

A FILM BY AYA DOMENIG

太陽が落ちた日

THE DAY

THE SUN FELL



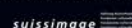
ICAN FILMS GmbH presents a film by AYA DOMENIG

Camera MRINAL DESAI Editing TANIA STÖCKLIN Sound MAKOTO TAKAOKA Original Score MARCEL VAID Sound Design OSWALD SCHWANDER Re-recording Mixer RALF KRAUSE Colorist ROGER SOMMER
Post Production Services ANDROMEDA FILM Written and Directed by AYA DOMENIG Produced by MIRJAM VON ARX, TANJA MEDING in Coproduction with SRF, SRG SSR, YLE

ican films SRF SRG SSR yle



www.thedaythesunfell.com



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CAST

Kiyomi Doi
Chizuko Uchida
Shuntaro Hida
Hitoshi Kai
Mai Nakata
Shoei Nakata

Kayoko Miyaji
Teruko Ueno
Natsuko Ishikawa
Chieko Matsumoto
Tsuyuko Nakakita
Hiromi Tsuji

Hideki Tabii
Kazumi Muratani
Toshimasa Sakaki
Satoshi Urabe
Mioko Doi
Yoshiya und Mieko Doi

CREW

Written and Directed by: AYA DOMENIG
Produced by: MIRJAM VON ARX, TANJA MEDING
Cinematography: MRINAL DESAI
Additional Camera: SIMON GUY FÄSSLER
MEHDI SAHEBI
AYA DOMENIG
MICHAEL KOMAGATA
Sound Recording: MAKOTO TAKAOKA
IVO SCHLÄPFER
Editing: TANIA STÖCKLIN
AYA DOMENIG
GISELA CASTRONARI-JANESCH
PETRA BECK
Story Consultant: MARTIN WITZ
Original Score: MARCEL VAID
Sound Design: OSWALD SCHWANDER
Re-recording Mixer: RALF KRAUSE
Sound Studio: TONBÜRO BERLIN GMBH
Colorist: ROGER SOMMER
Post Production Studio: ANDROMEDA FILM AG
Assistant Editing: ADRIAN AESCHBACHER
Narrators: JASMIN FRIEDRICH
MASAO FUKUMOTO
Translations: MIOKO DOI-DOMENIG
KAORI IMAJO
Subtitles: CATHERINE AGUILAR
CHRISTOPH KOHLER
BABELFISCH TRANSLATIONS, AYA KOUAMÉ
Production: ICAN FILMS
Coproduction: SRF SRG SSR, YLE
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SUCCÈS PASSAGE ANTENNE

SYNOPSIS



Swiss-Japanese filmmaker Aya Domenig, the granddaughter of a doctor on duty for the Red Cross during the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, approaches the experience of her deceased grandfather by tracing the lives of a doctor and of former nurses who once shared the same experience. While gathering the memories and present views of these very last survivors, the nuclear disaster in Fukushima strikes and history seems to repeat itself.

The protagonists of *THE DAY THE SUN FELL* have made it their task in life to fight tirelessly against the silence reigning over the true medical and social effects of the atomic bomb. By doing so, they address a long suppressed aspect of the past that since the nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima painfully forces itself back into the consciousness of many Japanese.

Director's Note

In my search of my grandfather's past it was the critical thinking of the film's main protagonists Chizuko Uchida and Shuntaro Hida that made me understand that in our family, just as in the majority of Japan's population, thoughts about the atom bomb have usually been repressed. Not only my grandfather has been silent throughout of his life, also his family has asked him virtually no questions and never brought his illness in connection with the radiation to which he had been exposed in Hiroshima. There are various reasons why many atom bomb victims have kept silent. On the one hand, with many of them the trauma was most severe; on the other hand, it was at the time of the American occupation strictly forbidden to speak about details of the atom bomb and its effects. Many also concealed that they had been exposed to radiation for fear of social discrimination; too big was the risk to find neither work nor marriage partner.

