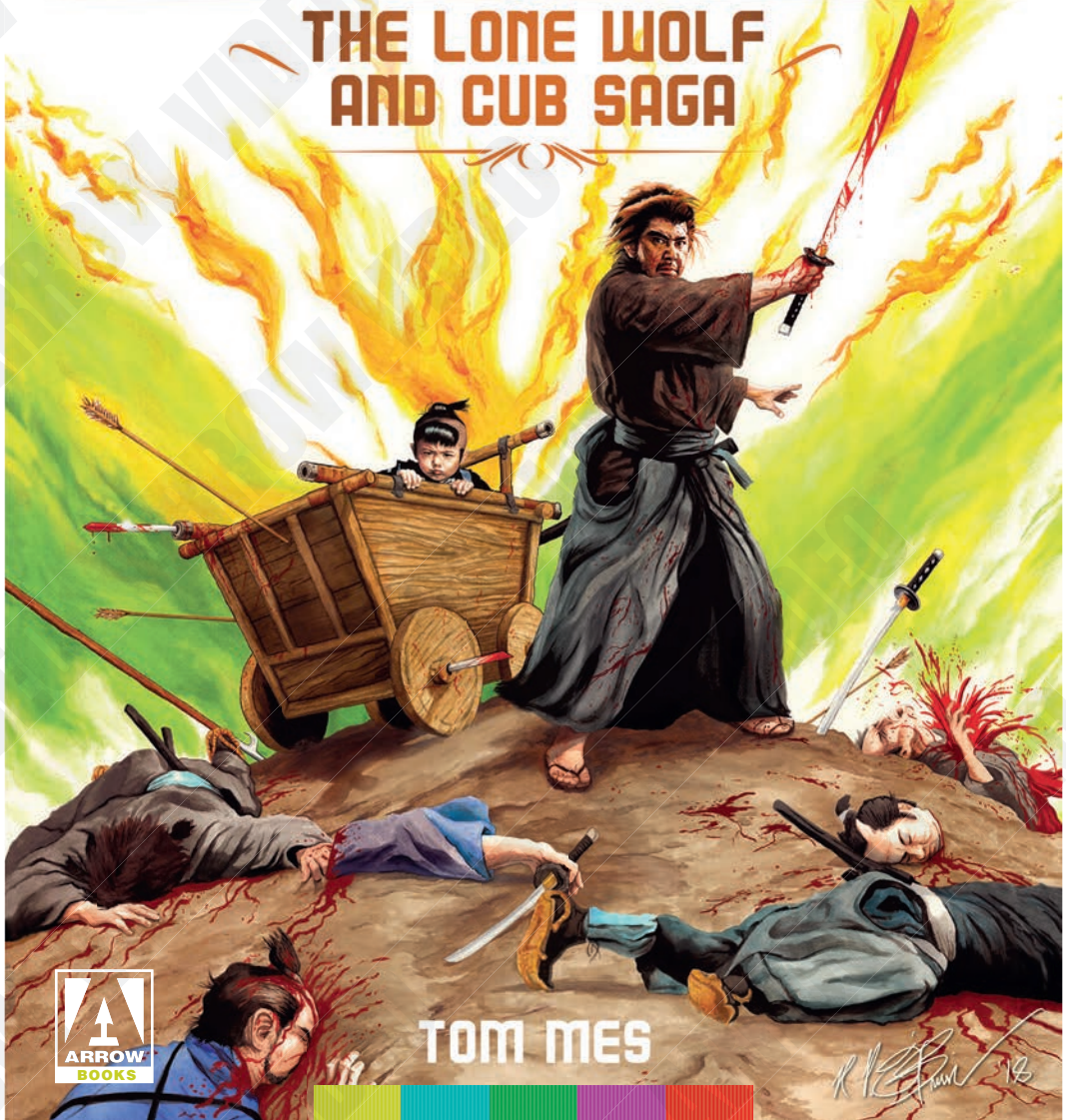


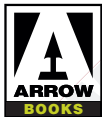
FATHER, SON, SWORD

THE LONE WOLF AND CUB SAGA



TOM MES





THIS IS AN ARROW BOOK
PUBLISHED BY ARROW FILM DISTRIBUTORS
The Engine House, Shenley Park, Radlett Lane, Shenley, WD7 9JP
www.arrowfilms.com

FATHER, SON, SWORD - THE LONE WOLF AND CUB SAGA - TOM MES

© Arrow Films 2018
ISBN 978-0-9933060-9-9
First Edition, First Printing
Printed in EU, 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

All images in this volume are used under provisions of fair use and function to complement the text.

Editor Liz Ward
Cover illustration R.P. "Kung Fu Bob" O'Brien
Design Oink Creative



FATHER, SON, SWORD

**THE LONE WOLF
AND CUB SAGA**



TOM MES



Contents

Introduction 6

I - Descent

1. Lone Wolf and Cub: The manga 09
2. Way of the Warrior: The origins 18
3. Setting the Stage: The industry 27
4. Kenji Misumi: The director 32
5. Tomisaburo Wakayama: The star 53

II - Carnage

1. Sword of Vengeance 59
2. Baby Cart at the River Styx 71
3. Baby Cart to Hades 81
4. Baby Cart in Peril 93
5. Baby Cart in the Land of Demons 101
6. White Heaven in Hell 107

III - Aftermath

1. Purgatory: Lone Wolf on TV 114
2. Bastard Cub: Shogun Assassin 122
3. Endless Road: The Lone Wolf legacy 130

Credits 135

Bibliography 141

Acknowledgements 146

About the Author 147

Index 148

Introduction

Created over thirty years ago, the six films in the *Baby Cart* series, based on the manga *Lone Wolf and Cub* by Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, have proven to be enduringly popular with audiences the world over. Stylish, exciting, and enthralling, to some they represent all the best things Japanese cinema has to offer. Whether by themselves or through their equally funky bastard offspring *Shogun Assassin*, they have converted legions to the cause of Japanese film.

Oddly enough, in Japan itself these films have been relegated to obscurity. Mention *Lone Wolf and Cub* (*Kozure okami*, or “wolf with child”, to give it its original title) to the average Japanese person and the first thing they will think of is not the films, but the long-running television series that was a primetime mainstay during much of the 1970s. Delivered to people’s homes week after week for years on end, this small screen adaptation, starring Kinnosuke Yorozuya as Itto Ogami, captured the public’s imagination on a scale the struggling film industry of that time could never hope to equal. That the six feature films are now all but forgotten in their home country is perhaps an injustice, but it thankfully has less to do with their quality than with the power of the cathode ray tube.

Because the *Baby Cart* films most definitely represent high quality filmmaking. Directed largely by Kenji Misumi, one of the true greats of the *chanbara* or samurai action film, produced by *Zatoichi* star Shintaro Katsu, scripted by the author of the original manga, Kazuo Koike, and starring the gifted Tomisaburo Wakayama, the series benefited from top talent on both sides of the camera. It was also a pinnacle of its era, made at a time when Japanese films were bolder than ever, with a generous amount of freedom to experiment. A more relaxed attitude towards the depiction of sex and violence went hand in hand with a politically defiant attitude directly inherited from 1960s counterculture. The *Baby Cart* films represent vital, popular cinema in every sense.

While we can still recognise the audacity of the violence and the visual experiments, the politics and social criticism of the films probably won’t

be readily apparent to Western viewers today. But like the manga on which they were based, these movies show a critical attitude towards Japan's feudal past and the martial spirit that is so often presented as the soul of the nation, particularly by those who seek to glorify violence and the abuse of power. There is no better time than today to take a fresh look at the *Baby Cart* films. In these days of gross collusion, governmental scheming and boldfaced violations of civil rights at home and abroad, these films have regained the topicality that for decades took a backseat to their more superficially sensational aspects. Ogami's sworn enemies, the Ura Yagyu, may have been created as a symbol of the enduring power of Japan's bureaucracy (the country has long been ruled from the shadows), but today it is not very hard to draw the parallel between Lord Retsudo's organisation, plotting behind the official face of government but actually wielding all the real power, and certain influential groups that pull the strings of the puppet leaders of our times.

Father, Son, Sword aims the spotlight at those forgotten qualities of the *Baby Cart* series and celebrates all the aspects we know and love, covering the films, the people who made them, the TV series and spin-offs, the many movies and comic books they inspired and the manga that started it all.

I - Descent

1. Lone Wolf and Cub: The manga

The story of disgraced shogunate executioner Itto Ogami, his little son Daigoro and their feud with the scheming Retsudo Yagyu first appeared in serialised form in the magazine *Manga Action* in 1970. *Manga Action* was a real hotbed of talent at the time, Koike and Kojima's creation rubbing shoulders with Monkey Punch's *Lupin III* and the early work of Katsuhiro Otomo. The lone wolf and his cub would occupy the pages of the magazine for the next six years, their revenge-driven trek across feudal Japan covering 142 episodes and nearly 9000 pages by the time Ogami and Retsudo finally met face-to-face.

The impact of the manga can hardly be overstated. The collected paperback editions sold over 8 million copies in Japan alone; it was translated into several languages and inspired countless derivations and imitations, official and otherwise. It instantly launched writer Kazuo Koike and artist Goseki Kojima to stardom, kicking off a long and fruitful collaboration between the two men.

The story behind the English-language edition of *Lone Wolf and Cub* is an epic in its own right. Initially published in English in 1987 by First Comics, its appearance was the product of a combination of influences. The wandering assassin who pushes his son around Japan in a wooden cart had been known to Western audiences for several years thanks to *Shogun Assassin*, the Americanised digest version of the first two *Baby Cart* films (see Chapter Three). The manga already had an influential supporter in the shape of Frank Miller, who had risen to comic book fame in the 1980s as one of the leading figures of a group of artists and writers that were taking American comics into darker, more mature territory. Miller had drawn an enormous amount of inspiration from Goseki Kojima's work, which he put to paper in his series *Ronin* and his stint on Marvel Comics' *Wolverine*. Spreading the word about *Lone Wolf and Cub* in interviews and among colleagues in the industry, Miller quickly found himself involved in First Comics' attempt to release an English translation, signing on to draw cover artwork and write introductions to each issue.

Although the releases were adapted to the standard American comic book format and incomplete – the first issue started with episode nine of the original manga – the U.S. edition became something of a headline-grabbing event. This was largely thanks to Miller’s involvement, which made *Lone Wolf and Cub* fit in seamlessly with the boom in more mature comics, but it also benefited from an increasing Western fascination with Japan and its contemporary culture. At the height of its economic power in the late 1980s, the archipelago was making its influence felt across the world, with Sony buying up Columbia Pictures and neophyte Japanese millionaires beginning to dominate the auction circuit by making record bids for Van Gogh paintings and rare sports cars. Added to this, the prophetic cyberpunk literature of such writers as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling loudly proclaimed Japan’s “high-tech” society the image of the future, several translations of manga began to appear and an explosion in popularity for anime in the West was just around the corner. The time was right.

The First Comics run of *Lone Wolf and Cub* would last for four years until the company’s demise in 1991, by which time it had published 45 issues. Although manga was by then a familiar part of the American comic book landscape, no one stepped forth to take over where First left off, possibly because of the daunting prospect of publishing such an enormous saga, but no doubt also partially due to First’s rather erratic selection. Anyone who was going to undertake publication of the complete *Lone Wolf and Cub* was going to have to start all the way from the beginning on account of the gaps left by First Comics. It wasn’t until another decade had passed that Dark Horse Comics rose to the occasion, committing itself to bringing out the complete, unabridged *Lone Wolf* as a monthly 300-page paperback.

The men behind the manga

Lone Wolf and Cub’s writer and creator Kazuo Koike was born in 1936. Child of a samurai family whose father and grandfather had served in World War II, he was confronted with *bushido* and samurai ethics from a tender age. His experiences during the war, when he lived through U.S. bombing raids, and immediately after, when the American occupiers confiscated all the family’s *katana* swords, most likely influenced the ambivalent views on the use of weaponry and violence present in *Lone Wolf and Cub* and his other work.

Starting his professional life as a civil servant with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, followed by a period in which he made a living as a professional Mahjong player, Koike got his break in comics in 1968, when he became one of the writers on *Golgo 13*, the legendary series about a stoic, invincible hitman. The character doubtlessly had an influence on the creation of Itto Ogami two years later, for which Koike left the studios of *Golgo* creator Takao Saito and went freelance. That same year he created the *Hanzo the Razor* (*Goyokiba*) series, which would be adapted for the big screen in 1973, in three films produced by and starring Shintaro Katsu. Set in the same timeframe as *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Hanzo* followed the exploits of morally dubious, if incorruptible Edo constable Hanzo Itami, who is nicknamed “The Razor” on account of his oversized and rock hard member, which he uses to interrogate a procession of courtesans and prostitutes in his efforts to get to the bottom of his cases.

The runaway success of *Lone Wolf and Cub* turned Koike into something of a comic book mogul. He founded his own production company and launched several new titles, including such internationally known series as *Lady Snowblood* (*Shurayukihime*, a sort of female counterpart to *Lone Wolf and Cub* set in the early 20th century, with art by Kazuo Kamimura), *Crying Freeman*, *Offered*, and *Wounded Man* (all drawn by his other regular collaborator Ryoichi Ikegami), as well as *Mad Bull 34* (drawn by Noriyoshi Inoue).

Koike also branched out into other areas of writing, scripting the first five of the *Baby Cart* films as well as the first big screen adaptation of *Hanzo the Razor* (Kenji Misumi, 1972). He also penned lyrics for the theme songs of both series, as well as for the giant robot anime *Mazinger Z* and the big screen adaptation of *Lady Snowblood* (Toshiya Fujita, 1973) starring Meiko Kaji. The latter’s theme tune, “Flower of Carnage” (“Shura no hana”), performed by Kaji, would be revived much later in Quentin Tarantino’s *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2004), in which it accompanies the climactic battle between Uma Thurman’s The Bride and Lucy Liu’s O-Ren Ishii.

In 1977 the writer started his own school for comic book artists and writers, the Koike Kazuo Gekiga Sonjuku (later shortened to Koike Kazuo Juku), located in his spacious production company offices in Osaka. Counting

Ranma ½ creator Rumiko Takahashi, *Fist of the North Star*'s Tetsuo Hara and *Dragon Quest*'s Yuji Horii among its alumni, it quickly gained major prestige and was, according to manga authority Frederik Schodt, as hard to get into as some of the country's leading universities.

It was at his private academy that Koike began teaching what he still sees as the fundamental rule of comic book creation: building strong characters. "If the character stands out, the comic will become a hit", was his oft-repeated adage. When he began teaching at Osaka's University of Arts in 2000, he named his course "Kazuo Koike's Character Principle".

Koike continued to accumulate extracurricular activities in the meantime: a golfing magazine, *Albatross View*, was launched in 1987 and a magazine exclusively devoted to samurai comics, *Jin*, saw the light of day in 2004. He was promoted several times at the University of Arts, where he currently holds the rank of Dean of the Character Figurative Arts Department. In this guise he launched the biweekly manga magazine *Stranger Sorrento* in 2013, intended as "a platform to cultivate young talent", including the Department's students and alumni.

In 2004, the year he was inducted into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame, Koike began work on the long awaited sequel to *Lone Wolf and Cub*. Entitled *Shin kozure okami*, or "New Lone Wolf and Cub", it follows the continuing adventures of Daigoro as he grows up and finds his own way in the hostile world of feudal Japan. The new series is drawn by Hideki Mori, who made a name for himself with the 11-tome *Bokko*, a mature, sprawling work set on the bloody battlefields of ancient China.

Goseki Kojima was not to see the follow-up to the series that made him famous. He died in early 2000, aged 71, after a career that spanned almost fifty years. Born in 1928, he moved to Tokyo after the war and began drawing panels for *kamishibai* or "paper theatre", the pictures used by travelling storytellers who went from town to town and from area to area to entertain the poor – those who lacked the means to go to the cinema or buy manga. In 1957 Kojima began working for the expanding *kashi-bon* manga library market, specialising in period stories based on historical figures and events. A

decade later his series *Dojinki*, *Oboro junin-cho* and *Akai kageboshi* (based on the ninja novels of Renzaburo Shibata) began to appear in manga magazines, leading to his collaboration with Kazuo Koike on *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

A great fan of the films of Akira Kurosawa, Kojima based his realistic style around a cinematic shot composition, alternating camera angles and emphasising the suggestion of dynamic, dramatic movement. His layouts of battle scenes over sometimes dozens of pages and his reliance on purely visual storytelling became two of the title's defining characteristics.

During and after *Lone Wolf's* six-year run Kojima and Koike would team up again many times over, the enormous commercial success of their collaborative efforts earning them the nickname "The Golden Duo". Other titles the pair worked on include *Samurai Executioner* (featuring the adventures of Decapitator Asaemon, who also put in an appearance in *Lone Wolf and Cub*), *Kawaite soro*, *Bohachi bushido* and *Oda Nobunaga*, about the warlord who made the first moves towards a unification of Japan's many warring factions, thus paving the way for the rise of the Tokugawa shogunate.

The counter-culture comic book

Though remarkably timeless in its appeal, *Lone Wolf and Cub* is very much a product of its time. It first appeared in 1970, one of the darker periods of post-war Japan. While the reconstruction was in full swing around that time and Japan had symbolically rejoined the community of "civilised, democratic" nations with the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and the opening of the Shinkansen bullet train, the 1960s had also seen widespread civil protests against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which granted American armed forces permanent bases on Japanese soil. The decade saw the rise of a social and artistic counter-culture centred around Tokyo's Shinjuku district, which became a bohemia of poets, painters, actors, writers, filmmakers and assorted hangers-on. Through the work of these people, the movement's ideals and philosophies found their way into art and entertainment.

By 1970, things were beginning to turn grim. The former student protest movements had made way for urban terrorist groups such as the Red Army factions, who were not averse to the use of violence, kidnapping and even

murder, particularly among their own ranks in “ideological purges”. The flipside of the country’s economic growth came to light with high-profile pollution scandals and cases of corruption within the government. Distrust of authority was widespread.

Looking at *Lone Wolf and Cub* in this light, it is easy to imagine how this general atmosphere of discontent would have fed the plot, in which Ogami is betrayed by high-ranking government official Retsudo Yagyu and he swears an oath of revenge against the ruling Yagyu and Tokugawa clans. It certainly was not the only anti-authoritarian manga out at the time. The quintessential example was Sanpei Shirato’s *Manual of Ninja Martial Arts* (*Ninja bugeicho*), the story of a renegade ninja who leads a peasant revolt against the government of Nobunaga Oda. *Manual of Ninja Martial Arts* was popular among left-wing students in the late 1960s, who regarded it as a manifesto on the level of Karl Marx’s *Capital*. Filmmaker Nagisa Oshima, whose deep commitment to the left-wing struggles could be seen in films such as *Night and Fog in Japan* (*Nihon no yoru to kiri*, 1960), *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (*Tokyo senso sengo hiwa*, 1970) and *The Ceremony* (*Gishiki*, 1971), adapted it into a feature-length film in 1967. His reverence for the manga was so deep that he used neither actors nor animation, but simply shot the comic book panels and let actors deliver the dialogue in voice-over.

One of the radical changes *Lone Wolf and Cub* made to the tradition of the samurai story is its dismissal of the so-called *giri-ninjo* structure, a classic plot ploy to create drama out of the samurai’s predicament between his human feelings on the one hand and his loyalty to his lord on the other. Also heavily employed in yakuza films, *giri-ninjo* formed almost a blueprint for the samurai genre. In *Lone Wolf*, Itto Ogami has no such internal struggle. He drops his loyalty outright after seeing through Retsudo’s plot, figuring that if the Yagyu are capable of such schemes, the entire shogunate government of which they are such an important part must be rotten. The storytelling traditions of art forms like Kabuki, Noh and *bunraku* abound with stories of retainers who sacrifice their wives and children out of loyalty to their lords; *Lone Wolf and Cub* draws a thick red line through this convention.



Sanpei Shirato's *Manual of Ninja Martial Arts (Ninja bugeicho)*, filmed by Nagisa Oshima as *Band of Ninja*

The manga's depiction of Tokugawa society is anything but rosy. Too often regarded as some kind of true face of Japan, with the samurai warrior embodying idealised Japanese manhood and *bushido* seen as the national spirit, in *Lone Wolf and Cub* Koike depicts the Tokugawa shogunate as a brutal militarist dictatorship that employs a network of spies and assassins to nip the slightest form of dissent in the bud. Ogami's travels take him to the furthest reaches of the Japanese archipelago and as a result the manga paints an almost documentary portrait of life in the Edo period. It is not a pretty picture: poverty, famine, oppression, violence, and the abuse of power are widespread and a rigid class system is brutally enforced by those at the top of the ladder. When Ogami exclaims that he travels along *meifumado*, the road to hell, he could well mean it literally: the manga really portrays this country as a kind of hell on earth.

Inevitably, *bushido*, the cornerstone of that society, also comes under some heavy fire. Throughout the saga, it is dismissed by Ogami as being good for only one thing: killing. Beneath all its talk of honour, discipline, fealty, and moral righteousness, *bushido* was devised to create killers who never questioned the orders of their superiors.

Ogami's lack of allegiance is effectively a renunciation of this society and its mores. He gives up his status as a samurai and even his humanity because of his disgust with those in power. His sword, in *bushido* considered the soul of the samurai, is little more than a tool to him, one weapon among the arsenal he transports in Daigoro's cart. By hiring out his services as an assassin, Ogami shows us how much bloodlust exists among the various social strata: from lords to commoners, everyone has somebody they want to see dead, usually for their own gain. Ogami becomes the vehicle for society's thirst for violence, laying bare the moral bankruptcy just beneath the façade of honour and fealty. The same moral bankruptcy that made him and his son the outcasts they are.

Kazuo Koike's relationship with *bushido* is more ambivalent than outright critical, however. What the manga eschews is a codified and institutionalised *bushido*, not the existence of a true warrior spirit. Ogami breaks with all the codes and liberally violates them, but he nevertheless retains his integrity. His

sense of duty and honour towards himself, his son, and the memory of his wife never wavers. When Ogami and Retsudo finally confront each other in the last few instalments of the series, even the shogun himself acknowledges that these two men and their battle exemplify the warrior spirit in its purest form.



Advertising for the Lone Wolf and Cub arcade game (1987).

2. Way of the Warrior: The origins

The story of Itto Ogami is set in the late 1650s during Japan's feudal Edo era. Japanese history is divided into periods, most commonly based on the reigns of emperors. The Edo period is the big exception to the rule: during this time the emperors had no more than a ceremonial, symbolic value and the effective ruler of the land was the shogun, the military high commander (shogun literally means general). Between roughly 1600 and 1867, the Tokugawa dynasty held this post for fifteen generations, which is why the era is also commonly known as the Tokugawa period.

The first Tokugawa shogun was Ieyasu, who came to power with his victory at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. This battle and Ieyasu's acquisition of the title *Sei-i Taishogun* ("barbarian-conquering grand general") three years later mark the start of the Tokugawa shogunate. But the absolute stranglehold the family would come to hold on the nation wouldn't become a reality until 1614 when Ieyasu's forces laid siege to Osaka castle, where his own son Hideyori had amassed an army of disgruntled *ronin* and anti-shogun sympathisers and was plotting to overthrow the grand general. Bigger and bloodier than the battle of Sekigahara, the siege of Osaka castle almost brought Ieyasu to his knees. When the shogunate forces did finally emerge victorious, Ieyasu ruthlessly implemented draconian measures to assure that he would never again be forced to sacrifice this much power to squelch a large-scale revolt. After executing Hideyori, his eight-year-old son (Ieyasu's own grandson) and all the surviving rebels (*ronin*, *daimyo* lords and their families, including children), Ieyasu began a process to restructure society with the goal of gaining total and absolute control over the land, its provinces, and all the regional warlords. The result was a totalitarian military dictatorship that functioned like a well-oiled machine for centuries.

The shogun's iron grip

Firstly, Ieyasu either directly controlled the provinces or appointed relatives and longtime supporters to govern them. Particularly central Honshu was under direct control of the shogunate. A network of spies and assassins infiltrated the outer fiefs (or *han*), where the risk of dissent or revolt was greater because these areas were governed more or less independently by

daimyo lords. To further minimise the power of such *daimyo*, each of these lords was obliged to spend every other year in residence in Edo, at the beck and call of the court. This was an expensive and time-consuming operation, not only for the trip to Edo and back, but also for the cost of maintaining a permanent household in the capital, with their own staff and chamberlain (who both ran the house in the lord's absence and served as his ambassador to the shogunate). This was particularly true for *daimyo* from the distant northern and western provinces, for whom it put a serious toll on their resources.

Ieyasu also implemented various other methods of keeping the *daimyo* under his thumb. Father of fifteen children – four sons and eleven daughters – he was wont to marry off his offspring to clan heirs, thereby bringing other domains under direct control. Fiefs could be dissolved and brought under the shogun's jurisdiction at the slightest sign of disobedience, and their lords executed by means of ritual suicide.

