

Hissatsu - Introduction

As one of the most popular TV shows ever to hit the airwaves in Japan, the "Hissatsu" series has kept audience glued to the screen for more than two decades, and continues to enjoy success in syndication and video markets.

The weekly series, which was first broadcast in September of 1972, turned a common "jidaigeki" (period movie/tv shows, mostly of Edo era) format on edge by showcasing many atypical elements, often with hilarious twists. Almost all the characters, especially the assassins, had at least one unconventional technique to show off, with or without amusing gadgets; at times, such gadgets and the special effects were deliberately made to look cheap and unrefined. Music (many times created by pop music composers and producers) was based on western/cowboy movie soundtracks. Anachronisms, parodies (especially the ones where other shows shown on different networks in the same time slot were made fun of) and jokes were thrown in with abandon.

At the same time, the series was praised for its technical virtuosity, for it exhibited some of the most artistic use of light and shadow in all of TV. The contrast (forgive us) of refined and crude elements, not to mention the all-star cast (superstars were often features, many after pleading to be on the show!) was just one of the curiosities which made the show appeal to a huge audience.

Approximately 800 episodes of the Hissatsu series were produced through March of 1991. During the most successful seasons, when the show could boast ratings of nearly 30%, certain phrases and dialogues from the shows entered the everyday vernacular! Because of its popularity, many specials and several movies (the latest one is scheduled to premier during summer of 1998!) were made. However, the show also experienced periods of disappointingly low ratings as well, as we'll see later.

The Hissatsu - The Movie

"The Hissatsu" (Sure Death 1) is the first of several Hissatsu movies produced during the 1980's, at the height of Hissatsu's popularity. The story takes place in Edo, in the very last years of the Tokugawa Era (1600-1868). For a brief overview of Japan during the Tokugawa Era, please refer to other samurai liner notes on the website

Nakamura Mondo

The most famous character of the series, Nakamura Mondo, was not introduced until the second season. He is said to be the brainchild of an Asahi TV Networks producer, who combined a stereotypical "salaryman" (a very average Japanese corporate worker) and James Bond of 007 fame. Like Mondo, many salarymen are verbally abused by their superiors at work, and by their wives and mother-in-laws at home. Mondo is thus a rather average worker, whose workplace happens to be a city constabulary. Mondo's superior, Tanaka, a rather effeminate man, likes to pick on him, as do his wife, Ritsu, and his mother-in-law, Sen. [Sen also likes to bother Mondo and Ritsu about wanting a grandchild - during one broadcast season, Ritsu does become pregnant, and they all look forward to the birth, but in the last episode, the baby is stillborn.]

"Nakamura", one of the most common family names in Japan, emphasizes that "commonplace" quality. The producer, however, also came up with "Mondo", which is a play on the Japanese rendering of "James Bond" (Jeemusu Bondo).

Mondo's post was not a stable one. Over the years, he has gone back and forth from being everything from a constable to a jail guard. It is interesting to note that during the seasons when Mondo worked in low ranking posts, the ratings suffered dismally!

Yuuji & Oriku

The mother & son team from the Shamisen shop. Their shop builds and repairs this traditional Japanese 3-stringed musical instrument. Oriku's favorite weapon is the shamisen plectrum, the large, blade-like pick that is used to pluck the strings. Yuji, on the other hand, uses Shamisen strings to hang his targets.

Yuji was actually an orphan adopted by Oriku. His father was a criminal who, in the end, was "finished" by Oriku. When Yuji grew up, Oriku told him the truth - but his love for the mother who had adopted him remained unchanged.

Tanaka

A supporting character, Tanaka is a city constabulary officer and Mondo's superior. In the series, Tanaka began as a rather macho type, but he somehow became quite an effeminate man as the series progressed. His mannerisms, gestures and speech, are quite womanly.

Hidé

A craftsman by day, assassin by night. When he first appeared in the series, his sure-death weapon of choice was a chisel. In the movie, he is first seen building what is called "Kanzashi", a kind of hair accessory for women. After about a year of fighting with a chisel in the series, Hide was now seen stabbing his enemies to death with his silver kanzashi.

For few seasons, Hide was looking after a girl, whose father was a criminal that he had killed.

Kayo

Mainly an informant, and a liaison to her assassin colleagues and the clientele. Originally, she had a fellow informant with whom operated a small office. Dozens of episodes later, she was alone in her "Nandemo-Ya" ("Will Do Anything Shop").

