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Meiji kyokyakuden - sandaime shumei (Blood of revenge), Kato, Tai, 1965

Ronin hakkei (Eight views of masterless samurai), Kato, Tai, 1958

Kaze to onna to tabigarasu (Wind, women and hobo), Kato, Tai, 1958

Genjikuro sassoki byakko nitoryu (Genjikuro's adventure: dual sword fighting: part 2), Kato, Tai, 1958

Hizakura daimyo (Red Cherry feudal lord), Kato, Tai, 1958

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Koizome ronin (Samurai in romance), Kato, Tai, 1957

Gyakushu daijamaru (Ninja strikes back), Kato, Tai, 1955

Ninjutsu jiraiya, Kato, Tai, 1955

Hiyodori zoshi (Book of birds), Kato, Tai, 1952

Kangun gakko (Military school), Kato, Tai, 1944

Shimizuminato wa oniyori kowai (Shimizu port of is more fearful than evils), Kato, Tai, 1952

Ken'nan jonan: kenko ryusei no maki (Trouble over swords and women: sword's light and shooting star), Kato, Tai, 1951

Ken'nan jonan: joshin denshin no maki (Trouble over swords and women: woman's mind), Kato, Tai, 1951

Hibotan bakuto: hanafuda shobu (Red Peony gambler: flower cards match), Kato, Tai, 1969

Shirami wa kowai (Afraid of lice), Kato, Tai, 1944

Awa (Bubble), Kato, Tai, 1943

Za ondekoza, Kato, Tai, 1981

Honoo no gotoku (Flames of blood), Kato, Tai, 1981

Edogawa ranpo no inju (A scream from nowhere), Kato, Tai, 1977

Sensuikan (Submarine), Kato, Tai, 1941

Minagoroshi no reika (Gospel for genocide), Kato, Tai, 1968

Bakumatsu zankoku monogatari (Brutal story at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate), Kato, Tai, 1964

Kaze no bushi (Samurai vagabond), Kato, Tai, 1964

Kutsukake Tokijiro - yukiyo ippiki (Tokijiro of Kutsukake - lone yakuza), Kato, Tai, 1966

Kaidan Oiwa no borei (The tale of Oiwa's ghost), Kato, Tai, 1961

Sanada fuunroku (The Sanada warriors), Kato, Tai, 1963

Hibotan bakuto: Oryû sanjô (Red Peony gambles her life), Kato, Tai, 1968

Nihon-kyokaden, Kato, Tai, 1973

MIDNIGHT SUPRISE

KATO Tai



# CONTENTS

A Profile of Kato Tai YAMANE Sadao... .....1

The Fundamentals of My Filmmaking

KATO Tai .....5

Samurai Loyalty: A Film Genealogy of Kato Tai

HASUMI Shigehiko .....19✓

KATO Tai, Director: Far Ahead of His Time

UENO Koshi .....31

KATO Tai's Movies and Their Times: 1950s and 1960s

YAMANE Sadao .....39

Who's Who in Films of KATO Tai YAMANE Sadao .....50

Filmography of KATO Tai YAMANE Sadao .....58

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# A Profile of Kato Tai

by YAMANE Sadao

KATO Tai was born in Kobe, Japan, on August 24, 1916. His real given name was Yasumichi, the professional pseudonym Tai being a sinicized pronunciation of its first character, "Yasu." When he was five years old, he moved with his family to Nagoya, his father's hometown, and it was there that he received his early education. After graduating from elementary school, he defied his businessman father's wishes and entered a polytechnic rather than a commercial high school. By this time, however, he had begun to discover a world which attracted him more than business or technology both: motion pictures.

Among the young Yasumichi's potential role models was maternal uncle YAMANAKA Sadao (1909-38), a director who made his film debut in 1932. While Yamanaka may have served as a source of inspiration, he did not, however, exert any noticeable cinematographic influence on his nephew's later work. Rather, it was the following group of movies, which Kato saw around 1930, which would decide the course of his film career:

ITO Daisuke: *Ooka Seidan, Continued: A Picture of Evil* (Zoku Ooka seidan: mazo hen), *Chuya the Masterless Samurai* (Suronin Chuya) and *Rise and Fall of the Shinsengumi* (Kobo Shinsengumi)

MIZOGUCHI Kenji: *Okichi the Foreigner* (Tojin Okichi)

MURATA Minoru: *Skyscraper: Erotic Desire* (Matenro: aiyoku hen)

SUZUKI Jukichi: *What Made Her Do It?* (Nani ga kanojo o sou saseta ka)

OZU Yasujiro: *I Flunked, But . . .* (Rakudai wa shitakeredo), *Maiden* (Ojosan) and *Ladies and Beards* (Shukujo to hige)

Lewis Milestone: *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Josef von Sternberg: *Morocco, The Blue Angel*

Rouben Mamoulian: *Applause*

Rene Clair: *Under the Roofs of Paris*

Pabst: *The Western Front, 1918*

Bernhalt: *Der Letzte Kompagnie* (The Last Company)

Kaufman: *Becha* (Spring)

Kato was particularly attracted by Ito Daisuke's films, and would draw upon them as a basic source of inspiration throughout his later filmmaking career.

After two years, Kato dropped out of the polytechnic in Nagoya and went to work for a trading company in Kyoto. His passion for films



remained unquenched, however, and before long he left the trading company and moved to Tokyo, looking to his uncle, Yamanaka Sadao, for assistance in landing a film job. Things went smoothly, and through the good offices of his uncle, he secured a position as an assistant director at Toho Films in the fall of 1937. While there, he worked on many films, including KUMAGAI Hisatora's *The Abe Clan* (Abe ichizoku), NARUSE Mikio's *The Whole Family Works* (Hataraku ikka), KIMURA Sojuni's *Navy Bomber Squadron* (Kaigun bakugekitai), YAMAMOTO Kajiro's *Horse* (Uma), TAKIZAWA Eisuke's *A Thousand and One Nights of the Warrior Way* (Budo sen'ichiya) and HAGIWARA Ryo's *The Night Before* (Sono zen'ya)--this last being a special memorial film made in honor of Yamanaka Sadao when he died in 1938.

With the escalation of the war in Asia, Kato found himself called upon to perform new duties. In 1941, he transferred to Riken Kagaku Eiga, where he produced a number of documentary films, including *Submarine* (Sensuikan) and *Bubbles* (Awa). Then, in 1944, he joined the Manchuria Movie Association to direct several more documentaries, including *Beware of Lice* (Shirami ga kowai), before the pressures of war made further production impossible. Still in Manchuria in the desperate summer of 1945, Kato found himself pressed into service as a soldier, but only to face surrender within a week when Japan finally capitulated to the Allies.

After disarmament, Kato returned to Japan in 1946 and soon found a job as an assistant director at the Kyoto studio of Daiei Films. This appointment was particularly lucky for Kato, since it gave him an opportunity to work with his idol, Ito Daisuke, in the production of two films, *Masterless Samurai Passing Through* (Suronin makaritoru) and *The Chess Master* (Osho), thus marking a new stage in his lifetime apprenticeship to the great filmmaker. He also assisted in other projects, including several films by NOBUCHI Akira, and KUROSAWA Akira's prize-winning *Rashomon* (Rashomon). For *Rashomon*, in fact, he was given the important responsibility of producing a preview, but collided with Kurosawa over its contents. As it turned out, however, there were more dangerous things one might do than disagreeing with Kurosawa Akira. While working for Daiei, Kato also acted as chief secretary for its labor union, and when the "Red Purge" of 1950 swept Japan, he suddenly found himself without a job. (Undiscouraged, he promptly formed a theatrical group with some friends and put on a number of performances.)

In 1951, fortune smiled on him again. After a brief trial period as an



assistant director, he made his feature-film directorial debut at Takara Productions, a small independent studio in Kyoto, with *Trouble Over Swords and Women* (Kennan jonan). Before long he was churning out mass-entertainment period films one after the next, and had begun activity as a script writer as well. Then in 1956, he returned to the Kyoto studio of Toei Films, serving initially as an assistant director, but promoted soon afterward to full director for the production of *Masterless Samurai in Love* (Koizome ronin) in 1957. While contributing on the one hand to the commercial success of Toei's boom years, he also began to attract serious critical attention around this time with an innovative new style of samurai film based on his own, unique realist method. Starting with *Wind, Women and Hobos* (Kaze to onna to tabigarasu) in 1958, Kato developed and refined this style in each of his succeeding films--*The Ghost of O-Iwa* (Kaidan O-Iwa no borei), *Love for a Mother* (Mabuta no haha), *Tange Sazen* (Tange Sazen), *Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (Sanada fuunroku), *Samurai Vagabond* (Kaze no bushi), *Brutal Story from the End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* (Bakumatsu zankoku monogatari), and *Tokijiro of Kutsukake : A Lone Gambler* (Kutsukake Tokijiro yukyo ippiki)--in the process creating an oeuvre of extraordinary originality and power. These films represent a crystallizing of the fascination and appeal of the chambara samurai movies which had so engrossed Kato in his youth, brought together and reformulated in an acute yet personal artistic vision. In the midst of the general decline of samurai films in the 1960s, these works by Kato Tai stand out alone.

Because of his unwillingness to compromise in his filmmaking, however, he often came into conflict with Toei's top management. For example, even after Toei had shifted its emphasis to modern "gangster" (*yakuza*) movies, Kato continued to produce original films with a "period" flavor, such as *Blood of Revenge* (Meiji kyokyakuden: sandaime shumei) and *Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match* (Hibotan bakuto: hanafuda shobu). Invited by Shochiku directors NOMURA Yoshitaro and YAMADA Yoji, Kato left Toei in 1966 to produce a number of films for Shochiku, including *A Man's Face Shows His Personal History* (Otoko no kao wa rirekisho), *Hymn for a Slaughter* (Minagoroshi no reika), *The Stage of Life* (Jinsei gekijo), *Flowers and Dragons* (Hana to ryu) and *Miyamoto Musashi* (Miyamoto Musashi).

After this period of extraordinary productivity at Shochiku, he returned briefly to Toho, the company where he began his career, to film *A History of Japanese Gamblers* (Nihon kyokaden). In 1981, he completed two final works, a feature-film, *Flames of Blood* (Honoo no gotoku) and



a documentary, *The Ondeko-za* (Za Ondeko-za)--though the latter was never released to the public. He was waiting for an opportunity to produce a major new period film based on his own adaptation of Ihara Saikaku's *Five Women Who Loved Love* (Koshoku gonin onna) when he died of liver cancer on June 17, 1985.

Kato's published written works include a contribution to a critical study of his own films, *A Lone Gambler: The World of Kato Tai* (Yukyo ippiki: Kato Tai no sekai), the scripts for *A History of Japanese Gamblers* and *Five Women Who Loved Love*, a critical biography of his filmmaker uncle, *Yamanaka Sadao, Movie Director* (Eiga kantoku Yamanaka Sadao), and a collection of lectures entitled *Kato Tai Talks About the Movies* (Kato Tai, eiga o kataru). He also edited Ito Daisuke's *Poetry and Truth in Samurai Movies* (Jidaigeki eiga no shi to shinjitsu). Although he wrote many scripts for television samurai dramas, he undertook to direct only one, *Swords and Territory* (Ken/shima), in 1967, declining all further offers to direct for the small screen.

< proofed and partially retranslated by Stephen Collington, 27 July 1997 >

# The Fundamentals of My Filmmaking

by KATO Tai

The first time I saw a silent movie was over half a century ago, in 1930. There used to be a cinema called the Minatoza, near Osu Park here in Nagoya. One day, I went there and saw part one of ITO Daisuke's *Ooka Seidan, Continued: A Picture of Evil* (Zoku Ooka seidan: mazo hen), and the impression that it made on me is still with me today. I had entered junior high school the year before, and about the same time, I'd started watching a lot of silent movies. I was utterly fascinated by them.

Of course, at the time I had never even heard the name Ito Daisuke before. Nor was I particularly a fan of high-brow movies, for that matter. At the Minatoza, I was able to watch three movies--a Nikkatsu modern drama, a samurai movie, and a Makino film--all for just thirty sen. (¥ 0.30). I went there for the price. Since I don't remember anything about the Makino film or the Nikkatsu drama, I suppose they must not have been very interesting. However, when Ito's *Ooka Seidan* came on the screen, and the band started up with a fantastic roll of drums, I immediately sensed something was different. I sat up in my seat and started watching. There was something different about this one, indeed.

The prints for the film are all lost now, but the story is quite simple. The movie begins with a scene in Chiyoda Castle on New Year's Day. In an office, a group of senior samurai officials are scolding a young samurai for being late for the New Year's ceremony and for the improper way in which he delivered his New Year's greetings. Phrases of scolding and abuse from the gathered officials--there are about seventeen or eighteen of them!--flash on the screen one after another. Gradually it comes out that the young samurai has married a woman whom one of the senior officials was fixed on, and so jealousy is a factor also. The young samurai, played by OKOCHI Denjiro, keeps his face bowed down to the tatami mats in apology, holding it there for ten, maybe fifteen minutes as the older samurai go on berating him. Suddenly, the tea master calls out from the hallway, "Here comes the Senior Minister, Mr. So-and-so," and so they all rush outside to see him along. That done, they return to the office, and the scolding starts again, right where it left off. Then a voice calls out, "Here comes the Vice Minister, Mr. So-and-so," and the whole process repeats itself. When the scolding resumes this time, however, the young samurai--who has remained kneeling, face to the floor, all this time--begins to shake ever so slightly, making the shoulder wings of his formal jacket quiver. One of



the older men says, "Hey, this guy's crying already. Look up and show us your face." But when the young samurai does so, rising slowly and majestically, we see that in fact he was laughing! What a marvelously cinematic moment!

I had never thought much of Okochi Denjiro as an actor, but his expression here was wonderful, the pupils of his eyes pulled way up so only the whites were showing, his face contorted in laughter. Unlike today's actors, he was able to lean way back while laughing yet still manage to keep his head in the same position. He never moved his head at all.

Anyway, this show of cheek angers the jilted senior official all the more, and he chases the young samurai out of the room. Then, a few moments later, a large round object comes crashing through the paper door into the office. It is the head of the official who has just chased the young samurai out! And the camera is now suddenly up at the ceiling, zooming in from above on the spinning head in a dizzying vertical dive!

I was astonished. This was half a century ago, remember. There were no camera cranes back then. When I asked about this trick later, I learned that they had employed an Eyemo, a type of camera used for filming news. They had attached the Eyemo to a rope, hoisted it up under the ceiling with a pulley, and then lowered it rapidly while filming. It sounds easy enough described this way, but it's very hard to accomplish successfully. It requires a great deal of skill. What an idea! You know, people today would probably just give up from the start, saying it can't be done. But Mr. Ito used his head, and pulled the trick off beautifully.

Anyway, to get back to the story, the young samurai escapes from the castle, hides himself in the town, and starts killing the other seventeen senior samurai, one by one. Realistically speaking, of course, no one could ever escape from Chiyoda Castle, but the hero does it all the same. He is able to escape because the audience wants him to escape, because the built-up dramatic tension demands a release, and because Ito Daisuke, master filmmaker, knows how to make the impossible possible. With all this going for him, the young samurai simply had to escape. That movie had the power to make the audience believe it was right that he escaped--and even applaud the act. Such is the power of movies. As you can imagine, I was on the edge of my seat throughout all this. I'd never known that a movie could be so interesting.

However, that thought alone might not have been enough to lead me



into filmmaking as a career. Over the years, as I grew from a boy into a young man and then to middle age, I often thought back on the old films I had seen, and read through many books and movie scripts, and one day it finally struck me. It wasn't just that *Ooka Seidan* was interesting or exciting, but rather, more importantly, that Ito Daisuke managed to convey something of his philosophy and beliefs as an artist to the audience in this film. How, he asked, could a man do such horrible things to other men? And what was it that drove him to such acts? Whatever it may have been, how hateful it was! Mr. Ito kept these thoughts firmly in his mind as he made *Ooka Seidan*, and, as a result, produced a movie of real depth and interest.

Mr. Ito never changed his beliefs. He couldn't stand the way society, or political power, or the establishment--call it what you will--makes people ugly and small. He hated anything which reduces a person that way. Thus, throughout his career, he made films which resisted and rebelled against such forces, protesting in a cinematic voice which at times seemed close to an anguished scream. It was enough to make you leave the theater with your head in your hands sometimes, and yet you couldn't help admiring his films all the same. Mr. Ito was just that sort of artist.

After *Ooka Seidan*, the next film to really grab me as a boy and make me excited about motion pictures was *Chuya the Masterless Samurai* (Suronin chuya; 1930), also by Ito Daisuke. This film was based on the story of the 1651 Keian rebellion, and dramatized the conflicts between two of its leaders, MARUHASHI Chuya and YUI Shosetsu. Although I have forgotten most of the details, I do remember that the film was organized as a "discussion drama." Looking on the rebellion as a kind of revolutionary movement, the movie portrayed all the various conflicts and frictions which inevitably arose among the members of the group. If I remember correctly, one faction insisted on using force right away, while another disagreed. At any rate, the film succeeded as a discussion drama, presenting the conflicting viewpoints and arguments of the conspirators in a manner so effective that one soon forgot that one was watching a silent screen.

akin to Brave Records of the Sarada Clan)

The next movie by Ito Daisuke that I saw was *Rise and Fall of the Shinsengumi* (Kobo Shinsengumi). That would have been in the fall of 1930--October, I think. I liked this movie so much that I watched it over and over. I read its script through many times as well. The story is set in the chaotic final years of the Edo period, when uprisings against the Tokugawa Shogunate were rocking the whole nation. Assassinations and



terrorism were a daily affair during this time. This was particularly so in Kyoto, the "Mecca" of the rebel movement. Shogunal authorities in Kyoto were no longer able to contain the problem, and so in response the Shogunate set up the Kyoto Defense Office. In addition, it recruited and organized a group of volunteer samurai from Edo (present-day Tokyo) and sent it to Kyoto to suppress the rebel forces. This group later came to be known as the Shinsengumi ("the New Force"). In his movie, Mr. Ito set out to portray the history and fate of KONDO Isami and his followers in the Shinsengumi, reinterpreting their story through his own unique historical perspective. In a time of social and political instability, these young men committed themselves to the Shinsengumi for a chance to achieve their own ambitions by the strength of their own swords. They took advantage of the political climate of the time, laid their bets on the Tokugawa Shogunate, and tried their luck. They even achieved a few of their ambitions for a time. But after that, their luck plummeted like a cart rolling downhill, and they were washed away in the current of history. They lost, and they were wiped out--slaughtered. This last point is particularly important, for it was Mr. Ito's passionate sympathy for these losers of history which made *Rise and Fall of the Shinsengumi* so unusual. When he made this movie, at the beginning of the Showa era, Kondo Isami and the Shinsengumi were routinely portrayed as bad guys simply as a matter of course.

Let me try to explain Mr. Ito's sympathy by looking at the example of Kondo Isami. When he became leader of the Shinsengumi, Kondo was young--just over thirty years old. No doubt there were times when he wondered about his decision, especially after things started to go against the Shinsengumi. Yet he didn't balk or run away even when he knew that he must lose. We might call it the aesthetics of failure. Onto this masculine aesthetic, Mr. Ito projected all his own passion for rebellion and romanticism, and the result was *Rise and Fall of the Shinsengumi*. I was a teenager when I saw this movie for the first time, and of course I didn't then understand all the things I have just described here. However, I nonetheless was fascinated by the extraordinary passion of the film as a whole. I was positively knocked flat by it.

For me, a pimply teenager in the midst of my second "rebellious stage," these films of Mr. Ito's were exhilarating--an extraordinary procession of one dazzling image after another. They were masterpieces, the achievement of a brilliant trio of artists--Ito, Okochi, and cameraman KARASAWA Hiromitsu--working in their prime. I became obsessed with Ito's movies, sitting through them over and over again, perched on the edge of my seat, breathless. I followed them across town, from first-



run openings, to second-run and third-run matinees; and each time I saw one I felt the same excitement and thrill at rediscovering just how interesting a motion picture can be. Then, as I mentioned earlier, I began to see beneath the surface a little, and think, "So this is what the director is trying to say!"--and that only made me all the more fascinated. Before I knew it, a powerful ambition had taken root in my heart, and I began to dream of making movies myself someday.

There's an old saying, "What is learned in the cradle is carried to the grave." Well, this may sound a little strange, but I feel in a way like the impression I received from my first experience seeing Mr. Ito's movies has become part of my flesh and blood. I still carry it around with me today. For example, let me tell you a bit about *Love for a Mother* (Mabuta no haha; 1962), the film which you were so kind as to watch today.

Actually, there are two different endings to the story of *Love for a Mother*. HASEGAWA Shin, the original author, wrote it that way. In one version, Chutaro's mother comes after him, and they are reunited, while in the other, Chutaro hides from his mother and sisters, shutting his ears as they cry out for him. The first film adaptation of the story came out in the spring of 1931, directed by INAGAKI Hiroshi, and released by the silent-era company Chie Productions (KATAOKA Chiezo Productions). It was a true masterpiece, and I was deeply moved when I saw it during its first run. You might think by this point that I am moved by anything, but you'll just have to trust me. It's true. Anyway, the ending in this version is that the mother and son are reunited.

