

# JAPANESE FILM CLASSICS

Japanese Film Classics #00

An Introduction to Classic Japanese Cinema:  
From the Japan Foundation Film Library

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As Japan's sole institution specializing in a comprehensive approach toward international cultural exchange, the Japan Foundation provides a platform connecting Japan and the world through the key pillars of culture, language, and dialogue.

In the field of film, this involves the organization of large-scale Japanese film festivals centered around new and recent works, as well as worldwide screenings of Japanese films tailored to the diverse needs of each country. The Japan Foundation Film Library plays a key role in these activities. This unique collection holds an extensive range of Japanese films—everything from historical masterpieces to recent works, including feature films, documentaries, and animation—and houses approximately one thousand 35mm and 16mm prints. It has also lately been adding 4K digital restorations (DCP) to its collection.

In recent years, more and more international film festivals have been placing an increased emphasis on their classic film sections, reflecting a growing trend toward the re-evaluation of classic cinema that is equally evident in the fresh angles being offered by retrospectives organized worldwide by film festivals and archives alike.

Despite this, the amount of information regarding Japan's classic cinema in languages other than Japanese remains limited, a situation that has prompted numerous requests from overseas film programmers for this basic information to be made available in English.

In response to these requests, the Japan Foundation has put together the following guidebook featuring a selection of forty works from among the films in our collection—two works each from twenty significant directors from across Japanese cinematic history. Also contained are several essays aimed at providing a brief introduction to the history of Japanese film, focusing in turn on the studio system that underpinned the golden age of Japanese cinema, the vicissitudes of the postwar independent production movement, and the women filmmakers whose contributions to Japan's cinema have been undergoing a resurgence of interest in recent years.

It is our hope that this booklet will serve as a useful guide for programmers interested in screening Japanese films overseas, thus proving a helpful resource for delivering such films to contemporary audiences.

Lastly, we would like to extend our gratitude to all those involved in the writing, proofreading, and translation of the pieces contained within, as well as the National Film Archive of Japan (NFAJ) and all the distribution companies whose invaluable cooperation made the publication of this guidebook possible.

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The Japan Foundation

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## A Short History of Japan's Studio System

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Fujii Jinshi

Like the so-called “Big Five” that dominated its Hollywood counterpart, the story of Japan's studio system too centers on the exploits of five major film companies. Yet it wouldn't be until after the war that the lineup of five became consolidated as such, with the first golden age of Japanese cinema, that of the 1930s, having been the product of a slightly different set of main players.

Of the studios that would go on to comprise Japan's own “Big Five,” Nikkatsu was the oldest. Founded in 1912 at a time when Hollywood wasn't yet the center of American film production, Nikkatsu's first forays into motion pictures reflected the Japan of its time, torn between the poles of tradition and modernization. Representing tradition was the studio's prolific output of *kyugeki* (literally, “old theater”) titles: period pieces that heavily retained the traditions of kabuki, brought to life by the immensely popular star Onoe Matsunosuke. At the same time, the studio also gained popularity with modern melodramas known as *shinpa* (“new-school”) tragedies, for which it constructed a glass stage in its Mukojima studio that was to become a symbol of the modernity of this new, cutting-edge medium. (It was Nikkatsu's Mukojima studio, on the east side of Tokyo, where many of Japan's future leading directors would learn their trade, including Mizoguchi Kenji.) Nikkatsu was also the first studio to use female actors, doing away with the kabuki practice of *onnagata* whereby male actors traditionally played female roles.

In 1920, Shochiku, an entertainment company that had made its name producing kabuki plays, entered the film industry. Shochiku was notable for training its actors under the principles of *shingeki* (“new theater”), a modern theater movement centered on the production of foreign plays in translation, as well as for the degree of freedom it granted its directors, thus playing a crucial role in the modernizing of Japanese cinema. Its specialty was the *shoshimin eiga* (“petit-bourgeoisie film”), which depicted with humor and pathos the daily lives of the newly emerging white-collar, urban lower-middle class. The films'

### Editorial Note

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Japanese names, titles, and terms have been transliterated following the Revised Hepburn system, with macrons omitted.

Japanese names are given in the Japanese order, with the surname coming first. However, the Western name order of the original has been preserved in the cases of Frankie Sakai, James Maki, and Aki Takejo.

Titles of Japanese films are presented as follows: the recommended English title (in italics), followed in brackets by the romanized Japanese title (in small capitals) and an alternative English title, if any (in standard typeface).

Italics are used for Japanese terms, except for some naturalized English words. If a Japanese word appears multiple times in the same article, only the first instance is italicized.

signature identity came to be known as Kamata-style (later Ofuna-style) after the location of the studios where they were shot. It was a style and tradition to which Ozu Yasujiro, who remained with Shochiku throughout his career, would stay true to the very end.

It was Shochiku, too, who first made the leap from the old drama of the *kyugeki* to the newer form of the *jidaigeki eiga*: “period-drama films” infused with a level of realism that had been missing from the more traditional, kabuki-based style. The key player behind this reform was screenwriter Ito Daisuke. Upon becoming a director at Nikkatsu in the late 1920s, Ito would produce a string of virile works bursting with tragic beauty, such as *A Diary of Chuji’s Travels* (*CHUJI TABI NIKKI*, 1927), which incorporated influences from European avant-garde cinema and elevated the period drama to the realm of art. Indeed, it was on the back of Ito’s having already achieved sublimity with the period-drama form that gifted directors like Yamanaka Sadao were able to modernize it in the 1930s, infusing the Nikkatsu *jidaigeki* (period film) with a more cheerful, vibrant breath of life.

That Shochiku was the first Japanese studio to make the transition to talkies (which demanded a substantial investment in equipment) is perhaps not surprising. Yet the most notable development in 1930s’ Japanese cinema was the rise to prominence of Toho, a company that had initially made its name renting its own sound stages to other production companies during the silent-to-talkie transition (the studio began film production in 1933 as P.C.L., an abbreviation of Photo Chemical Laboratories, before changing its name to Toho in 1937). In contrast to the director system in favor at Shochiku at the time, Toho introduced a system centered around producers, following the Hollywood example of streamlining management and implementing tight budget control for each film. This rational, urban approach to management was also reflected in the studio’s

films. Still a newcomer to the industry, Toho had to rely on actors associated with the *shingeki* movement—essentially the Japanese version of Western realist theater—which had the effect of promoting a more realistic acting style. It was arguably this new management style that gave Naruse Mikio, who had struggled to gain attention at Shochiku, his chance to flourish, and led to the discovery of a young Kurosawa Akira through the studio’s director recruitment program. At the same time, Toho was the happiest of all the major studios to comply with government pressure, becoming an active and prolific producer of wartime propaganda in the form of so-called *kokusaku eiga* (“national-policy films”). Under the supervision of special effects director Tsuburaya Eiji, films like *The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya* (*HAWAI MARE OKI KAISEN*, 1942) made effective use of elaborately crafted miniatures to stage battle scenes so realistic they were often mistaken for the real thing—a technique that Toho harnessed to stunning effect in its postwar special effects films beginning with *Godzilla* (*GOJIRA*) in 1954.

With the outbreak of the Pacific War, Japan’s film industry was accordingly reorganized and integrated into the wartime system. The merger of Nikkatsu with the newly formed Daiei in 1942 left three major studios—Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei—in charge of the country’s filmic output. After the war, as part of the Allied Occupation’s drive to hold the past regime responsible for its wartime conduct, many who had worked in the industry were driven from their posts, although the majority made their way back in just a few short years. That largely the same faces came to dominate Japan’s film industry after the war as before it, despite the country having suffered defeat, is a distinctive feature of Japan’s national film history. Most significant among the events triggered by Occupation policy was perhaps the Toho Labor Dispute, which eventually resulted in the formation of a new studio by the name of Shintohto (“New Toho”). Labor unions formed in

response to the Allied Occupation's democratic reforms had led a series of increasingly heated strike actions before eventually splintering; formed in 1947 by former union members hoping to prioritize filmmaking over politics, Shintojo made a name for itself in the *ero-guro* ("erotic grotesque") genre over the 1950s, turning a paucity of star power and budget to its own advantage by developing a unique style that saw it become the sixth studio alongside the five majors.

The formation of the so-called "Big Five" was itself a development of the '50s. In 1951 came the founding of Toei, who over the next decade would revive production of the *jidaigeki* genre — effectively banned during the Occupation for being deemed inconsistent with the new democratic ideals — proving a massive hit with children and the public at large. Whereas at Shochiku and Toho it was respectively the director and producer who were afforded the greatest authority, Toei took a more novel star-centric approach — to the extent that when major stars appeared together in the same movie, careful consideration was given to ensure an equal distribution of close-ups. In Toei's films of this era, innovation took a back seat to giving the audience more of what it had come to expect from them: namely, *chanbara* narratives of good triumphing over evil, so named for their highly stylized, not to mention highly unrealistic, swordfight action sequences. As previously mentioned, it was Shochiku who first accomplished the transition to talkies, a feat it later repeated by producing Japan's first color film as well; the fact that it was Toei who would pioneer widescreen speaks volumes about the changing power dynamics in the industry during this period.

With Nikkatsu's eventual return to film production in 1954, the "Big Five" lineup was complete. Yet despite boasting the longest history of any of the studios, the Nikkatsu of the postwar period was forced to play catch-up. In an era when stars were tied by exclusive contracts to specific companies, Japan's oldest studio had to turn to auditions to recruit the new talent it

needed — a handicap that ironically enabled it to discover new stars, such as Ishihara Yujiro, who would go on to become synonymous with the postwar generation. Ishihara's impressive physique, good upbringing, roguish charm, and Elvis good looks combined to create unprecedented sex appeal with which he captivated legions of female fans (many of Nikkatsu's stars, including Ishihara, sang the theme songs to their own movies). Bolstered by this new generation of stars, Nikkatsu won popularity among young audiences with a steady stream of over-the-top action romps that played fast and loose with their Japan setting, lending them a distinctly international flavor. The studio also succeeded in recruiting many young directors from other studios who had yet to be given the chance to shine, the most notable examples being its transferees from Shochiku. It is difficult to overstress the fact that directors like Kawashima Yuzo, Imamura Shohei, Suzuki Seijun, and Kumashiro Tatsumi — figures who would go on to become some of Nikkatsu's most renowned names — all originally learned their trade within Shochiku's traditional system.

In 1958, under the dominance of the "Big Five," Japanese film audiences reached an all-time high, marking a second golden age of Japanese cinema to stand alongside that of the '30s. It was a milestone that was also to signal the beginning of the end of the studio era. First among the studios to disappear was Shintojo, which had been plagued for years by chronic financial troubles. Even Shochiku, the most conservative of the companies, couldn't prevent the emergence of a "new wave" from occurring within its own ranks. When avant-garde directors like Oshima Nagisa and Yoshida Kiju began rebelling against the Ofuna-style in both form and content, it caused conflict with the studio, leading to their eventually parting ways to pursue independent film production on their own terms.

Even the once hugely popular Toei *jidaigeki* could no longer hide its declining popularity. In the 1960s, Toei shifted its

focus to yakuza films: tales in which “good” yakuza — the kind that valued *giri* (duty to society) and *ninjo* (duty to oneself) — were pitted against the “bad” kind, who colluded with modernization to trample violently over the old moral code. The plight of the former, faced with an enemy against whom they were all but guaranteed to lose, struck a chord with a generation of academic elites who were embroiled in their own struggles in the form of the 1960s student protest movement. Kurosawa’s jidaigeki of this period, such as the internationally acclaimed *Yojimbo* (YOJINBO, 1961), were but a mannerist twist on the more conventional form of a genre that was clearly on its way out. (Heavily inspired by the American Western, Kurosawa’s jidaigeki were in fact already “heretical” long before Sergio Leone returned the compliment by plagiarizing *Yojimbo* for his own *A Fistful of Dollars* [1964].) In the end, after being pushed out of the film industry, the jidaigeki would come to share its fate with the American Western, finding a new lease of life on the emerging medium of television.

Reflecting the then-prevailing public sense that all Japanese belonged to the middle class, Toho attempted to court the average cinemagoer with an output of urban “salaryman” comedies. These, together with the giant monster and war movies that capitalized on the studio’s expertise in special effects, proved cash cows for Toho, yet by themselves weren’t enough to halt the industry’s slow decline in profits. Daiei, meanwhile, emboldened by the international film festival success of Mizoguchi’s postwar jidaigeki in the ‘50s, continued in this vein, producing many sophisticated period pieces and adaptations of literary works. Quintessential examples were the films of Misumi Kenji, who defied naturalistic editing conventions to produce jidaigeki with a severity and sharpness of tone; and Masumura Yasuzo who, railing against what he saw as Japanese tradition’s over-propensity for sentimentality, attempted to establish a more modern sensibility within the Japanese film landscape. Suffering from its own paucity of

directly managed theaters, Daiei declared bankruptcy in 1971 — a year that also saw Nikkatsu change course to plunge headfirst into the world of softcore theatrical pornography with the launch of its new Roman Porno line (derived from the French term *roman pornographique*), a series that would eventually span a seven-year period and over 700 films.

It may seem strange to talk about the end of the studio period given that four of the “Big Five” (the exception being Daiei) continue to produce films to this day; nonetheless, it is commonly accepted that this period marked the transition to the post-studio era. In 1973, Toei released *Battles Without Honor and Humanity* (JINGI NAKI TATAKAI), a box-office hit that spawned a series and popularized the *jitsuroku eiga* (“reported reality film”) subgenre. As the film’s title suggests, it represented a complete repudiation of the chivalrous ideals of the *ninkyō* (“chivalry”) yakuza films that had once been the studio’s bread and butter. Rather aptly, it was also a fitting metaphor for the dog-eat-dog struggle that would play out haphazardly across the industry in the coming era, absent the unifying entities of old.

