the High Military Command (*Dai Hon'ei Rikugun Hodobu*) formally requested the film companies to make drama films covering the major theaters of action in the new war. Toho was assigned the Philippines and Daiei had Malaya/ Singapore. Shochiku was given the Burma (Myanmar) campaign and Ozu, along with screen writers Saito Ryosuke<sup>9</sup> and Akiyama Kosaku, were set to preparing the script. Actual writing was carried out between September and November 1942. Just why the script--tentatively titled *Haruka nari Fubo no Kuni* ("So Far From the Land of Our Parents")<sup>10</sup>--was never filmed remains a mystery. In a postwar memorandum, Shindo Kaneto suggests that the military found it unacceptable, but since it was apparently never submitted for pre-production censorship, we have no clear documentary record of the reason(s) for its abandonment.<sup>11</sup>

At least one copy of the script (159 mimeographed pages stamped with "Shochiku Ofuna: for in-house use only") still exists in the private archive of Makino Mamoru and is summarized below. It clearly draws on anecdotes Ozu had collected during his own tour of duty in China, and is rich in his dead-pan style of humor. This, along with its complex interweaving of themes and plot devices, strongly indicates that Ozu took the project seriously, pouring into it a full measure of his creative talents. For this reason, *Haruka nari* should be included in any consideration of the complete Ozu oeuvre.

## **I. The Script for *Haruka nari Fubo no Kuni***

### **A.) Proposed Casting of Characters**

The *dramatis personae* lists thirty-five characters, assigning specific actors to nine of the ten central roles. This seems to indicate that Ozu and his collaborators had these actors in mind as they wrote and had tailored the characters to the stars' established screen personalities. This is apparent in the case of Sakamoto Takeshi, known to multitudes of late silent-era Ozu fans as "Kihachi," the shiftless yet endearing father of the impish "Tokkan Kozo" in *Dekigokoro* ("Passing Fancy," 1933)

and other films. He is reincarnated here as the warm-hearted, semi-literate “Private Watanabe,” now well advanced into middle age and affectionately called *Otots’an* (“Pops”) by his younger comrades. Ryu Chishu, who had played the father in *There Was A Father* less than a year before, is assigned to play “Sgt. Adachi,” a career NCO whose gentle nature and self-effacing austerity have much in common with his previous role. Sano Shuji, who had co-starred in *There Was A Father* (1942) as Ryu’s son, was slated this time to appear as “Corporal Aihara,” a character only slightly younger than Ryu’s Adachi.<sup>12</sup> A second call-up notice for Sano, who had also served in the China Incident, effectively removed him as a candidate for the part and may have led an element in Ozu’s abandonment of the project.

### **B.) Annotated Plot Outline**

[Note: numbers below are the set-up numbers indicated in the script.]

1-5: Soldiers and tanks crossing a shallow river. On the road beyond, a line of soldiers is ordered left as a tank rumbles by, “leaving a cloud of dust in their sweaty faces.”

6: Soldiers marching. “The only thought in their minds is ‘On to Rangoon!’”

7-8: Maeda Company taking a short break. Cpl. Aihara (Sano Shuji) nurses a cigarette butt as Pfc. Watanabe (Sakamoto Takeshi) urinates in the grass. “His piss is blood red.”

Pfc. Ikeuchi: How far to Rangoon?

Sgt. Adachi (Ryu Chishu): Do you want it to be near or far?

Ikeuchi: Near.

Adachi: Okay then, about two kilometers.

9-11: Soldiers making camp, eating.

Watanabe: We’re still not there yet? Rangoon?

Ikeuchi: (irritated) Why don’t you just ask the road?

Adachi: (to Ikeuchi) Wasn’t it your turn to ask?

Ikeuchi: I’m sick of it. How about you, Sergeant? Near or far?

Adachi: As far as possible.

Ikeuchi: Okay. Um...thirty kilometers.

[Note: As we shall see, questioner/answerer role-reversals become a running joke throughout the script. This is part of what the introduction refers to as “deploying a comic-ironic world view” (*kaigyaku no sekaikan o tenkai suru*)]

12-16: Troops on the move. Shots of a pagoda, distant and then near.

17: A street in Rangoon. Soldiers march in, many with little boxes (*kotsu bako*) containing the ashes of war buddies.

[Note: An important *kokusaku* (national policy) theme. Similar shots of triumphant troops marching with *kotsu bako* in the documentary films *Marei Senki* (1942) and *Biruma Senki* (1942) were lavishly praised by pro-government critics at the time.]

18-27: Burmese civilians reading posters put up by Japanese authorities. Troops cleaning weapons, pack animals.

28: Encampment. Maeda company sings in chorus.