A little over thirty years later, I had an opportunity to film *Love for a Mother* myself. What I made was the movie you saw today. Although I don't usually like to think too much about difficult problems, I simply had to make a decision here. Which ending should I use in my version? Which should I choose? In the end, my mind leaned inevitably toward the ending in which they aren't reunited after all. Why? Well, think about human feelings for moment. Regardless of who you are and what is involved, parents are parents and children are children. Right? After ~~looking so hard for his mother~~, Chutaro is finally able to meet her again. But contrary to all his expectations, she rejects him, purposefully misinterpreting his words. Chutaro is sad, bitter, disappointed. That's why, even after she tearfully regrets what she has done, and comes looking for him, crying his name, he at first refuses to show himself to her. In the end, however, Chutaro runs into her arms, crying "Mother," and she holds him tightly to her, saying, "I was wrong." Such an ending



seems totally natural according to "normal" human feelings. However, as you have seen, I chose the ending in which they do not meet again after all.

I wonder, sometimes, which ending Ito Daisuke would have chosen if he had ever made a film of *Love for a Mother*. Might he not, part of me asks, have picked the "happy reunion" version? But then, when I look objectively at the difficult life which Ohama, the mother, has led up to the beginning of the story, I can't help but sympathize with her decision. Of course she realizes "That's my son," but all the same she can't welcome him. That's human reason--something beyond mere animal love for one's offspring. Ohama has suffered enough to know that much. And how about Chutaro? Almost thirty years old, Chutaro has seen enough hard times himself to understand his mother's thoughts through and through. Indeed, this only makes his shock all the greater when she rejects him, turning his feelings toward her as cold as they had once been warm. However, they are only human after all. There's no escaping the fact: she is his real mother, and he is her own son. Casting aside her careful reason, Ohama runs after Chutaro, weeping aloud for him. At first Chutaro stands on his pride, and hides himself from her; but in the end, he can't hold out, and so he runs out to her and embraces her . . . and that's it. The movie's over. I believe, however, that in this case their sorrow can be expressed more clearly and fully by having them not meet again, and so I chose the alternate ending. Considering the number of times *Love for a Mother* has been adapted for films or TV, I think that versions where they don't meet again are very rare. Most of the time, they're reunited, aren't they? Perhaps I felt a need somewhere inside me to rebel against this sort of conformity.

I went to see the movie *Napoleon* (1927) in Osaka the other day. This film was also made over half a century ago. I hope you will all go see it if you have the chance. However, I must warn you that it's a little difficult to understand. I mean, while the movie focuses on events around the time of the French Revolution, it still tries to give you an overview of Napoleon's entire life. It was directed by Abel Gance, the greatest of all French directors--and needless to say, he didn't make the thing with a Japanese audience in mind. Anyway, while it's a little tough to follow in places, it's worth seeing all the same. Literally a cast of thousands, fantastic sets, and a last scene that will knock you flat! This last scene is shown on a super-wide, three-screen surface and the effect is absolutely overpowering.

Now this may sound like nonsense to you, but take my word for it--it's



true. You know how there's a kind of grammar of various types of expression used in film, TV and other visual media? Well, you can find almost--no, never mind "almost"--you can find *every* one of them in some form in this movie. But wasn't Cinema Scope invented after World War II? you ask. You must be joking. This guy Gance had already done it in *Napoleon*. And what's more, he did it with a triple-size screen. Compared to this, the double-sized screen of Cinema Scope is nothing. Admittedly there were places now and then where the seams between screens didn't line up properly, sort of like in the early cinema, but nevertheless it was a spectacular feat, all things considered.

Once humans had motion pictures, it wasn't long before we wanted color and sound too. We wanted them to express more fully our feelings, aesthetic sensibilities, experiences, thoughts. And soon we wanted a larger screen also, and new freedom of viewpoint: freedom to see things from different angles, from up close or while moving, and so on. When these desires start to build up inside you, you can't just sit around waiting--you have to try something. Not to flog my story about Ito Daisuke and his improvised crane shot, but that's the sort of thing I mean. Without specialized equipment and such, he just went boldly forth and did it, throwing himself into the challenge heart and soul. You can't help but feel a little humbled by such an artist. Anyway, as a representative example of this kind of innovation--and one, moreover, which still moves you with its passion even today--this classic of the cinema, *Napoleon*, is a must-see, and I hope that you will all take the chance to learn from it. As for myself, I was as thrilled when I saw it as the day I first saw *Intolerance* (1916).

Anyway, let's get back to where I originally started. You have just watched *Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (Sanada fuunroku), a film I directed in 1963--and in "full natural color" no less! If we had tried to pass that one off on the world back then, no doubt we would have been laughed at to our faces, since while Japan's so-called all-color movies may have been all in color, they certainly didn't have *all* the colors. In fact, many colors didn't show up properly, especially black. The parts that are supposed to be black in the film are actually blue. When I asked my cameramen how this could happen, they stared at me and said with a smile that we just couldn't help it. But I can be stubborn too, and so I kept asking over and over, and finally they admitted, "The colors will come if you make them."

"Color films were developed after considerable research, and they were meant to work--and the same goes for the cameras we're using.



Today, you can obtain excellent colors if you use the best value in the film's characteristic curve, the best lens aperture, and the designated developing solution, carefully following the manufacturer's directions." So they told me.

"O.K.," I said, after listening to their explanation. "Let's do that for *Brave Records of the Sanada Clan*."

"It's easier said than done," they replied.

"Well, you just said you could do it," I persisted.

"Well, then, let me tell you something else. In view of the state of today's color films and the equipment we have here at the company, you realize that we will have to shoot at a considerably lower aperture. You know what happens when we use a lower aperture: we will have to use a lot of lighting. The result? More people. Do you think the company will say O.K. to that? Of course not. So, we'll have to do it with our current staff, taking more time. Then we won't be able to keep to schedule. And like they say, time is money. We'll go way over budget. How about it? Do you still want to do it?"

"Hmm," I said. "Let's do it. If we keep on in the current state of affairs, we'll just remain dissatisfied and nothing will ever improve." And so we did it.

At that time, Toei was enjoying its best years. Like a conveyor belt, the company was churning out four samurai movies and four or five modern dramas per month, making for a new double feature opening every week. All this meant, of course, that a month was too long to produce one movie. They were constantly telling us to hurry, that anybody could make a movie if given enough time. Some of the faster directors would finish filming in less than twenty days, if I remember correctly. Under such conditions, using a low aperture was out of the question. You would have been treated like a criminal. Instead, you were more or less expected to shoot with your lens opened to its maximum aperture. If it was a F2.8 lens, you just set it to 2.8 and started shooting. And with a minimum number of lights, you were expected to achieve a fair level of color quality. That was where you were supposed to show your stuff as director. The thought of reproducing clear, realistic colors was beginning to seem more and more like the impossible dream of some enchanted, faraway land.



"Corrupted" by the example of Ito Daisuke, I was determined not to make any compromises; but rather to pursue my ideal of what a movie should be, faithful to my art as a professional director. Surely such an attitude is only to be expected from any filmmaking professional! And there was something in the way the whole situation worked to repress that instinct--blocking my way, saying, "Sorry, Kato, can't let you do that"--that I simply couldn't stand. For the filming of *Brave Records of the Sanada Clan*, we used an aperture of 5.8 most of the time, stopping down to around 11 every now and then. Of course, production went behind schedule and over budget. Even after two months we were still filming. In the process, everyone began to look coldly at us. ("Why are they taking so long?" "Have some consideration for other people!") As a result, I got no work from Toei for over a year after completing the *Sanada Clan* movie. But, I ask you . . . Leaving contents aside as a given, do you think there would ever be any progress in filmmaking if we allowed ourselves to become satisfied with the status quo in modes of expression? I have always thought there should be something more, and that's what I have sought for. Often, people who disapprove of that sort of thinking have tried to place pressure on me, telling me, "Hey, Kato, that's going too far. If you try that, you'll ruin yourself." But really, what would you have done?

Anyway, from a commercial point of view, *Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* turned out to be a disaster. At that time, movies had a first run of a week, but in Osaka it didn't even last that long. It was discontinued after showing for only six days. When I asked about it at a theater--the Umeda Toei Cinema in Osaka, if I remember right--they told me that the audience put their chins on their hands as if lost in thought. In Tokyo, they at least gave it a whole week, apparently. I spent too much time and used too many people in its production; and when it was finally released it failed to attract anyone. Really, I can't blame the company for putting me out to dry for a year. (laugh). Interestingly, however, after about ten years, movie enthusiasts started to dig the film up again, and quite a few people have now seen it.

Tomorrow, you are going to watch *Brutal Story from the End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* (Bakumatsu zankoku monogatari; 1964). This movie was not particularly successful at the box office either, though at least they showed it for a full week. I thought I'd go see it when it came round to a local second-run theater, but though I waited and waited, it never came! They had its poster up for a while, but then they took it down. When I asked the theater why, they told me that they don't necessarily show all the movies which they put up posters for. That sort



of thing happens to me a lot (laugh).

Anyway, I really do believe I was especially fortunate to see Ito Daisuke's *Rise and Fall of the Shinsengumi* when I was a boy. What was the Shinsengumi really like? Of course, the characters in Mr. Ito's film inevitably reflected the director's own personal biases and historical understanding; but he adapted their story to the screen with such confidence and skill that the result was a movie of extraordinary interest. Because I had seen it as a boy, I was able to appreciate SHIBOZAWA Hiroshi's *The Destruction of the Shinsengumi* (Shinsengumi shimatsuki), making many new discoveries as I read along. That's the important thing: to put aside all preconceptions and listen objectively to the opinions of others, but then, ultimately, to form one's own opinion and stick by it. During my long career directing samurai movies, I had the opportunity at one point to make a film about the Shinsengumi, basing it on a wonderful screenplay by KUNIHIRO Takeo. That film is *Brutal Story from the End of the Tokugawa Shogunate*.

### Question and Answer Session

Q: In SHINDO Kaneto's *Victims of the Purge* (Tsuihosha-tachi, Iwanami shoten), you talk about the red purge. Could you tell us some more about it?

KATO: Well, I think I've said this before, but I was probably "corrupted" by Ito Daisuke. You know, believing that right is right and wrong is wrong, and so on.

After the war, labor unions began to emerge openly even at movie studios. Back then, there was an atmosphere in which we were able to question the way things were going for staff members, screen writers, and all the other people involved in movie production. And we were able to act on our decisions, too. For example, we argued that an eight-hour workday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., should be observed as a basic rule. Of course, a movie studio is not like a factory for making pots and pans. When you need to shoot a sunrise scene, naturally the nine-to-five rule doesn't apply. We fully understood that. But we wanted to make sure that the nine-to-five rule wasn't thrown out completely. We wanted to forestall the kind of logic which would hold that if shooting scenes at the break of day can't be done within the nine-to-five rule, then the rule itself must not be suited to the movie industry. The



importance of the nine-to-five rule is obvious if you stop to think about workers' physical condition and the quality of their performance on the job. When you start work at nine after having a good sleep, eating breakfast and going to the toilet, and finish again when you're tired at five, you can think a lot more clearly than when you're half asleep. That alone should be enough to justify the nine-to-five rule. Anyway, I worked to get this rule established.

To the company, of course, I became a real headache. It was much more convenient for them to adopt the opposite position --that the rule was basically impossible in the movie industry. Well, that is how I became a target of the red purge movement. No doubt there were other things involved also, but I don't know. I don't even really want to know. All in all, however, what I have just said is basically correct, I think.

Q: Would you please tell us about your low-angle camera work, your preference for long takes, and your avoidance of make-up--all things which distinguish you from other directors?

KATO: As for low-angle camera work, I can only give you a cop-out answer: I just like it. No logical reason--I just like it. That's why I do it. But if you insist, I suppose I will have to give a more detailed answer.

I was born during the Taisho Period (1912-26), and as you know, the Taisho generation is relatively sophisticated. No, really! (laugh) Anyway, when it comes to Japanese art, I really admire the work of KOBAYASHI Kiyochika, a wood-block print artist of the Meiji Period (1868-1912). There's just something about his color tones, and the way he guides the eye of the viewer--his "camera angle"--which really appeals to me. I wouldn't go so far as to call it "low angle," but his perspective certainly is lower than what we're used to in traditional Japanese art. I've also been influenced by the use of viewpoint in Western painting. When I first started to watch silent movies, I soon came to like OZU Yasujiro's modern dramas. Of course, after the war, all Mr. Ozu ever made were movies about Dad and his little girl who's about to get married! (laugh) When he was younger, however, he did some really funny stories. The masterpiece, *I Was Born, But . . .* (Umarete wa mitakeredo; 1930) is hilarious. Another really funny film



was *Tokyo Chorus* (Tokyo no korasu; 1931), which depicts the joys and sorrows of life as a company employee with great incisiveness. Mr. Ozu was just that sort of artist. But anyway, as you know, he always kept his camera quite low. No doubt I've been influenced by all these things that I like. I'm sure that's it.

Next, long takes. Compared to other art forms, the outstanding characteristic of motion pictures is the way you can cut images up and rearrange them in different combinations--the so-called montage technique. Thus, if you really want to take advantage of the full expressive possibilities of film, I think you should cut everything up very finely and then start composing from there. I've never rejected detailed cutting. In fact, people on my staff will sometimes turn to me with a look of hurt betrayal and say, "Mr. Kato, we never knew you were so fussy about small details." However, when a drama is approaching its climax, there are parts that I don't want to divert attention away from. After all, a drama boils down to relationships between people, right? Well, if you start cutting too finely, then when you're watching one person, you're not watching the other, and vice versa. If you want to watch them both at once, then naturally you will have to put them together in the same frame. In other words, you want to avoid cutting. But this only happens when the drama is approaching its climax. Anyway, that may help explain my preference for long takes.

To give you one more reason, I made my first feature film at Takara Productions. At the time, I had just been fired in the red purge, and I wasn't able to get a job at any of the major production companies. People started saying, "He'll never make another motion picture," but I always said, "What do they know? I'll return to the movies, mark my word!" Anyway, Takara Productions began subcontracting work in Kyoto from Shin Toho movies. They told me that since they were a subcontractor, they didn't care about the red purge at all, as long as my price was low enough. I started working as an assistant director, but they must have figured it was cheaper to pay me than to have a director come from Tokyo, because soon afterward they asked me, "Well, Tai, how about making one yourself?"

The first film I made, *Trouble Over Swords and Women* (Kennan Jonan; 1951), consisted of two parts of about one hour and ten minutes each, making for a total of two hours and twenty-odd minutes--and all this to be filmed in just one month! In other words, I had only fifteen days to shoot each segment. If I had started detailed cutting, I would never have made it on time. Of course, there are some who claim that cutting makes production faster--but that's true only if you also cut corners. For example, suppose someone is filming two people talking against a background of sliding paper doors. Since the pattern on the paper doors is the same on either side, first he shoots one person, and then he asks the other to come sit in the same spot, rather than moving the camera. That's why this type of director can say that cutting speeds up production. For me, however, setting up each shot requires a full amount of time, and so if I started making frequent cuttings, I'd never get finished on schedule. Well, then, the only way to do a good job, without cutting corners, is to use longer takes, isn't it? So you see, there are two reasons why I prefer long takes.

Lastly, while I don't necessarily dislike make-up, I'm rather fixed on the idea that the natural faces given to us by our parents are the best. A person's natural face suits them as no other can. I always want to ask women, Why do you paint all over your face that way, and draw on your eyebrows, and attach false eyelashes, and color your lips like you've just eaten another human being? This is my firm conviction. That's why I always tell my actors and actresses to come to the studio with their best faces--the one's they got from Mom and Dad. If they're young as well, then there's all the more reason to avoid make-up, since the skin still has its natural gloss. A good lens can capture that gloss, and so--thanks to technological advances--can the newer types of film. So I tell them, just show up as you are and don't worry about putting on make-up. This is my fundamental belief.

Of course, a specific role sometimes will require make-up of some kind. In such cases, I recommend it without hesitation. Furthermore, as we grow older, our skin begins to lose its gloss and form wrinkles. Make-up is fine in this case also. There are times when I film with older actors and actresses, and I ask them to put on make-up so that I can show them

looking a lot younger than they really are. But younger actors and actresses should never use make-up. It only hides the natural beauty of their skin with a lot of cheap powder! That's my reason.

Source: Excerpted from a lecture given at the Nagoya Cinémathèque theater in 1983. The original lecture is printed in full in *Kato Tai Talks About the Movies* (Kato Tai, eiga o kataru; Chikuma shobo, 1994), pages 145-71.

< proofed and partially retranslated by Stephen Collington, 27 July 1997 >



# **Samurai Loyalty: A Film Genealogy of Kato Tai**

by HASUMI Shigehiko

To the Japanese film industry of the time, the appearance of KATO Tai's first feature-length film *Trouble Over Swords and Women* (Kennan jonan) in 1951 was at best an event of trifling significance. Certainly nobody was eagerly awaiting for the appearance of this new director, and virtually nobody was especially excited to see this movie. Some critics became interested in Kato's work after the release of *Wind, Women and Hobos* (Kaze to onna to tabigarasu; 1957); but it was only with *Blood of Revenge* (Meiji kyokyakuden: sandaime shumei) in 1965, and the works which followed, that critics began to talk excitedly about him--and then still only as a director of "gangster movies." People at last "discovered" *Trouble Over Swords and Women* only after the release of *Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match* (Hibotan bakuto: hanafuda shobu) in 1969; and what they saw then was not even the original film, but rather an abridged version made for television broadcasting. With this final discovery, however, people began belatedly to recognize the existence of a true movie director, and wondered anew at the negligence of the critics who had ignored him for so long. Incidentally, it also was not until some time later that the public learned that Kato was the nephew of YAMANAKA Sadao, a filmmaker who, while at the height of his popularity and creative powers, had died of disease in wartime China.

Looked at from another perspective, however, the fact that Kato made his debut as director in 1951 takes on a certain interest and importance. Indeed, it cannot have been entirely coincidental that Kato, turning thirty-five in 1951 and chafing for a chance to direct a film, at last received his promotion to the director's chair in the same year as Japan and the United States signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Six years had passed since the chaos of the immediate postwar period and the Japanese film industry was ready for a new direction. The change in Japan's legal status which ensued upon ratification of the San Francisco treaty in turn no doubt helped pave the way for Kato's films.

*Trouble Over Swords and Women* is a movie in the "samurai" (chambara) genre, filming of which had long been forbidden by the Occupation authorities. This fact alone makes Kato's debut as director significant. While it seems hard to believe today, it was not easy to obtain a permit from the Occupation authorities for the production of samurai movies since--so it was feared--their romantic portrayal of samurai and gamblers and their numerous sword-fighting-scenes might contribute to the promotion of feudalistic values.



At all events; among the new directors of the postwar period virtually no one prior to Kato chose to make their directorial debut with a samurai movie. After Kato, however, a number of talented new directors, starting with MISUMI Kenji in 1954, and including SAWAJIMA Tadashi, TANAKA Tokuzo, KUDO Eiichi, IKEHIRO Kazuo and YAMASHITA Kosaku, began their careers at Daiei and Toei, two companies which had by then established samurai movies as their mainstay. However, when viewed against the background of the contemporary trend toward a modernization of attitudes modeled after American-style democracy, Kato's decision to start making samurai films in 1951 reveals a directorial stance which was decidedly against the spirit of the times. Movies which received the critics' approval and praise for their suitability in postwar Japanese society tended rather to be antiwar films such as IMAI Tadashi's *Until the Day We Meet Again* (Mata au hi made; 1950) and SEKIGAWA Hideo's *Listen to the Kamikaze Pilots* (Kike wadatsumi no koe; 1950). And yet here was this new director diligently filming old-fashioned vendetta stories just as if the impact of the Neo Realismo of Italy had never reached Japan!

A year before Kato filmed his first movie, Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon* (Rashomon; 1950) received the Golden Lion Award at Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica Venezia (the Venice Film Festival). As symbolized by this triumph, Japanese cinema was entering its second "Golden Age" in 1951 (its first was in the 1930s). Having recovered from the chaos of the war years and the immediate postwar period, Japan's movie industry was about to experience a ten-year period of unprecedented productivity and prosperity. This renaissance was in large part triggered by the San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed in 1951 and coming into effect the next year. KIDO Shiro and MORI Iwao, who as producers at Shochiku and Toho, respectively, had contributed to the prosperous 1930s, both were depurged in 1950 and ready to participate actively in the management of these two companies. The fact that NAGATA Masaichi, president of Daiei and friend of MIZOGUCHI Kenji since the 1930s, at this time began making large cash donations to conservative political parties testifies to the flourishing condition of the movie industry. A large-scale labor dispute which had paralyzed Toho's production functions at last came to an end, and a total of five major companies (Shochiku, Daiei, Toei, Toho, and the new Shin Toho, which had been established in the course of settling the labor dispute) now launched into the mass production of movies. (Soon after, Nikkatsu would also resume production, bringing the total up to six.) As a result of this increased activity, the annual production of movies in Japan more than doubled in a few short years, going from around 200 per year in the early 1950s to over 500 in 1956 at its peak. In this manner, many directors were



required to produce several movies a year, and it was precisely this mass-production system which supported Japanese cinema's second "Golden Age."