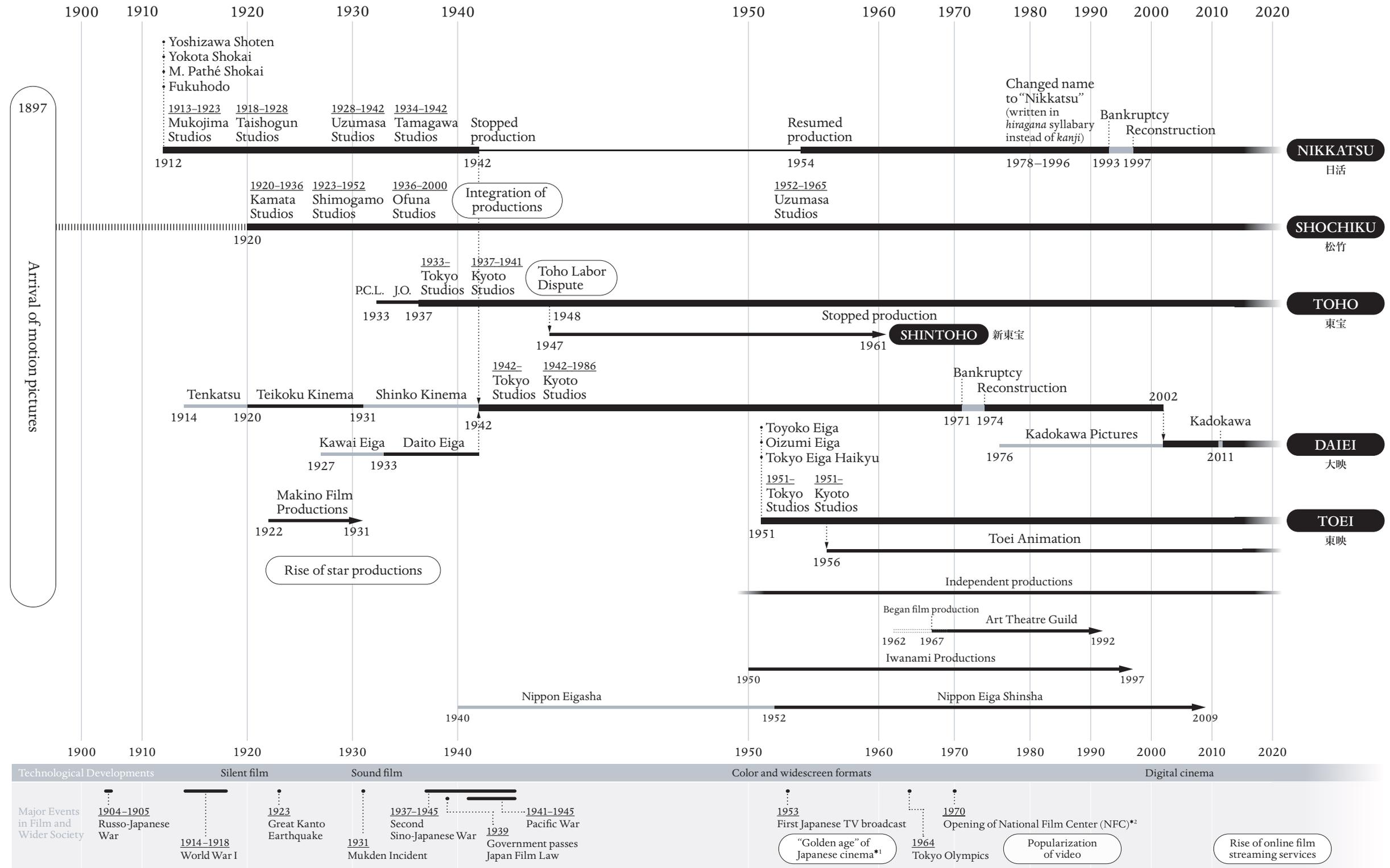
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Fujii Jinshi is a Professor of Film Studies in the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences at Waseda University. He is the editor of *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (in Japanese, 2008) and *Azuma Morisaki: Films of Laughter, Tears, and Anger* (in Japanese, 2013), co-editor of *Shinji Somai: A Film Director in the Japanese Post-Studio Era* (in Japanese, 2011) and *Filmmaking Today: 21 Dialogues with Japanese Contemporary Filmmakers* (in Japanese, 2023), and co-translator of *I Was Interrupted: Nicholas Ray on Making Movies* (2001).

# Japanese Film Production Companies Timeline

This chronological chart illustrates the evolution of the Japanese studio system alongside major societal developments of the time, focusing on the “Big Five” studios (Nikkatsu, Shochiku, Daiei, Toei, and Toho) that spearheaded Japanese cinema production. [This chart is an edited version of one originally created by the National Film Archive of Japan.]

Timeline



\*1 Peak audience attendance of 1.12 billion (1958); 7,457 movie theaters nationwide (1960); 547 Japanese films released (1960).

\*2 Re-established as the National Film Archive of Japan (NFAJ) in 2018.

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## Directors and Films

- |    |                   |    |                  |
|----|-------------------|----|------------------|
| 1  | Mizoguchi Kenji   | 11 | Kawashima Yuzo   |
| 2  | Gosho Heinosuke   | 12 | Misumi Kenji     |
| 3  | Ozu Yasujiro      | 13 | Suzuki Seijun    |
| 4  | Nakagawa Nobuo    | 14 | Okamoto Kihachi  |
| 5  | Naruse Mikio      | 15 | Masumura Yasuzo  |
| 6  | Tanaka Kinuyo     | 16 | Nakahira Ko      |
| 7  | Kurosawa Akira    | 17 | Haneda Sumiko    |
| 8  | Shindo Kaneto     | 18 | Imamura Shohei   |
| 9  | Kinoshita Keisuke | 19 | Shinoda Masahiro |
| 10 | Ichikawa Kon      | 20 | Oshima Nagisa    |



## Mizoguchi Kenji

1898–1956

溝口健二



### A pioneer of realism within Japanese cinema

After making his directorial debut in 1923, Mizoguchi continued to hone his craft across a string of notable works including *Sisters of the Gion* (GION NO KYODAI, 1936), which is often credited with having established the realist mode within Japanese cinema. After the war, he received the International Prize at the 13th Venice International Film Festival for *The Life of Oharu* (SAIKAKU ICHIDAI ONNA, 1952), a cherished project he had long fought to get made. This he followed with two masterworks adapted from the world of classic literature: *Ugetsu* (UGETSU MONOGATARI, 1953) and *Sansho the Bailiff* (SANSHO DAYU, 1954). Championed by members of the French New Wave, these films paved the way for the “discovery” of Japanese cinema in the west, though Mizoguchi was to die of leukemia just as these developments were getting underway. His

*A Story from Chikamatsu*  
1954

last film was *Street of Shame* (AKASEN CHITAI, 1956). Though often considered primarily a master of the women’s film and of historical dramas known for their studied accuracy, he was in fact active across a wide range of genres, applying his craft to everything from educational films, action romps, and patriotic works to films that preached democratic values and women’s social advancement. He also collaborated with multiple studios over the years, including Nikkatsu, Shochiku, Shintoho, and Daiei. Despite this eclecticism, his keen eye for observation, uncompromising directorial stance, and simultaneously bold yet delicate camera-work remained constants throughout his career — as did his talent for coaxing the best out of all with whom he worked, on both sides of the camera.

Written by Hoshi Ryotaro / Reference: NFAJ screening program

## A Story from Chikamatsu

CHIKAMATSU MONOGATARI  
近松物語

1954	<u>Based on a play by</u>	<u>Music</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
102 min	Chikamatsu Monzaemon	Hayasaka Fumio	Daiei (Kyoto)
B&W	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	Yoda Yoshikata	Hasegawa Kazuo (Mohei)	Kadokawa Corporation
<u>Director</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	Kagawa Kyoko (Osan)	
Mizoguchi Kenji	Miyagawa Kazuo	Minamida Yoko (Otama)	
<u>Producer</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>		
Nagata Masaichi	Mizutani Hiroshi		



Mizoguchi's quintessential tale of tragic love, based on a classic play by Edo-period dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon. In seventeenth-century Kyoto, Mohei, the apprentice of a wealthy scroll maker, forges a receipt to help his master's young wife, Osan, who is in dire straits. Falsely accused of carrying on an illicit relationship, they go on the lam, whereupon they realize their true love for one another. As they are eventually paraded to the gallows, onlookers

remark upon how serene and happy they look. The film's themes of patriarchal and class-based oppression continue to resonate to this day. Cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo, a frequent collaborator with Mizoguchi, evocatively captures the fated lovers' reflection against the glistening lake surface.

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Written by Hoshi Ryotaro  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

## The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum

ZANGIKU MONOGATARI  
残菊物語

1939	<u>Adapted by</u>	<u>Music</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
147 min	Kawaguchi Matsutaro	Fukai Shiro	Shochiku (Kyoto)
B&W	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	Yoda Yoshikata	Hanayagi Shotaro	Shochiku
<u>Director</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	(Onoe Kikunosuke)	
Mizoguchi Kenji	Miki Shigeto	Mori Kakuko	
<u>Producer</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	(Otoku)	
Shirai Shintaro	Mizutani Hiroshi	Takada Kokichi	
		(Nakamura Fukusuke)	



An unparalleled masterwork from Mizoguchi's prewar period. Kikunosuke, the adopted son of a famous kabuki performer, conceitedly believes he has little left to learn—until Otoku, the wet nurse of his infant brother, devotedly helps him to change his ways. When Kikunosuke suddenly loses an important ally, he finds himself thrust upon hard times. The film's frequent use of long takes creates palpable tension: an otherwise unassuming scene in which Otoku

slices and shares out a watermelon exudes such elegance as to prove particularly spellbinding. Similarly impressive are the rich, ornately designed sets by production designer Mizutani Hiroshi, who worked on many of Mizoguchi's films into the postwar era.

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Written by Hoshi Ryotaro



## Goshō Heinosuke

1902–1981

五所平之助

An intrepid explorer of humanism's boundaries

After making his directorial debut at Shochiku Kamata in 1925, Goshō went on to produce such renowned works as *The Neighbor's Wife and Mine* (MADAMU TO NYOBO, 1931), Japan's first fully fledged talkie, and *The Dancing Girl of Izu* (KOI NO HANA SAKU: IZU NO ODORIKO, 1933). Despite scoring a postwar hit with Toho's *Once More* (IMA HITOTABI NO, 1947), his contract with the studio was terminated during the Toho Labor Dispute, leading him to found the independent production company Studio Eight. Collaborating with emerging young talents such as existentialist novelist Shiina Rinzo and composer Akutagawa Yasushi, Goshō was a prolific creator of melodramas pulsing with the intertwining anxieties, hopes, benevolence, and desires of Japanese society. He had an exquisite eye for detail, creating unsettling stories that offered a glimpse into life's abyss through the window of everyday life, be it via a casual gesture or household goods, captured in all their subtlety with precise camera blocking. In addition to helming hits like *Elegy of the North* (BANKA, 1957) and *Hunting Rifle* (RYOJU, 1961), in his later years he also directed a documentary and a filmed puppet play, thus channeling his insatiable curiosity to support Japanese cinema from both an artistic and commercial standpoint. He was also an accomplished haiku poet who wrote under the penname Goshotei.

Written by Tamada Kenta / Reference: NFAJ screening program



## The Yellow Crow

KIIROI KARASU

黄色いからす

1957	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
105 min	Tateoka Kennosuke	Kubo Kazuo	Kabukiza Pro
Color	Hasebe Keiji	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	<u>Cinematography</u>	Awashima Chikage (Yoshida Machiko)	Shochiku
<u>Director</u>	Miyajima Yoshio	<u>Music</u>	
Gosho Heinosuke	Akutagawa Yasushi	Ito Yunosuke (Yoshida Ichiro)	
<u>Producer</u>		Tanaka Kinuyo (Matsumoto Yukiko)	
Nakajima Masayuki			



Hoping to bring pointed significance to the use of color for what was to be his first color film, Gosho turned to the world of child psychology. The film tells the story of Kiyoshi, a young boy emotionally estranged from his parents after his father's return from war, whose ominously colored drawings prompt concern from his teacher. An exploration from a child's perspective into the state of the postwar family and its war-inflicted scars, the film went

on to win the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film in 1958. Playing the role of Kiyoshi is Shitara Koji, a famous child actor known also for his appearances in the films of Ozu Yasujiro, among others.

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Written by Tamada Kenta  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

## Where Chimneys Are Seen

ENTOTSU NO MIERU BASHO

煙突の見える場所

1953	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
108 min	Oguni Hideo	Shimogawara Tomoo	Shintoho
B&W	<u>Based on a novel by</u>	<u>Cast</u>	Studio Eight Pro
—	Shiina Rinzo	Uehara Ken (Ogata Ryukichi)	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
<u>Director</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	Tanaka Kinuyo (Ogata Hiroko)	International Television
Gosho Heinosuke	Miura Mitsuo	Akutagawa Hiroshi (Kubo Kenzo)	Films, Inc.
<u>Producer</u>	<u>Music</u>		
Uchiyama Yoshishige	Akutagawa Yasushi		



An adaptation of a short story by Shiina Rinzo. When a middle-aged couple living in the lower-class outskirts of Tokyo find an abandoned child, it ends up sparking a conflict that engulfs the young boarders living above them. The film takes its name from the so-called “ghost chimneys” of a once famous power station in Kitasenju, which appeared to number anywhere between one and four depending on from which angle they were viewed. Offering

a vivid portrayal of the absurdities of human existence through the lens of ordinary people's nondescript lives, Gosho's film captures with humor the joys and sorrows of the lower classes in the period prior to Japan's “economic miracle.” It was shown in competition at the 3rd Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the Special Prize of the Senate of Berlin.

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Written by Tamada Kenta  
Reference: NFAJ screening program



## Ozu Yasujiro

1903–1963

小津安二郎



### A quintessentially “Japanese” director

Born on December 12, 1903, in Tokyo. Ozu harbored aspirations of becoming a film director ever since he saw Thomas H. Ince’s *Civilization* (1916), which had a profound effect on him as a schoolboy. In 1923, he joined Shochiku Kamata as a camera assistant, making his directorial debut in 1927 with *Sword of Penitence* (ZANGE NO YAIBA). He was propelled to the forefront of the industry when three films he made between 1932 and 1934—*I Was Born, But...* (UMARETE WA MITA KEREDO, 1932), *Passing Fancy* (DEKIGOKORO, 1933), and *A Story of Floating Weeds* (UKIGUSA MONOGATARI, 1934)—took the coveted first spot in prestigious

*A Hen in the Wind*  
1948

film magazine *Kinema Junpo*’s end-of-year list three years in a row. In the years that followed, he continued to commit to film controlled, meticulous depictions of everyday family existence and life’s sorrows. In the decades since he passed away on his sixtieth birthday in 1963, his reputation and influence have anything but waned. In 2012, *Tokyo Story* (TOKYO MONOGATARI, 1953) was voted first place by directors and third by critics in British film magazine *Sight and Sound*’s once-a-decade Greatest Films of All Time Poll—just one sign among many that his legacy as a cineaste for the ages seems destined only to grow.

Written by Fujiwara Masao / Reference: NEAJ screening program

**Dragnet Girl**

HIJOSEN NO ONNA

非常線の女

1933  
120 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Ozu YasujiroBased on a novel by  
James Maki  
Screenplay  
Ikeda Tadao  
Cinematography  
Shigehara Hideo  
Art Direction  
Wakita YonekazuCast  
Oka Joji  
(Joji)  
Tanaka Kinuyo  
(Tokiko)  
Mizukubo Sumiko  
(Kazuko)Production Company  
Shochiku (Kamata)  
International Contact in Japan  
Shochiku

When small-time gangster Joji falls for Kazuko, Joji's mistress Tokiko decides to scare her rival away, only to end up falling for her innocent charms herself. Inspired by Kazuko's example to turn over a new leaf, Tokiko convinces Joji to do the same, but things don't go as planned. Unfolding largely in boxing gyms and billiard halls and featuring characters attired in Western clobber, this atypical Ozu work is redolent of the gangster films that did gangbusters during

the early days of the American talkie and exudes a modernist sensibility quite at odds with the refined restraint of his later films.

—  
Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Fujiwara Masao

**A Hen in the Wind**

KAZE NO NAKA NO MENDORI

風の中の牝雞

1948  
83 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Ozu Yasujiro  
Producer  
Kubo KozoScreenplay  
Ozu Yasujiro  
Saito Ryosuke  
Cinematography  
Atsuta Yuharu  
Music  
Ito SenjiArt Direction  
Hamada Tatsuo  
Cast  
Sano Shuji  
(Amamiya Shuichi)  
Tanaka Kinuyo  
(Tokiko)  
Murata Chieko  
(Ida Shuko)Production Company  
Shochiku (Ofuna)  
International Contact in Japan  
Shochiku

Ozu's second film made upon his return from military service, following 1947's *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (NAGAYA SHINSHIROKU). Reduced to poverty during the hardship of the immediate postwar years, a woman is forced to prostitute herself to afford her child's hospital bills, only for her husband to find out upon his return from war. The film portrays the ensuing fallout and their eventual reconciliation. The overhead shot deployed in the scene in which

Shuichi unwittingly shoves his wife down the stairs in a fit of temper is particularly distinctive among the director's oeuvre, known otherwise for its trademark low-angle compositions.

