

Chushingura (The 47 Ronin Tale)

The fictional account of the 47 Ronin's tale of revenge is known as "Chushingura," and has been told and retold in almost all forms of media. There have been at least 22 different television series, 10 of which were produced in the last 10 years, and over 80 feature films devoted to the subject, and they're often shown in the month of December to commemorate the event. Themes from the tale have shown up in art and pop culture even in the West, including but not limited to: Ninja Scroll, Ronin, "The Simpsons", "Legends of the Hidden Temple", and The Tokaido Road.

The tale of the 47 Ronin is by a wide margin the most popular story in Japanese history, and is described by some as the country's "national legend". Its lasting resonance in the hearts of the Japanese can be attributed to the timeless appeal of the samurai code of honor, known as bushido. This true story of vengeance is recognized as emblematic of the loyalty, sacrifice, persistence, and honor which all should make prominent in their daily lives, samurai or not. The 47 Ronin saga became particularly popular during the Meiji period of Japanese history, when many citizens longed for a return to their cultural roots.

Samurai Vendetta is a Chushingura side-story, which intersects with the main story at key points. The film was made for Japanese audiences, who would be extremely familiar with the details of the story of the 47 Ronin. Western viewers are thus well advised to take a crash-course in 47 Ronin lore in order to get the most out of the film.

AnimEigo has also released two film versions of Chushingura; The Loyal 47 Ronin (1958), and a more dramatic modern interpretation, Kon Ichikawa's 47 Ronin (1994).

47 Ronin (AKA Forty-Seven Samurai, Ako Vendetta, Ako Wandering Samurai, or Genroku Ako Incident)

Though the actual details of the 47 Ronin have been filtered through 300 years of history, here is a summary of the events that transpired, as compiled from Wikipedia's large range of historical sources:

In 1701 the ruling shogun, TOKUGAWA Tsunayoshi, selected ASANO Takuminokami as one of two Daimyo charged with organizing an extravagant reception for Imperial Envoys who were visiting Edo. A rude and arrogant official named KIRA Kozukénosuke was responsible for instructing the Daimyo in the necessary court etiquette, but his manner of teaching was harsh and insulting, and would apparently send any self-respecting Daimyo into a murderous rage. While his powerful position in the hierarchy of the Shogunate made Kira "untouchable" enough that the other Daimyo settled for bribing him instead of killing him, Asano could not bring himself to practice such restraint. After numerous insults, the previously stoic Asano snapped, slicing at Kira's face with a sword, and earning himself an order to commit seppuku, because not only did he cause a minor wound to a high official and some slight property damage, but any form of violence was strictly forbidden within the walls of Edo castle, and even drawing a sword was a grave offense. The news of Asano's unjust seppuku reached his principal counsellor, OISHI Kuranosuke, and the rest of his men, and they were incensed to hear the corrupt official had gone unpunished.

Of the over three hundred men that had been employed by Asano, forty-seven banded together, swearing a secret oath to avenge their Lord, even though they knew they faced certain death as a reward for doing so. However, Kira was not as stupid as he was cruel, and surrounded himself with impenetrable defenses designed to defeat any sort of attack. He also sent spies to keep an eye on Oishi and the rest of Asano's former retainers, so they were forced to wait for their chance. The ronin dispersed and became tradesmen or monks, nursing their dreams of vengeance for over a year. Some of the ronin even managed to gain access to Kira's house over time, one of them going so far as to marry the builder's daughter in order to obtain its plans.

By the end of 1702, Kira began to relax, convinced he was free from danger, and the 47 Ronin were ready for their assault. They gathered at a secret meeting place in Edo to renew their oaths, and early in the morning of December 14, during a heavy snowfall, they attacked Kira's mansion. Their carefully constructed plan split the group into two, with half attacking the front gate, and the other attacking the back. They were held off at the front gate, but Oishi's party broke into the back of the house, subduing all of Kira's men (16 killed, 22 wounded). The cowardly target of their attack was eventually found cowering in a hidden courtyard. Oishi respectfully addressed Kira and notified him of his impending death in the name of honor, offering him the same sword that Asano had used to kill himself. Unsurprisingly, no matter how much they urged him, Kira made no attempts to commit seppuku, instead remaining crouched, speechless and trembling like a pathetic worm.