29: Watanabe asks, "Whereabouts are we in Rangoon?" "If this were Tokyo," Ikeuchi replies, "we'd be in Shitaya..." This leads to an involved joke—recurring several times in the script-- in which the geography of Tokyo is superimposed over that of Rangoon. Watanabe prepares for a fantasy stroll over to "Asakusa": "If you give me the money, I'll pick you up a new set of underwear."

30: Aihara and several soldiers inspecting a map:

Aihara: We've been in Burma for fifty days and still we've only gone one inch on the map.

[Note: script actually uses the phrase "one *sun*," an archaic unit measuring 1.2 inches.]

Soldier A: It's like writing a whole sutra on a single grain of rice.

Soldier B: And it's still five inches to Yunnan.

Pfc. How far to Mandalay?

Soldier B: Two inches.

Discussion then moves to the significance of the closing of the Burma Road, the Allied supply route to Chiang's forces in China.

[Note: As indicated in the script's introduction, "elucidation of this theme is one of the (*kokusaku*) functions of this film."]

31-40: Shot of steam rising from a bathtub. "Time to move out!" in voice-over. A looted Burmese village. "Push on the fight!" scrawled on a wall in Chinese characters, thus indicating the presence of pro-Chungking regulars in the area. [Note: Revealing the rapacity of the Chinese troops is another of the film's *kokusaku* functions.]

41-45: Adachi returns from reconnaissance with several friendly locals. Burmese civilians poling troops across a river in boats.

[Note: The enthusiastic support of the population is another major *kokusaku* theme. It also figures prominently in *Biruma Senki*.]

46-48: Encampment on the edge of a town. Laundry flaps in the wind.

49-52: Encampment. A soldier asks, "How far to Madalay?" "We've come a tenth

of an inch, so we've got nine tenths of an inch to go." Soldiers are shown picking lice out of their *sennin-bari*.

[Note: The *sennin-bari* (lit. "thousand people stitches"), a wide stomach-band worn by many soldiers as an amulet to ward off enemy bullets, was yet another favored *kokusaku* topic. The wife, mother or sister of a soldier at the front would stand on a street corner requesting female passersby to sew in one stitch. After a thousand had been accumulated, it would be sent off to the front. The custom rose to prominence during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) and, after the start of the China Incident, it attained the stature of a sacred national rite, celebrated in the press and popular song as a symbolic uniting the home-front with the battlefield. Ozu's (probably accurate) depiction here of the *sennin-bari* as a home for lice is a humorous travesty. It verges on "sacrilege" in much the same way his earlier substitution of green tea over rice for *sekihan* in his banned *Ochazuke no Aji*. In this scene and later in the script, the soldiers irreverently call the lice *kannon* (goddesses of mercy), apparently because they had taken up residence in the sacred territory of the *sennin-bari*. After crushing each *kannon*, they mutter a short sutra with mock solemnity. This appears to be one of the anecdotes Ozu had collected during his own stint at the China front.]

53-54: Infirmary. Company commander Miyamoto visits malaria-infected Pfc. Yamaguchi: "Take care of yourself. The war's anything but over, you know." Then, turning to Watanabe: "But just look at *you*! You've grown fatter!"

54: Soldiers peeling potatoes. Nagashima: "I'm off to play the violin!" [Note: Army slang for boot-polishing]

55: Room in a house used for lodging troops. Soldier C watches as Pfc. Nagashima sits polishing an officer's boots:

Soldier C: That's the way to do it, Zimbalist! Play that violin!

Nagashima: What's a zimbalist?

Soldier: A violinist.

Nagashima: Is he good at polishing boots?

Soldier: Well, he's a great violinist, just like you.

Nagashima: ...a good boot polisher, you mean?

Soldier: Not boots. Violin.

Nagashima: What kind of violin are you talking about? A real one, do you mean?

Soldier: ....

Nagashima: You mean boots that aren't violins?

Soldier: Yeah...You're really thick.

Nagashima: *I'm* thick? You're the one who doesn't know what he's talking about!

56: Interior. Watanabe and others are looking at a photograph of Aihara's baby son.

Old Soldier: Still only one kid?

Aihara: Yes.

Old Soldier: You're slow. When'd you get married?

Aihara: Okay, quit it. (snatching away the photo) You'll stir up the "bug" (*shaku no mushi*) !

[Note: *shaku no mushi* literally means "the bug that causes misfortune," usually a reference to waking the baby and setting it to crying. Later in the script, it will take on a more ominous meaning.]

Watanabe encourages an unmarried man (Soldier B) to find someone as soon as he gets home:

Watanabe: What? You don't have anybody good back there? Well, what do you think of this one? (he displays a large-format photo). She's my little sister.

Soldier A : (with a knowing look) Well, what do you think? Don't you like her?