The political climate in the 1950s was also unfavourable to the revealing of critical facts regarding the atom bomb and its effects. The Americans conducted at that time one nuclear bomb test after another and propagated the 'peaceful uses' of atomic energy. Any information about the destructive side of this technology was in the way; and the Japanese Government followed this course.

So the silence in my grandfather's family led me on the track of larger social and political repression processes which have become the main themes of the film.

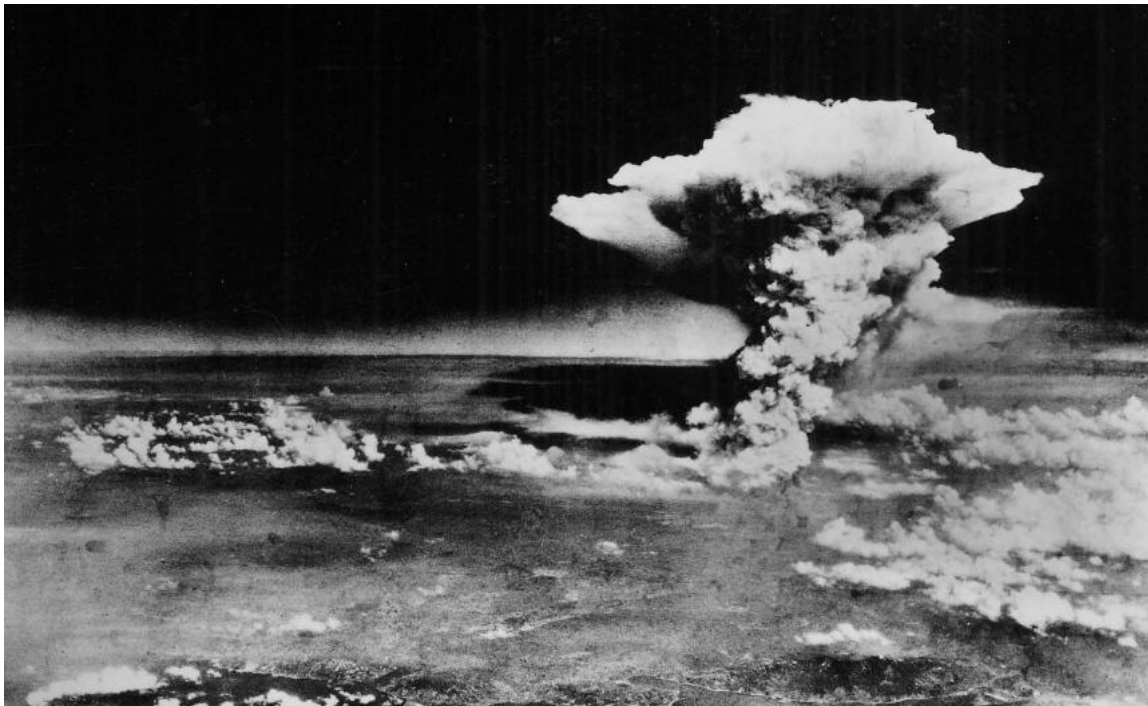
When in 2010, I started with my first researches I could not foresee that a year later the Fukushima nuclear disaster would take me back into the present. But the unthinkable happened, and one thing became frighteningly clear to me: The silence might be repeated after Fukushima. Society and politics today again build on the expectation that people want to look forward and to forget the unpleasant. Too important is the nuclear industry in Japan; too difficult it is to imagine a radical turn.

But at first, I was still full of hope. After the atomic disaster, thousands of people demonstrated against the restart of the decommissioned nuclear power plants. I was not the only one who thought that Fukushima would finally open the people's eyes and lead to big changes. But even though many went on the streets and seventy percent of the population said in surveys to be for the nuclear power phase-out, this was soon no longer an issue in everyday life. And today, almost five years after Fukushima, the media hardly report about the damaged nuclear plant, although contaminated water flows still daily into the sea.