They eventually pinned down the sad little man, relieved him of his life and his head, and carried the latter to Asano's tomb. They laid his head and the dagger before the grave, offered prayers at the temple, and gave the rest of their money to the abbot before turning themselves in to meet their fate. Forty-six of the ronin did so on February 4, 1703 (Terasaka Kichiemon was pardoned, possibly on account of his youth, and eventually lived to the ripe age of seventy-eight).

Notes

“I had to assist my uncle in his duel with the Murakami brothers, and while I was running towards Takata-no-baba, at the corner of the Ana-hachiman Shrine...”

In this film, Shintaro KATSU plays the real-life historical figure NAKAYAMA Yasubei, better-known by his adopted family name HORIBE Yasubei Taketsune. Yasubei's involvement with the Takata-no-baba duel and the 47 Ronin is based upon the true story.

Orphaned at the age of 13, Yasubei moved to Edo and honed his skills to be one of the finest swordsmen of his time. In 1694, at the age of 24, Yasubei defended his dojo-mate and uncle by killing three opponents at the famous Takata-no-baba duel, gaining him instant notoriety as a master swordsman. As seen later on in the film, Horibe Yahei was so impressed by Yasubei's skills that he invited him to marry his daughter, and become an adopted son of the Horibe family. Yasubei did just that, taking on the Horibe surname and becoming a retainer of the Ako fief for several years, until the fateful day he helped the 47 Ronin get revenge and subsequently committed seppuku.

“I hereby commit to writing, that on this day, at half-past the bottom hour of the snake...”

The units of time went through a few changes in Japan, until they were finally standardized (24 hours a day, 60 minutes an hour, etc.) in 1873. The traditional system used here originates back to 660 AD, when the Emperor Naka-no-Oo-e-no-Ooji began to signal each unit of time with a beat of the drum or the bell. At the time (pun intended), he divided each day into 12 units, each unit being called a “koku.” He also named each koku after a different animal. Before the Edo Period, at the start of each koku, bells were hit a different number of times to signal what time of the day it was. The same system was used during the Edo Period, but the bells were hit in the middle of each koku. Though each koku were roughly equivalent to 2 hours, the first six were counted from dawn and the second six from sunset, so the daylight koku were a different duration than the nighttime koku. The length of each koku was also dependent on the season, as there was more daylight during the summer than the winter.

“That's not a good tasuki!”

“Tasuki” are short, thin sashes worn with kimono which are wrapped around the shoulders in order to keep the long, wide sleeves of the kimono out of one's way when trying to do something with one's hands, like tidying up around the house, or slaughtering a group of rival samurai. Tasuki are not to be confused with “Obi,” which are longer, wider sashes also worn with kimono.

“I am Horibé Yahei of the Asano clan, from Ako in Banshu Province.”

“It is an honor. I am Nakayama Yasubei, a ronin of Shibata in Echigo.”

Banshu, also known as Harima, was an Edo Period province of Japan that included Ako. Its capital was Himeji and it was also the home of the samurai MIYAMOTO Musashi, who wrote The Book of Five Rings.

Echigo would have been approximately where Niigata Prefecture is today, and also includes the island which was the old Sado province. It's a large northern province, north of Shinano, and facing the Sea of Japan.

“Ta... Tayu?’ You mean, he's a chamberlain?”

“Correct. Chisaka Hyobu, Edo chamberlain of the Yonezawa fief in Unshu Province.”

In 1634, in an effort to control the Daimyo, the Shogunate instituted a policy known as “Sankin Koutai”, or the “Alternate Residence System” – a regulation that obliged the Daimyo to spend every other year in service to the Shogun in Edo. The Shogunate's intent was to burden the Daimyo with the enormous expenses of constant relocation, but a side-effect was the rapid expansion of Edo, as the Daimyo established great urban mansions

there — which in turn promoted the development of the town. To manage their residences in Edo, and to handle other small duties while they were out of town, the Daimyo appointed chamberlains, called “Edo-garou,” which literally means “Master of the House in Edo.”

CHISAKA Hyobu was a real-life Edo-garou, who was born in 1638 and died in 1700. Despite the fact that he had already passed away by the time Asano attacked Kira in April 1701, his character repeatedly appears in older 47 Ronin films, due to the influence of one of the 47 Ronin books. Now that the period of his death is known to the public, he has been replaced in recent films by IROBE Yasunaga (the real Edo-garou at the time) as a similar Kira-supporting Edo-garou character.

“...he is unlikely to be defeated by a ‘murder of crows.’”

This expression “togou no shu,” (literally, a “murder of crows”) refers to an undisciplined, inept mob.