For the actual governing of the land, Ieyasu installed a supreme board of five, the *goroju*, whose members rotated but who were always unconditional shogunate supporters or Tokugawa vassals, who were entirely dependent on the shogun for the power and wealth of their clans. Beneath this board was a junior council, the *wakadoshiyori*, whose members were sometimes promoted to a position in the *goroju*.

The general population was made subject to a strict class system. On top were the warriors or *bushi*, (though the word samurai has become synonymous with *bushi*, in actual fact it refers only to the official retainers to the various lords – samurai and their lords both were *bushi*). They formed a privileged class, living off an annual stipend and being the only ones allowed to carry two swords. Beneath them were the peasants, followed by artisans, and finally merchants. Edo-era society also counted numerous classless outcasts, including the *yakuza* or *bohachi mono* who ran prostitution and gambling (and who nevertheless enjoyed a number of privileges, such as permission to carry a sword), street performers, and ronin.

Travel was severely restricted, with the borders of the various *han* closed and

densely guarded and not all classes having the right to leave their area. Most people lived and died in or around the place where they were born. At the same time, Japan's outside borders were closed, cutting off ties with the rest of Asia and the world, with only a handful of strictly regulated exceptions. Those converted to Christianity by the Jesuits, who had arrived in Japan before the start of the shogunate, were relentlessly prosecuted.

The final tool Ieyasu wielded to support his reign is rarely seen as such: *bushido*, the warrior code that governed the actions of the samurai. For all its moral lessons, however, it can't be overlooked that *bushido* functioned as a way to keep the warrior class loyal and obedient to their masters and that it formed a mighty weapon for the shogun. In the words of Francis Bacon: "It is most conducive for the greatness of empire for a nation to profess the skill of arms as its principal glory and most honourable employ".

Formed through a wide spectrum of influences (shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism, whose teachings are often at odds with one another), *bushido* dictated a set of values that revolved around the twin poles of fealty to one's lord and indifference to death. Death was to be embraced so that every moment would be lived as if it were the warrior's last, while loyalty exceeded all other priorities, including family and loved ones, and individuality and human feelings were made entirely subordinate. Some historians have remarked that *bushido* didn't come into its own as an ideology until the Tokugawa era, which was paradoxically the moment when warriors no longer had a role to play in society, as warfare had ended and the country lived through three centuries of peace. When the Tokugawa shogunate was in place, the samurai became useless. Yet, they established themselves as a social elite and for this they needed a justification, which they found largely in *bushido*, with all its emphasis on self-sacrifice and exalted mental endurance. All in all, *bushido* was the perfect tool to keep the idle warrior class under complete control, while at the same time giving it the illusion of grandeur that kept it docile. What to a samurai was a glorious and honourable death, to the higher echelons was the passing of another expendable servant.

Given its importance, it is peculiar that the warrior code remained unwritten. The *Hagakure* by eighteenth-century samurai turned hermit priest Jocho

Yamamoto (a.k.a. Tsunetomo Yamamoto) is a collection of anecdotes, philosophical passages and guidelines to proper living that is often referred to as “the book of the samurai” and thereby passed off as the official written version of *bushido*. However, while they do converge with *bushido*, Yamamoto’s teachings were closely guarded by his clan, the Nabeshima, and weren’t made public until the Meiji era, which means they could never have served as a handbook to samurai across the nation.

The masterless samurai

Yet another paradox in the samurai lifestyle was the existence of masterless samurai, the ronin. If the ultimate and only goal of the samurai is to serve his lord, then a masterless samurai is a contradiction. For many years until the shogunate outlawed the practice, it was expected of a retainer that he die with his master. If his master was vanquished by an enemy or his clan dissolved, the samurai was expected to follow his master in death.

Many a samurai, however, chose to live on, whether out of bitterness, fear of death, or lack of loyalty. They became mercenaries or criminals or entered the service of another lord. The decision to become a ronin was very conscious and not necessarily an easy one: ronin were stripped of the privileges they held as samurai and seen as outcasts. They were allowed to continue carrying their swords and held the notorious right to kill commoners, but they were generally looked down upon by their own class.

To the shogunate, they gradually came to form a pest, as many threw the old values in the wind and became disturbances of the peace. For this the government had itself to blame: whenever another fief was dissolved because of a threat of rebellion, another legion of samurai became masterless. This growth of the ranks of masterless warriors would contribute to the gradual deterioration of the shogunate towards the 19th century.

The ronin in a sense formed the living, breathing denial of feudal values. They were individuals, vagabonds who had flaunted the rules of conduct, rank and status. Hence their popularity in fiction, where they incarnate the archetype of the anti-authoritarian loner who represents the (particularly male) Japanese audience members’ vicarious fantasies.



The family crest of the Tokugawa clan.

The Yagyu clan

Ieyasu's social reforms were so effective that the administrative machine could function flawlessly even under weaker shogun. One prime example is Ietsuna, the fourth Tokugawa shogun, who ruled from 1651 until 1680. He was reportedly too timid to fulfil his function and left much of the actual governing to his senior advisers. In *Lone Wolf and Cub*, set during Ietsuna's reign, Kazuo Koike employs this historical fact as the basis for Retsudo Yagyu's behind-the-scenes attempts to take control of the executive power of the shogunate. (Interestingly, in episode 9 of the manga Koike mentions that the Yagyu dynasty came to an end in 1681, which, while not factually correct, does reflect the bureaucratic reforms of Ietsuna's far more hands-on successor Tsunayoshi, who came to power one year earlier.)

Retsudo and the Yagyu clan both actually existed. The Yagyu belonged to the inner circle of the shogunate, serving as the shogun's personal sword instructors for several generations. The family originates from the Yagyu area near the city of Nara. The strategic placement of their land had long given them positions of favour with the rulers and it is said that the Yagyu already served under Nobunaga Oda. Their relationship with Ieyasu Tokugawa began at a martial arts demonstration by Muneyoshi Yagyu, some years before the battle of Sekigahara. Ieyasu was greatly impressed by the 68-year-old's skill with the sword and requested a match, which Muneyoshi won with ease. Ieyasu invited him to become his personal instructor, but his opponent declined on account of his age and suggested that his son Munenori take the position instead. The future grand general accepted, adopting Munenori Yagyu into his entourage.

Munenori would go on to fight on Ieyasu's side at Sekigahara and serve as sword instructor to not only Ieyasu, but also his successors Hidetada and Iemitsu. His fame spread across the land and many *daimyo* requested to be taught the Yagyu Shinkage-ryu ("New shadow style"). To teach the style in other parts of the realm, Munenori sent out his pupils, who could conveniently double as spies for the shogunate.

Munenori had five sons, the most famous of which was Jubei Yagyu, who, alongside his contemporary Musashi Miyamoto, became one of Japan's

most popular folk heroes on account of his martial arts prowess and his much romanticised travels. Retsudo was also a son of Munenori, but his real life story appears to have been far more sedate than the way he is portrayed in *Lone Wolf and Cub*: in this family of warriors and swordsmen, he lived a modest life as a priest at the family temple.

Perhaps this retracted life is exactly why Kazuo Koike chose to use Retsudo as Itto Ogami's nemesis and the head of the powerful, enigmatic Ura Yagyu: as the least prolific of an illustrious family, he was also the most mysterious (the word *ura* literally means "hidden" or "tucked away"). His physical appearance in the manga and films is a combination of his brother Jubei (who is often depicted as wearing an eyepatch) and his grandfather Muneyoshi (the aged warrior of unrivalled skill – although the real Retsudo would have been no older than fifty at the time the story is set).

The Yagyu clan has been the subject of countless fictional tales. Hiroshi Inagaki's 1957/58 two-part film *Secret Scrolls (Yagyu bugeicho)*, Ryo Hagiwara's *Yagyu tabi nikki: Tenchi musoken* (1959), and Kinji Fukasaku's *Shogun's Samurai (Yagyu ichizoku no inbo)* and its follow-up *The Fall of Ako Castle (Ako-jo danzetsu)*, both (1978) all put the family at the centre of their intrigue. Hideo Gosha's 1966 *Tange Sazen: Hien iaigiri* pitted them against the legendary one-armed swordsman Sazen Tange, with the future small-screen Itto Ogami, Kinnosuke Nakamura, playing Tange and Tetsuro Tanba and Isao Kimura (who plays Hyoei Yagyu in the sixth *Baby Cart* film, 1974's *White Heaven in Hell*) as the Yagyu clan leaders.

In nearly all fictional accounts of their exploits, the Yagyu are portrayed as heroes. This makes Kazuo Koike's decision to turn them into the villains of his story even more interesting than his choice to focus on Retsudo. Making such pillars of the shogunate evil creates the obvious implication that the Tokugawa government as a whole was rotten to the core. What's more, by choosing the Yagyu, Koike pits his hero against the best swordfighters in Japan's history. Hence Ogami's fictional Suio-ryu technique: no historical sword style could hope to triumph over the Shinkage-ryu; the shogun's house style would naturally be the best in the land. To beat it, a mythical style was needed, one that could slice waves and slay horses.

Twilight of the Tokugawa

By the 19th century, the stagnancy of Tokugawa society had begun to work against itself. Much as it may have tried to block any outside influences, the shogunate was eventually powerless against the forces of Commodore Perry and his “black ships”, who came to demand the opening of Japan’s borders. The shogunate also had no control over the natural disasters that regularly struck the archipelago, ravaging crops and causing widespread famine and poverty. These cut the government’s tax income, while the merchant class was steadily amassing more and more wealth. By the early 1800s, what was once the lowest of the four official classes had many a debt-ridden lord and samurai in its pocket. As resistance against the shogunate increased and the call for the restoration of power to the emperor grew louder, through such reformers as Ryoma Sakamoto, loyal samurai banded together to form militias to defend the shogunate. A brief civil war erupted between reformers and loyalist samurai in the 1860s, which ended in the fall of the Tokugawa dynasty and the re-ascension of the emperor. In 1868, the start of the Meiji period marked the end of the era of samurai and shogun.



Brothers in arms: Tomisaburo Wakayama (l) and Shintaro Katsu in their younger days.

3. Setting the stage: The industry

The heady brew called the *Baby Cart* film series was shaped by a diverse set of influences: the original manga, its star Tomisaburo Wakayama, and its directors and crew. Not the least important factor, however, were the peculiar circumstances formed by the Japanese film world of the early 1970s, which was at once an industry in crisis and a fertile breeding ground for new ideas and experimentation.

The decline of the studios

As Japan emerged from World War II, a small group of major studios effectively formed the entire film business: Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei had only grown bigger during the war years after independent and smaller companies had been forcibly merged with these studios in an attempt to economise resources and raw material. This cartel-like structure was kept largely in place by the American occupiers after the war, with only three major changes occurring in the 1940s and 1950s: the creation of Shintohto (literally “New Toho”) after a strike at Toho and the departure of some of that studio’s major talents; Nikkatsu, Japan’s oldest film studio, proclaiming its independence from Daiei; and the establishment of Toei.

This studio system lived its most successful period in the 1950s, when both film production and audience numbers were at an all-time high. However, the first problems began to rear their heads in the early ’60s, after the introduction of television and the gradual erosion of audience interest in cinema. Like elsewhere in the world, people would more and more often choose to stay at home with their new toy instead of going to the movies. The first significant shake-up came with the bankruptcy of Shintohto in 1961. A year later, independent filmmaking made its reappearance when the production/distribution outfit Art Theatre Guild (ATG) supported Hiroshi Teshigahara’s debut feature *Pitfall (Otoshiana)*. ATG would become the hub of independent filmmaking over the next decade, nurturing such filmmakers as Nagisa Oshima, Yoshishige Yoshida, Kazuo Kuroki and Shohei Imamura. (Though whether ATG could actually be called “independent” remains a moot point, since part of its funding came from Toho.)

This gradual fracturing of the industry structure continued throughout the 1960s. In 1963 the undisputed star of the Nikkatsu contract players, Yujiro Ishihara, split from his employer and founded his own production company Ishihara Productions, whose first project was Kon Ichikawa's *Alone in the Pacific* (*Taiheiyō hitoribotchi*), naturally starring Ishihara himself. Other stars soon followed this example and before the decade was out, Toshiro Mifune, Kinnosuke Nakamura, and Shintaro Katsu had all started their own companies in the hope of gaining more control over their careers and a stable future in an increasingly insecure industry.

As in the case of ATG, the irony of the situation was that such incentives in the end always had to rely on the major studios, who held a virtual monopoly over the distribution network and the theaters. On the other hand, the knowledge that the studios would continue to support them doubtlessly contributed to the actors' decisions to go freelance. They knew that a comfortable distribution deal with their former employers would be waiting for them as soon as the paperwork was in order. The split was by no means acrimonious and the situation was largely symbiotic.

Shintaro Katsu's Katsu Productions, formed in 1967, at first remained tightly linked with the actor's former employer Daiei. Even though Katsu had taken the rights to the hit *Zatoichi* series with him, Daiei continued to distribute the films until the studio halted its filmmaking activities in 1971, after which Katsu signed a deal with Toho that would also include distribution of the *Baby Cart* films.

The exploitation film

The end of Daiei formed the second dramatic blow to the old studio system and the one that set the entire structure reeling. By the early 1970s, the last corporations standing were scrambling to survive the exodus of their spectators. Much of the remaining audience consisted of men, those who were either too poor to own a television set – mostly young males who had flocked from the countryside to the cities hoping to find jobs as construction workers, but who had been laid off as the country's post-war reconstruction reached its end – or were looking for a kind of entertainment that television couldn't give them. As a result, the quotient of sensationalism was raised

drastically, the studios upping the ante with increasingly frank and lurid depictions of violence and sex. Nikkatsu devoted its entire output to its Roman Porno line of glossy skinflicks in 1971, a move that saw most of its established talent flee the company, leaving mostly younger, not to mention cheaper, former assistants to fill the crucial slots. Toei struck temporary gold with Kinji Fukasaku's *Battles without Honour and Humanity* (*Jingi naki tatakai*, 1973) and its sequels and imitations, which presented an altogether rawer and more brutal depiction of yakuza life than the studio's previous, more aesthetic *ninkyō eiga* ("chivalry film") gangster movie tradition.

This increase in graphic content was also partially the result of a gradual process, however. Softcore sex had been a staple of Japanese film since Tetsuji Takechi's 1964 *Daydream* (*Hakujitsumu*) and its follow-up *Black Snow* (*Kuroi yuki*, 1965). The latter's legal victory over the censors that wished to ban it as obscene opened the floodgates, leading to the creation of the *pinku eiga* genre of low-budget, independently made erotic films. Violence had also increased in intensity, not in the least in the *chanbara* films of the 1960s, by such notable directors as Hideo Goshū, Kihachi Okamoto and future *Baby Cart* helmer Kenji Misumi. The switch from black and white to colour further entailed a more graphic depiction of violence; from then on, the blood was unmistakably red.

These developments were not exclusive to Japan, of course. The same process could be seen in American, Asian, and European cinema around the same time. Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1968) and Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) are textbook examples of watershed films in the depiction of onscreen violence. Hong Kong studio Shaw Brothers ground out violent martial arts films by directors like Chang Cheh, while European cinema saw a move towards a more rough-edged style in productions as diverse as the French Nouvelle Vague, the gothic horror revival of England's Hammer films, and the Italian western. Whether in consciously artistic cinema or populist exploitation, developments ran parallel in many parts of the world.

Violence as social phenomenon

In Japan these developments were certainly not exclusively exploitative. The new violent cinema was also in many cases a critical and committed cinema.

Amid the social upheaval of the 1960s, the films of what is commonly referred to as the *nuberu bagu* or New Wave (including the aforementioned Oshima, Yoshida, et al), working independently and free from studio constraints, cultivated a style of filmmaking that was virulently critical. Their efforts and the events of society at large quickly came to influence directors and screenwriters at the studios and those working in genre films as well. The *pinku eiga* of Tetsuji Takechi, Koji Wakamatsu, and the radically left-wing Masao Adachi were unashamedly political, while the *chanbara* films of the 1960s openly doubted the hitherto sacrosanct values of *bushido* as a way to criticise contemporary society and politics – including unresolved issues from the past.

By the 1970s, during the era of corruption, terrorism, pollution scandals, and the Vietnam war, people were constantly confronted with the fact that violence and social ills were inextricably linked and many filmmakers were unwilling to gloss over this in their work. At Toei, for example, Kinji Fukasaku's gangster films cast serious doubts on the benefits of the post-war reconstruction, while Shunya Ito's *Female Prisoner Scorpion* (*Joshu sasori*, 1972-'74) series starring Meiko Kaji, ostensibly women-in-prison exploitation flicks, attacked the country's patriarchal power structure and its inability to own up to its wartime history.

Enter the wolf

As we've already seen, Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's *Lone Wolf and Cub* manga arrived right in the middle of all this turmoil. It followed a clear lineage from the critical *chanbara* films of the 1960s, sharing their doubts, their anger, and their outrageous violence. When actor Tomisaburo Wakayama acquired the film rights through his younger brother Shintaro Katsu's production company he may have been looking for a star vehicle that would allow him to show off his martial arts prowess, but by hiring Kenji Misumi as director and asking Koike to write the screenplay, he was also allowing two opinionated artists to bring the manga's critical viewpoints into the films.

Certainly, the *Baby Cart* films have populism to spare: Wakayama's portrayal of Itto Ogami as a scruffy, monosyllabic ronin is clearly shaped to fit the Toshiro Mifune *Yojimbo* mold, the female cast of the films frequently disrobe,

and the action scenes are plentiful and riveting. Each of the six films features several guest stars to help pull in the crowds, with main villain Retsudo Yagyu incarnated by three different actors over the course of this short series. But outrageous exploitation is not nearly all that the *Baby Cart* films are about. When Itto Ogami cuts the head off a toddler in the opening scene of *Sword of Vengeance*, the executioner represents first and foremost the edicts of the shogunate, the values of feudal Japan and the samurai which are still unofficially seen (both inside and outside the country) as representing the “true” spirit of Japan, the same spirit that was appealed to in order to rouse people’s opinions and soldiers’ rancor when the country marched off into a disastrous war. As the hollyhock crest of the Tokugawa on Ogami’s get-up indicates, he is but an instrument of something bigger. And this, at least as much as its more populist characteristics, is what makes the *Baby Cart* films so fresh, vital and fascinating after all those decades.



Wakayama and Katsu circa 1972, presenting their film adaptations of *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Hanzo the Razor*.

4. Kenji Misumi: The director

Thanks to his significant involvement in the enduringly popular *Baby Cart* and *Zatoichi* series, to international audiences Kenji Misumi is probably one of the best-known filmmakers within his field. Yet, with a career that stretches over three decades and encompasses nearly 70 films, only a fraction of his work has been seen outside Japan. As a result, much remains to be said about this fascinating artist.

Born March 2, 1921, Kenji Misumi was the product of an extramarital affair between Kobe entrepreneur Fukujiro Misumi and a geisha from Kyoto's Pontocho pleasure district who went by the name of Shizu. Neither parent wishing to care for their illegitimate offspring, the young Kenji was taken in by his aunt Shika, a waitress in a restaurant in Kyoto. Although Fukujiro Misumi had renounced his son, he nevertheless continued to financially support Kenji's upbringing, paradoxically with the ultimate aim of seeing the boy follow in his footsteps and become a businessman. To this end, he enrolled Kenji in the private Ritsumeikan business school.

The young man, however, had different ideas about how he wished to lead his life. Fascinated by *chanbara* films and by such stars of the genre as Tsumasaburo Bando and Denjiro Okochi, in his first year of university Kenji informed his father that he wanted to pursue the arts and work in film. Furious, Fukujiro cut off his allowance, severing the last tie that still bound father and son.

Kenji nevertheless completed his studies at Ritsumeikan, supplanting his former stipend by working part time at his aunt's restaurant. There, he had an encounter that would prove to be particularly fateful. He struck up an impassioned conversation about cinema with a client who turned out to be the novelist, playwright, and literary publisher Kan Kikuchi. When Kenji professed his desire to become a film director, the author, well connected in the film world thanks to several big screen adaptations of his work, slipped the boy a note carrying the name of a producer at the Nikkatsu studio.

A full two years went by before Kenji Misumi finished his studies and had the

opportunity to knock on the gates of Nikkatsu's studio complex in Kyoto's Uzumasa district – the area where most of Japan's main film production houses then had their studio facilities (Shochiku and Toei still run lots there to this day, with the latter also running the Eigamura movie theme park from the site). Misumi discovered that in the two years that had passed since his meeting with Kikuchi, the executive whose name was on the note had left Nikkatsu. The recommendation from a man of Kikuchi's stature, however, was more than enough to convince his replacement to hire Misumi on the spot: the young hopeful entered Nikkatsu as a trainee assistant director in 1941.

With the studio being home to such *chanbara* specialists as Hiroshi Inagaki, Masahiro Makino, and Mansaku Itami (father of *Tampopo* ((1985)) director Juzo Itami), Misumi found himself precisely where he wanted to be. But disaster struck. Before he had even had a chance to actually work on a movie set, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and Misumi was drafted into the military and sent off to fight on the Manchurian front.

Little is known of his wartime experiences, as throughout his life Misumi remained tight-lipped about his years in the army. Like many of his fellow soldiers, he was taken prisoner by the Russians at the end of the war and shipped off to a P.O.W. camp in Siberia, where he would remain for another two and a half years. He returned to Japan in 1948, after a six-year absence. With the American occupation under General Douglas MacArthur already having made major governmental and social reorganisations, and a good part of Japan in ruins from firebombings, Misumi found his country greatly changed. Feeling out of place, he turned to his first love and attempted to re-enter the world of film.

The Daiei apprentice

The Japanese film industry had not escaped the duress and hardships of the war years. With access to source materials greatly restricted, the industry had been regrouped into three major poles in 1942: Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei. Along with two other production houses, Shinko Kinema and Daito, Misumi's former employer Nikkatsu had been absorbed into the structure of Daiei (short for Dai Nihon Eiga Kabushiki Kaisha, or Greater Japan Film Company, Ltd.), so it was to there that he turned for employment.

Heading the company was the controversial but shrewd businessman Masaichi Nagata, former head of Shinko Kinema who had been employed at Nikkatsu in the early 1930s. Familiar with Misumi's history at Nikkatsu thanks to his acquaintance with Kan Kikuchi (at Daiei during the war, the two men collaborated closely with each other and with the militarist authorities, which got them temporarily branded war criminals during the Allied Occupation), Nagata hired the applicant as an assistant director.

Starting out at Daiei on two films for director Kozaburo Yoshimura (*The Tale of Genji* / *Genji monogatari* in 1951 and *Sisters of Nishijin* / *Nishijin no shimai* in 1952, both scripted by Kaneto Shindo), the quiet Misumi quickly gained himself a reputation as a loner. Declining to join the customary after-work drinking sessions among the crew, he instead spent his free time watching films and observing directors at work. He was consciously studying the language of cinema, to which his additional tasks of drawing storyboards and editing trailers were also finely suited.

Misumi did strike up a close working relationship with director Teinosuke Kinugasa, a legendary figure for the two independently made avant-garde films he directed in the 1920s, *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta ichipeiji*, 1927) and *Crossways* (*Jujiro*, 1928, the first-ever Japanese film to be shown overseas), who additionally had vast experience directing period films for the studios. Having been assisted by Misumi on *Saga of the Great Buddha* (*Daibutsu kaigan*, 1952) and *The Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*, 1953), and content with his pupil's development, Kinugasa personally pleaded with Nagata to promote him to the position of director. Kenji Misumi made his directorial debut in 1954 with the Kinugasa-scripted *Tange Sazen: Kokezaru no tsubo* [trans: "Sazen Tange": the moss monkey's jar], taking over from Masahiro Makino for the third instalment in a trilogy about the one-eyed, one-armed swordsman, portrayed by Misumi's childhood hero Denjiro Okochi.

Finally in the director's chair he had so long coveted, and with his debut film arriving second in that year's box office rankings, Misumi continued directing *chanbara* films with relish, setting a pace of an average four films a year. Although his second film *Nanatsu kao no ginji* [trans: "Ginji with seven faces"] featured another screen veteran, *Gate of Hell* star Kazuo Hasegawa, the

novice director quickly took a liking to working with two fledgling performers who had also made their debuts for Daiei the previous year: Shintaro Katsu and Raizo Ichikawa. If the breakthrough of Katsu wouldn't take place until 1962 with his defining turn as the blind swordsman Zatoichi, Misumi's first collaboration with Ichikawa, *Asataro garasu* [trans: "Asataro the crow"], was an immediate hit. Doubtlessly benefiting from the success of the young actor's first lead role in Kenji Mizoguchi's *Tales of the Taira Clan (Shin Heike monogatari, 1955)*, the film rivalled Mizoguchi's *Street of Shame (Akasen chitai)* at the box office in 1956. Misumi and Ichikawa would form a close professional relationship, going on to collaborate on a total of seventeen films until the actor's untimely death in 1969, including parts one and two of the *Satan's Sword* trilogy (*Daibosatsu toge, 1960*), scripted by Teinosuke Kinugasa, and several entries in the fondly remembered *Sleepy Eyes of Death (Nemuri Kyoshiro, 1963–1969)* series.