The actress that played Kayo, Ayukawa Izumi, suffered from whiplash during one season (from a non-work related accident), yet continued to perform on-screen, wearing a neck support! In fact, some of the better publicity photos show this.

Sure Death 1

Historical tidbits

Centuries-old Gidayu puppet and kabuki theaters, were very popular forms of entertainment, and continue to be appreciated both in and outside of Japan to this day. [The play near the end is the last act of a famous love-story & who-dun-it, "Honcho Nijushiko".]

Anachronisms

"Jidaigeki" shows traditionally remain rather faithful in portraying the past, incorporating almost everything that is historically credible. In the case of "Hissatsu", however, obvious use of anachronisms was all part of the fun

From the beginning, cowboy-movie-influenced music, produced and composed by pop and rock music legends, were a staple. Jokes-of-the-day and parodies of other TV shows were often featured. Hide's hairstyle, a modern hairdo, would've been alien in the mid-1800's Japan. Also, some of the most popular assassins in the series were known for their X-ray vision, complete with oscillograms of enemy's heartbeat!

That Kid's Song

"Zuizui zuikkorobashi" is a children's song (mainly sung while playing tag) whose origins and meanings remain a great mystery. Theories exist about its true meaning, from complete nonsense to a subtly-crafted cryptogram. Interpretations vary widely; as in numerous other children's songs, many words are not real words and no one coherent element binds the whole together. Also, many versions exist, some with strange word transformations.

After numerous bottles of Excedrin and several vicious email debates, this is what we came up with.

"Zuizui zukkorobashi" (Author unknown)

Zui zui zukkorobashi gomamisozi

Slip, Slip, Slippery Bridge, by the gomamisozi shop.
Chatsubo ni owarete doppinsha
Tea containers tumbled and went clank clank.
Nuketara dondokosho
Oh, where's everyone, now that they're hiding?
Tawara no nezumi ga kome kutte chuu. Chuu, chuu, chuu.
I see a shrieking mouse eating rice out of a barrel.
Shriek, shriek, shriek.
Ottosan ga yondemo okkasan ga yondemo ikikkonashiyo
My daddy and mommy are calling me, but I can't go home yet
Ido no mawari de ochawan kaitano dare?
they ask, "Who broke the rice bowl near the well?"

Gomamisozi refers to food, made with rice, sesame and soybean. It was a common item, readily available anywhere at the time.

Sure Death 2 - Brown, You Bounder!

The title, "Brown-Kan no Kaibutsu tachi," which translates roughly as "The Monsters at Mr. Brown's Mansion," is actually a clever pun - "Brown-Kan," when a different kanji character is used in place of '-kan,' refers to a cathode ray tube (CRT), or more commonly, television. It is no surprise, therefore, that the second installment of the Sure Death movie series, a commemorative and collaborative effort by Shochiku and Asahi TV, showcases the talents of many 'Monsters of TV,' the superstars of Japanese entertainment industry -- and provides many opportunities for inside jokes.

Many of the guest-stars in this film were famous and popular actors. Here is some information about some of them.

Tatsunoshin, the Ninja: Morita Kensaku began his acting career in the early 70's, where he starred in many youth dramas. Success made him a superstar for many years, but in the late 80's he began to show interest in politics, often writing or appearing on TV as a political commentator. By the early 90's he had abandoned the entertainment industry altogether and become a politician. His unique speech inflections are often made fun of by comedians.

Osen, the Iga Ninja Girl: Kashiwabara Yoshie began her career as a teenage idol star in the early 80's, fast becoming a pop singer who regularly performed on TV throughout the decade. She was once romantically linked to a prince of the Japanese Imperial Family, ensuring her the royal treatment.

Saichiro, one of the Kurodani Mansion Guardians: Okita Hiroyuki also began his career as an idol star around the same time. His superb performance in the second season of "3-Nen B-Gumi Kinpachi Sensei," a long-running, high school drama about a teacher, Mr. Kinpachi, and his students, launched his acting career. He starred in numerous movies during the 80's.

Kakusuke of Ushitora, the realtor by day, imperial courtier by night, and part-time assassin: Shofukutei Tsurube a highly successful "rakugo" (a kind of monologue comedy) artist, is a popular TV entertainer who hosts or appears on numerous "variety" (ex. quiz, game and talk shows) programs.