In Japan, crows are thought of as an evil bird. Despised by farmers, they are a common pest which destroys their rice and vegetable crops. Bigger and more aggressive than North American crows, they have even been known to attack children while trying to steal candy from their hands, and have carried away small animals from Tokyo zoos. Bird experts and government officials in Japan say crow populations have increased dramatically since the 1990s, with as many as 150,000 in Tokyo alone. The increase is attributed to the growing abundance of garbage, perfect for scavenging crows.

They are so despised in Japan that during special seasons, the government offers a bounty of around 500 yen for each crow hunted. Many cities like Tokyo also set traps in parks and nature reserves.

“Uzen-ya”

An old province of Japan, the Dewa province was split from Echigo in the 8th century, and grew as the Japanese pushed back the indigenous people of northern Honshu. During the Meiji Period in the 19th century, the Dewa province was split into Uzen and Ugo before being reorganized into prefectures. Today, it is composed of the Yamagata prefecture and Akita prefecture, except for the city of Kazuno and the town of Kosaka.

“It was a time when a dog had more value than a person. They were referred to as ‘Noble Dogs’ by edict of the fifth generation Shogun Tsunayoshi, based on his pity for all living things.”

Tokugawa Tsunayoshi became shogun in 1680, and exercised absolute rule without a Tairo to serve as chief advisor. His rule was quite strict at times, but it was also quite arbitrary, and Tsunayoshi is generally regarded as one of the least competent of the shoguns. Even so, the bureaucrats and administrators under him did well, maintaining the day-to-day governance of the nation, and Japan saw several decades of incredible prosperity before the bubble burst and real problems began to sink in.

In the later years of Tsunayoshi’s rule, he sought protection for all living things due to his own religious fundamentalism. In the 1690s and 1700s, he released a collection of daily edicts known as the “Shoruiawareminorei,” or “Edicts on Compassion for Living Things.” These edicts specifically focused on protection of dogs, perhaps because Tsunayoshi was born in the Year of the Dog. His strict edicts earned him the pejorative nickname “Inu-Kubo,” or “Dog-Shogun” (formally). There were already many stray and diseased dogs wandering around Edo, but by 1695 there were so many dogs that Edo began to stink unbearably. Eventually, they decided to deport 50,000 of the dogs to suburban kennels, where they reportedly lived out their days eating rice and fish, generously paid for by the taxpaying citizens of Edo.

“‘Senshu-in’ (Temple)”

As seen in the film, Chiharu explains that she was named after this temple called “Senshu-in.” The Sino-Japanese logograms “千春” for “Senshu” can be read alternatively as “Chiharu” (the latter being more common).

Another example of this kind of “phonetic paradigm shift” can be seen in the Miyamoto Musashi film series. In the story, the written nomenclature of “武藏,” or “Takézo,” came to be read as “Musashi”).

“Oh. They play Go together.”

Go is an ancient board game which is rich in strategy despite its simple rules. The game is played by two players who alternately place black and white stones on a 19x19 grid. Once placed, the stones cannot be moved, unless surrounded and captured by the opponent's stones, and the object of the game is to control the largest area of the board. Professional games, particularly in Japan, can take as long as 16 hours, and are often played in sessions spread over two days.

Go originated in China (as “weiqi”) more than 2500 years ago, and spread to Korea (as “baduk”) and Japan (as “Go”) around the 7th century. Most popular in East Asia, the game has recently gained worldwide popularity, with a conservative estimate of worldwide players at approximately 27 million. Despite its Chinese origins, Go is known globally by its Japanese name because it spread to the West from Japan.

“Yeah, but you know, I go and pray to Shichimen every month, right?”

Lady Shichimen of Kuonji is a dragon which is the guardian deity of Kuonji of Yamanashi Prefecture. While dragons are traditionally part of Japanese folklore, they are sometimes associated with Buddhism, as represented in the sculptures and paintings adorning many Buddhist buildings.

The popular legend is that a young, beautifully dressed woman would suddenly appear whenever Priest Nichiren recited the Lotus Sutra in Kuonji. She appeared many times to listen to Nichiren's recitation, until one day he asked her who she was. She said she was a nymph living in a pond near Mt. Shichimen who desired salvation by way of the Lotus Sutra. But Priest Nichiren knew there was more to the story and put a vase in front of her, revealing through her reflection a red dragon. The Priest made her return to the pond to be a guardian deity of Kuonji, and ever since, she's been guarding the southwestern corner of the temple.

“Oh from Takasago, raise the mast of the light ship... raise the mast... of the light ship.”