Despite this growing optimism, however, the Japanese movie industry was not, we should note, immune to the influence of the external forces which darkened this period of history. Indeed, the appearance of Kato Tai coincided precisely with a "Red Purge" campaign aimed at left-wing people in the movie industry. This campaign was a direct result of policy changes made by the Occupation Forces following the outbreak of the Korean War. However, the "Red Purge" in Japan was never as terrible as that which occurred in the United States. For example, in contrast with American filmmaker Joseph Losey, who was forced to seek refuge abroad, Japan's Imai Tadashi, while sharing similar beliefs with his American counterpart, still managed to continue producing movies at an independent studio (albeit, under difficult conditions) even after being 'purged'. Kato Tai, who was fired from his job at Daiei simply because he was secretary of a labor union, turned his misfortune to good profit and went on to secure a directorship at Takara Productions in Kyoto, a studio which supplied movies to Shin Toho. All the same, the days which had seen Mizoguchi Kenji lead demonstrations and negotiate with Shochiku as the leader of its labor union had become a thing of the past. Outside, the Cold War was escalating, but domestically Japanese society was about to enter into a period of prosperity unprecedented in its history.

During the 1950s, veteran directors who had been active since before the war once again began producing pictures worthy of their names--OZU Yasujiro and NARUSE Mikio leading the way with their 1950 masterpieces *Wheat Harvest Season* (Bakushu) and *Food* (Meshi). Around this same time, Mizoguchi Kenji also resumed production, releasing two brilliant films, *Oyu-sama* (Oyu-sama; 1951) and *Women for Ihara Saikaku* (Saikaku ichidai no onna; 1952) in quick succession--the latter to considerable acclaim in Venice. Thanks to the profits generated through the mass production system, these veteran directors were able to continue producing one masterpiece after another throughout the years to follow.

Kato Tai first became known as a director of samurai movies who made his ~~debut at the dawn of~~ Japanese cinema's second "Golden Age." As the newest of the major production companies, Shin Toho lacked a strong management base and marketing strategy, and thus was forced to rely primarily on tie-ups with independent studios--a situation which no doubt made it easy to utilize new directors. Needless to say, the conditions imposed on these new directors were harsh; but all the same it was fortunate for Kato to be picked up by Shin Toho



so soon after losing his job as assistant director at Daiei (where he assisted Kurosawa in making *Rashomon*). Despite having only one month for production, Kato naturally was eager to accept the offer of directing a two-part movie running three hours in total. *Trouble Over Swords and Women* depicts the misfortunes of a samurai who fights to save the honor of his feudal clan, and the struggles of his less "warlike" brother, who, though at first uninterested in swordsmanship, eventually succeeds in avenging himself in a duel after some training. By adding just the right amount of romantic interest, Kato made this movie into an ideal entertainment film. As a result, the film was a commercial--if not critical--success, earning its director the all-important trust of the studio bosses.

After directing five movies at Takara Productions, with *Book of Birds* (Hiyodori zoshi; 1955) being his last work there, Kato moved to Toei's Kyoto studio and worked again as an assistant director for two years. During the ten-year period following his debut, he produced a total of fifteen films. This was possible for him because he worked in the mass production era of the 1950s; directors like OSHIMA Nagisa and YOSHIDA Kiju, who debuted in the 1960s, were not nearly so productive. At Toei, he was in charge of directing the second-slot films of double features, and thus he was constantly under pressure to produce quickly, and at low cost, using new stars like NAKAMURA Kinnosuke and OKAWA Hashizo in title roles. In this regard, his works from the 1950s could perhaps be compared with Hollywood B-movies. The same could be said about Kato's contemporary SUZUKI Seijun, but when critics in the 1960s chose now and then to rescue Kato from his usual place in critical limbo, they no doubt were practicing a kind of *politique des auteurs*.

Throughout the 1950s the "official" director of choice for movie critics was Imai Tadashi. Indeed, from *Until the Day We Meet Again* (Mata au hi made; 1950) to *Kiku and Isamu* (Kiku to Isamu; 1959), his works seemed to enjoy an exclusive hold on the higher positions in annual "BEST 10" listings. According to the criteria employed by movie critics at that time, even such masters as Kurosawa, Mizoguchi and Ozu displayed only a relative, conditional degree of excellence compared to Imai's. Critics today, however, would not hesitate to choose Kato's *Wind, Women and Hobos*, a film originally regarded as little more than "entertainment," over Imai's self-consciously academic period film *Drums at Night* (Yoru no tsuzumi; 1958). Indeed, in his portrayal of traveling gambler in *Wind, Women and Hobos*, Nakamura Kinnosuke is reminiscent of the unaffected youth depicted in Nicholas Ray's 1955 masterpiece *Rebel Without a Cause*, delivering his lines in a "hip" contemporary style and acting without make-up--an unusual innovation in this



kind-of genre film. Although nobody can match the gambler in a duel, he in turn makes no effort to hide his moral weakness and greed. Kato thus presents, in this character, a figure quite off the beaten track of traditional samurai-movie moralism. This "rebellion" may well reflect Kato's own frustration at having had to depict the main character of his earlier *Genkuro's Adventure Story: Secret Sword of the Butterfly* (Genkuro satsukyoki: hiken ageha no cho; 1957-8) as a stereotypically handsome young samurai, complete with heavy make-up. At any rate, critics at the time lacked the necessary critical vocabulary for praising new attempts of this kind.

The critical reception accorded to *Love for a Mother* (Mabuta no haha; 1962) is a case in point. Although one could hardly declare it an unparalleled masterpiece, this film, bitterly attacked by the critics upon its release, nonetheless is of considerable historical importance, providing a valuable glimpse into Kato's cinematographic roots in the *chambara* samurai films of the late silent era, as well as looking ahead prophetically to his later development as a filmmaker. This project originally came about when popular director ITO Daisuke became unable to meet his production schedule, and a "filler" movie thus became necessary for the second week of the new year. At Toei's request, Kato stepped in, undertaking to complete a film in a mere two weeks. The story itself was familiar enough. Based on a play by HASEGAWA Shin, and first adapted by INAGAKI Hiroshi in 1931, it had already seen numerous film adaptations. If Kato himself wrote the screenplay, Toei decided, it should be possible to complete in time. Nevertheless, only two weeks were available for filming. Saddled by the company with this brutal production schedule, Kato unexpectedly found himself facing the same sort of tough situation he had met with in his very first directorial job.

Forty-six now, and with a wealth of experience to draw upon, Kato concluded that the deadline could be met if he left the supervision of the B-production group up to a reliable assistant director. Nonetheless, the tight schedule enforced a number of major technical limitations. For example, despite the story's stereotypical "traveling gambler" (*matatabimono*) plot, in which a scrappy but warm-hearted gambler wanders here and there in the hope of meeting his mother again, Kato was unable to shoot on location and had to make do entirely with stage sets instead. Furthermore, rather than dividing important scenes into several shots for editing later, he tried to complete each one in a single extended shot wherever possible. To do this, however, he had to ignore the space outside the camera's frame, concentrating instead on maintaining the quality of his images through a rich use of depth of field.



\* By means of such detailed calculations, Kato succeeded in creating a powerful movie in *Love for a Mother*, despite the restrictions of an extremely short filming period. While most directors no doubt would have used such difficult filming conditions as an excuse for cutting corners, Kato instead accepted them as a challenge and a means for maintaining a healthy creative tension. As a result, he was able to accomplish a miraculous feat of integration, combining an almost avant-garde experimentation with stage sets and equipment (something he would pursue, in a more exaggerated way, in *Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* [Sanada fuunroku; 1963]) with a vivid and powerful sense of presence in his actors (a trait which also would be emphasized in later films, as in, for example, *Brutal Story from the End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* [Bakumatsu zankoku monogatari; 1964]). With a mysterious thrill, the audience is drawn into the mesmerizing continuity of images on the screen.

love for a mother, cont.  
\* An excellent example of this kind of continuity can be found in the scene wherein the protagonist approaches a blind and elderly shamisen player, thinking that she may be his mother. After fighting off a man who behaves insultingly toward her, he discovers that she is not his mother after all and leaves her. The entire scene, from the protagonist's first approach to his departure is filmed as one long, fluid, slow-moving shot. The fact that certain critics began to describe Kato as an "artist" around this time no doubt was due to their recognition of the power of this type of directing.

Of course Kato did not reject editing for all scenes, nor did he always avoid close-up or cutback work. For example, in a sequence in which the gambler finally meets his mother in her room, only to be coldly rejected by her, Kato opens the scene with a long, stationary shot with the characters positioned on either side of the screen, thus allowing the viewer to absorb the situation in detail. Then, he switches to short, close-up and mobile shots in the latter half in order to heighten the emotional drama of the scene.

Despite this masterly display of directorial control, however, many critics continued to disparage *Love for a Mother*. Normally gentle and open-minded, Kato finally lost his temper with such old-generation critics, denouncing them roughly. "Are you criticizing my film," he demanded, "after carefully comparing it with adaptations of the same work directed by Inagaki Hiroshi and KINUGASA Toshizo? Can you still make the same criticisms after carefully reading the two different versions of the original drama and comparing with their different endings?"



*Love for a mother*

In this dispute, Kato emerged as winner. As a director, Kato had his roots in the samurai films of the past, but for all that he was more forward-looking than the old-generation critics and their "official" criteria for excellence. Despite his deep respect for older directors, Kato intentionally rejected Inagaki's earlier version of *Love for a Mother*, which ends with the mother and son holding each other. Instead, he chose to play up the protagonist's loneliness and self-denial by having him leave his mother in the end. The superiority of Kato's version is obvious. In the last scene, the wandering gambler turns away from his mother and sister as they call out to him in the darkness, and goes across a bridge alone. It is clear immediately to anyone who cares to consider the matter that Kato had planned his new, tragic version from the start, building it around this final image of the bridge, which occurs in none of the earlier versions. No doubt he wanted to ask his critics, unfamiliar as they were with the history of Japanese cinema, whether they had noticed this bridge or not. Indeed his critics seemed to understand the concept of "remakes" only in terms of cheap copycats, and accordingly had failed to observe what was really on the screen.

Kato's independent and original attitude toward directing "remakes" is revealed again in his 1964 film *Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (Yukyo ippiki: *Kutsukake Tokijiro*). In this work, Kato depicts a gambler who kills a complete stranger simply to repay a debt of gratitude for a night's lodging and food--only to find himself later traveling with the wife of the very man he has killed. If one compares this version with TSUJI Kichiro's original silent film, *Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (*Kutsukake Tokijiro*; 1932), one gets a fair understanding of the ethical stance which Kato held toward the remake process, and how it led him to alter the man-woman relationship in the story until it was substantially darker and more warped than the one portrayed in Tsuji's earlier version. Kato knew the history of movies so well, that this very knowledge impelled him to deviate from the work of his predecessors whenever using similar material.

Kato began his directing career as an assistant director at Toho in 1937, moving from there to a documentary film company in 1941. After making a few short films at this new post, he then spent the war years working for the ~~Manchuria~~ *Manchuria* Movie Association. Judging from this work history, Kato enjoyed no significant teacher-student relationship of the type which existed, for example, between ICHIKAWA Kon and his mentor, ISHIDA Tamizo. How, then, did Kato position himself within the genealogy of samurai movies? One thing which is certain is that he did not consider it a particular honor or privilege that, as an assistant director to Kurosawa at Daiei, he had been placed



in charge of editing a preview of the prize-winning *Rashomon*. Rather, it was his assistant directorship under Ito Daisuke that he regarded as his most important formative experience prior to becoming a director himself. Kato belonged to that generation which awakened to film through the world of the samurai-movie masterpieces of the late silent era, and so to him the word "movie" itself was all but equivalent to the samurai films of this great director.

Indeed, there is a period in the history of Japanese cinema which might well be called "The Age of Ito Daisuke." It spans the half decade from the 1927 *Chuji's Travels* (*Chuji tabinikki*), a three-part series which included *Sword Battle in Koshu* (*Koshu satsujin hen*), *Blood and Laughter in Shinshu* (*Shinshu kessho hen*) and *Goyo* (*Goyo hen*), to *Jirokichi, the Rat Kid* (*O-atsumae Jirokichi-goshi*) in 1931. During this period, Ito produced such masterpieces as *Gero* (*Gero*; 1928), *Sword for Life* (*Issatsu-tasho-ken*; 1928) and *Sword for Killing Men and Horses* (*Zannin zanba-ken*; 1929), attracting young viewers with his bold plots and elegant camera work, and drawing them into the world of movie directors and critics. By the time he completed his *Ooka Seidan* (*Ooka seidan*) series in 1933 with his first talking film, *Tange Sazen* (*Tange-Sazen*), he was widely regarded as a director of the first rank.

Unfortunately, few of the films Ito made during this period are available today. Judging by what has survived--*Chuji's Travels*, *Jirokichi, the Rat Kid* and some other fragments--we no doubt may conclude, however, that young viewers were attracted not only by the elegant visual effects which emerge from Ito's dynamic camera work and rapid-fire shot sequencing, but also by the tragic fate and spirit of self-sacrifice which mark his protagonists (an effect no doubt heightened by the gallant charms of OKOCHI Denjiro, the young star who played the title roles). It is this last point, in fact, which most clearly sets Ito's movies apart from earlier samurai films, which had featured national star ONOE Matsunosuke. Taking the heroes of the silent Western as a basis for comparison, we might say that the characters which Ito liked most to portray were closer to the self-denying William S. Hart than the cheerful and active Harry Carey. In his silent movies, Ito used this character type to personify his own frustration and disappointment with the contradictions of contemporary society.

With respect to camera angles and editing techniques, Ito was spiritually closer to the filmmakers of the European avant-garde than to those of Hollywood. Of course, the innovations of Soviet film were still largely unknown in Japan at this time, with only a single work by Pudovkin available, and none by Eisenstein. When exiled director Alexander Volkoff's *Kean*



(1923) was shown in Japan, it was widely misunderstood as a practical application of Pudovkin's montage theory, which at the time was known to Japanese critics in translation, but not in actual practice. Inspired by the photogenic images of Abel Gance's *La Roue* (Tetsuro no shirobara; 1922), Ito further refined the composition and editing techniques of the Volkoff school, applying them in bold new ways to the action scenes of his samurai movies. In this manner, "The Age of Ito Daisuke" saw the emergence of an editing style quite unlike that of the D. W. Griffith school.

Ito's style of shot sequencing is unusual in that ignores completely the agreement of camera position with character viewpoint and action which traditionally has been so dear to other Japanese directors (such as, for example, MAKINO Masahiro, Ozu and even, on occasion, Kurosawa). Interestingly, other critically acclaimed silent-period directors like Inagaki Hiroshi and ITAMI Mansaku also display a similar tendency to considerable freedom of camera movement. And, as the duel scene which opens *Trouble Over Swords and Women* exemplifies so brilliantly, Kato Tai consistently employs an editing style which, in its cavalier disregard for agreement between camera viewpoint and action, has marked him clearly as a faithful successor to the Ito school right from his debut as director.

"The Age of Ito Daisuke" was fated not to last, however; and with the arrival of talking movies the great director experienced a long slump. The particular attraction of Ito's films had lain in his brilliantly active camera work--a visual dynamism which at once compensated for, and was amplified by, the voicelessness of the silent-film screen. Alas for Ito, this style proved much less suitable to the talkies, and his golden age came to an end as the silent samurai movie gave way to its younger, talking cousin.

Ironically, it was none other than Kato Tai's uncle, Yamanaka Sadao, who was to take the lead in reinventing the genre. Yamanaka took the image of the masterless samurai--lonely, independent, slightly mad, perhaps--which Ito had established in *Tange Sazen* and other films, and transformed him into a lively, witty figure in his *Stories of Tange Sazen: The Pot of Gold* (Tange Sazen yowa: hyakuman-ryo no tsubo; 1935). The change caught audiences entirely ~~by surprise; and with this triumph,~~ it seemed that the world of samurai movies was poised to enter into an "Age of Yamanaka Sadao." Influenced by Yamanaka's works, a new generation of young artists (including, for example, SHINDO Kaneto) flocked to the movie industry. As it turned out, however, "The Age of Yamanaka Sadao" was to be short-lived also, as the young director died abroad at the age of twenty-nine soon after completing *The Paper*



*Balloon of Human Feelings* (Ninjo kamifusen; 1937), fading into legend after a short but brilliant career, much like Jean Vigo.

Kato Tai lived with his uncle for a time during his adolescent years, and even went on to write a book entitled *Yamanaka Sadao, Movie Director* (Eiga kantoku Yamanaka Sadao). For all that, however, he ultimately inherited very little from the older man in terms of filmmaking technique. Yamanaka's techniques of characterization and dramatization simply were too radically different from Ito Daisuke's--and, as we have seen, Kato's artistic loyalties bound him above all to the latter man. True to his declaration that he would rather choose current American practice over dated Russian (Pudovkinian) theory, Yamanaka went to great lengths to avoid any hint of "garrulousness" in his shot sequencing. Striving for brevity and an effective presentation, he maintained a "transparent" screen at all times, keeping the audience unaware of the camera's presence as much as possible--a style which, one might say, allies him with such "modern" film artists as Howard Hawks. Also, insofar as agreement between camera viewpoint and on-screen action was an article of faith for him, he clearly belonged to the traditionalist school of D. W. Griffith. To Kato, however, Yamanaka's characters smacked of nihilism, their apparent composure deriving more from resignation than genuine tragic understanding, and thus standing in constant danger of slipping into the merely ridiculous. At all events, the fact that Kato was not exactly crazy about his uncle's works is certain. It comes as no surprise, then, that his *Tange Sazen: Clouds and Dragons* (Tange Sazen: ken'un konryu no maki; 1962) is much closer in mood to Ito's original Tange Sazen than to Yamanaka's more light-hearted *Stories of Tange Sazen: The Pot of Gold*. Kato Tai was, first and foremost, a child of "The Age of Ito Daisuke."

While the 1960s saw, on the one hand, the emergence of new directors like Oshima Nagisa, Yoshida Kiju and the rest of the so-called Shochiku nouvelle vague, they proved hard times for filmmakers of Ito Daisuke's school--a period when the numerous contradictions inherent in the studio system began to make themselves felt. In fact, for five years after 1965 Ito himself had no opportunities to direct at all, briefly emerging from dormancy to make *End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* (Bakumatsu) in 1970 only to be forced into retirement soon after its completion. Times were hard even for Kurosawa Akira, who went through a long period in which he was unable to produce a single film.

Even as other directors thus were struggling to find work, however, Kato Tai, the faithful studio man, remained busily employed. When Toei had a hit



with YAMASHITA Kosaku's *Red Peony Gambler* (Hibotan bakuto; 1968), Kato responded with a three-part series starring FUJI Junko as a woman gambler--*Flower Cards Match* (Hanafuda shobu; 1969), *Here Comes Oryu* (Oryu sanjo; 1971) and *A Pleasure to Kill You* (O-inochi itadakimasu; 1971)--which generated considerable market success. He also demonstrated his versatility by producing several modern dramas, including *Suck to the Bone* (Hone made shaburu; 1966) at Toei, and *A Man's Face Shows His Personal History* (Otoko no kao wa rirekisho; 1966) and *Hymn for a Slaughter* (Minagoroshi no reika, 1968) at Shochiku. In fact, this shift of genres was of great importance, for after the 1960s Kato was to produce only two more samurai movies, *Miyamoto Musashi* (Miyamoto Musashi; 1973) and *Like Fire* (Honoo no gotoku; 1981), before his death in 1985.

The fact that Kato was able to make such a major genre change at this time reflects nothing less than his final maturation as a filmmaker. After long years of producing samurai movies for entertainment, Kato had established a unique style all his own, distinct from both the Ito Daisuke and Yamanaka Sadao schools. Sometimes referred to as the "Aesthetics of Kato Tai," this unique personal style took as its basis the long, low-angle, fixed shot described earlier in our discussion of *Love for a Mother*. As we also noted then, however, Kato's preference for this type of shot by no means made him reject short close-ups or mobile camerawork--on the contrary, it allowed him to use such techniques all the more effectively. Of course, as soon as one hears the words "one sequence/one shot" used about a Japanese filmmaker, one immediately starts looking for analogies with the director of *Sansho Dayu* (Sansho dayu; 1954). Unlike Mizoguchi, however, Kato almost always avoided crane shots and pans, choosing rather to keep the camera at an extremely low angle--sometimes even to the extent of imbedding the camera in the floor! Furthermore, while Kato had been an avid admirer of Ozu's work since the silent era, his low-angle shots are distinguished from those of his predecessor in that they do not assume as a precondition the agreement of camera viewpoint and action.