Otoki, the older woman guardian of the Kurodani Mansion: Shiozawa Toki is a TV entertainer who has a successful career in theater as well. She is known for her hilarious commentaries on men, many times poking fun at the middle-aged. Ms. Shiozawa also did some memorable voice-over work for "Rupan III - The Legend of the Gold of Babylon" (available from AnimEigo) as Lady Rosetta.

Okuni, the lady Kurodani guardian: Hyoodoo Yuki has been one of the most popular TV personalities of the last two decades. She is also a very successful radio personality, and hosts several syndicated shows.

Ernest Satow, the British interpreter: Kent Gilbert, once a lawyer from California, became a media personality in Japan, and his keen and sometimes-hilarious commentaries on Japanese politics and culture made him a celebrity in the early 80's. He is a regular TV figure, and hosts a successful show which examines some of the most bizarre yet entertaining historical facts of Japan. Kent is one of the most successful "Gaijin Talents" in Japan.

As a sidenote, Ernest Satow (b.1843), was indeed a British interpreter, for Harry Parkes, one of the many Mr. Brown-like figures that made Japan their home in the mid 1800's.

Renowned as a noted Japanologist, Satow began his study of Japan as a teen at the University College in London. In 1862, he spent several months at the British Legation in China, then transferred to Yokohama, Japan, where he was appointed an interpreter. His major assignments during the last years of Tokugawa Era included negotiations between the representatives of foreign powers present in Japan and the Shogun (1867), and accompanying Harry Parkes to demand the opening of the Port of Hyogo.

Satow, "probably the best informed foreigner in late Tokugawa Japan...wrote a pamphlet, which was immediately translated into Japanese, arguing that English policy should work towards the creation of a council of great lords, of whom the Tokugawa head would be one, under the Emperor, in order to secure binding guarantees of foreign privileges and rights." (Jansen) Later, during the Meiji Period, he travelled and wrote extensively, and continued to act as a liaison between the foreign representatives and the Japanese government. The British Embassy in Japan, built in 1872 near the Imperial Palace and rebuilt after the Great Tokyo Earthquake of 1923, still contains the cherry trees that Satow planted, during his appointment as the Minister there.

Okita Soshi, a Shinsen-Gumi (Renaissance Brigade) warrior: Akashiya Sanma's career as a comedian blossomed in the late 70's, and in the early 80's, he became a popular TV personality and actor, thanks to talk shows such as "Waratte litomo!" (the title roughly translates as "Go ahead and laugh!", but is also a pun, which can be read as "Let's laugh and be good friends!") which he often co-hosted. His acting career achieved new heights when he co-starred in a love-comedy TV series called "Danjo 7-nin Koimonogatari" (A Summer Love Story of 7 Men & Women). Following this success in the early 80's, he was linked romantically to many actresses in a series of well-publicized affairs and scandals, making him one of the most hunted celebrities in Japan as far as the tabloids were concerned. The actor has been known to make fun of those incidents himself, and his deathless line in this film, "Crooked renegades, illicit love affairs... I can't abide any such things!" is clearly an example of this.

Hijikata Toshizo, the Shinsen-Gumi warrior: Nishikawa Norio, as half of the successful comedy duo, Nishikawa Norio & Kamigata Yoshio, is a well-known celebrity who has made numerous TV, theater and movie appearances. He is also known as a writer, who has authored many best-selling books.

Junpei, the older male Kurodani guardian: Takada Junji also made himself a household name in the early 80's by appearing as a regular on shows like "Waratte litomo!". He is well-known for his sometime-lecherous behavior, especially around idol stars, but also known for his versatile acting skills.

The Renaissance Brigade

During the mid 1800's, Kondo Isami, a Shogunate loyalist and an owner of a small, little-known dojo in Tama, Musashi (now a part of Tokyo), gathered together peasants who showed strong interest in the sword. Under the leadership of Hijikata Toshizo, Okota Soshi and Kondo, the men practiced their own 'ryu' (a style, and discipline) called "Tennenrishin-ryu" (literally Nature, Logic and Heart).