—  
Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Fujiwara Masao



## Nakagawa Nobuo

1905–1984

中川信夫

A talented artisan who showcased a talent for more than just horror

Nakagawa spent his early career moving between various production companies — among them Toho in the prewar years and China Film Company, Ltd. during the wartime period — before eventually settling at Shintoho after the war, where he made a string of stylized horror masterpieces for which he is now best known, including *Ghost Story of Kasane Swamp* (KAIDAN KASANE-GA-FUCHI, 1957), *Mansion of the Ghost Cat* (BOREI KAIBYO YASHIKI, 1958), and *The Ghost Story of Yotsuya* (TOKAIDO YOTSUYA KAIDAN, 1959). Yet he was also a prolific director of program pictures who never allowed himself to be pigeon-holed by genre. Notable among his *jidaigeki* works are *The New Tange Sazen: The Story of His One Eye* (SHINPEN TANGE SAZEN: SEKIGAN NO MAKI, 1939) starring Okochi Denjiro; and *The Idle Vassal: La Maison de Corail* (HATAMOTO TAIKUTSU OTOKO: NAZO NO SANGO YASHIKI, 1962), on which Kainosho Tadaoto worked as costume designer. In addition to helming several women-led action films — including *A Wicked Woman* (DOKUFU TAKAHASHI OZEN, 1958), *Death Row Woman* (ONNA SHIKEISHU NO DATSUGOKU, 1960), and *Ohyaku, the Female Demon Part 2* (YOEN DOKUFU-DEN: HITOKIRI OKATSU, 1969) — he also demonstrated a talent for special effects, directing several episodes of *tokusatsu* TV series *Ultraman Leo* (URUTORAMAN REO, 1974). More than “just” a director of horror movies, Nakagawa was an accomplished practitioner of everything from exquisite shots to extravagant special effects who was active across a wide swathe of genres.

Written by Miyamoto Noriaki



## Jigoku

JIGOKU  
地獄

1960  
101 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Nakagawa Nobuo  
Executive Producer  
Okura Mitsugi

Screenplay  
Nakagawa Nobuo  
Miyagawa Ichiro  
Cinematography  
Morita Mamoru  
Editing  
Goto Toshio  
Music  
Watanabe Chumei

Art Direction  
Kurosawa Haruyasu  
Cast  
Amachi Shigeru  
(Shimizu Shiro)  
Numata Yoichi  
(Tamura)  
Nakamura Torahiko  
(Professor Yajima)

Production Company  
Shintocho  
International Contact in Japan  
International Television  
Films, Inc.



A bold concoction of a work, Nakagawa's *Jigoku* looks beyond Eastern values to incorporate Western classics such as Goethe's *Faust* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* among its tapestry of influences. When his friend Tamura commits a hit-and-run, it sets in motion a series of events that culminates with co-passenger, and unwitting accomplice to murder, Shiro descending to hell. The film's gruesome visuals—including images of humans with their skin

peeled off to expose their skeleton and internal organs—predates the splatter films of Herschell Gordon Lewis.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki

## The Ghost Story of Yotsuya

TOKAIDO YOTSUYA K Aidan  
東海道四谷怪談

1959  
76 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Nakagawa Nobuo  
Producer  
Okura Mitsugi

Screenplay  
Onuki Masayoshi  
Ishikawa Yoshihiro  
Cinematography  
Nishimoto Tadashi  
Music  
Watanabe Chumei

Art Direction  
Kurosawa Haruyasu  
Cast  
Amachi Shigeru  
(Tamiya Iemon)  
Wakasugi Katsuko  
(Oiwa, his wife)  
Emi Shuntaro  
(Naosuke)

Production Company  
Shintocho  
International Contact in Japan  
International Television  
Films, Inc.



Based on a kabuki play by Tsuruya Nanboku. After he is witnessed carrying out a murder, samurai Iemon falls prey to the manipulations of Naosuke. He later drives his wife Oiwa to suicide, incurring the wrath of her vengeful ghost. Nakagawa's bold tracking shots imbue the film with a dynamism rare for the ghost story genre, which is more typically associated with a sedateness of pace. The scene in which a blood-red mosquito net descends from the

sky as Oiwa's ghost torments Iemon atop a floor of piled-up sliding doors achieves a surreal, fantastical effect.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki



## Naruse Mikio

1905–1969

成瀬巳喜男



### A master of the women's film known for his elegant directing style

Joined Shochiku in 1920, where he produced a string of excellent silent works including *Apart from You* (KIMI TO WAKARETE, 1933) and *Every-Night Dreams* (YOGOTO NO YUME, 1933). He moved to P.C.L. (later Toho) in 1934, where he pioneered a Japanese form of backstage drama known as *geido-mono*, films set in the historical world of the performing arts, with works such as *Tsuruhachi and Tsurujiro* (TSURUHACHI TSURUJIRO, 1938) and *The Song Lantern* (UTA ANDON, 1943). After the war, he helmed a number of so-called “women’s films” for which he is now best-known, with Takamine Hideko in the lead role; these include *Lightning* (INAZUMA, 1952) and

*Lightning*  
1952

*Floating Clouds* (UKIGUMO, 1955), which he adapted from the novels of Hayashi Fumiko together with screenwriters Tanaka Sumie and Mizuki Yoko respectively. In films such as *White Beast* (SHIROI YAJU, 1950), *Husband and Wife* (FUFU, 1953), *Sound of the Mountain* (YAMA NO OTO, 1954), and *Scattered Clouds* (MIDAREGUMO, 1967), he used the themes of abortion and miscarriage to depict repeatedly on screen the lives of women resilient in the face of hardship. Swiss director Daniel Schmid was so enamored with the character of retired geisha Kin from *Late Chrysanthemums* (BANGIKU, 1954) that he included scenes from the film in his documentary *The Written Face* (1996), which he shot in Japan.

Written by Miyamoto Noriaki

## Wife Be Like a Rose

FUTARI-ZUMA: Tsuma yo bara no yo ni

二人妻 妻よ薔薇のやうに

1935

74 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Naruse Mikio

Based on a novel by

Nakano Minoru

Screenplay

Naruse Mikio

Cinematography

Suzuki Hiroshi

Music

Ito Noboru

Art Direction

Kubo Kazuo

Cast

Chiba Sachiko

(Yamamoto Kimiko)

Maruyama Sadao

(Shunsaku, her father)

Hanabusa Yuriko

(Oyuki)

Production Company

P.C.L.

International Contact in Japan

Toho



A film adaptation of the play *Futari-zuma* (literally, “Two Wives”), written by Nakano Minoru. When Kimiko pays her estranged father a visit ahead of her upcoming marriage, she ends up discovering the truth behind the remittances being sent to her mother every month. In addition to its eye-catching costumes (the shirt-and-tie outfit Kimiko wears while doing housework is particularly memorable), the film contains a wealth of unusual shots, such as a tracking shot that

captures the house interior through a wisteria trellis. The work is also historically significant for having been the first Japanese film to be released theatrically in the United States, under the title *Kimiko* in 1937.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki

## Lightning

INAZUMA

稲妻

1952

88 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Naruse Mikio

Producer

Negishi Shozo

Based on a novel by

Hayashi Fumiko

Screenplay

Tanaka Sumie

Cinematography

Mine Shigeyoshi

Music

Saito Ichiro

Art Direction

Naka Mikio

Cast

Takamine Hideko

(Kiyoko)

Murata Chieko

(Nuiko)

Miura Mitsuko

(Mitsuko)

Production Company

Daiei (Tokyo)

International Contact in Japan

Kadokawa Corporation



A screen adaptation by Tanaka Sumie of a Hayashi Fumiko novel. Frustrated by growing tensions at home — such as her elder sister Mitsuko’s being approached by her deceased husband’s mistress to provide child support for the child he secretly fathered — Kiyoko ends up emotionally confronting her mother, telling her “You shouldn’t have had me.” Kiyoko’s world-weary yet resilient approach to life is portrayed by means of elegantly composed shots and the

director’s eye for subtle gestures. Saito Ichiro’s piano compositions also enchant throughout.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki



## Tanaka Kinuyo

1909–1977

田中絹代



### A long-overlooked director currently in the international spotlight

Tanaka joined Shochiku Shimogamo at the age of fourteen, where she quickly found fame in roles playing a sweet-natured, charming young girl. Following the transition to talkies, she continued to appear in the films of Gosho, Ozu, and others, forging new paths as an actor all the way into her later years. Feeling nevertheless constrained by the limited roles available to women as they grew older—and inspired by her observations during a postwar trip to the United States—she decided to venture into directing. In doing so, she became only the second ever female director of feature films in Japan after Sakane Tazuko (who began directing prior to the war). Having made her directorial debut with *Love Letter* (KOIBUMI) in 1953, she later collaborated with female scriptwriters including

*The Moon Has Risen*  
1955

Tanaka Sumie and Wada Natto on works such as *Forever a Woman* (CHIBUSA YO EIEN NARE, *The Eternal Breasts*, 1955) and *The Wandering Princess* (RUTEN NO OHI, 1960). *Girls of Dark* (ONNA BAKARI NO YORU, 1961), set in a reformatory for prostitutes in the wake of the Prostitution Prevention Law, recalls in its themes the films of Mizoguchi, many of which Tanaka herself starred in, including *Women of the Night* (YORU NO ONNA TACHI, 1948). But whereas Tanaka's film also acknowledges its protagonist's hardships, it does so with a captivating perspective all its own, one which depicts her determination to carve out for herself a better future. In 2021, all six of Tanaka's directorial works were screened at the Lumière Festival in Lyon, a sign of the surging global interest in her career as a director.

Written by Tamada Kenta

## The Moon Has Risen

TSUKI WA NOBORINU

月は上りぬ

1955

102 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Tanaka Kinuyo

Executive Producer

Koi Eisei

Screenplay

Saito Ryosuke

Ozu Yasujiro

Cinematography

Mine Shigeyoshi

Music

Saito Takanobu

Art Direction

Kimura Takeo

Cast

Kitahara Mie (Asai Setsuko)

Sugi Yoko (Asai Ayako)

Yasui Shoji (Yasui Shoji)

Production Company

Nikkatsu

International Contact in Japan

Nikkatsu



Setsuko plays the role of overzealous matchmaker for her elder sister, but what about when it comes to her own budding romance? Featuring a screenplay by Saito Ryosuke and Ozu Yasujiro, Tanaka's sophomore film about three sisters' love lives skillfully blends humor with the atmospheric environs of the ancient capital of Nara, while also making strategic use of the various apertures and open space afforded by the design of traditional Japanese houses.

Tanaka herself plays Yoneya, a maid who, in a playful reversal of roles, finds herself being coached on how to act after being tasked with impersonating Setsuko's sister. The film was selected for the Cannes Classics section at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival.

—  
Written by Tamada Kenta

## Forever a Woman (a.k.a. The Eternal Breasts)

CHIBUSA YO EIEN NARE

乳房よ永遠なれ

1955

110 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Tanaka Kinuyo

Producers

Koi Eisei

Sakagami Shizuo

Screenplay

Tanaka Sumie

Cinematography

Fujioka Kumenobu

Music

Saito Takanobu

Art Direction

Nakamura Kimihiko

Cast

Tsukioka Yumeji

(Shimojo Fumiko)

Hayama Ryoji

(Otsuki Akira)

Mori Masayuki

(Hori Taku)

Production Company

Nikkatsu

International Contact in Japan

Nikkatsu



Tanaka's first directorial work on which she collaborated with a female scriptwriter tells the story of the life of tanka poet Nakajo Fumiko. Betrayed by her husband, Fumiko moves back to her mother's home together with her daughter. Though determined to find her voice as a poet, she is beset by failing health and eventually diagnosed with breast cancer. Rather than lingering on the tragedy of her illness, Tanaka opts boldly to focus on Fumiko's thirst

for life, as seen in her creative passion and her love affair with a journalist who covers her poems in the newspaper. Actor Tsukioka Yumeji vividly embodies Fumiko's determination and freedom of spirit that seem to grow in inverse proportion to her declining physical strength.

—  
Written by Tamada Kenta

## Kurosawa Akira

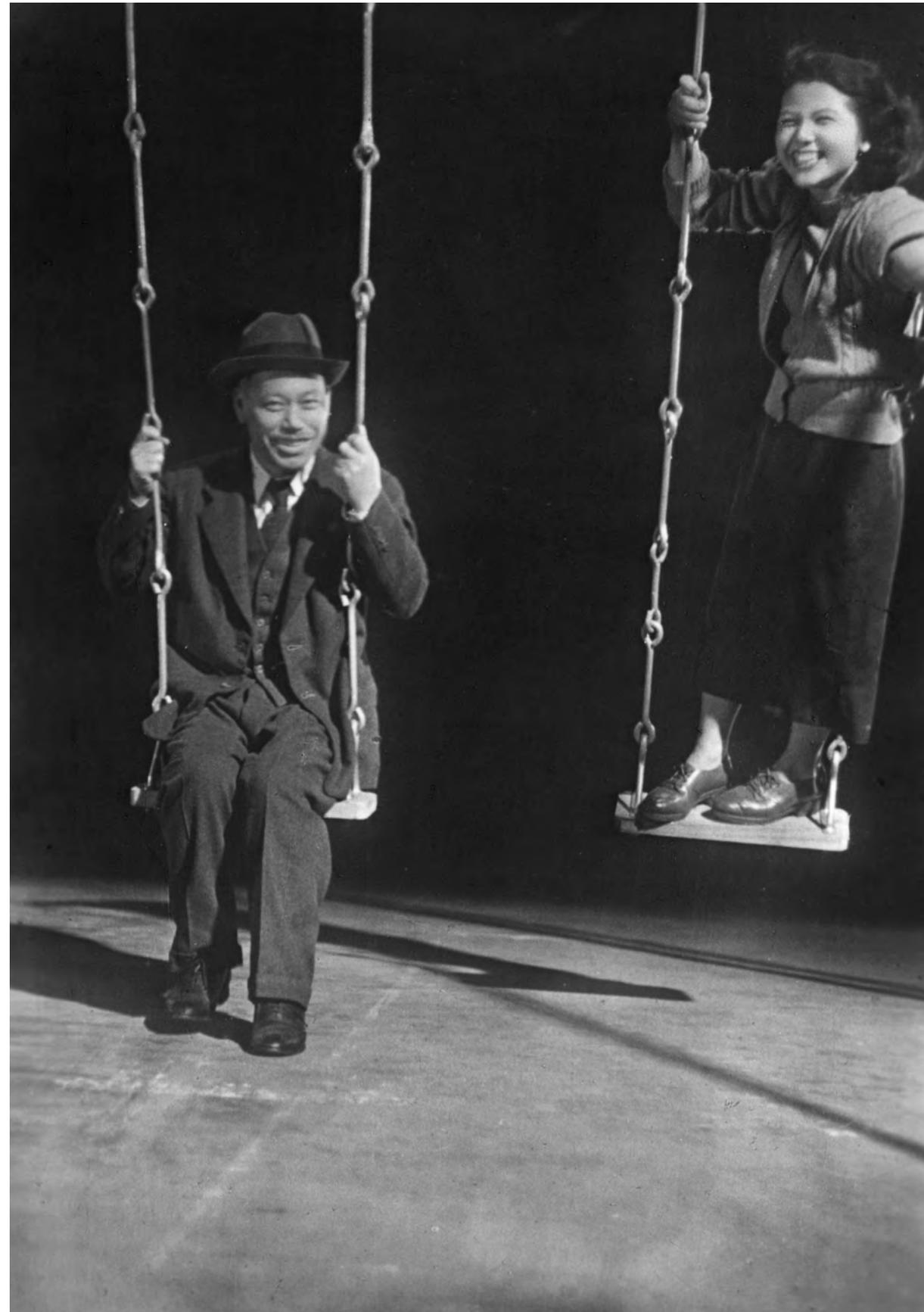
1910–1998

黒澤明

An enduring maestro whose name continues to inspire worldwide

Having once aspired to be a painter, the young Kurosawa ended up joining P.C.L. (the precursor to Toho) as an assistant director in 1936. There he honed his skills under the likes of Yamamoto Kajiro before finally making his directorial debut in 1943 with *Sanshiro Sugata* (SUGATA SANSHIRO). Distinguishing himself with works like *Drunken Angel* (YOIDORE TENSHI, 1948) and *Stray Dog* (NORA INU, 1949), which focused on the harsh realities of postwar life, he later shot to worldwide stardom when *Rashomon* (1950) was awarded the Golden Lion at the 1951 Venice International Film Festival, thus introducing the world at large to the high level of cinematic art in Japan. He followed this up with a string of robust masterworks spanning a multitude of genres—*Ikiru* (1952), *Seven Samurai* (SHICHININ NO SAMURAI, 1954), *The Throne of Blood* (KUMONOSU-JO, 1957), *Yojimbo* (YOJINBO, 1961), and *High and Low* (TENGOKU TO JIGOKU, 1963)—further bolstering his renown both at home and abroad. In later years, he also directed large-scale productions funded by foreign capital, including *Dersu Uzala* (1975) and *Ran* (1985). Each of the thirty films he directed over his lifetime holds a special place in cinematic history, with his work continuing to inspire new generations of filmmakers to this day.

