
Consuming fear and justice in a declining welfare state: The case of the Okayama Guardians

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Variety is a promise of opportunities, many and different opportunities, opportunities fitting all skills and any tastes – and so the bigger the city the more likely it is to attract a growing number of people who reject or are refused accommodation and life chances in places that are smaller and so less tolerant of idiosyncrasy and more tight-fisted in the opportunities they offer.¹

I can't (leave you alone.) Not any more. You really piss me off. Why don't you try looking at what's right in front of you? Huh? Why can't you try facing this reality? Because it's scruffy and filthy? Well, that's insulting. Because this reality also happens to be my reality. You have no right to treat it with such contempt, you fool! You're going to run? Run then. But where can you run to? Nimura, where can you run? You'll only end up in one of two places if you run. Either inside your dreams, or inside a prison. Got that?²

0. Politics of consumption of fear/justice and everyday life

Sometime after 11 pm on 23 August 2003, a bullet was shot into the glass of the front

¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love – On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, p. 112.

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² Kurosawa Kiyoshi, *Akarui Mirai*, Japan, 2002.

door of the headquarters of the *Chōgin Nishi Shinyō kumiai* (a credit union affiliated with the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), which is located in the *Zainichi* Korean community near Okayama station. A group who announced themselves as the *Kenkoku Giyūgun* (the volunteer army for nation-building) and *Chōsen Seibatsutai* (the Korea-conquering forces) made the following statement. “We launched the attacks in protest against a port visit to Niigata tomorrow by a spy ship belonging to the lawless state of North Korea. Unless North Korea shows regret for what it has done, we’ll step up our attacks.”¹ Later the suspects were arrested and found to be members of a group called *Tōken Tomo no Kai* (The Sword Friendship Society), a group set up by collectors of samurai swords. In the above statement, we can observe an interesting perception of suspects. That is, the image of an ‘enemy’ outside of the border is replaced by that of an ‘enemy’ living nearby. This kind of xenophobic emotional perception, which is similarly seen in a series of racist statements by the Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, is highly problematic in building a multicultural society in Japan.

On 24 and 25 August, the *Sanyō Shimbun*, a local newspaper in Okayama, reported in both its morning and evening editions on the port visit of the ship *Man gyong bong 92*, the related Port State Controls implemented by Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, as well as the anxieties of local residents. For example, in the morning issue of 25 August, a middle-aged man is reported as having said, “I was expecting that the North Korean issue would cause this kind of thing. The general public can be involved in it, and it is very scary.”³ With such a hostile atmosphere against North Korea, some LDP members attempted to promote economic sanctions, and to ban North Korean vessels from visiting Japan.

The sense of fear provoked by North Korea was stimulated by anxieties about an enemy linked to the North Korean government existing somewhere nearby. Such fears lay behind

³*Mainichi Daily News*, 23 August 2003. <<http://www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/896839/Chogin-0-1.html>> (Accessed through the web on 10 May 2004.)

the idea that *Chōgin* is linked to the North Korean government and that the attack was justified in order to remove the fear. Meanwhile, the local newspaper's discourse promoted the hysterical secular feeling in people's everyday lives that it is only natural to enhance border controls. However, there is no tangible linkage between the subject of fear (the people), the object of fear (the *Zainichi*) and issuance of supposed justice by *Seibatsutai*, and so therefore, there can be in fact no justice at all for anyone. Rather, there was only the consumption of the image of fear/justice, with bare violence being practiced as justice in a reckless manner. In such practices of consumption, the mass-produced exchangeable image of fear/justice creates an 'imagined community'. What we can observe here is what Etienne Balibar called "crisis racism".² In the age of consumption, it is often the acts of consumption, which link people's imaginaries and realities. In that sense, the mass-produced / mass-consumed images of North Korea and the *Mang Gyong Bong 92* 'others' *Zainichi* Koreans ('Korean Residents in Japan') through "crisis racism" and constructs an 'imagined community' of Japanese. Furthermore, in the age of consumption, the range of crisis management goes beyond one's race. 'Neo-races' become the targets of crisis management. Particularly, in the era of the dismantling welfare state, they are regarded as the newly emerging uncertainties. So we should call this phenomenon a crisis of 'neo-racism' that tends to be 'mixophobia'. As Zygmunt Bauman indicates, "Mixophobia manifests itself in the drive towards islands of similarity and sameness amidst the sea of variety and difference".⁴

This paper will examine the role of fear/justice in the everyday life of consumer society. Particularly, I will examine the use of fear/justice in the politics of border control in relation to the 'crisis of neo-racism' or "mixophobia". As a case study, I am going to look at the activities of the Okayama Guardians, a vigilante group established in 1998 in Okayama, a regional city in Western Japan. To begin, I'd like to outline the structure of this paper. Firstly,

⁴ Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class – Ambiguous Identities*, translated by Chris Turner, London and New York: Verso, 1991, first published 1988, p. 218.

it will deal with the significance of research into a regional city in the global era. Secondly, vigilante activism in this regional city will be positioned as a grassroots activity in the context of globalization and the decline of a welfare state. Thirdly, the ideological assertions of the Okayama Guardians will be critically examined through an ethnographic account of their patrolling activities. Fourthly, the relation between the subcultural nature of the Okayama Guardians and consumer society will be critically examined. Fifthly, how their practice towards the subjects of their patrolling activities is actually complementary to the local authorities and neo-liberal ideology will be discussed. Finally, I will propose that the limitations and possibilities of vigilante activism hinge on the establishment of networks with other social movements.