Reluctant master

The solid commercial results of his films saw Misumi gaining increasing favour with studio head Masaichi Nagata. The director himself also seemed happy with his position at Daiei: he had formed his own crew of technicians around him, which included assistant director Toshinori Tomoeda, cinematographer Chishi Makiura, editor Kanji Sukanuma and in particular the very talented production designer Akira Naito, who would come to have a significant influence on the development of the director's distinct visual style. Misumi furthermore declined an invitation to join the newly established Toei studio, even though the move would have meant a better pay cheque.

Nagata's clever business strategies, meanwhile, had made Daiei something of a pioneer in reaching out to foreign audiences. In hopes of having overseas praise rub off on domestic box office returns, the studio had started sending its films out to European festivals, after Akira Kurosawa's Daiei-produced *Rashomon* won the top prize at the Venice film festival in 1951 – a major turning point not just for the studio but for Japanese film as a whole – and a Grand Prix (the later Palme d'Or) in Cannes for Kinugasa's *The Gate of Hell* in 1954.

Nagata's next audacious plan was to mount Japan's first 70mm film, an



adaptation of the life of Buddha modeled on the biblical epics Hollywood was churning out at the time. Going so far as to gamble the future of the entire studio on this mammoth project, Nagata put his trust in Misumi to helm the undertaking and cast the studio's biggest names (including Raizo Ichikawa, Shintaro Katsu, and Machiko Kyo) to feature on the marquee. *Buddha (Shaka)* followed prince Siddharta (played by Kojiro Hongo, co-star with Ichikawa in the previous year's *Satan's Sword*) through the renouncement of his family riches, his transformation into the Buddha after resisting all temptation during his meditation under the Bodhi tree, and the subsequent spread of his teachings across India. Showing only the prophet's shadow or silhouette from the moment he reaches enlightenment, the film focuses instead on the miracles he performed and the impact he had on the rigid hierarchy of Indian society. Highlights include Shintaro Katsu as the scheming nemesis Devadatta – who seeks to discredit and destroy Buddha but learns to see the error of his ways – the expressionistic Bodhi tree sequence, plus several impressively designed and built sets of cities and castles.

The gamble paid off: the 156-minute film became the most successful picture of 1961 in Japan, outgrossing *The Guns of Navarone*. It rendered Misumi's position at Daiei even more comfortable, but instead of following Nagata's wishes and limiting himself to directing only the studio's most prestigious projects, he decided instead to stick with his beloved *chanbara* genre, a choice that his boss was more than happy to acknowledge when the following year's *The Tale of Zatoichi (Zatoichi monogatari)* again scored big. The film finally launched Shintaro Katsu into the big leagues and made household names out of the actor and his blind masseur-cum-swordsman alter ego through the 25 films and the TV series that followed.

The sword and the shadow

The 1960s also saw the gradual maturation of the themes and the style of Misumi's work. The expressionist nature of numerous scenes in *Buddha* signalled the direction in which the director was heading stylistically. His films showed an increasingly abundant use of shadows and silhouettes and evocative use of props and sets. The dark forest in the Bodhi tree sequence, set-bound and carefully lit to heighten its artificiality and its symbolic function, would return in various guises in later films and was in fact already

part of the previous year's *Satan's Sword*.

To a certain extent, dramatic lighting patterns and expressionistic sets were characteristics of many a Daiei *chanbara* film of the period, such as those of director Kazuo Mori. Set designer Akira Naito also had a hand in shaping this visual texture. However, never was this style more apparent than in the films of Kenji Misumi and it is likely that his mentor Teinosuke Kinugasa had an impact on the director's penchant for expressionism. Kinugasa was heavily influenced by the German Expressionists when he made *A Page of Madness* and *Crossways* in the 1920s and cited F.W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (*Der letzte Mann*, 1926) as making an indelible impression on him for disposing of intertitles and relying on visuals alone to tell its story. While some sources say Misumi was a great admirer of Kinugasa's revolutionary films, it is unlikely that he ever actually saw *A Page of Madness*, given that the film disappeared for decades soon after its 1927 premiere (when Misumi was only six years old) and didn't resurface until 1971. But even some of the later Kinugasa films contain striking visual similarities with Misumi's later work, especially the use of colour, shadow and space in *The Gate of Hell*.

Misumi may also have chosen expressionism for an additional reason. The German expressionist movement was strongly anti-authoritarian, dealing with the oppression of the populace by almost autonomous mechanisms, which were set into motion by an authority that was often personified by a father figure. Playwright Carl Zuckmayer has said that one of the major themes of the German expressionist movement was the revolt of son against father, which functioned as a metaphor for social criticism. As we will see, both the uneasy bond between fathers and sons and the open criticism of authority were important staples of Kenji Misumi's cinema.

At the same time, Misumi's dynamic use of the moving camera, odd angles, editing, varying film speeds and in-camera effects such as double exposure, all of which are particularly present in the *Baby Cart* films, come from a different lineage and are historically associated with the French Impressionist film movement. Although film historian Donald Richie claims, in *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (p.84), that there was no immediate influence from the French Impressionists on Japanese filmmakers in the 1920s and '30s

because the films didn't make it to Japan until much later, characteristics now commonly associated with this tradition made their entry into the *chanbara* genre as early as the late 1920s through Daisuke Ito, under whom Misumi also worked as assistant director. Misumi therefore could be seen as having at once an expressionist approach to composing his images and an impressionist style in his employment of camera and montage.

The director's experimentations with light, colour, props and sets, which would eventually culminate in the audacious visual design of the *Baby Cart* films, resulted in his first stylistic *tour de force* of this period, 1962's *Destiny's Son* (*Kiru*). The story of a boy raised in a foster family who grows into a master swordsman and goes in search of his real parents, it was scripted by Kaneto Shindo from a Renzaburo Shibata novel and breathtakingly shot by another regular collaborator of Misumi's, cinematographer Shozo Honda. It is a film filled with stylistic highlights: the one-take dolly shot of Raizo Ichikawa's running battle with a battalion of swordsmen under an inky sky, the labyrinth of empty castle chambers through which Ichikawa attempts to find his ambushed master, the scene in which the unarmed hero defends himself with a twig of cherry blossom and especially the recurring flashback to his mother's execution at the hands of her own lover, in a barren landscape beside a single, ancient tree.

Destiny's Son is a pivotal film in Misumi's development, not just for its style, but also for its contents. Film critics and historians have repeatedly and deservedly praised Misumi for his artisanal skills – Max Tessier described his work as “craftsmanship at its highest level” – but there is much more to his work than mere dexterity. As a filmmaker specialising in *chanbara*, it was inevitable that Misumi would deal with the portrayal of *bushido*, but, like a number of his forebears working in the same genre, he wasn't content with simply rehashing the noble samurai archetype. The early 1960s had seen the emergence of a wave of *chanbara* filmmakers who cast their core subject in an increasingly critical light. Taking a cue from the work that Akira Kurosawa and others including Yasuo Kohata, director of the revisionist 1954 biopic *Miyamoto Musashi*, had done the previous decade, directors like Masaki Kobayashi, Masahiro Shinoda, Hideo Gosha and Kihachi Okamoto began to explore the darker side of the warrior code.

The resulting films cast a less than flattering eye on the function of the samurai and the feudal dictatorship they served and sustained. Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961) and *Sanjuro* (*Tsubaki Sanjuro*, 1962), with its masterless samurai wandering a lawless land and Kobayashi's *Harakiri* (*Seppuku*, 1962), with its deconstruction of the suicide ritual, are generally seen as the major films of this stream, opening the gates for a decade's worth of critical genre cinema.

Kenji Misumi is a major representative of this tendency. In fact, the exploration of *bushido* and its complications forms the very heart of his work. If the protagonist of *Satan's Sword* was still merely a samurai who abused his position of privilege to give vent to his psychotic tendencies, in *Destiny's Son* the hero is the *bushido* ideal of the valorous and disciplined retainer, who, despite all his prowess with the sword and a noble heart, is powerless to prevent the deaths of those around him. *Destiny's Son* stated genuine doubt about the actual value of this warrior code and, by implication, of the samurai lifestyle as a whole.

In the films that followed, Misumi continued travelling along this path, gradually growing more sceptical and at the same time, as a counterbalance, more humanist. His explorations also encompassed a very rare contemporary-set excursion outside samurai film territory, an adaptation of Yukio Mishima's novella *Ken* (1964), set in 1960s Tokyo. Despite the drastic change in setting, Misumi continued to deal with the same themes through this story of a university kendo club's star pupil, Jiro Kokubu (again portrayed by Raizo Ichikawa), whose rigid discipline and total devotion to the sport clashes with the attitudes of his comrades. They, the typical well-to-do post-war youth, are more interested in girls, nightclubs, and music, and they consider Jiro a walking anachronism. The film closely follows Mishima's original story, but subtle nuances throw it in an entirely different light. Mishima, the self-conscious reactionary who considered the *Hagakure* his guide to life, saw Jiro as a shining example of how the contemporary Japanese could benefit from adopting the samurai ethos. Misumi, on the other hand, shot the film in stark black and white to emphasise the rigidity of the protagonists, had characters rebel against Jiro's spartan training tactics with phrases like, "I came here to study kendo, not to suffer feudal punishments", and, most significantly, added a coda that rendered Jiro's suicide at the end of the story – so heroic in

Mishima's eyes – a much more questionable act.

This humanism is the great overlooked quality of Misumi as a filmmaker and the main reason why the label “nihilist”, with which the violent *chanbara* of this period have often been tagged, is inappropriate in his case. In a film like *Samaritan Zatoichi* (*Zatoichi kenka daiko*, 1968), a hero so well known for solving problems with a quick swipe of his blade learns the negative impact of his use of violence and spends most of the film finding peaceful solutions to dilemmas he would previously have dealt with the old-fashioned way. The triptych of films Misumi made with star actress Fujiko Yamamoto in 1960 (*Sen-hime goten*, *Onnakeizu* and *Shirakoya Komako*) also make for a more nuanced portrait of the director, focusing as they do on women rebelling against their subservient positions under the Tokugawa shogunate.

Too often has Misumi been categorised based on his ample use of violence, without regard for how this violence functions within the context of his films. This was not only the case with Western film critics, who might be excused on account of being exposed to only a tiny fraction of the director's work. Japanese film chronicler Tadao Sato mentions Misumi only briefly in his lengthy tome on the history of Japanese cinema, pausing to remark on a scene in *Destiny's Son* in which a man is split from head to crotch by Raizo Ichikawa's sword, using it as an example of what he saw as a one-upmanship in the depiction of violence and cruelty in the *chanbara* film in the wake of Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro*.

But as Alain Silver points out in his book *The Samurai Film*, the violence in the *chanbara* films of the 1960s had far deeper implications, serving to “penetrate the prevaricative façade of *bushido* and to expose the sham of honour which shackled the historical samurai”. In the Misumi-directed *Sleepy Eyes of Death 2: Sword of Adventure* (*Nemuri Kyoshiro: Shobu*), the ronin Kyoshiro Nemuri tells a young boy enamoured with his fighting skills: “Forget it. Swords are for killing. Nothing more, nothing less”. Such exclamations by samurai characters are frequent in Misumi's work. The words penetrate right to the heart of *bushido* and blow away the façade to reveal that underneath it all is nothing but cold, merciless killing. In *Sword Devil* (*Kenki*, 1965, also based on a Renzaburo Shibata novel) the protagonist is a lowly gardener,

who becomes a master swordsman merely from observing an aging samurai practising on a hilltop. The old man tells him, “No need for technique; you just draw, kill, and sheath”, thereby reducing *bushido* to mere window dressing with a single sentence.

The frank depiction of violence and the abundant use of blood are logical results of this approach and Misumi rarely shied away from them. Given his refusal to speak on the matter during his lifetime, we can only guess how much of an influence the director’s wartime experiences were on his depiction of violence, but it is fair to assume that the impact was a major one. Many of the leading directors working in the *chanbara* genre in the 1960s had lived through the horrors of the battlefield, among them Masaki Kobayashi (director of *Harakiri / Seppuku*, 1962, and *Samurai Rebellion / Joiuchi*, 1967), Hideo Gocha (*Goyokin*, 1967, and *Tenchu / Hitokiri*, 1969) and Kihachi Okamoto (*Samurai Assassin / Samurai*, 1965, *Sword of Doom / Daibosatsu toge*, 1966). These men all shared Misumi’s critical view of samurai society, as well as his penchant for bloodletting. Similarly, the shock of Misumi’s return to a devastated Japan in 1948 is likely to have fed his investigation of the merits of the martial spirit, which so infused the militarist regime that had driven Japan to the brink of destruction.

While violence is one method Misumi used to visualise his thematic preoccupations, he also employed far more subtle means, including the aforementioned expressionist style. That the most dramatic fight sequences in Misumi’s films of the 1960s take place among barren or dead trees is far more than just an atmospheric visual touch. These withered forests are potent symbols of the death and decay forever present in the samurai’s actions. Misumi often emphasised nature and the elements to reflect on matters of life and death, not only in the forest settings, but also in the shots of the blazing sun that recur throughout his films, in wind, rain and snow, in rivers, mountains and cloudy skies. These serve a far more important function than providing pleasantly aesthetic backdrops. Misumi’s films have, in a sense, an internal eco-system: his characters don’t just stand in front of nature, they exist *within* it. They interact with the elements and form part of them.

To achieve this, the director makes heavy use of foreground objects, which



死ね！とひとこと……
血をふく敵は百もくれず、瞳は青く冴えている！

総天然色
監督 三隅研次

原作 柴田錬三郎
脚本 星川清司
撮影 牧浦地志

眠狂四郎勝負

橋本	近江	浅原	玉置	原三	風右	須賀	名不	戸二	加藤	和	藤	味	五	浜田	丹羽	成	久保	高	藤	市
映	江	尾	置	三	右	賀	不	二	和	藤	味	五	浜田	丹羽	成	久保	高	藤	市	
映	公	輝	奥	一	四	賀	不	二	和	藤	味	五	浜田	丹羽	成	久保	高	藤	市	
画	子	山	惠	郎	門	賀	不	二	和	藤	味	五	浜田	丹羽	成	久保	高	藤	市	
	子	山	惠	郎	門	賀	不	二	和	藤	味	五	浜田	丹羽	成	久保	高	藤	市	
	子	山	惠	郎	門	賀	不	二	和	藤	味	五	浜田	丹羽	成	久保	高	藤	市	

Sleepy Eyes of Death 2: Sword of Adventure (Nemuri Kyoshiro: Shobu, 1964)

create a great sense of depth within the two-dimensional image. Woodland battle scenes always have trees placed between the viewer and the characters, and even in non-action or dialogue scenes, whether in interior or exterior settings, Misumi often blocks the view by having an object or a character in the foreground to obscure a shot's focal point. This not only serves to create depth, it ties in again with Misumi's expressionist style. Often undefined and underlit, these obstacles become shapes that are used in much the same way as the director uses shadow and darkness.

Fathers and sons

There is another major trope that reappears in Misumi's films with at least as much persistency as his investigations into *bushido* and which supports the reading of his work as humanist. It is a trope that contributes to the palpable sense of sadness that informs the director's work and that elevates Misumi's films several notches above the genre's standard.

Growing up without a father who furthermore severed whatever remained of a tie at the slightest sign of his son's dissent, Misumi used much of his work to contemplate relationships between fathers and sons. One could even say that it informs his love for the samurai film, since these revolve around master-servant structures that are very close to those of a father and his sons. In Japanese this relationship is even referred to as *oyabun-kobun*, a term derived from the words for parent (*oya*) and child (*ko*). That the lords and masters in Misumi's films are often crooked individuals and that the director tends to identify with the servant/son should come as no surprise.

Neither can it be a coincidence that so many of Misumi's protagonists are orphans or illegitimate children abandoned by their parents and raised in foster families. This is particularly true for the characters played by Raizo Ichikawa. In *Destiny's Son*, young Shingo is given away by his father after the latter has had to execute his own wife. *Sword Devil's* protagonist is said to have been fathered by a dog; he later adopts his sword instructor as a father figure, but inadvertently kills him on his first mission. In *On the Road Forever* (*Mushukumono*, 1964), gambler Ipponmatsu ("Lone Pine") travels the country in search of the man who murdered his father, but the truth he discovers – that his father is alive and has wilfully abandoned him – gives him

an even heavier cross to bear. Jiro in *Ken* has a father, but they share only a single scene in which they barely communicate. In all these films, mothers are rarely more than a distant, if romanticised, memory.

Ichikawa and Misumi were very much united in their search for a father figure. The two men shared very similar experiences. Ichikawa, born in 1931 in Kyoto as Kichiya Ota, was adopted at an early age by kabuki actor Kudanji Ichikawa and rechristened Yoshio Takeuchi. At age 20 he was taken in by Osaka kabuki master Jukai Ichikawa, and given the name by which he later achieved fame.

However, the epitome of Misumi's examination of father-son relationships would come after Ichikawa's death, in the shape of a story about a ronin wandering Edo-period Japan with a child in tow...

Baby Cart

The thematic similarities between *Lone Wolf and Cub* and the work of Kenji Misumi are so striking that a meeting between the two must have been almost inevitable. The manga, in terms of both its themes and style, is entirely in line with what Misumi had been doing in his films during the previous decade. Everything is there: the disregard for *bushido*, the portrayal of the Tokugawa shogunate as an oppressive, dictatorial and corrupt regime, the violence and the extended swordfights, the itinerant ronin, the bond between father and son, and the absent but dearly remembered figure of the mother.

What Itto Ogami's self-chosen trip into hell allowed Misumi to do was to take a step further and devoid his portrayal of Edo-era samurai life of nearly all signs of compassion, to take his preoccupations as far as they would go by painting his most brutal and stylised portrait yet. On the *Baby Cart* films, Misumi applied his style to the full, lording over a frame in which even the incidental became intentional: every leaf on every tree, every cloud in the sky, every blade of grass becomes a prop and seems to have been placed in the image on purpose.

That such a leap came at a moment when the director had been freed from studio constraints is perhaps not something from which we should draw hasty conclusions, but the fact was that Misumi was now working for

creative minds instead of business-minded studio management. His stint for Shintaro Katsu's newly founded Katsu Production also re-united him with Chishi Makiura and Akira Naito, from whom he had been forcibly separated during the final years at Daiei, whose management saw the Misumi group's increasingly experimental tendencies as harmful to the films' commercial potential. On the *Baby Cart* films, these men picked up the thread of their work where they had left off.

In the overall downturn of the studios, Misumi made his final film for Daiei in 1971 and was released from his contract when the studio terminated production the same year. He had already directed *Zatoichi at the Fire Festival* (*Zatoichi abare himatsuri*) for Katsu Production in 1970 and after his dismissal from Daiei he made his debut in television with an episode from the *Tenno no seiki* [trans: "Emperor's century"] series in '71. At the request of Tomisaburo Wakayama, Misumi then returned to Katsu Production to direct the first of the *Lone Wolf and Cub* films, *Sword of Vengeance*.

Closure

Both brothers were enamoured of Misumi and now that he had properly entered the Katsu Productions fold, the two took turns working with the director. After three *Baby Cart* films with Wakayama, Katsu brought Misumi on board another Kazuo Koike adaptation, the demented but tongue-in-cheek *Hanzo the Razor* (*Goyokiba*, 1972). Silly as it was (the film opens with a groovy montage of Hanzo's incisive actions on the beat, in a style more reminiscent of *Starsky and Hutch* than any *chanbara*), it dragged Edo-era life and its ruling classes through the mud with even more conviction than the *Baby Cart* series, with any semblance of honour or humanity ruthlessly filtered out.

Misumi had travelled his chosen path all the way to the bitter end and wound up with something that was about as close to the realities of old Edo as any of the rose-tinted *chanbara* of the early 1950s that he had initially reacted against. After several additional stints in television, including over a dozen episodes of the hit TV series *Sure Death* (*Hissatsu shikake-nin*, 1973-), he embarked on perhaps his most ambitious project yet, an epic tale of the downfall of the shogunate and the end of the samurai era entitled *The Last*

Samurai (Okami yo rakujitsu o kire, 1974). Not to be confused with the 2003 Tom Cruise vehicle of the same name, it starred former Nikkatsu action star Hideki Takahashi as warrior Toranosuke Sugi, who experiences the chaotic final years of the Tokugawa from close by and is caught between the two sides of the conflict: the reformers who wish to restore rule to the emperor and the weakened shogunate that he has served his entire life.

Misumi made the film for Shochiku studios and shot it in a much more down-to-earth style than his entries in the *Baby Cart* and *Hanzo the Razor* series. This was partially due to once again being separated from his trusted collaborators, but the resulting film would nevertheless be one of Misumi's best and most significant creations.

Over the course of *The Last Samurai's* 158 minutes, the doubts of the main character run parallel with the doubts of the film's director (who, tellingly, is also credited as co-screenwriter). It is the balance between *bushido* and humanity that Misumi had been testing throughout his career as a filmmaker that Sugi contemplates. This very openness to doubt demonstrates the film's humanist heart. When Toranosuke finally throws his *katana* into a patch of privately owned farmland and settles down in a rapidly modernising Tokyo as a barber, Kenji Misumi also makes his final choice.

The director died of liver failure on September 24, 1975, leaving *The Last Samurai* as his last big-screen work. That this final film should contain his final statement is a comforting thought. Kenji Misumi was able to do what so few artists are ever given the opportunity to: to complete his quest and give it closure with a final and definitive work.

Kenji Misumi filmography

1954

Tange Sazen: Kokezaru no tsubo

1955

Nanatsu kao no ginji

Tsuki o kiru kageboshi

Kankanmushi wa utau

1956

Asataro garasu

Hana no kyodai

Shiranui bugyo

Amigasa gonpachi

1957

Mikazuki hibun

Freelance Samurai (Momotaro zamurai)

1958

Furisode matou

Ghost Cat: The Cursed Wall (Kaibyō noroi no kabe)

Shunen no hebi

Mito Komon manyuki

1959

Kagero-gasa

Senbazuru hicho

Yotsuya kaidan

Machibugyo nikki: Tekkabotan

1960

Sen-hime goten

Zenigata Heiji torimono hikae: Bijingumo

Onnakeizu

Shirakoya Komako
Satan's Sword (Daibosatsu toge)
Satan's Sword 2 (Daibosatsu toge: Ryujin no maki)

1961
Buddha (Shaka)
Zenigata Heiji torimono hikae: Bijinzame

1962
Fukeizu
The Tale of Zatoichi (Zatoichi monogatari, a.k.a Zatoichi: The Life and Opinion of Masseur Ichi)
Destiny's Son (Kiru)
Aobajo no oni

1963
Shinsengumi Chronicles (Shinsengumi shimatsuki)
Jokei kazoku
Maiko to ansatsusha
Kyojin: Okuma Shigenobu

1964
Sleepy Eyes of Death 2: Sword of Adventure (Nemuri Kyoshiro: Shobu, a.k.a. Adventures of Kyoshiro Nemuri)
Ken
On the Road Forever (Mushukumono)
Fight, Zatoichi, Fight (Zatoichi kessho tabi)

1965
Sleepy Eyes of Death 5: Sword of Fire (Nemuri Kyoshiro: Enjo ken, a.k.a. Kyoshiro Nemuri: Fiery Sword)
Nezumi kozo Jirokichi
The Rickshaw Man (Muhomatsu no issho, a.k.a. Life of Matsu the Untamed)
Sword Devil (Kenki)
Zatoichi and the Chess Expert (Zatoichi jigoku tabi)

1966

The Virgin Witness (Shojo ga mita)

Yoidore hakase

Wrath of Daimajin (Daimajin ikaru)

Sleepy Eyes of Death 8: Sword of Villainy (Nemuri Kyoshiro: Burai ken, a.k.a.

Kyoshiro Nemuri: The Villain's Sword)

1967

Yuki no mosho

Koto yushu: Ane imoto

Namidagawa

Zatoichi Challenged (Zatoichi chikemuri kaido)

1968

Tomuraishi-tachi

Nihiki no yojimbo

Samaritan Zatoichi (Zatoichi kenka daiko)

1969

The Devil's Temple (Oni no hisomu yakata)

The Magoichi Saga (Shirikurae Magoichi)

1970

Kyojo nagare dosu

Zatoichi at the Fire Festival (Zatoichi abare himatsuri)

1971

Woman Gambler's Iron Rule (Shin onna tobakushi tsubogurehada)

Kitsune no kureta akanbo

Tenno no seiki [TV series, episode 9]

1972

Sword of Vengeance (Kozure okami: Ko o kashi ude kashi tsukamatsuru)

Baby Cart at the River Styx (Kozure okami: Sanzu no kawa no ubaguruma)

Baby Cart to Hades (Kozure okami: Shi ni kaze ni mukau ubaguruma, a.k.a.

