

Shinobi no Mono 1 - Translation & Cultural Notes

About the Film

Shinobi no Mono is the first film in a massively popular ninja series which sparked the first “ninja boom” in Japan. Award-winning director Satsuo YAMAMOTO helmed the first film of the series, immediately getting rid of the fabricated, special effects laden look of the past and moving toward a more rustic look and feel, more akin to the realities of ninja life.

In order to achieve his vision, Satsuo developed his film by focusing on a list of criteria:

1. A ninja's lifestyle, specifically living in the shadows and the acceptance of dying namelessly.
2. The ninja's place in the history of Japan.
3. The ninja's code of behavior and power hierarchy.
4. The individual life of ninja, their struggle and the sacrifice of not having a normal family life.
5. Realistic ninja tricks. The use of tools, explosives, poisons, and their manipulation of animals (for example, making rats run to shift attention away from them).
6. Ninja house secrets (hidden doors, escape doors, etc.).
7. Espionage skills (information control skills, group collaboration skills, etc.).
8. Surviving torture.

Satsuo's attempt was quite successful, critically and commercially. The realism of Shinobi no Mono created a new benchmark in the history of cinema and forever changed the public's perception of the ninja, making it much more realistic in nature.

Ninja

In Japanese culture, a ninja is a highly skilled warrior trained for dangerous stealth missions similar to those of modern day special forces like the US Navy Seals or British SAS. The exact origin of the ninja is still unknown, though they are thought to have first appeared in 14th Century feudal Japan (it could have been earlier, ninjas are good at not being noticed), and they remained active from the Kamakura to the Edo period. They are known to have engaged in sabotage, espionage, scouting, and assassination missions as a means of destabilizing enemy fiefs, either in the service of their employers or as an underground ninja organization waging guerilla warfare.

The word ninja is the on'yomi (Chinese) reading of the two kanji used to write shinobi-no-mono, which is the native Japanese word for people who practice ninjutsu. The term shinobi has been traced back as far as the late 8th century and means “be patient” or “quiet acting”, while mono means “person”. These terms became popular in post-World War II Japan, while the pre-war term for ninja was ninjutsu-zukai, which means “one who uses the art of remaining unperceived.” In Japan, the word shinobi and its variants are often used instead of ninja. While ninjas were almost exclusively men, some women are known to have been ninjas as well, called kunoichi. These women specialized in espionage, sometimes of a most intimate kind.

Ninjas as a group were first written about in 15th century feudal Japan, when conflicts between smaller clans favored the use of guerrilla warfare and assassination as a necessary alternative to frontal assault. The Samurai Code of Bushido forbade such tactics as dishonorable, so ninjas were hired to carry out their “dirty work”. Though typically considered to be merely assassins, in reality, they were warriors in all senses of the word. One of the most well-known ninjas, Hanzo HATTORI (who ruled the ninjas of central Iga), is classically depicted in armor similar to that of a samurai.

There is no evidence that historical ninjas limited themselves to all-black suits. It was more probable that they wore camouflage based upon dark colors such as dark red and blue, or white suits for concealment in the snow. Some may have been dressed like samurai or peasants. The stereotypical black-garbed ninja came from the Kabuki theater, where “invisible” stage hands (kuroko) would dress in black and move props around the

stage. Building on this willing suspension of disbelief, ninjas came to be portrayed in the theater in similar black suits, implying to the audience that the ninja were also invisible.

Ninja boots featured a unique split-toe design which improved gripping and climbing, and they were soft enough to be virtually silent. Ninja also attached special spikes to the bottoms of the boots called ashiko. Many ninja attached wooden pads called ashiaro to their feet to disguise their tracks as animal paws. They are also known to have worn a small ring on their finger called a shobo, which was a small notch of wood used to hit assailant's pressure points, sometimes causing temporary paralysis. Ninja used special short swords called ninjaken, which are smaller than katana but larger than wakizashi (the long and short swords of the samurai), and they also used shuriken throwing weapons commonly referred to as "throwing stars", even though the blades took on a variety of different shapes (ranging anywhere from a basic three-point triangle design up to the more intricate eight-tipped "snowflake" designs, and also included spike-like shapes).

The ninja's most unique and well-known types of weapons and tricks involved various uses of gunpowder. Smoke bombs and firecrackers with timed fuses were used to aid in escape or create diversions, Ozutsu (cannons) were used to launch fiery sparks or projectiles, and small bombs called metsubushi ("eye closers") were made by filling bamboo segments or hollow eggs with sand or metal dust, then thrown at assailants to blind them. Even land mines were sometimes employed. The secrets of ninja pyrotechnics have always been strictly guarded by the hidden ninja clans.

Ninja in Pop Culture

As mentioned earlier, the ninja craze began during the 1950s and 1960s in Japan, with several films and books. Shinobi no Mono is largely credited as the film series which is responsible for the original craze in Japan, as well as the 1962 Japanese TV series called The Samurai. The ninja theme has remained popular in media around the world, expanding into countless comic books, TV shows, and video games. The first major appearance of ninja in Western pop culture was in the 1967 James Bond film, You Only Live Twice, which also borrowed many elements from Shinobi no Mono (English screenwriter Roald Dahl was shown the film during a 1960s trip to Japan). Western fascination with the ninja took off in the 1980s with a slew of ninja movies. Modern depictions show ninja as either groups of redshirts** attacking in large numbers or as almost invulnerable lone warriors. Erotic art has also been a popular medium of the ninja theme since the late 19th century, and Japanese Ninja literature and cinema still contain a powerful element of eroticism, including pornography which focuses on ninja women.

Shinobi no Mono Ninjutsu Advisors

The first two films of the series credit one Yoshiaki (Masaaki) HATSUMI as a ninjutsu consultant, but it is widely speculated that his master and trainer, Toshitsugu TAKAMATSU ("the last living true ninja") also worked on the film. Masaaki HATSUMI is the founder and current head of the Bujinkan Dojo martial arts organization, and currently resides and teaches in Tokyo. Beginning in childhood, Masaaki studied most of the popular martial arts but began questioning modern martial arts training after instructing American soldiers in the art of judo. While studying ancient Japanese weaponry, he learned of Toshitsugu, and immediately became his student in 1957, regularly taking 15-hour train rides to study with the legendary master. He did this almost every weekend for 15 years, until Takamatsu's death in 1972. Masaaki has held training seminars for law enforcement organizations including the FBI, CIA, the Mossad, and for police in Britain, France, and Germany. Besides his role in Shinobi no Mono, he was also the martial arts advisor to several other film and TV productions, including the previously mentioned You Only Live Twice, in which he also plays a small speaking role as Tanaka's assistant on the train.

For this reason, most of the ninja technology that appears in Shinobi no Mono (stances, weaponry, and techniques) is historically accurate and fairly realistic, though it's said that after the second movie, things become a little bit more dramatic and slightly less realistic, though not as prone to exaggeration as is typical in today's portrayal of the "hollywood" ninja.

Historical Characters

Goemon ISHIKAWA (1558-1594)

Goemon was a historical figure of the Azuchi Momoyama Period (1573-1598) who became a folk hero. Though he may have just been a simple though notorious bandit, in legend he became a highly skilled ninja trained by none other than Sandayu MOMOCHI, founder of Iga style ninjutsu, and head of the southern ninja. Goemon is often called the "Japanese Robin Hood" because he is said to have indulged in the famous tactic of "stealing from the rich, and giving to the poor."

Not much else is known about Ishikawa except that he was a thief who operated in the Kyoto area. There's evidence he may have been a member of the Akechi clan, and he was captured and executed in 1594 by being boiled alive in a kettle of oil after a failed assassination attempt on Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI.

The details of his death vary; one account says he failed because he knocked a bell off a table, awakening the guards. He was then boiled alive along with his young son, whose life he supposedly saved by holding him above the oil. Another account describes Hideyoshi's mystical incense burner as catching Goemon in the act, and his whole family was boiled in the same pot. Either way, his horrible demise has given his moniker to a type of bathtub: a large iron kettle-shaped tub is now called a Goemon-buro.

Besides being the subject of the Shinobi no Mono films, Goemon has been the subject of many Kabuki plays, and has also made appearances in several video games, including The Legend of Mystical Ninja (SNES), in which he is the main character. In the popular Lupin the Third series, Ishikawa Goemon XII is a trusted sidekick to the titular detective.

Nobunaga ODA (1534-1582)

Known to have a quick temper with sudden bursts of anger, Nobunaga was a powerful warlord during the Sengoku period who almost achieved his dream of a unified Japan.

At age 17, Nobunaga's father, Nobuhide, unexpectedly died. This incident created conflict within the clan, as Nobuhide's brother, Nobutomo, challenged his nephew for leadership in Owari province.

Over the next eight years, the Oda clan experienced internal strife, as political assassinations and broken alliances littered the province.

However, by age 25, Nobunaga had successfully eliminated all opposition within his clan and united the Owari province. A year later, in 1560, he achieved his first major victory by successfully leading 3,000 troops against Yoshimoto IMAGAWA's 25,000 troops at the Battle of Okehazama. This battle was not only significant for bringing his name to national prominence, but also for the alliance Nobunaga forged with Ieyasu TOKUGAWA (whose name at the time was Motoyasu MATSUDAIRA).

In 1567, Nobunaga captured Inabayama Castle in the Mino province and changed the name of the castle and surrounding city to Gifu (in tribute to China's legendary Mount Gi, home of the Zhou dynasty). It was also around this time that Nobunaga publicly revealed his ambition to conquer all of Japan.