1. Researching the local cities

This paper will not examine the vigilante activities in global cities such as New York, Tokyo and Osaka. It is a case study of vigilante activities in Okayama, a regional city of Japan and the 'hometown' of the researcher. In terms of epistemology as well as in practice, focusing attention on a local/regional city has the following advantages and significances.

First, established in the United States in 1979, the Guardian Angels are now deploying globally; in South America, Europe, and Asia. Under such circumstances, to undertake a case study of vigilante activities in a local city is to examine the local frontiers of vigilante activities, where one can find its limitations and possibilities more clearly than those of global cities. It is because the vigilante activities which originally started in the global cities is more vigorously deployed in the local cities of Japan at this very moment. Furthermore, it is also a matter of concern that there is a lack of infrastructure in terms of institutions and people to deal with globalization issues in the local cities, compared to those of the global cities. The newly emerging liberalism seems to be further promoting this trend by tempting people in the local cities to go out to the global cities.

Secondly, there are advantages in looking from the periphery rather than from the centre,

in order to fight against the politics in consumption of fear/justice. While the ideology of the vigilante activities is globally deployed, there are inconsistencies in actual local practice from that of the centre, such as that of the Japan Guardian Angels. It is in such inconsistencies in practice that the reasoning of vigilante activities and members emerge. This also dissolves the hierarchy of urban/text-centricism in the task of writing global phenomena.⁵ Also, it enables us to clarify 'coevalness' as well as locality, the different sides of the same coin, namely globalization.

Thirdly, it is important to examine the research subject concretely in the context of local politics. Examinations of the limitations and possibilities of the Okayama Guardians should not only provide intellectual satisfaction about local knowledge. It must be knowledge that critically intervenes in the local political context.

Fourthly, there are still inconsistencies in the ideology and practice of vigilante activities in the local cities. For example, these groups do not have established connections to local conservative politicians such as the former mayor of New York, Rudolf Giuliani, or the Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō. Therefore, it is much easier to intervene critically in and cooperatively with the vigilante activities and to seek out other possibilities.

Rather than drawing out the epistemological significance of the vigilante activities, this paper will focus mainly on the aspects of practical intervention, which are mentioned as the third and fourth points above. This is because the researcher is attempting to elaborate academic theory from the practice of everyday life. It is an attempt, through the practice of writing, to draw academic theory about global/local issues from the political and practical motivations that are engendered in everyday life. This practice of writing against globalization from the local city sharply contrasts with, for example, writing practices

⁵ When we write a text, we prefer to choose salient subjects or tend to think of such salient phenomena of subjects because it is considered that they are more sensational to readers. So we prefer metropolises rather than local cities, prime ministers and other important figures rather than local politicians, sophisticated subcultures rather than uninspiring subcultures practiced by ordinary people in everyday life and so forth. While the salient subjects enable you to write acceptable texts for a wider-range readership or journals, they disregard the dynamics of the popular cultures, and marginalize smaller but nevertheless important issues.

presenting the local city as an exotic tourist city. At the same time, it also contrasts sharply with writings about local cities urging them to assimilate themselves to contemporary metropolitan areas as symbolized in the enhancement of urbanization and redevelopment. We must seek a new horizon for writing local cities and their possibilities under globalization and the declining welfare state, in an effort to write local cities in a styles that is neither 'macho urban' nor 'exotic rural' styles.

2. A declining welfare state and the rise of grassroots movements

Viewing the United States from Europe, Zygmunt Bauman points to the transition from a 'labour society' to a 'consumer society' in the 1970s, and to the decline of the social welfare society and the rise of the market economy oriented society. Bauman indicates that the 'loser' in the social welfare system used to be treated 'collectively', as the subject of protection. In the consumer era, the 'loser' has come to be treated as an 'individual'.⁶ Therefore, the political, economic, cultural, historical, social or any background factors of the 'loser' would not be questioned, and the reasons for their 'defeat' would be reduced to 'individual responsibility' as a consumer. In this situation, the 'individual' would be judged by things such as consumer tastes toward items that he or she acquires, which are infinitely categorized into smaller and smaller factions. It is the clothes one wears, the cars one drives, the house one lives in, the restaurant one goes to, and so on, which became the scale for judging people.

The collapse of the bubble economy and Cold War structure swept away the myth of the middle class nation – it is said that 90% of Japanese people used to believe that they belonged to the middle class. The winds of neo-liberalism promoted lay offs in the name of economic rationalization, thereby increasing the number of unemployed people, and disrupting the economies of many families. But in the consumer society the reasons why

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its discontents*, New York: New York University Press, 1997, pp. 35-45.

homeless people overflow in urban areas, why delinquent youth are on the street, why more and more people are involved in sex industries and so forth remains unquestioned. Such people will simply be labeled individually as 'losers' in the consumer society. Furthermore, as Bauman indicates, they may even be considered as criminals. Because of their lack of public appeal, they become scapegoats of 'fear', threats to security, and so subjects to be managed as 'a reserve army of criminals'. The practice of 'justice' and such epistemologically consumed 'fear' are different sides of the same coin. Namely, it is the consumption of 'justice' that is consumed as 'justice'.