Lightning Swords of Death / Lupine Wolf)

Hanzo the Razor: Sword of Justice (*Goyokiba*, a.k.a. *The Razor: Sword of Justice*)
Kogarashi Monjiro [TV series, episode 2]
Sure Death (*Hissatsu shikakenin*) [TV series, episodes 3, 4, 9, 12, 21, 33]

1973

Sakura no daimon

Baby Cart in the Land of Demons (*Kozure okami: Meifumado*)

Sure Death (season 2: *Hissatsu shiokinin*) [TV series, episode 4]

Sure Death (season 3: *Tasukebito hashiru*) [TV series, episodes 3, 7, 8, 12, 33]

Okami: Buraihikae [TV series, episode 5]

Mute Samurai (*Oshizamurai Kiichi Hogan*) [TV series, episodes 3, 9, 14, 18, 26]

1974

The Last Samurai (*Okami yo rakujitsu o kire*)

Oshidori ukyotorimono guruma [TV series, episode 1]

Shokin kasegi [TV series, episodes 2, 10, 17]

Zatoichi monogatari [TV series, episodes 4, 26]

Sure Death (season 4: *Kurayami shitomenin*) [TV series, episodes 17, 21]

1975

Sure Death (season 5: *Hissatsu: Hitchu shigotoya kagyo*) [TV series, episodes 1, 2, 8, 10]

Sure Death (season 6: *Hissatsu: shiokiya kagyo*) [TV series, episode 13]

Tsukai! Kouchiyama Soshun [TV series, episode 1]



5. Tomisaburo Wakayama: The star

If the rest of the world knows him as the silent, brooding Itto Ogami, in his home country Tomisaburo Wakayama is best remembered for playing short-tempered gangsters and snarling brutes. Making full use of his impressive physique, it was in such gregarious roles that Wakayama truly shone, from the senior gang member schemed out of his rightful promotion in Kosaku Yamashita's *Big Time Gambling Boss* (*Bakuchi-uchi: Socho tobaku*, 1968), the scarfaced yakuza in Kinji Fukasaku's *Sympathy for the Underdog* (*Bakuto gaijin butai*, 1971), or the salacious Buddhist cleric in the five-part *Wicked Priest* series (*Gokuaku bozu*, 1968-'71).

Wakayama's origins as a performer are of gentler kind, however. As the elder son of Katsutoji Kineya, a master of the *nagauta* form of epic narrative chants used in Kabuki theater, Wakayama began his artistic career in his father's footsteps. He became a professional *nagauta* singer in 1949, aged twenty, and adopted the stage name Tomisaburo Wakayama. Fascinated by theatre in all its forms, he studied and experimented with a variety of acting styles and forms of physical expression, including martial arts.

The combination of dedicated, full-blooded performances and physical prowess would come to characterise him as an actor. In a manner similar to Hong Kong action star Sammo Hung, his burly frame was never a hindrance to Wakayama's agility. Many of his period film roles, in particular the *Baby Cart* series, show off his smooth, confident handling of the sword and his ease with performing physical action. With the actor performing many of his own stunts, Kenji Misumi in particular often employed long takes in order to focus attention on Wakayama's skills.

Wakayama the wanderer

His martial arts prowess and dramatic training gained Wakayama a versatility that made him eminently suitable for the film world. He joined the Shinto studio in 1954 and made his big-screen debut a year later in *Ninjutsu Jiraiya*, co-directed by Ryo Hagiwara and Tai Kato. Finding himself mostly stuck in supporting parts, he jumped ship in 1958 in the hope of finding better opportunities at the newly established Toei studio, which specialised in

period films. After four years during which he appeared in over fifty films, Wakayama was lured away by Daiei, where his younger brother Shintaro Katsu had just become a major star thanks to the success of *The Tale of Zatoichi*. For the sequel, directed by Kazuo Mori, Katsu and studio head Masaichi Nagata conceived the headline-grabbing plan of having the two brothers co-star and, what was more, to have them play brothers in the film as well. *The Tale of Zatoichi Continues* (*Zoku Zatoichi monogatari*, 1962) introduced Wakayama as a renegade gangster, a fugitive from justice who travels the land disguised as a ronin. Crossing paths with Zatoichi at an inn, the tension between the two travelling warriors mounts until their filial bond is revealed in the final fifteen minutes.

At the behest of Nagata, Wakayama changed his screen name to Kenzaburo Jo upon joining Daiei. It was common practice for stage actors to change their name when they entered the film industry, and it was seen as more unusual that Wakayama had retained his stage name after he joined Shintocho than that he changed it at Daiei. Under the Jo moniker he served another four years with Daiei, playing second fiddle to the studio's main stars Raizo Ichikawa (he was a regular on the Ichikawa-starring *Band of Assassins / Shinobi no mono* and *Sleepy Eyes of Death / Nemuri Kyoshiro* series) and Kojiro Hongo, as well as making a second appearance in his brother's signature series, in *Zatoichi and the Chest of Gold* (, 1964, directed by Kazuo Ikehiro). The period also saw his first collaborations with Kenji Misumi, on *Shinsengumi Chronicles* (*Shinsengumi shimatsuki*, 1963), *Maiko to ansatsusha* [tr: "The courtesan and the assassin"] (1963) and *The Virgin Witness* (*Shojo ga mita*, 1966).

With stardom still eluding him, the actor switched employers once more, returning to Toei and re-adopting the Wakayama name in 1966. By this time, however, the majority of Toei's output was in the yakuza genre, signalling a move away from swordfights and martial arts on Wakayama's part. After a spate of gang films, it was his powerful turn in *Big Time Gambling Boss* that at last saw him launched into the big leagues. The same year he was given starring roles in two films, both of which would garner several sequels: *Gokudo*, directed by Kosaku Yamashita, and *Wicked Priest*, directed by Kiyoshi Saeki. He was now established as a star, except in the wrong genre. Wakayama's heart was with the *chanbara*, but at Toei he was on an almost exclusive diet of gangster films. The *Wicked Priest* series – a kind of predecessor to Katsu's later

Hanzo the Razor series in its mix of sex, action and comedy – gave him the opportunity to don period clothes, trade punches and swing the occasional blade, but the series was set in the early twentieth century Meiji era, when epic *katana* battles were already a thing of the past.

Wakayama was yearning for a return to his favourite genre when he discovered Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's manga *Lone Wolf and Cub*. Feeling that it wouldn't be Toei's cup of tea, he asked his brother to acquire the rights through Katsu Productions, with the aim of making a series of film adaptations with himself in the lead role of Itto Ogami. On loan from Toei (the studio is acknowledged alongside the actor's name in the credits of each of the films), Wakayama effectively produced the films himself, with little or no interference from Katsu. His first choice to helm the project was Buichi Saito, director of the fifth and final instalment of *Wicked Priest*, but Saito was already contracted to a project at Toei and was forced to decline, thus facilitating the entry of Kenji Misumi.

And then

Post-*Baby Cart*, Wakayama retained his freelance status, successfully moving between genres and projects despite the decline of the industry. He returned to Toei's yakuza films on many an occasion, continuing the *Gokudo* series and working on projects that included Kinji Fukasaku's *Gate of Youth* (*Seishun no mon*, 1981), *Samurai Reincarnation* (*Makai tensho*, 1982, a.k.a. *Darkside Reborn*, in which he played Munenori Yagyu), and *Theater of Life* (*Jinsei gekijo*, 1983). In 1978 he appeared in the John Berry's Hollywood kids' comedy *The Bad News Bears Go to Japan* and in 1989 in Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*, opposite Michael Douglas, Andy Garcia, Ken Takakura and Yusaku Matsuda. For *Baby Cart* fans, perhaps his most remarkable role of this period was as none other than Retsudo Yagyu, starring opposite Hideki Takahashi's Itto Ogami in the made-for-TV *Baby Cart in Purgatory* (1989, see Chapter Three).

Wakayama died of a heart attack in 1992, aged 63. His official final screen appearance had been the previous year in Junji Sakamoto's *Checkmate* (*Ote*), his 246th film. Toei, however, posthumously gave him a 247th credit when it CGI'd Wakayama's effigy into its 1997 straight-to-video title *Gokudo no chi: Iwashitare!*

ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO

II - Carnage

東宝

この浪人

元兵衛の介錯人、打二刀
反逆の存を、討つて
今は師生の間に運われ、復讐者
その必殺の技は
本陣流波刃の太刀、斬り方

斬つて返り血また斬つて
どへゆくのか子連れ狼

子連れ狼

《カラー作品》

子を貸し 腕貸し つかまつる

原野小池 雄 小島陽夕 週刊漫画アクション 連載



若山富三郎

波島 文雄

露口 朝雄

加藤 武敏

内藤 朝雄

藤田 朝雄

菅原 昌弘

伊藤 雄之助

監督 三隅研次

原野小池 雄 小島陽夕 週刊漫画アクション 連載

[映倫]

1. Sword of Vengeance

Elite samurai Itto Ogami holds the coveted position of executioner for the shogun. He falls victim to the schemes of the rival Yagyu clan, who kill his wife and accuse him of treachery. Ogami is ordered to commit harakiri, but he sees through the plot and escapes with his infant son Daigoro. He swears vengeance on the Yagyu clan and its leader, the silver-maned mastermind Retsudo. Pursued by the Yagyu, Ogami leads the life of a wandering assassin, pushing Daigoro around feudal Japan in a wooden cart equipped with a hidden arsenal.

A little boy, barely a toddler, is led by the hand into a white room, which is silent but for the sobs of a group of kneeling samurai. The little boy is their master and he is here to commit ritual suicide at the order of the shogun.

So begins the *Baby Cart* series, with a scene that lays down the rules for everything that follows over six films. It expresses the cruel inhumanity of shogunate rule, the madness inherent in *bushido* principles, and the cold-blooded disposition of Itto Ogami, the shogun's executioner and acting second at this and all other suicides by government decree. It provides more than an indication of the level and the kind of violence that pervades the series, but it also gives us a stunningly designed, inventively shot, and visually sumptuous opening to a series of films that stand out for their pictorial beauty.

As the first instalment, the function of *Sword of Vengeance* (1972) is to establish the parameters. All the basic information we need about characters, story, and setting is right here. The plot consists of two main strands: one details the background of Itto Ogami and his struggle with Retsudo Yagyu; the other shows us Ogami's present-day fate as a wandering assassin with son. The film jumps back and forth between the two stories, leaping over the two-year gap that separates them.

In the flashbacks that start with the aforementioned opening scene, we meet Itto Ogami as the shogun's official executioner, his clothes emblazoned with the hollyhock crest of the Tokugawa, a rare phenomenon that indicates his elite status within the shogunate hierarchy: he effectively stands in for the

shogun himself. Married to Azami (Yoshiko Fujita) and father of the little Daigoro, Ogami's ruthlessness in his job goes hand in hand with integrity and honour. He tends to his private shrine, where he prays for the souls of all the convicted lords that died by his hands.

It is exactly during one of his prayers that disaster strikes. Azami is murdered by intruders and moments later Ogami is framed for high treason by a police force led by Bizen Yagyu (Fumio Watanabe, who played the vicious warden in *Female Prisoner Scorpion* the same year), a member of the clan that functions as the shogun's assassins. In a plot masterminded by their shadow leader Retsudo (Yunosuke Ito), the Yagyu intend to usurp Ogami's position as official executioner by branding him a criminal. Ogami figures out the plot and kills Bizen and his men. The shogun orders him to commit seppuku, an irony the film doesn't dwell upon for very long, because Ogami defies the order and flees, swearing to avenge his wife at all cost. Finding Retsudo blocking his path, he agrees to a duel with the white-maned lord's son Kurando (Shigeru Tsuyuguchi), from which he emerges victorious by lopping off Kurando's head. He and Daigoro receive free passage out of Edo as exiles. The life of a wandering ronin awaits Ogami.

And so we find him two years later, roaming the country, pushing the now three-year-old Daigoro (Akihiro Tomikawa) ahead of him in a wooden cart and carrying a banner advertising his services as an assassin ("Child and expertise for rent. Suio-ryu style. Ito Ogami"). In keeping with the introductory nature of the film, that banner appears only here and is later discarded as Ogami embarks on his assignment – the assassination of a crooked chamberlain and his brutal henchmen in a secluded hot spring resort – never to reappear. There is quite simply no more need for the banner in future films. After seeing *Sword of Vengeance* we are well aware of the identity and purpose of this shabby ronin.

The two threads of the story also introduce us to two other major factors of importance. Firstly, in the flashback scenes the bond between Ito and his son is forged, which forms the basis for their further adventures and their peculiar relationship. The scene of the ball and the sword, in which the disgraced executioner gives his son a choice between life and death, is



The execution of the infant *daimyo* lord.



Ogami offers Daigoro a choice: the ball or the sword.

unforgettable in its power and deranged beauty, all the more so because we realise that Ogami means it. After all, in the film's opening scene we saw him unflinchingly execute a child not much older than Daigoro. Because of that opening scene we know that he is capable of killing his own son, should the little boy choose the ball. Daigoro's choice for the sword then paves the way for the child's presence in the duel with Kurando, in which, tied to his father's back and proving crucial in the outcome of the confrontation, he becomes an extension of Ogami. When Kurando's head flies, father and son become one, hence Ogami's oft-repeated phrase: "We are the assassin Lone Wolf and Cub". Secondly, of course, there is the climactic revelation of the hidden arsenal in the baby carriage during the film's finale, in which Ogami, his sword confiscated, dispatches with the chamberlain and his brutes using the concealed spears and knives.

This two-tiered plot structure is quite typical of all six films in the series. Though scripted by Kazuo Koike (for the first five instalments, at least) the stories don't follow the same order as the comic book. Each episode is a kind of cut-and-paste mixture of plots and situations from the manga, sometimes adapted in their entirety, as with the two main plot strands of *Sword of Vengeance*, and sometimes only in part. The sequence of the woman hiring Daigoro to relieve her lactating breasts is lifted from an entirely different story, as is the sequence of travellers reacting to Ogami's banner that precedes it (this formed the opening scene of the first episode of the manga). While a purist might complain about the changes made to the manga, particularly the discarding of whole chunks of its story, the result is very often beneficial to the film. This reveals a strong understanding of the specific narrative requirements of cinema in Koike, which cannot be said for every comic book writer, whether from the East or West. But regardless of changes, the films are true to the manga in perhaps the most important respect: their tone.

Koike and Misumi: Brothers in arms

When it first came out in 1970, Koike and Kojima's manga tied in fluently with developments that had been happening in the *chanbara* film over the previous decade. The same virulent criticism that was being levelled against *bushido* and the Tokugawa shogunate in the work of Kenji Misumi and his contemporaries could be found in *Lone Wolf and Cub*, not to mention the

level of violence and bloodshed employed to get this criticism across. In many ways, *Lone Wolf and Cub* was tailor-made for a Misumi adaptation, since, as already noted, the manga shared an uncanny number of similarities with the director's films.

When we look at the film from this perspective, once again the opening scene proves to be of crucial importance: it exposes the inhumanity and madness of the era and its morals. A child, barely old enough to be aware of his environment, is sentenced to death like an adult, merely as a consequence of the rank he inherited by birth. Seating him on the platform where the grotesque act is meant to take place, the boy's aged escort (Yoshi Kato) tries to reassure him, and himself, with the words "This is the way of the true samurai, Young Lord" – right from the start it is unmistakable that this society and its codes are severely unhinged.

Placing this scene at the start of the film (it doesn't appear in the manga until episode 17) is a stroke of genius. It establishes history, society, morality, the personality of the main character and the point of view of the film's creators, all within three minutes of the film's start. The film then cuts to a text (narrated by Shoji Kobayashi) explaining the workings of the shogunate dictatorship and the three pillars that support its structure by suppressing any form of dissent: the assassins (the Yagyu clan), the spies (the Kurokuwa clan) and the chief executioner (Itto Ogami).

Further examples of this venomous write-off of shogunate society, samurai life and *bushido* are legion, and they all adhere closely to both the tone of the manga and the tendencies in Kenji Misumi's earlier work. There is the senseless behaviour of the samurai bandits at the hot spring resort, whose brutal occupation of the town is way out of proportion with the purpose of their stay; there is the fact that the samurai and yakuza captured by the bandits don't recognise Ogami's motivations and need a lowly prostitute (Tomoko Mayama) to enlighten them; there is the backstabbing within the Oyamada clan that forms the motive for the assassin's assignment; and most importantly of course there is Retsudo Yagyu's treacherous plot against Itto Ogami, which results in the death of not only Azami, but also two of Retsudo's own sons, and will spiral even further out of control in the films that follow.



Father and son assassins: Daigoro plays his part.

When it comes to that other major trope from Misumi's work – fathers, sons, and the memories of Mother – *Lone Wolf and Cub* again connects seamlessly with the director's films. It forms a change in that Daigoro, unlike earlier sons in Misumi movies, is not abandoned by his father, but despite the strength of their bond, the knowledge that Ogami will sacrifice his son if the situation really calls for it, hangs like a dark cloud over the entire story. The banner Ogami carries at the start of the film, with its "child for rent" inscription, indicates his willingness to sacrifice the boy. As the series progresses this becomes more apparent, as Ogami's enemies try to get to him through Daigoro, who they believe to be the assassin's weak point. Of course, this sense of sacrifice is mutual. The boy is aware that it is the combination of father and son that allows them both to survive. They truly are one, because father and son both believe they are.

This bond is put across in the interplay between Tomisaburo Wakayama and the little Akihiro Tomikawa as well. As tough as Ogami is on his son, there is more than the ghost of a smile on his face when the father looks at his son playing in the outdoor spa. There are several of these more emotional moments in the series, though all very subtle, in which Itto and Daigoro are temporarily able to be something resembling a normal father and son. See the credit sequence of *Baby Cart to Hades*, for example. Reportedly, Wakayama stayed close to Tomikawa during the shooting of the films, playing with the boy and even sharing his lunch with him, all with the intent of creating a bond off-screen that would reflect in the films.

Another significant moment in this respect comes when Ogami shields Daigoro from witnessing the brutal rape of a village girl as they enter the hot spring resort. The little boy witnesses one bloody act after another, limbs are hacked off in plain view, but his father won't let him see the poor young woman violated by one of the chamberlain's thugs.

This ties in with the importance of women and in particular the mother figure in the series. Azami's lingering presence is emphasised all throughout *Sword of Vengeance* and its sequels, as if the bloody fingerprints she left on her son's cheek before she gave up the ghost could never be washed off. En route,

Daigoro observes first a dog feeding its pup and later a troupe of monkeys guarding their little ones. More importantly, surrogate mother figures play a large role in each of the six films. In *Sword of Vengeance* this starts with the madwoman who snatches Daigoro from his cart to breastfeed him, taking him for the son she lost. This forms a bridge to the flashback in which we learn about Azami and her death at the hands of the Yagyu. Women's breasts are a recurring visual motif, not just for excitement and gratuity – though, let's be frank, certainly in that sense too – but also as reminders of the absent mother. The first shot of the flashback in which we meet Azami is a close-up of her breast as she is about to feed the infant Daigoro and the boy shows a fascination with the naked female form throughout the series. In *Sword of Vengeance* this happens when the second mother surrogate, the prostitute Osen, shares a bath with Ogami and Daigoro. "The boy has no mother," Ogami says to apologise, but Osen doesn't mind. As with most of the women that cross the couple's path in the series, Daigoro's attention stirs something inside, a maternal instinct that her own life has denied her the chance to indulge.

Finding the form

If the adaptation of *Lone Wolf and Cub* allowed Kenji Misumi the opportunity to further pursue his thematic preoccupations, it also gave him plenty of space to develop and hone his signature visual style. Although Goseki Kojima's drawings were strongly influenced by the cinema and the artist's work is often described as being cinematic, the *Baby Cart* films derive their style less from Kojima than from Misumi. Set design in the series is often quite faithful to the work of the manga artist, but in terms of framing, composition, and editing the films follow their own path. A good example is the rope bridge scene, during which Ogami first meets the bandits that rule the hot spring resort. The situation is identical to the manga, characters look similar and the bridge itself looks like a painstaking recreation, but if we compare Kojima's panels to Misumi's shots we see a world of difference.

The *Baby Cart* series contains some of most audacious formal experimentations of Misumi's career. Reunited with some of his old collaborators from the Daiei days – including cinematographer Chishi Makiura, designer Akira Naito, and editor Toshio Taniguchi (who had



The dramatic rope bridge shot from the manga and its counterpart in the film.

replaced Kanji Suganuma as Misumi's editor of choice by 1967) – Misumi's approach to shadows, colour, composition and editing followed closely on from his past work, but moved forward above all. According to one anecdote, Makiura and Taniguchi had made a pact that they would do things in a way the director himself would never have imagined. They were planning to outdo all their earlier collaborations.

Makiura's influence is present throughout in the beauty of the images, with the gorgeous looking duel between Ogami and Kurando against the blazing disc of the setting sun as one of the standout moments of the film. In a more experimental vein, perhaps the most impressive sequence is the sex scene between Ogami and Osen, which is filmed with a triple superimposition: four close-ups that in a normal case would follow each other in an edited sequence are here overlaid into a single uninterrupted shot. It's not just the technical feat that makes the sequence impressive, it's also how it functions as an extension of the story: it transforms something that was meant as a public humiliation (Osen was forced by the bandits to have sex with Ogami in front of a roomful of hostages) into a moment shared by only two people. It isolates Osen and Ogami from the rest of the world.

Editor Toshio Taniguchi's experimentations are felt particularly strongly in the scene of Ogami's battle with Bizen in the cascading river (a location, incidentally, that is almost identical to one Misumi used eight years earlier in the second *Sleepy Eyes of Death* film, *Sword of Adventure*). First he uses the machine-gun paced crosscutting technique pioneered by Sergey Eisenstein in *October (Oktiabr, 1927)* to introduce Retsudo, who stands on a bridge observing the battle. Then, when Ogami uses his signature "wave slicing stroke", Taniguchi realigns the individual frames of the shot of the sword splitting the water, repeating them and jumping back and forth, which expresses the surprise and confusion felt by Ogami's opponent.

The stylistic move forward is also readily apparent in the characteristic use of silhouettes, shadows and blacks. Always an important, even dominant part of Misumi's visual style, in *Baby Cart* there is more of this than ever before, with darkness pervading many a scene. In *Sword of Vengeance* this is strongly noticeable in the scene of the murder of Azami. At the same time, the film

also makes significant use of its polar opposite, the colour white. Traditionally representing death, as well as purity, to the Japanese, white is almost blinding in the opening scene of the boy *daimyo*'s execution and also recurs in the death robes worn by Ogami and his son before their supposed suicides. There is also the “white path between two rivers”, the Buddhist concept that symbolises determination and resistance to temptation, which is here applied to Ogami's rejection of his old life and his sworn vengeance on the Yagyu.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of Misumi expanding his formal experimentations is not found in his visuals, but in his use of sound. Or to be more precise, his suppression of it. Take the flashback to Azami's murder and the subsequent confrontation with Bizen and the Yagyu. Seconds go by with the soundtrack being entirely dead. What sound there is, is conspicuously unnatural, amplified and judiciously positioned. It is the aural equivalent of the director's visual blocking technique, in which emptiness gains a predominant position. With *Sword of Vengeance*, Misumi expands his trademark expressionism to the level of sound.

All in all, we can draw the conclusion that it was Misumi and his crew that established the style of the *Baby Cart* films. Having directed the first three, Misumi's style so strongly defined the look of the series that Buichi Saito – the director of part four, *Baby Cart in Peril* – and Yoshiyuki Kuroda – who helmed part six, *White Heaven in Hell* – could not afford to stray too far from the path. Kuroda, who unlike Saito also worked with the Makiura / Naito / Taniguchi triumvirate, even sought to consciously emulate Misumi's style in the final film of the series.



「ちゃん！」ダツと駆け寄る大五郎！

生きるも死ぬも己れひとり
宿命の剣に生きる父と子！
今日もまた斬らねばならぬ刺客道！

(カラー作品)

子連れ狼

之途の川乳母車

監督・三隅研次

原作・小池一雄 / 小島剛夕

(源流映画アクション連動)

製作・原田 隆雄 監修・小池一雄 脚本・若山富三郎
企画・製作・映博プロダクション 配給・東宝株式会社

東宝

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 若山富三郎 | 松尾嘉代 | 大木実 | 小林昭二 | 新田昌文 | 岸田昌森 | 富川晶宏 | 鮎川いづみ | 水原麻紀 | 笠原玲子 | 池田幸路 | 正桐衣麻 | 三山ゆかり |
|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|

映倫

2. Baby Cart at the River Styx

Lord Retsudo sends the female killers of the Akari Yagyu into action to stop Itto Ogami. As a contingency plan, he also enlists the services of the Kurokuwa clan, the shogun's assassins. Ogami, meanwhile, is hired by a fief that has gained its riches with a unique method of creating indigo dye. He is asked to kill a traitor who seeks to sell the clan's manufacturing secrets to the shogun. But the traitor is protected by a trio of bodyguards known only as The Gods of Death, who could be Ogami's fiercest enemies yet.