The name of the song heard here and again at the end of the film is “Takasagoya,” a Noh song traditionally sung at Japanese wedding ceremonies for blessings of longevity, a happy family life, and peace. Even to this day, Takasagoya is commonly performed in many traditional-style wedding ceremonies.

Noh plays are among the oldest existing stage arts in the world (over 600 years in Japan), and consist of dance, music and poetry. In a typical Noh Act, the hero is a ghost telling the story of his past life, while attempting to convey the essence and passion of the human condition. As an audience member, the Noh should be observed with a peaceful state of mind and without any preconceived ideas.

“Our target tonight is Kira Kozukénosuke.”

“Kozukénosuke” is Kira's title, not his name. Kira holds a higher court rank than Asano even though Asano is a Daimyo and he is not. There were multiple types of hierarchies in Edo Period Japan, and you had to know your place in all of them. In the court rank hierarchy, Asano is lower-grade junior fifth rank and Kira is upper-grade junior fourth rank, so Kira's rank trumps Asano's.

“Perhaps an assistant of Inari, the mansion's guardian deity.”

Inari is the Japanese “kami” (spirit/deity) of fertility, rice, agriculture, foxes, industry, and worldly success. One of the main kami of Shinto, Inari can be represented as male, female, or androgynous. More than one-third of all Shinto shrines in Japan are dedicated to Inari, and even modern corporations revere Inari. Inari uses pure white foxes (“kitsune”) to act as his/her messengers, as depicted in the film. During the Edo period, Inari was considered the patron protector of blacksmiths and warriors, so Inari worship was especially prominent among officials and samurai. Many castle compounds in Edo-era Japan would contain Inari shrines because the Daimyo would seek continued protection as they relocated to new domains.

“By the time of the Hina festival, I'll have earned enough to send you some of Kyoto's famous husband-and-wife Dairi Hina dolls.”

There are five seasonal commemorative festivals each year in Japan, called “Sekku.” One of these is “Hina-

matsuri," a.k.a. "Japanese Doll Festival" or "Girl's Day," which is held on March 3rd. The tradition began in the Heian period, and until the end of the Edo period, Dairi Hina dolls (which were just the Emperor and Empress) were common in Japan.

Later, as the economy grew, multiple-tiered platforms were introduced, which were covered with red carpet and used to display rows of ornamental dolls called "hina-ningyo," which represented not only the Emperor and Empress, but several other characters in the traditional court dress of the Heian period. The dolls come from the traditional Japanese custom of "hina-nagashi" (lit. "doll floating"), in which straw hina dolls were sent downriver to the sea, taking troubles and bad spirits with them.

Most households with girls will decorate and display their own hina dolls, usually around mid-February. The platforms are taken down immediately after the festival, because superstition says displaying the dolls past March 4 will result in a late marriage for the daughter.

"Here. A broth of horsetail shoots."

The horsetail is the common name for the genus "Equisetum," which is made up of vascular plants that reproduce by spores instead of seeds. There are a variety of uses for the plant, such as making dye and wood polish, and the plant is also traditionally used as medicine. In Japan, young stems of some species are cooked and eaten in a dish similar to asparagus, called "tsukushi." The dish requires considerable preparation and care to cook the horsetails correctly. As seen in the film, the shoots can also be cooked into a broth, as well as a tea. Ironically, the foliage of the horsetail is often poisonous to horses and some other grazing animals.

"This is a very difficult time for our lord; all I can do is keep praying that the important duty of entertaining the imperial envoy will go smoothly, and without a hitch."

An imperial envoy is dispatched by the Emperor to deliver letters to the Shogun or to perform ceremonial functions as his representative. Daimyo were appointed to host these envoys, and even if the envoy was technically of lower status than the chosen Daimyo, on these trips the envoy was to be treated AS THE EMPEROR, so any slight against the envoy was considered a slight against the Emperor himself.

"I've been enjoying the famous Tangé-Kyoto cherry-blossoms of Edo..."

Cherry blossoms, a.k.a. "sakura," are an important part of Japanese life, and show up throughout Samurai Vendetta. The original Japanese title of this film is "Hakuoki," which can be translated as "A Chronicle of Pale Cherry Blossoms"; "Samurai Vendetta" is the title under which it is best known in the West.

Cherry blossoms are indigenous to many Asian states, and over 200 varieties can be found in Japan alone. The cultural experience of flower viewing, known as "hanami," was borrowed from China during the Heian Period (794-1191), when the upper class would gather and celebrate under the cherry blossoms. The social phenomenon evolved as more trees were cultivated for their beauty, and by the ninth century, the sakura was the most favored species in Japan.