It is indeed 'the reserve army of criminals' who are actually being targeted by the vigilante activities of the Okayama Guardians. The model of the Okayama Guardians is the Guardian Angels, established in the New York's South Bronx by Curtis Sliwa in 1979, two years before Ronald Reagan became the President of the United States. Their original activity was to patrol unarmed in the subway line #4, which was considered as a 'muggers express' at that time. In Japan, the Guardian Angels were established in Tokyo in 1996 by Oda Keiji, who had served as the director of the New York Guardian Angels for five years. It was one year after several events such as the '*Hanshin-Awaji* earthquake' and '*Aūm Shinrikiyō* incident' created confusion in Japanese society. According to Oda, he 'felt' Japan was not a safe place any more, when he encountered the sarin gas incidents by *Aūm Shinrikiyō* during his visit to Japan to inspect the damage caused by the '*Hanshin-Awaji* earthquake'.⁷ Indeed, there seem to be that several anti-establishment grassroots movements somehow linked up with the 'fear' toward the decline of the welfare state in Japan.⁸ So, who is being fearful? It is obviously not the people living in 'gated

⁷ Komiya Nobuo, *NPO ni yoru semi-formal na hanzai tōsei – volunteer community commons*, Tokyo: Tachibana Shobō, 2001, pp. 285-289. Oda Keiji, "Guardian Angels no hanzai bōshi katsudō to community zukuri", in Nishikawa Yoshiaki, Matsuo Tadashi, and Isa Atsushi (Ed.), *Shimin Sanka no machizukuri – NPO, Shimin, Jichitai no torikumi kara*, Tokyo: Sōseisha, 2001, pp. 67-82.

⁸ For example, grassroots nationalism movements such as '*Jiyū shugi shikan kenkyū kai*' and '*Atarashi rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai*' were established in 1996. In those grassroots level movements, former leftist activists took important roles. However, in contrast, there are no former activists of any sorts in the vigilante activities

communities' or wealthy neighborhoods, the winners of the age of the neo-liberal economy. Rather, it is the people who cannot afford to live in 'gated communities' and who feel uneasy about the coming future, whom Ghassan Hage refers to as "refugees of the interior".⁹ Following a series of events, the Okayama Guardians were established in 1998 in the business districts of Okayama city. With a population of 0.6 million, Okayama city is the center of Okayama Prefecture. Spread all over Japan are two district headquarters, five district branches, and eighteen patrol districts of the Japan Guardian Angels. The Okayama Guardians do have informal exchanges with them, such as member training, but it does not affiliate with them, seeking its own way. According to Pond¹⁰, a representative of the Okayama Guardians, they chose not to affiliate with Japan Guardian Angels since it was not an equal relationship, and they would be considered as a lower branch of an organization. However, the main manuals and activities are based on those of the Guardian Angels.

The nature of the Okayama Guardians differs substantially from the grassroots nature of the Guardian Angels established in New York. Originally, the Community Safety Planning Division (Safety Department, Okayama Prefectural Police Headquarters) came up with the idea of Guardian Angels in seeking to establish a youth crime prevention volunteer group. They recruited members under the name the Okayama Guardians. However, it was not announced to the general public, and members were recruited through groups affiliated with the police and local colleges. Preparations were initiated in September 1997, and police officers provided instructions on establishing purposes and guidance techniques to thirty prospective members. On 4 April 1998, it was initiated as a contract project funded by the Okayama Prefectural Police Headquarters, and implemented by the Okayama Association

of Okayama Guardians. On the other hand, it is supported by the local police and *Bōhan kyōkai* (Association for the prevention of crime).

⁹ Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism – Searching for hope in a shrinking society*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 2003, p. 21.

¹⁰ In their daily activities, the members of the Okayama Guardians use their nicknames rather than real names. According to them, reasons for this are to prevent prejudice in difference of age, gender, and occupation. Furthermore, it is also for the protection of privacy and organization.

for the Prevention of Crime.¹¹ The annual budget was 5.012 million yen in 1998, and 4.739 million yen in 1999.¹² And in 2003, they were budgeted 3.16 million yen as a community safety project.¹³

Quickly, there arose discord between the police officers (including affiliated members), and the public volunteer members. According to Pond, the police officers who were *Jūdō* and *Kendō* experts left due to disagreements about activities, and the matter of insurance in case of accidents. From 1999, the Okayama Guardians was restarted solely by volunteer members consisting of mature adults and students, and they confirmed that they could patrol by themselves. Pond looked back at the first year and said, “We can’t act effectively if we are considered by the public as an agent of authority such as an organization affiliated with the police or with campaign groups.” Then he emphasized the importance of communication on the horizontal level with the public instead of the top-down approach of the police. He says proudly, “We began to be recognized as one of the crime prevention organizations after the police stepped back two years ago”.

Cannot this anti-establishment perspective from the “bottom” be considered as the other side of the ‘fear’ that the welfare state is declining? Because nobody will protect them, they must take care of themselves. What Pond proudly told me reminds me of one of the scenes from Michael Moore’s film, *Bowling for Columbine*. Members of a militia group in a country village of Michigan, battered by the winds of neo-liberalism, are training with M16s and other automatic weapons, insisting that nobody would protect them, so they must

¹¹ The Okayama Association for the Prevention of Crime was established in 1985, and the governor of Okayama is its representative. Its eight projects of 2003 are as follows. (1) Promotion of crime prevention ideology, (2) Coordination of crime prevention organizations, (3) Coordination of affiliated organizations, (4) Cooperation and support for activities fostering healthy youth, (5) Purification activities targeting the entertainment and amusement environments, (6) Comprehensive research of crime prevention measures, (7) Commendation of the crime prevention organization and distinguished services, (8) Any other projects to achieve this organization’s purposes.