Soldier B: Is this really your sister, Otots'an?

Watanabe: Yup.

Soldier B: Really? What's her name?

Watanabe: Shizue.

Script note: The photo is actually a pin-up of a popular actress. [Natsukawa Shizue]

The others, having all caught on, urge the marriage as "a good move."

57: Room next door. Soldier D is reading a pamphlet:

Soldier D: Says here lice leave a mark like a "semicolon." What's that?

Soldier E: It's an English punctuation mark. Like this. (he draws it in the air)

Soldier D: Really? I figured it was some kind of woman, one of those charming damsels.

[Note: A play on "colon"/ "cologne"?] Semicolon, huh? Gotta keep it in mind.

Soldier D: (to Ikeuchi, who has just entered the room): Do you know what a semicolon is?

Ikeuchi: No...

Soldier D: It means a beautiful woman. Remember the word.

58: Barracks. Later that night. Soldiers sing in chorus.

In a valley of the Himalayas,

A braveheart from Japan reels in a croc.

We piss off the Great Wall of China

And make a rainbow over the Gobi.

As the fog clears in London,  
See the *koinobori* fluttering high!  
In the streets of Chicago thick with gangsters,  
Raise a memorial stone for our grandchildren to remember us by.

[Note: The song is a *kae-uta* (lit. a “change song,” new words having been put to an old melody), based on a popular *dan-cho-ne* ballad dating back to the Taisho period.]

59: Adachi visits with Yamaguchi in the infirmary:

Yamaguchi: Excuse me for being sick. I know this is a bother to all the men.

[Note: In war films of the period, wounded or sick soldiers almost invariably apologize for not being able to carry out their duties, after which they are “absolved” by their commanding officer. The propaganda intention is, of course, to showcase the “humane” side of the military command. Sometimes, however, such scenes plunge straight to the macabre. Even *Five Scouts* comes perilously close when a soldier hefts a rifle with his bullet-shattered arm and shrieks, “I can still fight, despite my wound!” Noda Kogo’s original script for *Tank Commander Nishizumi* featured a scene, cut from the film by director Yoshimura, in which a wounded soldier lies athwart the path of a tank and shouts out, “Just roll over my legs! I don’t mind!” In several press interviews, Ozu criticized such scenes as inauthentic fabrications and it seems reasonable to assume that the humorously ironic twist he puts on the scene here is intended as a further assault on the convention.]

Adachi has specially prepared some rice gruel for the sick soldier:

Yamaguchi: Don’t worry about me. You must be hungry yourself.

Adachi: Sick people should just shut up...You’ve come all this way out of Rangoon and now you come down with malaria. I’ve gone through a lot of trouble getting this stuff for you, so you’d better eat up. Just shut up and eat.

Yamaguchi: I’m sorry.

Adachi: How’s it taste?

Yamaguchi: Delicious!

Adachi: Delicious you say? That just goes to show you don’t know what delicious is....(then, as he departs) Since you won’t be needing it, I’m going off to drink your ration of sake.

60: Room next door. When Adachi announces he has brought a load of cigarettes, Soldier C cheers--“*Tian hau! Tian hau!*”--indicating he has seen service in China.

61-67: Company commander Maeda plays the melody *Chidori no Kyoku* on the shakuhachi. Listening from a distance, soldiers talk about the last time they had heard him play: “That was when Funaki was still alive. A real interesting guy... cooked a slab of pork in saddle polish and actually ate it!”



68-72: Soldiers go into action. A short fire fight.

75-76: Room. Division commander and subordinates study a map. Commander gives a long explanation of the campaign, enemy troop dispositions and the significance of the Burma Road.

78: Nagashima: Hey, how far to Mandalay?

Soldier A: One and a half inches.

79: Aihara summoned to company commander Maeda's quarters. Maeda informs him that he has received a letter from Aihara's wife. Their baby has died.

Maeda: (to Aihara) This is war and all sorts of things happen. Don't lose heart. Throw yourself into the fight and you can overcome any [grief].

That's how you can build yourself into an outstanding (*rippa na*) man.

[Note: Maeda's use of the adjective *rippa* here tags his advice as part of the era's *seishinshugi* (spirit-ist) discourse, which emphasized absolute determination as the means of overcoming all obstacles, psychic or material.]

80: Barracks. Soldiers writing letters. Aihara sits slumped in depression.

Adachi: It was showing around that picture of the baby that did it. You must have stirred up the "bug."

Aihara: Yeah, a great big "bug."

Adachi: Well, don't let it get you down. You can still have more kids.

Make [the next one] so big and strong he'll survive no matter how hard he gets smacked.

