

# ... through the pines

The land and the ocean are both living, changing things, and the coastline – where these beings connect with each other – constantly moves and dances over time. Archeological digs around the site of this installation (i.e., the Kyushu University Museum on the former Hakozaki Campus) show that the wall built along the coast to protect Kyushu against Mongolian invaders in the 1270s ran near here. Medieval anchor stones have also been unearthed. Both of these show that this area was right on the coast at that time. When Kyushu Imperial University was founded and began to be constructed here in 1911, topographical maps show that the coastline had extended to about 700 meters away. Today, thanks entirely to landfill construction, the coast is two kilometres distant.

Part of the academic-scientific-medical arm of Imperial Japan from its foundation, Kyushu University has been involved in many colonial and imperial misadventures abroad. But here on this site, there has also been contestation: A place of defence against foreign invasion in the 13th century, and land reclamation by the imperial military during the Pacific War, the construction of Kyushu University's buildings here were strongly contested by the local population of farmers and fishers. Their land was eventually expropriated as they never came to an agreement with the imperial government. Human construction is also constantly at odds with the land itself. The sandy coastal soil, great for the pine trees which once grew so plentifully here, is unstable and not well suited for building large buildings on.

The 6-channel sound installation ... through the pines is divided into three zones, each with its own multifarious character. The eastern, oceanic zone (imagining the stones in the garden as a meandering river flowing into the ocean, this zone is the ocean) is a memory of the deep past, when this area was ocean waters, waters which are now underground and the ocean itself two kilometres distant. It comprises sounds recorded in Hakata Bay at the closest point to Hakozaki campus where the Bay can be accessed, as well as sounds from the basement (underground level) of the museum. It is the lowest, oldest, and deepest layer of the sound installation.

The western, upstream zone is a memory of the sky, of heaven, and of the trees (pine and otherwise) which once grew on this land. 300 meters west of here a few old pines remain on what is now a construction site but was, when Kyushu University was being planned, the edge of the pine forest which grew on the coastline (called: Jizō no Matsubara). The recordings in this zone were made of the dawn chorus (of various types of birds) in that straggling pine grove remnant, as well as recordings from the highest floor of the museum. That these trees, however few they are, live on is hopeful, outliving the university buildings which toppled most of their brethren. Perhaps someday a pine forest might grow here again. This is the top, future-facing layer of the sound installation.

In medieval Japanese aesthetic cosmologies (typical, for example, of *nō* theatre), a tripartite structure where two elements were ocean and sky would naturally be complemented by the third, earth. In this installation, however, between the low and high, between the natural interweaving of these three elements comes human modernity. On this specific site, that takes the form of the Imperial University. Along with the unpredictable roaring of airplanes overhead, the central (downstream) zone thus plays the role of an impedance, a dam which disrupts the flow of sonic energies between the eastern upstream zone and the western ocean zone. Its sonic material is drawn from Kyushu University Museum's collection of shellac records (78 RPM), used from the late 19th century to around the 1950s, before vinyl became standard, and played on the museum's historical record players.

The poet Wakayama Bokusui (1885–1928) visited Kyushu University and the Hakozaki coastline sometime prior to 1913, when Kyushu University basically consisted solely of its medical faculty. One of the poems he wrote during his visit reflects the three zones of the installation:

Behind the somehow ocean-like grove of pines the university's red smokestacks loom

The title of this work, however, comes from another poet, Nagatsuka Takashi (1879–1915), who spent his last year alternately recovering from and then finally dying of tuberculosis in Kyushu University's hospital and nearby guesthouses. Walking among the pine trees was, for him, restorative, comforting, and hopeful.