Each year the public (and now the Japanese Meteorological Agency) tracks the cherry blossom front ("sakura zensen") as it travels northward with the advent of warmer weather. The blossoming begins in Okinawa in January and reaches Kyoto and Tokyo by March/April, eventually arriving in Hokkaido a few weeks later. These forecasts are taken very seriously, and Japanese turn out in huge numbers at parks, shrines, and temples for hanami festivals.

The cherry blossoms themselves have a rich symbolism in Japan. They can represent femininity, love, good fortune, or clouds, which are an enduring metaphor for the fleeting nature of life. This idea is associated with the concept of "mono no aware," or the transience of mortality, and is symbolized by the extreme beauty of an en masse blooming, followed by a quick death.

"It was the 14th day of the 3rd month of the 14th year of the Genroku period."

Genroku was the Japanese era which spanned from 1688 through 1704. The reigning emperor was Higashiyama-tenno and the period was generally considered to be the Golden Age of the Edo Period, with relative economic stability and a flourishing of arts and architecture.

This date mentioned is April 21, 1701 in the Gregorian calendar, which is the day Lord Asano drew his sword against Kira in Edo Castle.

“He said he was next going to Kamigata.”

Kamigata is a region which contains the cities of Kyoto and Osaka, in the Kansai region, but is a term which today is mostly used to refer to Edo period culture such as ukiyo-e and kabuki. This is because these and many other fields of popular culture first originated in Kamigata before spreading to Edo (now Tokyo). These days, Edo culture is widely studied and exhibited, while Kamigata culture is often overshadowed.

“I figured he’s too good a man to let die. I sent him to the mineral hot springs of Shirabu Takayu outside of Yonezawa, so that he could recover from his wound.”

A hot spring (or “onsen,” in Japanese) is a spring that is produced by the emergence of geothermally-heated groundwater from the earth’s crust. Being located in the “Pacific Ring of Fire,” Japan is in a volcanic region and is home to thousands of hot springs. Visiting an onsen is a quintessential Japanese experience and what once were public bathing areas are now popular tourist attractions.

The water of an onsen is believed to have healing powers, due to its mineral content. Different onsen will boast of their own unique mineral composition and what healing properties they may provide. Some examples include the sulphur onsen, sodium chloride onsen, hydrogen carbonate onsen, and iron onsen. Generally, it is believed that the onsen heals aches, pains, and some diseases, such as arthralgia, skin diseases, diabetes, constipation, menstrual disorders, etc... These medical effects have given rise to a form of balneotherapy (bathing therapy) called Onsen Therapy, or “onsen-ryoho.” It’s a comprehensive treatment which maintains health, normalizes dysfunctions, and prevents illness. There are some rare side effects associated with the onsen, such as fungal infections and the exposure to dangerous bacteria or amoeba.

“I have discovered that the master of ceremonies at Kira’s tea party is going to be Shiho-an Yamada Sohen himself.”

YAMADA Sohen was the founder of the Sohen-ryu school of tea, and one of the four close disciples of SEN Sotan, grandson of the famous 16th century tea-master SEN Rikyu. Sen Rikyu perfected The Way of Tea, known as “wabi-cha,” and Sen Sotan gave rise to the three Sen historical households of tea when his three sons split into three different tea houses.

Yamada Sohen was the source of a crucial bit of information that the 47 Ronin needed – the date of Kira’s tea ceremony, December 14th. One of the 47 Ronin, WAKIYA Shinbei, whose real identity was OOTAKA Tadao, became a tea student of Yamada Sohen to gain this information. Many believe that Sohen knew the true identity of Shinbei, but deliberately told him the date in quiet support of their revenge.

He’s putting on a 5-mon street show in Ueno.

The mon was the smallest monetary unit used from the Muromachi period in 1336, until it was replaced by the yen in 1870. The mon was worth roughly 1/4000 of a ryo, and the coins themselves were cast in copper or iron and had square holes in the middle, allowing them to be strung together.

It’s difficult to estimate how much 5 mon would be worth today, since the value of the currency (based on rice) fluctuated dramatically throughout the Edo Period. It would probably be between \$1-\$5 based upon the value of his performance and how much average street people were willing to pay.