Beginning in 1568, the forces of the Asakura and Azai clans, as well as a small band of Buddhist militants (Ikko), battled against Nobunaga's grand ambitions. In the ensuing Battle of Anegawa, in 1570, the combined forces of Nobunaga and Ieyasu laid siege to the Odani and Yokoyama fortresses near Lake Biwa in the Omi province.

It was during this time that Nobunaga destroyed the Enryakuji monastery on Mt. Hiei, killing between 20,000 and 30,000 monks and their families; Shinobi no Mono is set just after this massacre, which is mentioned briefly in film by Sandayu.

In 1575, the Battle of Nagashino took place at Nagashino castle in Mikawa province. Nobunaga and Ieyasu strategically used "arquebuses" (a primitive European musket) to push Katsuyori TAKEDA out of the region. Many historians cite this as a turning point in Japanese warfare and list it as the first modern Japanese battle.

At the height of his power, Nobunaga finally destroyed the Takeda clan in 1582 and began to launch his invasion into the Echigo province.

Nobunaga was finally defeated at Honno-ji temple by Mitsuhide AKECHI, a former ally who betrayed him. Trapped with only a few dozen servants and bodyguards, Nobunaga and his men surrendered and he was forced to commit seppuku.

He is remembered for not only his dream of a unified Japan, but also his revolutionary tactics that modernized warfare. His brutality on the battlefield is infamous. However, his other contributions to Japanese society included: modernizing the economy, creating roads between castle towns, beginning international trade with Europe, donating money to support the arts, and establishing the Japanese tea ceremony.

TOKUGAWA Ieyasu (1543-1616)

Ieyasu was the first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, which began in 1603 after the Battle of Sekigahara and lasted for the next 265 years, until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Ieyasu was born in the Mikawa province and originally named MATSUDAIRA Takechiyo. His life was tumultuous from the beginning, with mother and father belonging to rival clans (Oda and Imagawa, respectively), and because of this family feud, at the tender age of six he was abducted and held hostage for three years by ODA Nobuhide, leader of the Oda Clan. When Ieyasu's father died of natural causes, Nobuhide agreed to let their rivals, the Imagawa Clan, hold Ieyasu hostage instead. At the slightly less tender age of nine, he was moved to Sunpu and lived as a hostage and potentially future ally of the Imagawa Clan until the age of 15.

Ieyasu's rise to power was the result of a series of battles involving the Oda Clan. In 1561, after ODA Nobunaga had just gained leadership of the Oda Clan, Ieyasu "switched sides", breaking from the Imagawa Clan and allying himself with the Oda Clan. He did so in order to save his wife and son, who had essentially been hostages of the Imagawa Clan themselves, and whose executions were, years later, ordered by Ieyasu himself.

After a long life of strong leadership and many battles, during one of Japan's most violently tumultuous eras, Ieyasu received the title of Shogun from Emperor Go-Yozei at the age of 60. He had outlasted all of his great rivals, and used his remaining years to wisely solidify the Tokugawa shogunate, making it almost impossible for other Daimyos to gain significant power or for the people to stand up against the government. His system ensured that the Tokugawa shogunate would last for over 250 years, regardless of the intelligence or wisdom of his descendants.

Ieyasu had many other qualities which aided him in his rise to greatness, the most obvious being the bold and calculating strategy he employed, always switching alliances at just the right time. In this era of violence and betrayal, he was like no other Daimyo of his time. While not well liked or popular, he was feared and respected, and was very loyal to his personal friends and vassals.

He had 19 wives and concubines, with whom he had 16 children, and according to some sources, he had a bad habit of biting his nails when nervous. He claimed that, throughout his life, he had fought as a warrior or general in 90 battles. He died at the age of 75 from either cancer or syphilis.

In popular culture, he has made several appearances in films and TV series well-known in the U.S., including Akira KUROSAWA's Kagemusha, the "Shogun" miniseries starring Toshiro MIFUNE (Mifune's "Yoshi Toranaga" is obviously Ieyasu), and in the video game Samurai Warriors 2. Naturally, in Japan, he's probably the most well-known historical figure, and has made countless appearances in all forms of media.

Note: The Tokugawa family symbol (or "mon") can be seen in the opening and ending credits of Shogun Assassin.

Sandayu MOMOCHI (c. 1525 - c. 1585)

The founder of Iga style (Iga Shijuku-ryu) ninjitsu and leader of the southern sect of the Iga ninja, Sandayu was head of three ninja schools (Momochi-ryu, Gyokko-ryu and Koto-ryu) and is considered one of the most famous of all ninja.

Legend has it that Sadayu and Fujibayashi Nagato (leader of the northern sect) were actually the same person, as they were never seen in the same place at the same time.

Nagato FUJIBAYASHI

Very little is known of Nagato, except that he was head of the northern sect of the Iga ninja, also known as the Koga ninja. As stated earlier, many believe he and Sandayu were the same person.

Yoshikage ASAKURA (1533-1573)

The feudal lord of Echizen and head of the Asakura family, Yoshikage served under Nagamasa ASAI and lost to Nobunaga in the Battle of Anegawa.

Nagamasa ASAI (1545-1573)

The feudal lord of the Omi province and head of the Asai family, Nagamasa fought alongside the monks of Mt. Hiei and lost to Nobunaga in the Battle of Anegawa. He was married to Nobunaga's younger sister, Oichi, and, upon his defeat, committed seppuku in exchange for his daughter's lives.

Nagahide TANBA (1535-1585)

Nagahide, also known as Nagahide NIWA, was a senior retainer in the Oda Clan. He became second in command under Nobunaga's son, Nobutaka.

Junkei TSUTSUI (1549-1584)

Junkei was the son of a minor Daimyo of Yamato province, until one of the most powerful warriors of the time, Matsunaga HISAHIDE, took his castle in a surprise attack. Joining forces with Nobunaga, Junkei defeated Matsunaga in 1577, and was soon appointed Daimyo of Yamato by Nobunaga. He built a new castle in Koriyama, where he lived out the rest of his days. He died in 1584, and was succeeded by Hidenaga TOYOTOMI.

Notable Cast Members

Raizo ICHIKAWA

Making a big splash in the film was its young and handsome leading man, Raizo ICHIKAWA. Raizo was born August 29, 1931 in Kyoto, Japan, and had a highly successful film career in mostly period dramas, however his roles as Ishikawa GOEMON in the Shinobi no Mono film series and the lone samurai Nemuri KYOSHIRO in the Sleepy Eyes of Death films (also from Daiei studios) catapulted him to true stardom.

Appearing in over 150 films, Raizo worked with legendary directors Kenji MISUMI and Kon ICHIKAWA, and also co-starred with Shintaro KATSU (Zatoichi) in at least a dozen features. During his career he worked exclusively for the Daiei Motion Picture Company, and, along with Shintaro, was one of the studio's top box-office draws.

His romantic presence garnered him legions of female and male fans, and earned him the nickname of the "Japanese James Dean." He died of cancer on July 17, 1969, at the young age of 37, cutting short what would have been an even more brilliant career.

Within two years of his death, Daiei, one of the five biggest studios in Japan, went bankrupt.

Raizo's awards include:

1958 Blue Ribbon Award - Best Actor (Enjo)

1958 Kinema Junpo Award - Best Actor (Enjo)

1967 Kinema Junpo Award - Best Actor (The Wife of Seishu Hanaoka)

Tribute to Yunosuke Ito

Born in Tokyo on August 3, 1919, Yunosuke was one of most famous character actors in Japanese history. He employed his trademark scowl for some of cinema's greatest directors: Akira Kurosawa (Stray Dog, Ikiru, Sanjuro, High and Low), Kihachi Okamoto (Samurai Assassin, Red Lion, Japan's Longest Day) and Kon Ichikawa (The Burmese Harp, Sanshiro at Ginza, Pursuit at Dawn).

His roles leaned towards playing the "heavy" or corrupt officials, but parts such as the "novelist" in Ikiru and Mutsutu, the falsely accused chamberlain, in Sanjuro showed his softer side.

Yunosuke may best be known for his role as Retsudo Yagyu in the first installment of the Lone Wolf and Cub film series (Sword of Vengeance), which was later edited into Shogun Assassin.

He received his most prestigious award, the 1962 Blue Ribbon Award for Best Supporting Actor, for his dual portrayal of Sandayu Momochi and Nagato Fujibayashi in Shinobi no Mono.

He passed away on March 11, 1980 leaving behind a library of over 75 film appearances.

Film Notes

The first year of the Tensho period (1573), summer: Oda Nobunaga, burning with ambition to dominate the entire nation, attacked the allied forces of Asakura Yoshikage and Asai Nagamasa at northern Omi.

The film begins with the downfall of Yoshikage and Nagamasa's armies in the Battle of Anegawa.

"Ever since he annihilated Imagawa's army at Okehazama, Oda Nobunaga has risen to unparalleled power in merely thirteen years."

The Battle of Okehazama is considered Nobunaga's first significant victory and one which established him as a major warlord of the Sengoku period.

The actual battle took place in the early summer of 1560 as a powerful daiymo named Yoshimoto IMAGAWA led a troop of 25,000 men towards Kyoto. After several victories along the way, Imagawa's men reached the Owari province, the stronghold of Nobunaga. On the night of June 12, while Imagawa's troops were celebrating their victories, Nobunaga's army launched a surprise attack with only 3,000 men. The outcome of the battle gave Oda the reputation of being a strategic genius and was a huge first step towards his dream of unifying Japan.

"A couple years ago he had sacrilegiously set fire to Mount Hiei."

Mount Hiei has served as the sacred home of Tendai esoteric Buddhism since the eight century. When Sandayu refers to the carnage at Mount Hiei, he is specifically talking about the Enraku-ji temple and its surrounding buildings, which Nobunaga destroyed in 1571.