¹² Komiya, *ibid*, see pages 228-231.

¹³ “Shadan hōjin Okayama ken bōhan kyokai no gaiyō”, *Shōkō rōdō keisatsu iinkai shiryō*, Keisatsu Honbu, 15 July 2003.

protect themselves, with their own arms.

This is an American tradition. It's an American responsibility to be armed. If you are not armed, you are not responsible. Who is gonna defend your kids? Cops? Federal Government?¹⁴

3. Dare to Care!

On 16 December 2003, the members of the Okayama Guardians participated in the end of year crime prevention campaign, which was held under the auspices of the Okayama Prefectural Police Headquarters and the Okayama Association for the Prevention of Crime. The event was held in the underground open space in the *Omote-chō*, the business and shopping quarter of Okayama city. The brass band of Okayama Prefectural Police Headquarters played the popular songs by artists such as SMAP, Matsutōya Yumi, and of course, the image song for the 2005 National Athletic Meet to be held in Okayama. On the back of the band, there was a banner saying, “The end of year special guard enforcement – exterminate street crimes – have a nice end of year and New Year”. The place was surrounded by hard-faced policemen and by people working in the local TV, radio, and press. Amid a number of organizations at this theatre of crime prevention, there were Guardian angels, wearing black pants and boots, and red jackets with the message printed on the back, “We are volunteer staff”. Seven members, including Pond, Bean, Sniper, Piano, Alf, Sleepy, and Haō, participated in this campaign. One of the highlights of this event, the governor of Okayama, Ishii Masahiro’s speech, confirmed the reason why people were there: “The number of crimes have increased in the last six consecutive years.”

The ceremony ended, and the Governor Ishii walked down the *Omote-chō shōtengai*

¹⁴Michael Moore, *Bowling For Columbine*, Canada, 2002. Produced in 2002 by the journalist and movie director Michael Moore, it won the Oscar for best documentary at the 2003 Academy Awards, the 55th Anniversary Prize at 2002 Cannes Film Festival and many other awards. The village of Deckerville where the militia groups are living is located one hundred km northwest of Flint, where Michael Moore is originally from. It is a small village with a population of less than one thousand.

(*Omote-chō* shopping center) and pronounced the necessity of crime prevention to shop owners and passers-by. Stopping at the newly installed security cameras, a middle-aged man in a suit explained to the governor about crime prevention techniques of the new era. It was the members of the Okayama Guardians who walked at the head of the group.

“Good evening!”

“Please get off from your bike!”

Using small transceivers, they communicated with each other, reporting on what was going on. The camera of RSK, the local TV station, shot the red and black angels, and images of red and black could be seen to permeate the imagination of people in everyday life. The whole event was finished within one hour when the governor and his entourage reached the local department store *Tenmaya*, the centre of the shopping quarters in *Omote-chō shōtengai*. Back to the normal routine, forming a straight line, the angels patrol on the way to their office. Rather unilaterally, they greet the people passing by, the shoppers, salary men and students on their way home.

“Good evening!”

People look back at the angels, and their activities draw ridicule from passers-by.

“What is that all about?”

Nevertheless, the angels carry out their duty, the practice of ‘justice’. They warn the group of students riding bikes on the shopping street, where it is prohibited to ride bikes.

“You must not ride bikes here!”

Some students warned by the unfamiliar red and black angels got off from their bikes in a fluster. But others just ignore the admonitions.

Along from the shopping street, they find some *pinku bira* –stickers advertising sex services – covering a public phone booth. They remove the stickers, decorated with smiling female pictures and phone numbers, carefully erasing all traces of evil. While removing stickers, other members do not forget to take defensive positions in case of attack. Having removed these stickers peacefully, they put them into a plastic bag, and go to the police

station located at the JR Okayama Station. They report what is going on the streets and hand over their takings to the police officer.

The streets and underground shopping areas near JR Okayama Station are where the young street musicians, poets and their fans hang around until very late at night. Most of them are teenagers and in their early twenties, and they are the targets of the angel's patrolling activities, namely the project of 'fostering a healthy youth'. The members exchange conversation with young musicians and fans, and advise them not to litter the area with trash – juice bottles and cigarette butts – and to keep the area looking clean. Sometimes, the Angels buy the works of musicians and poets as if in testimony to the concrete existence of horizontal communication. However, without penetrating too deeply into conversations with young artists and fans, they leave the place within a few minutes and head for their next targets.

Passing the amusement quarters not far from there, they go to a park where their next targets – skateboarders and homeless – stay. On that day, around 8 pm which is slightly earlier than their regular patrol, they found a couple, wearing high school uniforms, chatting on top of a climbing frame. They expose the couple with strong light generated by the American-made high-powered flashlight 'Scorpion' and tell them in a friendly tone.

"It is pretty late at night. Maybe you guys should go home."

Diminishing the satisfaction of Angels, and perhaps their confidence that they are fostering a healthy youth, the highlighted couple got off the climbing frame and left the place wordlessly.