One last, significant feature distinguishes Kato's use of low-angle, fixed camera work: namely, that what he captures in his fixed frame is never the kind-of-comfortable, domestic space, in which family members sit at ease, exchanging glances, that Ozu depicted so brilliantly in *Tokyo Story* (Tokyo monogatari; 1953). Rather, the men and women portrayed in such films as *Wind, Women and Hobos*, *Love for a Mother* and *Tokijiro of Kutsukake* are never allowed the intimacy of a parent-child or husband-wife relationship. Kato's low angles define and enliven a small corner of disorderly space in



which lonely men and women, though fated to remain apart, may coexist for a brief time. With this technique, Kato successfully concentrates the attention of the audience on the palpable reality of each scene's multivoiced continuity. Although lacking in movement, the scene as a whole constitutes a moment of revelation in which a new drama--the drama of pure stasis, we might call it--acts itself out. Encountering that moment, one can only stop and wonder anew at the excellence of Kato's work during this period--one which might well be called, without exaggeration, "The Age of Kato Tai." It is the moment in which this former director of samurai swashbucklers transcends himself to emerge as a true film artist.

# **KATO Tai, Director: Far Ahead of His Time**

By UENO Koshi

## **As Director of Format Pictures**

When thinking about KATO Tai as movie director, we should first remember that he was a director of 'format' pictures. His career in the movie industry began with production of documentary films called "Culture Movies" at Riken Kagaku Eiga in the 1940s. In early 1950s, he produced samurai movies at Takara Production and Shin Toho. In the late 1950s, he moved to Toei and began producing samurai, gambler and gangster movies. During these decades, he made movies in accordance with the company's requirements. In other words, planning, budgeting, screenwriting, casting for the leading roles, and scheduling were basically taken care of by the companies. He had to produce the movies according to standard formats set by the companies within the framework of commercialism. It was only in the 1970s that he was able to produce movies relatively at his own discretion. (In his late years, the movie production system changed and it again became difficult for him to produce movies according to his preferences and standards.)

Of course, this kind of problem was not limited to KATO Tai alone. Up until the end of the 1960s, most directors, except for such masters as OZU Yasujiro, MIZOGUCHI Kenji and KUROSAWA Akira, had more or less to accept such conditions from Japan's movie production companies. However, KATO Tai was never happy with these constraints and constantly tried to escape them. In the course of his struggle, he created original forms which he could say were his movies.

To learn more about such conditions and his struggle against them, let's look into the background to "*Love for a Mother* (mabuta no haha)" shown in 1962.

KATO Tai completed the production of this movie in 15 days, less than a half of the time normally needed. In spite of such a formidable condition being imposed on him, he succeeded in doing so because of factors peculiar to movie production companies at that time and his own motivation. As regards matters related to the company, they had a plan to show a movie starring NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke (YOROZUYA Kin'nosuke) in the second week of new year of 1962. However, this plan fell through, resulting in the urgent need to fill this week with another movie. At that time, NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke



was already a popular movie star, so the company had to produce a new movie in a hurry. However, there was not enough time to write a new screenplay. Then, they remembered the screenplay for "*Love for a Mother (mabuta no haha)*" which KATO Tai had written some time earlier, and, they offered him production of the movie as well as direction. However, he had only 15 days for filming.

"Love for a Mother (mabuta no haha)" was a famous drama written by HASEGAWA Shin and was made into a movie several times. KATO Tai respected HASEGAWA Shin and he was very impressed with the movie directed by INAGAKI Hiroshi which starred KATAOKA Chiezo. KATO Tai apparently wanted to take up a challenge of making this drama into a movie by himself. That's why he had written the screenplay. And thus by chance, an opportunity came along for him to realize his wish. However, the 15-day filming condition was tough. Therefore I think he must have experienced some inner conflict between wanting to do it as he had hoped for a long time and rejecting it as it would surely require more than 15 days to do a good job. In the end, he decided to do it, but he also set some conditions of his own.

First, all filming would be undertaken on stage settings, with no location shooting, since locations would be affected by the weather and it would take time to get there and set up. Thus, he wanted to make full use of the 15 days allocated for filming, and to this end, some outdoor scenes would have to be incorporated as stage settings. Fortunately, there were a number of excellent stage carpenters on hand, with the skills to incorporate outside scenes in a stage setting, and as it was also the end of year, and other productions were completed, he was able to use additional stages.

Second, he was able to organize a complete B-production team, led by KURATA Junji whom he trusted, which would undertake all tasks including filming and lighting. He also asked to rehearse some scenes. He let KURATA Junji take full charge of all the things he was able to do so that he could focus on filming. In order to save time, moreover, he basically filmed one scene in one-cut, running the camera for a longer time per shot, as detailed cuts involving multiple scenes meant more time would be needed.

After thinking about how to meet the 15-day challenge without compromising quality, or omitting even minor work, KATO Tai set the above conditions and completed "*Love for a Mother (mabuta no haha)*" in exactly 15 days. Thus, we see in this example his struggle as a company-employed director. Provided, of course, it was a movie he had wanted to produce, he



didn't flatly reject such a difficult demand on the part of the company. While accepting the demand, on the other hand, he worked to improve conditions so that he would be able to do his very best and he devoted all his efforts to accomplish the task. Running the camera for a longer time was one technique which had come out of such efforts.

In the case of "*Love for a Mother* (mabuta no haha)," one would assume the company might have compromised and provided him with the maximum support in order to overcome the critical situation of not having a movie available for the second week of the new year. However, some limitations and regulations that the company places on the production of movies are meaningless on a daily basis and yet affect the quality of movies. The following is one example of this. For the production of "*Wind, Women and Hobo* (kaze to onna to tabigarasu)" (1958) also starring NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, KATO Tai wanted to film him without makeup. When the company learned about it, they rushed over to the studio, screaming. The reason was that NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke was outstandingly popular as a handsome samurai character with a white makeup face. (Not only him, but most of samurai movie stars used white makeup on their face at that time as a custom.) The company didn't want Director KATO to destroy such an image of the star and thus tried to pressure him. However, as he was convinced that a white makeup face didn't fit in with the contents of the movie, he stubbornly refused their demand. Since then, the range of roles for young stars like NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke has widened and samurai movies themselves have changed.

In other words, it can be said that his action generated a 'nouvelle vogue' within the company. When producing the "*Horror: The Ghost of Oiwa* (kaidan oiwa no borei)" in 1961, he stipulated the conditions whereby SAKURAMACHI Hiroko, the leading star of this movie, who had played the role of a princess in many previous movies, would not use makeup or a wig. She responded to his requests positively and became an important actress in his later works. [e.g., "*Fightin' Tatsu The Rickshaw Man* (shafuyukyoden, kenkatatsu)" and "*Suck to the Bone* (honemade shaburu)"].

These episodes demonstrate the kind of realism that he strove for in his work, and we should not forget that though it was ultimately successful, it ~~always conflicted with the existing star system and customs of the company at the time.~~ At Toei, with which KATO Tai was affiliated, it was known that they had a sort of unspoken rule that a lens should be used at its widest aperture in order to produce color movies as cheaply as possible. However, when he was producing the "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (sanada fuunroku)" (1963), he broke this rule in order to reproduce the color black clearly by



stopping down to about F5.6 after discussions with the cameraman. As this movie failed to attract a large audience during its first run, the company didn't give him any work for almost a year after that. However, KATO Tai would not have been the movie director wouldn't have been him without such struggles.

### Running the Camera for a Longer Time and at Low Angle

After watching a few movies by KATO Tai, everyone will notice their distinctive characteristics. As mentioned earlier, one is where the camera is run for a longer time, and thus individual scenes are longer. The other is low angle shooting by positioning the camera lower down. The former, as mentioned earlier with regard to "*Love for a Mother* (mabuta no haha)," was chosen in order to produce this movie in a very short time. While this may have been the primary reason, KATO Tai said that he himself wanted to be immersed in the drama when it was approaching a climax and in this light, running the camera for a longer time would seem to have been a natural choice. In any case, it is very obvious that he was aggressively inclined to choose the appropriate way to shoot a scene in relation to the contents of the story.

This tendency intensified as he produced more movies. One such example can be found in "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (kutsukake tokijiro: yukyoippiki)." In a snow scene in Takasaki, Tokijiro, played by NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, is talking casually to a female innkeeper about a man loving a woman whose husband he had killed for someone who had let him stay overnight. He was in fact actually talking about himself. Throughout the scene, the camera remains fixed at a low angle. The lens keeps looking only at the action of talking. Another example is the "*History of Japanese Gamblers* (nihon kyokaden)" (1973). In one scene, MAKI Yoko, playing the heroine's role, is sitting next to WATARI Tetsuya in the boat. MAKI Yoko is holding a sake bottle on her knees, which her husband has asked to bring home, and WATARI is holding a glass. The man says "You should go home now" and she replies "Yes, I will." Feelings contrary to their words are building up in the two. Then, the glass breaks in his hand and he embraces her tightly with passion and she responds to him similarly. The camera lens just keeps looking at them from a low angle.

"Drama is a relationship between a human and another human. That's why I don't want to look at other things when it approaches its climax," said KATO Tai. His words are substantiated with these scenes. In this regard, his commitment to and concentration on the act of looking goes well beyond the reason of a limited number of days allowed for production forcing him to



choose running the camera a longer time for a cut. Moreover, this attitude of his is clearly evident in scenes of love between a man and woman, the main theme which this artist pursued throughout his life.

Now, let's turn our attention to the topic of low-angle shooting.

KATO Tai was asked about this by his fans on a number of occasions. On each occasion, he replied honestly, with basically the same answer: because he liked it. While stating that there is no particular reason why you like or don't like things, in his attempts at explaining it, he mentioned that he liked drawings by KOBAYASHI Kiyochika, a Japanese-style painter of the Meiji Period and he also liked OZU Yasujiro's works. He also said, "When I try to create my own pictures [when producing movies], I find myself lowering my body, squatting, and sometimes sitting on the ground unconsciously and looking at the subjects and play." In fact, according to YAMANE Sadao who actually saw him at work, KATO Tai quite often directs production in a squatting position.

Until not long ago, squatting was a common posture adopted by the Japanese in order to rest briefly. In the 1950s, before Japan's post-war economic expansion, I used to see senior citizens sitting and smoking with their pipes in the street. Such a posture, however, had disappeared from Japan except for some areas by the end of 1960s. Therefore, when I saw "*The Stage of Life* (jinsei gekijo: hishakaku to kiratsune)" (1968) directed by UCHIDA Tomu, I was really moved for no reason by one scene where TSURUTA Koji and TAKAKURA Ken were squatting and talking in the street.

While squatting is a Japanese or Asian posture, it would however be a mistake to regard KATO Tai's low-angle shooting as simply Japanese or Asian. Paintings by KOBAYASHI Kiyochika are not captured from a low angle like KATO's movies. Moreover, Japan's traditional paintings such as picture scrolls, before KOBAYASHI's works, were drawn rather from an angle of a crane flying above you, and pictures drawn from low angles were very rare.

Similar characteristics can apply to OZU Yasujiro. Although his works were generally filmed from low angles, David BORDWELL argued, after carefully analyzing films for each cut, that OZU's camera work featured low positions but not necessarily low angles. (OZU and the Poetics of Cinema (ozu yasujiro:eiga no bigaku)." In the case of OZU, he positioned the lens axis on the center and upper two thirds of the object which he wished to capture. Therefore, when shooting an object closer to the ground, the camera is inevitably lowered, and conversely, raised higher when shooting buildings and



other tall objects. In other words, OZU moved the camera in relation to the objects being filmed. While it may be a fact that KATO Tai liked OZU's works (especially those before the war), it does not mean that KATO's low-angle filming was following suit to OZU. KATO Tai's low-angle filming features shooting an object from an extreme reentrant angle. Moreover, the position of the camera got lower as the years went by. In some cases, he dug a hole and placed the camera inside, or put the camera under water and captured an object together with ripples. Therefore, he captured the face of the main character played by NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke by positioning the camera at his feet and intentionally distorted the image in "Tokijiro of Kutsukake (kutsukake tokijiro: yukyo ippiki)." This is quite different from OZU's low-angle technique.

Use of such an extreme degree of low-angle filming goes beyond the justification that "he just likes it." Although he initially liked to see things from the squatting position, such a low angle is far lower than that of normal human vision. While OZU Yazujiro's low filming angle is also below that of normal human vision, KATO Tai's low angle goes even further to an extreme degree. However, nobody really knows what he wished to accomplish by doing so. Even if you were to ask him about it in heaven, you would be likely to get the same answer of "I just like it." The screen may show an extremely small number of objects - for example, only a man's face and the sky behind, which makes the images on the screen two-dimensional. Moreover, KATO Tai didn't use such an extreme low angle from the beginning of his career, and it was only from the late 1960s that he started running the camera for a longer time in a fixed position.

For example, in "*Castle of Fire (honoo no shiro)*" (1960), which was based on a translation of "Hamlet," Hamlet acted the play in front of the king and queen in order to find out why the former king was poisoned. For this scene, KATO Tai wanted the camera to pan fast, get closer to the face of the king by slowly going up and move to other positions. In order to achieve this free movement of the camera, he had a mini crane made to a special order. However, he didn't place this special order with a shop specializing in camera equipment: cameramen and stage carpenters worked together and hand-made something-like a small-crane mounted vehicle.

Similarly, in "*Horror: The Ghost of Oiwa (kaidan oiwa no borei)*" produced the following year, the camera turns around the face of Tamiya Iemon, the character played by WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo, making a circle. In order to do such a shot, a cameraman made a special rotary device for the



camera. KATO Tai had a strong desire to keep looking at the cruel face of this evil character, Tamiya Iemon, and this is how he did it.

This reminds me of "*Afraid of Lice* (shirami wa kowai)," a documentary film which KATO Tai produced while he was working for the Manchuria Movies Association. At one point, KATO asked a cameraman to take a close-up shot of lice. Unlike today, they didn't have much equipment back then, but the cameraman worked hard at it and was able to satisfy his need. From this, we can see his strong desire to look at things which are difficult to see from a normal viewing position. Therefore, when he wanted to take a shot of a train approaching, he placed an Eyemo, a small camera designed for use in news filming, between the rails, attached a cord to the camera, extended the cord under a rail, operated the switch by means of the cord, and filmed the train coming head-on.

His desire to look is also a desire to show. The desire to see things which are difficult to see under normal circumstances was available to the audience to enjoy looking rather than closed in the inner part of his works. In this respect, we can see that he positioned himself as a director of entertainment movies throughout his life and at the same time, his view that movies were also made by the audience. To this end, he utilized a variety of techniques including rotary shooting around an object. From around the time of "*Gospel for Genocide* (minagoroshi no reika)" (1968), he started using fixed camera positions and running the camera for a longer time. At the same time, however, he did many cuts and carefully edited them for the opening scene of "*Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match* (hibotan bakuto: hanafuda shobu)" (1969). This scene depicts the heroine Oryu saving a blind boy from being run over by a train. While KATO Tai wanted to accomplish his desire of "looking and showing" straightforwardly by moving the camera in the early part of his career, he learned its limitations in terms of the confinement of the square frame of the camera and no possibility of escaping from that confinement, and used the fixed camera position more in the last half of his career.

However, his low-angle orientation became bolder as he aged. In the 1970s, when he worked a lot for Shochiku, he brought a bulldozer onto the stage in ~~Shochiku Ofuna Studio~~ and had it dig a hole where he wanted to place the camera. For filming at the waterfront, he had a special waterproof camera box made with a glass panel at the front, which he called a "camera box for filming in the water," and used it to film the feet of Miyamoto Musashi. For a love-making scene, he put the camera in between the bodies to obtain the boosting effects of close-up shooting. So, actresses joked about it by saying



**"Mr. KATO's movies only show my nostrils" . In fact, such an extremely low angle inevitably limits what's captured and the images become more two-dimensional. This tendency became very obvious in "*A Scream from Nowhere* (edogawa ranpo no inju)" (1977) , "*Flames of Blood* (honoo no gotoku)" (1981) and his posthumous work "*The Ondekoza* (za ondekoza)" (1981). How did it come about?**

He used to say that you can't do anything about the camera frame but that depth is unlimited. In fact, KATO Tai used to like vertical frame composition. But why did he make his screen images increasingly flatter? Of course, it didn't happen all at once in his later years, but this tendency could already be detected in "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (sanada fuunroku)" and some other works. However, this tendency was combined with low-angle filming and became very clear in his later years. What did he really wish to accomplish from making the images on the screen increasingly flat? Movies create a false distance and depth on the screen, which is two-dimensional itself. Did he intend to shake this false three-dimensional nature of the movies and take them to pieces. Or could it be that the world that he knew may have begun to appear as two-dimensional. Or..... Of course, nobody knows the truth. Therefore, I would like to see all his works again. He was so particular about the direction of love between a man and woman and waited so patiently to capture the right moment when love was expressed through the eye, a hand or foot. At the same time, why this same artist make his world more and more flat? The answer remains a mystery.



# KATO Tai's Movies and Their Times: 1950s and 1960s

By YAMANE Sadao

KATO Tai made his debut with "*Trouble Over Swords and Women: Woman's Mind* (ken'nan jonan)" as a director of drama movies in 1951, when the San Francisco Peace Treaty was established. More specifically, the Treaty was signed in September 1951 and Parts One and Two of "*Trouble Over Swords and Women: Woman's Mind*(ken'nan jonan)" were shown in November.

How are his debut and international politics related? Very closely. With the establishment of this treaty, Japan became an independent nation once more, allowing the movie industry to produce samurai movies freely again.

In August 1945, Japan lost World War II and was occupied by the Allied Forces. The General Headquarters of the Allied Powers carried out an extensive range of occupational measures concerning politics, society, culture and so forth. Many restrictions were also imposed on the making of movies. One such restriction banned the production of samurai drama movies on the ground that they could encourage the concepts of feudalistic loyalty, vendettas and disdain for human life. Samurai drama movies had been produced continuously since the beginning of the Japanese movie industry and as a unique art form, provided entertainment to many people. Therefore, when production was banned, it is easy to imagine how difficult it was for the movie industry. In such an environment, the Japanese movie industry produced modern drama movies with samurai movie stars using guns instead of swords, and samurai drama movies without sword fight scenes.

In the year such restrictions were lifted, KATO Tai made his debut with a samurai movie. Actually, a small number of samurai movies had been produced a year earlier. One can only speculate that KATO Tai produced his first samurai movie in time for the signing of the Treaty, which actually came into effect in April 1952. Nevertheless, this coincidence is interesting.

With regard to "*Trouble Over Swords and Women: Woman's Mind* (ken'nan jonan)," he wrote "I completed filming by exclusively ~~emphasizing my naive and know-how~~ of samurai movies for which I decided to involve myself in the movies."

After producing samurai movies at a small independent movie production company and at Shin Toho, he joined Toho in 1957. It was at Toei, which was referred to as the "Kingdom of Period Drama movies," that he established



his reputation.

The table below shows the number of samurai drama and modern drama movies produced from 1945 onward by the Japanese movie industry.

Year // Samurai Drama Movies // Modern Drama Movies

1945 // 2 // 10

1946 // 7 // 72

1947 // 10 // 88

1948 // 16 // 108

1949 // 30 // 126

1950 // 40 // 179

1951 // 54 // 152

1952 // 91 // 187

1953 // 100 // 208

1954 // 182 // 205

1955 // 167 // 247

1956 // 157 // 356

1957 // 163 // 289

1958 // 163 // 376

1959 // 137 // 356

1960 // 165 // 391

1961 // 133 // 394

Source: NAGATA Tetsuro, *Fight Scene: History of Samurai Movies* (Tate: chanbara eigashi) (Tokyo: Shakaishissha, 1993)

As shown in the table above, many samurai movies were produced from 1954 through 1958, with the peak year being 1954. An increase in their number again in 1960 reflects the fact that Toei established Daini Toei, an affiliated company, which commenced mass production of samurai movies. However, the affiliate discontinued production in 1961.

While production of samurai movies became non-existent soon after the war, it expanded dramatically in 1952 and remained buoyant from 1954 to 1958. This revival of samurai movies meant nothing less than a revival of Japanese movies. The number of persons admitted at theaters continued to ~~increase and~~ reached its peak in 1958, demonstrating the revival of Japanese movies. This was the second "Golden Age" of Japanese movies, following the first one in the 1930s. The revival of Japanese movies also represents the recovery of Japanese society from the post-war confusion and instability.

The "Golden Age" of Japanese movies also meant the age of mass



production of movies. At that time, the Japanese movie market was under monopolistic control by the five major players of Shochiku, Toho, Daiei, Toei and Shin Toho, with respect to production, distribution and showing. Furthermore, after interruption during the war, Nikkatsu resumed production and distribution in 1954, further intensifying market competition among six major players. These majors employed the marketing strategy of showing two new movies as a package, which led to mass production of movies.

In particular, Toei developed a system of showing a medium-length movie along with a full-length movie as a package in 1954, making the showing of two films at a time an industry standard. These medium-length "B pictures" movies were a great success in the market, giving birth to new stars like NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke. New stars were very popular especially among young people. These were samurai movies and their peak year of 1954 reflects the success of Toei's new marketing strategy.

During the last half of the 1950s, KATO Tai enthusiastically produced a succession of samurai movies at Toei, the "Kingdom of Period Drama Movies." Under Toei's mass-production system, he was able to make innovative attempts at film making.