Shintaro KATSU (NAKAYAMA Yasubei)

Shintaro, originally born Toshio OKUMURA, was born November 29, 1931. Nicknamed Katsu-shin, he was a very prolific actor, but also a singer, producer, and director. Beginning with his first film in 1955, Bara ikutabika, Shintaro appeared in over 100 films, and along with Raizo ICHIKAWA, was one of Daiei Studios top stars during Japan’s golden age of filmmaking. His most famous role is, of course, Zatoichi the blind swordsman, whom he played in 25 separate movies between 1962 and 1973, as well as four seasons of a Zatoichi television series. In 1989, he starred in and directed the 26th film.

Shintaro founded Katsu Productions when Daiei Studios closed, and produced several great films, including the Lone Wolf & Cub series which starred his older brother Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA.

He died of pharyngeal cancer on June 21, 1997 at the age of 65. Known for his love of alcohol and cigarettes, in his last few years Katsu-shin spent increasing amounts of time in the hospital, only to be seen lighting up cigars at press conferences held to announce his recovery. Two days after his death, five thousand people attended his memorial service at a Tokyo Temple.

Raizo ICHIKAWA (TANGÉ Tenzen)

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 nihilistic samurai NEMURI Kyoshiro in the Sleepy Eyes of Death films catapulted him to true stardom.

Appearing in over 150 films, Raizo worked with legendary directors Kenji MIZOGUCHI, Kon ICHIKAWA, Kenji MISUMI, and Teinosuke KINUGAWA, and also co-starred with Shintaro KATSU (Zatoichi) in at least a dozen features. During his 15 year 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 the 1958 Blue Ribbon Award for Best Actor in Enjo (1958), as well as the Kinema Junpo Awards for Best Actor in Enjo (1958) and The Wife of Seishu Hanaoka (1967).

Kazuo MORI (Director)

Kazuo Mori was born January 15, 1911, and had a prolific career as a film director from the 1930s to the 1970s. Over his long career, he directed 131 films, including The Blind Menace, four Zatoichi films, and three Shinobi no Mono films. Samurai Vendetta is regarded as one of his best films. Kazuo Mori died on June 29, 1989.

Kosuke GOMI (Original Story)

Born as Yasusuke GOMI on December 12, 1921, in Osaka, Kosuke Gomi is regarded as one of the top popular fiction novelists of historical themes in Japan. His noble writing often featured swordsmen and Yagyu of the Edo Period as his main characters, and his depiction of history and the spirituality of master swordsmen attracted millions throughout the nation.

Winner of the prestigious Akutagawa award in 1952 for his novel Soshin, he is best-known for his novel Yagyu Bugeicho ("Yagyu Secret Scrolls"), which was made into two films, Yagyu Bugeicho (1957), and its sequel, Yagyu Bugeicho: Souryuu Hiken (1958), both starring Toshiro Mifune and directed by Hiroshi Inagaki.

In addition to his long writing career, Gomi was a respected critic of classical music and audio systems, and had a wide variety of other hobbies, from mahjong to palmistry. He died on April 1, 1980, and his grave can be found at the temple of Kencho-ji in Kamakura City, Kanagawa Prefecture.

Daisuke ITO (Screenplay)

Born October 12, 1898, in Uwajima, Ehime, Daisuke Ito was one of the top directors and screenwriters of his time in Japan. Often regarded as the "Father of Jidaigeki (period drama)," he particularly laid his bricks in samurai cinema, building the foundation of modern jidaigeki from the era of silent film (his first screenplay was produced in 1921), to his final film in 1971.

During his early filmmaking days in the silent era, he was known for his mobile camera style, and earned himself the nickname "Ido DAISUKE" ("I LOVE Motion"), a pun on "Ito Daisuke." Over his many years of

filmmaking, he worked with such legendary stars as Kinnosuke NAKAMURA, Raizo ICHIKAWA, Shintaro KATSU, Denjiro OKOCHI, and Tsumasaburo BANDO. The director of Samurai Vendetta, Kazuo Mori, was also a beloved student of Daisuke Ito.

As a director, he's perhaps best known for his award-winning Hangyakuji, a.k.a. Conspirator (1961), and Benten Kozo, a.k.a. The Gay Masquerade (1958). As a writer, he's best-known for his adaptation of Yukinojo Henge, a.k.a. Revenge of a Kabuki Actor, as well as his single contributions to long-running samurai series such as Sleepy Eyes of Death 8 (1966), and Zatoichi and the Chess Expert (1965).

Ito died on July 19, 1981, at the age of 82, after a career that lasted more than half a century.