Whereas shortly after Fukushima the nuclear phase-out was decided in Japan, the Government of Prime Minister Abe is now on the opposite course. The first reactor has been put back into operation and despite massive protests the remains of the contaminated tsunami debris have been spread across the country and been burned in poorly equipped refuse incineration plants. Meanwhile almost 100'000 refugees of the reactor disaster still live in temporary emergency dwellings. When the compensation payments expire in 2018 financial reasons will force many of them to return to areas that are released by the Government but still contaminated.

Although many Japanese feel pessimistic about these developments it is important not to give up, as do the protagonists of my film who since Hiroshima and despite all

adversities have made it their task not to keep silent and to fight actively for the rights of the victims. I am very touched by their great strength and also by the lightness and relaxed determination with which they pursue their goal. In the meeting with them, I realized that their most original drive is a great love of life. Nothing characterizes Chizuko Uchida better than her saying that with her modest means she wants to protect any ever so little life – in contrast to a policy that wants to protect the country with great power and military strength. And Shuntaro Hida once said: “In Hiroshima, any ever so noble person with ever so sophisticated thoughts was wiped out like an insect.” Since he saw that, he said, he knows how much life should be appreciated above all and that he would fight for the protection and preservation of human life as long as his feet would carry him. Chizuko Uchida and Shuntaro Hida are people with great moral courage who deeply impress me.



THE PROTAGONISTS

Shigeru Doi (1914-1991) and Kiyomi Doi (1926- 2013)



Shigeru and Kiyomi Doi in the 1940ties (left) and Kiyomi Doi, 2011 (right)

My grandfather, Shigeru Doi, studied medicine in Seoul, the Korean capital, occupied by Japan at the time. After his return, he accepted a position as a physician of internal medicine at the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital and got married to my twelve years younger grandmother.

Towards the end of the war, when life in the city became increasingly dangerous, my grandparents moved to my great-grandparents' house in the countryside from where my grandfather commuted to work. My mother Mioko was born in that house in May 1945. At that time my grandfather was thirty and my grandmother was eighteen years old. When my grandfather went to work on August 6, 1945, just like every Monday morning, he found a city that was no longer the same. But no one in our family ever learned anything from him about his time in the completely devastated Hiroshima.

Four years after the war, my grandparents moved back to Hiroshima. In the first years after the war, my grandmother gave birth to two more children, a son Yoshiya and a daughter Kaoko. In 1951, my grandfather opened his own medical practice where he worked until 1971, assisted by my grandmother and a nurse. During this period, he also treated many atom bomb victims. Then he suddenly became ill from an acute liver inflammation and as a consequence suffered several strokes. The following twenty years until his death he was bound to a wheelchair with half of his body paralyzed, cared for by my grandmother.

One of my grandfather's great passions was writing tanka, traditional Japanese short poems. He wrote many tanka but not a single one about the atomic bomb. When I asked my grandmother about this, she answered:

«In his tanka the atomic bomb never comes up. There are many tankas about soldiers who were sent from the Military Hospital to the Red Cross Hospital and whom he had to treat. He also wrote funny ones. Your grandfather had a lot of humor and literary talent,

but he was also someone who did not show his emotions very much. He never spoke to us about his upsetting experiences.»

Since my grandmother married and had children when she was very young she was never able to attend to her own interests. And after the children became independent her husband's serious illness tied her down for another twenty years. When my grandfather died in 1991, a new period began for her, a time of "blossoming," as she described it in retrospect. Now for the first time she was able to do as she pleased. She travelled in Japan and abroad and pursued her hobbies. But after ten years fate also caught up with her: Hemorrhaging in her cervical spine led to hemiplegia and a life confined to a wheelchair. In 2010 she was diagnosed with cancer; in October 2013, she passed away, just one month after the shooting of the film had been completed.



