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Even more explicit was *The Ballad of Narayama* (Narayamabushi-ko, 1958), about a small community in the northern mountains whose custom it was to expose the aged to the elements so that there would be more food for the young. The barbarity of the custom, one absolutely unauthenticated it should be added, did not move Kinoshita (indeed, he made very decorative use of it) nearly so much as did the spectacle of the son who, the perfect Japanese *chonan*, weeping and struggling, was forced to deposit his mother on top of Narayama. Tradition, in this case, naturally, did not consist of the fictitious abandoning of the aged, but rather the traditional respect with which youngsters regard their elders in Japan, a tradition all the more conspicuous because of its ostensible absence from this film.

Technically *The Ballad of Narayama* reflected Kinoshita's later preoccupation with the traditional. Though using both color and widescreen, the director relied heavily on stage effects—even choosing to frame the story in devices taken from the Kabuki, that most traditional of Japanese theatrical forms. At times this thoroughly conservative motion picture even appeared to be filmed theater.