The second film is the best and certainly the most exhilarating of the bunch. Populated with near-iconic characters and consisting of a range of unforgettable scenes, it is one of the most opulent fruits of the Misumi / Makiura / Taniguchi / Naito partnership. These four men here work at the peak of their powers to create an extremely stylish and breathtakingly beautiful work of cinema, full of invention and experimentation. And with all the basics established in *Sword of Vengeance*, there is just enough plot to keep the narrative moving forward without getting in the way of any of the film's stylistic achievements.

This is not to take anything away from the story. Despite again following only two main plot strands, *Baby Cart at the River Styx* (1972) follows on, develops and elaborates the events of the previous film. Most clearly there is the pursuit of Ogami by the Yagyu. Though he received Retsudo's word that he was free to go where he pleased as long as he stayed out of Edo, the scheming leader of the Shadow Yagyu intends to eliminate the former executioner for managing to slip through the cracks in his carefully thought-out plot. We find out that Retsudo has broken his promise in the brief opening scene, when two of his warriors attack Ogami on the road.

With *Baby Cart at the River Styx*, paranoia starts to play a large part in the proceedings and in the motivations of Ogami and Daigoro. They become continuously vigilant for Yagyu and Kurokuwa clansmen lurking in the shadows, whether having dinner around an outdoor campfire or bathing at an inn. Wherever they go, the sound of the mendicant monk's gong resounds as it did on the night Azami was murdered, signalling the eternal presence

of their pursuers. This adds an extra layer of tension to the film and to the remainder of the series and it finds even more resonance later in the story when we also find out that Ogami isn't impervious: superior swordsman he may well be, he nevertheless emerges badly wounded from a forest battle with Kurokuwa forces.

There is also development in the character of Daigoro, who grows more aware and more mature in this episode. This is strongly felt in the scene in which he nurses his wounded father back to health after the battle with the Kurokuwa and when the boy counts from one to six in the bath, but also in more subtle passing moments, such as his spattering of the arrogant innkeeper's face. He works the arsenal in the cart too, truly becoming an extension of his father in battle.

Less outspoken than in the first film but nevertheless a continuing presence, the debunking of the image of the Tokugawa shogunate forms part of the second main plot thread: the assignment Ogami receives from the leaders of the Awa clan to kill one of their subjects. In recounting the clan's story, Misumi and Koike shed a different light on the historical notion that the Edo period was a time of peace. Certainly, civil wars were a thing of the past after the shogunate came to power, but what, so wonder the creators, is the value of peace for those living under a cruel dictatorship? The Awa clan sees itself threatened by the shogunate itself, which creates strife so as to gain control of the clan's profitable textile dyeing process, a move that would enrich the government, but ruin the Awa. Peace is a relative term for the violently oppressed.

Gods of death, ladies of mercy

One of the great assets of *Baby Cart at the River Styx* is its gallery of unforgettable characters. Chief among these are the iconic "Gods of Death", the trio of superbly skilled warrior brothers Benma, Tenma, and Kuruma Hidari (played by Minoru Oki, Shogen Nitta, and Shin Kishida, respectively). In Japanese, they aren't referred to as Gods of Death, but as "Bentenrai", a word composed of the first *kanji* of each of the three brothers' names, which they wear on the inside of their cloaks (*kanji* often have several pronunciations, depending on the context, hence "kuru" here becoming "rai"). Bantenrai

translates as “the coming of Benten”, Benten (short for Benzai Tennyo) being the Buddhist goddess of good fortune – fortune of course being on the side of the Hidaris and those who hire them, rather than those who oppose them.

The Hidari brothers are three of the most fearsome fighters Ogami encounters over the course of the series. In the corresponding episode of the manga (episode 15, whose plotline the film follows quite faithfully) they are revealed to be an elite Kurokuwa force. Their weapons are suitably exotic: a bear claw, a steel club, and a pair of studded gauntlets (there’s a change here from the manga, in which Kuruma simply carried a sword instead of combat gloves). These kinds of unconventional weapons pop up throughout the series, from the dirks of the bandit Monnosuke in *Sword of Vengeance* to the juggling knives of Kaori Yagyu in *White Heaven in Hell*. Ogami’s cart is of course the ultimate example. *Baby Cart at the River Styx* has more than its share of these sidearms, with the hidden weapons of the female fighters of the Akashi Yagyu complementing the Hidari brothers’ arsenal, but more on them in a moment. This imaginative weaponry may occasionally border on gimmickry, but in the case of the Gods of Death, they only serve to make the characters even more larger-than-life, unforgettable even.

Ogami’s confrontations with the Hidari brothers also give the series some of its most outstanding sequences. The first section of the story, set on the boat that transports them over the Inland Sea, consists of three parts, all equally memorable: the attack of the hired hands of the Awa clan on the Hidari brothers, which shows us the trio’s incredible fighting skills; the scene below deck, in which Benma surreptitiously tests Ogami’s skills by throwing a small dagger at him; and thirdly of course the blazing fire, from which both parties escape in their own unique ways.

What follows is perhaps the single most astounding sequence in the *Baby Cart* series: the battle in the dunes. Riveting in its excitement and breathtaking in its beauty, it is also one of the most outrageously violent scenes from the six films. From Benma burying his claw in the skulls of assailants concealed in the sand, via Tenma split from head to crotch by Ogami’s Dotanuki blade, to Benma’s almost poetic demise, admiring the whistling sound of the blood that spurts from his jugular.



Ogami's formidable opponents in *Baby Cart at the River Styx*: the Hidari brothers (top) and the Akashi Yagyu.

As in the case of the exotic weaponry so abundantly brandished in this instalment, the stylised exaggeration of the violence underlines the film's comic book origins. But *Baby Cart at the River Styx* is unashamed in displaying its roots. In fact it only adds to the otherworldly, almost surreal quality of the film, even on the occasions when it strays into the realm of comedy. Whether it's Ogami throwing Benma's miniature dagger back into its tiny sheath from across the room, Daigoro steering the cart with its *Ben-Hur*-esque springing blades into a line of Kurokuwa fighters, or Sayaka Yagyu jumping straight up and out of her kimono to avoid the lethal edge of Ogami's sword: it all serves to remind us that we are deep inside the un-human netherworld that Itto Ogami calls *meifumado*. It goes a couple of steps beyond the commitment of Misumi and Koike's depiction of the Edo era as a violent, corrupt land, but if the results are this stunning, then who's complaining?

Everything that is true for the Gods of Death also goes for the lethal ladies of the Akashi Yagyu, the film's other set of iconic characters. Posing as cartwheeling street performers, chaste travelling maidens with razor-lined straw hats and peasant girls packing knives inside *daikon* horseradishes, their three-tiered assault on Ogami and Daigoro is something to behold. Through the character of their leader Sayaka (Kayo Matsuo), however, they do more than just contribute to the outlandish tone of the film.

In the manga, Sayaka Yagyu is one of Retsudo's five children. She doesn't make her entry until episode 64 of the comic, much later than the stories upon which the script of *Baby Cart at the River Styx* is based. The manga stories that involve Sayaka form the basis for the screenplay of *White Heaven in Hell*, in which she is split into two separate, new characters: Kaori and Azusa Yagyu. Having introduced Sayaka in the second film, then later adopting her as a character in the manga in a different guise and as part of a different storyline, Koike made things a tad difficult for Tsutomu Nakamura, the screenwriter of *White Heaven*. Nakamura consequently had to come up with two new daughters for Retsudo, bringing the total of his offspring to six instead of the five children he has in the manga: Bizen and Kurando in *Sword of Vengeance*, Gunbei in *Baby Cart in Peril*, and Kaori, Hyoei, and Azusa in *White Heaven* (Sayaka as she appears in *River Styx* is a Yagyu, but not a daughter of Retsudo).

Following on the role played by Osen in *Sword of Vengeance*, Sayaka solidifies the importance of women in the series. She again functions as a surrogate mother, but the relationship with Ogami and Daigoro becomes slightly more complex, more symbiotic than Osen's. After the former executioner defeats her eight warriors, she begins to develop a fascination for the couple that replaces the hatred she felt over Ogami's killing of Bizen and Kurando. She trails them, ostensibly to finish the job, but her bloodlust dissipates as she witnesses Ogami's prowess and attitude, as well as the bond with his son. A crucial moment is the scene in which the three of them disrobe after becoming soaked during their escape from the burning ship. As with Osen, when Daigoro shows an interest in her breasts, something that lay dormant inside her resurfaces. And again, when the final scene of the film unfolds, a woman is left behind in confusion and awe.

Whether this is all a proper representation of femininity is beside the point, certainly in a film of such a stylised nature. No one will ever mistake the *Baby Cart* series for a feminist statement. But there is little real-life credibility to the relationship between Ogami and Daigoro either; all that matters is whether it is credibly and consistently portrayed within the context of the story. And as we will see in later films, the portrayal of women in *Baby Cart* is nothing if not consistent.

Masters of the frame

The greatest achievements of *Baby Cart at the River Styx* lie in the realm of style and form. The film displays a mastery of the frame and of technique that is nothing short of brilliant. As already noted, it is a strikingly beautiful film, with Chishi Makiura and Akira Naito working magic in every shot, whether wide or close-up. The close shot of Benma Hidari as he dons his bear claw, the light falling onto his face in shafts through the vents in his straw hat, is as impressive as the vistas of barren dunes or the inferno on the ship. But *Baby Cart at the River Styx* is more than just a succession of pretty images. The style of the film is deeply cinematic, showing complete control and understanding of form and technique.

Take for example the first confrontation between Ogami and the women of the Akashi Yagyu. As the Lone Wolf stands staring at the somersaulting

warriors in disguise, the spinning colours and patterns of their costumes begin to mesmerise and destabilise him. The effect is achieved by cutting back and forth between the three twirling colour motifs (which were achieved by spinning the camera, rather than the object in front of it) and a quick zooming in and out on Ogami. There is nothing more to it than that, but the result is incredibly effective, almost psychedelic in its suggestion of disorientation.

What stands out about the scene is firstly that its effect is entirely achieved by means of camerawork and editing, and secondly that its execution is of such simplicity. These two characteristics are valid for the film as a whole. Effects work is largely done in-camera. There is a shot of a pair of feet entering the cabin where Daigoro has left his wounded father to recuperate. Seen through the eyes of the half-conscious Ogami, the shot is a kind of double vision, with the approach of the feet seen twice in the same shot. This technique of multiple exposures is also employed in for example the sex scene in *Sword of Vengeance* and the tattoo scene in *Baby Cart in Peril*, in each of which it achieves a slightly different effect.

Then there is the simplicity, or rather the economical approach to constructing and editing scenes. Following Akashi Yagyu's attempt to confuse Ogami, they leap at him through the air, after which their actual attack takes place in a single, uninterrupted shot. Another prime example is the scene of Ogami and Daigoro eating around a campfire and hearing the gongs of the Yagyu in the distance. This entire scene consists of only three shots: first a two-shot of father and son at the fire to establish the situation (note the branches in the foreground, so typically Misumi); second a close-up of a concerned-looking Daigoro that pans diagonally up to a close-up of a vigilant Ogami, in which we find out that the pair is on its guard; third and finally a wider side shot of Ogami at the fire, shot from amid the brush, which emphasises their isolation amid a hostile environment. But that's not all, because the third shot starts with a quick dolly, the camera moving towards Ogami in an evocation of someone watching or approaching him, then slowly moves out again, suggesting both the vulnerability of Ogami and Daigoro in the empty countryside and the cautious retreat of a Yagyu spy (the subjective nature of the shot is reinforced by the swaying movements of the camera).

The same moving in / moving out pattern is repeated in a similar scene later, when father and son are taking a bath.

Another three-shot sequence can be found in the first scene aboard the ship. When the Awa clansmen attack the Hidari brothers, the battle starts with Benma jumping through the air and planting his claw in the skull of one of the assailants. This passage is again made up of only a trio of images: one of him sailing through the air, another of him parrying a sword blow and raising his claw, and a third of his enemy in close-up with a bleeding face wound. There is no visible contact between claw and face, but the sequence works perfectly.

Such leaps in time, with editing that skips over movement that should logically have been shown, can also be seen in perhaps the most emblematic moment of the film, when Sayaka jumps out of her kimono and disappears with lightning speed into the distance. The whole sequence is unnaturally eerie, a tone achieved through a combination of leaps in the editing, cutaways to Ogami's face, undercranking, and reverse motion, i.e. the actress was filmed running towards the camera, but the shots were reversed in the editing so it looks like she is running away.

These are all effects that are intrinsically cinematic: they can be created in-camera or through editing, with no need for special effects of post-production trickery. Often a change in film speed is enough to magnify a scene and give it an unearthly feel, for instance in the mild slow motion used for the shot in which Tenma Hidari's body splits in two from head to crotch, which makes clothes and strands of hair flutter so beautifully in the air.

All of this demonstrates what Max Tessier meant by "craftsmanship at its highest level", but it is craftsmanship with a purpose. It is virtuosity, but not of the kind that vies for attention and only exists to show off its own achievement. This is perhaps the best thing about it. The virtuosity in *Baby Cart at the River Styx* combines to create an organic, logical unity that expresses the mad, infernal land Ogami and Daigoro travel: a violent descent into the hellishly gorgeous netherworld of Edo-era Japan.



The suggestion of constant surveillance: Misumi shoots a calm moment between Ogami and Daigo through shrubbery (a), followed a slow tracking shot moving closer (b), then away from the pair (c).



東宝

「チャンノ危い」
 危機を救うが箱車
 「やこうん大五郎」
 斬馬刃まします刃える
 子連れ狼役人の決戦!

カラー作品
 監督・三隅 研次
 原作・小池 一雄
 小島 剛夕
 漫画アタシヨシ進蔵

40
 年

プロ・製作

子連れ狼

死に風は向、浪し舟車

加藤 剛
 富川 晶宏
 水島道太郎
 加藤小一
 中谷 信子
 名和 宏
 草野 俊
 浜野 大
 山形 純
 山形 勲
 若山 三郎
 洪 木 子
 木 子

3. Baby Cart to Hades

Itto Ogami crosses paths with a masterless samurai who strictly follows the bushido codes of honour and proves to be more than a match for Ogami. At the same time, father and son come to the rescue of a young girl, who has been sold to a group of gangsters who want to force her into prostitution. Against the female leader of this criminal gang, Ogami has to rely on more than just his skill with a sword, as he volunteers to undergo the gruelling ritual of torture that will set the girl free.

If the emphasis in *Baby Cart at the River Styx* was firmly on the form, then in *Baby Cart to Hades* (1972) it is on the contents. Of all six episodes, *Baby Cart to Hades* is the one that deals most overtly with the contradictions and negative side effects of living by codes. It doesn't just limit itself to *bushido*, but also treats a different type of code in the subplot of Ogami's confrontation with the yakuza group.

So concentrated is the script on this main theme, that the story is virtually Yagyū-free. There are two very exciting confrontations with Kurokuwa ninjā and a group of Yagyū warriors on horseback observes the final battle, but this is the only film in the series in which Ogami does not confront a member of the Yagyū family.

The plot for *Hades* is once more of a two-tiered nature, with the strands coming together at the end of the film. Both stories detail the consequences of chance meetings on the road between Ogami and fellow travellers: firstly the *ronin* Kanbei (Go Kato), an upstanding samurai forced to make his living as a sword for hire, travelling with a trio of salacious, good-for-nothing fellow mercenaries; secondly Torizo (Yuko Hama), the female leader of a group of yakuza, who is after a teenage runaway sold into her service as a prostitute.

The Kanbei plot deals very overtly with the trappings of *bushido*. We quickly recognise him as a man of valour for the asceticism he retains while his three layabout companions agree that the best thing about being a *ronin* for hire is the opportunity to freely accost any woman that takes their fancy; "If it wasn't for that, I would have already thrown away my sword," says one of

these *watari-kashi* (wandering mercenaries). To illustrate the point, the trio violently attacks and rapes a travelling noblewoman and her daughter. When the women's servant comes to their rescue, they scatter in confusion until Kanbei arrives on the scene. When the three lechers hide behind the ronin, the servant attacks Kanbei, who defends himself with a quick, deadly stroke of his blade. What happens next is a crucial moment, as the ronin steps forward and kills the two victimised women in cold blood. Here we see the inherent contradictions of an unwritten warrior code at work. Kanbei's incisive actions can't hide the fact that he is in doubt, that he despises the behaviour of his cohorts. However, he chooses *giri* over *ninjo*, duty over feeling, and even sacrifices one of his companions to keep the others and himself in the clear. He has chosen these men as his fellows and has to accept the consequences.

This sequence seems to have been inspired by a passage from the *Hagakure*, which tells of a samurai whose travelling companions become involved in a drunken bout that results in several deaths. Though the samurai declined to join the drinking and returned home early, when he hears of the incident he sides with his men and takes a share of the blame by pretending he took part in the tussle. His name is cleared in the ensuing investigation and he is praised for standing by his companions.

What *Baby Cart to Hades* does is to test this passage from the *Hagakure* by applying it to an extreme situation. Kanbei may follow his codes, but he has to kill four people, including two innocents, for it. This is a humanist reproach against *bushido*. Something similar happens when we learn about the incident that made Kanbei a ronin and that forms the source of all his doubts: assigned to guard his master's palanquin, his group is ambushed en route and outnumbered. Instead of staying by his master's side to defend, he calculatedly chooses to attack, thereby winning the battle that he would have lost had he remained in defensive position. He triumphs over the enemy, but is shamed for deserting his lord's side and banished from the realm. This punishment is based on a line from *Hagakure* that says it is more noble to die for your master than to kill an enemy. Here *bushido* is not tested against humanism but against the logic of strategy and again the shortcomings of the warrior code reveal themselves. (It must be pointed out that in deciding to attack, Kanbei followed another, almost contradictory rule, which is to

plunge yourself into battle with death in your heart, an attitude that the *Hagakure* says will lead almost certainly to victory: the warrior who accepts that he may die at any moment is truly fearless and will therefore give his all in the face of the enemy.)

What Kanbei struggles with is more than a classic *giri-ninjo* conflict. It is the contradictions and illogicalities inherent in *bushido* itself. When they first come face-to-face, Ogami immediately recognises Kanbei as a warrior of virtue, despite the fact that he kills his mate Jukkan right in front of the two passers-by. This is confirmed when the remaining two *watari-kashi* begin to threaten Ogami, which Kanbei knows is foolish. When Kanbei challenges him to a duel, Ogami prematurely calls it a draw, saying that true warriors like Kanbei should live on. Indeed, we have already seen many times that there are few like him left in this Japan. Despite being the paragon of the valiant warrior, someone who should to all intents and purposes be in a position of great esteem, Kanbei is just a shamed, errant ronin.

The conclusion the movie seems to arrive at, ironically, is that this is again a result of the illogicality of *bushido*. Later on Ogami is hired to kill a chamberlain responsible for the treacherous dissolution of an entire clan. This man, who acts entirely out of self-interest, with greed as his only motivation, is the kind of person that moves up the ranks of the shogunate hierarchy, while the loyal servants find themselves unemployed ronin when their clan is disbanded because of corrupt superiors like him. This, the film seems to say, is the true face of the Tokugawa shogunate. Those who valiantly serve it are as expendable as the lower castes, forced to become ronin or the kind of *watari-kashi* that rape and plunder their way across the land. The system is rotten to the core.

This point is hammered home with even more force in the film's finale, in which the corrupt chamberlain sacrifices a small army of servants and hired hands alike in his attempt to get rid of Ogami, whom he believes is an obstacle on his road to even greater power. Men die by the dozens believing they are fulfilling their duties as warriors in dying for their lord. But they are mere puppets; like Retsudo Yagyu, their lord is willing to gamble their lives just to move up a rung on the ladder of power, abusing the unconditional

loyalty that *bushido* installs in them.

The idea that *bushido* and similar codes lead inevitably to victimisation and suffering is also present in the story of Torizo. Though she is not a samurai, her yakuza world also adheres to its own code, that of the *bohachi*. Although she too comes across as someone of an honourable disposition, in the end the only function of her codes is to ruin the lives of young farm girls like the one that asks Ogami's protection. The only escape which the *bohachi* tradition allows for such girls is a sham, an extensive ritual of torture they haven't the slightest chance of surviving.

Baby Cart to Hades attacks the façade of honour and brings it down, crumbling it to dust in the space of less than ninety minutes. It's telling that in the end both Kanbei and Torizo turn to Ogami, the man who has renounced all codes and customs, as the one who holds true wisdom.

Victims and survivors

Although in the dénouement Torizo follows her predecessors Osen and Sayaka by being completely in awe of Ogami as he walks off into the distance, *Baby Cart to Hades* further develops the role of the women in the series. They too are regarded in this episode through their subjection to codes and rules.

There are four female characters in the film: Torizo, the girl called Omatsu who is sold into prostitution and the two ladies who are attacked by the leering mercenaries. Three of them are victims and what binds them is that they are all subject to the rules of society at large. Torizo, child of a disbanded *han* and leader of a group of outcasts, is a pillar of strength, who commands a dozen men. The other three are victimised for abiding by the rules of society: like the warriors sacrificed by their master, they are swallowed up by the very rules they serve.

This is a constant in all the films, that the women who are outcasts are the ones that display strength and self-determination: the prostitute Osen, the yakuza Torizo, the swordfighter Oyuki in *Baby Cart in Peril*. Sayaka Yagyū in *River Styx* avoided death because she chose to renege her duties towards her family and let Ogami escape.



The women of *Baby Cart to Hades*: gang leader Torizo (top) and the ill-fated mother and daughter.

On the road

Among the six films, *Baby Cart to Hades* is also one of the best examples of the documentary-like qualities that characterised the original manga. Here, Ogami comes into contact with several strata of Edo-era society, including peasant girls, ronin and gangsters. It's not a social-realist document by any stretch, but we do learn about the poverty that forces farmers to sell their daughters into prostitution, about the unemployment among ronin that drives some of them to crime and about how some of these phenomena give rise to an underclass of people like the *bohachi mono* or *yakuza*. With all of these being chance encounters that grow into major events, this accentuates the road movie-like nature of the *Baby Cart* films. Though the road movie is a genre we normally associate with American films in contemporary setting, the *chanbara* genre had its own variation on it, the *matatabi mono*, a tradition to which *Baby Cart* if not belongs, then at least adheres.

The *matatabi mono* are essentially the earliest form of today's *yakuza* films. First appearing in literature by early 20th-century authors like Shin Hasegawa and Kan Shimozawa (creator of the most popular of the *matatabi* heroes, Zatoichi), they were stories revolving around the adventures of wandering outlaws, gamblers, and assorted vagabonds in Edo Japan. Breaking with tradition by focusing on other social classes than samurai and nobility, the *matatabi mono* often saw their protagonists aligning with crime syndicates, living impossible romances with the kind-hearted women they protected from bandits, or trying to make up for the consequences of their violent acts. Not rarely a child would be thrown into the fray, whom the hero would try his best to protect from harm. In addition to Zatoichi, one of the key characters in the *matatabi* tradition is Chuji Kunisada, hero of numerous films, most famously *Diary of Chuji's Travels* (*Chuji tabi nikki*, 1927) by the great *chanbara* director Daisuke Ito (who wrote the screenplay for Kenji Misumi's *Zatoichi and the Chess Expert*, 1965).

The similarities between the *matatabi mono* and the *Baby Cart* films are obvious: the travelling loner, the temporary alliances with figures of power, the encounters with women, the attention for the repercussions of violence, the presence of the child. Having renounced his rank, Itto Ogami is as much a classless outsider as the rogue anti-heroes Zatoichi and Kunisada.

Perhaps even more so, since the Lone Wolf has not just given up status, but also his humanity.

Blades or bullets

Baby Cart to Hades' most remarkable addition to the series comes in the shape of firearms. Making their appearance here for the first time, but following the line of exotic weaponry used in the previous films, they pervade much of the subplot involving Torizo and the assassination of the chamberlain. The yakuza leader carries one herself, while the chamberlain not only has a bodyguard who packs two pistols in a double shoulder holster, but also brings an entire division of musketeers to stop Ogami during the film's climax. Most eye-catching of all, though, is the automatic machine gun hidden inside the baby cart.

To some fans of the series, the gun in the cart is something of a dissonant, a kind of jarring presence. It's true that it is one of the more gimmicky elements of the films, one of those James Bond-esque devices so common in popular cinema of the period, like Mr. Han's detachable claws in *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973) or Shintaro Katsu's booby-trapped hideout in the *Hanzo the Razor* series (1972–1974). Though the pram is already a gimmick in itself, what contributes to making the appearance of the hidden canons so conspicuous is that there is no background for them. The manga contains a story (episode 28) in which Ogami is hired to assassinate a gunsmith who has created plans for the most powerful firearm in Japan. Learning that his client has lied about the reasons for the assignment, he agrees to fulfil the gunsmith's last request and use the gun in his own quest. Modifying the original designs, Ogami fashions an alternative that can be incorporated into Daigoro's cart. All of this is missing from the film, probably with the idea of keeping the revelation of the guns a big surprise.