81: Soldiers cooking and eating a dog caught by Aihara. Discussion leads to a tale about a dog they had been specially fattening up:

Soldier B: Every time we fed him, he'd set his tail to wagging. We just couldn't eat him after that...It'd become a matter of *bushi no nasake* (samurai compassion).

Kurokawa: (to Soldier B) What are you doing eating dog meat, anyway?

You're a Buddhist priest!

82: Maeda orders Lt. Miyamoto to lead a reconnaissance patrol.

83-84: Barracks. Kurokawa preparing to go out on patrol. Soldier C offers to lend him his *sennin-bari*. Kurokawa: "Forget it. Its crawling with *kannon!*"

85: Barracks. Adachi tries to take Aihara's turn on patrol: "In her letter to the company commander, your wife said you tend to do unwise things (*mucha o suru*). This is more *mucha*." But Aihara persists in his refusal: "Just when I was beginning to forget about the baby, you bring it up again!"

[Note: By this time, the baby's death has become a sore-thumb issue, verging on the humorous.

Even perfectly innocent comments turn into oblique references to Aihara's misfortune.]

86-109: On patrol. An extended combat sequence ensues in which Aihara picks off several pursuing English soldiers. Mamiya is hit ("Don't worry about me, just go on!"), but Aihara carries him back.

110-111: Maeda expresses satisfaction with the scouts' report: "Just as we planned. They're going to be trapped like rats."

112: Mamiya, concerned he had failed on the mission, apologizes for being wounded. Aihara: "*Baka* (idiot)!" A letter from Mamiya's mother arrives and Aihara reads it to him. "A truly fine mother," he comments.

[Note: Letters and packages (*imon bukuro*) from home form another of the government-prescribed *kokusaku* themes for cinema. Significantly, perhaps, the letters here are either read by someone else or, as in the case of Aihara's wife, are sent to a third party. Furthermore, in the single *imon bukuro* scene, the contents of the package are rejected by the receiver. The subject matter of this particular letter resembles that of "The Sailor's Mother," a chapter in the fifth-grade *Kokugo* (National Language) textbook used into the thirties. This identifies Mamiya's mother as an exemplary *gunkoku no haha* ("militarist mother"), one of the icons of standard national policy films of the era. Although Ozu's script treats certain other national policy film conventions with iconoclastic irreverence, this one is allowed to stand unchallenged.]

113-117: Infirmary. Interior and then exterior. An ambulance has come to take Mamiya to the hospital. Maeda and others see him off. Maeda: "Hurry up and get well! We'll be waiting for you." Then, after Mamiya's departure, Maeda comments, "That's the last we'll see of him."

118: Heavy enemy shelling.

119: Soldier arrives with a large number of Indian troops who have deserted the enemy side. Staff officer: "They realize they're being used by the British and have grown disgusted."

122-31: Army advances under heavy shelling.

132-137: Heavy shelling continues. Adachi sneers at the enemy's bad aim: "They're just killing a lot of moles out there."

138-145: Soldiers advancing in a line against enemy positions. Adachi orders Ikeuchi, "Lower your elbow as you fire!" Enemy tanks approach. Watanabe: "Here comes the white rice!" [Note: A reference to Caucasians?]

146-147: Japanese artillery opens up on the tanks. Commander: "A direct hit!"

148-154: Japanese troops, supported by tanks, advancing again. Adachi attempts to

continue leading the charge although he has been seriously wounded in the leg by a shell fragment; finally he collapses: "I'm okay! ...Just ignore me!"

155-156: Pagoda shown in the distance; then in close-up.

157: A Japanese flag flutters over the pagoda.

158-163: Streets of Mandalay. Civilians enthusiastically welcoming the Japanese.

164: Encampment. Soldiers comment on enemy looting of Mandalay. The conversation again turns to the issue of distances:

Soldier A: You know, the distance from Rangoon to Mandalay is about the same as from Tokyo to Okayama.

Soldier B: Really? And we walked all that way?

Soldier C: War's a matter of walking.

[Note: Soldier C's comment almost immediately takes on an ironic significance when Soldier A informs them that Adachi's leg has been amputated. Below, Adachi himself uses the amputation as an excuse for a wry joke. Throughout the script, Ozu consistently treats maimings, sickness and death with a humorous/ironic irreverence found almost nowhere else in the entire body of Japanese national policy cinema. His audacity probably comes from the fact that, unlike most war film screenwriters, he knew intimately the psychology of the battlefield. In the press, Ozu occasionally sneered at the trepidation and reverential awe with which other (war) films treated these subjects, a complaint he also leveled at wartime novelist Hino Ashihei, as well. One of his purposes here seems to be to de-sanctify them and thus clear the way for more accurate representations of the psychological environment of the combat soldier.]

165-166: Watanabe and Aihara learn that Adachi may die from his wounds. Commander Maeda suggests they have Adachi dictate his will.