Written by Fujiwara Masao / Reference: NFAJ screening program



Directors and Films 7  
—  
Kurosawa Akira

## I Live in Fear

IKIMONO NO KIROKU  
生きものの記録

1955	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
104 min	Hashimoto Shinobu	Muraki Yoshiro	Toho
B&W	Oguni Hideo	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	Kurosawa Akira	Mifune Toshiro (Nakajima Kiichi)	Toho
<u>Director</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	<u>Music</u>	
Kurosawa Akira	Nakai Asakazu	Miyoshi Eiko (Toyo)	
<u>Producer</u>	Hayasaka Fumio	Shimura Takashi (Harada)	



Convinced that a nuclear war is imminent, an elderly man decides to uproot his entire family and emigrate to Brazil. When they object to his plan, it sends him spiraling deeper and deeper into obsession. Kurosawa reportedly got the idea for the story from a conversation with composer Hayasaka Fumio, a close collaborator since *Drunken Angel* (YOIDORE TENSHI, 1948), in which Hayasaka had voiced his fears regarding nuclear experiments. Hayasaka's

sudden death during production on the film had a profound effect on the director. The film marks the first time Kurosawa employed a multi-camera approach to the entire shooting process, laying the foundations for what would later come to be his trademark style.

—  
Written by Fujiwara Masao  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

Directors and Films 7  
—  
Kurosawa Akira

## Ikiru

IKIRU  
生きる

1952	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
143 min	Hashimoto Shinobu	Matsuyama Takashi	Toho
B&W	Oguni Hideo	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	Kurosawa Akira	Shimura Takashi (Watanabe Kanji)	Toho
<u>Director</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	<u>Music</u>	
Kurosawa Akira	Nakai Asakazu	Odagiri Miki (Odagiri Toyo)	
<u>Producer</u>	Hayasaka Fumio	Himori Shin'ichi (Kimura)	



Thrown into despair after his terminal cancer diagnosis, a city office bureaucrat fights to turn around his unremarkable life and do something of consequence with his remaining time. This was the first film Kurosawa co-wrote with famed scriptwriters Hashimoto Shinobu and Oguni Hideo, marking the start of a collaborative relationship that would result in numerous masterpieces. The film received a foreign remake in 2022 in the

form of *Living*, directed by Oliver Hermanus and based on a screenplay by novelist Kazuo Ishiguro.

—  
Written by Fujiwara Masao  
Reference: NFAJ screening program



## Shindo Kaneto

1912–2012

新藤兼人



*The Island*  
1960

A fascinating example of a screenwriter-turned-director

Shindo joined Shinko Kinema in 1934, where he initially worked in the art section while also teaching himself the art of scriptwriting. He made his debut as a screenwriter in 1940 with *Southbound Women* (NANSHIN JOSEI), before later receiving recognition for his work on *The Ball at the Anjo House* (ANJO-KE NO BUTOKAI, 1947), a film made while he was at Shochiku. Seeking greater creative freedom, he left Shochiku in 1950 together with close friend and director Yoshimura Kozaburo, with whom he established the Kindai Eiga Kyokai (“Modern Film Association”), later becoming a central figure in Japan’s independent production movement. Even after debuting as a director with the autobiographical work *Story of a Beloved Wife* (AISAI MONOGATARI, 1951), he simultaneously remained a

prolific screenwriter, producing screenplays for works including Suzuki Seijun’s *The Born Fighter* (KENKA EREJI, Fighting Elegy, 1966), Kawashima Yuzo’s *Elegant Beast* (SHITOUYAKA NA KEDAMONO, 1962), and Masumura Yasuzo’s *The Wife of Seisaku* (SEISAKU NO Tsuma, 1965)—a creative energy he managed to sustain all the way through to his very last work, *A Postcard* (ICHIMAI NO HAGAKI), released in 2011. Heavily influenced by the modern realist drama of playwrights like Ibsen and Chekhov, he frequently tackled themes related to social and individual hardship. His independent works centered on issues he would have struggled to include while working for a major studio, as in *Children of Hiroshima* (GENBAKU NO KO, 1952), set in Shindo’s birthplace, and *Lost Sex* (HONNO, 1966), which deal with post-atomic fallout and human sexuality respectively.

Written by Hoshi Ryotaro

## A Last Note

GOGO NO YUIGONJO  
午後の遺言状

1995  
112 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Shindo Kaneto  
Executive Producer  
Shindo Jiro

Producers  
Mizokami Kiyoshi  
Ibata Yasuo  
Original Story and Screenplay  
Shindo Kaneto  
Cinematography  
Miyake Yoshiyuki  
Art Direction  
Shigeta Shigemori

Music  
Hayashi Hikaru  
Cast  
Sugimura Haruko  
(Morimoto Yoko)  
Otowa Nobuko  
(Yanagawa Toyoko)  
Asagiri Kyoko  
(Ushikuni Tomie)

Production Company  
Kindai Eiga Kyokai  
International Contact in Japan  
Kindai Eiga Kyokai



Like many works of the director's later period, *A Last Note* grapples with the theme of aging. It focuses on famed (fictional) actor Yoko, whose retreat to her rural summer residence is interrupted by a visit from Tomie, an old friend and former actor suffering from dementia. When Toyoko, Yoko's housemaid, reveals a startling secret, it sets in motion a series of events that leads to the women's lives intersecting in a variety of ways. Loosely adapted from

Chekhov's play *The Seagull*, the film employs a lightness of touch to question what it means to live and grow old; it also marked the last on-screen appearance of actor Otowa Nobuko (Shindo's wife), who was diagnosed with cancer prior to the film's production. A major hit upon its release in Japan, *A Last Note* was later adapted into a stage play, also directed by Shindo.

—  
Written by Hoshi Ryotaro

## The Island

HADAKA NO SHIMA  
裸の島

1960  
96 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Shindo Kaneto

Producers  
Matsuura Eisaku  
Shindo Kaneto  
Screenplay and Art Direction  
Shindo Kaneto

Cinematography  
Kuroda Kiyomi  
Music  
Hayashi Hikaru  
Cast  
Otowa Nobuko (Toyo)  
Tonoyama Taiji (Senta)  
Tanaka Shinji (Taro)

Production Company  
Kindai Eiga Kyokai  
International Contact in Japan  
Kindai Eiga Kyokai



Shindo's celebrated work poetically depicting the struggle between man and nature. The film portrays the daily lives of a middle-aged couple and their young sons on a remote island as they cultivate the barren land, fetch water in a rowboat, and contend with steep terrain. Their life of meager means is dealt a tragic blow when their eldest son suddenly falls ill. Featuring only a small cast and very little in the way of spoken dialogue, the film derives much of

its emotional heft from its powerful images and sound. The recipient of the Grand Prix at the 2nd Moscow International Film Festival, it was released independently by Shindo's own Kindai Eiga Kyokai, having been made by a production team of only thirteen people.

—  
Written by Hoshi Ryotaro



## Kinoshita Keisuke

1912–1998

木下恵介



A director with a tender eye for portraying the vulnerable

Joined Shochiku Kamata's film processing laboratory in 1933. He was later picked to serve as Shimazu Yasujiro's assistant director, making his own directorial debut in 1943 with *Port of Flowers* (HANA SAKU MINATO). He and Kurosawa Akira, who also debuted in the same year, were often considered rivals, albeit whereas Kurosawa was known for his distinctly masculine tales, Kinoshita's films famously spotlighted women. In addition to making Japan's first full-length color feature with *Carmen Comes Home* (KARUMEN KOKYO NI KAERU, 1951), Kinoshita earned a reputation as a director in tune with popular sentiment, as evidenced by his lyrical melodramas including *Twenty-Four Eyes* (NIJUSHI NO HITOMI, 1954) and *The Lighthouse* (YOROKOBI MO KANASHIMI MO IKUTOSHITSUKI, Times of Joy and Sorrow, 1957). He was a leading figure during the

*Twenty-Four Eyes*  
1954

golden age of Japanese cinema, proving equally adept at directing light-hearted comedies as he was hard-hitting social dramas. He was also an active facilitator of new talent who fostered figures like Kobayashi Masaki, Kawazu Yoshiro, and Yoshida Kiju. After leaving Shochiku in 1964, he transitioned to creating work predominantly for television, producing several shows including *The Kinoshita Keisuke Hour* (KINOSHITA KEISUKE AWA, 1967–1974). Throughout a career that spanned the wartime years to the period of high economic growth, he created an oeuvre distinctive for its consistent portrayal of delicate, sensitive male characters at a time when the demand was for a stronger, more virile mode of masculinity. Recent scholarly interest has accordingly focused on his work from the perspective of queer studies, among others.

Written by Ku Mina / Reference: NFAJ screening program

Directors and Films 9  
—  
Kinoshita Keisuke

## Farewell to Spring

SEKISHUN-CHO  
惜春鳥

1959  
102 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Kinoshita Keisuke  
Producers  
Koide Takashi  
Wakita Shigeru

Screenplay  
Kinoshita Keisuke  
Cinematography  
Kusuda Hiroyuki  
Music  
Kinoshita Chuji  
Art Direction  
Umeda Chiyoo

Cast  
Tsugawa Masahiko  
(Makita Yasuo)  
Yamamoto Toyozo  
(Masugi Akira)  
Kawazu Yusuke  
(Iwagaki Naoji)

Production Company  
Shochiku (Ofuna)  
International Contact in Japan  
Shochiku



Five childhood best friends reunite early one spring in their hometown of Aizu-Wakamatsu, only to find themselves shaken by the discovery that they are not quite as similar as they once were. For this film focused on youth, Kinoshita called on a talented young cast plucked from his so-called “Kinoshita school,” an appellation for recurring protégés who had honed their skills under the tutelage of the director himself. The film draws on the metaphor of the Byakkotai (“White Tiger Corps”)—a group of teenage soldiers

who met with a tragic fate during the 19th century Battle of Aizu—while also capturing delicately the intricacies of the young men’s emotional state as, defeated by the passage of time, they are forced to bid farewell to the purity of their youth. The film’s theme song, with lyrics penned by Kinoshita himself, projects a bracing yet poignant sensitivity onto the natural beauty of Aizu, imbuing the film’s sense of time and place with a deep lyricism.

—  
Written by Ku Mina

Directors and Films 9  
—  
Kinoshita Keisuke

## Twenty-Four Eyes

NIJUSHI NO HITOMI  
二十四の瞳

1954  
155 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Kinoshita Keisuke  
Producer  
Kuwata Ryotaro

Screenplay  
Kinoshita Keisuke  
Cinematography  
Kusuda Hiroyuki  
Music  
Kinoshita Chuji  
Art Direction  
Nakamura Kimihiko

Cast  
Takamine Hideko  
(Oishi Hisako)  
Tsukioka Yumeji  
(Masuno)  
Tamura Takahiro  
(Okada Isokichi)

Production Company  
Shochiku (Ofuna)  
International Contact in Japan  
Shochiku



A chronicle of the emotional bond between a young schoolteacher—a new arrival to the island of Shodoshima—and her twelve students, set against the transitional period of the wartime years. Kinoshita was inspired by Jean Renoir’s *The River* (1951) to make a conscious departure from his typical directing style, juxtaposing the island’s unchanging natural beauty with the tragedy of war, thus throwing the latter into stark relief. The film’s emotionally

resonant soundtrack comprised of children’s songs and choral numbers proved a salve for a populace still exhausted from the ravages of war, cementing Kinoshita’s reputation as a director of the people.

—  
Written by Ku Mina  
Reference: NFAJ screening program



## Ichikawa Kon

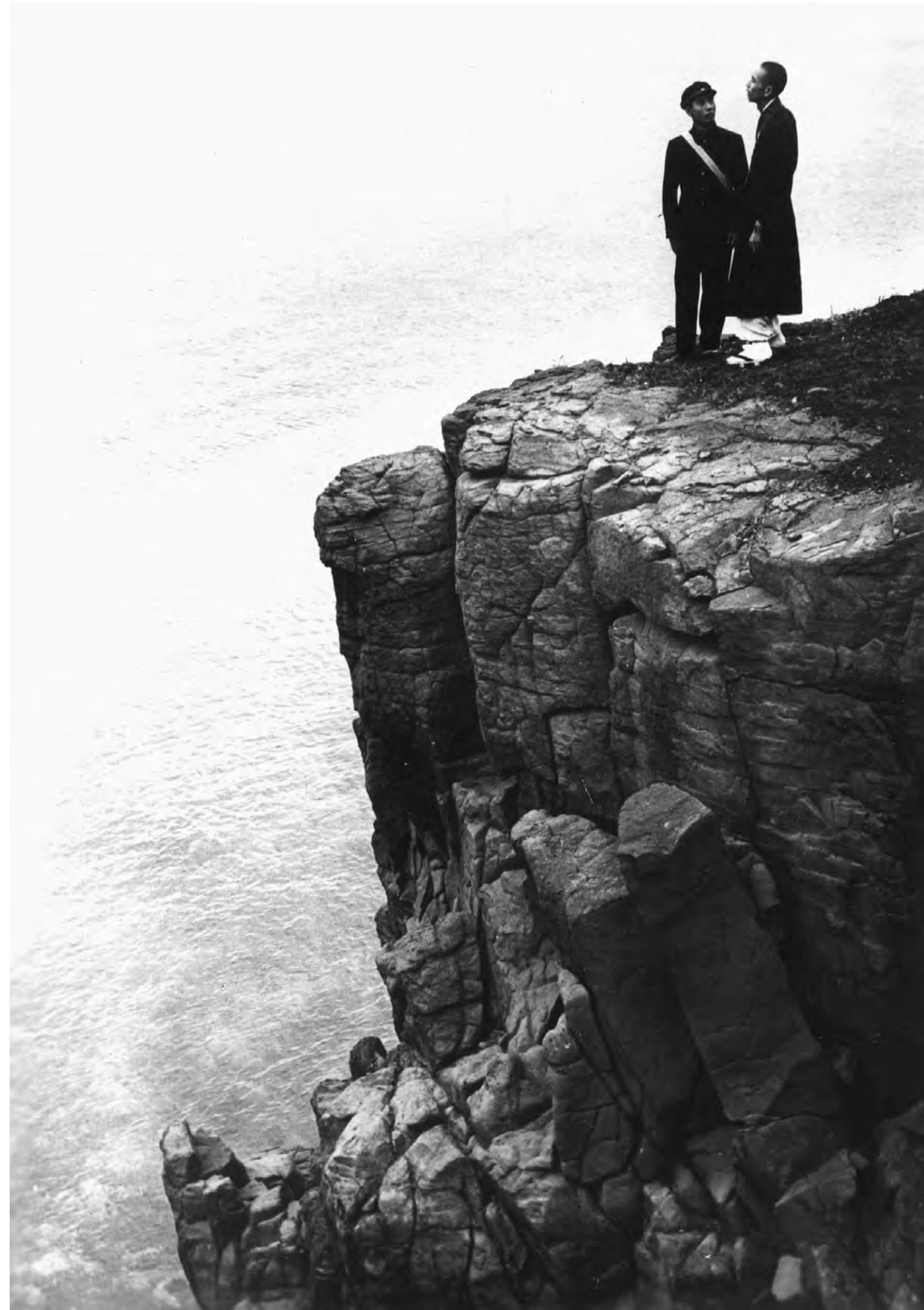
1915–2008

市川崑

A fiercely experimental conjurer of light and shadows

Ichikawa joined the animation department of J.O. Studio (one of the predecessors of Toho) in 1933, where his experience as an animator would serve as the origin point of the visual innovation of his later work in feature film. Following the department's closure in 1936, he transferred to the assistant director department, where he worked under Itami Mansaku and Ishida Tamizo, among others. After the Toho Labor Dispute, he moved in 1948 to Shintocho, where he made his first feature length film, *A Flower Blooms* (HANA HIRAKU: MACHIKO YORI, 1948). In the same year he married scriptwriter Wada Natto, with whom he would later collaborate on a number of films. Upon returning to Toho in 1951, he made several works including the visually daring *Mr. Pu* (PU-SAN, 1953) before going on to produce films across a wide range of genres, a large proportion of them literary adaptations: first at Nikkatsu from 1955, where he made *The Burmese Harp* (BIRUMA NO TATEGOTO, 1956); then at Daiei from 1956, where he made *Odd Obsession* (KAGI, The Key, 1959). He was awarded the FIPRESCI Prize (International Film Critics Award) at the 1965 Cannes Film Festival for *Tokyo Olympiad* (TOKYO ORINPIKKU, Tokyo Olympics, 1965), a film that sparked debate as to whether it constituted reportage or art. Combining experimental brio with the ability to turn it into something commercially viable, he remained active at the forefront of the industry well into his twilight years, continuing to turn out hits like *The Inugami Family* (INUGAMI-KE NO ICHIZOKU, 1976) even as the industry fell into relative decline.