In the end, what is so striking about the presence of guns in the film is that they don't represent any kind of deeper meaning. In many *ninkyō eiga* (literally "chivalry films", i.e. the heavily codified gangster films of the 1960s, traditionalist variations on the *matatabi mono* set in the early twentieth century, whose heroes were honourable outlaws), the gun represented a pernicious modern influence. It was the weapon of the coward, in most

The theme song from *Baby Cart to Hades*

Playing over the final scene of *Baby Cart to Hades* is the untitled theme song performed by Tomisaburo Wakayama. With lyrics written by Kazuo Koike, it's the type of signature tune that was quite typical for star vehicles of the day – see also, for instance, the vocal interpretations by Meiko Kaji that accompany her *Lady Snowblood* (also with words by Koike) and *Female Prisoner Scorpion* films.

However, when Shintaro Katsu first saw the film and heard the song, he allegedly became infuriated. Cursing his brother's vocal talents – admittedly, judging from this one song Wakayama was not the greatest of vocalists, although the take that appears on the soundtrack album is somewhat easier on the ears – he demanded, as head of the production company, that the tune be removed. Misumi and Wakayama opposed him, but finally it was lack of time to redo the sound mix that kept it in. Here are the translated lyrics of the song:

cases the villain, whereas the honourable hero always went into battle armed with the far nobler *katana* sword. There is none of this kind of symbolism in *Baby Cart to Hades*. Ogami uses the built-in machine gun simply as a tool to even the odds. When he kills the chamberlain with his own bodyguard's pistols, there is a sense not so much that guns are for the cowardly or the weak, but that they don't form such a big change from swords in the first place. *Baby Cart* doesn't regard swords with any degree of reverence; they are tools for killing, just as much as guns are. Those who live by the sword die by the sword and, as the finale of *Baby Cart to Hades* shows, the same holds true for those who carry guns.

Within the frame

That *Baby Cart to Hades* is more concerned with story and themes, as stated above, can be gleaned from the film's style: it is noticeably more sober than its predecessor. Whether or not it was an influence is a matter of debate, but it should be noted that production designer Akira Naito is absent from this instalment, replaced by Yoshinobu Nishioka, another former Daiei employee, who had worked on many of the *Zatoichi* films. Nevertheless, the film still contains a number of standout visual moments worthy of special mention.

Let's take a look at how the rape scene early on in the film is shot. When the three salacious ronin assault the two ladies and are in turn attacked by their servant, camera and editing combine to express chaos and confusion: the image is a

jittery handheld, the camera is kept close to the characters and cuts come quick. When Kanbei enters the scene, however, things immediately calm down. Just as the rapists' excitement and their victims' panic was translated into the style, thus creating a visual expression of nervous tension, Kanbei's composure is expressed by use of steady shots that are taken from a greater distance and held longer.

A similar awareness is present in the confrontations between Kanbei and Ogami. The two men recognise in each other a certain integrity and dignity; they each see the other as a "true warrior". So the style of these scenes works towards connecting and approaching them. The first meeting is caught in a wide shot that is almost perfectly symmetrical: seen from the side, Ogami and Kanbei each stand on one side of Daigoro's cart, which is right in the middle of the frame. With both men wearing straw hats, their shapes are almost identical. Next, when they square off in a nearby field for a duel, two interesting things happen. Firstly, their communication is shot in a series of reverse shots in which both characters look directly into the camera. The camera's point of view in this sequence is constantly through the eyes of either Kanbei or Ogami, creating a real immediacy and connection. Next, after swords are drawn we are treated to a shot from behind Kanbei. Both men stand still with their *katana* raised. The shot is taken from some distance, but either on zoom or with a telephoto lens that flattens the image and eradicates depth of field: the combatants seem to stand so close as to be

Crows cry in the night
Someone is going to die
Stray dogs howl
Lone Wolf and Cub are
coming

The reaper from his grassy
tomb
The wolf and his cub
They are coming

Footsteps approaching
Lone Wolf and Cub are
coming
Insects stop chirping
Someone is going to die
Footsteps approaching
Lone Wolf and Cub are
coming

The baby cart from Hell's
Sanzu River
The wolf and his cub
They are coming

Footsteps approaching
Lone Wolf and Cub are
coming
Coming
Coming
Coming
Coming...

almost stuck together.

Another very remarkable moment happens in the final face-to-face between Ogami and Kanbei, the dénouement to the big battle scene. Kanbei, defeated, wishes to commit *seppuku* and asks Ogami to be his second. After the Lone Wolf concurs and the samurai's head is severed, we are treated to a delirious point-of-view shot through Kanbei's eyes as the severed cranium rolls down the hill. This seems like gratuitous sensationalism at first, but the point behind this shot is revealed in the final image on Kanbei's retinas as his consciousness fades: he sees his decapitated body kneeling in front of Itto Ogami, who is dressed in his executioner's clothes and standing in a white room. This image reveals that Kanbei has finally found what he has been searching for: an honourable death, one that has come at the hands of none other than the shogun's executioner.

The film ends with the signature moment of Ogami pushing Daigoro's cart forward towards the next adventure. Here comes a last display of the Misumi style, in the shape of the clouds that hang against an intensely blue sky. They are real clouds, yet they seem to have been placed there on purpose, as if part of the set design. This is Kenji Misumi's mastery over the frame; even those things that just happen to be there become props, an integral part of an intentionally composed image.



4. Baby Cart in Peril

Itto Ogami is hired to hunt down the killer of a group of samurai. Much to his surprise, he finds that the culprit is a young woman, Oyuki. She has sworn revenge on the clan that defiled her and won't stop her killing spree until she reaches the man responsible for her shame. As he learns more about her past, Ogami is torn between his duty and his growing sympathy for the deadly maiden.

After completing *Baby Cart to Hades*, Kenji Misumi moved on to work on *Hanzo the Razor: Sword of Justice*. Since the director had more or less found a home at Katsu Production after the demise of Daiei, the brothers Tomisaburo Wakayama and Shintaro Katsu had an unwritten agreement that they would share the director between themselves. Both admirers of Misumi, they took turns working with him and after three *Baby Cart* films, Katsu claimed him for the first *Hanzo the Razor* episode.

Misumi's replacement on *Baby Cart in Peril* was Buichi Saito, a former assistant to Yasujiro Ozu whose own career as a director started at the Nikkatsu studio in the mid-'50s. There he directed a number of the studio's signature youth films, before familiarising himself with the action genre by directing eight out of nine episodes of one of the studio's hallmark productions, the *Rambling Guitarist* (1959) series. Starring Akira Kobayashi as the wandering, guitar-strumming hero, the films were typical of Nikkatsu's brand of so-called borderless (*mukokuseki*) action films: movies whose plots were modelled on foreign, mostly American, genre films, such as westerns and film noir, rather than on Japan's indigenous film genres – for instance, the yakuza film or the *chanbara*.

Saito relocated to Toei studios in 1970, where he first encountered Tomisaburo Wakayama on the fifth and final episode in the *Wicked Priest* series. He continued working with the star on several more films in 1970 and '71, until Wakayama asked him to take the reins of *Sword of Vengeance*. A commitment to Toei forced Saito to decline the invitation, paving the way for Kenji Misumi's entry. When Misumi in turn went off to work with Shintaro Katsu after *Baby Cart to Hades*, Wakayama came back to Saito, who this time was able and willing to helm *Baby Cart in Peril* (1972).

Deep focus

After three films directed quite distinctly by the same filmmaker, the Misumi style had become firmly established as the signature look and tone of the *Baby Cart* series. Saito apparently had little problem working within the contours etched out by his predecessor (he had seen and loved *Sword of Vengeance*, which he allegedly considered a masterpiece); *Baby Cart in Peril* follows quite seamlessly on from the earlier films. This is all the more remarkable when we know that in addition to Misumi and the still absent Akira Naito, cinematographer Chishi Makiura had also left the series to accompany his director on *Hanzo the Razor*. Makiura's replacement was a formidable one, however: Kazuo Miyagawa, regular director of photography for Kenji Mizoguchi, who had also lensed Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1951) and *Yojimbo*, as well as Kon Ichikawa's renowned documentary *Tokyo Olympiad* (1965) among many others. Having spent much of his career at Daiei, where he shot a good number of the *Zatoichi* films, Miyagawa had also worked with Kenji Misumi on a few occasions and must therefore have been quite familiar with the director's style and approach.

Misumi's brand of visual audacity and in-camera effects intermittently also marks *Baby Cart in Peril*, particularly in the various flashback sequences that make heavy use of overlaps and superimpositions. The tattoo scene is one of the film's standout moments in this regard, because it also uses the technique of double exposure in an even more sophisticated and intricate way to create deep focus. Made famous by Orson Welles and cinematographer Gregg Toland on *Citizen Kane* (1941), deep focus refers to a technique in which both foreground objects and background action in a shot are in focus. With its makers remaining tight-lipped about how they had actually achieved it, deep focus was one of those enigmas that contributed to lending Welles' film its legendary status. French director Jean-Pierre Melville figured out a way to do it in 1949, when his debut feature *Le Silence de la mer* included a rather self-conscious shot in which vases in the foreground are as sharp as the man passing by a doorway in the background. He further upped the ante by placing an out-of-focus conversing couple right in between the two focal points.

Melville achieved the effect by way of a double exposure, shooting the

vases separately, but on the same piece of film on which he had shot the man passing behind the couple. Even though by the 1970s filmmakers more commonly used a split-focus diopter to achieve deep focus, on *Baby Cart in Peril*, Saito and Miyagawa used the same procedure as Melville. At the start of the aforementioned tattoo scene, we see an extinguished candle right in front of the camera while Ogami and the tattoo master are seated further away. Both the candle and the conversing couple are in focus. There is a wonderful moment next, when this scene slowly dissolves to an identical set-up in the same location that truly starts the flashback of Oyuki's visit to the tattoo parlour. The framing is identical in both shots, except that it is daytime in the shot with Ogami yet evening in the shot with Oyuki and the extinguished candle is now burning. (A rather less successful use of the dissolve comes in the scene where Retsudo orders a Kurokuwa spy to disguise himself as his son Gunbei. The transition from the spy donning the mask to him revealing the result lacks smoothness, to say the least.)

The film additionally shows a similar economical editing style as the previous instalments (Toshio Taniguchi remained in charge here), particularly in the scene of the suicide of Gunbei Yagyū's double, which is once more composed of only three shots. Saito also makes distinct use of sound effects, most clearly in the rapid, piercing jabs of the tattoo needle.

While the versatile and accommodating Buichi Saito is not the kind of filmmaker whose films display a distinctly personal touch, all of the above is not to mean to suggest that he left his own personality at the door when he accepted to direct *Baby Cart in Peril*. The film stays true to the foundations laid by Misumi, but it is also quite distinctively not a Misumi film. In terms of framing and lighting, for example, Saito is a different filmmaker altogether. The influence of Ozu – as odd it may seem – can even be found in his handling of axis lines, which show a similar disregard for what is normally considered right and wrong as Ozu displayed. Axis lines essentially dictate camera positions between the shots that make up a scene, with the intention of getting the geography of a scene across to the viewer and not disorienting them when a set-up is changed between shots. In most cases, when a dialogue scene is filmed in the standard “shot – reverse shot” style, the camera always stays on the same side of the two actors. Ozu, however,

felt this was often unnecessary and commonly broke the axis line by placing the camera on the other side. Saito does this several times in *Baby Cart in Peril*, for example in the scene of Daigoro's first meeting with Gunbei. At one moment during the ostracised samurai's monologue he suddenly moves the camera over, keeping the close-up, but shooting the actor from the other side of his face. He does this again in the duel between Gunbei and Ogami later on, when the two combatants have switched positions after the first attack, but the shot of them facing each other is the same as before they moved. Though the axis line is often seen as a golden rule of filmmaking, Ozu's assessment that it needn't always be followed to the letter is true. In the duel scene, the environment is a panoramic wheat field that looks the same when shot from any angle, making disorientation on the part of the viewer an impossibility in the first place. There is no particular reason to stick to the axis line in this scene.

Crossroads

If the plots of the previous three films consisted very clearly of two separate scenarios, in *Baby Cart in Peril* such a neat distinction is more difficult to make. The main thread covers Ogami's mission to kill Oyuki (Michi Azuma, who previously incarnated one of the female warriors under Sayaka Yagyu's command in *Baby Cart at the River Styx*), a tattooed expert of the short sword who seems to be on a killing spree against the vassals of the Owari clan. In investigating her past, Ogami develops more and more understanding for the lady he is hired to assassinate. We learn that she is the victim of rape by the Owari trickster Enki Kozuka (Shin Kishida, also alumni of *River Styx*, in which he played Kuruma Hidari, one of the three Gods of Death), who uses illusion and hypnosis to subdue his opponents. To turn the tables she asks a tattoo master (Asao Uchida, another repeat performer, he played chamberlain Sugito in *Sword of Vengeance*) to imprint the most shocking design he can think of in her flesh: an image of the mythological feral prince Kintaro, placed so as to look like he is suckling Oyuki's left breast. The Oyuki plot continues the documentary aspect of the previous film by introducing us to a clan of street performers, classless outcasts from society who are not allowed to hold any other jobs or positions.



Breaking the 180-degree rule: Gunbei and Ogami face off (a), engage in combat (b), switch positions (c) and are seemingly back in the same spot where they started (d).

The rest of the story consists of essentially a succession of subplots, all adapted from separate stories from the comic and connected into a single continuous narrative. There is the tale of Daigoro running off and getting lost in the countryside, where he encounters a samurai who turns out to be Gunbei Yagyū (Yoichi Hayashi), the son of Retsudo who battled Ogami for the position of shogunate executioner but lost when he allowed his sword to point directly at the shogun. This is a combination of two manga stories, in which we learn about the origins of the feud between Retsudo Yagyū (here played by Tatsuo Endo) and Itto Ogami. The subplot of the wandering Daigoro gives the boy (and the young actor Akihiro Tomikawa) a chance to shine by showing the composure of, as the astonished Gunbei puts it, “a swordsman who has faced death and survived”. When the banished Yagyū draws his sword to test the little boy, Daigoro even picks up a stick and copies his father’s Suio-ryū sword stance (which, incidentally, is different from the one in the manga: here the sword points forward instead of away).

The remaining two subplots deal with Ogami visiting the court of the lord Owari (Asao Koike), where he once again uses his hidden machine gun, which leads to the climactic confrontation with a battalion of Yagyū headed by Retsudo himself. Ogami is given yet another addition to his secret arsenal – a set of darts shot from a pipe – but nevertheless emerges badly wounded from the ensuing clash with Retsudo. Though not without taking out one of the old man’s eyes first.

Heart of the parent, heart of the child

As we have already seen, each of the *Baby Cart* films contains a central female character and *Peril* is no exception. Oyuki continues the line from Torizo in part three, another woman who stands on the outside of society but who has achieved strength and independence as a result of her position. Despite her modest background, she drives several men into obsession: the lord Owari (Asao Koike) who defied class divisions to adopt her into his entourage; Enki Kozuka, whose fascination leads him to violate her; and the tattoo artist overwhelmed by her skin, her form, and her ability to undergo the most painful tattoo imaginable without batting an eyelid.

To this list we can add two more men: Itto Ogami and his son Daigoro. Ogami

obviously grows to have if not a fascination then at least a deep respect for Oyuki, despite the errors she has made and for which he has come to claim her life – once the job is done he cremates her body and returns her ashes to her father, Jindayu (So Yamamura), leader of the community of street performers. Daigoro also develops a curiosity for Oyuki like he has for most of the women that have crossed his father's path. That their first meeting is a virtual copy of the bathing scene in *Sword of Vengeance* and that the boy is once again fascinated by a woman's breasts only goes to show how the mother figure continues to haunt the films and the character of Daigoro. We could say that it's the tattoo that attracts his attention, but let us not forget that this tattoo represents a scene of breastfeeding.

At the same time, though, there is an intriguing break with the tradition in the way Oyuki is portrayed. She no longer swoons over Ogami's abilities, but, as noted, it is the men that lose themselves over her. What is more, in her death scene she exclaims with her final breath that she is happy to die with her clothes on, the tattoo and her bare skin having been reminders of her greatest shame for much of her recent life. In the manga however, the cut of Ogami's sword that kills her also splits open her kimono and *reveals* her naked torso. Although the actress Michi Azuma spends most of her scenes in a state of undress, the change in attitude from both the manga and the previous films is unmistakable. There is no record that tells who was responsible for these changes, but with the writer remaining the same, it is likely that this was newcomer Buichi Saito's contribution.

The mother figure formed by Oyuki also fits in snugly with the film's dominant theme, that of the connection between parents and children. This is one of the main motifs of the series as a whole, of course, but in *Baby Cart in Peril* it infuses every subplot. The original title of the film, *Oya no kokoro, ko no kokoro*, translates as "Heart of the parent, heart of the child" and points towards forced rifts and distances between parents and their offspring: there is Daigoro losing track of his father's whereabouts, Retsudo banishing his son Gunbei and having him officially declared dead, and Oyuki straying from her father's community. In all cases the result is violence and death. As Jindayu says at one point: "There are times when parents believe that praying for the death of their children is an act of love". No wonder Itto Ogami comes to look upon Oyuki and her father with such respect. He knows better than anyone how true those words are.

「黒田五十三万石の命運は預った！ゆくぞ大五郎！」
「チャン！わが子を背負った狼が走る魔道に最大の危機！」

若山富三郎
富川晶宏
安田道代
佐藤友美
山城新伍
山内新伍
大内秀治
須賀不二夫
内藤武敏
石川信雄
石川信雄
加藤嘉敏
岡田英次

狼連れ子

冥府魔道

めい ぶ ま どう

（カラー作品）
監督 三隅研次
原作 小島剛夕
脚本 小島剛夕
演出 三隅研次
撮影 小島剛夕
音楽 船橋和郎
録音 船橋和郎
編集 船橋和郎
美術 船橋和郎
衣装 船橋和郎
特殊効果 船橋和郎
プロダクション 船橋和郎

5. Baby Cart in the Land of Demons

Relentlessly pursued by the Yagyu clan, Ogami and Daigoro flee across Japan, waiting for the opportunity to face the evil Retsudo. They face five warriors who come to test their skills before hiring the lone wolf and his cub to expose an intricate plot against the ruler of their clan. Meanwhile, Daigoro falls under the charms of a lady pickpocket and is arrested by the police as her accomplice.

Kenji Misumi returned to the fold for *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons* (1973). In the intervening time he had not only directed the first of Shintaro Katsu's *Hanzo the Razor* films, but also 1973's *Wakayama*-starring *Sakura no daimon* (which featured *Baby Cart in Peril* co-star Michi Azuma) and several episodes of a pair of newly launched television series that contained more than a few similarities to the *Baby Cart* series. *Kogarashi Monjiro* (1972) featured a stoic, apolitical, wandering samurai who makes many a noblewoman swoon over his brooding glances, while *Sure Death* (*Hissatsu shikake-nin*) was a chronicle of a group Edo-era assassins. Conceived by Kinji Fukasaku, *Sure Death* would continue to run on Japanese TV for decades. Misumi directed a total of 19 episodes of the show between 1972 and his passing in 1975. He died while working on its sixth season.

Like many of his colleagues that were given the boot by the ailing film studios, Misumi became quite prolific as a television director in the early 1970s. Some of these small screen projects were made by Katsu Productions, such as the *Zatoichi* TV series and the *Wakayama* vehicle *Mute Samurai* (*Oshizamurai Kiichi Hogan*, 1973–1974), but for most of them Misumi worked as freelancer. The agreement between *Wakayama* and Katsu, which quietly assumed that Misumi would remain entirely loyal to the company, never quite worked out as planned: although they had hoped to share the director evenly between them, of the nine projects Misumi directed for Katsu Productions, only three finally featured Katsu himself.

The darkest hour

Although the *chanbara* Misumi made for television occasionally displayed a similar critical vein as his films, it was his big screen work that was truly representative of the evolution of the filmmaker's main themes and concerns.

The *Baby Cart* series as a whole already signalled a bleaker outlook, which the anarchic *Hanzo* did nothing to change. *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons*, the director's penultimate film, emerged as the most relentless and most hopeless entry in the series. The Japanese title *Meifumado*, the crossroads to hell, was hardly an arbitrary choice: this is a film in which children are abandoned by their parents, thrown in prison, publicly flogged and finally killed, and in which dozens of other lives are willingly sacrificed, with doublecrossings forming merely the start of a spiral of betrayal that spreads like blood in water.

The film is chaotic and erratic in both its story and its style. The main plot, a virtual grab bag of disparate scenarios from the manga, revolves around the infant lord of the Kuroda clan, whose parents have put him under lock and key and adopted a little girl to take his place and identity. This dirty secret is kept from the shogunate, for fear that the Edo government should interfere and dissolve the clan. The facts have been written down in a scroll kept by the aging abbot Jikei (Akira Yamauchi), who is secretly an agent of the shogunate and plans to turn over the document to Retsudo Yagyū (played here by his third interpreter, Minoru Oki, previously seen as Benma Hidari in *River Styx*). Ogami is first hired by Kuroda men to kill the abbot and obtain the scroll, but he later receives a second assignment from a noblewoman from the same clan to kill the little girl and the boy lord's parents.

This plot becomes increasingly dense and puzzling as it plays itself out. Ogami's clients are so thoroughly confused about their allegiances in this bizarre situation that they end up having no choice but to fight the assassin when he enters Kuroda castle to do the very job for which they hired him. When he initially receives the mission, it's through five warriors who each own a piece of the information and money and who take turns attacking him to test his skills. One of them delivers his part of the story while being on fire, allowing himself to be slowly roasted alive as he fulfils his duty. The *Baby Carts* were outrageously violent before, but never quite as unnervingly painful as in this scene.

The style of the film is suitably chaotic, if unmistakably Misumi's: in one close-up, Ogami's straw hat fills two-thirds of the frame, leaving a narrow sliver at the bottom of the screen for his eyes. The pace of the cutting is

more nervous, while the use of sound effects and music is more erratic and their editing more coarse than in any of the previous films. Throughout, the film's shots are crammed with extras, blood and carnage are filmed with much less regard for pure aesthetics than on *River Styx* and the whole thing culminates in a harrowing seaboard suicide scene in which the figure of the dying noblewoman (Michiyo Yasuda) is evocatively rendered as a dissonant in an otherwise abstract, harmonious plane of horizontal bars formed by the natural elements of sea, beach and trees.

All of this is not to say that the film is careless or sloppy. There is a method to the madness and a consistency to the chaos that reveals the mind behind it all. Misumi seems to be giving vent to a sense of desperation with what is not only the bleakest film of the *Baby Cart* series, but perhaps of his entire career.

Bless the child

Knowing the director's predilection for the plight of orphans, it is not surprising that the ominous tone of *Land of Demons* is at its most resonant in the treatment of children. Not since the opening scene of *Sword of Vengeance* have infants been so helpless as they are here. It all begins when we learn about the story of the Kuroda clan, how its underage leader was deserted and sequestered by his own parents, who for no apparent reason favoured a little girl over their own son. This is a significant change from the story as it appears in the manga, in which the girl was a legitimate daughter passed off as a boy because there was no male heir. In the film's script (co-written for the first time by Kazuo Koike and Tsutomu Nakamura) the boy heir is added and the girl becomes an assumed child, creating an illogicality that under normal circumstances would be a sign of bad plotting, but which here only contributes to Misumi's carefully woven web of confusion.

Then there is Ogami's mission to assassinate the girl and her adopted parents – the only occasion in the series where he is hired to kill a child – plus the episode of Daigoro being whipped in public for his involvement with a pickpocket. The presence of this latter lengthy subplot makes the violence against children in the film all the more resonant, because it deals with Daigoro's inner conflict and by extension the conflict that befalls all children who grow up within the feudal structure of Edo Japan. In *Baby Cart in Peril*



Ogami grabs Daigoro's hand after the little boy's ordeal.



The striking horizontal composition of the seboard suicide scene.

we already saw Daigoro's childlike nature creeping through: fascinated as he was by the street performers, he even lost track of his father in the hope of catching a glimpse of the colourful spectacle. The same thing happens here: Daigoro climbs out of the cart when he notices a funfair and becomes the unwitting accomplice of Quick-Change Oyo (Tomomi Sato), a lady pickpocket working the crowd (this episode's mother figure, although it is not the father but the son that awes her this time). When he is arrested and whipped because he steadfastly keeps the promise he made to Oyo, Daigoro's conflict is evoked as strongly as it has ever been. It makes it all the more clear for us that he is just a little boy in the end and that a child likes toys and candy instead of battles and blood. Misumi brings up this duality again when Ogami and his cub enter Kuroda castle and find themselves face to face with the girl and her adoptive parents. Daigoro starts pulling funny faces at her, to which she responds. The moment seems very playful at first, but becomes deeply tragic when the girl matter-of-factly calls out the order to kill the two visitors.