"It is an art whose inception by the Yamabushi of Tendai and Shingon Mikkyo was to advance and protect the Buddha-dharma."

The term “mikkyo” (literally “secret teachings”) pertains to the esoteric practices of syncretistic Buddhism, a mystical practice of acquiring the powers of nature, mastering incantations, magical rites, and ultimately to find union with the ultimate reality that is the adi-buddha of the cosmos (attaining Buddhahood in one’s own lifetime).

“The mudras and mantras of the Ninja are all the legacy of Tendai and Shingon...”

“Mudra” is a Sanskrit term that refers to magical hand-gestures that are formed while simultaneously reciting incantations (mantras); it is believed the right combination channels energy for paranormal purposes.

Tendai and Shingon are the two major esoteric-Tantric Buddhist sects of Japan.

“He’s on a roll. I think he’ll invade Echu and attack Uesugi.”

Kenshin UESUGI (1530-1578) was daiymo of the Echigo province and one of the most famous leaders during the Sengoku period. His rivalry with fellow daiymo Shingen TAKEDA, which consisted of five battles during the years 1553 to 1564, are legendary in Japan history.

Note: In the film Samurai Banners, Kenshin is played by the late Japanese film legend, Ishihara Yujiro.

“Endeavor, endeavor, perseverance is difficult, we must be ready to immediately sever even our love of parents and spouse.”

The term “Shinobi” was translated as “perseverance” here with respect to the Ten Paramitas of Mikkyo, of which “perseverance” = “Shinobi,” but the term “Shinobi” also refers to the art of Ninjutsu and those who are Ninjas.

“Thus the word Shinobi puts heart beneath the sword.”

The group response-recitation is with regard to the logogram “Shinobi” in Sino-japanese; it is a composite of two irreducible logogram-singletons, that is to say, of the logogram “sword” written above the logogram “heart” on the bottom.

“That’s ridiculous. Venerable chief has gone to Ryuguchi, remember?”

Ryuguchi, located in the Iga province, was thought to have been Sandayu’s main residence.

“Nobunaga’s going back to Gifu tomorrow.”

Gifu city is located in the southern part of present-day Gifu prefecture.

Kawachi

Kawachi was an old province of Japan which is part of present-day Osaka prefecture.

“You can’t just linger about; Nobunaga is coming here to Sakai tomorrow.”

Sakai is a port city located in the present-day Osaka prefecture. During the Sengoku period, Nobunaga purchased many European firearms in the city.

“There, that’s the Yamato river. Come on, why are you so slow?”

The Yamato river is located in the former Yamato province, now the present-day Nara prefecture. The river originally flowed north from Kashiwara city and joined with the Shirinashi and Kizu rivers. In 1704 the river was diverted to put an end to flooding problems in the region.

The Ishiyama Hongan-ji War

Oda Nobunaga spent eleven years on a campaign to destroy the cathedral fortress Hongan-ji of Ishiyama, which is now the city of Osaka. Ishiyama Hongan-ji was the primary fortification of the Ikko sect of Buddhism, who were mobs of warrior monks and peasants that opposed samurai rule, and were among the last to stand in the way of Nobunaga's mission to conquer all of Japan. This extensive siege began in 1570 and consisted of countless attacks and strategies, but even though Nobunaga had twice as many men, the resilient Ikko rebels steadfastly defended their fortress.

After several attempts to cut off supplies to Ishiyama Hongan-ji, the defenders finally ran out of ammunition and food in 1580, and surrendered shortly after. Contrary to the quote in the film, Nobunaga actually spared the lives of many defenders, including Nakayuki SHIMOTSUMA, but still burned the fortress to the ground. Three years later, Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI began construction on the same site, building the famous Osaka Castle, which still stands today.

Azuchi Castle

Built from 1576 to 1579 on the shores of Lake Biwa, in Omi Province, the massive Azuchi Castle was one of Nobunaga's main castles. It was intentionally built close enough to Kyoto so that he could watch over the capital, and keep a safe distance from any conflicts that occasionally arose. It was also an advantageous location because it lay astride the communication and transportation routes between his three greatest enemies--the Uesugi clan to the north, the Takeda clan to the east, and the Mori clan to the west.

Nobunaga intended the castle to be a lavish mansion which would impress and intimidate his foes, so Azuchi was one of the first Japanese castles with a tower keep, an enormous seven-story structure that resembled a royal palace. It also featured an outside facade colorfully decorated with tigers and dragons, instead of the usual solid white or black of other castles.

In the summer of 1582, shortly after Nobunaga's death, the castle was attacked and set aflame by the forces of Nobunaga's betrayer, Mitsuhide AKECHI. All that remains of the castle today is the stone base, though a reproduction of Azuchi stands in Ise Sengoku Village, a samurai theme park near Ise.

Footnotes

** This is a cheap reference to Star Trek; when Kirk, Spock, McCoy and Ensign Doofus (wearing a red security shirt) beamed down to the planet, you knew which one wasn't coming back. In reality, ninjas only wore red shirts after battles, when they were drenched in the blood of their samurai victims.

Shinobi no Mono 2 - Translation & Cultural Notes

Historical Characters (please also refer to the notes for the first film)

Mitsuhide AKECHI (1528-1582)

Known as the "13-day shogun", Mitsuhide was born into the wealthy and well respected Toki clan, whose members descended from Emperor Seiwa (850-880).

Serving under Yoshikage ASAKURA through most of his life, Mitsuhide, at age 38, followed his leader and joined forces with Nobunaga. Over the next five years he slowly rose through the ranks, ultimately attaining the

status of intellectual advisor to Nobunaga. As it is stated in the film, Nobunaga awarded him an estate worth 600,000 koku and land in Omi.

The turning point in Mitsuhide's relationship with Nobunaga came in 1579. Leading a campaign along the Northern coast of the Tamba province, Mitsuhide clashed with the Hatano clan at Yakami Castle. Ever the bureaucrat, Mitsuhide sought a truce with Hideharu HATANO by sending his own mother as a hostage. The negotiations were successful, however once the Hideharu and his brother emerged from the castle, Nobunaga broke the treaty and had them executed. Members of the Hatano clan responded by killing Mitsuhide's mother, in, according to some accounts, a particularly gruesome manner.

Three years later, in 1582, Nobunaga, possibly sensing a taste of victory, sent his generals to various outposts. Mitsuhide, ordered to help Hideyoshi fight the Mori clan, instead made his move.

“At this time, it is raining, the month of May...”

“At this time, it is raining...”

“Now the Toki family, will rule the Nation, this month of May!”

Just before the battle of Honno-ji, Mitsuhide met with poets and compiled a renga (an early version of what would later become haiku). As the movies shows, he used this occasion to elegantly express his ambition.

On the morning of June 21, Mitsuhide surrounded and set fire to Honno-ji temple in Kyoto. Nobunaga, unable to escape, committed seppuku together with his attendant Ranmaru. There is no record whether or not Nobunaga was sliced to bits by a ninja, however his remains were never found.

Three days later, news of Nobunaga's death reached Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi immediately made peace with the Mori clan and marched towards Kyoto. Averaging between 18-24 miles a day, he arrived in less than two weeks and began his attacks on Mitsuhide's forces at Yamazaki.

Following his defeat at the Battle of Yamazaki, it is rumored that Mitsuhide fled and was killed by a bandit named Nakamura. With Mitsuhide's death, the Akechi clan fell. Aside from conquering Nobunaga, he is best remembered as a refined samurai who preferred the arts to warfare.

Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI (1536-1598) (aka Hashiba CHIZUKEN)

Nobunaga's favorite and most trusted general, Hideyoshi was born into a family of poor peasants, but quickly rose through the ranks by virtue of an unwavering loyalty to Nobunaga. Although most of his early life is clouded in mystery, Hideyoshi went from one of Nobunaga's sandal-bearers in 1557 to Daiymo of the Nagahama fief by 1573.

After Mitsuhide's defeat at Yamazaki, Hideyoshi supported Nobunaga's youngest son, Hidenobu, to succeed Nobunaga. This led to conflict within the Oda faction, but within a year, Hideyoshi had defeated his rivals and became chief advisor of the Oda clan.

By 1586, as the film mentions, Hideyoshi began to construct the Juraku-dai in Kyoto. After its completion he moved to the castle and made it his administrative headquarters.

His nickname, “Saru” (Monkey), is briefly mentioned in the first Shinobi no mono film, and may have been attributed to the fact that Hideyoshi was short and had sunken facial features.

Nevertheless, Hideyoshi was regarded as the most skilled general in Japan during and after Nobunaga's death. His battlefield skills are legendary and included tactics such as redirecting rivers to flood castles. During his “rule” he was credited with banishing Christian missionaries and creating laws to help Japanese agriculture blossom.

Hanzo HATTORI (1542-1596)

A samurai and the head of a clan from the Iga region of Japan, Hanzo is one of the most famous ninja in history. He began training at age eight, fought his first battle at age sixteen and became a ninja master by eighteen. He was a skilled swordsman, strategist, and spearman and earned the nickname "Devil Hanzo" because of his tenacity in battle.

To this day, artifacts of Hanzo's legacy remains. The Kyoko Imperial Palace has a gate called Hanzo's Gate, and the Hanzomon subway that runs from central Tokyo to the southwestern suburbs is named after the gate. Hanzo's remains are interred at Sainen-ji temple cemetery in Shinjuku, Tokyo; the temple also holds his favorite spears and his ceremonial battle helmet.

Hanzo is still prevalent in popular culture today. Actor Sonny Chiba portrayed him in the Japanese television series Shadow Warriors in the 1980's. Chiba also played a character named Hattori Hanzo in Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill; this Hanzo was a master swordsman and sword maker whose "Japanese steel" was considered to be the most powerful sword in the world. Though not mentioned on screen, Tarantino has said that his Hanzo was a direct descendent of the famous Hanzo from Shadow Warriors.