Written by Ku Mina



## The Burmese Harp

BIRUMA NO TATEGOTO  
ビルマの豎琴 総集篇

1956  
116 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Ichikawa Kon  
Producer  
Takagi Masayuki

Screenplay  
Wada Natto  
Based on a novel by  
Takeyama Michio  
Cinematography  
Yokoyama Minoru  
Music  
Ifukube Akira

Art Direction  
Matsuyama Takashi  
Cast  
Mikuni Rentaro  
(Captain Inoue)  
Yasui Shoji  
(Private First Class Mizushima)  
Mihashi Tatsuya (Captain of  
the unit in Triangle Mountain)

Production Company  
Nikkatsu  
International Contact in Japan  
Nikkatsu



At the close of the war in Burma, Private First Class Mizushima is tasked with persuading a holed-up group of soldiers who are still fighting to surrender. After sustaining injuries when caught in crossfire, he is rescued by a Burmese monk, whereupon he resolves to stay behind on foreign soil to pray for the souls of fallen Japanese soldiers. Though the film is based on a children's novel by Takeyama Michio released just after the end of World War II,

Ichikawa adds his own spin on the material, poignantly depicting the horrors of war with a controlled, no-frills approach. The film won the San Giorgio Prize at the Venice International Film Festival and was also nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards.

—  
Written by Ku Mina  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

## Conflagration

ENJO  
炎上

1958  
99 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Ichikawa Kon  
Producer  
Nagata Masaichi

Screenplay  
Wada Natto, Hasebe Keiji  
Based on a novel by  
Mishima Yukio  
Cinematography  
Miyagawa Kazuo  
Music  
Mayuzumi Toshiro

Art Direction  
Nishioka Yoshinobu  
Cast  
Ichikawa Raizo  
(Mizoguchi Goichi)  
Nakamura Ganjiro  
(Tayama Dosen)  
Nakadai Tatsuya (Tokari)

Production Company  
Daiei (Kyoto)  
International Contact in Japan  
Kadokawa Corporation



A young Buddhist acolyte fanatically obsessed with Shukakuji Temple despairs at how its beauty is being tarnished by worldly corruption and decides to set it ablaze. The film adapts Mishima Yukio's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, with Ichikawa using the author's personal research notes into the real-life case that inspired the novel to bring out vividly the young priest's complex inner struggles. In the conflagration scene, cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo

expertly exploits the stark contrast between light and dark to showcase black-and-white cinema at its most visually resplendent. Ichikawa Raizo (no relation to the director) won numerous awards both at home and abroad for his portrayal of the tortured monk, with the role solidifying his status as actor.

—  
Written by Ku Mina



## Kawashima Yuzo

1918–1963

川島雄三



A maverick talent who sought to embody a playful “low brow” spirit while resisting authority

A film enthusiast during his student years, Kawashima Yuzo joined Shochiku Ofuna in 1938. After achieving the highest grade among his peers on the studio’s internal promotion exam, he was handpicked to direct his debut feature film with 1944’s *The Man Who Has Returned* (KAETTE KITA OTOKO). A self-proclaimed “member” of the Nihon Keicho-ha (literally, “Japan Frivolous School”), he directed such classical nonsense comedies as *Oh, Citizens!* (SHIMIKIN NO OI SHIMIN SHOKUN, 1948) in addition to publishing *Dema Kurabu*, a well-received newsletter that satirized the daily goings-on within the studio. After his transfer to Nikkatsu in 1955, his talent blossomed further, resulting in the creation of a number of

*A Room for Rent*  
1959

important works across a variety of genres and styles, including melodrama *Susaki Paradise: Red Light District* (SUSAKI PARADAI: AKASHINGO, 1956), which portrayed the emotional lives of a couple in a dysfunctional relationship, and *The Sun in the Last Days of the Shogunate* (BAKUMATSU TAIYO-DEN, 1957), a comedy based on a classical *rakugo* story. While he moved to Toho subsidiary Tokyo Eiga in 1957, in subsequent years he also directed three films for Daiei starring Wakao Ayako, including *A Geisha’s Diary* (ONNA WA NIDO UMARERU, Women Are Born Twice, 1961). His body of work—in which he dismantled the boundary between beauty and ugliness and resisted authority and hypocrisy via his philosophy of “positive escapism”—exudes a unique brilliance that remains unfaded to this day.

Written by Ku Mina

## Elegant Beast

SHITOYAKA NA KEDAMONO  
しとやかな獣

1962  
96 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Kawashima Yuzo  
Producers  
Yoneda Osamu  
Mitsuguma Masaki

Original Story and  
Screenplay  
Shindo Kaneto  
Cinematography  
Munekawa Nobuo  
Music  
Ikeno Sei  
Art Direction  
Shibata Tokuji

Cast  
Wakao Ayako  
(Mitani Yukie)  
Ito Yunosuke  
(Maeda Tokizo)  
Yamaoka Hisano  
(Maeda Yoshino)

Production Company  
Daiei (Tokyo)  
International Contact in Japan  
Kadokawa Corporation



In this dazzlingly original work set entirely within a single public-housing apartment, we follow the Maedas, a family of four whose surface elegance belies their moral depravity, as they engage in one act of deception after another. Featuring an original screenplay by Shindo Kaneto (for which he received the Kinema Junpo Screenplay Award), the film serves as a showcase for Kawashima's inventive use of space, transforming the family's

small living quarters into a microcosm of contemporary society and all its aching desires. Wakao Ayako is particularly memorable as Yukie, the duplicitous lover who bedazzles the "elegant beasts" of the title.

—  
Written by Ku Mina  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

## A Room for Rent

KASHIMA ARI  
貸間あり

1959  
112 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Kawashima Yuzo  
Producer  
Takimura Kazuo

Based on a novel by  
Ibuse Masuji  
Screenplay  
Kawashima Yuzo  
Fujimoto Giichi  
Cinematography  
Okazaki Kozo  
Music  
Manabe Riichiro

Art Direction  
Kojima Motoji  
Cast  
Frankie Sakai  
(Yoda Goro)  
Awashima Chikage  
(Tsuyama Yumiko)  
Katsura Kokinji  
(Tani Yokichi)

Production Company  
Takarazuka Eiga  
International Contact in Japan  
Toho



A quick-moving yarn that follows the exploits of a zany cast of characters living in an old Osaka boarding house. The film's unique stylings are said to have angered Ibuse Masuji, the author of the novel it was originally based on; Kawashima, meanwhile, remained fond of the work, which he described as a "cry" aimed at highlighting the sorrow of all those forced to live in a state of vulgarity. Something of Kawashima's own philosophy

is reflected in protagonist Goro (Frankie Sakai), a self-described "good-for-nothing oddball" who runs away at the end of the film, injecting a somber air into this otherwise whimsical ensemble drama.

—  
Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Ku Mina



## Misumi Kenji

1921–1975

三隅研次

A precise stager of jaw-dropping mise-en-scène

Misumi was called up for military service shortly after joining Nikkatsu Kyoto in 1941. He spent several years during the war interred in a Siberian prisoner of war camp; when he later returned to Japan, he joined Daiei, where he served as assistant director under such notable figures as Kinugasa Teinosuke and Ito Daisuke before making his directorial debut in 1954. By the time Daiei went bankrupt in 1971, he had directed upwards of sixty feature films, including *The Yotsuya Kaidan* (YOTSUYA KAIDAN, 1959) and *The Adventure of Kyoshiro Nemuri* (NEMURI KYOSHIRO SHOBU, Sleepy Eyes of Death: Sword of Adventure, 1964). In his later years, in addition to his continued directing of films like *Lone Wolf and Cub: Sword of Vengeance* (KOZURE OKAMI: KO O KASHI UDEKASHI TSUKAMATSURU, 1972), he also worked as a director on numerous television dramas. He is revered for having reinvigorated the *jidaigeki* genre with arresting production design and rapid-fire editing, all from within a studio system that was in sharp decline from the late 1950s onward. A prolific director of studio-led projects, he was simultaneously an auteur who brought his own inimitable signature to anything he made, with his scintillatingly choreographed swordfight scenes in particular influencing later works such as Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003). In recent years, his achievements have become the focus of global attention, as attested by a recent retrospective of his work held at the Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival in 2022.

—  
Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Hoshi Ryotaro



## The Tale of Zatoichi

ZATOICHI MONOGATARI

座頭市物語

1962

96 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Misumi Kenji

Producer

Kubodera Ikuro

Based on a novel by

Shimozawa Kan

Screenplay

Inuzuka Minoru

Cinematography

Makiura Chikashi

Art Direction

Naito Akira

Music

Ifukube Akira

CastKatsu Shintaro  
(Masseur Ichi)

Amachi Shigeru

(Hirate Miki)

Banri Masayo (Otane)

Production Company

Daiei (Kyoto)

International Contact in Japan

Kadokawa Corporation



The first installment of the popular Zatoichi series, which over the course of twenty-six films stamped its mark on popular culture worldwide. Zatoichi, a humble blind swordsman skilled in the quick-draw sword technique of *iai-jutsu*, encounters Hirate, a *ronin* suffering from tuberculosis, on his travels. Their blossoming friendship comes under threat when the two men are forced into conflict through their association with rival yakuza

clans. The film's pervasive forlorn atmosphere sets it apart from the more upbeat *jidaigeki* fare that had typically proved popular with Japanese audiences. Katsu Shintaro brings a seething determination to the role of the blind swordsman, fully embodying his skill with the sword.

—  
Written by Hoshi Ryotaro

## The Sword-Cut

KIRU

斬る

1962

71 min

Color

—

Director

Misumi Kenji

Producer

Miyata Yutaka

Based on a novel by

Shibata Renzaburo

Screenplay

Shindo Kaneto

Cinematography

Honda Shozo

Art Direction

Naito Akira

Music

Saito Ichiro

CastIchikawa Raizo  
(Takakura Shingo)

Fujimura Shiho

(Yamaguchi Fujiko)

Nagisa Mayumi

(Takakura Yoshio)

Production Company

Daiei (Kyoto)

International Contact in Japan

Kadokawa Corporation



A showcase of Misumi's skills as a modernist director, and the first installment in the "Sword Trilogy," a collaboration between the director and Daiei star Ichikawa Raizo. Ichikawa plays Takakura Shingo, a samurai whose foster father and sister are killed by a grudge-bearing neighbor. After avenging their deaths, the forlorn Shingo finds solace under a new lord only to fall victim to a treacherous attack, eventually culminating in his suicide by

*seppuku*. From its electrifying opening to its bleakly nihilistic conclusion, the film is a master-class in tension, never once letting go throughout its 71-minute runtime. Ichikawa, who brings an intense richness to the fleeting life of the protagonist, himself passed away at an early age seven years after the film was made.

—  
Written by Hoshi Ryotaro



## Suzuki Seijun

1923–2017

鈴木清順

An unconventional maestro who played by his own rulebook

Born in Tokyo, Suzuki (real name Suzuki Seitaro) was conscripted to the army in 1943, where he served in the Philippines and Taiwan. Upon returning to Japan in 1948, he joined Shochiku Ofuna; he later transferred to Nikkatsu in 1954, where he worked under Noguchi Hiroshi, among others. In 1956 he made his directorial debut under his real name, taking on his more familiar assumed name two years later. Though working mostly on relatively small-scale B-movies for double-feature programs, he employed techniques that transgressed against the established norms of film grammar, filling his work with outlandish art and jarring cinematography and editing to produce a string of freewheeling masterpieces including *Kanto Wanderer* (KANTO MUSHUKU, 1963). With *Branded to Kill* (KOROSHI NO RAKUIN, 1967), however, his predilection for anarchic eclecticism got him into hot water with Nikkatsu, resulting in his dismissal from the studio. He spent the next decade producing television dramas and commercials before finally returning to film with *A Tale of Sorrow and Sadness* (HISHU MONOGATARI, 1977), finding critical adulation both at home and abroad particularly from *Zigeunerweisen* (TSIGOINERUWAIZEN, 1980) onwards. His last film, *Princess Raccoon* (OPERETTA TANUKI GOTEN, 2005), premiered as an honorary screening in the Out of Competition section at the 58th Cannes Film Festival. Suzuki's works have continued to influence many directors worldwide, including Jim Jarmusch.

Written by Hoshi Ryotaro



## Carmen from Kawachi

KAWACHI KARUMEN

河内カルメン

1966

89 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Suzuki Seijun

Planning

Sakagami Shizuo

Based on a novel by

Kon Toko

Screenplay

Miki Katsumi

Cinematography

Mine Shigeyoshi

Art Direction

Kimura Takeo

Music

Kosugi Taichiro

CastNogawa Yumiko  
(Takeda Tsuyuko)Wada Koji  
(Sakata Akira)Kawachi Tamio  
(Takano Seiji)Production Company

Nikkatsu

International Contact in Japan

Nikkatsu



In this unabashed crowd-pleaser, Nogawa Yumiko plays the curvaceous Tsuyuko, a young woman from a poor household who falls in love with Akira, the heir to a factory. Fed up with her hometown, she leaves for the city where she finds work in a nightclub and subsequent success as a model. While fending off the solicitations of her ardent admirers, she runs into Akira again, who appears down on his luck. Nogawa's stellar performance as

the uninhibited, spirited heroine brings a levity to the film at odds with its occasionally bleak subject matter. The "Kawachi" of the title refers to a province formerly situated in what is now Osaka Prefecture.

—  
Written by Hoshi Ryotaro

## Branded to Kill

KOROSHI NO RAKUIN

殺しの烙印

1967

91 min

B&amp;W

—

Director

Suzuki Seijun

Planning

Iwai Kaneo

Screenplay

Guryu Hachiro

Editing

Suzuki Akira

Cinematography

Nagatsuka Kazue

Music

Yamamoto Naozumi

Art Direction

Kawahara Sukezo

CastShishido Joe  
(Hanada Goro)Mari Annu  
(Nakajo Misako)Nanbara Koji  
(Number One Killer)Production Company

Nikkatsu

International Contact in Japan

Nikkatsu



Suzuki's notoriously off-the-wall masterpiece about professional hitmen vying for rank subverted the template of the action films Nikkatsu was then mass-producing while also pushing at the limits of cinematic expression. When Hanada, the Japanese underworld's third-ranked hitman, botches a job he receives from a mysterious beautiful woman, he ends up a wanted man. To make matters worse, the Number One Killer is gunning for him too... A work

bursting with free-wheeling energy, the film shares something of the zeitgeist-defining quality of Suzuki's contemporary Jean-Luc Godard. The shootout on the pier and Hanada's fetish for the smell of boiling rice elicit gasps and smiles in turn.