The young angels Sleepy and Haō try to communicate with two middle-aged homeless men, which is generally the task of Pond, the senior leader among the members. After a while one of the homeless men continues to talk and talk, and the two young angels do not know what to do, confronted with the bitter accounts of the homeless man's life. The unilateral conversation continues for about half an hour.

Originally advocated by Curtis Sliwa, the founder of the Guardian Angels, "Dare to Care"

is the motto of the Okayama Guardians. The idea is based on the 'broken windows theory', which was advocated by an American psychologist Philip Zimbardo in 1969. The theory is based on empirical studies that indicate leaving a broken window causes another window to be broken, eventually leading to a chaotic situation, and an increase in the number of crimes.¹⁵ This theory was further developed by the Social Criminologists James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982.¹⁶ In short, the theory states that minor crimes encourage chaos and disorder, thus, they should not be neglected. Therefore, it is 'the reserve army of minor criminals' who must be the target of patrolling activities. In fact, the patrol activities of the Okayama Guardians target the uncertain 'losers' of consumer society, namely the youths in the street, pimps and sex workers in the sex industries (including foreigners), homeless people, and *pinku bira*. As Shibuya Nozomu states, "in order to arouse fear towards poverty, it is effective to isolate poor people by criminalizing them."¹⁷ The eliminated 'loser' can be managed as 'the enemy inside'.

In the *Okayama Guardians – 2002 Annual Report*, Pond states his opinion as follows: "Communication which does not care about others and preventing unpleasant feelings will only create self-centered ideas, and enhance the culture of 'pretending not to see'". He thinks that we should overcome such social conditions by revitalizing "communication between people".¹⁸ This nihilistic idea of Pond against politics and social movements may be interpretable as an earnest 'fear' that the era in which the nation-state protects the people is in decline.¹⁹ However, his idea of 'apathy', which he believes is widespread

¹⁵ Philip G. Zimbardo, "The human choice: Individuation, reason, and order versus deindividuation, impulse, and chaos, in W. J. Arnold & D. Levine eds., *1969 Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970, pp. 237-307.

¹⁶ James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows – The police and neighbourhood safety", in *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982, pp. 29-37. (Accessed through the web: *The Atlantic Online* on 9 April 2004.)

¹⁷ Shibuya Nozomu, "Shōhi shakai ni okeru kyōfu no katsuyō", in *Gendai Shisō*, Seidosha, June 2001, pp. 64-76, p. 73.

¹⁸ *Okayama Guardians – 2002 Annual Report*.

¹⁹ I am using the term 'nihilism' in the sense that Pond is generating 'nihilism' himself by representing people as they are falling into 'nihilism'. However, it is not the case that I am essentializing the existence of nihilism.

among Japanese people is not based on any empirical data, but merely 'feeling'. In the very foundation of such notions, there is illogical thinking that a *Gemeinschaft*-type of community has disappeared and that a *Gesellschaft*-type of community has not yet been established. There is nihilism which underestimates the various rights established through the practices of social movements, and nostalgia for a *Gemeinschaft*-type of community. Indeed, he himself is generating 'apathy' by not looking at the political, economic, historical, social, and cultural ties and networks which actually exist.

We cannot 'see' 'the reserve army of minor criminals' with eyes trained in consumer society. Yet, in the discourses of everyday life, particularly through the media, we only consume them as defeated human waste and objects of 'fear' that you do not want to become. However, they are not 'Sushi Trains' or one of the millions of Toyota Camrys existing all over the world. They are not mass-produced commercial products, but human beings, and each of them has their own history. Such eyes are not looking at 'why' the 'loser' exists. No 'why' exists unless we take into account the very gaze that seeks that 'why', and they must be managed as 'the reserved army of minor criminals' because they are covered with 'shabby' consumer items. It is the desire to manage uncertainties, which increases 'fear' in society.

4. 'Good' & 'Cool'

A distinct characteristic of the Okayama Guardians that is visible in their vigilante activities is the fusion of the subcultural sense of 'good' and 'cool'. It is that sense of 'good' and 'cool' which attracts and motivates members to engage in the volunteer vigilante activities. The vigilante activities, for them, are 'good' and 'cool', just like heroes and heroines in TV dramas, cartoons, and anime. The 'good' becomes consumable without a solid social knowledge because it is 'cool'.²⁰ This characteristic of the current vigilante activities indicates that their sense of 'justice' is the by-product of the consumer society.

²⁰ The term social knowledge is used here to reveal the contrast between intellectual and secular knowledge.

Their fantasies of 'good' and 'cool' come from the very fact that it is a volunteer activity, and also manifest several subcultural features related to fashions, anime cultures, nicknames, military subculture, and martial arts.

