

“Shadow Hunters” takes place sometime during the Tokugawa Era (approximately 1603-1868, also called Edo Period), the period named for the 15 generations of Tokugawa Shogun (Military Overlords) who ruled the nation, maintaining a relatively static society, for over 250 years. This period of military-rule was characterized by its relatively peaceful order overall, clear division of the social hierarchy, extravagance by the privileged classes, isolation from the West, and a lot of convoluted treachery, as well as many important cultural and intellectual developments.

For many centuries, Japan had a form of feudal system, in which the servants, vassals and palace guards of the Daimyo (the military Lords of independent regional domains, who maintained a castle, a home base, and several strategically-located satellite fortresses) were granted a piece of land (a fief), or in most cases, a stipend that came with a specific official post. In return, the vassals were expected to dedicate their lives to the service of their masters. The relationships between masters & vassals were based on this reciprocity of services and rewards, and were emotionally very strong.

Almost two-hundred Daimyo-ruled domains and their associated castle-towns existed in the early Tokugawa period, whose sizes varied according to the Daimyo's holdings and the agricultural production of the fiefs under their control. However, the number of Daimyo decreased quickly during this era, as the Tokugawa Shogunate practiced strict enforcement over Daimyo domains to reduce their power.

Since in most cases this maneuvering was political in nature, both the Daimyo and the Shogunate employed a large contingent of spies, and despite the code of Bushido (“The Way of the Warrior”), betrayal of a Lord by his supposedly loyal servants was a common event.

“When we leave Izushi territory, we'll split into three groups.”

Izushi is centered around the present-day town of Toyooka in Hyogo Prefecture. Historically, Izushi is one of five provinces that originally made up the Kansai Region.

Izushi Castle, Tajima province

Tajima was once a province in what is now Hyogo Prefecture, bordering the Sea of Japan.

“From Ise to Mikawa, they raced eastwards on the great Tokaido highway.”

A popular pilgrimage area during the Edo period, Ise is located in Mie Prefecture.

The Tokaido (Eastern Coast Highway) was the greatest of the five major roads in feudal Japan, linking the home of the Emperor (Kyoto) with the home of the Shogun (Tokyo). Fifty-three official “stations” along the road served as rest stops and included such amenities as inns, restaurants and shops. Today, the Tokaido has become a heavily traveled highway route that roughly runs along the same path and extends to Osaka. A popular train route, the Tokaido Main Line, also runs along the route as well.

“If they go to Suruga on the Tokaido, their next stop should logically be Hakone.”

Hakone is a popular tourist area in the Kanto region of Japan, full of scenic views, relaxing hot springs and a national park. The Hakone post along the Tokaido marks the beginning of the Kanto region.

“So why would they go the long way and take the Koshu route?”

The Koshu Kaido is one of five major roads of feudal Japan. Koshu, also known as Kai, is a landlocked mountainous region that includes Mt. Fuji. The Kobotoke Pass in the film is also located in Koshu.

“I don't care how good those Shadow Hunters are, they're no match for ol' Ikkaku's scythe and chain.”

Ikkaku's weapon of choice is similar to a weapon called a kusarigama. However, instead of a long staff with a scythe, the kusarigama is a sickle on a short staff. Both weapons include a weighted chain (or in Ikkaku's case, a morning star) attached to the staff. The kusarigama was considered a secondary weapon and used mainly by ninja.

“They told me that their ancestors were members of the tragic Heike clan.”

One of the most famous conflicts in Japanese military history were the Genpei Wars. Fought from 1180-1185, between the Taira (Heike) clan and Minamoto (Genji) clan, a series of bloody battles were fought for control of the Imperial throne--and ultimately control of Japan. In the final clash of the wars, the battle of Dannoura, the Minamoto clan defeated the Taira clan in a naval engagement at the Kanmon Straits in southern Japan.

During the battle, the Heike samurai, outnumbered and beaten, began to commit suicide by throwing themselves into the water. Seeing this, many of the clan's women and children embraced death in the same manner. According to legend, the few surviving Heike clan members retreated into mountainous areas and founded small villages where they lived in secrecy. Many noblemen, women and children were among the Heike clan members on these boats, and followed suit as well. According to legend, the surviving members throughout the country were said to have retreated into the mountains of Japan and form small villages.