Shigeru Doi, approximately 6 month after the detonation of the atomic bomb (left) and in the 1980ties (right)

Chizuko Uchida (born 1922)



Chizuko Uchida, 2012 (left) and in the 1940ties (right)

For the former Red Cross nurse Chizuko Uchida August 6, 1945 symbolizes a radical cut in her life. During her training under the Japanese military regime she was taught that working as a Red Cross nurse is of significant beauty. Cleansing and caring for the wounds of injured soldiers was glorified in propaganda songs as an aesthetic act. But when Chizuko Uchida was confronted with the reality following the dropping of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, all she felt was disgust and revulsion. She had landed in hell and this experience marked her for the rest of her life.

Since that day the former nurse does not rely on the state any longer, but rather on the strength of citizens. As a young woman she believed the government and the military slogans, but her experience as a young nurse in the center of Hiroshima's debris changed this: «*I became very critical of politics.*»

After the war, Uchida became a follower of the well-known feminist writer Tomoe Yamashiro, who became famous for her socially critical novels.

From Yamashiro she learned «that there will be war in Japan again and again, as long as women say yes to everything men do.» Yamashiro convinced her that it is a significantly important task for women to voice their opinions, and at best through literary or artistic work. Uchida took this to heart. As a result she began to write down her Hiroshima memories and to deliver public lectures.

Uchida holds the firm conviction that doing little things locally, for victims of war and catastrophes is worth it. As a member of the Junod Association, acting for years on behalf of radiation victims from Chernobyl and now for those in Fukushima, she has tried to do this for years. And she knows what she is talking about because she herself had to fight hard against the symptoms of her own radiation sickness. She suffered from anemia, fever, swollenness and shortness of breath. Bone abscesses meant that at times she could not walk.

Ten years ago, she decided to «sweat out» the poisons in her body. She began to work hard in the fields and to sweat as much as she could. With time, her blood tests normalized and she felt better and better. Even today, twice a week, she drives with her electric car for one and a half hours uphill to work on a remote field. She cultivates various types of vegetables and wheat from which she bakes her own bread.



Hitoshi Kai



At first, Hitoshi Kai wanted to become a doctor of tropical medicine, but he had to interrupt his studies in his final year because his parents' house burnt down. After that he never made it back to university because he became engaged with the Vietnam War and Chernobyl later on, and he wanted to do something practical for the victims. So he earned a living as a math tutor and volunteered with various relief projects of the Junod Association. He never experienced the atomic bomb himself, but has dedicated many years to the victims of atomic catastrophes. The office of the Junod association is located in a residential building next door to Uchida's house in the town of Fuchu (Hiroshima prefecture).

Chizuko Uchida and Hitoshi Kai's acquaintance goes back to the early 1980s. At the time, they collected articles with a group of friends about the dangers of atomic waste and screened films critical of nuclear power. When the Chernobyl catastrophe happened in 1986, they knew they had to do something. Uchida recalls: «Before Chernobyl we already knew about the many uranium workers who were exposed to radiation during their work. And just when we thought that we should do something for these people, the reactor accident happened in Chernobyl. Then we established the Junod Association.»

Kai thinks it is naïve to believe that war or nuclear catastrophe is avoidable. More important is to set up functioning organizations that can really help after such catastrophes. That is why he is also critical of the peace movement in Japan: «The atomic bomb was so horrible that it was enough to mourn the victims and the world listened. Just the statement that we experienced something horrible and therefore something so bad must never happen again was considered a peace campaign activity. It was not about doing something, but rather to mourn having become victims. If you really think about it, until now we haven't done anything at all.»

The Junod Association depends on donations and works under very difficult conditions. In spite of that, its members have made considerable achievements at least in Chernobyl. And now, after the reactor accident in Fukushima, association members are faced with their greatest challenge to date. Shortly after the reactor accident, Hitoshi Kai told me on the telephone that in the present situation not much could be expected from the physicians in Fukushima. However the experiences collected over decades from Hiroshima victims and doctors are of great value and these should be built on.