Ranmaru MORI

Born in Mino, Ranmaru was Nobunaga's valet and personal attendant. He was known to help Nobunaga keep his schedule in order, sometimes anticipating his commands and actions (thereby avoiding any angry outbursts). He committed seppuku alongside Nobunaga at Honno-ji temple. Although his age was unknown, he was thought to be around age 20 at his death.

Note: Ranmaru is probably the most famous homosexual in Japanese history.

Film Notes

Koku as a unit of measurement

Literally translated as "bale," the incomes of samurai were measured in koku of rice. One koku is the equal to the amount of rice needed to feed one man for one year. As the film notes, Mitsuhide had a 600,000 koku fief and Hideyoshi's offer to Magoichi SUZUKI was a stipend of 20,000 koku.

Average estimates of koku related to status:

Daimyo: 10,000 + koku

Hatamoto (Upper Vassals): 100-9,500 koku

Go-kenin (Lower Vassals): <100 koku

Ikko-ikki

The Ikko-ikki were groups of people who followed the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism and violently opposed samurai rule in the 15th and 16th centuries. They included peasants, monks, priests and nobles and followed the teachings of a monk named Rennyo (1415-1499).

Although the dates are not specific, the beginnings of the Ikko-ikki are generally attributed to Rennyo's appointment to abbot of Hongan-ji Temple in 1457. In 1488, the first major organized attack by the Ikko-ikki took place in the Kaga province as Ikki warriors overthrew the resident samurai rulers; this marked the first time in Japanese history that commoners ruled a province.

It is said that Rennyo never advocated the attacks, but rather taught self-defense as a way of protecting the sect's temples. Nevertheless, uprisings continued after his death, and as his teachings spread throughout Japan, so did violence against samurai rule. By the middle of the 16th century, many Ikko-ikki were well-established in fortified positions along major roads and trade routes. As shown in the film, Nobunaga ODA's hatred of the Ninja was primarily fueled by the sects who occupied these posts.

The Saiga Faction (Saiga-ikki)

Along with the Negoro-gumi, the Saiga-ikki were known for their proficiency with firearms. Their fortress, Ota Castle (later named Wakayama Castle), withstood numerous attacks by Oda during his reign. However, in 1585, Hideyoshi attacked Saiga-ikki and Negoro-gumi and destroyed both of them.

Magoichi SUZUKI (1535-1580) (aka Magoichi SAKAI, Magoichi SAGAI)

Magoichi was the leader of the Saiga faction and helped to defend the Hongan-ji Temple against Nobunaga ODA in 1577.

The Negoro-gumi

“The Saiga faction and the Warrior Monks of Negoro-ji Temple will not remain silent.”

The “Hyakunin shu” (literally “hundred man group”) Negoro-gumi lived in the area of the Kumono mountains and practiced Shingon Buddhism. Their group numbered around 10,000 soldiers, who, along with the Saiga Faction, were known to be excellent sharpshooters.

Crucifixions in Japan

As seen in the film, crucifixions (called Haritsuke) were used in Japan during the 16th century. The most common method involved tying the convicted criminal to a T-shaped cross and stabbing them to death with a spear. This form of execution lasted throughout the Tokugawa Shogunate and continued until the end of World War II.

“Said Shinran Shonin, with regard to the evil that is in each of us, it is not that we must suppress our feverish delusions, and become Buddha, but rather, that by steadfast belief in the great compassion of Amitabha, we shall be delivered.”

Amitabha is a celestial buddha and the principal deity of Pure Land Buddhism. According to one sutra, he was once a monk named Dharmakara who resolved to become a buddha by writing 48 vows. These vows, widely known throughout China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan, are a blueprint for becoming a buddha and what to expect once a person is reborn as one.

The mantra (or nembutsu) of “Namu Amida-bu, Namu Amida-bu...” heard throughout the film is directly related to his 18th vow that states: “any being in any universe desiring to be born into Amitabha's Pure Land and calling his name even as few as ten times will be guaranteed rebirth there.”

Shinran Shonin (1173-1262)

The founder of the Jodo Shinshu (Pure Land Buddhism), Shinran was sent to the Tendai school of Buddhism at Mt. Hiei at age nine to begin his religious training. He is known for helping to invigorate the waning Buddhist religion in Japan during the early 13th century by teaching that “faith in Amitabha would lead to “shinjin” (nirvana, spiritual awakening).”

In 1955, a statue of Shinran was brought to New York City. It is one of the few structures that survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and now stands in front of the New York Buddhist Church, just a mile from ground zero. The plaque under the statue states that it was brought to New York “to be a testimonial to the atomic bomb devastation and a symbol of lasting hope for world peace.”

“What?! You failed to capture the Takeda clansmen?”

The clansmen that Nobunaga refers to are the monks of Erin-ji temple. Led by Joki KAISEN (Abbot Kaisen), the temple was located in Kofu, the main stronghold of Shingen TAKEDA's forces. It is said that Joki convinced his fellow monks to meditate as the flames burned them alive inside the temple.

“You ingrate! I’m sick of looking at your kumquat of a head!”

Although it is not known if Nobunaga really felt this way about Mitsuhide's head, a famous story exists involving Mitsuhide and melons. After hearing of Nobunaga's death, Hideyoshi began his march to avenge his master's death. Along the way, a peasant provided Hideyoshi's regiment with a bundle of melons. As Hideyoshi sliced his melon into several pieces, he proclaimed that Mitsuhide and his supporters would receive the same fate.

“Certainly you have not forgotten about our assault on Yagami Castle!”

This castle, which fell to Mitsuhide AKECHI in 1579, was later dismantled by Ieyasu TOKUGAWA and rebuilt as Sasayama Castle.

“I, Ieyasu, depend entirely upon the support of the Minister of the Right.”

Originally created by the Code of Taiho in 702, the “Udajin” (Minister of the Right) was the official who oversaw all the branches of the Department of State for the Japanese government. Under the umbrella of the “Daijokan” (Great Council of State), the Minister of the Right was third in command, just under the “Daijodaijin” (Chief Minister) and the “Sadaijin” (Minister of the Left)

“This is a short-sword made by Go-no-Yoshihiro, and a Kuniyuki sword.”

Masamune OKAZAKI, also known as Goro Nyudo Masamune (Priest Goro Masamune), is widely recognized as Japan's greatest swordsmith. Masamune is believed to have trained a great number of sword smiths, 10 of which are considered to be the Juttetsu or “Ten Famous Students” or “10 Great Disciples of Masamune”.

“The Bonten-maru has brought in a shipment of new matchlocks from Tanegashima.”

The name of the ship is Bonten (named after the Hindu deity ‘Brahma’), and the suffix ‘maru’ is always appended to the name of a ship.

Tanegashima is an island located off the southern coast of Kyushu. It is perhaps best known as the place where Portuguese explorer Mendes Pinto first landed in 1543. Until the end of the Edo Period, these matchlocks were known as Tanega-shima because it was believed this is where they first appeared.

Teppo

Teppo (literally “iron cannon”) is the Japanese word for gun, specifically the Portuguese arquebuses seen in the film.

“What is the fastest route from Sakai to Hamamatsu?”

The distance “as the crow flies” between Sakai and Hamamatsu is approximately 127 miles or 204 km.

“After swiftly repositioning his army, Hideyoshi engaged Mitsuhide at Yamazaki in Settsu. At the same time, he dispatched Mitsunari ISHIDA to Kishu with orders to obliterate the Saiga faction. After negotiating a peace treaty with the Mori at Takamatsu Castle, Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI led his army on a forced march towards Shoryuji Castle, averaging 30 to 40 km a day.”

To give you an idea of the range (and not taking mountainous terrain into consideration), the distance “as the crow flies” between Takamatsu Castle (Okayama) and Shoryuji Castle (Nagaokakyo) is approximately 106 miles or 171 km.

Considering, Mitsunari traveled through Oasaka, the distance “as the crow flies” between Takamatsu Castle (Okayama) and Osaka is approximately 90 miles or 144 km. An additional 30 miles or 48 km was needed to reach the Saiga faction at Ota Castle (Wakayama).

“Didn’t Hanzo know about the ‘nightingale floor’ alarm?”

Many of the ancient castles of Japan were equipped with alarm systems called nightingale floors or uguisubari. These floors were made of planks of wood that squeaked when someone walked over them; the squeak sound is actually the flooring nails rubbing against a clamp.

The most famous castle where you can experience a nightingale floor is Nijo-jo Castle in Kyoto. It is one of the popular sightseeing spots in Kyoto.

Note: Across the Nightingale Floor is the first installment in a trilogy of fantasy books by Lian Hearn called Tales of the Otori. The story follows a skilled, young warrior named Takeo and an infamous fortress with a nightingale floor. At the time these notes were written, a film version has been set for tentative release in 2009.

Shinobi no Mono 3 - Translation & Cultural Notes

Timeline

Shinobi no Mono 1 : 1573-1580

Shinobi no Mono 2 : 1581-1586

Shinobi no Mono 3 : 1586-1598

1586 (Tensho 14) - Emperor Go-Yozei becomes 107th emperor of Japan

1590 - Hideyoshi becomes Taiko

1591 - Hideyoshi's heir and genetic son, Tsurumatsu, dies. Hidetsugu beomes new heir and Kampaku.

1592 - New era, Bunroku 1, begins

1592 - 1598 (Invasions of Korea)

1593 - Hideyoshi's blood son, Hideyori, is born.

1595 - Hidetsugu is ordered to commit seppuku.