Firstly, the very fact that it is a volunteer activity legitimizes them to themselves, allowing the notion that because they are practicing 'justice', therefore, their activities are 'good'. As the back of their red jackets clearly elucidate: "We are volunteer staff". The members participated in the activities of their own free will, and without being paid. They are indeed sacrificing their precious time after work, school, and part-time jobs, from 7 to 10 pm on Tuesday and Saturday nights. Unlike those of the Japan Guardian Angels and the Fukuoka Street Hawks²¹, the Okayama Guardians as an organization do not support any particular political groups. The members are non-political as well. On the other hand, they believe that they are practicing 'good' because it is voluntary, free work. So are they doing 'good' without any political intentions or desires? How is that possible? A senior at a private college, Sleepy talks about himself as "having a strong sense of justice" and "knowing good from evil". For him, the practice of the Okayama Guardians is to "cut off the root of evil." His simple sense of 'justice' is not connected to social justice with any political meanings. What he feels as 'evil', what he refers as "environmental pollution" such as "*pinku bira*, graffiti, and *syūkaizoku*" ('let's-meet-up-and-hang-around-tribe') merely exist in everyday life, but without clear antecedents. In other words, his sense of justice is nothing but the representation of mere secular feeling. On the other hand, unlike a rural village society where people know each other, the post-modern Japanese society is complex enough that one's feeling of 'justice' would not be able to directly deal with it. Sleepy's practice of 'justice' is shaped in the consumer era, and in that sense, it takes the form of the 'consumption of justice'.

Secondly, the practice of 'justice' by the members of the Okayama Guardians also

²¹ This vigilante group was established in December 2000 by a conservative local politician (not affiliated to a particular party), Mizuki Shirō, a member of the Fukuoka municipal assembly. The information can be acquired through their website: <http://www.street-hawks.com/>

reveals that it is the by-product of the consumer era. The 'good' is complemented by the subcultural sense of 'cool'. First of all, this is apparent in the styles of activities, fashions, nicknames and so forth; the subculture taste associates with Guardian Angels, which fascinates the members into becoming members. According to the Criminal Sociologist, Komiya Nobuo, 'cool' is playing an important role for the members of the Japan Guardian Angels.²² The style of the Okayama Guardians is based on the Guardian Angels that originated in New York, and some of the members actually trained with the Japan Guardian Angels in Tokyo. So it is the subculture of Guardian Angels that is being practiced and considered 'cool'. But what is 'cool' about it? In the following, the subculture of Guardian Angels; TV drama or anime-type of thinking, nicknames, clothing, military subculture, and martial arts, will be briefly examined.

Pond says, "Our goal is to make criminals recognize 'we should stop this since they (the Guardians) came over' and the citizens to recognize, 'they will help us'". Then he tried to explain to me his inspiration and imagination of their destiny, which was engendered by the popular TV show *The Guard Man – Tokyo keibi shirei* (1965-1971). It was an extremely popular show during that time, modeled on *SECOM (Nihon Keibi Hoshō)* which was established in 1962. The theme of the story is well reflected in the opening narration by *Akutagawa Takayuki*.

The Guard Man is a story of brave men whose business is guarding and security, to face up squarely to the crimes surging in the big city. During the day, they secure people's lives, and during the night, they allow people to go to sleep peacefully. The Guard Man are unknown men who work hard every day in the names of liberty and responsibility.²³

Pond continues, "Like Utsui Ken in the *The Guard Man*, my goal is to clean up by patrolling." His 'justice' has nothing to do with social justice, it is, rather, a desire to be the

²² Komiya, *ibid*, p. 301.

²³ *The Guard Man – Tokyo Keibi Shirei*, TBS, 1965-1971.

'cool' hero of the drama.

The nicknames of the members; Pond, Musashi, Sniper, Piano, Peach, Ken, Sleepy, Alf, Haō, Sanji, Jesus, recall heroes and heroines from the animations. The nicknames, written in *Katakana*, are fanciful, and enable them to identify as 'cool' heroes and heroines of the fantasy.

One can readily see links between their activities and *Cosplay*, which literally refers to "costume" and "play". Dressing up and pretending to be a fictional character, usually the heroes and heroines of science fictions, comic books, and anime characters. The keynote colour of the caps, jackets, T-shirts, and pants of Okayama Guardians: red, black, and white are the same as those of the Guardian Angels. According to Komiya, "This flamboyant uniform establishes member's identities on the one hand, and is expected to visualize the role model for youth on the other".²⁴ Their original symbol is the griffin from the Greek mythology who "protects the treasures of gold". Pond says, "The Okayama Guardians are willing to be guardian deities who maintain security, which is gold treasure for the people in the local community."

As animation-inspired heroes, they need grounding for their strength, to become a guardian deity. Their military-flavoured fashions, 'Scorpion' and transceivers engender a sense of the macho. More importantly, the martial arts culture also plays a significant role, as the ground of their strength. Pond, Piano, Haō, and Sleepy are masters of *Shaolin Kempō*. So protecting themselves without any weapons but their very physical skills are believed to be sufficient against 'the reserve army of minor criminals'.

There is strong interest in 'security' among the four young members; Sleepy, Alf, Haō, and Sniper, who are seeking to get jobs after graduation from college. Their expected future careers are: policeman, juvenile officer, and a member of the Self-Defence Forces. In fact, Alf was offered a position as a police officer with the Tokushima Prefectural Police and as a juvenile officer in Okayama, choices from which she eventually chose to become a

²⁴ Komiya, *ibid*, see page 292-293.

juvenile officer.

Their patrolling manuals are based on that of the Guardian Angels, who they refer as 'G. A'. The self-defence of those designed in US society, where the opponents are assumed to carry guns, seems to be rather an exotic performance when it is practiced in the shopping streets, office buildings, crossroads, and so forth in Okayama. The dissociation between their patrolling ideology and practice seems to be rather comical. It often induces passers-by to burst into laughter. On the other hand, the performance seems to be engendering confidence in the members to engage in such activities.