In "*White Tiger Swords of Genji Kuro* (genji kuro sassoki:byakko nitoryu)" (1958), for example, a mysterious handsome samurai, former pirates, a masterless samurai and spies of the shogun fight each other in their pursuit of a hidden treasure. KATO Tai directed this movie with an original approach. "As this was my first time directing my own screenplay, I abandoned a conventional approach to samurai movies. In my direction, I tried to imagine personal things about the characters, for example, their income, lifestyles, foods they ate, things they liked, things they felt sad about, things they got angry at and so forth." As a result, he was able to "produce a movie which transcended the common sense of Toei's samurai movies at that time."

In "*Wind, Women and Hobo* (kaze to onna to tabigarasu)" (1958), KATO Tai not only had NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke and all other cast appear without make-up, but also had NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke kiss an actress. The latter led to a serious conflict with the producer and senior officers of the company. At the filming location, KATO Tai was so particular about simultaneous recording that staff had to transport hundreds of straw mats to the mountains by truck, and place them over a stream to reduce the sound of the water so that they could record the voices of actors and actresses. Needless



to say, all these efforts are based on KATO Tai's unique and strong commitment to realism.

At that time, efforts to produce new kinds of samurai movies were in full swing at Toei, bringing about advanced movies including KATO Tai's works. However, it soon became clear that 'quality' was taking a back seat to 'quantity.'

SAWAJIMA Tadashi's works represent such a development at Toei. He treated the traditional, familiar topics with new interpretations and produced the modern-touch "*Isshin Tasuke*" series (1958-1963) in which he worked with NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, and the comedy-flavored "*Young Lord Yajikita* (tonosama yajikita)" series (1958-1960). Both these series were very successful.

On only at Toei, such 'new waves' of samurai drama movies developed but also at Daiei, another "Kingdom of Samurai Movies," and other companies. They could only have become possible against the backdrop of the mass-production age of movies.

At Toei, following SAWAJIMA Tadashi's debut in 1957, a number of new directors made their debut successively, including KUDO Eiichi in 1959, and YAMASHITA Kosaku and KURATA Junji in 1961, while at Daiei, MISUMI Kenji in 1954, TANAKA Tokuzo in 1958 and IKEHIRO Kazuo in 1960, respectively producing highly motivated movies with ICHIKAWA Raizo, KATSU Shintaro and other young stars.

The reason I use the expression 'new waves' here reflects the 'nouvelle vogue' movement of young French directors.

In Japan then, the term 'nouvelle vague' became a fashionable term and activities by OSHIMA Nagisa and others were called such. However, the 'new waves' surfaced in a wider spectrum of areas from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. The debut of new directors other than those of period drama movies above are listed below in chronological order.

1956: SUZUKI Seijun and NAKAHIRA Ko

1957: MASUMURA Yasuzo, KURAHASHI Koreyoshi, and ISHII Teruo.

1958: OKAMOTO Kihachi, IMAMURA Shohei and MASUDA Toshio

1959: OSHIMA Nagisa and TSUCHIMOTO Noriaki

1960: YOSHIDA Yoshishige and SHINODA Masahiro

1961: FUKASAKU Kinji

While KATO Tai belonged to an earlier generation, his attitudes toward film making were similar to theirs in many respects. As regards Samurai



drama movies, we must not forget that old timers from pre-war times such as ITO Daisuke, NAKAGAWA Nobuo and MORI Kazuo also made innovative movies during this period. One such example is "*The Fight at Blacksmith Cross (ketto kajiya no tsuji)*" (1952) directed by MORI Kazuo and starring MIFUNE Toshiro. This was a samurai movie depicting the drama of a famous revenge story in complete realism. The screenplay was written by KUROSAWA Akira, who later produced "*Seven Samurai (shichinin no samurai)*" (1954) as if it had followed "*The Fight at Blacksmith Cross (ketto kajiya no tsuji)*" as a series.

ITO Daisuke, NAKAGAWA Nobuo and MORI Kazuo were very active in producing samurai movies of the 1930s. KATO Tai has pointed out ITO Daisuke and YAMANAKA Sadao as the foundation of his film making. In this light, the 'new waves' of samurai drama movies in the late 1950s didn't just happen, but were a continuation of developments in the 1930s. (For more information concerning this matter, please refer to HASUMI Shigehiko's article.)

KATO Tai's original and strong-impact film making further sophisticated in the 1960s.

For example, many movies had been made on the topic of "*The Horror : The Ghost of Oiwa (kaidan oiwa no borei)*" before his work (1961). Their works, in accordance with the original story, featured a handsome main character with whom a woman fell in love at first sight. In contrast, KATO Tai depicted the main character as a dirty, poor samurai. Of course, all the cast including this main character appeared without make-up. He made sure that realism was emphasized throughout this movie, following "*Wind, Women and Hobo (kaze to onna to tabigarasu)*" which was mentioned earlier, and "*The Robin Hood of Edo (ooedo no kyoji)*" (1960) which describes a chivalrous robber in the lives of poor people.

The same emphasis is also found in "*Tange Sazen: Story of Masterpiece Sword (tange sazen: ken'unkonryu no maki)*" (1962). Before his work, many movies had also been made on this samurai drama of a nihilistic samurai with master swordsmanship. At a preview, a general manager of the Planning Division at Toei cried out in anger, "Why did you make such a dirty movie?", resulting in heated confrontations with KATO Tai. In the case of "*Brutal Story at End of the Tokugawa Shogunate (bakumatsu zankoku monogatari)*" (1964), some theaters avoided showing this movie, possibly because of the horrible scenes it contained. When you look for an adjective to modify such realism, you cannot help using "excessive."



As a great fan of samurai movies since his boyhood, KATO Tai aspired to the form of a dream which is unique to Japanese movies, particularly samurai movies, and became a director. During his career, however, he was so persistent in his pursuit of original realism that he destroyed the form of the dream known as samurai movies.

KATO Tai wasn't simply a realist. He also made samurai movies exclusively based on anti-realism. The representative example is "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan (sanada fuunroku)*" (1963). By totally ignoring the time setting, KATO Tai made the popular samurai characters engage in a variety of things at random, sometimes with a touch of musicals, slap-stick comedies, and science fiction. Such anti-realism attitudes didn't start suddenly in him. In his second movie "*The Port of Shimizu Is More Fearful than Evils (shimizuminato wa oniyori kowai)*" (1952) which was supposed to be a samurai movie, you will find neon signs and samurai fighting with baseball bats in some scenes.

Concerning these cases, I will have to say something is totally opposite of what I explained earlier?. That is, in "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan (sanada fuunroku)*" and other similar works, KATO Tai expanded the form of the dream known as samurai movies to an incredible degree and attractively realized the world of fantasy movies.

For KATO Tai, realism and anti-realism were not separate at all. They were like two sides of a coin. And we can see the uniqueness of KATO Tai as movie artist in this regard.

These two ways can be equated to the traditional method and the non-harmonic method of producing samurai movies. There is no doubt that KATO Tai was an authentic successor of samurai movies which had been passed down over many years. At the same time, he was also a movie artist who had transcended the "common sense of samurai movies." When we see his works, we know that he followed and dismantled the orthodoxy of that time.

For example, "*Love for a Mother (mabuta no haha)*" (1962), "*Samurai Vagabond (kaze no bushi)*" (1964) and "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake (kutsukake tokijiro: yukyo ippiki)*" (1966) represent nothing less than the achievement of advanced samurai movies. These works not only demonstrate the attainment of an sophisticated style with authentic attractions, but also a force which breaks through their boundaries, showing their powerful originality.



However, the popularity of samurai movies rapidly lost momentum as soon as we entered the 1960s.

This development is most clearly seen in the shift from the "Kingdom of Samurai Movies" to the "Kingdom of Yakuza Movies" by Toei from 1963 to 1965. Daiei also experienced difficult times. This was not a result of worsened quality but a rapid detachment of the general public from samurai movies, which reflected the social environment at that time.

After the turbulent period associated with the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1959 to 1960, Japanese society worked on a rapid economic expansion in the 1960s. Its milestone was the Tokyo Olympics held in 1964, ushering in a full-scale TV age. At the same time, people's entertainment and hobbies began diversifying, as represented by the growth in the number of weekly magazines, automobiles, comic books, traveling, pachinko parlors, bowling alleys and golf. As a result, movie-goers became fewer and fewer.

In other words, such a social change signaled a critical situation not only for samurai movies but also for the Japanese movie industry. The bankruptcy of Shin Toho in 1961 was only the first such case, followed by that of Daiei in 1971.

In such an environment, KATO Tai produced "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (sanada fuunroku)," "*Samurai Vagabond* (kaze no bushi)," "

"*Brutal Story at End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* (bakumatsu zankoku monogatari)," and "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (kutsukake tokijiro: ninkyo ippiki)." The intensity contained in these works must have resulted from KATO's rebellious spirit against the predicament samurai movies were now facing.

It was the same for actors and actresses. The superb quality of "*Love for a Mother* (mabuta no haha)," "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (sanada fuunroku)," and "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (kutsukake tokijiro: ninkyo ippiki)" was a direct result of "the samurai movie star NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke's fights. When "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (kutsukake tokijiro: ninkyo ippiki)" was produced, Toei had already transformed itself into the "Kingdom of Yakuza Movies." Therefore, it is easy to imagine how much NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke must have been motivated. The same attitude also applied to "*Brutal Story at End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* (bakumatsu zankoku monogatari)" in which OKAWA Hashizo played the role of a cruel character superbly.



Around this time, Toei produced a few movies called "Samurai Movies for Group Fights" which were represented by "Seventeen Ninjas (junananin no ninja)" (by HASEGAWA Yasuto) and "Thirteen Assassins (jusannin no shikyaku)" (by KUDO Eiichi) in 1963, "Hunting for the Ninja (ninja gari)" (by YAMANOUCHI Tetsuya) and "Assassination Swords of Jube (jube ansatsuken)" (by KURATA Junji) in 1964. Rather than single heroes in conventional movies, all these movies depicted the fights between groups in intense realism. The last cry of samurai movies placed in the corner can be concentrated in a high degree of intensity of these movies. Obviously, "Brutal Story at End of the Tokugawa Shogunate (bakumatsu zankoku monogatari)" emerged on a continuum of these movies. Interestingly enough, HASEGAWA Yasuto, YAMANOUCHI Tetsuya and KURATA Junji worked under KATO Tai as assistant directors.

Under contract with Toei, KATO Tai began to produce yakuza movies as the times went by. However, he didn't simply beautify the heroes who lived in the world of authentic yakuza. As shown by its title itself, "Fightin' Tatsu The Rickshaw Man (shafu yukyoden:kenka tatsu)" (1964) was supposedly planned as a yakuza movie. However, the finished work goes over the boundary of yakuza movies.

While "Blood of Revenge (meiji kyokyakuden: sandaime shumei)" (1965) is considered the masterpiece of Toei's yakuza movies, KATO Tai didn't make it as a typical yakuza movie. When a producer offered him the plan, KATO Tai told him that he would direct it on the condition that he would be allowed to make it like the world of HASEGAWA Shin, one of his favorite directors, i.e., a drama of a man who lived as a yakuza and a woman who lived as a human being. For KATO Tai, "Blood of Revenge (meiji kyokyakuden: sandaime shumei)" was related to his next work written by HASEGAWA Shin, "Tokijiro of Kutsukake (kutsukake tokijiro: ninkyo ippiki)." From both these movies, we can see that he worked to accomplish something commonly found in his samurai movies.

His rebellious attitudes against gangster movies remained firm throughout "Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match (hibotan bakuto: hanafuda shobu)" (1969) and "Red Peony Gambler (hibotan bakuto: oryu sanjo)" (1970). When he was ready to film "Red Peony Gambler (hibotan bakuto: oryu sanjo)," it was said that KATO Tai had the following attitude: "Suppose there is an expected image of yakuza and that a large portion of that image is of a person who helps the weak and destroys the strong, are you guys sure



that you can do that? You know, I hate liars.'" With such a skepticism for the ethical ways of yakuza, which was a 'common sense' of yakuza movies, he was able to make yakuza movies which surpassed the common boundaries of other yakuza movies.

KATO Tai accomplished both the succession and dismantling of authentic samurai movies at the same time. Concerning yakuza movies, while succeeding the conventions, he generated a breakthrough energy.

Kato Tai also applied the same amount of energy to bad conditions related to film making.

For the production of "*Love for a Mother* (mabuta no haha)," he only had fifteen days for filming and therefore asked for use of all the stages at the studio and a complete B-production team. One indication as to what a B-team should be like is described below.

In a scene around the middle of this movie, the main character comes to Edo (today's Tokyo) and speaks to a blind old woman who is playing the Shamisen. After deciding to shoot this scene in long one cut, the B team led by KURATA Junji repeated rehearsals from morning to early evening. However, NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, the main character, was not involved in the rehearsals but someone else was playing the main character's role, working with all other characters in addition to photography, lighting, sound and other staffs. During these rehearsals, the main team led by KATO Tai was shooting different scenes with NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke on a different stage. Then, after finishing all scheduled filming in the evening, the main team came to the stage where the B team was rehearsing and replaced the B team. The main team began shooting NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke acting with other characters who had been rehearsing all day long without him.

Simply put, KATO Tai made and used two-days worth time in a single day. In this manner, the amount of time in fifteen days was effectively doubled. It is also said that some cuts filmed by the B team under the direction of KURATA Junji were also used in the final work.

KATO Taisuke also applied almost the same method when producing "*Blood of Revenge* (meiji kyokyakuden: sandaime shumei)." For a project that he was able to commit himself to, he could overcome numerous difficulties by thinking hard about all the possibilities and with the cooperation of staff members. This approach began with his debut work "*Trouble Over Swords and Women: Woman's Mind* (ken'nan jonan)" in which he had to complete two movies (Parts One and Two) in thirty days.



He also did things which were totally opposite. For example, while the production of "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (sanada fuunroku)" would "normally" take about one month, he spent almost three months on it. Prior to that movie, when he was making "*Young Emissary* (kogan no misshi)" (1959), he demanded too much of casting and staff members and made himself a reputation throughout the studio as a hard-to-work-with director.

Concerning his filming methods for "*Love for a Mother* (mabuta no haha)," KATO Tai mentioned something to the extent that he was able to gain the maximum degree of freedom in the worst condition. On the other hand, when producing "*Brave Records of the Sanada Clan* (sanada fuunroku)," he expanded a given degree of freedom to such an extent that it developed into a bad condition.

Here again, two opposing attitudes are like both sides of a coin.

His unyielding, sometimes excessive, attitudes toward film making.... These kinds of attitudes must have created the situation where apparently opposing approaches were actually developed from one concept.

As mentioned earlier, I would like to place an accent on the attitude of "excessiveness." I believe that it enabled KATO Tai to undertake such remarkable fights with the studios in the 1960s.

Starting with "*A Man's Face Shows His Personal History* (otokonokao wa rirekisho)" (1966), his fights were extended to Shochiku. While this work was embodied with the outrageous anger of the wartime generation exposed to post-war Japanese society, "*Gospel for Genocide* (minagoroshi no reika)" (1968) trampled on the senses of average people for its description of cruelty. We can see the "excessiveness" of KATO Tai here as a concrete example.

While KATO Tai's works are always filled with gentle feelings, they also have moments of inhumane, cruel expression. This should be very clear to everyone in "*Brutal Story at End of the Tokugawa Shogunate* (bakumatsu zankoku-monogatari)" and "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake* (kutsukake tokijiro: yukyo ippiki)." The same attitude can also be found throughout "*Gospel for Genocide* (minagoroshi no reika)."

After all, gentleness and cruelty are also two sides of the same coin. Needless to say, at the bottom of such contrasts is found his excessive attitudes



in film making.

Even in the 1970s when the studio system, the basis for film making, was rapidly breaking apart, KATO Tai remained committed to fighting. Expected to continue his fights into the 1980s, he became ill. Thus, one excessive attitude in film making collapsed.

Note: KATO Tai's quotations in this article are taken from Yukyo Ippiki: The World of KATO Tai (edited by YAMANE Sadao 1970: Togensha).



# Who's Who in Films of KATO Tai

By YAMANE Sadao

## [Actors]

NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke (YOROZUYA Kin'nosuke) (1932-1997)

NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke was a leading actor in post-World War II period drama films. He was born into a family of Kabuki actors. As he was used to performing on the stage and well versed in the movements and elocution from a young age, he had a polished performance style in addition to handsome looks. In 1954, he made his screen debut in "*Book of Birds (hiyodori zoshi)*" (by UCHIDE Kokichi) and then joined Toei Film Production. He starred in "*Flute Playing Boy (fuefuki doji)*" (1954, by HASEGAWA Ryo) and became very popular as a handsome young actor. Later he became one of the stars in a succession of Toei samurai movies, establishing the bright-spirited samurai movies with a contemporary touch by starring in the popular "*Isshin Tasuke*" series (1958-63 by SAWASHIMA Tadashi). In KATO Tai's "*Wind, Women and Hobo*", enthusiastically he acted without any makeup when handsome actors in other films were heavily made-up. This spirit of challenge continued into "*Sanada Fuunroku*" (1963). Meanwhile, he also acted superbly in a number of orthodox period dramas by great directors including the five-part "*Miyamoto Musashi*" (1961 - 1965 by UCHIDA Tomu) series, "*Rebellious Youth (hangyakuji)*" (1961 by ITO Daisuke), and "*Bushido: Samurai Saga (bushido zankoku monogatari)*" (1963 by IMAI Tadashi). Through these movies, he accomplished an integration of tradition and innovation in period dramas. Concerning "*Love for a Mother*" (1962), "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake*" (1966) (both by KATO Tai), and "*Yatappe of Seki (seki no yattape)*" (1963 by YAMASHITA Kosaku), the themes were frequently used in Japan ever since before World War II, these movies transcend time because of the high order of achievement. As the genre of period dramas gradually declined, he shifted his acting to TV and theater, and in 1972 changed his stage name from NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke to YOROZUYA Kin'nosuke. Later, he returned to movies, starring in "*Samurai of Shogun (yagyu ichizoku no inbo)*" (1978 by FUKASAKU Kinji). Eventually, he retired from the movies, and in March of this year, in 1977, he passed away at the age of sixty four.

FUJI Junko (FUJI Sumiko) (1945 - )

FUJI Junko was a leading actress in Toei yakuza (gangster) movies which



were very popular in the 1960s. In these movies, she enjoyed great popularity for her handsome looks and sharp actions. After her debut in the period drama "*Legend of Hasshu Gamblers: Cup for Men* (hasshu yukyoden : otoko no sakazuki)" (1963 by MAKINO Masahiro), she acted in both period drama and contemporary movies. She was noted for the quality of her acting in KATO Tai's "*Fightin' Tatsu The Rickshaw Man*" and "*Bakumatsu Zankoku Monogatari*" (1964). She acted with TSURUTA Koji and TAKAKURA Ken, two giants of yakuza movies, in the "*Legend of Japanese Gamblers* (nihon kyokakuden)" series (1964 - 1970 by MAKINO Masahiro and others), "*Blood of Revenge*" (1965 by KATO Tai), "*Master Gambler* (bakuchiuchi : socho tobaku)" (1968 by YAMASHITA Kosaku), and "*The stage of Life: Hishakaku and Kiratsune* (jinsei gekijo : hishakaku to kiratsune)" (1968 by UCHIDA Tomu). After acting with these top movie stars, she became referred to as the "Elegant Flower of the Yakuza Movies." After she became even more popular in her "*Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match*" series (1968 - 1972), she left the in 1972 for marrying ONOE Kikunosuke, a Kabuki actor. Her father, SHUNDO Koji, is a producer of Toei and he produced most of her movies above. In 1989, she returned to the movies under the new stage name of FUJI Sumiko.

#### TSURUTA Koji (1924 - 1987)

TSURUTA Koji was one of the leading actors in post-World War II Japanese movies. When he was young, with a trace of nihilistic expression, he acted in many period drama and contemporary movies. In his middle age, he enjoyed solid popularity as a hero in yakuza movies. After his debut with Shochiku Movie Production in 1948, he founded his own independent production company, and moved to Shin Toho, Daiei and Toho, playing an important role in the creation of the Golden Age of Movies based on mass production. Major movies in which he acted during this period include the samurai movie "*Yataro's Bamboo Hat* (yataro gasa)" (1952 by MAKINO Masahiro), the war movie "*As Clouds Flow Away* (kumo nagaruru hateni)" (1953 by IEKI Miyoji), and the action movie "*Boss of the Underworld* (ankokugai no kaoyaku)" (1959 by OKAMOTO Kihachi). After joining Toei in 1960, he triggered the yakuza movie boom with "*The stage of Life: Hishakaku* (jinsei gekijo : hishakaku)" (1963 by SAWASHIMA Tadashi), acted in many subsequent yakuza movies such as the "*Gambler*" series (1964 - 1971) and achieved outstanding popularity. At his peak, he acted in KATO Tai's "*Blood of Revenge*" "*Most Enormous Gangster in Japan* (nihon daikyokaku)" (1966 by MAKINO Masahiro), "*Disbandment Ceremony* (kaisanshiki)" (1967 by FUKASAKU Kinji), "*Master Gamble*" and "*The Stage of Life: Hishakaku and Kiratsune*". For his superb acting in "*Master Gamble*", he received the



highest-praise from MISHIMA Yukio, Japan's leading novelist. In addition to his acting career, he has been a popular singer since his youth.

