

MATSUDAIRA Nariatsu (the target)

The young lord of the Tatebayashi fief is probably modeled after the real life figure MATSUDAIRA Nariyoshi (also called MATSUDAIRA Tokunosuke 1819-1839), who was the 19th (or perhaps 20th) son of the 11th Tokugawa Shogun TOKUGAWA Ienari (1787-1837). He was also the younger brother of the 12th Tokugawa Shogun TOKUGAWA Ieyoshi (1837-1853).

His father Ienari reportedly had 16 wives and concubines and 26 sons and 27 daughters -- Ienari obviously took his father's request to have many children for the family a bit too seriously. He had his children adopted into the families of various Daimyo in order to strengthen their ties with the Shogunate family and maintain control over many fiefs. Ienari was notorious for his lack of interest in politics, and having so many children to support saddled the government with immense debts, which led to the decline of the Tokugawa government.

MATSUDAIRA Nariatsu was actually Nariyoshi's adoptive father's name. We do not know why the filmmakers decided to do this.

MATSUDAIRA Nariatsu (1783-1839), who died aged 57, adopted Nariyoshi who died when he was 19 years old -- a perfect fit for this story. The circumstances surrounding his death are obscure, which is also very convenient for dramatic purposes.

Dialogue Notes, not explained by captions in the subtitles:

“None of you will be receiving the relief of kaishaku. Follow due process and gash your stomachs open by yourselves.”

“Kaishaku” entails the meaning of “relieving” (from the suffering of death, “euthanasia”) and it is the “merciful” part of the seppuku ceremony where a “second” severs the head of the samurai committing seppuku, after the stomach has been slit all the way.

“If any of you don’t have the courage to cross-cut your stomachs, I’ll do kaishaku for you.”

The “cross-cut” is considered to be the ultimate form of seppuku, in which the belly is first slit horizontally, then vertically, making a “+” cut instead of the mere horizontal.

Bios:

Eiichi KUDO - Director (7/17/1929 - 2/6/2006)

Best known for this trilogy and the legendary TV series “Kizu darake no tenshi” (Injured Angels) and “Sure Death” (Hissatsu), Kudo directed over 30 films between 1956 and 1999. His 1982 film Yaju-Deka was nominated for the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. In 2001, he won a post-mortem Special Award at the Mainichi Film Concours.

Akira IFUKUBE - Music (5/31/1914 - 9/23/2000)

Composer of classical music and film scores, perhaps best known for his work on the soundtracks of the Godzilla film, Ifukube was awarded the Order of Culture by the Japanese government and subsequently the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Third Class.

Koutaro SATOMI - Actor (11/28/1936 -)

Satomi is best known for his roles in the longest running Samurai TV series of all time, MITO KOMON, which lasted 42 years, 43 series, and 1227 episodes until 12/19/2011, a Guinness Book World Record. At various times, he was part of the cast in three different main roles; Suke-san, Kaku-san and finally as Mito Komon himself.

He also appeared in all of three films in The Samurai Revolution Trilogy. He plays one of eleven, MITAMURA Kenshiro in this film.

Ko NISHIMURA - Actor (1/25/1923 - 4/29/1997)

Nishimura has appeared in supporting roles in many films, including three made by Akira KUROSAWA but is best known for taking on the title role in MITO KOMON. For fans of MITO KOMON in Japan, this film is like watching two actors who have played James Bond in the same film -- though they would argue about who is Sean Connery, and who is Daniel Craig!

He appeared two films of The Samurai Revolution Trilogy (13 Assassins and this film). He plays IDO Daijyuro in this film.

Isao NATSUYAGI - Actor (12/25/1939 -)

In a career that started in 1966 and continues to this day, NATSUYAGI has played the lead and the sidekick, the hero and the villain, the noble samurai and the homeless wretch. His skills in Karate, Akido and horseback riding have come in handy in many a film, and his filmography includes such films as Goyokin, Onimasa, Mikogami III, Warm Water Under a Red Bridge, and (one we love just for the title alone) Female Prisoner #701 Scorpion.