167: Infirmary. Aihara lists the contents of a package sent to Adachi by his wife:

Aihara: ...toilet paper, underwear, *geta* (wooden clogs)...

Adachi: Well, I sure won't be needing those anymore.

Aihara: ...soap, beans. Wanta eat them?

Aihara: Naw, the doc'll get angry.

Aihara: We'll put them aside for you latter.

Adachi: No, I won't be needing them either. Distribute them to the men, will you?

[Note: Adachi's final scene here is superbly developed and quite moving, even as literature. By having him refuse the beans, Ozu deftly indicates Adachi's realization that death is near. The scene develops in a perfectly natural and seamless continuity, as he now proceeds to divest himself of his worldly goods, doing it all with his customary wit.]

Adachi: And I've got a few sets of underwear somewhere among my stuff, still brand new.

Aihara: ....

Adachi: And a few pencils in my pack. Somebody could use them.

Aihara:....We're all waiting for you to get well....

Adachi: Say, isn't there something you want to tell me while there's still time?

Aihara: What do you mean?

Adachi: It's written all over your face...Go on, ask me.

Aihara: Um, nothing much. We just want you to hurry up and get well.

Adachi: Okay.... Thanks.

Aihara: Actually, its us who should be asking you. ..Is there anything you want to say?

Adachi: .... You're not good at this, are you?....You were dithering and so I decided to pop the question myself. [omission]....I thought about what I'd say all last night. I know I've been hard on everybody and all—but I feel I've done my best....(to Watanabe) Otots'an, we've been together a long time. Sorry we can't have another meal together. Of dog meat....(to Aihara) When I was second best in basic training, you were third; and when I made top of the group, you were second....Now, I'm ahead of you in pushing off, too....

Aihara: (weeping)

Adachi: When your kid died, you didn't cry. You acted just like always. That was sure impressive. I really thought you were something. But, now you're crying...for me...makes no sense. Hey, Aihara. Nothing to cry about. Look at me. I'm gonna die, but I'm still laughing.

168-170: Shot of the window and the clear blue sky beyond. External shots of blue sky.

171: Company headquarters. Maeda and staff looking at map. Maeda explains significance of Mandalay as the converging point of the three Burma Road routes. Aihara is congratulated on his promotion to sergeant. [ Note: This was Ozu's rank when he left the army.] Maeda indicates Adachi may not last the night. Turning away in silence, he says, "Its going to be good weather again tomorrow...hot."

172-173: Sun rising. Pagoda.

174: Open space. Soldiers reciting the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers. [Note: A *koku-saku* motif. In militarist ideology, service in the army was considered tantamount to death in battle. In newspaper interviews at the front, Ozu himself regularly used the phrase "if I get back," rather than "when."]

175: Adachi's body, draped with a flag.

176: Morning sun. Pagoda.

177: Maeda tells Lt. Miyamoto to send Adachi's body back to Rangoon before they move out again. He reads aloud the letter he has written to Adachi's family. It speaks of his warm regard for the man, but the language is stiffly formal, in the archaic *soro-bun* style. [Note: Another circumvention of letters as a modes of communication. In this case, it foregrounds ritualistic over the communicative.]

178-182: As they go through Adachi's things, his comrades find a piece of paper with a child's hand-print: "Daddy, Banzai! Yoshiko"

Kurokawa: He had a child?

Adachi: Yes, she'd be six by now.

Kurokawa: He never said a word.

Watanabe: Not a word.

Another sheet of paper emerges, this time with a foot-print: "With this foot, I want to go see my daddy."

Watanabe: Now this cute little foot will be putting on *geta* for the walk to Yasukuni.

[Yasukuni Jinja was the national shrine for the war dead]

183: Shot of a rushing train [heading back to Rangoon]

184: Roofless train car. Aihara and Watanabe with Adachi's *kotsu-bako*.

185-187: They gaze at the scenery flowing by. Burmese working in fields. A Japanese flag waves in the distance. Soldiers doing calisthenics.

188: Aihara: Since coming to Burma, we've lost a lot of good guys, the sergeant and all.

...Look at all those Rising Sun flags.

Right there. And over there!

189: A *koinobori* streams in the breeze.

Aihara: Ah, it's May, isn't it.

Watanabe: Yeah. Planting time at home.

Aihara: Well, let's put our all into this, okay? The sergeant's watching us from somewhere, you know.

190: The train rushes on, the sun directly overhead. "End" mark.