#### **OKAWA Hashizo (1929 - 1984)**

OKAWA Hashizo was a star of post-World War II period drama movies. He was popular as a bright, handsome, dignified actor. In his childhood, he performed in Kabuki. In 1955, he made his film debut at Toei and starred in the "*Samurai Detective (wakasama samurai torimonochō)*" series (1956 - 1962), the "*Shingo's 10 Sword Fights (shingo juban shobu)*" series (1959 - 1964) and other movies. While becoming one of the stars of Toei samurai movies, he took up the challenge of creating new samurai movies together with enthusiastic directors. These include KATO Tai's "*Throne of Flame*" (Japanese title: *The Castle of Fire, honoo no shiro*) (1960), "*Samurai Vagabond*" (1964), "*Bakumatsu Zankoku Monogatari*" (1964) and OSHIMA Nagisa's "*Christian Samurai : Amakusa Shiro (amakusa shiro tokisada)*" (1962). Later when Toei changed from samurai to yakuza movies, he moved to the TV samurai drama series "*Zenigata Heiji*" (1966 - 1984) and the theater.

#### **SAKURAMACHI Hiroko (1937 - )**

SAKURAMACHI Hiroko became well known in Toei period drama movies. She was very popular for her beautiful looks and the elegance of traditional Japanese women. Along with OKAWA Keiko and OKA Satomi, she was popularly referred to as a "princess of the Toei Castle." Making her debut in 1957, she acted in an enormous number of movies with diverse roles as a princess, a daughter of a common class family, and a woman who marries a man for love. She co-starred with famous actors such as KATAOKA Chiezo, ICHIKAWA Utaemon, OTOMO Ryutaro, NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, and OKAWA Hashizo, playing a significant part in the golden age of Toei period drama movies. She manifested her talent in KATO Tai's "*Kaidan Oiwa no Borei*" (1961), "*Samurai Vagabond*" (1964), and "*Fightin' Tatsu the Rickshaw Man*" (1964). She is one of KATO Tai's favorite actresses, and she acted superbly in "*Suck to the Bone (honemade shaburu)*" by playing the role of a mistreated prostitute with a fighting spirit. She also played a major role in KATO Tai's last samurai movie "*Like a Fire (honoo no gotoku)*" (1981). Later, she co-starred in Toei's gangster movie "*Master Gambler (bakuchiuchi socho tobaku)*." At present, she is active in theater and TV dramas.

#### **WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo (1929 - 1992)**

WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo was an unique movie star who demonstrated very strong individuality in diverse movies. Being both dynamic and delicate, he



acted a variety of roles superbly, such as those of handsome, comical, dignified, and horrible characters. In 1955, he made his debut in KATO Tai's "*Ninjutsu Jiraiya*." Then he moved from Shin Toho to Toei and later to Daiei, acting in many period drama movies, but he wasn't able to fully capitalize on his individuality in the role of a handsome character. A rare exception was KATO Tai's "*Kaidan Oiwa no Borei*" (1961). In 1966, after changing his stage name back to WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo from JO Kenzaburo, as he was known in Daiei's movies, he became a familiar face in Toei yakuza movies. After attracting attention by playing the villain's roles in many yakuza films and by playing the role of a comical character in the "*Gambler with Red Peony Tatoo* series" he regained the position of the main character in the parodic yakuza movie series "*Gokudo*" (1968 - 1974). Later, he acted in the period drama movie series "*Lone Wolf with Child (kozure okami)*" (1972 - 1974 by MISUMI Kenji and others) produced by his brother's company KATSU Production. His dynamic sword handling in the series were highly praised not only in Japan but also abroad. Until his last film-acting performance in "*Check Mate (ote)*" (1991 by SAKAMOTO Junji), he gave his deep-yet-light performance in various TV programs and theater.

#### SHIOJI Akira (1928 - 1994)

SHIOJI Akira was well known as an excellent supporting actor in period drama and yakuza movies. From his early roles of getting killed, he attracted attention for his strong individuality. After acting at Daiei, Shochiku, Shin Toho and in other movies and theater, he joined Toei in 1957 and played the role of getting killed in a great number of movies. In particular, he actually fell down the staircase in his role in the period drama movie "*Shinsengumi: Rebellious Samurai Group*" (1958 by SASAKI Yasushi), which surprised everyone at Toei. Later this bold action became the model for "*Fall Guy: Kamata Koshinkyoku*" (1982 by FUKASAKU Kinji). He acted in KATO Tai's first movie "*Trouble Over Swords and Women*" (1951), impressing KATO with his dedicated acting. SHIOJI then acted in "*Sanada Fuunroku*" and in all KATO's subsequent movies, and respected KATO as the great master of his lifetime. The role of an uncanny samurai in "*Bakumatsu Zankoku Monogatari*" the role of a hitman in "*Blood of Revenge*" and the role of a gambler in "*Gambler with Red Peony Tatoo*" (1969) were particularly impressive. He acted in over 2,000 movies and TV programs during his career of almost a half century.

#### TODA Junko(SAWA Yoshiko) (1937 - )

TODA Junko is an excellent supporting actress in KATO Tai's movies. Whatever the role may have been, she has acted with sincerity and passion,



creating an image of woman with individuality. After a career in theater, she made her debut in the movies by acting a prostitute in KATO Tai's "*Suck to the Bone*" - under the stage name of SAWA Yoshiko. Since then, she has acted in all of his subsequent movies. Her acting a bored housewife in "*Minagoroshi no Reika*" (1968) and a disguised woman gambler in the series "*Gambler with Red Peony Tatoo*" were particularly impressive. After changing her stage name to her real name, TODA Junko, she acted increasingly more important roles in terms of relationship with the main character in KATO Tai films : as a novelist in "*Stage of One's Life*" (1972), a woman boss in "*Flowers and Dragon*" (1973), and an wandering woman in "*Nihon Kyokaden*" (1973). She has also acted in a few movies by other directors, such as "*Yatsuhaka Village (yatsuhaka mura)*" (1977 by NOMURA Yoshitaro).

ANDO Noboru (1926 - )

ANDO Noboru is a unique actor in light of the fact that he actually used to lead his own gangster group. He gained popularity as a result of his past career, substantiated by a sharp-eyed expression, a scar on the cheek, and animal movements. He formed and expanded a local gang in the chaotic Tokyo just after World War II and later founded the Ando Gang. After conducting illegal activities for many years, he was arrested and imprisoned. After his release, he dissolved the Ando Gang. In 1965, he debuted in his biographical movie "*Blood and Rules*" (by YUASA Namio) and acted in many other yakuza movies. His first appearance in a KATO Tai film was "*A Man's Face Shows His Personal History*" (1966), followed by the war movie "*Opium Hills: the Hell's Squad Charges*" (1966) and the jail break movie "*18-Year Sentence*" (1967). These movies are referred to as the "*Trilogy of the Wartime Generation*". Other movies he has acted in include the series "*Document: Ando Group (jitsuroku andogumi)*" (1973 - 1974).

BAISHO Chieko (1941 - )

BAISHO Chieko is a representative actress of the movies produced by Shochiku Film Production after World War II. From her youthful days to the present, she has been popular due to her unpretentious beauty and her reliable acting. Following her debut in 1961, she acted in a succession of movies as an adolescent star of Shochiku. In particular, she established wonderful teamwork with YAMADA Yoji in his movies, starting with "*Flag in the Mist (kiri no hata)*" (1965) and "*The Lovable Tramp (natsukashii furaibo)*" (1966) to "*The Yellow Handkerchief (shiwase no kiiroi hankachi)*" (1977) and the series "*Tora-san, Our Lovable Tramp (otokowa tsuraiyo)*" (1969 - 1995) in which she played the role of a sister of main character. She acted in only one of KATO Tai's-movies, "*Minagoroshi no Reika*", and she played the role of



a strong-willed girl with a shadowy past. She also acted with BAISHO Mitsuko, her younger sister, in "*The Woman Who Doesn't Divorce* (rikon shinai onna)" (1986 by KUMASHIRO Tatsumi) and in a number of other movies.

[Staff]

**FURUYA Osamu (1920 - )**

Cinematographer. After training as an assistant cinematographer at Toho and Toyoko (the predecessor of Toei), he has done excellent work in period drama and yakuza movies produced by Toei. He began working with KATO Tai in "*Kaidan Oiwa no Borei*" For "*Sanada Fuunroku*" he created the fantastic world of a samurai musical in Color Cinema Scope. In "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake*" he accomplished KATO Tai's unique low-angle filming superbly. He worked as cinematographer for "*Yatappe of Seki*" and "*Three Vagabonds*" (1965 by SAWASHIMA Tadashi) both starring NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke. Along with KATO Tai's "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake*" these two movies were well known as masterpieces of the wandering gambler movies in the post-World War II era. Other superior movies in which he worked as cinematographer include the collective samurai movie "*Great Fight Scene (dausatsugin)*" (1964 by KUDO Eiichi) and the "*Gambler with Red Peony Tatoo*" series.

**SUZUKI Norifumi (1933 - )**

Director and script-writer. He joined Toei Movie Production in 1954, and after working as assistant director to UCHIDA Tomu, YAMASHITA Kosaku and others at the Kyoto Studio, he made his debut as director of "*Osaka Spirit Story: Unbelievable Guy* (osaka dokonjo monogatari, doerai yatsu)" starring FUJITA Makoto and FUJI Junko in 1965. He worked with KATO Tai for the first time as assistant director of "*Sanada Fuunroku*" In "*Fightin' Tatsu the Rickshaw Man*" he got deeply involved in KATO's film making, working as chief assistant director and co-writer. He also worked as chief assistant director in "*Bakumatsu Zankoku Monogatari*" and as co-writer for "*Blood of Revange*". He is considered the number-one pupil of KATO Tai. Later, he wrote the scripts for the "*Gambler with Red Peony Tatoo*" series, creating the heroine Oryu, who enjoyed great popularity, and he also took charge of directing in the second film. He designed his movies thoroughly for entertainment, and has since directed a succession of hit movies, including "B" yakuza, female gang, and erotic samurai movies. In particular, the "*Truck Driver (torakku yaro)*" series (1974 - 1979) directed by him and starring SUGAWARA Bunta became a major support for Toei during the decline of yakuza movies.



**KURATA Junji (1930 - )**

Director. He joined Toei Film Production in 1950 and worked at the Kyoto Studio as assistant director to MARUNE Santaro, MAKINO Masahiro, UCHIDA Tomu and others. In 1961 he made his debut as director, and later directed "*Jube's Sword for Assassination (jubi ansatsu ken)*" (1964) and other movies which feature lyricism and fierce sword battles, revitalizing the declining samurai movies by means of innovative image. At present, he is active in directing samurai TV programs. His directing talent was highly praised by KATO Tai as a younger friend of his. When KATO Tai had only 15 days left to shoot "*Love for a Mother*" he was asked to take charge of another completely staffed team (a B team, so to speak) and in so doing, contributed to the successful production of the movie. In "*Blood of Revenge*" he was also asked to take charge of the B team and he further deepened his relationship with KATO Tai. In KATO Tai's fiction film "*Flame of Blood*" he worked as guest director.

**MIMURA Haruhiko (1937 - )**

Director and script-writer. In 1961, he joined Shochiku Film Production. While working as assistant director to SHIBUYA Minoru, SHINODA Masahiro, MAEDA Yoh'ichi, NOMURA Yoshitaro and others, he also wrote many scripts. During this period, he also worked as assistant director to KATO Tai in "*Ootokono Kao wa Rirekisho*" KATO's first movie produced by Shochiku. He was attracted by KATO Tai's personality and the originality in his film making. Since then, he has maintained a high respect for KATO Tai. His roles in KATO Tai's films include assistant director in "*Opium Hills: the Hell's Squad Charge*", script-writer and assistant director in "*Minagoroshi no Reika*", co-writer and B team director in "*The Stage of Life*", co-writer in "*Flowers and Dragon*" and B team director in "*A Scream from Nowhere*" (1977). His participation in KATO Tai's movies at Shochiku expanded so greatly that he was often compared to SUZUKI Noribumi at Toei. In 1983, he made his debut as director in "*Amagi Pass (amogi goe)*" for which he wrote the script with KATO Tai. He passionately depicted a sad murder story in this movie by keeping the camera at a low angle, a technique he learned from his master KATO Tai. The movie received an outstanding response. While he has directed a few of movies since then, he is now more involved in directing TV dramas.

**MARUYAMA Keiji (1931 - )**

Cinematographer). After working in Shochiku as assistant cinematographer in OZU Yasujiro's movies, he has demonstrated his talents as cinematographer in adolescent movies, comedies and suspense movies since 1941. He contributed



to the considerable success of the "travel" series such as "*Travel for Wish Fulfillment* (mangan ryoko)" (1970 by SEGAWA Masaharu). He met KATO Tai when he directed "*Minagoroshi no Reika*" in which MARUYAMA depicted a bloody revenge story lyrically in black and white. After this film, he was put in charge of camera work for all KATO Tai's movies produced by Shochiku, i.e., "*The stage of Life*," "*Flowers and Dragon*," "*Sword of Fury*," and "*A Scream from Nowhere*." In this period, he refined the technique of low-angle camera work. In addition to working in KATO Tai's last fiction film "*Flames of Blood*," he also worked in the documentary film "*The Ondekoza*" (1981), KATO Tai's last work. In the latter, he depicted, in a subtle balance of documentary and fiction, a group of young people devoted to the sounds of traditional music. At present, he is involved primarily in TV production.

**IKAWA Norimichi (1929 - )**

Production designer. After working at the Modern Film Society, in 1954 he joined in the Kyoto Studio of Toei Film Production. In "*Wind, Women and Hobo*" (1958), his first work with KATO Tai, the "*Isshin Tasuke*" series (1958-1963) and the "*Tonosama Yajikita*" series (1958-1960)(both by SAWASHIMA Tadashi), integrating the traditional style and the modern scene, he contributed to the "Nouvelle Vague in the Period Drama." He worked with KATO Tai in various films, i.e., "*Sanada Fuunroku*," "*Fightin' Tatsu the Rickshaw Man*," "*Blood of Revenge*," "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake*," "*18-Year Sentence*," and "*Red Peony Gamblers Her Life*," creating the bold world of image based on realism. Other his works include a collective samurai film "*13 Assassins* (jusan'nin no shikaku)" (1963 by KUDO Eiichi) and a fantastic period drama "*Black cat in the Thicket* (yabuno nakano kuroneko)" (1968 by SHINDO Kaneto.)



# Filmography of KATO Tai

By YAMANE Sadao

## 12 Film Shown in Locarno : Commentary and Summary

*"English Title / Lit. Trans. (Japanese Title)"*

*"Oiwa The Ghost / Horror: The Ghost of Oiwa (kaidan oiwa no borei)"* 1961, B&W, Scope, 94min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: KANBE Yumi

Based on an old story "Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan" by TSURUYA Nanboku

Screenplay: KATO Tai

Cinematography: FURUYA Osamu

Music: TAKAHASHI Nakaba

Art Direction: KATSURA Choshiro

Lighting: INOUE Giichi

Sound: TAIRA Taro

Stills: MOROZUMI Yoshio

Editor: HORIIKE Kozo

Sword technique: SHIMA Giichi

Assistant: NAKAGAWA Wataru

### Cast:

WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo (TAMIYA Iemon, samurai)

FUJISHIRO Yoshiko (Oiwa, his wife) SAKURAMACHI Hiroko (Osode, Oiwa's sister)

KONOE Jushiro (Naosuke)

MIHARA Yumiko (Oume)

SAWAMURA Tossho (SATO Yomoshichi, Osode's lover)

FUSHIMI Sentaro (Shohei)

ONOE Koinosuke (OKUDA Shozaburo)

WATANABE Atsushi (Takuetsu, masseur)

### [Commentary]

This movie is based on "Yotsuya Ghost Story on the Tokaido Highway (tokaido yotsuya kaidan)" (first performed in 1825) originally written by TSURUYA Nanboku for Kabuki. Among many movies based on this story, recent ones include "Tokaido, Yotsuya Mystery Story (tokaido yotsuya kaidan)" by NAKAGAWA Nobuo and "Yotsuya Ghost Story (yotsuya kaidan)" by MISUMI Kenji in 1959. The former is widely regarded as a masterpiece. KATO Tai's "Kaidan Oiwa no Borei" was made with complete emphasis on realism. The entire cast wore no make-up, and SAKURAMACHI Hiroko did her own hair in a topknot without a wig, a dramatic change from her previous image of "actress for the princess." KONOE Jushiro was known for a sword-fighting star. WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo played the same



role in the "Yotsuya Ghost Story (yotsuya kaidan)" directed by MOURI Masaki in 1956.

### [Summary]

Oiwa, married to TAMIYA Iemon, a poor samurai, runs away from him because of his bad deeds. But he plots together with Naosuke, his bad company who is in love with Oiwa's younger sister Osode, kills YOTSUYA Samon, Oiwa's father, and gets his wife back. Naosuke then kills a man mistaking him for Osode's fiance. One year later, Iemon is seduced from Oume, daughter of a rich merchant. The rich merchant drives Oiwa to kill herself with a poison. On the evening of the marriage of Iemon and Oume, Oiwa's ghost appears and Iemon panics and kills many people, but is himself killed by Osode, her fiance and Naosuke.

*"Love for a Mother / In Search of Mother (mabuta no haha)"*  
1962, Color, Scope, 83min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: HASHIMOTO Keiichi, MIMURA Keizo

Based on a novel by HASEGAWA Shin

Screenplay: KATO Tai

Cinematography: TSUBOI Makoto

Music: KINOSHITA Chuji

Art Direction: TONO Minoru

Lighting: NAKAYAMA Haruo

Sound: SASAKI Toshiro

Stills: SUZUKI Kazunari

Editor: KAWAI Katsumi

B Team Director: KURATA Junji

B Team cinematography: SUZUKI Juhei

Assistant: HONDA Tatsuo

### Cast:

NAKAMURA Kinnosuke (Chutaro)

MATSUKATA Hiroki (Hanjiro)

KOGURE Michiyo (Ohama)

OKAWA Keiko (Otose, Ohama's daughter)

NAKAHARA Hitomi (Onui, Hanjiro's sister)

NATSUKAWA Shizue (Omura, Hanjiro's mother)

SAWAMURA Sadako (Otora)

NANTWA Chieko (blind old woman)

### [Commentary]

The original drama was written in 1930, based on the playwright's own experience of again meeting his mother - who left him at a young age - after several decades. This story was performed in theater and made into a movie many times. There were two versions in the last scene of the original work: 1) the man and his mother meet and make peace; and 2) the two don't make



peace. This film was shot in only 15 days in order to make up for a delay in the production of " *Genjikuro's Adventure: Secret Sword of Butterfly* (genkuro sassoki: hiken ageha no cho)" directed by ITO Daisuke and starring NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke. The speedy shooting was made possible by filming every scene in studio sets, a fully-staffed B- team, and long takes.

### [Summary]

Chutaro, a wandering gambler, helps his follower Hanjiro in his fight against the IIOKA Gang. After the fight, he tells Hanjiro to go home, but the IIOKA Gang pursues him. Chutaro then kills them in place of Hanjiro for his mother and younger sister. Thereafter, he goes to Edo (today's Tokyo) to look for his own mother whom he hasn't seen since his childhood. While being pursued by the IIOKA Gang, Chutaro helps an female shamisen player and an old prostitute who seem to be his mother. Finally Chutaro meets his mother, Ohama, an owner of a restaurant. While Chutaro is happy to meet her, she rejects him. He decides to leave her and kills the members of the IIOKA Gang. Even though he hears his mother and others crying for him, he starts off on a new journey.

"Sasuke and his Comedians / Brave Records of the Sanada Clan  
(sanada fuunroku) " 1963, Color, Scope, 100min, Toei (Kyoto) aka The Sanada Warriors

Plan: OGAWA Takaya, ONAGA Takao

Based on a play by FUKUDA Yoshiyuki

Screenplay: FUKUDA Yoshiyuki, ONO Ryunosuke, KONAMI Fumio

Cinematography: FURUYA Osamu

Music: HAYASHI Hikaru

Art Direction: IKAWA Norimichi

Lighting: INOUE Giichi

Sound: NAKAYAMA Shigeji

Stills: SUZUKI Kazunari

Editor: MIYAMOTO Shintaro

Sword technique: ADACHI Reijiro

Assistant: SUZUKI Noribumi

### Cast:

NAKAMURA Kinnosuke (Sasuke)

WATANABE Misako (Okiri)

OMAE Hitoshi (Seiji)

TOKITA Fujio (Izo)

Mickey GURTIS (YURI Kamanosuke)

Jerry FUJIO (Roku)

KAWARAZAKI Choichiro (ANAYAMA Kosuke)

YONEKURA Masakane (NEZU Jinpachi)

CHIAKI Minoru (SANADA Yukimura)

SATO Kei (ONO Shuri)

### [Commentary]



The original story was written for a play (1962) which projected the student movement "Zengakuren" against the modification of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960 to a group of powerful samurai depicted in classic literature. NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke saw the play and wanted to make it into a movie. Initially, the director was intended to be SAWASHIMA Tadashi. The role of Okiri (originally a man by the name of KIRIGAKURE Saizo) was played by WATANABE Misako who performed the same role on the stage. Both TOKITA Fujio and YONEKURA Masakane also performed on the stage. Micky CURTIS and Jerry FUJIO are singers. It took almost three months to shoot, and the movie failed to generate a large audience. As a result, KATO Tai was strongly criticized by the production company. Later, however, the movie was highly rated.