During the 1860's, Anti-Shogunate activists, many of whom were ronin from major Daimyo provinces such as Satsuma, and Imperialists challenged the Tokugawa's authority more frequently than ever before. In 1863, the Shogunate sponsored Kondo's brigade of ronin, now christened "Shinsen-gumi" (which is roughly translated to "Renaissance Brigade") by authorizing it to investigate a series of crimes in the Kyoto area committed by ronin formerly resident in Daimyo provinces. That year the group uncovered a plot in which seven rebels, who were staying at the Ikeda Inn, planned to set ablaze a village in Kyoto which would have enabled them to assassinate an Aizu Daimyo. The Shinsen-gumi then arrested the rebels and executed them immediately. The incident at the Ikeda Inn is portrayed somewhat amusingly in the film.

The group, which was eventually stationed in the Edo area, was ordered to investigate anti-Shogunate activities there and to execute criminals at will. They were praised for their heroism and patriotism, but were also known for occasional rowdy behavior. The Renaissance Brigade was more seriously portrayed in an excellent 1970 film by Mifune Toshiro called "Shinsengumi."

Imperial Loyalists vs. Shogunate Supporters

As Japan in the mid 1800's witnessed the diminishment of the centralized authority of the Tokugawa government, the powerful southwestern domains, such as Choshu and Satsuma, mainly Imperial loyalists, challenged the Shogunate for control of the nation. By late 1866, the Tokugawa forces and Choshu units were at war. The former had planned to attack Choshu by surrounding its borders. The latter, a much more agile group of warriors, had an advantage as the Tokugawa forces at the time were a carelessly led collection of vassal warriors. Even though the Shogunate had strengthened its military through extensive foreign assistance --- namely through one Leon Roches, the French minister who offered military and political reform in exchange for Japan's assistance with the silk trade --- for the past couple of years, its poor tactics had disastrous results. Meanwhile, Shogun Iemochi passed away, and Tokugawa Yoshinobu (or Keiki), the Shogunate's acting chief officer, declares that "the battle would have to be broken off and seized upon the Shogun's death as a face-saving reason for a cease-fire." (Jansen)

As soon as Yoshinobu became the 15th Shogun, in the final year of the Tokugawa Era, the Shogunate undertook a major reconstruction. Yoshinobu's continued interest in French military, political and social matters was certainly instrumental in implementing policies calling for regulation of foreign relations and the 'opening' of the nation. The reform efforts essentially replaced the old Shogunate system with a successful, modernized one, much of which was later adopted by the Meiji government.

The death of Emperor Komei in 1867 sparked important changes at court. (His successor, Mutsuhito, who became the Emperor Meiji, was only a boy at the time.) In Kyoto, Imperial courtiers such as Iwakura Tomomi suggested that the imperial rule must be restored, that "the Emperor should issue orders to the Bakufu that from now on it must set aside its selfish wars, acting in accordance with the public principle... and that thereafter the Tokugawa house must work in concert with the great domains in the Emperor's service." (Jansen)

With the loyalists in Kyoto and Shogunate bureaucrats in Edo both claiming to rule the nation, Japan was clearly in need of a single central government. It also made it difficult for foreign representatives who wanted guarantees of their privileges and a clear understanding as to the channels of power: "Roches accepted the (Shogunate) as a legitimate national government and devoted his efforts to help it become a more effective one. His British counterpart Harry Parkes was not sure and suspected that Japan would not have a real government until basic changes in Edo-Kyoto relations took place." (Jansen)

In 1866 and 1867, negotiations took place between the great domains of Satsuma, Choshu and Tosa. Their agreements, all working for "the glory of the Imperial country," established a mutual defense policy, should they be attacked by Shogunate forces. The domains strove towards the goal of imperial rule and the abolishment of the Shogunate. They proposed that the Shogun be asked to step down, to again become just one of the

Daimyo, "in a new conciliar structure under the aegis of the throne." (Jansen) They threatened Yoshinobu that should the settlement fail they were prepared to use force.

By November of 1867, the Satsuma-Choshu leaders were preparing themselves for war with the Shogunate. Meanwhile, representatives from Tosa met with Yoshinobu, urging him to voluntarily restore power to Emperor Meiji. Their proposal stated that: "The court would rule, but a two-house council, made up of Daimyo and court nobles, would be established; new treaties would be worked out; an Imperial army and navy would be established; 'errors of the past' in procedure and institutions would be abolished; 'wrong customs' in the court would be reformed; and once again, self-interest would be put aside." (Jansen)