1596 - New era, Keicho 1, begins

1598 - Hideyoshi dies at age 63

Directed by Mori KAZUO

Mori KAZUO is a famous Japanese film director who was born on January 15, 1911, in Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, Japan. He directed over 50 feature films throughout his life, including Shinobi no Mono 3, 6, & 7, as well as several Zatoichi films, including the AnimEigo classic, Zatoichi at Large. In 1957 Mori's film, Suzakumon, won Best Film at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival. Mori passed away on June 29, 1989, leaving behind a legacy of great filmmaking. He will always be remembered in Japan as one of the top directors of the

Golden Age of Daiei Films.

“I hear folks are coming all the way from Otsu and Nara just to see it.”

Otsu is the capital city of Shiga Prefecture, and was officially founded on October 1, 1898, and was home to the legendary haiku writer Basho MATSUO. The area was also the site of the 12th century Battle of Awazu of Genpei War, and from 667 to 672, was the site of the Imperial Palace under Emperor Tenji.

Otsu to Kyoto = 15.6 km (9.7 miles)

Nara is the capital city of Nara Prefecture, which is in the Kansai region of Japan. Nara was the capital of Japan from 710 to 784, accordingly called the Nara period, and the original city, Heijō-kyō, was modeled after the capital of Tang Dynasty China, Chang'an. The city was officially incorporated on February 1, 1898, and is now the seat of the prefectural government, as well as a thriving commercial center. Eight temples, shrines, and ruins in Nara, together with Kasugayama Primeval Forest, collectively form a UNESCO World Heritage Site called “Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara.”

Nara to Kyoto = 42.7 km (26.5 miles)

“Iga has been under attack. Saiga has been crushed.”

The Iga Faction (Iga-ikki)

The Iga-ikki were based in the Iga Province and are one of the most famous ninja sects of the 16th century. Their style of fighting (Iga Shijuku-ryū) was founded by Sandayu MOMOCHI. Hanzo HATTORI also led a separate clan from the province.

The Saiga Faction (Saiga-ikki)

The Saiga-ikki were based in Kii Province, and were one of many Ikko-ikki groups (Buddhist warriors) in feudal Japan. Along with the Negoro-gumi, the Saiga-ikki were known for their proficiency with firearms, particularly the arquebus. Their fortress, Ota Castle (later named Wakayama Castle), withstood numerous attacks by Oda during his reign. However, in 1585, Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI attacked Saiga-ikki and Negoro-gumi in chastisement for their opposition to Lord Oda, and destroyed both of them, the former by flood, and the latter by fire.

The Iga-ikki as well as the Saiga-ikki are mentioned in previous Shinobi no Mono films.

“When it came to reading people, I was second to none at the Momochi Garrison.”

Under the tutelage of Sandayu MOMOCHI, Goemon ISHIKAWA received his training at the Momochi Garrison in Iga.

Sandayu MOMOCHI (c. 1525 - c. 1585)

The founder of Iga style (Iga Shijuku-ryū) ninjitsu and leader of the southern sect of the Iga ninja, Sandayu was head of three ninja schools (Momochi-ryū, Gyokko-ryū and Koto-ryū) and is considered one of the most famous of all ninja.

Legend has it that Sadayu and Fujibayashi Nagato (leader of the northern sect) were actually the same person, as they were never seen in the same place at the same time.

The first Shinobi no Mono film takes place in and around the Momochi Garrison.

“Then he made his adopted son Hidetsugu take his position, and now he's the Taiko.”

Hidetsugu TOYOTOMI (1568-1595)

Hidetsugu was the nephew and retainer of Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI. He was born to Hideyoshi's elder sister, and

adopted by the Miyoshi Clan under the name Miyoshi NOBUYOSHI. He was later adopted by Hideyoshi and renamed himself Hidetsugu HASHIBA, and was given a 400,000 koku fiefdom after the Incident at Honno-ji in 1582. In 1591, after the death of Tsurumatsu TOYOTOMI (Hideyoshi's heir and blood son from Lady Yodo), Hidetsugu became the new heir and was given the position of Kampaku (regent/advisor to the Emperor) and had to move to Juraku'dai in Kyoto. This resulted in a "dual system of government" from Hidetsugu and Hideyoshi, with the assumption that Hidetsugu would take Hideyoshi's position after his death. While Hideyoshi was out fighting wars, Hidetsugu handled domestic affairs. However, in 1593 a new heir, Hideyori, was born to Hideyoshi's mistress, and Hidetsugu became the target of rumors designed to compromise his position. In 1595, Hidetsugu was accused of plotting a coup and was ordered to commit seppuku at Mt. Koya. Many of his children and mistresses were also executed, and many Daimyo and Vassals associated with him were confined, punished or executed.

There are several conspiracies surrounding Hidetsugu's execution:

1. Hideyori's position would be protected with the death of Hidetsugu and all of his blood-related children.
2. Rumors spread that Hidetsugu had become obsessed with woman and alcohol and had killed innocent civilians.
3. His death was the result of a conspiracy between Lady Yodo and Mitsunari ISHIDA.

Today, many scholars believe that the latter two are deeply questionable, as the second theory was dispelled by many Daimyo and no record can be found for the third.

Overall, the Korean campaigns and the execution of Hidetsugu were regarded as the two major causes of the fall of the Toyotomi Clan. If Hidetsugu had been alive after Hideyoshi's death, he could have challenged Ieyasu TOKUGAWA's claim to rule Japan.

“Congregations are gathering, and the monks are having to rush to their headquarters.”

Mount Hiei is a mountain which lies on the border between Kyoto and Shiga Prefectures, and which is northeast of Kyoto city. Mount Hiei has served as the sacred home of Tendai esoteric Buddhism since the eighth century, when the temple of Enryaku-ji was founded atop the mountain by Saicho in 788. The temple complex was destroyed by Nobunaga ODA in 1571 in order to crush the Tendai warrior monks, but it was rebuilt and remains the Tendai headquarters to this day.

“Maybe a tengu did it, having descended to this world to reform it.”

Tengu (literally, “heavenly dogs”) are supernatural creatures featured in Japanese folklore, art, theater, and literature. They are one of the best known monster-spirits (yokai) and are sometimes worshipped as revered spirits (shinto kami). They are traditionally depicted with characteristics of both humans and birds. Though the earliest tengu were pictured with beaks, this feature was humanized into an unnaturally long nose, which is now the tengu's defining characteristic. Though Buddhism long held that the tengu were disruptive demons and harbingers of war, their image has softened into one of protective spirits of the mountains and forests.

“It must be a tengu from Iga or Koga.”

Koga is a city of Shiga Prefecture, and is well known for its ninja history, as well as its ceramics. The city was officially founded on October 1, 2004, and currently has a population of over 90,000 people. The official tree is the Cryptomeria, and the bird is the Common Kingfisher.

“We’ve run up quite a tab with you, but we two ronin have been hired by the Todo clan.”

The Todo clan served Nobunaga ODA and later fought alongside Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI during his Korean campaigns. After Hideyoshi's death, the clan became trusted advisors to Ieyasu TOKUGAWA. Clearly, the clan elders could tell which way the wind was blowing at any particular moment.

“Any riffraff with two swords can find employment these days.”

Even within the samurai class, there was a hierarchy of rank and status. The upper ranks of samurai enjoyed such privileges as being able to ride horses, carry more than one sword, go hunting, and so on. They were usually paid much higher stipends than lower-ranked samurai. In fact, many low-ranked samurai were paid so little that they were forced to find part-time employment in handicraft work.

It should be noted that such rank was preserved even when a samurai had become a ronin and jobless (for example, when a Daimyo house fell).

However, during the time Hideyoshi ruled (the Sangoku Jidai), the ranks and status were much less solid due to frequent conflict, which meant that opportunities for employment and promotion were more available. A good example was Hideyoshi, who was originally a farmer but rose to rank of Kampaku and Taiko.

“Two more sun and you would've been dead.”

1 sun = 3.03 cm (1.2 inches)

2 sun = 6.06 (2.4 inches)

A sun is a Japanese unit of measurement, and its length is equivalent to 1/10 of a shaku, which is the basis of the shakkanho (traditional Japanese system) length measurements, and which originated in the Shang Dynasty of ancient China. All other units are all fixed fractions or multiples of the shaku (similar to the metric system meter). Beginning in 1924, the shakkanho system was replaced by the metric system, however, the old system is still used, particularly in carpentry and agriculture.

“Right after he crushed Saiga, Hideyoshi set fire to Negoro'ji Temple.”

Saiga was a region in Kishuu which had a large number of supporters of the Ikko ideals. Nobunaga attempted to crush the Saiga forces for many years, but Hideyoshi was able to achieve victory by cutting their water supplies for over a month.

The Siege of Negoro'ji Temple was led by Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI in 1585, and was one of many sieges led by Nobunaga ODA's forces in the 1580s, which destroyed many groups of warrior monks. The Negoro-gumi were the warrior monks of Negoro-ji, and were known for their proficiency with firearms. The Negoro-gumi were allied with the Ikko-ikki and Ieyasu TOKUGAWA, which is why Hideyoshi destroyed them during the brutal siege. Though many monks retreated to Ota Castle, home of the Saiga-ikki, the temple was attacked from two sides, the complex was set aflame, and Hideyoshi's samurai cut down monks as they fled the inferno. Hideyoshi went on to destroy Ota Castle in the same year.

“We ran for our lives to Mount Koya...”

Mount Koya is a mountain in Wakayama prefecture, south of Osaka. It was first settled in 819 by the monk Kukai, and is known as the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism. The original monastery has grown into the town of Koya, now featuring a religious university and over 100 temples and other famous sites. Many Buddhist monasteries in Koya function as traditional hotels for visitors, and in 2004, UNESCO designated Mt. Koya as a World Heritage Site.