## II. Analysis

### A.) Issues of Space and Distance

Soldier C's comment that "war is a matter of walking" (164) evokes the main theme of Tasaka's *Tsuchi to Heitai* ("Mud and Soldiers"), but in the context of most Pacific War films, it is almost anachronistic. *Biruma Senki*, which established the

popular impression of the campaign, emphasized surging trucks, tanks and aircraft. The script's conclusion—with Aihara and Watanabe on the train swiftly retracing the route they had so laboriously traversed on foot (183-190)—is a final comment on a theme dominating the entire script.

To *Haruka nari's* walking soldiers, distance and space are constant sources of anxiety which they counter with two strategies: 1) miniaturization (of distances) and 2) superimposition of familiar (space) over the unfamiliar. The script's very first dialogue (7-8) is a joking acknowledgment of the subjectivity of "distance": "Do you want it [Rangoon] to be near or far?" The miniaturization of distance<sup>13</sup> is invariably done in the context of a map (30, 49, 78, etc.), which is taken quite literally: "How far to Mandaly?" "Two [map] inches." The soldiers' subjective/ literal approach to the map contrasts sharply with that of the upper-echelon officers, who use it in an instrumental/abstract manner, moving markers to maneuver vast bodies of troops (75, 82, 110, 171). Although soldiers and officers are united in purpose, they are polarized by perception. The soldiers know of the grand strategic overview of the campaign, but it is for them "like writing a whole sutra on a grain of rice" (30).

The soldiers repeatedly superimpose the geography of Japan over that of Burma; Rangoon becomes Tokyo (29 onward) and the distance from Rangoon to Mandalay becomes that of Tokyo to Okayama (164). Gradually this fantasy play becomes reality, with Japanese flags sprouting atop alien pagodas and, in the final sequence, the Burmese countryside becoming a wonderland of *Hi no Maru* and *koi nobori*. Adachi and Watanabe's satisfaction with the sight suggests that it was for this that they had been fighting. While it is unclear how seriously we are to take the sentiments of the song (58), with its emphasis on the conquest and Japanization of the entire world, it seems to coincide thematically with the final sequence. Similarly, although characters twice refer to the war aim of "Burmese liberation," the finale implies a negation of that objective. This contrasts with the final segments of *Biruma Senki* with its long speech by collaborationist-independence leader Ba Maw.

### **B.) *Haruka Nari* as a "Humanist" War Film**

The "humanist" sub-genre flowered in the late China Incident period with such works as *Gonin no Sekkohei* (1938), *Chokoreto to Heitai* (1938) and *Nishizumi Senshacho-den* (1940), but it had run its course by the start of the Pacific War. In my own study of Japanese wartime cinema, *The Imperial Screen*, I essay the following definition of the sub-drama: "What unites the 'humanist' films into a recognizable

group is their tendency to de-emphasize martial heroics and hatred of the enemy, while promoting emotion, especially affection, over any form of conceptual thought. The soldiers have in common that *essential* human nature which emerges after the incidentals and blemishes of individual character have been erased, much as the *Kokutai no Hongi* view of history wiped away factual incidentals in favor of 'essences' and 'true motives.' [...] One finds the 'humanist' war films appealing because of their frank acknowledgement of the fears, foibles, and weaknesses of their characters." (p. 217) The emotional tenor of *Haruka nari*, with its "home drama" focus on the soldiers' human frailties, seems to situate it firmly within this category. There are, however, significant differences. The idiosyncrasies of the individual soldiers is emphasized far more than in the "China Incident" films. There is no (or little) suggestion of the rhapsodic synaesthesia which seems to meld the soldiers in *Five Scouts* into a veritable single organism. Whereas the latter film makes much of their *ishin denshin* (intuitive communication of thought or intention), *Haruka nari* often exploits miscommunication (see 54 and 57) for comic effect. Furthermore, the *Haruka nari* script provides abundant evidence of individual cerebration on the part of its soldiers—as exemplified by the repeated superimposition of Japanese geography over that of the local terrain—which, for all its ludic quality, sets them apart from the rather stereotypical (or *essential*) mindset of the soldiers populating the earlier films.

### C.) Plot Sequences Transposed from Other Films

Aihara's reconnaissance mission is striking for both for its similarities to and contrasts with the Tasaka's *Gonin no Sekkohei*. In both works, the scouts succeed in discovering the disposition of enemy forces, are themselves discovered and pursued, inflict casualties on the enemy and "lose" one man. In *Haruka nari*, the man does not actually go astray, but is wounded. From this point onward, however, the script ceases paralleling *Gonin* and enters into a critical dialogic relationship with it. In an August 1939 *zadankai*, Ozu had criticized as "inauthentic" Tasaka's film for the abandonment of the lost man by his comrades<sup>14</sup>. *Haruka nari* corrects this by having Aihara seek out his wounded man and bring him back. In *Five Scouts*, there are no more combat sequences after the scouts return and the film ends with the company moving out to a new, but unspecified, battle. In Ozu's script, on the other hand, the soldiers move on to further battles which are depicted onscreen and clearly defined as to location and purpose. The difference is crucial, since it reflects in part the

differing nature of the two conflicts. The China Incident was often perceived by contemporaries as amorphous and without a foreseeable conclusion (as seen in the visual metaphor, employed in both Tasaka's *Tsuchi to Heitai* and Kamei Fumio's *Tatakau Heitai*, of a apparently endless road stretching to an indeterminate horizon). In contrast, the campaigns of 1941-42 were most often characterized as aggressive pushes toward specific and attainable objectives.