The true heart of *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons* is the shot that comes right after the whipping episode, though: it is the moment when Daigoro runs back to his father, who has witnessed the flogging and the boy tightly grabs his hand as they continue their journey. Misumi holds the close-up of their clasped hands so long that the shot becomes an almost desperate statement, a humanist outcry that announces the tone of the director's next and final film, *The Last Samurai*. Having arrived at this point, decrying the samurai ethos with his dreariest-ever film, Kenji Misumi had no further use for Itto Ogami.

6. White Heaven in Hell

As *Retsudo* sends more and more forces after Ogami and Daigoro, the pair have to face ghosts, the living dead, and Retsudo Yagyu's deadly daughter, Kaori. Finally, the lone wolf and his cub find themselves battling a small army of Yagyu warriors on skis on a snowy mountain slope.

After the dark *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons* and the subsequent departure of Kenji Misumi, *White Heaven in Hell* takes an entirely different route. Under the stylish direction of Yoshiyuki Kuroda it is the most comicbook-like episode of the entire series, making it the most downright entertaining entry since *Baby Cart at the River Styx*.

Another member of the old boys' network from the Daiei days, Kuroda entered the studio in the mid-1950s, spending most of his career there as an assistant director to such names as Masahiko Tasaka, Teinosuke Kinugasa and Kazuo Ikehiro. Kuroda assisted Misumi on the epic *Buddha* (along with Akira Inoue, who would go on to direct the 1992 *Lone Wolf and Cub: The Final Conflict*, see Chapter Three), and worked as director of special effects on the *Daimajin* series (1966), of which Misumi directed the second instalment. Kuroda often worked in tandem with the director of the first *Daimajin*, Kimiyoshi Yasuda, with whom he collaborated especially closely on the *Yokai Monsters* trilogy, the second and third of which, *Spook Warfare* (*Yokai daisenso*, 1968) and *Along with Ghosts* (*Tokaido obake dochu*, 1969), were helmed by Kuroda. Shintaro Katsu later also brought him on board for the *Zatoichi* TV series.

Kuroda brings a very stylised, colourful approach to *White Heaven in Hell*. Working with cinematographer Chishi Makiura and set designer Akira Naito, both returning to the fold, he doesn't simply follow up on the style laid down by Misumi, as Buichi Saito did for *Baby Cart in Peril*, but literally emulates Misumi's signature style. He appropriates such typical Misumi traits as the use of foreground objects, relying heavily on darkness and shadow and blocking off large sections of the frame. One shot early in the film is pure Misumi: in a wide, bird's eye view that sees Ogami and Daigoro entering a cemetery, the couple are isolated as tiny figures in the top right hand corner,

while the screen is dominated by a vast, grey-tiled temple roof.

Ogami vs. the undead

The combination of the stylish visuals and a screenplay that blends some of the manga's more outlandish stories results in the most fantastical and, as noted, comic-book-like of all the *Baby Carts*. *White Heaven in Hell* throws walled-up warriors, a rocket launcher, the living dead and the supernatural into the fray. Its snow battle finale sees Ogami engaging an army of Yagyū and Kurokuwa warriors on skis and sleighs, with Retsudo himself commanding his forces from an armoured toboggan. What was occasional gimmickry before becomes the norm here, but it is Kuroda's suitably exaggerated style and the very 1970s "wacka-wacka" musical score by Kunihiro Murai (also composer of the funky tunes of the *Hanzo the Razor* series; here he takes over from Hideaki Sakurai who scored the first five films) that tie everything together into a very enjoyable bundle and keep it from drifting off into the realms of the ludicrous. In the subplot that has Ogami pursued by a trio of the undead, for example, the tone of the film becomes genuinely atmospheric if not outright creepy.

Spreading the wings

The plot of *White Heaven in Hell* is a peculiar mix-and-match of episodes from the manga, merged, expanded and modified for the film. In some places, like the battle in the snow, it is entirely new. The main storyline of Retsudo's illegitimate son Hyoei, his mystic mountain clan, the living dead and their ruthless pursuit of the assassin and his son by killing all the people the couple come into contact with, is a fusion of three very separate stories of the manga. The three living dead were originally just a single character, a man buried alive for a few hours only to be dug up and inducted into an elite shogunate fighting force (in episode 77). Their technique of isolating Ogami by killing innocent bystanders comes from a different story altogether, told in episode 76, in which a warrior unable to show emotions fights his enemies by robbing them of all their own sensations. In the film, the three "zombies" are named Mujo (played by Daigo Kusano, previously seen as the gun-toting bodyguard in *Baby Cart to Hades*), Muga (Jiro Miyaguchi), and Mumon (Renji Ishibashi) – *mu* being the word for emptiness or nothingness, a state which both Ogami and Daigoro achieve in the comic, but which in the films is

illustrated most clearly by the abbot Jikei in *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons*, the man Ogami is unable to kill precisely because he is nothingness incarnate.

The final battle, as noted, does not appear in the manga. There are plenty of snowbound clashes throughout the comic's 142 instalments, with those in parts 85 (Ogami against a small army on horseback) and 88 (a fight on a mountain slope with five men who use an outlandish fighting style incorporating ladders) most likely the main inspirations for the scene, but there is no fight with Yagyu men on skis and sleds anywhere in the original.

This daring, looser form of adaptation might well be the result of Kazuo Koike's retreat from scriptwriting duties, which are handled here by his co-writer on part five, Tsutomu Nakamura. It also marks the other main thread of the story, that of Retsudo's daughter Kaori being sent to dispatch Ogami and



Kaori Yagyu as she appears in the film (top) and her counterpart in the manga.

Daigoro. As already explained in the chapter on *Baby Cart at the River Styx*, some imaginative rewriting was in order to account for the appearance of a Sayaka Yagyu in the second film. The character upon which Kaori is based was called Sayaka in the manga and she was the younger sister of Shobei, both of them being Retsudo's illegitimate children. In the film, however, she is a full daughter of Retsudo named Kaori (Junko Hitomi), Shobei is renamed Hyoei (Isao Kimura) and the role of Shobei's sister is given to a new character, Azusa (Chie Kobayashi), who appears only briefly in an ill-fated incestuous coupling with her brother.

What is perhaps more striking than this game of musical chairs is that Kaori's portrayal, like that of Oyuki in *Baby Cart in Peril*, is markedly less sexist than in the manga. As drawn by Goseki Kojima, she dresses in anachronistic black tights and a tiny top that barely covers her breasts, but in the film she is fully clothed throughout. She nevertheless follows in the line of earlier female characters in forming this episode's mother surrogate (note that the previous mother figure, Quick-Change Oyo in *Land of Demons*, also kept her clothes on). This is felt particularly during the scene in which she meets Daigoro and entertains him with a juggling act. The mother figure continues to resonate, additionally emphasised by the visit to Azami's grave at the start of the film, while the conflict between Daigoro's link with his father and his identity as a child continues in *White Heaven* as well. When the three undead warriors begin their assault on Lone Wolf, their first victims are the two people that give the little boy a toy whistle and some candy; Kaori fails in her confrontation with Ogami because she recoils from the thought of killing Daigoro – violence and compassion are constantly at odds. All of this is emphasised even more by Retsudo sacrificing no less than three of his own children over the course of the film, extinguishing his own lineage in the process.

Thus passes the glory

When the battle in the snow ends, Retsudo beats his retreat and Ogami is left standing in a white landscape dotted with the insect-like bodies of dead warriors. Daigoro clammers out from between the bushes and safely returns to his father's arms once more. But as they ride off down the mountainside and disappear into the distance, it is for the last time. They will never make good on their promise at Azami's grave to return to Edo. With *White Heaven*

in Hell, the *Baby Cart* saga comes to a premature close.

Quite a bit of uncertainty has existed among fans and commentators as to exactly why the series came to such an abrupt end, with the most common misconception being that Katsu Productions ran out of funds and was forced to cancel plans for further episodes. In actual fact, the company continued to exist and produce films and TV series for its owner, including the *Zatoichi* television serial and Katsu's final turn as the blind swordsman in the 1989 feature *Zatoichi*. The real reason for the cancellation of the *Baby Cart* series had more to do with Tomisaburo Wakayama's famed obstinacy.

The rights to *Lone Wolf* were held by Kazuo Koike's company Koike Shoin. Katsu Productions had acquired the rights to adapt the series for the big screen, but did not hold television rights, which were snapped up in 1973 by Union Eiga, an affiliate of nationwide broadcaster NTV, with the intent of fashioning a *Lone Wolf and Cub* TV show around well-known *chanbara* actor Kinnoyuke Yorozuya, a.k.a. Kinnoyuke Nakamura. Wakayama, who felt strongly about the character, went into a rage over the thought of having a different actor portray Ogami and angrily refused to return to the role. Union Eiga actually saw the benefits of having the films continue alongside the series (it is likely that this is why they bought the TV rights in the first place) and wanted Wakayama to continue. A late offer of truce, in which Union Eiga and NTV were willing to have Wakayama star in the TV version in place of Yorozuya, was brusquely swept aside by the proud actor. Pleas from Toho and his brother to continue with the films did nothing to change his mind. Exclaiming that he was through with Itto Ogami, Wakayama left Katsu Productions and continued his career on his own.

We can look upon this incident as being a waste or a lost opportunity and we can nurture tantalising thoughts of what might have been, but if we step back and look at what is there – i.e. six superb, exciting, stylish, enthralling, magical films of consistently high quality – we have no cause for complaint. Its incompleteness only adds to the appeal of the *Baby Cart* series. There is a charm to an unfinished masterpiece; it is not something that we can only admire from a distance, but it leaves room for our imaginations, which makes this great incomplete saga all the greater.

ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO ARROW VIDEO

III - Aftermath

1. Purgatory: Lone Wolf on TV

As popular as the *Baby Cart* films continue to be on our shores, in Japan hardly anyone remembers them. Mention *Kozure okami* to a Japanese person and they will immediately think of the television series broadcast by NTV from 1973 through 1976. That the TV incarnation has completely overshadowed its big screen predecessors is indicative of the state of the Japanese film industry during that period, or rather, of the dominance of television. Brilliant as the *Baby Cart* films may have been, and however much they tried to please their audiences, they were swept away by the continuing advance of the mighty tube, which conveniently brought the adventures of Itto Ogami and Daigoro into everyone's homes for free – and more comprehensively to boot.

The 78 episodes of the *Lone Wolf and Cub* TV series were directed by a battalion of former studio directors, recently unemployed after the shake-ups at Daiei and Nikkatsu and the decrease in film production everywhere else. Men like Kazuo Ikehiro, Tokuzo Tanaka, Minoru Matsushima and Mitsumasa Saito were all veterans of studio *chanbara* films, including (for Ikehiro and Tanaka) on Shintaro Katsu's *Zatoichi* series.

The star of the show, Kinnosuke Yorozyua, came from a similar background. Under the name Kinnosuke Nakamura he had been a major star in the *chanbara* and *jidai-geki* films of the Toei studios in the 1950s and '60s, playing folk heroes like Sazen Tange and Musashi Miyamoto. He went freelance and founded his own production company at the dawn of the 1970s. His prestigious first production, the aptly named *The Ambitious* (*Bakumatsu*, 1970, directed by Daisuke Ito), was a biopic of famed modernist reformer Ryoma Sakamoto, in which Nakamura also took the lead role. The film's failure at the box office despite a star-studded cast (it co-starred Toshiro Mifune and Tatsuya Nakadai) effectively forced the actor to take refuge in television – he adopted the Yorozyua moniker to mark the transition.

With its exceptionally long running time, the television series comes much closer to faithfully representing the full scope of Koike and Kojima's manga than the films do. Particularly in the later episodes it sticks closely to the original storyline, including the full subplots of the Yagyu letter and the

interference of the deranged poisoner Abe no Kaii in the conflict between Ogami and Retsudo. And here the end really is the end: like the manga, the series ends with the showdown between the two nemeses, as the shogun and a group of *daimyo* watch, enthralled, from a distance.

But there are also important differences, ones that disprove the popular notion that comic books are naturally suited to screen adaptation. Goseki Kojima's artwork may be very visual and supposedly "cinematic", but it is this very aspect that doesn't transfer well to the television format. The episodes of the serial use the mix and match technique employed on the films to a far lesser extent, with each instalment of the TV show generally based on a single story from the manga. However, since many of the manga stories are so visually oriented and fairly low on plot, the television scripts usually have extra subplots and new characters added in order to pad the stories out over 45 minutes.

The result is a very plot-heavy, rather turgid form of storytelling that is unfortunately often confined to backrooms, where peripheral characters relay dialogue whose sole function is to explain the intrigue to the viewer. We are very far from the dynamics of either the manga or the films. At the same time, all effort is made not to confuse that same viewer, resulting in simplified characters, the loss of any sense of ambivalence and very literal storytelling. Much of the social criticism of the manga is lost in favour of a tone more suitable for family viewing, with more conventional drama and a focus on tragic love stories among supporting characters. Paradoxically, the series does contain occasional nudity and at times fairly graphic violence.

Inevitably, the relationship between Ogami and his son also suffers from this simplification. The TV Daigoro gets off rather easy compared to the hardships his big screen counterpart had to endure. The young actor who plays him in the first two seasons, Kazutaka Nishikawa, also seems to have been cast mainly for his puffy-cheeked cuteness. He certainly can't match the intensity and the chilling stares of Akihiro Tomikawa. Kinnosuke Yorozyua on the other hand cuts an impressive figure as Ogami, but his unswerving gravitas is offset somewhat by a rather obvious wig and too much make-up around the eyes. There are other problems plaguing the show, including its at

times clumsily-staged action sequences and anonymous outdoor locations, but the main conclusion is that it simply does not add anything to the manga. It retells its stories and that's it.

Things drastically improved, however, with the series' third season, broadcast in 1976 after a one-year absence from the airwaves. With the first two years having been bonafide hits, the third and final set of episodes was given larger means. Production values made a huge leap and bigger talents were hired both in front of and behind the camera: *Baby Cart in Peril* director Buichi Saito helmed many of the episodes, including the finale, and some of the actors from the films make return appearances, like Yuko Hama, who returns to the part of yakuza leader Torizo that she played in *Baby Cart to Hades*.

Other changes also work to the series' advantage: the cloying Nishikawa is replaced by Takumi Sato as Daigoro, the unconventional dramatic actor Kei Sato – an oft-seen figure in the work of the Japanese New Wave of the 1960s – takes over the role of Retsudo (played by Lee van Cleef lookalike Koji Takahashi in season one and the gaunt Ko Nishimura in season two) and Yorozuya is at last relieved of his wig and eye shadow. With far more striking location shooting and better cinematography, the final season gave the *Lone Wolf and Cub* TV series an unexpectedly worthy end.

A return to features

Occupying a prime time slot over a period of three years, it's not surprising that the TV series established itself as the popular image of *Lone Wolf and Cub* in the minds of the Japanese. All subsequent adaptations of the manga have taken it as their main reference. Even a revisionist attempt like the 1993 theatrical release *Lone Wolf and Cub: The Final Conflict*, which took enormous liberties with the source material, nevertheless had Daigoro constantly yelling "Chan!" – the boy's characteristic way of calling his father, little used in the *Baby Cart* films but all the more in the television series.

Throughout the 1980s, the series was regularly revived in feature-length re-edits, usually two episodes combined, which were released theatrically at the rate of one a year between 1983 and 1986. The first of these (*Kita kara minami, nishi kara higashi*, tr: "From north to south, from west to east") was credited



Kinnosuke Yorozuya in the first *Lone Wolf* TV series, with the two different Daigoros.

to Teruo Ishii, director of such cult *ero-guro* fare as *Shogun's Joy of Torture* (*Tokugawa onna keibatsushi*, 1968) and *The Horror of Malformed Men* (*Kyofu kikei ningen*, 1969), who was never involved in the television series proper.

In 1989 an entirely new made-for-TV feature was shot, entitled *Kozure okami: Meifumado no shikaku-nin*, directed by Tokuzo Tanaka and starring Hideki Takahashi, the lead actor of Kenji Misumi's final film *The Last Samurai*, as Itto Ogami. Sometimes referred to as *Baby Cart in Purgatory*, creating the false illusion that it is a belated conclusion to the *Baby Cart* series (its other unofficial English title is the literal translation *Lone Wolf and Cub: An Assassin on the Road to Hell*), this episodic film tried to cover the entire Ogami story in the space of 138 minutes, resulting in a kind of "Lone Wolf Digest", as disparate plots are combined into a rather loose whole. Some drastic changes are made to fit the story into feature length, the most audacious being the ending, which is the complete opposite of the conclusion of the manga and the television series.

Though the film is plagued by lacklustre cinematography and an overall rather prosaic approach to both storytelling and style, it benefits from the presence of some excellent actors. Doubtlessly the most eye-catching feature here is the casting of Tomisaburo Wakayama in the role of Retsudo. Exactly why Wakayama accepted to return to the *Lone Wolf* universe after his very militant and abrupt departure fifteen years earlier remains a guess. Perhaps his bitterness had passed with time, perhaps he approved of Takahashi's rendition of the character, perhaps he accepted the fact that his *Baby Cart* performance wasn't seen as the definitive Ogami as he once believed it to be, or perhaps he simply needed the money. Whatever his reasons, his presence adds a lot of interest to the film, as does the casting of the stunning Meiko Kaji in the role of yakuza leader Torizo, and also famed female impersonator Peter – of Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), Toshio Matsumoto's New Wave milestone *Funeral Parade of Roses* (*Bara no soretsu*, 1969), and Kenji Misumi's last *Zatoichi* film *Zatoichi at the Fire Festival* (*Zatoichi abare himatsuri*, 1971). Credited here under his real name Shinnosuke Ikehata, he plays one of the Kurokuwa ninja and gets to act in two different female disguises, one an old crone and the other a princess. And even though Koji Aeba is hardly the most memorable Daigoro, the impressive Takahashi makes for a fine Itto Ogami.

Lone Wolf for housewives

Not quite so suited to the role was Masakazu Tamura, who played the former executioner four years later in *Lone Wolf and Cub: The Final Conflict* (*Kozure okami: Sono chisaki te ni*, sometimes also referred to as *Handful of Sand*). *Final Conflict* is a rather fascinating addition to the *Lone Wolf* canon, though not a successful one. Originated by Kazuo Koike himself and produced by his company, the film was directed by Akira Inoue, who was Kenji Misumi's assistant director in the early 1960s, and scripted by Tsutomu Nakamura, who wrote the screenplays of *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons* and *White Heaven in Hell*. The film was distributed theatrically by Shochiku in early 1993, banking on the presence of TV celebrity Tamura and the mouth-watering casting coup of Tatsuya Nakadai in the role of Retsudo Yagyu.

As an attempt to drastically rethink the source material, *Final Conflict* often feels like a breath of fresh air. Characters' appearances are completely altered from their manga counterparts (neither white hair nor beard for Retsudo), relationships are drastically revised (the Bentenrai, a.k.a. the Gods of Death from *River Styx*, are Retsudo's sons, while Kurando and Bizen are his brothers) and events unfold differently (Azami is killed by Bizen's men in front of Ogami). Most astonishingly, Daigoro is old enough to walk, resulting in the absence of the baby cart altogether.

Such details are often amusing and overall quite refreshing, but the most fundamental change is unfortunately also the most misguided. *Final Conflict* is an attempt to humanise the story of Ogami and Daigoro, retelling it from a presumed humanist standpoint instead of a critical one. Retsudo isn't an omnipotent schemer, but a bureaucrat put upon by the government hierarchy. Daigoro joins his father on his quest not because he chooses the sword over the ball, but because Ogami can't bring himself to send the infant to join his dead mother: the former executioner cries as he holds a knife to the boy's throat, then gives up.

This sounds like a novel and noble enough decision on the part of its creators, but *Final Conflict* fails precisely because of this new direction. The very existence of Ogami and Daigoro as fugitives from the shogunate can only work because the two give up their humanity and live by an entirely different

The Curse of Daigoro

Although at the end of the manga he is the last person standing when the dust of the Ogami-Retsudo battle has settled, in real life Daigoro met with a more tragic fate. In their adult lives, both Akihiro Tomikawa, who played the boy in the *Baby Cart* films, and Kazutaka Nishikawa, who played him in the first two seasons of the television series, would have dramatic run-ins with the law.

In October 2000, Nishikawa, then 33 years old, was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and theft. Together with an accomplice, the owner of a Mahjong parlor, Nishikawa had strangled 56-year-old Yukio Sato with an electrical cord, dumped the body in a forest, and stolen 5 million yen from the victim's safe. Nishikawa fled to Thailand after the crime, but he was arrested in Bangkok and tried in a district court in Shirone in Japan's Niigata prefecture, the same town where the former child star had been serving on the Municipal General Assembly since 1995. His lawyer made an attempt to plea in his favour by

set of rules, in which one will sacrifice the other in an instant if need be. By ignoring this, the foundation is pulled out from under the story.

Even worse, Inoue confuses “human” with “melodramatic”. What was probably meant as a humanistic take more often than not ends up politically correct or sentimental or both. Violins swell on the soundtrack as soft focus shots are meant to communicate the warmth and happiness of the Ogami household. Dramatic moments are shot in clichéd slow motion. The opening scene sees Ogami executing an anonymous *daimyo* lord, not a child as in the manga and in *Sword of Vengeance*. En route, Ogami even delivers a baby at one point, which he follows with a long monologue about the eternity of the father-son bond. He even goes picking flowers with Daigoro. As for criticism of *bushido*, don't ask.

All of this fails because it topples the very basis upon which *Lone Wolf and Cub* is built. The material didn't need humanising in the first place, because the original was no less human for its extremes. In the *Baby Cart* films, the stern attitude of Wakayama's Ogami made the rare moments of tenderness all the more resonant. In *Final Conflict* it is layered on with a trowel and becomes ridiculous: the film is a gutless, sentimental, overwrought samurai melodrama. With a strictly drama-school performance by the miscast Tamura, *Final Conflict* is a *Lone Wolf and Cub* for the middle-aged housewife demographic.

Resurrection of the Lone Wolf

Itto Ogami returned to the small screen ten years later, in a new ten-part series launched in late 2002 on TV Asahi. With a protagonist solidly played by Kinya Kitaoji – with Tsubasa Kobayashi as Daigoro and Isao Natsuyagi as Retsudo – Ogami’s adventures were inevitably truncated, making the series, despite dynamic action scenes and a number of high-profile guest stars (including the star of 2004’s *Cutie Honey* Eriko Sato, as well as Yoichi Hayashi, who played Gunbei Yagyu in *Baby Cart in Peril*), not the most memorable *Lone Wolf* adaptation.

On the whole the post-*Baby Cart* incarnations of *Lone Wolf* and *Cub* can be said to be fairly middling in their results. Although each has its own distinct approach and all have at least something going for them, none of the later versions offer the pure joy and exhilaration, the audacity or the challenging subject matter of the *Baby Cart* films. That the original six films are lost in oblivion in Japan while the more mediocre incarnations have stuck in people’s memories is a form of injustice, but one that is largely compensated by the continuing popularity of the *Baby Cart* series abroad.

arguing that Nishikawa “lacked normal social common sense” because he had been spoiled by the entertainment industry in his youth.

Five years later it was Akihiro Tomikawa who broke the law when he tried to smuggle a gun and ammunition into Japan. Arrested at the airport of Osaka and sentenced to three years in jail, 36-year-old Tomikawa had gone to procure the weapon for a young woman, a student from Nagoya who said she planned to use it to commit suicide. He had gone to buy the weapon in Thailand.

2. Bastard Cub: Shogun Assassin

There can be little doubt that the *Baby Cart* films owe a large part of their enduring popularity in the West to their Americanised bastard offspring *Shogun Assassin* (1980). For many fans, this re-cut, repackaged and re-scored version of *Baby Cart at the River Styx* – with a dash of *Sword of Vengeance* thrown in – was their first encounter with the series. To some it was even the start of a fascination with Japanese film.

Rendered all the more titillating as one of the forbidden fruits of Britain's early-1980s video nasties scare, *Shogun Assassin* was and remains a sublime piece of entertainment, westernised with a remarkable care that made it so much more than just another re-dubbed martial arts actioner for the grindhouse crowd. Even with the *Baby Cart* series widely available for years, *Shogun Assassin* hasn't lost its appeal, let alone faded away or been rendered obsolete, popping up in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* or sampled by GZA/Genius of the Wu-Tang Clan.

In a way its stamina and quality defy the odds. The history of Japanese films dubbed and re-edited for the Western market contains its share of embarrassments, but even where such surrogate versions have their legions of fans – be it *Godzilla* (1954), *King of the Monsters* (1956) and its trail of giant monster movies and Toho fantasy films, or the bone-crushing adventures of Sonny Chiba – these were without exception inferior to the originals, nostalgia notwithstanding. *Shogun Assassin* on the other hand can so proudly stand in its father's shadow that if someone were forced to choose to see only one of the *Baby Cart* films, he or she wouldn't go wrong to watch *Shogun Assassin*.