“This Ishikawa Goemon, had he been a samurai, he would've become the lord of a fief.”

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.

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.

“Just a few years ago during the time of Akechi Mitsuhide's revolt...”

The details of Mitsuhide's revolt can be seen in Shinobi no Mono 2: Vengeance.

Mitsuhide AKECHI (1528-1582)

Known as the “13-day shogun”, Mitsuhide was born into the wealthy and well respected Toki clan, whose members descended from Emperor Seiwa (850-880).

Serving under Yoshikage ASAKURA through most of his life, Mitsuhide, at age 38, joined forces with Nobunaga. Over the next five years he slowly rose through the ranks, ultimately attaining the status of intellectual advisor to Nobunaga.

In 1582, Nobunaga sent his generals to various outposts. Mitsuhide, ordered to help Hideyoshi fight the Mori clan, instead made his move. On the morning of June 21, Mitsuhide surrounded and set fire to Honno-ji temple in Kyoto. Nobunaga, unable to escape, committed seppuku together with his attendant Ranmaru.

“Hideyoshi was merely a military commander then. But after his defeat of Mitsuhide, he moved with the speed of lightning and single-handedly laid the foundation of his national supremacy.”

See Shinobi no Mono 2: Vengeance, for more information regarding this incident.

Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI (1536-1598) (aka Hashiba CHIZUKEN)

Nobunaga's favorite and most trusted general, Hideyoshi was born into a family of poor peasants, but quickly rose through the ranks by virtue of an unwavering loyalty to Nobunaga. Although most of his early life is clouded in mystery, Hideyoshi went from one of Nobunaga's sandal-bearers in 1557 to Daimyo of the Nagahama fief by 1573.

After Mitsuhide's defeat at Yamazaki, Hideyoshi supported Nobunaga's youngest son, Hidenobu, to succeed Nobunaga. This led to conflict within the Oda faction, but within a year, Hideyoshi had defeated his rivals and became chief advisor of the Oda clan.

By 1586, as the film mentions, Hideyoshi began to construct the Juraku'dai in Kyoto. After its completion he moved to the castle and made it his administrative headquarters.

His nickname, “Saru” (Monkey), is briefly mentioned in the first Shinobi no mono film, and may have been attributed to the fact that Hideyoshi was short and had sunken facial features.

Nevertheless, Hideyoshi was regarded as the most skilled general in Japan during and after Nobunaga's death. His battlefield skills are legendary and included tactics such as redirecting rivers to flood castles. During his “rule” he was credited with banishing Christian missionaries and creating laws to help Japanese agriculture blossom.

“Even my counterattack at Komaki Nagakute, calculated to reverse his situation ended in defeat, due to Nobukatsu's unexpected betrayal.”

The Battle of Komaki and Nagakute were two battles in 1584 between the forces of Hideyoshi and those of Nobukatsu and Ieyasu.

The tension began to build in 1583, when Hideyoshi and Nobukatsu were allies. After Hideyoshi defeated Shibata Katsuei, he invited Nobukatsu and other generals to his Osaka Castle residence, where the men would pay homage to Hideyoshi. However, Nobukatsu's pride did not permit him to go, so he broke his bonds to Hideyoshi and did not go. Hideyoshi offered reconciliation to some of Nobukatsu's chief retainers, but this was misunderstood through rumors that these retainers supported Hideyoshi. Nobukatsu became paranoid and

killed the retainers, which prompted Hideyoshi to attack Nobukatsu. Nobukatsu acquired auxiliary forces from Ieyasu, with the result that the conflict became battle between Hideyoshi and Ieyasu.

The Battle was actually more of a series of small battles, but the fighting was fierce and long, and in the end, Hideyoshi just couldn't hold off Ieyasu's forces.

“And thus we find ourselves in Yodo Castle, the home of ‘Ochacha’, as his guest, Your Highness.”

Yodo Castle was a castle located in the Yamashiro province of Kyoto. The castle was originally constructed under Sadatsuna MATSURAIDA in 1623, and destroyed in 1868.

Lady Yodo, one of Hideyoshi's favorite concubines, lived at the castle for some time, which is where she received her name, and where she bore Hideyoshi's second child, Tsurumatsu (who died at age 6).

“Since the birth of Hideyori...”

Hideyori TOYOTOMI (1593-1615)

Hideyori was the son and designated successor of Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI. His mother, Lady Yodo, was the niece of Nobunaga ODA, and brought him into the world in 1593. When Hideyoshi died in 1598, the appointed regents began fighting for power, and Ieyasu TOKUGAWA seized control in 1600. Hideyori married Ieyasu's seven-year-old granddaughter to ensure his loyalty towards the Tokugawa Clan, but Ieyasu continued to view Hideyori as a threat, and attacked him in the Siege of Osaka (winter of 1614). As a result, Hideyori was forced to sign a truce which dismantled his Osaka Castle defenses. In April 1615, Hideyori began to attack contingents of the Shogun's forces near Osaka. The battle lasted almost two months, and Hideyori's forces were chased into Osaka Castle, where they were pummeled by artillery fire and defeated. Hideyori committed seppuku, and the final uprising against the Tokugawa Shogunate was put to an end.

“The other is the matter of Ochacha who has gained more influence than his faithful wife of many years having risen in status, so much so that people now refer to her as ‘Lady Yodo’.”

Lady Yodo (1567-1615) aka Ochacha

Lady Yodo was Hideyoshi's favorite concubine and bore his two sons, Tsurumatsu (who died at age 6) and Hideyori.

After Hideyoshi's death, Lady Yodo moved to Osaka Castle with Hideyori and tried to restore the Toyotomi clan. However, in 1615 Ieyasu attacked the castle and Lady Yodo and Hideyori committed seppuku.

Since Hideyoshi had trouble conceiving with any other concubines and was thought to be sterile, some theories exist that Lady Yodo had affairs with two of Hideyoshi's vassals, Mitsunari ISHIDA and Harunaga OONO.

Others believe that these are merely allegations created by the rising Tokugawa clan, in an effort to tarnish the Toyotomi clan.

Juraku'dai (Hideyoshi's mansion)

The Juraku'dai was an exquisite palace constructed under Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI in 1586 in present-day Kamigyoo of Kyoto, on the former Heian site of the Imperial palace. Once the palace was completed, Hideyoshi moved there from Osaka Castle and made it the base for his administration. Several events were held here until Hideyoshi resigned the post of Kampaku in 1591, and his nephew Hidetsugu TOYOTOMI assumed his position and residence. In 1595, Hidetsugu was forced to commit seppuku, and the lavish Juraku'dai was dismantled, and many pieces reassembled at Hideyoshi's new palace, Fushimi Castle. It is said that gold leaf lined the roofing tiles, and recent excavations have confirmed some tiles bearing gold leaf.

“Let us ride the tide and conquer the nations of Ming and Korea!”

The Korean Invasions (1592-1598)

Once Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI unified Japan, he focused his efforts toward conquering China (Ming) and Korea. In 1591, the newly built Hizen Nagoya Castle in Kyushu became the headquarters of Hideyoshi's Korean deployment.

Note: The Hizen Nagoya Castle (which is not in Nagoya) is not the same castle as Nagoya Castle (which is!).

The first invasions were a failure for Hideyoshi, as Korean naval forces continually intercepted Japanese fleets, and thereby thinned their supply lines. A stalemate continued for five years while Ming's Emperor Wanli pressed for a peaceful compromise. In 1597, Japan invaded Korea again, launching 141,000 soldiers towards the peninsula. The final conflict, known as the Battle of Noryang, included 20,000 Japanese soldiers on 500 ships and over 15,000 Ming and Korean soldiers on 150 ships. In just a day over half of the Japanese ships had been sunk or captured. Hideyoshi withdrew his troops and fled back to Japan.

Following Hideyoshi's death, most of Hizen Nagoya Castle was dismantled and used to build Karatsu Castle.

“We shall stop construction of the Daibutsu'den.”

The original Daibutsuden (the Great Buddha Hall of Todai-ji temple) was completed in 751 and is one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites.

Hideyoshi built his own 19m (62 ft) high Great Buddha Hall in Kyoto, however it collapsed in 1596 due to an earthquake.

“A royal procession is on the way!”

In feudal times, it was the law for common folk, merchants, farmers, (non-royalty) et al. to prostrate themselves and remain in that position for all royal processions; disobedience meant execution, typically performed on the spot.

“If it takes me seven reincarnations, I will tear Hideyoshi to shreds.”

Seven generations of a bloodline indicate its full succession, in which case a reincarnation of seven times would indicate that he will reincarnate as many times as possible to fulfill his revenge.

“What a fine item; I have heard your province is famous for its tea.”

Mikawa Province is an old province which today forms the eastern half of Aichi Prefecture. Mikawa was the original fief of Shogun Ieyasu TOKUGAWA before he gained control of Kanto. Mikawa was famous for its fireworks, and was the only area permitted by the Shogun to produce gunpowder. The annual Okazaki fireworks are still some of the best in Japan.

“No matter what, I, Ieyasu, will always recognize you, Lady Kita, as the official wife of our Lord Taiko.”

Lady Kita (1546-1624) aka Nene SUGIHARA

Nene married Hideyoshi at age 15 and became his legitimate wife. After Hideyoshi was appointed Kampaku in 1585, Nene became the Kita no Mandokoro (wife of the Kampaku) and was referred to as Lady Kita.

As the daughter of a samurai, Lady Kita afforded Hideyoshi many familial connections that provided him several retainers. Although she was unable to conceive, Hideyoshi trusted her as an advisor and confided in her regarding many difficult decisions.