Ozu's intention of pairing Sano once again with Ryu would have, if it had been realized, cued audiences to look for parallels with *Chichi Aiki*. The most obvious of these is to be found in *Haruka nari*'s concluding sequences, which are clearly reminiscent of the earlier work. Again a tearful Sano Shuji is in attendance on a dying Ryu Chishu and again the death scene is followed by shots of a speeding train and a cut to the interior for a shot of Ryu's *kotsu bako*. Again Sano stares expressionlessly at the scenery flowing by. In a wry variation on the fiancée in *Chichi*, Sano's companion is Watanabe/Sakamoto. Clearly, however, the nature of the Ryu-Sano relationships are completely different in the two works. In *Haruka nari*, the two are portrayed as roughly equivalent in age and worldly attainment (Adachi being only slightly higher in rank than Aihara). Indeed, as we discover (in 164), they had long been friendly rivals. By highlighting parallels and contrasts between the two works, Ozu seems to be consciously creating, not only an intra-oeuvre dialogue, but a subtly comic intrusion of the "home drama" into the inviolable precinct of the *kokusaku* war film. If this is so, the key to the joke could be the line in the script introduction which states that "the military unit...is like a family, with upper and lower ranks bound together by mutual trust."<sup>15</sup>

### III. Ozu's Subsequent Wartime Activity

Donald Richie's speculation--that "[one] reason for canceling the [*Haruka Nari*] project was that Ozu was once again called up by the military"<sup>16</sup> --leaves certain important questions unanswered. Why, for instance, was the script not consigned to another director, as had been the case with his script for *Kagirinaki Zenshin* ("Unending Advance"), which was passed on to Uchida Tomu after Ozu's call-up in 1937(see footnote 11). In any case, by the time he departed for Southeast Asia, in June 1943, the Burma front was in great turmoil and he was re-routed to Singapore. Among the various projects seriously considered during the early months of his stay there was a depiction of the Indian liberation struggle (with the working title of "On to Delhi"). On at least one occasion, Ozu interviewed the pro-Japanese



independence leader Subbhas Chandra Bose and some footage was actually shot (and then, reportedly, destroyed in August 1945). Ozu was largely idle during most of his sojourn in Singapore, where he read, played tennis almost every day and availed himself of the opportunity to view foreign films, mostly American, which had never imported into Japan. In his postwar memorandum, Shindo Kaneto indicates Ozu was a regular visitor to a certain local *kon-kon* (knock-knock) house, adding that “some people may complain I have no business revealing this side of Ozu’s activities at that time, but I think its absolutely essential if one wants to get a glimpse of him as a real human being.” (17)

After the Japanese surrender, Ozu was interned with other civilians in a complex of barracks specially constructed in a field in the outskirts of Singapore. With only a few repatriation ships in operation at the time, returnees were selected by drawing lots. Ozu drew a number making him eligible for early repatriation, but gave his ticket to another member of his staff, casually remarking that “I don’t mind going later.” “I first heard about this incident when I was working in the [Shochiku] Ofuna script department,” Shindo recalls, “On hearing what he said at that time, I suddenly had an insight into Ozu’s films. It calls to mind that single, continuous thread of powerful self-confidence running through all his pictures... ‘I don’t mind going later’ is just the sort of line one can imagine coming out of the mouth of [*Haruka nari...*’s] Sgt. Adachi or Cpl. Aihara.” (18)

Neither Ozu himself nor any of his friends or acquaintances have left much of a record of how he spent the next five and a half months in the Jurong holding camp under British military supervision in the southern part of Singapore. As his biographer Tanaka Masasumi notes, “it remains a peculiar blank in his personal history.” (19) He was finally released and returned to Japan on February 2, 1946.