Shuntaro Hida (1917-2017)



Shuntaro Hida, 2011 (left) and 1945 (right)

For the former military doctor Shuntaro Hida his experience with the atomic bomb in Hiroshima marked the beginning of a new era. While caring for the innumerable injured and dying after the complete destruction of the city, his resistance to war was reinforced. This profound experience is why he unremittingly has dedicated his life to fight for the needs of radiation victims and against nuclear power.

In order to better support atomic bomb victims in Japan, the *hibakusha* (victims of the atomic bomb), who were suffering physically and psychologically, Dr. Hida founded a clinic close to Tokyo in 1978. He remained director of that clinic until the age of 92 and treated almost exclusively atomic bomb victims and their children and grandchildren who traveled from all over Japan to see him. In this way he acquired significant knowledge about the symptoms of internal radiation.

Shuntaro Hida says the damage caused to health by inhaling and ingesting the smallest radioactive particles is still grossly underestimated. He attributes this to the strict censorship introduced to Japan by the US occupation authorities after the war, for until 1952 it was forbidden to publish articles about the atomic bomb or its effects:

«We were allowed to treat the sick, but not to study their symptoms. That is why only much later I discovered the causes of my patients' suffering.»

In the course of his life, Dr. Hida repeatedly was confronted with the fact that American censorship had its effects long after 1952 and even today. In 1975, as chairman of the nationwide atomic bomb victims' association, he declared at the UN that there are still

many people in Japan who suffer from the effects of the atomic bomb and that Japanese doctors couldn't help them. He demanded that specialists from all over the world be sent to Japan to help. His suit was rejected. It was argued that a report issued seven years earlier by the Japanese and US governments proved that everyone who became ill from the atomic bomb had already died and therefore there were no longer any victims. It was only after Shuntaro Hida returned to the UN two years later with tens of thousands of medical reports that the legitimacy of radiation victims was acknowledged and, beyond that, the official number of deaths was raised from 64,000 to 140,000.

Dr. Hida's opinion is that it was primarily the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) sponsored by the US atomic energy department that systematically downplayed and covered up the facts. The ABCC was established by the Americans in Hiroshima in 1947 and since 1975 has been maintained by the Japanese in collaboration with the Americans under the new name of Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF): «Today, worldwide consensus is that knowledge about the effects of radioactivity is based on the experiences of the *hibakushas* from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The admissible amount of radioactivity before it becomes toxic, that is, the maximum permissible value that is the worldwide standard, is still determined by the RERF. They are so respected that even when one says that all of their information is wrong, they will always be right,» says Dr. Hida. According to him, the ABCC supported their studies with control groups, for example, whose members were exposed to weak radiation and therefore could not form a comparative basis. In this and other ways, results were produced that trivialized the effects of internal radiation.



Dr. Hida says that none of this has changed until today, but he considers it his task to fight these conditions until the end of his life. He is the last surviving physician who experienced the atomic bomb and who like no other has observed and tried to treat the consequences of internal radiation on the lives and sufferings of thousands of people over decades.

From today's perspective, what Shuntaro Hida already said before the nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima was virtually a prophecy:

«Certain people say about the abolishment of nuclear weapons: Never again Hiroshima or Nagasaki. I think that is old-fashioned. Nuclear technology has gone much further than that. The future will be much more difficult. That is what I want to tell them. The world could become terrifying and it will be much more difficult to live on this Earth. Even when certain people tell me that I am old-fashioned, I will still continue to fight in the same way as before. Indefatigable, and until my last day.»



AYA DOMENIG Filmo-/Biography



Aya Domenig was born in Japan in 1972 and grew up in Switzerland. From 1992 until 2000 she studied Social Anthropology, Film Studies and Japanology at the University of Zurich, specializing in Visual Anthropology. During an exchange year at the Hitotsubashi University of Tokyo (1997) she shot her first documentary film OYAKATA (The Master). OYAKATA was part of her master thesis when she graduated from University three years later. From 2001 to 2005 Aya Domenig studied Film Directing at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Her graduation film HARU ICHIBAN (Spring Storm) was screened at various international Filmfestivals such as Locarno and Clermont-Ferrand and was awarded the Prix Cinécinéma at the Premiers Plans Film Festival in Angers. Her latest film THE DAY THE SUN FELL premiered at the 68th edition of the Locarno International Filmfestival (Critics Week) and was nominated for the Swiss Film Prize 2016 in two categories: Best Documentary Film and Best Film Score.