Yoshinobu concluded that the restoration of power to the court was necessary to settle the crisis facing the nation. "Several loci of power had developed and he was searching for a political system that would incorporate the various factions in such a way as to allow the new government to function effectively." (Hane) Without consulting his own government, Yoshinobu accepted the proposal. However, his resignation as Shogun, which signaled the end of almost 300 years of Tokugawa rule, did not mean that he would also step down as the head of Tokugawa Clan and its domains; his clan was bound to be "a significant force in the new order as long as this situation remained unchanged." (Hane)

The anti-Tokugawa faction felt that they were still threatened by the Tokugawa, and they were prepared to destroy the clan by force. The military leaders of the Shogunate were determined to fight, and even Roches offered Yoshinobu extensive support. The ex-Shogun, however, tried to avoid conflict, and fled to Kyoto in late January 1868, only to find Satsuma and Choshu forces waiting. (Meanwhile, several imperialist groups were on their mission to spread anti-Shogunate sentiments through certain parts of Japan. "Akage" ("Red Lion," also released by Samurai Cinema, portrays one such group and its deceived member, played by Mifune Toshiro. More information about the film, as well as history behind it, can be found at our website) At the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, the bloody, four-day-long fighting was clearly won by the Imperialists. Yoshinobu's army escaped to Edo, where it was dismantled. In April, he permitted his subordinate Shogunate official Katsu Kaishu to surrender Edo to the Imperial Army. Brief conflict followed, but "without much trouble...the whole country submitted to the rule of the Emperor..." (Sansom) Japan's feudal era had finally come to an end.

Kurodani Mansion & Mr. Brown

Sure Death 2 contains parodies of many historical facts. Although the story of Kurodani Mansion and its being involved in a deal with a foreign trader is purely fictitious, the Mansion is actually a temple in Kurodani, a village in Kyoto, a famous site where many samurai-genre movies were made. For example, one of the "Nemuri Kyoshiro" (Sleepy Eyes of Death) movies was shot there.

The foreign trader, Mr. Brown, is a composite of many western merchant types that were present in Japan during the 1860's. In particular, the character may have been mostly based on one Thomas Blake Glover (1838-1912), who headed the largest foreign trading firm in Nagasaki, where a treaty port was opened in 1859. Nagasaki became the highly active gateway to the West, where much trade as well as cultural exchange took place. Glover exploited the opportunity by profiting from Japan's interest in West: He "played a large role in importing weapons and exporting students for the anti-Tokugawa (domains) in late Tokugawa days." (Jansen) Glover, a very wealthy British merchant, was a loyalist (unlike Mr. Brown) who sold weapons to the Choshu forces during their battle (late 1866) against the Shogunate army. His business proved so profitable during the final years of Tokugawa Era that he was able to build and live in a gargantuan mansion, not unlike what appears in the film. However, as other major ports, such as Hyogo, were opened at the close of the Tokugawa Era, trade at Nagasaki declined rapidly. Glover lost most of his fortune as the new era of Meiji began.

The "Daimonji Gozan Okuribi" (Five-Mountain "Dai"-Character Fire) Festival

One of the most famous festivals in Kyoto, it has been celebrated annually since the early 1600's. It is a Buddhist event, a part of the "Bon" ceremony, which honors the spirits of the dead. Each year, on the 13th of August, bonfires are started to welcome the spirits of the ancestors. On the 16th, to help the spirits find their way back, five shaped bonfires are lit over five mountains in sequence. The "Dai" character, as it appears in the film, is the first shape to be lit. The fires can be seen from many miles away, however the entire ceremony lasts only about half an hour. This custom is duplicated by several other cities in Japan.

"Sonny" Kayo and Oriku refer to Junnosuke as "Boya." It is a word which means a boy, kid, etc., that can be used affectionately to address a young man as the two ladies in the film do often. We have chosen to render it as "Sonny".

"It's OK, it's the World Renewal!" In the late 1860's, peasants staged the so-called "Yonaoshi Ikki," uprisings to reform the society, calling for "world renewal," criticizing the Shogunate and, in many areas, the rich as well. In SD2's version, townspeople are seen dancing en masse, strutting their acrobatic maneuvers. The "Eejanaika" ("It's OK!," "Ain't it grand!," etc.) Movement of 1867 persisted in many parts of the nation for over a year.

Anachronisms

"Jidaigeki" shows traditionally remain rather faithful in portraying the past, incorporating almost everything that is historically credible. In the case of "Hissatsu", however, obvious use of anachronisms was all part of the fun

From the beginning, cowboy-movie-influenced music, produced and composed by pop and rock music legends, were a staple. Jokes-of-the-day and parodies of other TV shows were often featured. Hide's hairstyle, a modern hairdo, would've been alien in the mid-1800's Japan. Also, some of the most popular assassins in the series were known for their X-ray vision, complete with oscillograms of enemy's heartbeat!