The wars resulted in the establishment of the first Shogun of Japan, Minamoto Yoritomo, but the more infamous, bloody aftermath that saw thousands of Heike clan members commit suicide have fueled legends and a few ghost stories about the doomed clan.

Possibly the most famous re-telling of the Genpei Wars is “Heike Monogatari” (The Tale of Heike).

“Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu.” (Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life)

Sunlight's chant is a mantra from Japanese Buddhism. An individual who recites this is said to be able to achieve a spiritual peace of mind. It is also believed that if a person recites it at their death, they will experience a spiritual rebirth in a heaven alongside the Buddha of Spiritual Light, Amida Butsu. Sunlight's chants toward Chitose is part of the belief that the reciter can also choose to transfer their spiritual peace to another individual.

Creator / Story: Saito Takao

Born in Osaka in 1936, Saito made his professional debut in 1955 with the manga “Kuki Danshaku” and later opened his own studio, Saito-Production Co., Ltd., in 1960. In 1968, Saito released his most popular manga, “Golgo 13,” which became one of the longest running comics in Japanese history. Along with his success, Takao also helped usher in a new type of manga known as gekiga (drama pictures), a movement which brought more realism and maturity to both the storylines and artwork of the genre.

Director: Masuda Toshio

Born in 1927, Toshio has been a prolific director (over fifty films!) and an early pioneer in Japan's “Nikkatsu Action” genre. Working at the peak of the Japanese New Wave in the late fifties, Toshio began his career by directing Ishihara Yujiro in “Sabita Naifu” (Rusty Knife) and “Akai Hatoba” (Red Quay). The two men went on to work together on over a dozen films--many of them favorite cult classics today. His best-known work came in 1970, when, along with Kinji Fukasaku, he co-directed the Japanese sequences for “Tora! Tora! Tora!” By the late seventies, he tried his hand at the field of animation and successfully collaborated with Leiji Matsumoto on the television and film series “Space Battleship Yamato,” which was released in the United States as “Star Blazers.” Toshio has twice been nominated for best director by the Japanese Motion Picture Academy, for the films “Shaso” and “203 Kochi.”

Producer / Muroto Jubei: Ishihara Yujiro (December 28, 1934-July 17, 1987)

One of the most legendary stars in Japanese motion picture history, Ishihara Yujiro was, at the peak of his success, a box office superstar and a pop culture icon. Blending a rebellious acting style with a soothing singing voice, he helped usher in the era of film-making known as the Japanese New Wave with his 1956 debut film "Taiyo no Kisetsumi" and the sensational "Kurutta Kajitsu," both based upon the novels written by Ishihara Shintaro, his elder brother, and a series of films about post-war Japanese youths.

From the late fifties to the early sixties Ishihara was a powerful force in the Nikkatsu Action genre. Films such as "Sabita Naifu" (Rusty Knife) and "Akai Hatoba" (Red Quay) established his "tough guy" image, and in 1958 he won the Best New Actor Blue Ribbon Award for his roles in "Arashi o Yobu Otoko" (Man who Causes a Storm) and "Washi to Taka" (Eagle and Hawk).

In the early sixties, he formed Ishihara Productions and made a handful of films, including such box office hits as "Kurobe no Taiyo" and "Eiko e no 5,000 Kilo". Over the course of the seventies, he produced and appeared in a few popular television shows and served as a protegee to several young actors, most notably Watari Tetsuya. Yujiro's final role was as the voice of Captain Harlock in the classic anime "[Arcadia of my Youth](#)," available from AnimEigo.

Sadly, Yujiro succumbed to cancer at the age of 52. On the thirteenth anniversary of his death, over 150,000 fans brought flowers and offerings to Sojiji Temple to mourn his passing and celebrate his legacy. Today, the Yujiro Memorial Museum stands in Otaru, Hokkaido where he spent early childhood days. On a side note, Ishihara's brother, Shintaro, is the current Governor of Tokyo.

Moonlight: Narita Mikio (January 31, 1935-April 9, 1990)

A veteran actor of over sixty films, Mikio is best known for appearing in several of Kinji Fukasaku's features, the most famous of which were the classics "The Yakuza Papers: Vol. 2" and "The Yakuza Papers: Vol. 3." Perhaps his most popular role was that of Jumonji, the chess playing samurai, in the 1965 film "Zatoichi and the Chess Expert."