After Hideyoshi's death, she became a nun and established a Buddhist temple in Kyoto where Hideyoshi and Hideyori are buried.

Today, a unique street in eastern Kyoto, The Path of Nene, stands as a commemoration to her life and is lined with structures of ancient Kyoto.

“I can just picture Kiyomasa's face when he learned Yukinaga landed first.”

Kiyomasa KATO (1562-1611)

Kiyomasa was a Daimyo of the Sengoku and Edo period. He first fought in Hideyoshi's army at the Battle of Yamazaki, at age 20, and because of his distinguished conduct, eventually became known as one of the Seven Spears of Shizugatake. He was a natural leader and rose through the ranks, leading men through many fierce battles in Korea. In his later years, he worked as a mediator between Ieyasu and Hideyori, and died on his way back from one such meeting after he fell ill at sea. He was buried at Honmyo-ji temple in Kumamoto, and is also enshrined in a Shinto shrine in Kumamoto.

The momentum of battle ebbed, and the battle lines in Korea became static. Korea enlisted Ming to negotiate a settlement. Hideyoshi retreated to Nagoya, and returned to the newly-built Fushimi Castle.

Also known as Momoyama Castle, Fushimi Castle is where Hideyoshi moved to following his Kampaku resignation. Though the current structure is a 1964 replica, the original castle was constructed between 1592 and 1594, utilizing over 20,000 workers. The structure was intended as a retirement palace for Hideyoshi, and was furnished lavishly (as mentioned earlier, using some Juraku'dai parts). In 1623, the castle was dismantled, with many rooms incorporated into other castles and temples throughout Japan. In 1912, Emperor Meiji's tomb was built in the original site, and in 1964, the replica was created nearby and mostly out of concrete. It served as a Hideyoshi TOYOTOMI museum until it was closed to the public in 2003.

“The five magistrates, starting with Mitsunari along with the four elder retainers, including Maeda Toshiie have all sworn blood oaths.”

The Five Magistrates (The Go'Bugyo, The Five Commissioners)

Hideyoshi appointed five samurai to help govern the city of Kyoto. They included Nagamasa ASANO, Mitsunari ISHIDA, Nagamori MASHITA, Masaie MATSUKA and Geni MATSUDA. Their specific duties included overseeing civil disputes, finances and the local police. However, some scholars believe the Magistrates were more likely advisors or “yes men” rather than officials.

The Council of Five Elders (aka The Five Tairo, The Five Regents)

The Five Magistrates eventually evolved into a more commanding unit formed from the five most powerful Daimyo, who included Ieyasu TOKUGAWA, Toshiie MAEDA, Hideie UKITA, Terumoto MORI and Kagekatsu UESUGI.

The purpose of the Council was to distribute control between these men so that no one would become too powerful. However, after Hideyoshi's death, Ieyasu broke apart from the council and claimed control of Japan.

Shinobi no Mono 4 - Translation & Cultural Notes

About the Film

The Shinobi no Mono film series is set during a turbulent period in Japanese history, and though the characters played by Raizo ICHIKAWA are actual historical figures, the portrayals are works of fiction. Indeed, Raizo (and many of the other actors) switch characters throughout the series, which can be confusing. In the first 3 films, Raizo plays ISHIKAWA Goemon, then he plays KIRIGAKURE Saizo in the 4th through 7th films, only to become KASUMI Kojiro in the 8th film.

Shinobi no Mono 3 generally centered around Hideyoshi and the rest of the Toyotomi Clan, as Goemon plotted the death of Hideyoshi and the demise of his Clan. Shinobi no Mono 4 skips ahead a few years and deals with the rise to power of Ieyasu Tokugawa, one of the most famous and wildest leaders in the history of Japan. His last remaining opponents are then remnants of the Toyotomi Clan and the Daimyo that support them, and his key rival of the film is SANADA Yukimura (Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA), one of the strongest and wisest warriors in Japan at the time, and a legendary figure in his own right.

The Battle of Sekigahara

The Battle of Sekigahara (in present-day Gifu Prefecture), also known as the Realm Divide, took place on October 21, 1600, and decisively cleared the path to the Shogunate for Ieyasu. The battle pitted Tokugawa Ieyasu and the Clans of Eastern Japan (some 90,000 troops) against Toyotomi Hideyori and the Clans of Western Japan (around 80,000 troops). It was a clear victory for Ieyasu, and the Western bloc was quickly crushed.

Immediately after the victory at Sekigahara, Ieyasu divided up the spoils -- in particular, the land and the income it generated -- to the vassals who had served him, and though he had many western nobles captured and killed, he left some of the Daimyo unharmed. Toyotomi Hideyori (son of Hideyoshi) lost much of his territory and status, becoming just another Daimyo instead of one of the most powerful men in Japan.

Sekigahara is considered as the unofficial beginning of the Tokugawa shogunate, and even though it took three more years for Ieyasu to consolidate his power over the Toyotomi Clan and the Daimyo, he was now the de facto ruler of Japan. He was 60 years old when he received the title of Shogun in 1603, and though he abdicated his official position only 2 years later, henceforth acting as the retired Shogun, he remained the effective ruler of Japan until his death. The Tokugawa Shogunate would rule Japan for the next 265 years.

“After 15 years, by deliberately misinterpreting an inscription on the bell at Hoko’ji Temple, he at last has the excuse he needed to launch a military campaign against them.”

Hoko’ji is a temple which still stands in Kyoto, Japan, and which was originally constructed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He did so under the belief that the capital city should have a Daibutsu temple to surpass Nara’s, and apparently claimed from the beginning that it would only take him half the time it took Emperor Shomu to complete construction of the Great Buddha of Nara (which was 10 years). With the approval of Emperor Go-Gozei, planning began in 1586, and construction was completed in 1589, including the creation of a grand Buddha statue made from the melted metal of weapons taken from non-samurai citizens.

In 1596, an earthquake destroyed the statue of Buddha, and two years later work began to replace the statue with a wooden one. One month after work began, on September 17, 1598, Hideyoshi passed away. In 1602, the wooden Buddha statue was consumed by flames due to carelessness by the workmen, and the temple would remain neglected for the next 8 years. On November 15, 1610, Toyotomi Hideyori decided to continue where his father had left off by recreating the giant Buddha statue in bronze, as well as ordering a giant bronze bell.

The bronze bell was completed on August 24, 1614, and Hideyori planned to preside over the dedication ceremonies. But at the last minute, Ieyasu (71 at the time) forbade the ceremonies to take place, based on his interpretation of the inscription on the bell, which is reproduced below (please note that this may not display properly on some browsers):

文中に「国家安康」「君臣豊楽」とあったものを、「国家安康」は家康の諱を分断し、「君臣豊楽」は豊臣家の繁栄を願い徳川家に対する呪詛が込められていると断定した。

In this inscription, there are two lines which scholars have interpreted as a bad omen to Ieyasu. In the first, 「国家安康」, the character 安 (“an,” meaning “peace”) was placed between the two characters composing his name, 家 and 康 (“ka’ko,” meaning “house tranquility”). The second line, 「君臣豊楽」 represented the prosperity of the Toyotomi Clan, and was therefore a bad omen to Tokugawa. This may have suggested to him that peace could only be attained by Ieyasu’s demise.

Of course, this offense was only a pretext, as Ieyasu knew he could not gain complete control of the nation until Hideyori was out of the picture. No matter how much Hideyori apologized for the incident, Ieyasu refused to give in, and his military campaign finally had some sort of justification. He ordered the Toyotomi Clan to leave Osaka Castle, but those inside refused and began to gather samurai into the castle who were loyal to their cause and who believed Hideyori to be the rightful heir to the shogunate.

“It is the 11th month of the 19th year of the Keicho period (1614).”

The Keicho period refers to the years 1595-1614. It should be noted that 'November,' for example, is used for '11th month' in such instances of translation by many sources, but sometimes this is incorrect, as the translation is made literally and directly. 'November' is a designation from the Gregorian calendar, but the Gregorian calendric system had not been adopted in Japan at the time (it was not introduced until 1873), so this could be a reference to the lunar calendar then in use.

Note: In these notes, we use 'November' or other Gregorian calendar months for easy reference.

“Osaka: the winter campaign.”

As mentioned previously, tensions began to rise between the Tokugawa and Toyotomi Clans, following the supposed offensive bell inscription in August 1614. Toyotomi Hideyori could see that no amount of apologies could rectify the situation, and that Ieyasu was bent on destroying him. So he began to gather troops of ronin and enemies of the shogunate in Osaka.

By November, Ieyasu, determined to stop Hideyori, led 164,000 men into the city, and the Siege of Osaka began on the 19th, when Ieyasu led 3,000 men across the Kizu River to destroy the fort there. A week later he defeated the 600-strong Imafuku village with 1,500 men. He continued attacking small forts and villages throughout Osaka until the siege on Osaka Castle itself began on December 4.

Thanks to the strong defense led by the outnumbered forces of the general Sanada Yukimura, the Shogun's armies were repeatedly repelled. After Sanada continued to break through the attackers' siege lines, Ieyasu resorted to artillery and began to mine the walls. The battle ended in a truce on January 22, with Toyotomi Hideyori pledging to cease his rebellion, and allowing the moat of Osaka castle to be filled in.

“How many Iga ninja have penetrated the castle?”

The Iga-ikki (Iga Faction) were based in the Iga Province (far southwest of Edo, now a part of Mie prefecture) and are one of the most famous ninja sects of the 16th century. Their style of fighting (Iga Shijuku-ryu) was founded by MOMOCHI Sandayu. HATTORI Hanzo also led a separate clan from the province.