—  
Written by Hoshi Ryotaro



## Okamoto Kihachi

1924–2005

岡本喜八



### A director of entertainment films rooted in his own wartime experiences

Conscripted into the army during the Pacific War, Okamoto underwent the harrowing experience of seeing his comrades blown up before his very eyes. After the war, he joined Toho, where in addition to making comedies and gangster films he was also given the opportunity to try his hand at war movies, resulting in *The Human Bullet* (NIKUDAN, 1968) and *Battle of Okinawa* (GEKIDO NO SHOWA-SHI: OKINAWA KESSEN, 1971), among others. In *Desperado Outpost* (DOKURITSU GURENTAI, 1959) in particular, he interwove humor to expose the folly of war while simultaneously breaking the staid mold of the conventional Japanese war film.

*The Elegant Life of  
Mr. Everyman*  
1963

Possessed of an insatiable curiosity, he continued to direct films across a wide range of genres well into the latter half of his career, from science-fiction work *Blue Christmas* (BURU KURISUMASU, 1978) to eccentric *jidaigeki* *Jazz Daimyo* (JAZU DAIMYO, 1986). Okamoto's films' appeal lies in their lively tempo, which he achieved through the brisk layering of shots, and their garrulous narration. So profound was Okamoto's influence on Anno Hideaki, director of TV animation series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (SHINSEIKI EVANGERION, 1995–1996), that Anno used a photo of the late director as a stand-in to portray a significant missing character in his 2016 film *Shin Godzilla* (SHIN GOJIRA).

Written by Miyamoto Noriaki

## The Last Gunfight

ANKOKUGAI NO TAIKETSU  
暗黒街の対決

1960 95 min Color —	<u>Screenplay</u> Sekizawa Shin'ichi	<u>Art Direction</u> Akune Iwao	<u>Production Company</u> Toho
<u>Director</u> Okamoto Kihachi	<u>Cinematography</u> Yamada Kazuo	<u>Cast</u> Mifune Toshiro (Fujioka Saburo)	<u>International Contact in Japan</u> Toho
<u>Producer</u> Tanaka Tomoyuki	<u>Editing</u> Kuroiwa Yoshitami	<u>Music</u> Sato Masaru	



The third installment in Toho's "made-in-Japan" gangster *Underworld* series, following on the heels of *Underworld* (ANKOKUGAI, 1956), directed by Yamamoto Kajiro, and Okamoto's *Boss of the Underworld* (ANKOKUGAI NO KAORYAKU, 1959), starring Mifune Toshiro and Tsuruta Koji. A charming blend of genres, the film mixes elements of the buddy film — as seen in its curious blossoming bromance between a demoted corrupt cop and a

gangster-turned-bar owner — with the occasional musical scene. Okamoto crafts delicate moments out of everyday items such as a box of cigarettes and a pocket notebook, showcasing his keen eye for detail.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki

## The Elegant Life of Mr. Everyman

EBURI MAN-SHI NO YUGA NA SEIKATSU  
江分利満氏の優雅な生活

1963 102 min B&W —	<u>Producers</u> Fujimoto Sanezumi Kaneko Masakatsu	<u>Art Direction</u> Hamagami Hyoe	<u>Production Company</u> Toho
<u>Director</u> Okamoto Kihachi	<u>Screenplay</u> Ide Toshiro	<u>Cast</u> Kobayashi Keiju (Eburi Man)	<u>International Contact in Japan</u> Toho
	<u>Cinematography</u> Murai Hiroshi	<u>Music</u> Sato Masaru	



Unremarkable office worker Eburi Man — a play on the English word "everyman" — makes an inebriated promise to a pair of editors to write them a serial novel that will attract a huge readership. The film comically portrays his process as he mines his life for novel-worthy material. In addition to portraying the fatigue and homogeneity of postwar Japanese society, Okamoto also provides moments of pointed criticism, such as a scene in which, at a party held to celebrate his

literary success, Eburi bares his anger toward the politicians responsible for plunging his nation into war. The film was also notable for its short animated sequences penned by famed cartoonist Yanagihara Ryohei, a rarity within films of the time.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki



## Masumura Yasuzo

1924–1986

增村保造



### A master of breakneck editing and rapid-fire dialogue

Masumura studied film in Italy at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Center of Cinematography) in the early 1950s. Back in Japan, he worked as an assistant director to Mizoguchi Kenji at Daiei, whose Tokyo Studios he would subsequently remain at for most of his directing career. Deeply critical of the sentimentality and slow-moving nature of conventional Japanese movies, he instead made films characterized by their breakneck cutting and depictions of individuals who expressed themselves openly. His rapid-fire approach to dialogue was taken to its extreme in his 1959 work *The Most Valuable Wife* (SAIKO SHUKUN FUJIN). He made twenty

*All Mixed Up*  
1964

films together with actor Wakao Ayako, portraying an image of strong, resilient women in works such as *The Wife's Confession* (Tsuma wa Kokuhaku Suru, *A Wife Confesses*, 1961) and *The Wife of Seisaku* (Seisaku no Tsuma, 1965). From around the midpoint of his career, he embarked on a series of weighty adaptations of the works of novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, including *All Mixed Up* (Manji, 1964), *The Spider Tattoo* (Irezumi, 1966), and *A Fool's Love* (Chijin no Ai, 1967). A contemporary of Mishima Yukio during their time together at Tokyo University, he later directed the novelist in the Mishima-starring *Afraid to Die* (Karakkaze Yaro, 1960), as well as basing his film *Music* (Ongaku, 1972) on Mishima's novel of the same name.

Written by Miyamoto Noriaki / Reference: NFAJ screening program

## A Cheerful Girl

AOZORA MUSUME  
青空娘

1957  
89 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Masumura Yasuzo  
Producer  
Nagata Masaichi

Based on a novel by  
Genji Keita  
Screenplay  
Shirasaka Yoshio  
Cinematography  
Takahashi Michio  
Music  
Kosugi Taichiro

Art Direction  
Shibata Tokuji  
Cast  
Wakao Ayako  
(Ono Yuko)  
Kawasaki Keizo  
(Hiraoka Ryosuke)  
Sugawara Kenji  
(Futami, Yuko's teacher)

Production Company  
Daiei (Tokyo)  
International Contact in Japan  
Kadokawa Corporation



In this lighthearted work from Masumura's early period, protagonist Yuko comes to Tokyo to find her mother after learning about her from her critically ill grandmother. The film, which unfolds beneath a cloudless blue sky, remains remarkably unsentimental despite its subject matter. Masumura's talent for rapid-fire editing is on full display in a scene in which Yuko plays table tennis at her stepmother's house. An array of well-drawn supporting

characters, from a philosophy book-carrying fishmonger to the sharp-tongued Ono-family maid, adds to the film's charm.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki

## All Mixed Up

MANJI  
卍

1964  
90 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Masumura Yasuzo  
Producer  
Saito Yonejiro

Based on a novel by  
Tanizaki Jun'ichiro  
Screenplay  
Shindo Kaneto  
Editing  
Kobayashi Setsuo  
Music  
Yamanouchi Tadashi

Art Direction  
Shimogawara Tomoo  
Cast  
Wakao Ayako  
(Tokumitsu Mitsuko)  
Kishida Kyoko  
(Kakiuchi Sonoko)  
Kawazu Yusuke  
(Watanuki Eijiro)

Production Company  
Daiei (Tokyo)  
International Contact in Japan  
Kadokawa Corporation



A literary adaptation from Masumura's mid-career period. The title is taken from the Japanese name for the swastika, an ancient Buddhist symbol representing good fortune, whose four-pronged shape serves as a visual metaphor for the intertwined fates of the two couples at the film's heart. When Sonoko falls in love with fellow female art student Mitsuko, it sets them and their respective partners on a collision course that culminates

in tragedy. Based on a Tanizaki novel written after the novelist relocated to western Japan following the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the film retains the novel's western dialect, lending it a distinct charm. The split-screen-like composition adopted in certain scenes is also worthy of note.

—  
Written by Miyamoto Noriaki



## Nakahira Ko

1926–1978

中平康

A modernist master who grandiloquently referred to the filmmakers of the French New Wave as his “disciples”

Joined Shochiku Ofuna in 1949. After working as an assistant director under figures such as Kinoshita Keisuke and Kawashima Yuzo, Nakahira transferred to Nikkatsu in 1954. Though he first directed *The Shadow of Fear* (NERAWARETA OTOKO, 1956), it was the sensational *Juvenile Jungle* (KURUTTA KAJITSU, *Crazed Fruit*, 1956), which ended up being released earlier that same year, that catapulted him to fame overnight. While active across a variety of genres, he harbored a predilection for stylish visuals and briskness of tempo, seeking to provide in his work an antithesis to conventional Japanese cinema, as seen in a string of films he made for Nikkatsu that became synonymous with the youthful energy of the recently revived studio. Between his dismissal from Nikkatsu in 1968 and his founding of the independent Nakahira Productions three years later, he was invited to Hong Kong and South Korea where he directed remakes of his own works, resulting in *Summer Heat* (1968) and *A Crash Landing of Youth* (1971), among other films. He grandiloquently referred to the filmmakers of the French New Wave as his “disciples” and remained committed to the pursuit of cutting-edge innovation, approaching film first and foremost as a visual artform. Half a century after his death, Nakahira’s films still pulse with unconventional beauty, cementing his position as a modernist even after all this time.

Written by Ku Mina



## Juvenile Jungle (a.k.a. Crazy Fruit)

KURUTTA KAJITSU  
狂った果実

1956  
86 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Nakahira Ko  
Producer  
Mizunoe Takiko

Original Story and Screenplay  
Ishihara Shintaro  
Cinematography  
Mine Shigeyoshi  
Music  
Sato Masaru  
Takemitsu Toru

Art Direction  
Matsuyama Takashi  
Cast  
Ishihara Yujiro  
(Takijima Natsuhisa)  
Tsugawa Masahiko  
(Takijima Haruji)  
Kitahara Mie (Eri)

Production Company  
Nikkatsu  
International Contact in Japan  
Nikkatsu



While spending the summer at their Shonan holiday villa, two brothers lust over and fall in love with the same woman, setting them on a one-way course to destruction. Characterized by its bold editing style and cutting-edge visual flair, Nakahira's most famous work portrays the lifestyles of the *taiyozoku* ("Sun Tribe") generation of Japanese youth (so named after an epoch-defining novel by Ishihara Shintaro) and heralded the arrival of a new generation of

filmmakers. A commercial hit, the film catapulted its lead Ishihara Yujiro to stardom and served as an inflection point for the kind of movies Nikkatsu would make going forward. It also made a strong impression on the directors of the French New Wave, with François Truffaut declaring that he was "madly in love with it."

—  
Written by Ku Mina

## Flora on the Sand (a.k.a. Jungle Interlude)

SUNA NO UE NO SHOKUBUTSUGUN  
砂の上の植物群

1964  
95 min  
Partial Color  
—  
Director  
Nakahira Ko  
Producer  
Sakagami Shizuo

Based on a novel by  
Yoshiyuki Junnosuke  
Screenplay  
Ikeda Ichiro  
Kato Akira  
Nakahira Ko  
Cinematography  
Yamazaki Yoshihiro

Music  
Mayuzumi Toshiro  
Art Direction  
Otsuru Yasuhiro  
Cast  
Nakaya Noboru  
(Igi Ichiro)  
Inano Kazuko  
(Tsugami Kyoko)

Nishio Mieko  
(Tsugami Akiko)  
Production Company  
Nikkatsu  
International Contact in Japan  
Nikkatsu



After a chance encounter with a precocious high school student, a cosmetics salesman is solicited by the young girl to seduce and "hurt" her older sister. The film is adapted from a famous novel by Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, a member of the so-called "third generation" of postwar writers (the first and second "generations" having debuted in 1947 and 1948–1949 respectively), who breathed new life into the postwar literary scene. Its story charting the protagonists' surrender to sexual

pleasure unfolds across stark black-and-white images interspersed with Paul Klee's richly colored abstract paintings and Bach's sensual melodies to produce an aesthetic eroticism that threatens to burst from every frame. The film is exemplary of Nakahira's late-period works, characterized by their explorations of sexual love.

—  
Written by Ku Mina



## Haneda Sumiko

—  
1926—  
—

羽田澄子



### A keen and unwavering observer of Japanese society in all its varied manifestations

Born in Dalian, China. Active in the women's section of the Dalian Japanese Labor Union after the war, Haneda later served as assistant director to Hani Susumu upon returning to Japan. She made her directorial debut in 1957 with *A Women's College in the Village* (MURA NO FUJIN GAKKYU, Village Women's Classroom) from Iwanami Productions, a studio for whom she would also produce many educational, scientific, and public-relations documentary films. Meanwhile, she collaborated with her husband, the film producer Kudo Mitsuru, to complete her first independently produced film, *The Cherry Tree with Gray Blossoms* (USUZUMI NO SAKURA, 1977), which went on to become a hit. From 1981 onwards, she released a string of notable works through Jiyu Kobo, a documentary film

—  
*The World of Dementia*  
1985

production company founded by her husband, including the six-part series *Kabuki Actor Kataoka Nizaemon* (KABUKI YAKUSHA KATAOKA NIZAEMON, 1992–1994), a meditative and meticulous study of the actor's artistic mastery in his final years. For over half a century, she has tenaciously continued to document a vast range of subjects—everything from traditional performing arts to the women's movement and welfare sector—creating works that consistently offer new perspectives on Japanese society and culture. Her work has lately been the focus of renewed attention abroad, with recent events including an online symposium and screenings organized by the University of London in 2021 and her inclusion in the 2022 exhibition and screening program *No Master Territories: Feminist Worldmaking and the Moving Image*.

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Written by Tamada Kenta / Reference: NFAJ screening program

## Into the Picture Scroll: The Tale of Yamanaka Tokiwa

YAMANAKA TOKIWA: USHIWAKA-MARU TO TOKIWA-GOZEN—HAHA TO KO NO MONOGATARI  
山中常盤—牛若丸と常盤御前 母と子の物語—

2004	<u>Screenplay and Editing</u>	<u>Joruri</u>	<u>Narration</u>
100 min	Haneda Sumiko	Toyotake Rosetayu	Kita Michie
Color	<u>Cinematography</u>	<u>Design</u>	<u>Cast</u>
—	Wakabayashi Hiromitsu	Asakura Setsu	Kataoka Kyoko (Tashi)
<u>Director</u>	Soda Kikumatsu	<u>Piano</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
Haneda Sumiko	<u>Composition, Shamisen</u>	Takahashi Aki	Jiyu Kobo
<u>Producer</u>	Tsurusawa Seiji	<u>Recording</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
Kudo Mitsuru	<u>Sakucho, Kotsuzumi, Uchimono</u>	Takizawa Osamu	Kanatasha Inc.
	Senba Kiyohiko		



An adaptation of the 12-volume, 150-meter-long picture scroll of the same name by early-Edo period painter Iwasa Matabei, which was in turn based on a popular *bunraku* puppet play. Panning slowly sideways, the camera captures in rigorous detail the action of the scroll, dynamically recounting the tale of filial love between Ushiwakamaru and his mother Lady Tokiwa, whose death the young samurai sets out to avenge. From initial conception (though Haneda had yet

to choose which picture scroll she would film), the project was thirty-seven years in the making, thus representing the culmination of Haneda's art films. It offers a fascinating glimpse into the charm of Japan's traditional arts, with narration by *joruri* singer Toyotake Rosetayu and music composed by *shamisen* performer and Living National Treasure Tsurusawa Seiji.