The only extant comment by Ozu about his internment experiences was made shortly thereafter, for the March 26, 1946 edition of *Tokyo Shinbun*: “With the end of the war, Japanese civilians were collected at Jurong. It was nothing more than a rubber plantation upon which barracks were set up and connected with water and electricity lines, allowing for a tolerable life made relatively pleasant by performances of a Japanese dance troupe and a volunteer theatre group, along with regular film showings. [...] There was also a newspaper called *Shindo* which was later re-named *Jiyu Shinbun* [the name was actually *Jiyu Tsushin*], which was printed in mimeograph form.” (20) The latter not only reported on the local Japanese internees but also provided some meager information about the homeland in the immediate

aftermath of the surrender. Although there were a great many professional journalists among the 6000 Japanese civilians interned at Jurong, Ozu was selected as the paper's titular "editor" and he held the same title with the camp "culture" magazine (*Bunka Shuho*) which was started a few months before Ozu's departure. His name also appears on the program of the Jurong Art Society (*Jurong Bijutsu-kai*), with the title of "Head of the Culture Division" (*bunka-cho*) at its first meeting in January 1946.

Although Donald Richie reports that Ozu engaged in some manual labor while in the internment camp, Tanaka Masasumi's extremely detailed study of Ozu's wartime activities—*Ozu Yasujiro to Senso*—makes no mention of such whatever and we can therefore probably discount this report.

#### (Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, October 14, 1937
- <sup>2</sup> *Hochi Shinbun*, October 17, 1937
- <sup>3</sup> *Miyako Shinbun*, July 16, 1939
- <sup>4</sup> *Hochi Shinbun*, July 31, 1939
- <sup>5</sup> *Tokyo Shinbun*, August 17, 1939
- <sup>6</sup> *Tairiku*, August, 1939, collected in Tanaka Masumi (ed.) *Ozu Yasujiro Zen Hatsugen: 1933-1945* (Tokyo: Tairyu-sha, 1987)
- <sup>7</sup> *Eiga Fan*, November, 1939 "Senso to Eiga o Kataru"
- <sup>8</sup> *Star*, February, 1940—"Saigo no Ippei Made' Go-hyo"
- <sup>9</sup> Saito co-scripted *Kaze no Naka no Mendori* ("Hen In the Wind") with Ozu in 1948.
- <sup>10</sup> Saito Ryosuke, Ozu Yasujiro and Akiyama Kosaku, *Haruka Nari Fubo no Kuni* (Ofuna: Shochiku Ofuna Satsueisho Kyakuhonbu, 1942). The only available copy of the script, as far as I have been able to ascertain, was at the time I read it located in the private archives of Makino Mamoru, at his home in Kokubunji, Tokyo. The entire archive is now housed at Columbia University. It came into Makino's possession when he purchased the extensive personal collection of the late film director Inoue Kintaro. One of Mr. Makino's many kindnesses to me was to allow me to make a copy of this rare manuscript for the purposes of this paper.
- <sup>11</sup> See Shindo Kaneto, "Ore ha ato de ii yo—Low angle no katachi to shudai" in *Ozu Yasujiro: Hito to Shigoto*, Inoue Kazuo (ed.) (Tokyo: Ban'yu-sha, 1972), p.189. Furthermore, in a conversation I had with Makino Mamoru (10/10/98), the latter proposed three other possible explanations for why it was never submitted for official government inspection (i.e. abandoned): 1. Shochiku's in-house *ken'etsu gakari* ("censorship specialist"--employed by the company, but with close personal ties to the government censors) rated it "unpass-

able,” perhaps after informal discussions with Home Ministry officials; 2. Top Shochiku executives decided to suppress it after privately circulating it to officials at the *Johokyoku* (Information Bureau); 3. Ozu himself, perhaps after receiving revision demands he could not agree with, decided not to make the film. Makino indicates he favors the third explanation. The high quality of the script indicates that Ozu probably did want to make it, as written and submitted in November 1942 and, in a January 1943 issue of *Shin Eiga*, he stated that he was about to go into production on it. His decision to abandon the project, if it was his personal decision, seems have occurred sometime between the end of December and the end of January (when Shochiku announced, in the February 8<sup>th</sup> issue of *Eiga Junpo* that he was to make a *documentary* about Burma).

- <sup>12</sup> A photograph, labeled “*Haruka Nari* production planning session,” and showing Ozu, Sano and Ryu, appears in *Ozu Yasujiro—Hito to Shigoto*, p. 564.
- <sup>13</sup> It is perhaps significant that the “*haruka nari*” (“far from”) in the script title is also a reference to distance.
- <sup>14</sup> *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, August 22, 1939
- <sup>15</sup> *Haruka Naru Fubo no Kuni*, p. 1.
- <sup>16</sup> Donald Richie, *Ozu* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1974), p. 231.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ozu Yasujiro—Hito to Shigoto*, p. 182.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p.198.
- <sup>23</sup> Tanaka Masasumi, *Ozu Yasujiro Shuyu* (Tokyo:Bungei Shunju, 2002), p. 307. *Op. cit.* *Ozu Yasujiro Zen*
- <sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.* *Hatsugen: 1933-1945*, p. 223.