Iga was one of many provinces that were not a part of the scattered Shogunate domains, and thus not under the Shogunate control. It was the home base of so many spies, Ninja and gangs that regularly infiltrated the Shogunate domains on behalf of various causes that the words “Igamono” (Iga-person) and “Igashuu” (Iga-people) eventually became synonymous with such infiltrators no matter where they came from.

“Have them relay to us every detail of the goings-on in the castle, especially the movements of Sanada Yukimura.”

Sanada Saemon-no-Suke Yukimura was a samurai born to the Daimyo Sanada Masayuki. He was called “A Hero who may appear once in a hundred years” and the “Crimson Demon of War.” A strong warrior, he and his Clan drifted between Daimyo in the war-torn late 16th century, but eventually the Sanada Clan became vassals of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. In 1600, when Tokugawa Ieyasu rallied Daimyo to attack Uesugi Kagekatsu, the Sanada Clan split in two, with half (including Yukimura) joining the western forces and half joining the east. The Clan survived and reformed, eventually ending up in Osaka Castle, where they played a crucial role in the defense.

During the winter campaign, Sanada Yukimura built fortifications along the south wall of Osaka Castle at all of its weak points. From there, he defeated approximately 30,000 of Tokugawa's men with groups of 6,000 arquebusiers. Despite this small victory, during the summer campaign, Yukimura's forces were greatly outnumbered and were eventually defeated.

According to *The Life of Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu*, by A.L. Sadler, Yukimura was badly wounded in the fight, and was surrounded. Too tired to fight, he allowed the men to kill him, reportedly saying, “Go on, take my head as your trophy.” Sanada died honorably, and his grave is now located in Osaka. However, his body was not found in Osaka castle, so other sources indicate that it's very possible that he escaped, as portrayed in the film.

“Dispatch! Gate One has just fallen.”

The arrangements of gates and walls is one of the main tactical differences in design between the Japanese castle and its European counterpart. Japanese castles usually didn't have walls which extended around a jokamachi (castle town); they only surrounded the castle compound itself. This comes from Japan's long history of not fearing invasion, unlike the philosophies of defensive architecture in Europe, China, and many other parts of the world.

However, the complex system of gates and courtyards leading up to the central keep served as the key defensive element. In the case of a larger castle like Osaka, these were very carefully arranged to impede an invading army and allow fallen outer portions to be regained by the garrisons of the inner portion. For example, as an invading army would penetrate an outer ring of the compound, they would find themselves directly under windows from which they could be fired upon, or leading down blind alleys and bottlenecks which slowed them down. In this way, these measures made it impossible to travel straight through to the keep, and made it easier for defenders to slow down and even push back attackers. Invaders would be forced to travel around and around the complex as they gradually approached the center, all the time being attacked by the defenders beyond the next gate.

“Sir Kirigakure!”

A Ninja was commonly referred to by his “handle,” which characterizes the Ninja's particular skill(s). In this case, “Kirigakure” literally means “Hidden Mist,” as Saizo is often associated with fog, and by extension, illusion magic.

Kirigakure Saizo is one of the Ten Heroes of Sanada (Sanada Juyushi), which was a group of ninja bodyguards that assisted Sanada Yukimura during the Sengoku period. Of the Ten, only Kirigakure Saizo and Sarutobi Sasuke commonly appear in popular literature and films, and the appearance of all ten members is rare; even then some members are more-or-less generic filler characters. Kirigakure was one of the most popular of these men, and his character has appeared in many novels, manga, anime, and video games. Though he was an actual historical figure, his portrayal differs widely, but he generally is portrayed as a calm, elegant, mature, handsome, and sometimes feminine young man.

Saizo is said to be a master of Iga ninjutsu, and Sarutobi Sasuke, a Koga ninja, is thus often portrayed as Saizo's arch-rival. After they both convert to Sanada's cause, they become best friends and partners. Though Sarutobi doesn't appear in this film, they're often portrayed together. However, two of the other Ninja of the Ten Heroes of Sanada show up in this film, Anayama Kosuke and Kakei Jyuzo.

“The moat-filling was a condition of the truce. It can't be helped. The agreement was that only the outer moats would be filled in.”

In case it's not made clear, when they mention filling up the moats, they mean with sand, so the troops can eventually walk across them. This differs from the approach of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who commonly redirected rivers to flood castles in many of his sieges.

Large castles such as Osaka generally had two main moats. Samurai lived almost exclusively within the compound, and those of higher rank lived closer to the Daimyo's central keep. The inner moat was constructed between this central area of residences and the outer section where lower-ranking samurai lived. The outer moat, of course, surrounded the outer wall of the castle.

“Magistrate Matsudaira is in charge of the operation, and he has hired over 5,000 men, who are filling in all the moats simultaneously.”

The Matsudaira Clan claimed descent from the Minamoto Clan, and took its name from its village of origin. It wasn't until the 16th century that the Matsudaira line experienced a meteoric rise to success during the leadership of Matsudaira Motoyasu, a.k.a. Tokugawa Ieyasu (who changed his name in 1567). Ieyasu's line formed what became the Tokugawa Clan, but the branches retained the Matsudaira surname. The Tokugawa surname was not granted to all of the sons of the Shogun or the heads of the six main Tokugawa branches. Only the inheritor received the Tokugawa name, while all of his siblings would receive the Matsudaira surname.

“Lord Fukushima Masanori hasn't returned to his home province at all.”

Fukushima Masanori was a samurai retainer of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who fought in the Battle of Shizugatake in 1583, and became known as one of the Seven Spears of Shizugatake after taking the first enemy head, that of the general Ogasato Ieyoshi. He took part in many of Hideyoshi's campaigns, and eventually became a Daimyo. Masanori sided with Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle of Sekigahara, ensuring the survival of his domain. He later lost his holdings and faded to obscurity, but his descendants became hatamoto (senior vassals) in the service of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

“What is happening with the newfangled guns we ordered from Holland?”

On April 19th, 1600, a Dutch ship landed on Oita Prefecture (located on Kyushu Island in southern Japan), and marked the beginning of a trading relationship between Japan and the Netherlands. The first Dutch trading post was set up in 1609 and moved to Nagasaki in 1641. During the Japanese seclusion, trade occurred on a small scale with China, Korea, Okinawa and Ainu (a Hokkaido tribe), but a larger amount of trade occurred with the Dutch. Nagasaki became the center of Holland Studies, where Japanese scholars learned about astronomy, botany, chemistry, geography, mathematics, medicine, pharmacology, and physics. In 1992, a theme park was created in Nagasaki which was modeled on Holland and the year 2000 was designated “Nagasaki-Holland Year,” marking the 400th anniversary of the relationship between the two nations.

“I... I... I'm just a kagemusha. P... Please spare me my life.”

Literally “Shadow Warrior,” the term is used to describe a body double, and was left transliterated due to the popularity of the Akira KUROSAWA film, in which a lower-class criminal is taught to impersonate a dying warlord (based on Takeda Shingen) in order to dissuade opposing lords from attacking the newly vulnerable Clan. Such kagemusha were quite common at the time, and throughout the history of Japan as well.

“Climb the rope. We got something for you to see up here.”

As seen in the film, crucifixions (called Haritsuke) were used in Japan during the 16th century. The most common method involved tying the convicted criminal to a T-shaped cross and stabbing them to death with a spear. This form of execution lasted throughout the Tokugawa Shogunate and continued until the end of World War II.

“Nagoya... Yatomi... Kuwana... Tomita... Yokkaichi... Oi(partial)... Kameyama... Seki... Suzuka... Ibukisan... Nabari...”

The captioned areas that appear as the camera scrolls over the map are mostly stations on the Tokaido (“East Sea Road”) which connected Edo to Kyoto. The Tokaido travelled along the sea coast of eastern Honshu, and is made up of 53 stations which serve as rest areas. Nagoya and Yatomi are located in the Aichi Prefecture, but are not stops on the Tokaido. Kuwana, Yokkaichi, Kameyama, Seki, and Suzuka are all found in the Mie Prefecture, and are Tokaido stops. Ibukisan and Nabari are also in Mie Prefecture, but are not stops on the Tokaido.

“Osaka: the summer campaign begins”

In April 1615, Ieyasu learned that Hideyori was accumulating even more troops at the castle than in November, and was trying to stop the filling of the moat. Soon after, Toyotomi forces (the Western Army) began attacking the Shogun's forces (the Eastern Army) near Osaka. They raided Wakayama Castle on April 29, but were driven off, and by early June, the main forces of the Eastern Army had arrived, before Hideyori could secure any land to use against them. At the battle of Domyoji, 2,600 of his men encountered 23,000 of the Eastern Army. Hideyori's commander, Goto Mototsugu, attempted to retreat, but he was killed and the battle was lost. Goto's death is mentioned in the film. Following this, Sanada Yukimura (Hideyori's only other general) was intercepted by Tokugawa forces at Honta-Ryo, but he and his forces managed to get away.

After several more shogunate victories on the outskirts of Osaka, the summer campaign came to a head at the battle of Tennoji. Hideyori planned to have 55,000 men to attack the center of the Eastern Army, while a second force of 16,500 men flanked from the rear, and another contingent waited in reserve. Ieyasu's army was led by his son, Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada, and numbered about 155,000. Their forces moved in four parallel lines, preparing to make flanking maneuvers of their own. Both sides made mistakes, as Hideyori's ronin split from the main group, and Hidetada's reserves moved without orders, but in the end, the Western

Army was devastated. Hideyori's reserves came too late, and were chased right back into Osaka Castle by the advancing enemies. There was no time to set up a proper defense of the castle, and it wasn't long before it was demolished. Hideyori reportedly committed seppuku (though his body was never found), and the final large-scale uprising against Tokugawa leadership was squashed, leaving the Shogunate unchallenged for the next 250 years.