Sunlight: Uchida Ryohei (February 5, 1931-June 15, 1984)

A talented character-actor who appeared in over fifty films, Ryohei began his career during the peak of the Japanese New Wave, moving from genre to genre as circumstances required. Classics such as Kinji Fukasaku's "Kyokatsu Koso Waga Jinsei" (Blackmail is my Life) gave way to chambara films, "Kiba Okaminosuke" (Samurai Wolf), yakuza films, "Nihon Boryoku-dan: Kumicho" (Japanese Organized Crime Boss), and serious dramas, "Seishun no Satsujin Sha" (The Youth Killer). In the late seventies Ryohei appeared on television as the martial arts master Tate Tetsushu on the short lived live-action television series "Battle Hawk", and later in the popular television mini-series "The Water Margin."

Echo of Destiny:

"My name is Domoto Mukaku of the Iga clan. And at my side is... Maki, mistress of the Kunoichi." - Mukaku

Kunoichi, or female ninja, acted primarily as spies or messengers. Their training emphasized specialized techniques that included disguise, sexual manipulation, feminine charm, and the use of small, concealable weapons. Overall, their training was very similar to that of their male counterparts, but focused more on developing their psychological skills and female intuition.

Many of the young girls that eventually became kunoichi were originally orphans or simply girls from poor families and broken homes. Older kunoichi agents recruited and raised these girls, providing them with not only food and shelter, but also strict training in the finer arts of being a female ninja.

Being a gay samurai was no protection against kunoichi, as some men were also trained in their arts.

Carousel Maki

The mistress of the Kunoichi is played by none other than the popular transvestite actor, Carousel Maki. Born Tetsuo Hirahara on November 26, 1942, Maki has appeared in a handful of films and remains one of the most famous "okama" (transvestites) in Japan.

"What the heck. I mean, we've come all the way to Bungo province..." - Sunlight

Bungo was a province on the island of Kyushu, in southern Japan. Today, the area is known as Oita Prefecture.

"Like the flowing Sumida River... the lamps of the Yoshiwara... the Kanda festival..." - Sunlight

Sumida River: Flowing through the eastern part of Edo (Tokyo), from north to south and into Edo bay, the Sumida River is the closest of the Edo rivers to the city center. For that reason, it became a popular and crowded recreation area for the people of Tokyo.

The Lamps of the Yoshiwara: The main Edo (Tokyo) red-light district was called Yoshiwara. At one time, as many as 3,000 Japanese women worked there as prostitutes.

The Kanda festival: This is a Mikoshi festival which takes place on May 15th at the Kanda Jinja Shrine in Tokyo near Kanda station.

Mikoshi are portable Shinto shrines that serve as the vehicle of a divine spirit. Usually, a Mikoshi resembles a miniature building, with pillars, walls, a roof, a veranda and a railing. It takes a team of 50 to 100 people, working in shifts of 30 to 50 to carry a Mikoshi, which could weigh as much as several tons.

"Understood. What is your interest in our small, country fief?" - Hoshino

A fief is a piece of land held by a clan under the feudal system, consisting of lands or revenue-producing property granted by a lord in return for a vassal's service.

Production Staff

Japanese Production Staff Shadow Hunters

A Toho Co., Ltd. and Ishihara Productions production

Producers: Ishihara Yujiro, Okuda Kikumaru & Kobayashi Masahiko
Original work by: Saito Takao, Saito-Pro Production ('Shukan Host' syndication)

Screenplay: Ikegami Kanao

Cinematography: Kanau Mitsuji

Art direction: Kobayashi Masayoshi

Recording: Sato Yasuhiro

Lighting: Fujibayashi Ko

Edited by: Watanabe Shiro

Music by: Ishihara Yujiro, Hirose Kenjiro, Osawa Yasuro, Sera Jo, Inomata Takeshi & Sound Ltd.