Research Notes:

A considerable amount of historical research was necessary in translating Samurai Cinema's films and in compiling the information contained here. Among the many sources we have consulted, the following were especially helpful:

1) "Tokugawa Japan - The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan" Chie Nakane, Shinzaburoo Ooishi and Conrad Totman, eds. Univ. of Tokyo Press, 1990 2) "Japan - A Historical Survey" Mikiso Hane. Scribner, 1972 3) "A History of Japan: 1615 - 1867" George Sanson. Stanford Univ. Press, 1963 4) "The Emergence of Meiji Japan" Marius Jensen, ed. Cambridge University Press, 1995

Production Staff

Japanese Production Staff - SURE DEATH 1

The Shochiku Company presents:

SURE DEATH! (Hissatsu!)

Produced by Yamanouchi Hisashi, Sakurai Yoozo & Nomura Yoshiki

Screenplay: Nogami Tatsuo & Yoshida Go

Music: Hirao Masaaki

Photography: Ishihara Koo

Lighting: Nakajima Toshio

Art Direction: Yoshino Tadataka, Kurahashi Toshio and Kitao Masahiro

Sound Recording: Hirose Kooichi

Mixing: Honda Akihito

Editing: Sonoji Kooichi

Stills: Hasegawa Soobei

Director's Assistant: Sujima Masaru

Assistant Director: Suzuki Ikko

Continuity: Nozaki Yaeko

Key Grip: Nakayama Toshio

Camera Assistant: Akita Hidetsugu

Assistant Editor: Sekiya Kenji

Sound Assistant: Yamamoto Kenji
Effects: Suzuki Shin'ichi
Set Decoration: Shinei Arts
Accessories: Tamae Ken'ichi
Costumes: Shochiku Costumes
Makeup: Yagi Katsura
Film Developing: Toyo Laboratories

Ekuran Acting Group

Production Advancement: Suzuki Masaki & Ooshiman Munehisa
Production Assistants: Watanabe Yoshio & Kuroda Mitsushige
Titles: Itomi Keinan
Special Effects: Shishido Taizen
Fight Choreography: Kusumoto Eiichi
Puppeteers: Toyotake Sakitayu, Tsuruzawa Seisuke & Tsuruzawa Hachisuke
Puppet Director: Yoshida Minosuke
Instrumentals: Mochizuki Tamezo
Special Thanks: Kyoto Movie Company, Ltd., Asakusa Hoodo, Daikakuji Temple & Kyoto Shimogamo Shrine

Directed by Sadanaga Masahisa

Japanese Production Staff - SURE DEATH 2

The Shochiku Company Presents:

Sure Death II - Brown, You Bounder!
Hissatsu! Buraun-kan no Kaibutsu-tachi (Sure Death! The Monsters in Brown's Mansion)

Produced by Yamauchi Hisashi (Asahi) & Sakurai Yoozo
Screenplay: Yoshida Takeshi
Music: Hirao Masaaki
Photography: Ishihara Koo
Lighting: Nakajima Toshio
Assistant Director: Sushima Masaru
Assistant Producer: Takahashi Shinji
Publicity: Matsumoto Jun & Nagasaki Naosada (Asahi)
Art: Kurahashi Toshinori & Kitao Masahiro
Sound Recording: Hirose Kooichi
Mixing: Honda Fumihito
Editing: Sonoji Kooichi
Continuity: Nozaki Yaeko
Set Decoration: Tamai Ken'ichi
Stills: Hasegawa Sohei
Production Advancement: Suzuki Masayoshi & Nishimura Noriki
Talent Coordinator: Kitsuji Ryuuzo
Assistant Director: Kinoshita Yoshiyuki
Camera Assistant: Akita Hidetsugu
Lighting Assistant: Nakayama Toshio
Sound Assistant: Tahara Shigetsuna
Art Assistant: Ieki Kazumi
Assistant Editor: Sekiya Kenji
Sets: Shinei Arts & Crafts
Wigs: Yagi Katsura
Costumes: Shochiku Costumes
Props: Takatsu Shookai
Film Developing: Toyo Developing
Ekran Acting Group
Fight Choreography: Kusumoto Eiichi

Special Techniques: Shishido Taizen
Effects: Suzuki Shin'ichi
Special Costume Help: Asakusa Hinoodoo Kuaji
Production Managers: Watanabe Toshio & Kuroda Mitsushige
Special Photographic Effects: Fujihara Saburoo
Calligraphy: Itomi Keinan

Special Thanks to the People of: Kitano Tenmangu (Kyoto), Shimogamo Shrine (Kyoto) & Himeji Castle (a National Treasure)

Special Thanks: Reishinkai, Kyoto Movie Co., Ltd. & Shozan Co., Ltd.