### [Summary]

Around the time the TOYOTOMI faction lost the battle of Sekigahara against the TOKUGAWA faction, a group of juvenile vagrants who make living by stealing things from dead samurai meets Sasuke, who is feeling lonely because he is able to read the minds of others due to his psychic powers. Okiri is a leader of the group. After ten years, when they have become adults, they go to Osaka Castle, headquarters of the TOYOTOMI faction in order to join them. They form the SANADA Squad under the leadership of SANADA Yukimura and fight the TOKUGAWA faction by engaging in guerrilla warfare. Since the senior officers at the castle have no desire to fight, however, the SANADA Squad keeps fighting for its own sake. Members of the squad die one after another, and Okiri loses her baby by Sasuke in premature birth. Sasuke then leaves Okiri for a lonely journey.

### "Samurai Vagabond" / (kaze no bushi) "

1964, Color, Scope, 95min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: NAKAMURA Yurin, MATSUDAIRA Norimichi

Based on a novel by SHIBA Ryotaro

Screenplay: NOGAMI Tatsuo

Cinematography: MATSUI Ko

Music: KINOSHITA Chuji

Art Direction: KAWASHIMA Taizo

Lighting: TANAKA Kenji

Sound: TOJO Kenjiro

Stills: MIYASAKA Kenji

Editor: KAWAI Katsumi

Assistant: HONDA Tatsuo

### Cast:

OKAWA Hashizo (NABARI Shinzo)

SAKURAMACHI Hiroko (Chino)



KUBO Naoko (Osei)	NAKAHARA Sanae (Oyumi)
OKI Minoru (KORIKI Denjiro)	NANBARA Koji (Neko, ninja)
KITAMURA Kazuo (NABARI Yoroku)	NOGIWA Yoko (Ritsu)
MIYAGUCHI Seiji (HIRAMA Taikosai, Chino's father)	
SHINDO Eitaro (Tokubei)	

### [Commentary]

The story was originally written as a ninja novel (1960 - 1961) appearing in a weekly magazine. Around this time, the ninja was a fashionable character in novels and movies. Based on an idea by KATO Tai, however, the screenplay for this movie was written as a large-scale melodrama including swords fights. NOGAMI Tatsuo was an innovative script-writer of period dramas at that time. Later he wrote many scripts also for Toei yakuza movies. The "Samurai Vagabond" turned out to be a big success, rehabilitating to some extent the reputation of KATO Tai following the lack of success of "Sanada Fuunroku" and "Tange Sazen"

### [Summary]

Shinzo is living casually, although he is a descendant of a ninja family. However, the TOKUGAWA Shogunate orders him to explore the village of Yasurai, an unexplored area in Kumano. The Shogunate and the daimain of Kishu fight each other to obtain a scroll which contains a map of this area. The head of the dojo (a place where a samurai learns and practices his sword skills) is attacked and his daughter Chino disappears. Shinzo, Koriki - a samurai who is in love with Chino - and other ninjas - Neko and Oyumi dispatched also by the Shogunate - all engage in fights as they head to the village of Yasurai. Shinzo finds out everyone is going after the gold buried in the area. After some romantic moments with Chino, Shinzo leaves the village.

"Fightin' Tatsu The Rickshaw Man" / (shafu yukyoden kenka tatsu) " 1964, B&W, Scope, 100min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: SAKAMAKI Tatsuo, KUSAKABE Goro

Based on a novel by KAMIYA Gohei

Cinematography: KAWASAKI Shintaro

Art Direction: IKAWA Norimichi

Sound: NAKAYAMA Shigeji

Editor: MIYAMOTO Shintaro

B-Team Director: KURATA Junji

Screenplay: KATO Tai, SUZUKI Noribumi

Music: TAKAHASHI Nakaba

Lighting: INOUE Koji

Stills: SUGIMOTO Shozo

Sword technique: SHIMA Giichi

Assistant: SUZUKI Noribumi



**Cast:**

UCHIDA Ryohei (NAKAI Tatsugoro, "Tatsu")

SAKURAMACHI Hiroko (Kimiyaako, geisha)

KAWARAZAKI Choichiro (KURIHARA Ginjiro)

SOGANOYA Meicho (NISHIKAWA Yasaburo)

FUJI Junko (Gyokuryu)

CHIHARA Shinobu (Otoku, Yasaburo's wife)

MUNAKATA Nami (YAJIMA Suzuko)

SHIOJI Akira (Dynamite Tetsu)

KONOE Jushiro (MITSUKAWA Yataro)

OKI Minoru (YAJIMA Ryuun, yakuza)

**[Commentary]**

While this was first planned as one of the early yakuza movies, which had begun to become more popular than samurai movies, KATO Tai arranged it to a melodrama with a touch of comedy. The original story was written by KAMIYA Gohei, and later he offered other original works (to be made into KATO Tai movies such as "*Blood of Revenge*") UCHIDA Ryohei was becoming rapidly popular for his original acting of main, supporting or evil characters. The Osaka Railway Station which appears many times from the beginning of the film is a replica built in the studio, and was almost the same size as the actual early 1900-structure.

**[Summary]**

Rickshaw man Tatsu has wandered to Osaka from Tokyo. He has quarrels with Kimiyaako, a geisha, and throws her into the river. But later, he falls in love with her. Yasaburo, the boss of the NISHIKAWA Gang, loves her very much, too. However, as he likes Tatsu's dynamic personality, he volunteers to become a go-between for their marriage. Yasaburo gets tipped off by Yajima who wants to take over the territory of the NISHIKAWA Gang, and is arrested and imprisoned. After his release, YAJIMA tries to kill him. Ginjiro, a lover of Tamaryu respects KIMIYAKKO as an older sister and a follower of Tatsu, is murdered. After the third marriage ceremony just between Tatsu and Kimiyaako, Tatsu goes off to the place of fighting.

*"Brutal Story at the End of the Tokugawa Shogunate (bakumatsu zankoku monogatari)"* 1964, B&W, Scope, 99min, Toei (Kyoto)

Producer: OKAWA Hiroshi

Plan: OKADA Shigeru, TAMAKI Junichiro, AMAO Kanji

Screenplay: KUNIHITO Takeo

Cinematography: SUZUKI Juhei



Music: HAYASHI Hikaru

Art Direction: TOMITA Jiro

Lighting: INOUE Giichi

Sound: NAKAYAMA Shigeji

Stills: NAKAYAMA Kenji

Editor: KAWAI Katsumi

Sword technique: ADACHI Reijiro

Assistant: SUZUKI Noribumi

**Cast:**

OKAWA Hashizo (ENAMI Saburo)

KAWARAZAKI Choichiro (OKITA Soji)

FUJI Junko (Sato)

NAKAMURA Takeya (KONDO Isamu)

NISHIMURA Ko (HIKATA Toshizo)

OTOMO Ryutaro (YAMANAMI Keisuke)

KIMURA Isao (KAWASHINA Ryusuke)

UCHIDA Ryohei (YAMAZAKI Susumu)

**[Commentary]**

While many movies were made about the Shinsengumi, the squad of rebellious samurai fighting for the Shogunate, KATO Tai approached it with vivid realism and incorporated a sad romantic drama. As the popularity of samurai movies declined, this was one of the period drama which emphasized the anti-heroic, collective rebellion. Around this production, there were many movies with the title of "*Brutal Story of.*" OKAWA Hashizo, unlike his conventional image of a handsome character, performed enthusiastically his role in blood. The inn used as a secret meeting place was precisely rebuilt as a stage set. While the movie itself was highly praised, its marketing failed, further tarnishing KATO Tai's reputation within the company.

**[Summary]**

ENAMI Saburo volunteers to join the Shinsengumi. While spending anxious days in hard training under strict rules, he is attracted to the gentleness of Sato, a maid at the inn. At one time, ENAMI becomes scared when he is ordered to execute a traitor. Later, however, he volunteers for executions. This change in him is observed by his squad boss OKITA Soji and Sato who becomes increasingly sad. After the Shinsengumi experiences a crisis, resulting from a breakaway of senior officers, ENAMI's real identity is revealed in front of KOMDO Isami, the leader of the Shinsengumi, and others. He is found to be a nephew of SERIZAWA Kamo who was murdered by the KONDO faction. Fighting against OKITA, ENAMI is killed with brutality, and Sato's cries are heard.

**"Blood of Revenge / (meiji kyokyakuden sandaime shumei)"**

1965, Color, Scope, 90min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: SHUNDO Koji, HASHIMOTO Keiichi.



Based on an idea by KAMIYA Gohei  
Cinematography: WASHIO Motoya  
Art Direction: IKAWA Norimichi  
Sound: NOZU Hiroo  
Editor: KAWAI Katsumi  
B-Team Director: KURATA Junji

Screenplay: MURAO Akira, SUZUKI Noribumi  
Music: KIKUCHI Shunsuke  
Lighting: KITAGUCHI Kozaburo  
Stills: FUKANO Takashi  
Sword technique: UENO Ryuzo  
Assistant: TORII Motohiro

**Cast:**

TSURUTA Koji (KIKUCHI Asajiro)  
OKI Minoru (HOSHINO Gunjiro)  
ABE Toru (KARASAWA Ryuzo)  
NAKAMURA Yoshiko (Okatsu)  
FUJIYAMA Kanbi (ISHII Senkichi)

FUJI Junko (Hatsue)  
TSUGAWA Masahiko (EMOTO Haruo)  
YAMASHIRO Shingo (TATEISHI Saburo)  
ARASHI Kanjuro (EMOTO Fukuichi)  
TANBA Tetsuro (NOMURA Yutaro)

**[Commentary]**

Regarded as a masterpiece, this Toei yakuza movie was produced during the early peak of the genre's popularity. However, it was never the intention of KATO Tai to idealize yakuzas in his movies, but to portray the emotional conflict of a rule-bound love between man and woman as depicted in the world of HASEGAWA Shin. Partly because this movie was intended to be intended to be directed initially by OZAWA Shigehiro, there were only 18 days left for filming. Therefore, he created a fully-staffed B team. It is said that he had trouble with TSURUTA Koji because of his strict staging. ARASHI Kanjuro was a long-time actor in samurai movies, and FUJIYAMA Kambi was known comedian in theater.

**[Summary]**

During a struggle over interests in a construction project, the second boss of the KIYA-TATSU Gang is attacked. An executive of the Gang, Asajiro takes the place of the boss and manages quite well. However, he faces a conflict with KARASAWA, a yakuza, over Hatsue, a prostitute. As KARASAWA is controlled by HOSHINO, interference with the construction project escalates. After the death of the second boss, Asajiro succeeds to the position of third boss, leaving construction business in the hands of a son of the second boss, Haruo. Due to the debt-of-gratitude code practiced in the world of yakuza, Asajiro attacks to kill Haruo and others. Asajiro goes to Hoshino's place to retaliate.

*"Tokijiro of Kutsukake / (kutsukake tokijiro: yukyo ippiki) "*



1966, Color, Scope, 90min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: OGAWA Mikio, MIMURA Keizo

Based on a novel by HASEGAWA Shin

Screenplay: SUZUKI Naoyuki, KAKEFUDA Masahiro

Cinematography: FURUYA Osamu

Music: SAITO Ichiro

Art Direction: IKAWA Norimichi

Lighting: NAKAYAMA Haruo

Sound: WATABE Yoshitake

Stills: NAKAYAMA Kenji

Editor: MIYAMOTO Shintaro

Sword technique: ADACHI Reijiro

Assistant: SHINOZUKA Masahide

### Cast:

NAKAMURA Kinnosuke (KUTSUKAKE Tokijiro)

IKEUCHI Junko (Okinu)

AZUMA Chiyonosuke (Sanzo, Okinu's

husband)

ATSUMI Kiyoshi (Asakichi)

KIYOKAWA Nijiko (Oroku)

MIHARA Yoko (Omatsu)

OKAZAKI Jiro (Shotaro)

YUMI Keiko (Oyo)

### [Commentary]

The original play (1934) , was performed and made into a movie many times as a masterpiece of wanderling gambler stories. This film, directed by KATO Tai, is the most outstanding of all. Around this time, Toei was enjoying its heyday with yakuza movies. As period-drama were now rarely made, KATO Tai and NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, both period-drama enthusiasts, were highly motivated to make this movie. Both NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke and AZUMA Chiyonosuke gained their popularity in the 1950s and this was the last film in which they acted together. The part of Asakichi performed by ATSUMI Kiyoshi was not included in the original work. ATSUMI Kiyoshi was a comedian, and after this movie, he gained enormous popularity as the main character Tora-san in the series "*Tora-san, Our Lovable Tramp* (otoko wa tsuraiyo)".

### [Summary]

Asakichi respects Tokijiro as a 'big brother.' He believes in the world of yakuza so innocently that he gets murdered in dealings with yakuza. Tokijiro takes his revenge on the killer, but in his turn he is bound by the rules of yakuza and kills Sanzo with whom he has no relationship. In accordance with Sanzo's dying wish, Tokijiro takes Okinu, the widow, and Tarokichi, his son, to her home town. After turning out to be impossible to rely on her relatives, on their way to Kutsukake, Tokijiro's home town, Okinu and Tarokichi



disappear. When the three meet again, Okinu is seriously ill. In order to make money for medicine, Tokijiro goes back to a very risky fight. However, Okinu dies and Tokijiro abandons his sword and takes Tarokichi to his home town.

*"A Man's Face Shows His Personal History (otokonokao wa rirekisho)"* 1966, Color, Scope, 89min, Shochiku

Producer: MASUMOTO Kinen

Screenplay: KATO Tai, HOSHIKAWA Seiji

Cinematography: TAKAHA Tetsuo

Music: KABURAGI Hajime

Art Direction: UMEDA Chiyoo

Lighting: AOKI Yoshifumi

Sound: OBI Tatsuhiko

Stills: SAKAI Kenichi

Editor: ISHII Iwao

Sword technique: ADACHI Reijiro

Assistant: HASEBE Toshiro, MIMURA Haruhiko

#### Cast:

ANDO Noboru (AMAMIYA Shuichi, doctor)

ITAMI Ichizo (Juzo) (AMAMIYA Shunji, Shuichi's brother)

NAKAHARA Sanae (KURAMOTO Maki, nurse)

NAKATANI Ichiro (SAI Bunki, injured man)

MARI Akemi (LI Keishun)

HAMADA Torahiko (YAMASHITA)

ARASHI Kanjuro (ONOGAWA Tadazo, old yakuza)

KAYAMA Yoshiko (nurse)

UCHIDA Ryohei (RYU Seigen)

#### [Commentary]

With support from NOMURA Yoshitaro and YAMADA Yoji, this is KATO Tai's first movie at Shochiku. This is one of the "trilogy of the Wartime Generation", along with "*Opium Hills: the Hell's Squad Charges*" and "*18-Year Sentence*", starring ANDO Noboru. The trilogy was filmed primarily by TAKAHA Tetsuo and other camera crews of YAMADA Yoji. Although this film depicts three different time periods in Japan, i.e., contemporary, immediately after World War II, and during the war, this movie is regarded as KATO Tai's first contemporary drama. The title comes from the words which OYA Soichi, a social critic, used to describe ANDO Noboru.

#### [Summary]

A Korean is rushed to AMAMIYA's office after being injured in a traffic accident. AMAMIYA previously knew this patient by the name of SAI. The scene then goes back to the time immediately after the war. The Kyuten Federation made up of Ryu and other "third country men (Koreans and Chinese living in Japan were referred to as such during the US occupation)"



attempts to take a Japanese market by force, but AMEMIYA, the landlord of the marketplace, refuses to fight. SAI, a violent member of the Federation, and AMEMIYA knew each other as a soldier and a doctor in the Japanese military during the war. Shunji, AMEMIYA's younger brother, comes to the town and fights the Federation in place of his brother. He is captured by the Federation and is killed along with LI Kei-shun, his young Korean girl. Rejecting the pleas of Maki, a nurse in love with him, AMEMIYA heads off to fight the Federation. The scene then returns to the present. Hearing the pleas of Maki, having married SAI, to save his life, AMEMIYA decides to perform a difficult operation.

**"I, the Executioner / Gospel for Genocide (*minagoroshi no reika*)"**

1968, B&W, Vista, 90min, Shochiku

Based on an original idea by HIROMI

Producer: SAWAMURA Kunio  
Tadashi

Adaptation: YAMADA Yoji, KATO Tai

Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji

Art Direction: MORITA Kyohei

Sound: NAKAMURA Hiroshi

Editor: OSAWA Shizu

Screenplay: MIMURA Haruhiko

Music: KABURAGI Hajime

Lighting: TSUBUKI Tadashi

Stills: SASAKI Chieji

**Cast:**

SATO Makoto (KAWASHIMA Tadashi)

O Ran Fan (YASUDA Takako)

SUGAI Kin (MORI Misa)

SAWA Toshiko (O So)

BAISHO Chieko (Haruko)

NAKAHARA Sanae (HASHIMOTO Keiko)

KAWAMURA Yuki (TOMINAGA Kyoko)

**[Commentary]**

The first contemporary drama of KATO Tai in full-scale. The plan was initially to make it into a modern version of the "*Five-Petaled Camellia* (*goben no tsubaki*)" (1964 by NOMURA Yoshitaro) based on YAMAMOTO Shugoro's novel in which pitiful girl takes revenge for her father. Since, without proper direction and structure, the story would have disgusted the audience, it is said that KATO Tai asked YAMADA Yoji for his assistance. With his extensive know-how, MARUYAMA Keiji accomplished superb pan focusing. SATO Makoto was an action star belonging exclusively to Toho. The boy's favorite song in the movie was "Always with Dreams (*itsudemo yumewo*)" (1962) sung by HASHI Yukio.



## [Summary]

KAWASHIMA rapes Takako and kills her after forcing her to write names of four women. Shortly before the murder, a boy kills himself jumping from the same condominium. KAWASHIMA successively rapes and kills Keiko, Misao, and Misa. During this period, he meets and gets involved with Haruko, who works at a restaurant. Visiting a dry cleaner, where the boy used to work, he learns about Haruko's murder of her brother from the owner of the restaurant. Haruko shows KAWASHIMA a poster with his face printed on it as a wanted man by the police. The bride murder case committed by him thirteen years ago is also revealed by the police. He kills Kyoko after getting a confession from her that five women sexually molested the boy. Then he kills himself at the same place where the boy committed suicide.

*"The Red Peony / Red Peony Gambler: Flower Cards Match (hibotan bakuto: hanafuda shobu)"* 1969, Color, Scope, 98min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: SHUNDO Koji, KUSAKABE Goro

Based on an idea by ISHIMOTO Hisakichi

Screenplay: SUZUKI Noribumi, TORII Motohiro

Music: WATANABE Takeo

Lighting: KANEKO Katsuyoshi

Stills: KIMURA Takeshi

Sword technique: TANI Akinori (Toshio)

Assistant, B-Team Director: HONDA Tatsuo

Cinematography: FURUYA Osamu

Art Direction: TOMITA Jiro

Sound: NAKAYAMA Shigeji

Editor: MIYAMOTO Shintaro

### Cast:

FUJI Junko (YANO Ryuko, "Oryu")

TAKAKURA Ken (HANAOKA Shogo)

ARASHI Kanjuro (SUGIYAMA Sadajiro)

WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo (KUMASAKA Torakichi)

FUJIYAMA Kanbi (Policeman)

MACHIDA Kyosuke (Fujimatsu)

KOIKE Asao (KINBARA Tetsunosuke)

KIYOKAWA Nijiko (Otaka)

SHIOJI Akira (IGARASHI Yasuji)

SAWA Toshiko (Otoki)

ISHIYAMA Ritsu (SUGIYAMA Jiro)

SHIBATA Mihoko (KINBARA Yaeko)

## [Commentary]

This is the third film of the series featuring FUJI Junko, a leading actress in Toei yakuza movies. The drama progresses, so-to-speak, as a yakuza movie version of "Romeo and Juliet." KATO Tai was fully aware of the fact that the main character had no drama in herself, compared with the rest of the



series; KATO Tai specially portrayed Oryu's emotional changes as a woman. The scene where she hands an umbrella to TAKAKURA Ken is regarded as one of the best scenes on the screen. TAKAKURA Ken was a very popular star of Toei yakuza movies, along with TSURUTA Koji. A leading actor made guest appearance in every film of this series. The story was set in Nagoya, where KATO Tai spent his boyhood.