Theme song: Teichiku Records, "Shadow Hunters"

Lyrics: Yasutomi Yasushi

Composer: Hirose Kenjiro

Performed by: Ishihara Yujiro

Costume Design: Yagyu Etsuko
Assistant Director: Ichige Katsumi
Props: Koyama Teruyoshi
Set Decoration: Yamamoto Kenichiro & Matsumoto Yoshihiro
Production Manager: Otake Katsuhiko
Swordfighting Choreographer: Kuze Ryu
Stunts: Shishido Daizen & Group
Cooperation: Seishu Shochikubai
Production Advertising: Nihon Geino Kikaku
Costumes: Dai-ichi Costumes Kyoto Costumes
Wigs: Yamadaya
Props Supply: Takatsu Eiga Props
Film Development: Tokyo Laboratory Co., Ltd.

Directed by: Masuda Toshio

Echo of Destiny

Produced by: Ishihara Yujiro, Okuda Kikumaru & Kobayashi Masahiko
Original work by: Saito Takao, Saito-Pro Production ('Shukan Host' syndication)
Screenplay: Ikegami Kanao
Cinematography: Kanau Mitsuji
Art direction: Kobayashi Masayoshi
Recording: Sato Yasuhiro
Lighting: Fujibayashi Ko
Edited by: Watanabe Shiro
Music by: Ishihara Yujiro & Tamaki Hiroki

Theme song: Teichiku Records, "Shadow Hunters"
Lyrics: Yasutomi Yasushi
Composer: Osawa Yasuro
Arrangement: Kotani Ju
Singer: Ishihara Yujiro

Costume Design: Yagyu Etsuko
Assistant Director: Katagiri Yasuo
Props: Koyama Teruyoshi
Set Decoration: Yamamoto Kenichiro & Matsumoto Yoshiharu
Production Manager: Otake Katsuhiko
Swordfighting Choreographer: Kuze Ryu
Stunts: Shishido Daizen & Group
Still Photos: Nakayama Akira
Cooperation: Seishu Shochikubai
Casting: Daimon Minoru, Arai Gan-e
Costumes: Dai-ichi Costumes, Kyoto Costumes
Wigs: Yamadaya
Props Supply: Takatsu Eiga Props
Film Development: Tokyo Laboratory Co., Ltd.

Directed by: Masuda Toshio

US Production Staff (Subtitling)

Executive Producers: Robert J. Woodhead, Natsumi Ueki & Janice Hindle
Production Manager: Bobby Engelmann
Producer: Brian Godwin
Production Assistant: Branson Moore
Translator: David Rowe-Caplan

Cast

Shadow Hunters

Ishihara Yujiro (as Muroto Jubei)
Uchida Ryohei (as "Sunlight")
Narita Mikio (as "Moonlight")

Asaoka Ruriko, Ebara Shinjiro, Honda Michiko, Kusanagi Kojiro, Tamagawa Isao, Kuno Shiro, Fukae Shoki, Muto Akio, Kihara Tsuchihiro, Harumi Yuzo, Horii Eiko, Shirakawa Keiko, Kasai Kazuhiko, Chico Roland, Kariya Shunsuke, Arai Ganei, Kikuchi Kenichi, Kahara Bumon, Kamota Kiyoshi, Yamagishi Emiko, Tsujimura Seishi, Kuwata Tetsuya, Otani Kazuo, Arakura Hiroshi, Harada Kunji, Omaeda Takeshi, Daimon Minoru, Okamoto Hisato, Inagaki Minoru, Kurata Yuji & Waka Koma

Narrator: Urano Mitsuru

Tanba Tetsuro & Tatsumi Ryutarō

Echo of Destiny

Ishihara Yujiro (as Muroto Jubei)
Uchida Ryohei (as "Sunlight")
Narita Mikio (as "Moonlight")

Natsu Junko, Kato Yoshi, Aoki Yoshiro, Fukae Shoki, Carousel Maki, Shiraki Mari, Takagi Jiro, Sahara Kenji, Kariya Shunsuke, Ito Keiryō, Kasai Kazuhiko, Enoki Hyoe, Matsuyama Shinichi, Kahara Bumon, Miyashita Junko, Isayama Hiroko, Seto Yuki, Yagi Junko, Yamagishi Emiko, Fukida Reiko, Fuji Megumi, Maki Keiko, Omaeda Takeshi, Mori Ryuji, Kimura Shohei, Otani Kazuo, Kuwata Tetsuya, Ai Koji, Sawa Mitsuru, Hika Kazuko, Saeki Minako, Suzuki Etsuko, Takase Michiko, Nishimura Yuitsu, Takasugi Ryo & Tanba Tetsuro