The innocent sense of 'good' and the subcultural sense of 'cool' are the two main foundations of the Okayama Guardians. This 'good' and 'cool' do not come from the demands of particular people, therefore, it lacks certain elements of social movements such as the fact that the core advocacy of their campaign has nothing to do with the genealogy of social 'justice'. In fact, no members have been engaged in any types of social movements. Instead, what is motivating members to be engaged is the innocent sense of justice, just like heroes and heroines from movies and TVs. Thus, obviously, they lack understanding toward social movements and concepts which spread globally. Rather, they tend to reduce all social problems to security issues. In their view, the homeless people, young people, pimps and sex workers on the streets are nothing but social terrorists endangering Japanese homeland security.

5. Managing 'the reserve army of minor criminals' from the top and bottom

Bauman states that the "dangerous classes" of the era of the welfare state were redefined as the "classes of criminal" in the era of the market economy-oriented society.

Given the nature of the game now played, the hardships and misery of those left out of it, once treated as a collectively caused blight which needs to be dealt with by collective means, can be only redefined as an individual crime. The 'dangerous classes' are thus redefined as classes of criminals. And so the

prisons now fully and truly deputize for the fading welfare institutions.²⁵

For the people engaging in vigilante activities, who are practicing crime prevention measures, the “classes of criminals” are ‘the reserve army of minor criminals’. They are the targets of the Okayama Guardians patrols: youths in the streets, homeless people in the park, people in the sex industries, and so forth. What we can observe from the practice of the Okayama Guardians is that there is a conflict between the police authority exercised from the top and the vigilante activities generated from the bottom. On the other hand, their actions are complementary in terms of the management of ‘the reserve army of minor criminals’.

‘Foot patrolling’ is the core activity of the Okayama Guardians, and the core practice for managing ‘the reserve army of minor criminals’ from the bottom. The members usually patrol the business and shopping quarters. The patrolling course is not strictly designed but the targets that they are looking for are: the street musicians and poets sitting and performing in the streets in front of JR Okayama Station, the young people smoking and chatting at the underground shopping complex of JR Okayama Station, pimps and sex workers standing on the street corners and in front of shops, the homeless in the park, the public telephone booths, covered with *pinku bira*. Other than such managing activities, moving bikes from studded paving blocks to aid the blind people, calling out for bikers to turn their lights on and to stop dinking, not to cross streets on red lights, and not to litter. These patrolling activities are reported to Ken who is sitting by the radio in the office, writing down one by one whatever is reported by the members. This contributes the invention of an ‘imagined community’ of people practicing ‘justice’.

It is indeed, ‘the reserve army of minor criminals’ who are being targeted as subjects to be managed. In the case of the Okayama Guardians, although they are certainly aware of the existence of the female foreign pimps and sex workers whom the members think are Chinese, they are not considered as important targets since their number is small. However,

²⁵ Bauman (1997), *ibid*, page 41.

as their increase in number became an issue able to be visualized by the public, the situation changes, and they are the next targets.²⁶ Furthermore, when I participated in their patrolling activities, they did not patrol the entertainment districts where the bars and sex industries are concentrated and 'general crimes' occur more frequently. Instead, they focus on 'the reserve army of minor criminals' in the underground shopping complex, streets, and park. What is being practiced here seems to be the concept that 'minor crimes' are more crucial than 'vicious crimes', an idea advocated by George Kelling, who took a leading role in the public security of New York City from the mid-1980s.²⁷

In managing 'the reserve army of minor criminals', the members of the Okayama Guardians aim to communicate with them equally but oppressively. Pond thinks the ideal relationship with them is to be their "father and friends". However, it is literally impossible to be a father to so many young people in the streets. Instead, this observer's impression is that it is highly likely that it is not a father-son or friend-friend relationship that is being established. On the contrary, it is the image of 'communication with youth' being achieved, which is unilaterally being 'consumed' by the members. Their interests are exclusively with security issues, so the social and family backgrounds of the young people are out of the range of their patrolling activities. Rather, the young people are simply gazed at as individual/consumer, detached from any kinds of social contexts.

More importantly, they are playing an important role as agents complementing the local police and government demands for security and urban purification from the 'bottom'. Their activities to 'purify' people's manners in public places seem to be synchronized with the promotion of the redevelopment of the business and shopping quarters of central Okayama. How it 'looks' is the key for its management. For example, the homeless people in a park who symbolize the economic stagnation and lay offs of recent decades are managed as

²⁶ The policeman and the members of Okayama Guardians think the pimps and prostitutes standing on one street corner are Chinese.

²⁷ The idea advocated by George Kelling has been introduced to Sapporo Central Station in 2001, and it is reported that the rate of crimes decreased by 12%.

subjects who pollute the public toilets of the 'citizens'. It is not accompanied with bare violence, but the conversation which seems to be building mutual confidence between the members and homeless men is actually a way to manage the shabby subjects. Thus, the members attempt to talk to them, but they do not have any intention of dealing with the social issues behind the homeless people. Another case is their graffiti cleaning activities, organized by *Omote-chō shōtengai*. The graffiti is seen as the subject to be removed, but without reference to reasons why the young people want to draw graffiti. Distant from public eyes, 'the reserve army of minor criminals' is eliminated to the periphery of people's imaginations as a spectacle of everyday life in the consumer society.