### [Summary]

Oryu saves the life of a blind girl on the railway track. She visits the NISHINOMARU Gang in Nagoya and learns about the warfare with the KIMBARA Gang. KIMBARA offers his daughter Yaeko to a politician in an attempt to expand his power, but Yaeko is in love with Jiro, a son of the NISHINOMARU boss. Otoki, the mother of the blind girl, who misused the name of Oryu, releases Jiro and Yaeko from confinement, for which she is killed. HANAOKA, a wandering gambler who let Oryu and the younger lovers go, attacks the NISHINOMARU boss on an order from KIMBARA. Oryu has a match with Otoki's husband, Yasuji, in a card game. An operation on the girl's eyes is successful. The money to be offered Atsuta Shrine, gets robbed by KIMBARA gangsters, and Oryu goes to fight with HANAOKA's assistance.

"Red Peony Gambles Her Life" / (hibotan bakuto: oryu sanjo) "  
1970, Scope, Color, 100min, Toei (Kyoto)

Plan: SHUNDO Koji, KUSAKABE Goro  
Cinematography: AKATSUKA Shigeru  
Art Direction: IKAWA Norimichi  
Sound: WATABE Yoshitake  
Editor: MIYAMOTO Shintaro  
Assistant: HONDA Tatsuo

Screenplay: KATO Tai, SUZUKI Noribumi  
Music: SAITO Ichiro  
Lighting: WATADA Hiroshi  
Stills: KIMURA Takeshi  
Sword technique: TANI Akinori (Toshio)

### Cast:

FUJI Junko (YANO Ryuko, "Oryu")    SUGAWARA Bunta (AOYAMA Tsunejiro)  
WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo (KUMASAKA Torakichi)  
ARASHI Kanjuro (Teppo Kyu)    SHIOJI Akira (Kisaburo)  
ABE Toru (Masagoro)    NUMATA Yoichi (Junkichi)  
AMATSU Bin (KANAI Kingoro)    YAMAGISHI Eiko (IGARASHI Kimiko,  
"Okimi")  
HASEGAWA Akio (Ginji)



## [Commentary]

This is the sixth film of the popular series produced as the sequel to the third one "*Flower Card Match* (hanafuda shobu)." The sixth precinct of Asakusa, an amusement quarters, in the early 1900s was recreated at the studio. Commonly referred to as the "12-story building," Ryounkaku, once a popular spot in Tokyo, provides a location for the last fight. However, it was destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. The scene of a woman giving a tangerine to a man on the Imado Bridge in the snow is well known, and it is often compared to the peach in "*Blood of Revenge*" and the permission in "*Tokijiro of Kutsukake*." About this time, SUGAWARA Bunta was becoming a leading actor in Toei yakuza movies.

## [Summary]

Oryu comes to Asakusa, Tokyo, looking for the girl whose life she once saved. She learns that Okii, a pickpocket, is Okimi. The TEPPPO-Hisa boss adopts Okimi as a daughter. Okimi's lover Ginji belongs to the SAMEZU-Masa Gang. In order to take a popular theater company away from TEPPPO-Hisa, SAMEZU-Masa has these lovers steal a title deed, but Oryu gets them back. Tsunejiro, a drifter, is pursued by the SAMEZU-Masa Gang, but counter-attacks them and escapes. Okimi becomes very popular on the stage. SAMEZU-Masa kidnaps Okimi and Ginji gets killed in an attempt to rescue her. Oryu goes to the Ryounkaku to fight.

\* Hanafuda: Japanese-style traditional playing cards depicting beautiful scenes, such as a deer on a mountain in autumn, butterflies, and so on, or the game using this type of playing card. The card game typically involves gambling.

## [Other Works]

“*Submarine* (sensuikan) ”

B & W : Standard : 1941 : Riken Kagaku Movies.

Original script: YAGI Yasutaro. Screenplay: KATO Yasumichi.

Cinematography: KASAMA Kimio

\* Documentary film. Because KATO Tai was not legally certified in accordance with the Motion Picture Act, he wasn't approved as director. Therefore, the movie was introduced under a different director's name, NISHIO Yoshio.

“*Bubble* (awa) ”



B & W : Standard : 1943 : Riken Kagaku Movies.

Screenplay: KATO Yasumichi.

Cinematography: OOI Eiji and TAGAMI Haruo

\* Short documentary film. It depicts a technology which uses bubbles to identify different minerals. In this movie, KATO Yasumichi was registered as director.

*"Afraid of Lice (shirami wa kowai) "*

B & W : Standard : 1944 : Manchuria Movie Association.

Screenplay: IMAI Shin. Cinematography: YOSHIDA Teiji. Motion Picture: SASAYA Iwao and MORIKAWA Nobuhide

\* Short documentary film. Prevention of typhus is the theme of this movie. Animation is used to describe the danger of lice.

*"Military School (kangun gakko) "*

B & W : Standard : 1944 : Manchuria Movie Association.

Screenplay: KATO Yasumichi. Cinematography: KURODA Takeichiro

\* Believed to be a short documentary film. Details unknown.

*"Trouble Over Swords and Women: Woman's Mind (ken'nan jonan: joshin denshin no maki) "*

*"Trouble Over Swords and Women: Sword's Light and Shooting Star (ken'nan jonan: kenko ryusei no maki) "*

B & W : Standard : 1951 : Takara production (Distribution: Shin-Toho).

Original Script: YOSHIKAWA Eiji. Screenplay: KINOSHITA Tokichi.

Cinematography: FUJII Harumi.

Cast: KUROKAWA Yataro, ICHIKAWA Haruyo, HORI Masao and TOKUGAWA Musei.

\* The first fiction film. Consisting of two parts, this movie depicts, through a successive number of sword fights, an effeminate, handsome samurai upgrading his swordsmanship in a number of difficult situations, refuting false accusations made against his older brother and restoring his family name.

*"Shimizu Port of Is More Fearful than Evils (shimizuminato wa oniyori kowai) "*

B & W : Standard : 1952 : Takara production (Distribution: Toei).

Screenplay: KINOSHITA Tokichi and TOMODA Shojiro. Cinematography: KONDO



Noriaki.

Cast: OIZUMI Akira, KATSURA Harudanji, HAYASHI Kazue, and HIROSAWA Torazo.

\* Comical-period drama with songs and naniwabushi. The son of a rich merchant in Edo (today's Tokyo) becomes attracted to the world of yakuza and joins the Jirocho Gang of Shimizu.

*"Book of Birds (hiyodori zoshi) "*

B & W : Standard : 1952 : Takara production (Distribution: Toei).

Original story: YOSHIKAWA Eiji. Screenplay: NOJIMA Shinkichi.

Cast: EMI Wataru, ASAKUMO Teruyo, HOSHI Michiko and SAWAMURA Masahiko (currently, TSUGAWA Masahiko).

\* Samurai movie with lots of actions by a honest, devoted young man. Good and bad guys stage a lot of fights over hidden money.

*"Ninjutsu Jiraiya (ninjutsu jiraiya) "*

*"Ninja Strikes Back (gyakushu daijamaru) "*

B & W : Standard : 1955 : Shin-Toho.

Screenplay: GASHUIN Taro. Cinematography: HIRANO Yoshimi.

Cast: OTANI Tomoemon, TAZAKI Jun, OKOCHI Denjiro, WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo, and SAGA Michiko.

\* This two-part series depicts a ninja's adventures. Part one was co-directed (only on a formal basis) with HAGIWARA Ryo. After mastering the secret skills of Ninjutsu of a toad (in Japanese folklore, the toad is believed to possess magical powers) in the mountains, a young samurai goes out on revenge to restore his family name.

*"Samurai in Romance (koizome ronin) "*

B & W : Standard : 1957 : Toei.

Original story: YAMATE Kiichiro. Screenplay: KESSOKU Shinji.

Cinematography: MIKI Shigeto.

Cast: OTOMO Ryutaro, HANAYAGI Kogiku, NAMIJIMA Susumu and HASEGAWA Yumiko.

\* Bright samurai movie. KATO Tai's first film produced by Toei. The story of a masterless samurai is depicted in a daily life of sword fights and romance.

*"Genjikuro's Adventure : Dual Sword Fighting: Part 1 (genjikuro sassoki nuregami nitoryu) "*

B & W : CinemaScope : 1957 : Toei.



Original story: SHIBATA Renzaburo. Screenplay: KESSOKU Shinji. Cinematography: MATSUI Ko.

Cast: NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, TASHIRO Yuriko, CHIHARA Shinobu and NAMIJIMA Susumu.

\* In this samurai movie, KATO Tai met NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke for the first time. This is also Japan's first black and white wide-screen film [ first color wide-screen film is "*Bride of the Otori Castle* (ootorijo no hanayome)" (1957 by MATSUDA Sadatsugu)]. Wandering, handsome samurai gets involved in a number of fights resulting from the trouble over sword skill matches.

*"Red Cherry Feudal Lord (hizakura daimyo) "*

B & W : CinemaScope : 1958 : Toei.

Original story: YAMATE Kiichiro. Screenplay: SAIKI Iwau. Cinematography: MATSUI Ko.

Cast: OKAWA Hashizo, OKAWA Keiko, NAMIJIMA Susumu and OKOCHI Denjiro.

\* Light-hearted samurai comedy. The second son of a feudal lord runs away from an arranged marriage. He saves the life of a princess whom he gets to fall in love with. It turns out that she is just his prospective bride.

*"Genjikuro's Adventure : Dual Sword Fighting: Part 2 (genjikuro sassoki byakko nitoryu) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1958 : Toei.

Original story : SHIBATA Renzaburo. Screenplay: KATO Tai. Cinematography: TSUBOI Makoto.

Cast: NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, OKAWA Keiko, SATOMI Kotaro and OKA Satomi.

\* This is KATO Tai's first color film for which he wrote himself the script. A young, handsome samurai goes to an island, looking for the treasure left by his ancestors, and fights against pirates and corrupt officials.

*"Wind, Women and Hobo (kaze to onna to tabigarasu) "*

B & W : (CinemaScope : 1958 : Toei.

Screenplay: NARUSAWA Masashige. Cinematography: TSUBOI Makoto.

Cast: NAKAMURA Kin'nosuke, MIKUNI Rentaro, OKA Satomi and HASEGAWA Yumiko.

\* Wandering gambler movie which clearly represents KATO Tai's idea of film-making. The adventure of a young punk and a middle-aged gangster at the hometown of the former is depicted based on realism.



***"Eight Views of Masterless Samurai (ronin hakkei) "***

Color : CinemaScope : 1958 : Toei.

Original story: YAMATE Kiichiro. Screenplay: SUZUKI Hyogo. Cinematography: ITO Takeo.

Cast: ICHIKAWA Utaemon, HASEGAWA Yumiko, YUKISHIRO Keiko, SATOMI Kotaro and FUJITA Susumu.

\* Bright samurai movie innovatively adapted from a classic story. A traveling masterless samurai is asked by a daughter of an established samurai family to pretend they are a married couple, and gets involved in the troubles of the samurai clan.

***"Mission to Hell (kogan no misshi) "***

Color : CinemaScope : 1959 : Toei

Original story: CHIBA Shozo. Screenplay: KATO Tai. Cinematography: YOSHIDA Teiji.

Cast: OKAWA Hashizo, ICHIO Tamami, FUSHIMI Sentaro and FURUSATO Yayoi.

\* Adventure samurai movie which reminds you of American Westerns and spectacular war movies. A young samurai chosen as a spy for the Royal Court destroys a rebellious army on the battlefield in the Tohoku region.

***"The Robin Hood of Edo (oedo no kyoji) "***

B & W : CinemaScope : 1960 : Toei

Original script: YAMAGAMI Itaro. Screenplay: KATO Tai. Cinematography: WASHIO Motonari.

Cast: OKAWA Hashizo, KAGAWA Kyoko, AOYAMA Kyoko and TATARA Jun.

\* Realistic period drama on INAGAKI Hiroshi's "Kid of the Times (jidai no kyoji)" (1932). The birth and life of Nezumikozo, a Japanese-version of Robin Hood, is projected as an elegy of the common people.

***"Fights As We Travel (ayamegasa kenkaido) "***

B & W : CinemaScope : 1960 : Toei.

Screenplay: NAGAE Isamu. Cinematography: MORI Tsuneji.

Cast: SHINAGAWA Ryuji, WATANABE Atsushi, AOYAMA Kyoko, and HANAZONO Hiromi.

\* Wandering gambler movie filled with humor and compassion. An odd couple of a gangster and a masterless samurai becomes involved in a variety of events as they travel.

***"Throne of Flame (honoo no shiro) "***



Color : CinemaScope : 1960 : Toei

Screenplay: YASUMI Kazuo. Cinematography: YOSHIDA Sadaji.

Cast: OKAWA Hashizo, MITA Yoshiko, OKOCHI Denjiro and TAKAMINE Mieko.

\* Samurai movie adapted from "Hamlet." A young prince takes revenge for his father, who was murdered in conspiracy. Because Toei insisted that the prince should not die, KATO Tai was not satisfied with this ending.

*"Asagiri Highway (asagiri kaido) "*

B & W : CinemaScope : 1961 : Toei (Secind Toei).

Screenplay: SUZUKI Hyogo. Cinematography: WASHIO Gen'ya.

Cast: TAKADA Kokichi, KOGURE Michiyo, KITAZAWA Noriko, and YAMASHIRO Shingo.

\* Yakuza movie in a period drama setting based on a new interpretation of a classical story. After coming back to his home town, the yakuza kills off an evil gang. However, he is caught by a detective who has pursued him from Edo.

*"Tange Sazen : Masterpiece Sword (tange sazen: kan'unkonryu no maki) "*

B & W : CinemaScope : 1962 : Toei

Original script: HAYASHI Fubo. Screenplay: ISHIDO Toshiro.

Cast: OTOMO Ryutaro, SAKURAMACHI Hiroko, KUBO Naoko, AZUMA Chiyonosuke, and KONOUE Jushiro.

\* This movie depicts a familiar samurai story realistically. A samurai loses one of his eyes and arms in an attempt to recover a masterpiece sword for his lord. However, his efforts are not appreciated and he becomes a man of hatred.

*"Suck to the Bone (honemade shaburu) "*

B & W : CinemaScope : 1966 : Toei

Screenplay: SAJI Kan. Cinematography: WASHIO Motonari. Cast: SAKURAMACHI Hiroko, KUBO Naoko, NATSUYAGI Isamu, and MIYAZONO Junko.

\* This movie realistically depicts prostitutes in the early Meiji Period, in which they are forced into a harsh life but resist, fall in love and attempt to escape.

*"Opium Hills: the Hell's Squad Charges (ahendaichi: jigokubutai totsugekiseyo) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1966 : Golden Pro. (Distribution: Shochiku).

Original script: KAMIYA Gohei. Screenplay: KUNIHIRO Takeo. Cinematography: KAWASAKI Shintaro.



Cast: ANDO Noboru, Peggy PANG, NAMBARA Koji, and KUBO Naoko.

\* Following "*A Man's Face Shows His Personal History*," this movie is the second of the "*Trilogy of the Wartime Generation*" It is a war drama set in China and depicts battles over opium.

*"18-Year Sentence (choeki juhachinen) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1967 : Toei. Year

Screenplay: KASAHARA Kazuo and MORITA Shin. Cinematography: FURUYA Osamu.

Cast: ANDO Noboru, KOIKE Asao, SAKURAMACHI Hiroko, and KONDO Masaomi.

\* Contemporary drama which questions the values of post-war Japanese society. It is the last of the "*Trilogy of the Wartime Generation*" A demobilized soldier is imprisoned but escapes and fights his former friends who have betrayed him.

*"Sword : Territory (tsurugi: shima) "*

1967 : CAL. Broadcast : NTV

Screenplay: NOGAMI Tatsuo. Cinematography: MIYANISHI Ryotaro.

Cast: OGATA Ken, KAWAMURA Yuki, and SAWA Yoshiko.

\* KATO Tai's only work for TV broadcasting. One of the "Sword" series, this samurai drama realistically depicts a love triangle of a gambler in hiding, his wife and a mistress.

*"Red Peony Gambler : You Are Dead (hibotan bakuto: oinochi itadakimasu) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1971 : Toei.

Screenplay: OWAKU Morimasa, SUZUKI Noribumi and KATO Tai. Cinematography: WASHIO Motonari.

Cast: FUJI Junko, TSURUTA Koji, MACHIDA Kyosuke and SHIOJI Akira.

\* This is the seventh of the popular female yakuza movie series. Oryu follows the will of a yakuza who pursued the problem of mining pollution and was murdered. Her fights are depicted in a uncanny, erotic manner.

*"Female Gambler of the Showa Period (showa on'na bakuto) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1972 : Toei.

Original script: FUJIWARA Shinji. Screenplay: TORII Motohiro and HONDA Tatsuo. Cinematography: FURUYA Osamu.

Cast: ENAMI Kyoko, MATSUKATA Hiroki, AMACHI Shigeru and MATSUDAIRA Junko.

\* Revenge drama which praises the supreme love. A woman becomes a yakuza in order to take revenge for her lover who was murdered. ENAMI Kyoko was a former star of Daiei



movies.

*"The Stage of Life: Youth, Lust and Spirit (jinseigekijo: seishun, aiyoku, zankyo hen) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1972 : Shochiku

Original story: OZAKI Shiro. Screenplay: NOMURA Yoshitaro, MIMURA Haruhiko, and KATO Tai. Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji.

Cast: TAKEWAKI Muga, KAYAMA Yoshiko, TAMIYA Jiro, TAKAHASHI Hideki, BAISHO Mitsuko, and WATARI Tetsuya.

\* Large-scale drama of which many films have been made. A young man fails to become a writer. Two yakuza fall in love with the same prostitute. All these events are depicted with a series of dramatic fight and erotic scenes.

*"Flowers and Dragon: Ambition, Love, Hate and Rage (hana to ryu: seiun, aizo, doto hen) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1973 : Shochiku.

Original story: HINO Ashihei. Screenplay: NOMURA Yoshitaro, MIMURA Haruhiko, and KATO Tai. Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji.

Cast: WATARI Tetsuya, KAYAMA Yoshiko, TAMIYA Jiro, TAKEWAKI Muga, ISHIZAKA Koji and BAISHO Mitsuko.

\* Large-scale yakuza drama following the *"The Stage of Life (jinseigekijo)"*. A man and woman establish a family of longshoreman. Love and struggles centering on them and involving yakuza and hobos are depicted.

*"Sword of Fury (miyamoto musashi) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1973 : Shochiku.

Original story: YOSHIKAWA Eiji. Screenplay: NOMURA Yoshitaro and YAMASHITA Seisen. Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji.

Cast: TAKAHASHI Hideki, MATSUZAKA Keiko, TAMIYA Jiro, BAISHO Mitsuko, Franky SAKAI, and TODA Junko.

\* Many movies have been made on this samurai drama based on the original novel. This depicts the pursuit for swordsmanship by a young samurai and his experiences in love, fight and agony.

*"Nihon Kyokaden (nihon-kyokaden) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1973 : Toho.

Original story and screenplay: KATO Tai. Cinematography: MURAI Hiroshi.



Cast: MAKI Yoko, WATARI Tetsuya, TODA Junko, SOGANOYA Meicho and KATO Go.

\* This movie, featuring a woman, is based on KATO Tai's original script. It is the leading film of his later years. An honest young woman is hurt by broken love but finds true love after drastic experiences.

*"A Scream from Nowhere (edogawa ranpo no inju) "*

Color : VistaVision : 1977 : Shochiku

Original story: EDOGAWA Rampo. Screenplay: NAKAKURA Juro and KATO Tai. Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji. Cast: AOI Teruhiko, KAYAMA Yoshiko, OTOMO Ryutaro and WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo.

\* This unique movie depicts the hell of physical love in the world of a detective novel. A young writer of detective stories is seduced by the beautiful married woman and finds out the true identity of a mysterious novelist.

*"Flames of Blood (honoo no gotoku) "*

Color : VistaVision : 1981 : Daiwa Shinsha. (Distribution: Toho.)

Original story: IIBOSHI Koichi. Screenplay: KATO Tai. Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji.

Cast: SUGAWARA Bunta, BAISHO Mitsuko, KITAMURA Akiko, WAKAYAMA Tomisaburo, and SAKURAMACHI Hiroko.

\* This is his last fiction film. In the chaotic times at the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, a gambler falls in love with a blind woman and they wander for life. Attractive features of period drama and melodrama are fully incorporated in this movie.

*"Za Ondekoza (za ondekoza) "*

Color : CinemaScope : 1981 : Den Office, Asahi National Broadcasting Co.,Ltd..and Shochiku.

Screenplay: NAKAKURA Juro. Cinematography: MARUYAMA Keiji.

Cast: Members of the Ondekoza including KAWACHI Toshio, HAYASHI Eitetsu and MORI Mitsuru.

\* KATO TAI's posthumous work, filmed before and completed after *"Flames of Blood (honoo no gotoku)."* Ondekoza is a group of young musicians playing Japanese traditional drums and other music. While this is a documentary film, it bravely integrates fiction. It has not been shown publicly except for several film festivals and special showings.