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Written by Tamada Kenta  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

## The World of Dementia

CHIHOSEI ROJIN NO SEKAI  
痴呆性老人の世界

1985	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
84 min	Takamura Takeji	Nishio Kiyoshi	Iwanami Productions
Color	<u>Producer</u>	<u>Sound</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	Kawakami Hirohisa	Kubota Yukio	Documentary Film
<u>Director</u>	<u>Screenplay</u>	Takizawa Osamu	Preservation Center
Haneda Sumiko	Haneda Sumiko	<u>Music selected by</u>	
		Todaka Yoshiyuki	



Conceived with the purpose of conveying the everyday reality of elderly dementia patients, Haneda's film painstakingly documents the lives of residents in a care facility, turning the camera on their interactions and support for one another. The film performed extremely well, running for a full eight weeks at Tokyo single-screen venue Iwanami Hall, thus playing a pivotal role in bringing out into the open issues surrounding the

daily lives and care for those with dementia. Haneda has stated that she regards the film less as her own work than as the product of the facility's tranquil environment, the lives of its residents, and the joint efforts of all the crew who brought the film's visuals and audio to life.

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Written by Tamada Kenta  
Reference: NFAJ screening program




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## Imamura Shohei

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1926–2006

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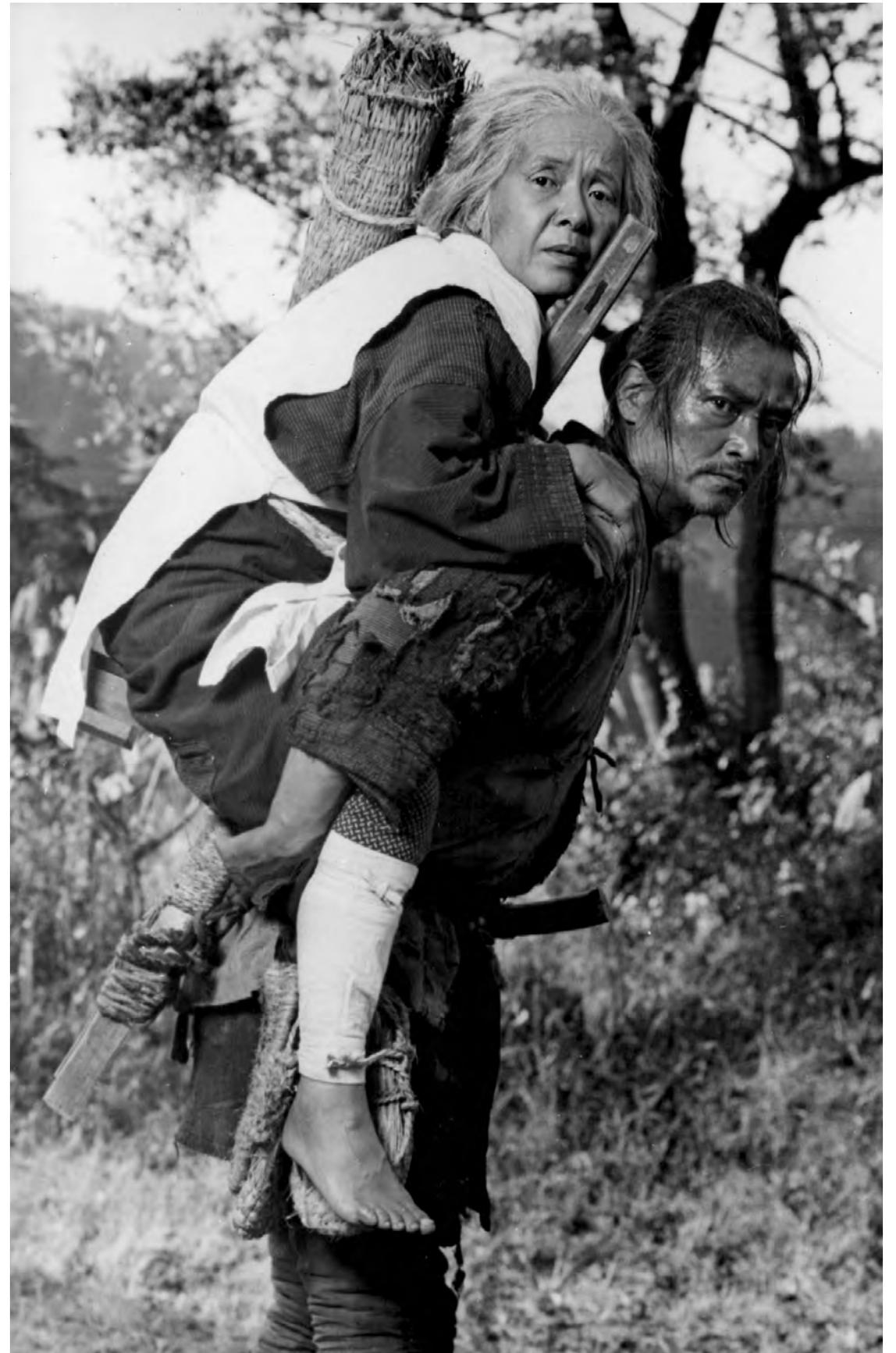
今村昌平

A director who fiendishly documented life's extremes with uncompromising realism

Upon graduating from Waseda University, Imamura joined Shochiku Ofuna in 1951, where he honed his craft serving as assistant director under the tutelage of Ozu Yasujiro and Kawashima Yuzo. In 1954, he transferred together with Kawashima to the newly revived Nikkatsu, making his directorial debut in 1958 with *Stolen Desire* (NUSUMARETA YOKUJO). Over the next several years, he would achieve widespread recognition with a string of vital works bursting with chaotic energy—including *Hogs and Warships* (BUTA TO GUNKAN, Pigs and Battleships, 1961), *The Insect Woman* (NIPPON KONCHU-KI, 1963), and *Intentions of Murder* (AKAI SATSUI, 1964)—earning the nickname “Demon Imahei” (a portmanteau combining the first and second halves of his family and given name) for his uncompromising shooting style and vigorously realistic portrayals of the underbelly of human desire. Following the establishment of his own company, Imamura Production, he turned his hand to documentary films and television dramas, before finally exploding on to the world stage with *The Ballad of Narayama* (NARAYAMA-BUSHI-KO, 1983), for which he was awarded the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival. He continued to reap success with films such as *Black Rain* (KUROI AME, 1989) and *The Eel* (UNAGI, 1997), the latter of which saw him awarded the Palme d’Or for a second time. He is also known for his efforts aimed at fostering future generations of filmmakers, having founded the Yokohama Broadcasting Technical School (now known as the Japan Institute of the Moving Image) in 1975.

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Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Fujiwara Masao



## A History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess

NIPPON SENGOSHI: MADAMU ONBORO NO SEIKATSU

にっぽん戦後史 マダムおんぼろの生活

1970	<u>Producers</u>	<u>Sound</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
105 min	Horiba Shinsei	Hasegawa Yoshio	Nippon Eiga Shinsha
B&W	Ogasawara Motoo	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	<u>Screenplay</u>	Akaza Etsuko	Toho
<u>Director</u>	Imamura Shohei	Akaza Tami	
Imamura Shohei	<u>Cinematography</u>	Akaza Akemi	
	Tochizawa Masao		



Etsuko, the hostess of a Yokosuka drinking establishment catering to foreigners, reflects on her past for the camera. Encouraged by the results of his experimental pseudo-documentary *A Man Vanishes* (NINGEN JOHATSU, 1967), Imamura was only too happy to accept this commission from newsreel and documentary production company Nippon Eiga Shinsha. The film interweaves Etsuko's matter-of-fact descriptions of her life of hardship with actual

newsreel footage of the era's political events, presenting a compelling cross-section glimpse of the nation's postwar history.

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Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Fujiwara Masao

## The Ballad of Narayama

NARAYAMA-BUSHI-KO

檀山節考

1983	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Music</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
131 min	Kusakabe Goro	Ikebe Shin'ichiro	Toei Company, Ltd.
Color	<u>Based on a novel by</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	Imamura Production
—	Fukazawa Shichiro	Inagaki Hisao	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
<u>Director</u>	<u>Screenplay</u>	Yoshino Nobutaka	Toei Company, Ltd.
Imamura Shohei	Imamura Shohei	<u>Cast</u>	
<u>Producer</u>	<u>Cinematography</u>	Ogata Ken (Tatsuhei)	
Tomoda Jiro	Tochizawa Masao	Sakamoto Sumiko (Orin)	
		Aki Takejo (Tama)	



The second film adaptation of Fukazawa Shichiro's novel of the same title, based on the legend of a small mountain community whose custom it was for aged relatives to be carried to a mountain and left there to die. Unlike Kinoshita Keisuke's 1958 version, which was shot using sets, Imamura's film was captured entirely on location; it also intersperses its action with scenes of animals copulating and hunting, resulting in a richly realistic narrative more concerned with

the raw, gritty ingredients of life than Kinoshita's version, which was instead notable for its staged, stylistic beauty. The film famously beat out Oshima Nagisa's *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (SENJO NO MERI KURISUMASU, 1983), regarded as the favorite to win, to take home the Palme d'Or at the 36th Cannes Film Festival.

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Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Fujiwara Masao



## Shinoda Masahiro

1931–2025

篠田正浩

An innovator forever in pursuit of new expressive possibilities

Joined Shochiku Ofuna in 1953. Shinoda shot to fame with *Youth in Fury* (KAWAITA MIZUUMI, 1960), his second directorial feature, for which he became regarded as a leading figure of the Shochiku New Wave alongside stablemates Oshima Nagisa and Yoshida Kiju. He collaborated with avant-garde playwright Terayama Shuji and composer Takemitsu Toru in pursuit of new expressive possibilities within film, experimenting with stop-motion techniques and a narrative structure reminiscent of *Citizen Kane* (1941) for his *jidaigeki* *The Assassin* (ANSATSU, 1964). In 1965 he left Shochiku to form his own production company, Hyogensha, where he continued to push the mold of artistic expression. His films from this period — such as *Double Suicide* (SHINJU TEN NO AMIJIMA, 1969), an experimental adaptation of a *bunraku* play by leading Edo-period dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon; and *Demon Pond* (YASHAGAIKE, 1979), a collaboration with special effects supervisor Yajima Nobuo (famed for his work on Toei *tokusatsu* TV series) — continue to attract global attention to this day. Whether directing hit movies like *MacArthur's Children* (SETOUCHI SHONEN YAKYUDAN, 1984) or more artistic fare such as *Gonza the Spearman* (YARI NO GONZA, 1986), for which he was awarded the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, he remained a director who steadfastly refused to be pigeon-holed right up to his retirement in 2003.

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Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Tamada Kenta



Directors and Films 19  
—  
Shinoda Masahiro

## Pale Flower

KAWAITA HANA  
乾いた花

1964  
94 min  
B&W  
—  
Director  
Shinoda Masahiro  
Producer  
Shirai Masao

Based on a novel by  
Ishihara Shintaro  
Screenplay  
Shinoda Masahiro  
Baba Masaru  
Cinematography  
Kosugi Masao

Music  
Takemitsu Toru  
Art Direction  
Toda Shigemasa  
Cast  
Ikebe Ryo (Muraki)  
Kaga Mariko (Saeko)  
Fujiki Takashi (Yoh)

Production Company  
Shochiku (Ofuna)  
International Contact in Japan  
Shochiku



A yakuza gangster freshly released from prison encounters a mysterious young woman at a gambling den, who requests that he introduce her to games with higher and higher stakes. Stylishly dressed in outfits designed by Mori Hanae, Kaga Mariko cuts a conspicuous figure amidst the male-dominated formality of Tokyo's gambling houses. Making striking use of dark and light contrast, Shinoda's portrayal of the criminal underground caused such a stir within

Shochiku—famed for its light and breezy comedies—that the film's release was delayed, with it looking at one time as if it might not be released at all. Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese were such admirers of the work that they each purchased their own print of the film for their private collection.

—  
Written by Tamada Kenta

Directors and Films 19  
—  
Shinoda Masahiro

## My Face Is Red in the Sun

YUHI NI AKAI ORE NO KAO  
夕陽に赤い俺の顔

1961  
82 min  
Color  
—  
Director  
Shinoda Masahiro  
Producer  
Ueno Tetsuo

Screenplay  
Terayama Shuji  
Cinematography  
Kosugi Masao  
Editing  
Sugihara Yoshi  
Music  
Yamamoto Naozumi

Art Direction  
Umeda Chiyoo  
Cast  
Kawazu Yusuke  
(Ishida Haruhiko)  
Iwashita Shima  
(Arisaka Mana)  
Honoo Kayoko (Nagisa)

Production Company  
Shochiku (Ofuna)  
International Contact in Japan  
Shochiku



A gang of eight competitive hired killers is thrown for a loop by the appearance of a young marksman who outclasses them all. Responding to a sudden request from Shochiku, Shinoda co-wrote the script—a parody of Nikkatsu's popular gun-blazing action films—in less than a week together with playwright Terayama Shuji, who would later also go on to direct experimental films. The resulting film is a vibrant comedy bursting with

colorful fashion and populated by a motley crew of idiosyncratic assassins. Shinoda himself described the work as “a forerunner of Japanese film pop art.”

—  
Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Tamada Kenta



## Oshima Nagisa

1932–2013

大島渚



Boy  
1969

A radical innovator who challenged the conventions of Japanese cinema and society

Having been deeply involved in theater and the student protest movement while at university, Oshima joined Shochiku Ofuna in 1954, where he accrued experience working as an assistant director to Oba Hideo and Nomura Yoshitaro, among others. He was also a prolific writer of scripts, which he published in film and literary magazines. In 1959, he made his directorial feature debut with *A Town of Love and Hope* (*AI TO KIBO NO MACHI*), later scoring a hit with his second feature, *Cruel Story of Youth* (*SEISHUN ZANKOKU MONOGATARI*, 1960), whose vivid scenes of sex and violence drew attention to Oshima as a leading figure of the Shochiku New Wave. When *Night and Fog in Japan* (*NIHON NO YORU TO KIRU*, 1960), known for its politically subversive content, was shelved by Shochiku only a few days after its release, Oshima left the studio

to found his own production company, Sozosha, the following year. As an independent, he continued to release challenging films that pushed against the boundaries of convention, such as the ATG collaborations *Death by Hanging* (*KOSHIKEI*, 1968) and *Boy* (*SHONEN*, 1969), as well as television documentaries of a similar vein. After dissolving Sozosha in 1973, he expanded his sphere of operations beyond Japan, making waves internationally with *In the Realm of the Senses* (*AI NO KORIDA*, 1976), a collaboration with a French production company, and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (*SENJO NO MERI KURISUMASU*, 1983), starring David Bowie and Sakamoto Ryuichi. A champion of true cinematic freedom, Oshima remained a rebel to the end, skewering the dark underside of Japanese society through works that continue to prove relevant and provocative to this day.

Written by Nakanishi Kanako / Reference: NFAJ screening program

## Diary of a Shinjuku Thief

SHINJUKU DOROBO NIKKI  
新宿泥棒日記

1969	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
96 min	Tamura Tsutomu	Toda Shigemasa	Sozosha
Partial Color	Sasaki Mamoru	<u>Cast</u>	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
—	Adachi Masao	Yokoo Tadanori	Oshima Productions Ltd.
<u>Director</u>	Oshima Nagisa	(Okanoue Torio)	
Oshima Nagisa	<u>Cinematography</u>	Yokoyama Rie	
<u>Producer</u>	Yoshioka Yasuhiro	(Suzuki Umeko)	
Nakajima Masayuki	Sengen Seizo	Kara Juro	



An allegorical portrayal of the relationship between a young book thief named Torio and Umeko, a store clerk who catches him in the act. The action unfolds against the chaotic and politically charged backdrop of Shinjuku in 1968, a convergence point for political movements and underground culture. Oshima has described the film as his attempt to capture the dynamics of a changing world and society. Starring graphic designer and illustrator Yokoo Tadanori

alongside a cast made up of real-life artists and cultural figures — including Kara Juro of the Jokyo Gekijo (“Situation Theater”) troupe and other Oshima regulars — the film ambitiously blurs the line between fiction and reality via an improvisational directorial style that incorporates chance occurrences within its narrative fabric.