The police also play an important role. The support of the police is crucial in the 'foot patrol'. Usually, a police officer from the Community Safety Planning Division, Safety Department, East Okayama Police Station follows the members from ten to twenty meters behind. Sometime, he shoots them with his digital camera for the purpose of advertising the activities. Therefore, while the members of Okayama Guardians advocate 'justice' from the 'bottom', it is obviously under the management of the local police. Furthermore, the strong presence of police also can be seen after every patrol when they hand in the removed *pinku bira* to the police station at JR Okayama Station, with reports on what is going on. Nevertheless, despite such management by the police authorities, Pond and other members believe that they are practicing 'justice' from the 'bottom'.

Overall, under the management of the local police and government, the members of the Okayama Guardians manage the homeless people, street musicians and poets, youths in the streets, foreigners, *pinku bira* and so on, as subjects to be eliminated. And such elimination is a practice drawing a border between 'here' and 'the reserve army of minor criminals'. However, the motivation of the Okayama Guardians from the 'bottom' is based on the feeling of 'fear' toward 'the reserve army of minor criminals'. In that sense, it is nothing but the consumption of the sense of 'fear/justice'. On the internal border, they become subjects to be managed. It is a domestic border control movement from the

'bottom' to complement the local authority, which is reflecting the hysterical psychology of the "refugees of the interior". Their fears come from a very earnest reality where global and neo-liberal competition is the most severe: the borderline between 'Us' and 'Others'. For them, 'the reserve army of minor criminals' are the 'Others', which they themselves must not become. They fear that 'Others' might be their own future. In that sense, we may call this as a competition between those to not desiring to become part of 'the reserved army of minor criminals'.

6. A proposal to establish a network in the local city

Amid the transformation of the social structure under globalization and the demise of the welfare state, how should people in Okayama deal with the issues related to 'the reserve army of minor criminals'? They should not create a fortress city of the Los Angeles type, as described in Mike Davis's *City of Quartz*, through the vigilante activities of fear/justice.²⁸ We do not need cleaning volunteers to sweep every corner of the fortress city, to eliminate 'the reserve army of minor criminals' to the marginalized slums in the people's spectacle imagination in everyday life. Nor do we have the time to be pessimistic and fear that the future of Okayama will be the fortress city. We must face the very reality of the local community. Political practices that take advantage of the small scale of the local city must be tested. The local city is a place where urban problems are less extreme than in the metropolis, thus, it is a frontier whereupon to seek and construct political practices to deal with serious urban issues. This will not take the form of future-oriented crime prevention. On the contrary, dealing with various social issues of Okayama will provide a prescription to deal with even more serious urban issues such as slums in metropolitan areas. We must critically articulate the subcultural knowledge, which Okayama Guardians expresses in their patrolling activities, to knowledge of social movements.

To be provocative, I would suggest that the Okayama Guardians should manage 'the

²⁸ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz – Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, London and New York: Verso, 1990.

reserve army of minor criminals' thoroughly. They should not just be satisfied with the spectacle of volunteer cleaning activities. Instead, they must face up to the social, economic, and historical backgrounds of 'the reserve army of minor criminals'. They must look at why the young people sit and smoke in the streets, why female foreigners must engage in touting for business on the streets, and why one homeless man is chatting with another homeless man in the park. And to realize that is not disconnected from the everyday lives of members of the Okayama Guardians. Thus, affiliated with the Okayama Prefectural Police and the Okayama Association for the Prevention of Crime, they must seek an alternative, in denying oppressive authority from the 'top', and in establishing networks with other social movements that engage with the homeless, foreigners, domestic violence, and so forth. It is in this way that members of the Okayama Guardians might realize connections among the people in Okayama and their historical backgrounds. Thereby would they avoid falling into nihilism, and be released from the illusion that society is filled with apathy.

However, many of us might still feel skeptical about the possibilities of a transformation from the spectacle of cleaning volunteer activities to social movements. Others may refer to the historical facts of vigilante activities in Japan and fear the potential danger of their activities in future. Of course, we must be aware of that history. However, we must face and grapple with the fear of "the refugees of the interior" in reconstructing society and social movements. Because the fact that people who are managing and being managed are the same refugees of the interior. Both of them are lost in the global capitalism and do not have any literacy toward it. We should not simply draw a line between them; 'good' and 'bad', 'winner' and 'loser', 'clean' and 'dirty', and so forth because both of them are suffering from the neo-liberal competition. So what we ultimately must fight against is not the vigilante groups or 'the reserve army of minor criminals' but intervene in the very reality of neo-liberal economy. Such hopes can be only sought through such very experimental ways of reconstructing society.

*The researcher observed the vigilante activities of the Okayama Guardians four times during December 2003 and January 2004. During their patrolling activities, I followed ten to twenty meters behind the members with a police officer from Community Safety Planning Division, Safety Department, East Okayama Police Station. After the patrol, I interviewed eight members of the ten who participated in patrolling activities during that time. In 2001, there were thirty four members (twenty nine male/five female). Currently, there are twenty three members, of whom I met ten during the investigating period. The nicknames of the members that I have interviewed are as follows; Pond (representative of the Okayama Guardians, male, small construction business owner), Piano (male, company employee), Ken (Female, company employee), Sniper (male, college student), Alf (female, job seeker), Sleepy (male, college student), Been (male, small business owner), Haō (male, student). In interviews, I did not use a voice recorder, taking memos in notebooks.

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