- 2015 **ALS DIE SONNE VOM HIMMEL FIEL** (The Day the Sun Fell), *Doc., 78'*; *Author and Director*
Nomination Swiss Film Prize for "Best Documentary Film " & "Best Film Score"
Winner Swiss Film Prize "Best Film Score"
- 2007 **BESTATTUNGSKULTUR IM WANDEL**, *Doc. (TV), 30'*; *Co-Director and Editor*
- 2006 **ZEIT DES ABSCHIEDS** (Time of Closure), *Doc., 63'*; *Editing*
Winner Prize of the Semaine de la Critique Filmfestival Locarno
Jury- and Audience Award Entrevue Filmfestival Belfort
- 2005 **HARU ICHIBAN** (Spring Storm), *Fic., 22'*; *Author, Director and Editor*
Winner Prix Cinécinéma, Film Festival Premier Plans d'Angers
- 2004 **HITORITABI** (Iio-sans Journey), *Doc., 21'* *Author, Director and Editor*
- 2004 **WIR**, *Fic., 2'20"*; **Author, Director and Editor**
- 2002 **JE T'AIME**, *Fic., 6 Min'*; *Co-Director*
- 1999 **OYAKATA** (The Master), *Doc., 37'*; *Author, Director, Camera and Editor*
Winner JVC Student Video Prize, 7th Int. Festival of Ethnographic Film, London

Mirjam von Arx (Produzentin) Filmografie

2019 **VOYAGE TO THE OTHER**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit Lichtblick Media GmbH Berlin
Autoren: Stefan Schwietert / David Bernet
Produzenten: Mirjam von Arx, , Tanja Meding, Martin Heisler
HD, 90' / 52'

2016 **DIE GENTRIFIZIERUNG BIN ICH: BEICHTE EINES FINSTERLINGS**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit SRF
Regie: Thomas Haemmerli
Produzentin: Mirjam von Arx
HD, 90' / 52'

2015 **ALS DIE SONNE VOM HIMMEL FIEL**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit SRF, SRG SSR und YLE
Regie: Aya Domenig
HD, 90' / 52'

2014 **FREIFALL – EINE LIEBESGESCHICHTE**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit SRF, BR, ARTE
Regie und Buch: Mirjam von Arx
HD / DCP, 83'

2011 **VIRGIN TALES**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit SF
Regie: Mirjam von Arx
HD / 35mm Faz, 87'

Gewinner Zürcher Filmpreis 2012

Finalist Maysles Brothers Award 2012

2009 **SEED WARRIORS**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit SRF, ARTE/ZDF
Regie: Mirjam von Arx und Katharina von Flotow
HD / 35mm Faz, 86'

Nomination Int. Green Film Award, Cinema for Peace Gala, Berlinale 2011

2007 **SIEBEN MULDEN UND EINE LEICHE**

Produziert von ican films gmbh, in Co-Produktion mit SRF
DV / Super 8mm, 81'

Regisseur: Thomas Haemmerli

Nominiert für den Schweizer Filmpreis 2008

Gewinner Zürcher Filmpreis 2007

Gewinner Publikumspreis Duisburger Filmwoche 2007

2005 **BUILDING THE GHERKIN**

Co-produziert von ican films gmbh

Digibeta / 35mm, 89' / 52'

Regisseur / Exec. Producer: Mirjam von Arx

Gewinnerin Festival Int. du Film sur l'Art, Montréal

2003 **ABXANG**

Produziert von ican films gmbh

Super 16mm / DVcam, 102'

Regisseur: Mirjam von Arx