—  
Written by Nakanishi Kanako  
Reference: NFAJ screening program

## Boy

SHONEN  
少年

1969	<u>Screenplay</u>	<u>Art Direction</u>	<u>Production Company</u>
97 min	Tamura Tsutomu	Toda Shigemasa	Sozosha
Color	<u>Cinematography</u>	<u>Cast</u>	Art Theatre Guild
—	Yoshioka Yasuhiro	Abe Tetsuo (The boy)	<u>International Contact in Japan</u>
<u>Director</u>	Sengen Seizo	Watanabe Fumio	Oshima Productions Ltd.
Oshima Nagisa	<u>Music</u>	(His father)	
<u>Producers</u>	Hayashi Hikaru	Koyama Akiko	
Nakajima Masayuki	Yamaguchi Takuji	(His stepmother)	



A deadbeat father exploits his status as a veteran to force his son to feign being hit by cars in order to shake down the drivers for money. The film captures poignantly the boy’s lonely plight as, following his father’s orders, he repeatedly puts himself in harm’s way while traveling across the country, resulting in a road movie that trades the genre’s usual sense of freedom for stifling oppression. Based on a series of real-life events that made newspaper headlines,

the film was Oshima’s attempt to portray “the struggle of people who were forced to fight by corrupt means.” The entire movie was shot on-location up and down the country as Oshima traced the footsteps of the family who served as inspiration for the story.

—  
Taken from text originally written for NFAJ screening program  
Rearranged by Nakanishi Kanako

## The Changing Face of Postwar Independent Film in Japan

Kawamura Ken'ichiro

During the Allied Occupation that followed Japan's defeat in World War II, labor unions were established in all the major film studios at the encouragement of the General Headquarters (GHQ). Of all the companies affected, it was Toho in which the fiercest labor disputes erupted. The so-called Toho Labor Dispute reached its zenith in 1948, a year in which union representatives faced down police and American tanks—"everything but the battleships," as one unionist put it—and came to an end with the dismissal of the remaining union executives. With this as catalyst, independent production companies began to spring up one after another in what soon took on the appearance of a new "movement."

The independent film movement was marked by its tendency to engage with the real-life social issues of the day, as seen in the example of Yamamoto Satsuo's *Street of Violence* (PEN ITSUWARAZU: BORYOKU NO MACHI, 1950), a work that not only exposed the systemic collusion between police, local gangster bosses, and prosecutors, but was actually filmed in the location in which the events it was based on had taken place. Such films displayed a bold willingness to tackle themes that were difficult to broach within the existing studio structure, such as poverty, labor exploitation, discrimination, the lingering effects of the atomic bomb, and miscarriages of justice. This tendency toward the radical had much to do with the fact that many of those involved in the films' production, not to mention the formation of the production companies themselves, were either members or sympathizers of the Japanese Communist Party who had been ousted from the major studios as part of the fallout of the Toho Labor Dispute—victims of a Red Purge that had gripped Japan similar to Hollywood.

While the independent production movement had as its aim the realization of a democratic mode of filmmaking, its efforts were impeded by an existing distribution system in which the production, circulation, and exhibition of films were

all integrated under the same umbrella. Unable to secure enough cinemas willing to screen the films made by its adherents, the movement was thus handicapped by its extremely fragile economic foundations, leading to a decline in its activities in the latter half of the 1950s. Many of the movement's directors returned once more to work at major studios, though the Kindai Eiga Kyokai ("Modern Film Association"), an independent production company and supporter of the movement, managed to continue producing the films of its linchpin Shindo Kaneto independently thanks to the finances he earned as a prolific scriptwriter on major studio projects.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of Japan's postwar economic recovery of the 1950s there developed a thriving market for educational and corporate PR films, leading to the emergence in quick succession of several film companies specializing in such fare. Chief among them was Iwanami Productions, whose ranks produced a number of directors who would leave their mark on the history of Japanese documentary, including Hani Susumu, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, and Haneda Sumiko. Working within the field of documentary in its broader sense, the young talent who joined such companies re-examined theoretically what it meant to "document" reality via the camera and explored avant-garde and experimental techniques in pursuit of new expressive possibilities within the medium. These endeavors proved a huge inspiration, both intellectually and creatively, on the group of artists who comprised Japan's New Wave that was just then beginning to emerge. One such filmmaker was Oshima Nagisa. When his film *Night and Fog in Japan* (NIHON NO YORU TO KIRI, 1960), a critical examination into the ethical principles motivating the postwar student movement, was abruptly pulled by Shochiku only days after its release, he parted ways with the studio and founded his own independent production company, Sozosha, together with like-minded peers. From this new base of operations, he expanded his sphere of

activities to incorporate not just film but television also, continuing to produce work that never compromised on his controversial edge. Yoshida Kiju and Shinoda Masahiro—the two other leading figures along with Oshima of what was often referred to as the "Shochiku New Wave"—would also leave the studio in later years to set up their own production companies.

In the late sixties and early seventies, as the financial hardship facing major studios on account of sharply declining audiences became increasingly apparent, prominent directors once at the forefront of major studio output—figures such as Imamura Shohei, Nakahira Ko, Okamoto Kihachi, and Masumura Yasuzo—followed in Yoshida and Shinoda's footsteps by venturing into independent production. Supporting them and others in this endeavor by providing the financial capital necessary to produce and distribute such films was the Art Theatre Guild (ATG). Originally founded in 1961 as an entertainment and distribution company, ATG presided over an independent chain of ten theaters nationwide, from which it introduced Japanese audiences to contemporary European films and American films that had gone unreleased during the war. Once established as a hub of art-house cinema screenings, the company soon branched out into the work of producing films, sharing production costs with independent production companies in a framework that gave rise to important works including *Death by Hanging* (KOSHIKAI, 1968), Oshima's penetrating look at the moral questions surrounding the death penalty, and Okamoto's *Human Bullet* (NIKUDAN, 1968), a satirical skewering of the absurdities of war. In subsequent years, a current of independent filmmaking with ATG handling distribution duties took root, with projects emerging not only from the world of film but theater and television also.

By the early 1970s, the studio system was in freefall, and major companies like Toho and Shochiku were now focusing the bulk of their efforts on distribution instead. It was a period in

## Beyond Tanaka Kinuyo: Hidden Gems from the Women Who Made Japanese Cinema

Morimune Atsuko

which even an established auteur like Kurosawa was unable to make films domestically; after disbanding Sozoshu, Oshima likewise worked with overseas production companies from his erotically explicit *In the Realm of the Senses* (AI NO KORIDA, 1976) onward. Meanwhile, publishing company Kadokawa Shoten entered the film production arena, finding a way to successfully integrate the world of novels (which served as material for adaptation), films, and theme songs into a single commercial package, all while relying on existing major distributors and bolstered by massive television advertising campaigns. Indeed, given that Kadokawa Shoten, too, was originally “independent”—insofar as it existed beyond the sphere of the “Big Five” studios— independence from the major studios had by this point arguably lost much of its practical significance. A new era was dawning within the world of Japanese film, one in which referring to a production company as “independent” was now obsolete.

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Kawamura Ken'ichiro is a film programmer and scholar. Since 1995 he has worked in the Audio-Visual Department at Kawasaki City Museum, where in addition to overseeing film acquisition with a focus on independent titles, he has also organized retrospectives of Iwanami Productions films as well as the works of Imamura Shohei and Matsumoto Toshio. He taught in the College of Image Arts and Sciences at Ritsumeikan University from 2007 to 2025. His published research includes “Oshima Nagisa and Vietnam” (published in *Film and War: Desire to Shoot / See* [in Japanese, 2009]).

Looking back at the history of women filmmakers in Japan is meaningful for several reasons, not least of all from the contemporary perspective of women’s empowerment. Gender disparity remains a deeply embedded problem within the Japanese film industry, with female directors accounting for only 11% of the country’s filmmakers as of 2022.

The screening of Tanaka Kinuyo’s directorial works at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival as part of its Cannes Classics program was met with acclaim, as well as equal parts confusion as to why the films had remained so obscure for so long. The fact that a director of Tanaka’s caliber is only just now being “discovered” internationally speaks to a longstanding tendency in Japan of female filmmakers being unjustly overlooked.

A prominent actor who graced many of Mizoguchi Kenji and Ozu Yasujiro’s most celebrated works, Tanaka was also a distinguished filmmaker, directing six films between 1953 and 1962. Interestingly, her move into directing occurred against the backdrop of a celebrated trend at the time for actors-turned-directors— as in the case of Saburi Shin, among others— within the golden age of postwar Japanese cinema. In fact, Tanaka was only the second female director of feature films the country had ever seen; so scarce were the opportunities for women to embark upon such an endeavor that one needs to go all the way back to 1936 to find the first example, when Sakane Tazuko was promoted to director after years spent serving as assistant director to Mizoguchi.

As it so happens, Sakane’s debut feature *New Clothing* (HATSU-SUGATA, 1936) was poorly received at the time, putting an end to any further opportunities she may have had to continue down this route. Yet her work as editor on Mizoguchi’s *Osaka Elegy* (NANIWA EREJI, 1936) of the same year, a film which portrays modern woman as valuing her own self-determination, revealed Sakane’s extraordinary eye for detail and high level of technical proficiency; it is therefore a shame that *New Clothing* has been lost

to time, making any reappraisal of the film impossible.

The fact that by the early 1960s only two women had been given the opportunity to direct feature films goes a long way to revealing the roots of the gender disparity still at play in the industry today. Yet by shifting the focus of our attention to positions other than director, we can find any number of examples of women who have historically been active across various roles within the industry. The predominance of women script supervisors (or “script girls” as they were then known)—essentially an assistant director in all but name—reflected a practice adopted from Hollywood; yet women were also heavily involved in many other areas of film production, from screenwriting and producing to art direction, editing, costume design, and hair and makeup. Focusing on the accomplishments of said women provides us with a new lens through which to view afresh the various masterpieces of Japanese cinema history.

Female scriptwriters, for instance, were heavily involved in both *jidaigeki* and contemporary pieces as far back as the silent era, but it was the rise of the postwar *bungei eiga* (“literary films” based on novels) that saw the emergence of leading talents like Tanaka Sumie and Mizuki Yoko. Tanaka’s forte was in depicting the inward conflicts of women who felt like outsiders in their own homes, such as the protagonists of Naruse Mikio works *Repast* (MESHI, 1951) and *Lightning* (INAZUMA, 1952) as well as Tanaka Kinuyo’s masterpiece *Forever a Woman* (CHIBUSA YO EIEN NARE, *The Eternal Breasts*, 1955). Mizuki was also a renowned screenwriter for Naruse, for whom she wrote *Floating Clouds* (UKIGUMO, 1955) among others, while also addressing the theme of social minorities in the Imai Tadashi film *Kiku and Isamu* (KIKU TO ISAMU, 1959). Wada Natto, another scenarist active at the same time, worked almost exclusively in collaboration with her husband, the director Ichikawa Kon, bringing her talent to bear on such illustrious literary adaptations as *The Burmese Harp* (BIRUMA NO TATEGOTO, 1956) and *Conflagration* (ENJO, 1958).

As for producers, the achievements of Mizunoe Takiko are particularly noteworthy. A popular female actor of male roles with Shochiku’s musical theater troupe in the prewar years, she retired from the spotlight after the war only subsequently to sign a contract with the newly revived Nikkatsu in 1954, thus becoming the first ever female producer at a major film company. Over a career spanning 76 films as producer, she became a bona fide hitmaker who drew on her instincts honed in showbusiness to give many a director and young star their first major break, as seen in her handpicking of Nakahira Ko to direct *Juvenile Jungle* (KURUTTA KAJITSU, *Crazed Fruit*, 1956), a film that propelled its lead Ishihara Yujiro, another Mizunoe discovery, to stardom.

Meanwhile, away from the trends of the major studios, the field of documentary was already an established path for female filmmakers prior to the 1960s. A notable figure in this regard is Tokieda Toshie. A fellow Iwanami Productions employee alongside Haneda Sumiko, Tokieda made over a hundred films across a wide range of subjects, though it was the theme of early childhood education that emphasized child autonomy that she would return to again and again throughout her career. She attached the same importance to on-location sound recording as to the visual aspect of her work, experimenting with a direct cinema approach while also exploring innovative ways of using narration in her films.

In the 1970s, against the backdrop of a flourishing independent production movement, women also set up their own companies and threw themselves into directing their own productions. Two good examples are Miyagi Mariko and Hidari Sachiko, both former actors, whose independent modus operandi distinguished them from Tanaka Kinuyo, who directed films received on commission from within the studio system. There are stylistic differences, too: whereas Tanaka portrayed the lifestyles of women from within a literary film

framework, Miyagi and Hidari instead each addressed themes rooted in the world of social movements, favoring a distinctly documentarian approach. Miyagi made waves with a series of four films beginning with *The Silk Tree Ballad* (NEMU NO KI NO UTA, 1974), a visually poetic documentary depicting the day-to-day life of students at a school for children with physical disabilities, an institution Miyagi herself had founded. Hidari, meanwhile, found critical favor with *The Far Road* (TOI IPPON NO MICHI, 1977), a fictional film that incorporated docudrama techniques to tell the story of a railroad worker at the mercy of the streamlining influence of modernization. Another little-known figure particularly deserving of attention today is Gajumaru, a professional director of documentaries (known under her pseudonym) who also pursued her own independent productions. Her *Women Wandering Alone* (WARAJI KATAPPO, 1976) mixes past and present in an avant-garde fashion in a work that explores themes of female freedom and oppression.

The reappraisal of Tanaka Kinuyo's directorial works has led to an uptick in new perspectives on the history of women in Japanese film. And not a moment too soon: the history of Japanese cinema remains full of women whose time in the spotlight is long overdue.

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Morimune Atsuko is a film programmer and archivist. At the time of writing (February 2024), she is an assistant curator at the National Film Archive of Japan, where in 2023 she organized "Women Who Made Japanese Cinema," a retrospective aimed at highlighting the varied roles women have played across the industry in Japan since its earliest days. She has previously worked in the programming and running of film festivals and independent "mini" theaters and also as an independent film programmer.



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Text Contributions

(in alphabetical order of family name)

Fujii Jinshi, Fujiwara Masao,  
Hoshi Ryotaro, Kawamura Ken'ichiro,  
Ku Mina, Miyamoto Noriaki,  
Morimune Atsuko, Nakanishi Kanako,  
Tamada Kenta

Advisor

Osawa Jo (Curator, Head of Film Collections,  
National Film Archive of Japan)

Proofreading (Japanese version, pp. 20–99)

Sazaki Yoriaki

Editors

Inagaki Haruka, Alo Jōekalda,  
Osumi Tomoko  
(The Japan Foundation)

Editorial Coordinators

Tazawa Keiko, Sato Shiori  
(The Japan Foundation)

Translation (Japanese to English)

Adam Sutherland

Designer

Koike Toshiki

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Mori Daishiro, Nakamura Daigo,  
Okada Hidenori

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The information of films and directors as well as essays in this booklet can also be found on the Japanese Film Database (JFDB).

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JFDB (<https://jfdb.jp/en>) is a database of Japanese films co-managed by the Japan Foundation and UniJapan. Film synopses, cast & staff, and production & distribution company information are searchable and available for public perusal. With the goal of promoting Japanese films abroad, information on theatrically released films as well as the contact details for companies are provided in both English and Japanese.

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