Directed by Hirose Joo

US Production Staff (Subtitling)

Executive Producer: Robert J. Woodhead
Translator: Shin Kurokawa
Dialogue Checker: Ueki Natsumi
Cultural Consultant: Hisayo Klotz
Subtitling Director: Robert J. Woodhead

Japanese Cast - SURE DEATH 1

Fujita Makoto as Nakamura Mondo
Mitamura Kunihiko as Kagiri Shokunohid
Ayukawa Izumi as "Jack-of-All-Trades" Nokayo
Sugai Kin as Sen
Shiraki Mari as Ritsu
Hikaru Ippei as Nishi Junnosuke
Yamauchi Toshio as Hittou Dooshin
Hayashi Keiko as Otami
Nakajyoo Kiyoshi as "Shamisen Shop" Yuuji
Yamada Isuzu as "Shamisen Shop" Oriku
Ashiya Gannosuke as Masa
Nakai Kie as Oyoo
Asaoka Yukiji as Okoo
Hino Shoohei as Senta
Ken Naoko as Oyone
Hamada Shuuri as Okimi
Miri Eiji as Shinkichi

Saitoo Seiroku, Tako Hachiroo, Akatsuka Fujio, Ishidoo Yoshio, Yanagisawa Shingo, Hashimoto Isao, Kusano, Daigo, Tanaka Kooji, Omae Hitoshi, Yoshida Ryoozen, Kitamura Shooichi, Takemura Haruhiko, Ooshita Tetsuya, Tomogane Toshio, Takashina Masahiro, Sugi Kinya, Sugiyama Takashi, Nagae Yoohei, Kawaguchi Akiyoshi, Kato Hiroki, Ichikawa Kako, Inoue Yukari, Ito Masako, Uchida Tsuyumi, Ogasawara Machiko,, Kataoka Koozaburoo, Ito Katsumi, Kitami Tadakazu, Mitaka Kenji, Higashida Tatsuo, Inoue Akira & Shiho Koo

and Kataoka Takao as Konotake Asanosuke

Japanese Cast - SURE DEATH 2

Fujita Makoto as Nakamura Mondo
Ayukawa Izumi as "Jack-of-All-Trades" Kayo
Kyoomoto Masaki as Ryuu the Braidmaker
Murakami Hiroaki as Masa the Florist
Hikaru Ippei as Nishi Junnosuke
Yamauchi Toshio as Chief Officer Tanaka
Umezu Sakai as Tamasuke
Shiraki Mari as Ritsu
Sugai Kin as Sen

Morita Kensaku as Tatsunoshin
Nakai Kie as Oyoo
Kashwabara Yoshie as Osen
Okita Hiroyuki as Saiichiroo
Shoofukutei Tsurubei as Kakusuke of Ushitora
Shiozawa Toki as Bamboo Rake Otoki
Hyoodo Yuki as Iron-neck Okuni
Takada Junji as Monkey-running Junpei
Kaneda Tatsunosuke as Daikokuya Tadayasu
Nishikawa Norio as Hijikata Toshizo
Kent Gilbert as Ernest Satoo
Omae Hitoshi as the Daikokuya Enforcer
Akashiya Sanma as Okita Sooshi
Hira Mikijiro as Inaba Masakuni
Yamada Isuzu as Oriku
Fujioka Shigenori as the Boss of Saruya-cho
Ryu Kotaroo as Shota of Sanshodama
Paul Selesky as Mr. Brown

Oosaki Noriko & Yoshida Noriko & Tanaka Yuuka as the Geisha

and Mino Monta as the Narrator

Song: "Sayonara Sazanka"
Performed by: Fujita Emiko
Lyrics: Uyama Kiyotaroo
Composer: Hirao Masaaki
Arrangement: Ryuuzaki Takaji
Released by RiverStar Music