From 42nd Street with love

The *Baby Cart* series already made it to American cinema screens as early as the mid-1970s. In Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, theaters like the Toho La Brea, the Kokusai, and the Kabuki showed Japanese films to the expatriate community and anyone else who happened to wander in, most likely in search of martial arts movies. Among the latter were David Weisman and Robert Houston. Weisman was a former journeyman graphic designer who had worked alongside Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Otto Preminger and who

David Weisman & Peter Shanaberg present a Toho Company-Katsu Production

Meet the greatest team in the history of mass slaughter.



Sword & Sorcery... with a vengeance.

Starring Tomisaburo Wakayama as Lone Wolf - Music by Mark Lindsay & W. Michael Lewis
Screenplay by Robert Houston - David Weisman - Kazuo Koike - Exec. Producer, Peter Shanaberg
Original Version Produced by Shintaro Katsu & Hisaharu Matsubara - Directed by Kenji Misumi
American Version Produced by David Weisman - Edited by Lee Percy - Directed by Robert Houston

Also Starring Kayo Matsuzaki as The Supreme Ninja & Masahiro Tomikawa as Daigoro - Photographed by Chishi Makuro
Associate Producers Larry Francisco, Michael Makella, Albert Ellis Jr., Joseph Ellis - Creative Consultants Igor Dimovici & Nelson Lyon

WARNING: This film contains scenes depicting graphic violence which may be considered shocking.

A New World Pictures Release

MPAA R RESTRICTED UNDER 17 REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN

DD DOLBY DIGITAL

had made his directorial debut with 1972's *Ciao! Manhattan*, an avant-gardish feature starring Andy Warhol acolyte Edie Sedgwick. Houston was a young actor who had made his debut in Wes Craven's 1977 *The Hills Have Eyes*.

With James Clavell's novel *Shogun* riding high on bestseller lists and a TV mini-series in the works, interest in Japanese history was on the up and Weisman felt the time was right to give some of the films he had been seeing in Little Tokyo a wider canvas. With money loaned from a group of friends, he acquired the rights to *Baby Cart at the River Styx*, plus ten minutes of exposition from *Sword of Vengeance*, through Toho's L.A. office. With Houston as co-writer and director he set about fusing this material into something suitable for U.S. release.

What resulted was six months in the studio rearranging, editing, and dubbing, with a voice cast that included comedienne Sandra Bernhard, actor Marshall Efron (who had played opposite Robert De Niro in 1973's *Bang the Drum Slowly* and under George Lucas on 1971's *THX 1138*), prolific TV director Lamont Johnson and the staff of a nearby sushi bar for authentically Japanese grunts and yelps. Slabs of beef, vegetables and watermelons doubled as chopped torsos. Houston and Weisman also added their vocal talents, as did Mark Lindsay, the former lead singer of 1960s gimmick pop band Paul Revere & The Raiders, who also composed *Shogun Assassin's* John Carpenter-esque synth score with Michael Lewis. None of these people are credited for specific characters, so it's likely that everyone provided multiple voices. The exception is the most impressive one of all, seven-year-old Gibran Evans, the voice of Daigoro. Son of Jim Evans, the designer of *Shogun Assassin's* poster and logo, his entrancing tones dominate the film thanks to Houston and Weisman's choice to have Ogami's son narrate the film in voice-over.

Weisman and Houston sold the finished film for distribution to Roger Corman's company New World Pictures, who released it in the second half of 1980. That the title had to have the word "shogun" in it was by then obvious: its release coincided with the premiere of the TV mini-series based on James Clavell's novel (it was Nelson Lyon, director of the 1971 sex comedy *The Telephone Book*, on which Weisman worked, who added the "assassin"). Corman, in his memoirs *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and*

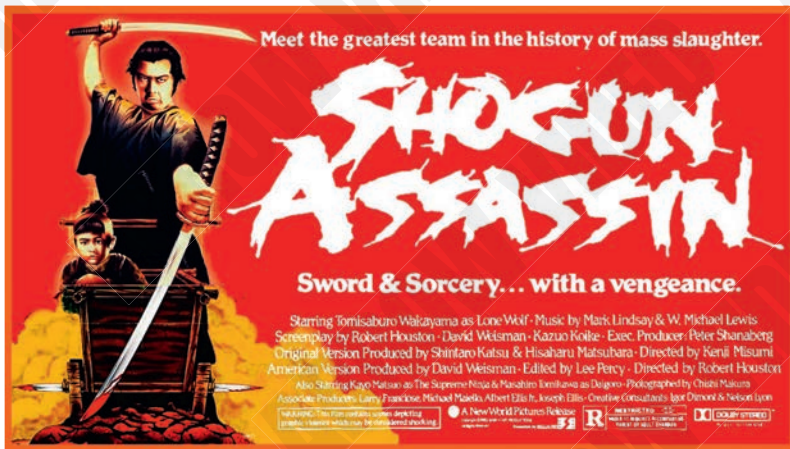
Never Lost a Dime, called it “a rather bizarre Japanese film” that he “decided rather whimsically to acquire”. Though for him it was a “surprise money maker”, Houston and Weisman later claimed they never saw a cent beyond their advance.

Released onto the then still flourishing grindhouse circuit epitomised by the run-down cinemas on New York’s 42nd Street and L.A.’s Hollywood Boulevard, the film made a splash that went far beyond the normal reception for an exploitation film. According to Houston, “people would leave the theater and get right back in line to see it again”. High profile American movie guide critic Leonard Maltin raved about it in such instantly quotable phrases as “brilliantly edited out of two different features”, “inordinate amounts of combat”, and “absolutely stunning visual ballet of violence and bloodletting”.

In Britain the film gained notoriety on video a few years later, its reputation only growing in later years after copies were seized by the police and the film became unavailable during the video nasties scare. Though it was never officially on the Public Prosecutor’s list of banned videos, it was one of the many titles that were quietly sacrificed to this decade-long, tabloid-fuelled paranoia.

In spades

Much of the achievement of *Shogun Assassin* is down to the decision to use *Baby Cart at the River Styx* as the source material. The iconic characters that populate the original film survive the transition without any problem, their otherworldliness only enhanced by being taken out of context. With its emphasis on style, the film also gave Weisman and Houston far less thematic and historical weight to contend with than some of the other episodes. *Shogun Assassin* logically does away with any of the film’s allusions to deeper meaning, focusing instead on inventing a simple but effective plot around the action scenes. What is left of Japaneseness is played up for its exotic qualities (some Japanese expressions are even sprinkled into the English dialogue), while any narrative gaps are covered up with Daigoro’s voice-over, which smoothly takes the viewer along for the ride, humanising the plight of the father and son protagonist for Western viewers.



There is also little to fault in the editing and reshuffling of the scenes. Moving *River Styx*'s final scene (Sayaka dropping her sword in sight of Ogami) to before the battle in the dunes and ending the film with the latter, for example, was a smart choice, closing the film on a suitably open-ended and resonant note with Daigoro looking back at one of the straw hats of the Bentenrai (here called Masters of Death) being blown away on the wind. Furthermore, the English dialogue contains some unexpectedly strong moments, such as when Daigoro keeps count of Ogami's victims so he knows how many souls to pray for.

That the directorial pair decided to emphasise the exotic, the enigmatic and the violent, points to another likely inspiration for *Shogun Assassin*: Alejandro Jodorowsky's classic midnight movie *El Topo* (1970), a western about a lone gunman and his infant son who travel across the desert, encountering a succession of outlandish villains. Equal parts mystical and cartoony, *El Topo* has exaggerated violence to spare, with blood flowing (though not spurting) copiously. Particularly in its English-dubbed form, the similarities between Jodorowsky's film and *Shogun Assassin* are striking.

Having to deliver the goods in the space of a single film, rather than an ongoing series, *Shogun Assassin* wisely focuses on entertainment value, which it offers in spades. That it survives the amputation of much of its thematic heart so well is a testament not just to the quality of the adaptation, but also to that of *Baby Cart at the River Styx* in the first place. What is most important, though, is that *Shogun Assassin* is not just a distillation, but something entirely new that exists in its own space, separate from its source material. There is the *Baby Cart* series and there is *Shogun Assassin*, still standing rather proudly beside it. This is something almost no other Asian film dubbed and repackaged for a Western market has ever managed to do and it is entirely thanks to the devotion of Robert Houston and David Weisman.

Denouement

After *Shogun Assassin*, its two creators went on to bigger things, both finding no less than Oscar glory on their paths. Weisman produced *Kiss of the Spider Woman* in 1985, which was nominated for Best Picture and won its lead actor William Hurt one of the coveted statuettes, while Robert

Houston collected one in person in 2005 for his documentary *Mighty Times: The Children's March*.

The two men contemplated giving another *Baby Cart* entry the makeover, but decided against it, feeling that the other episodes lent themselves much less to successful westernisation. Perhaps they were referring to *Lightning Swords of Death*, the first attempt to officially release one of Itto Ogami's adventures, in this case *Baby Cart to Hades*, in U.S. theatres. Shorn of six minutes and dubbed into English with rather less care than *Shogun Assassin*, it had been released in 1974, obviously in an effort to cash in on the kung fu craze that was then sweeping the nation. With silver screen pugilists from the four corners of the globe vying for Bruce Lee's crown in the wake of the Little Dragon's passing, Columbia Pictures decided to throw the samurai into the fray. The poster even carried the tagline: "Raise a Kung-fu fist against Ogami... and he'll chop it off!" In an ironic twist that shows just how strong the appeal of Houston and Weisman's effort continues to be, when *Lightning Swords of Death* later surfaced on DVD (under the nonsensical title *Lupine Wolf*) it was promoted as a sequel to *Shogun Assassin*.

The Samurai...
in his hands, flashing steel
becomes the ultimate
weapon of vengeance!

Raise a Kung-fu fist against Ogami...and he'll chop it off!

LIGHTNING SWORDS OF DEATH



COLUMBIA PICTURES Presents A KATSU Production In Cooperation With TOHO COMPANY LTD.
"LIGHTNING SWORDS OF DEATH" Starring TOMISABURO WAKAYAMA • GOH KATO • YUKO HAMA
Executive Producer SHINTARO KATSU • Original Story by KAZUO KOIKE • GOYU KOJIMA • Screenplay by
KAZUO KOIKE • Directed by KENJI MIYUMI • COLUMBIA PICTURES/A DIVISION OF COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC.



©1978 COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

7/78

"LIGHTNING SWORDS OF DEATH"

3. Endless road: The Lone Wolf legacy

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the impact and quality of any work of art can be measured by how many others it inspired. The *Lone Wolf and Cub* saga and the *Baby Cart* films have had no shortage of offshoots, tributes and imitations, both in Japan and abroad, in comic books as well as film. The template of the lone warrior with child pops up in the unlikeliest of places.

Kazuo Koike's own manga series on the continuing adventures of the fully-grown Daigoro is an official follow-up and therefore falls into a different category. And while Hiroaki Samura's *Blade of the Immortal* (and the 2016 Takashi Miike film based on it) shares certain characteristics, surely the biggest thing *Lone Wolf and Cub* has spawned within the manga world is Hiroshi Motomiya's hugely successful *Salaryman Kintaro*. Comic book, animated series, live action TV show, a feature film: there isn't a medium that *Salaryman Kintaro* hasn't conquered. The similarities with Koike's original idea are evident: the hero of the piece is a young, valiant office worker with a dark past, who single-handedly has to raise an infant son while battling corruption and injustice in the workplace. Kintaro (played on TV and in film by Katsunori Takahashi) is the reformed former leader of a biker gang, who works at the head office of the Yamato construction company. While fiercely loyal to the boss that gave him a second chance in life, he isn't averse to using his old strongarm tactics when there are wrongs that require righting.

If the blueprint is the same, the philosophies behind *Salaryman Kintaro* are quite a contrast with the defiant nature of *Lone Wolf*. Aimed at teenage boys, the original manga glorifies the values of Japan's post-war industrial society. If Popeye took a weight off many a mother's shoulders by teaching children to like spinach, *Salaryman Kintaro* forms a kind of propaganda for a life as office worker, glorifying the desk jockey as the morally upstanding cornerstone of society. Quite unlike Itto Ogami, Kintaro is a loyal retainer to a system that is presented as righteous and just, whose bad apples are crooked individual villains who take advantage of the system, rather than being products of it.

Kintaro made his big screen debut in 1999 in a film directed by Takashi Miike (released in the West as *White-Collar Worker Kintaro*). Two years prior, this

same director had made a film that also closely resembled *Lone Wolf*, a story about a Japanese hitman exiled in 1990s Taipei, who has to drag his young son around with him as he carries out his assassinations. *Rainy Dog* (*Gokudo kuroshakai: Reini doggu*, 1997) shares *Lone Wolf's* distrust of those in power, as the protagonist Yuji is first dumped by his own yakuza gang and then betrayed by the Taiwanese kingpin who hired his services. It also looks at the effect of violence on those that experience it, with Yuji's son observing his father's actions much like Daigoro observes Ogami. The tone of the film is one of sadness, though – a common trait of Miike's work that is all his own.

The influence of Itto Ogami can also be felt elsewhere in the world. Luc Besson's *Léon* (a.k.a. *The Professional*) from 1994 is another variation of the hitman-with-child premise, though one that presents the life of an assassin as something cool and exciting and which asks no questions about the impact of violence or the use of weapons. As soon as she takes a peek at Jean Reno's arsenal, Natalie Portman forgets all about her dead family and hopes that one day she will get to look cool waving guns around like her surrogate father Leon.

And while "influence" may be overstating the matter, John Hillcoat's Viggo Mortensen-starring *The Road* transposes the wandering-father-and-son survival template to a post-apocalyptic North American, albeit one adapted from Cormack McCarthy's novel rather than Koike and Kojima's manga.

Other filmmakers have been inspired by the manga and/or the films (*Shogun Assassin* included) for incidental scenes or characters. Note the very Bentenrai-like trio of Chinatown killers in John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986), or the interaction between a man and a child in a crisis situation during the spectacular finale of John Woo's *Hard Boiled* (1991), in which Chow Yun-fat tries to save a baby from a blazing fire and the couple only escape because the tyke douses the hero's flaming trouser leg by peeing on it.

Without doubt the most overt tribute to *Lone Wolf and Cub* yet made by non-Japanese artists is *Road to Perdition*, the graphic novel by Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Rayner. The influence is acknowledged in the comic book,

whose first episode opens with a quote from Koike's manga: "You must choose a road for yourself". Set in Prohibition-era America, it follows the travels of Michael O'Sullivan, a former mob enforcer on the run after his own gang murders his wife and one of his two sons. The other son, Michael Jr., accompanies him on his trip and much of the drama revolves around whether or not the boy will follow in his father's footsteps and embrace violence and death.

Collins' storyline (narrated *Shogun Assassin*-style by the boy) is closely modelled on Koike's manga; several characters and their relationships are clear equivalents. Not just in O'Sullivan and son's similarity to the two generations of Ogami, but also in the aging mob boss John Looney and his hotheaded son Connor, who are obvious references to Retsudo Yagyu and his offspring. Like Koike, Collins goes further up the hierarchical ladder, having Looney owe allegiance to Al Capone just as Retsudo does to shogun Ietsuna. Collins additionally weaves in historical fact, with Looney, Capone, and Eliot Ness making the transition directly from the history books. And the writer treats the codes, the loyalties, and the backroom dealings that shape the 1930s gangland as being remarkably similar to Koike's feudal Japan: the gangs are presented as the most powerful forces in the country, their influence going all the way to the highest levels, controlling daily life through corruption of the police, the banks, and the church.

Road to Perdition the movie (2002), directed by Sam Mendes, instead focuses more on the personal drama of the fugitive father and son. Tom Hanks looks as much unlike the comic book O'Sullivan as Tomisaburo Wakayama differed from the Ogami of the manga, but with such a family-friendly actor in the lead, a change of tone is inevitable: Michael Sullivan (the O' is dropped) is more family man than hitman and father-son bonding sessions verge on the melodramatic. The film contains an anti-violence message which it fails to pull off properly for two reasons: firstly because it treats Michael Jr. as an automaton, who becomes violent almost immediately after witnessing his father at work, and secondly because it overly humanises and sympathises its gangster characters. John Rooney (instead of Looney) is a gentle old codger played with deep underlying melancholy by Paul Newman and Al Capone's lieutenant Frank Nitti (Stanley Tucci) is downright likeable. Like

Salaryman Kintaro, the film version of *Road to Perdition* isolates the evil and violence in a few rotten eggs (Daniel Craig as Connor Rooney and the assassin Maguire played by Jude Law), instead of portraying the world that spawned them as inherently rotten. In trying to manipulate audience emotions by keeping the hands of most of the characters clean, the film becomes a sanitised melodrama.

In addition to tributes and imitations, *Lone Wolf and Cub* has also had official western offshoots, notably the Dark Horse comic book series *Lone Wolf 2100* written by Mike Kennedy and drawn by Francisco Ruiz Velasco, which transposes the action to a post-apocalyptic sci-fi setting. Supervised (from afar) by Kazuo Koike, this American production follows the story of a man named Itto and a girl named Daisy who are fleeing the minions of a powerful pharmaceutical corporation. A tribute in name, the similarities with the original manga never move beyond the superficial.

And then, of course, there remains the long-rumored American live action film adaptation of *Lone Wolf and Cub*. This project was at first to be directed by Darren Aronofsky, of *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) and *The Wrestler* (2008) fame – a dynamic enough filmmaker whose style is largely inspired by Japanese cinema, in particular the works of Shinya Tsukamoto (1989's *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*) and such anime as *Perfect Blue* (1997). Announced for ages, the project remained very much tentative due to problems with rights clearance, even while Japan's "Gross National Cool" became the toast of Tinseltown in the wake of *The Last Samurai*, *Kill Bill*, and *Lost in Translation* (2003). Later reports had the project tied to *Fast & Furious* director Justin Lin before it seemed to peter out. However, a June 2016 article in *Variety* announced that Hollywood production house SP International Pictures, the company behind the controversial 2017 U.S. live-action remake of *Ghost in the Shell*, had acquired remake and sequel rights from Kazuo Koike's company. The report specified that the rights in question were actually for the 1993 film starring Masakazu Tamura, *Final Conflict*. A year later, though, *The Hollywood Reporter* revealed that the earlier Justin Lin project was still very much alive and being developed at Paramount, thus resulting in two American *Lone Wolf and Cub* films in the works concurrently. With these developments taking on dimensions of a soap opera, it remains to be seen

whether either U.S. version will be a fitting end to the as yet ongoing saga of *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

Credits

1. **Sword of Vengeance**

Kozure okami: Ko o kashi ude kashi tsukamatsuru

[tr: “Wolf with child: child for hire, expertise for hire”]

Japanese release: January 15, 1972

85 minutes

Director: Kenji MISUMI

Producers: Shintaro KATSU, Hisaharu MATSUBARA

Screenplay: Kazuo KOIKE

Original Story: Kazuo KOIKE, Goseki KOJIMA

Director of Photography: Chishi MAKIURA

Editing: Toshio TANIGUCHI

Music: Hideaki SAKURAI

Art Director: Akira NAITO

Fight choreography: Eiichi KUSUMOTO

Costume designer: Yoshio UENO

Assistant Director: Mitsuaki TSUJI

Production company: Katsu Production

Distribution: Toho

Cast:

Itto Ogami: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

Daigoro: Akihiro TOMIKAWA

Retsudo Yagyū: Yunosuke ITO

Bizen Yagyū: Fumio WATANABE

Kurando Yagyū: Shigeru TSUYUGUCHI

Osen: Tomoko MAYAMA

Sugito: Asao UCHIDA

Aid to young lord: Yoshi KATO

Young lord: Yutaka NAKAMURA

Azami: Yoshiko FUJITA

Narrator: Shoji KOBAYASHI

Adapted from episodes 1, 4, 8, 9 and 17 of the manga.

2. **Baby Cart at the River Styx**

Kozure okami: Sanzu no kawa no ubaguruma

[tr: "Wolf with child: perambulator of the Sanzu river"]

Original release date: April 22, 1972

85 minutes

Director: Kenji MISUMI

Producers: Shintaro KATSU, Hisaharu MATSUBARA

Screenplay: Kazuo KOIKE

Original story: Kazuo KOIKE, Goseki KOJIMA

Director of photography: Chishi MAKIURA

Editing: Toshio TANIGUCHI

Music: Hideaki SAKURAI

Art director: Akira NAITO

Fight choreography: Eiichi KUSUMOTO

Costumes: Yoshio UENO

Assistant director: Senro KOBAYASHI

Production company: Katsu Production

Distribution: Toho

Cast:

Itto Ogami: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

Daigoro: Akihiro TOMIKAWA

Sayaka Yagyū: Kayo MATSUO

Ozunu Kurokuwa: Akiji KOBAYASHI

Benma Hidari: Minoru OKI

Tenma Hidari: Shogen NITTA

Kuruma Hidari: Shin KISHIDA

Akashi Yagyū warriors: Michi AZUMA, Izumi AYUKAWA,

Reiko KASAHARA, Yuriko MISHIMA, Maki MIZUHARA,

Yukari WAKAYAMA, Ima MASAKIRI, Hinode NISHIKAWA

Adapted from episodes 3, 4, 7, 15, 33, 37 and 47 of the manga.

3. **Baby Cart to Hades**

Kozure okami: Shi ni kaze ni mukau ubaguruma
[tr: “Wolf with child: perambulator in wind and death”]

Original release date: September 2, 1972

89 minutes

Director: Kenji MISUMI

Producers: Shintaro KATSU, Hisaharu MATSUBARA

Screenplay: Kazuo KOIKE

Original story: Kazuo KOIKE, Goseki KOJIMA

Director of photography: Chishi MAKIURA

Editing: Toshio TANIGUCHI

Music: Hideaki SAKURAI

Theme song performed by Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

(lyrics: Kazuo KOIKE, music: Hiroshi KAMAYATSU,
arrangement: Masahiko AOI)

Art director: Yoshinobu NISHIOKA

Fight choreography: Eiichi KUSUMOTO

Costume designer: Yoshio UENO

Assistant director: Toshihiro NABE

Production company: Katsu Production

Distribution: Toho

Cast:

Itto Ogami: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

Daigoro: Akihiro TOMIKAWA

Kanbei: Go KATO

Torizo: Yuko HAMA

Genba Sawatari: Isao YAMAGATA

Itakura: Michitaro MIZUSHIMA

Omatsu: Sayoko KATO

Tatewaki Miura: Jun HAMAMURA

Kuchiki: Daigo KUSANO

Samon: Toshiya WAZAKI

Adapted from episodes 2, 18, 32, 46, 47 and 50 of the manga

4. **Baby Cart in Peril**

Kozure okami: Oya no kokoro ko no kokoro

[tr: "Wolf with child: heart of the parent, heart of the child"]

Original release date: December 30, 1972

108 minutes

Director: Buichi SAITO

Producers: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA, Hisaharu MATSUBARA

Screenplay: Kazuo KOIKE

Original story: Kazuo KOIKE, Goseki KOJIMA

Director of photography: Kazuo MIYAGAWA

Editing: Toshio TANIGUCHI

Music: Hideaki SAKURAI

Art director: Narinori SHIMOISHIZAKI

Fight choreography: Eiichi KUSUMOTO

Tattoo artist: Seiji MORI

Assistant director: Haruo UEDA

Production company: Katsu Production

Distribution: Toho

Cast:

Itto Ogami Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

Daigoro: Akihiro TOMIKAWA

Gunbei Yagyu: Yoichi HAYASHI

Oyuki: Michi AZUMA

Jindayu Gomune: So YAMAMURA

Lord Owari: Asao KOIKE

Retsudo Yagyu: Tatsuo ENDO

Enki Kozuka: Shin KISHIDA

Tattoo artist: Asao UCHIDA

Adapted from episodes 13, 22, 23, 24, 34, 42, 53 and 95 of the manga

5. **Baby Cart in the Land of Demons**

Kozure okami: Meifumado

[tr: “Wolf with child: road to hell”]

Original release date: August 11, 1973

90 minutes

Director: Kenji MISUMI

Producers: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA, Masanori SANADA

Screenplay: Kazuo KOIKE, Tsutomu NAKAMURA

Original story: Kazuo KOIKE, Goseki KOJIMA

Director of photography: Fujio MORITA

Editing: Toshio TANIGUCHI

Music: Hideaki SAKURAI

Art direction: Narinori SHIMOISHIZAKA

Fight choreography: Eiichi KUSUMOTO

Costume design: Kazuo MATSUDA

Colour technician: Mikio TAKEUCHI

Assistant director: Umeo NANNO

Production company: Katsu Production

Distribution: Toho

Cast:

Itto Ogami: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

Daigoro: Akihiro TOMIKAWA

Shiranui: Michiyo YASUDA (a.k.a. Michiyo OKUSU)

Wakita: Eiji OKADA

Retsudo Yagyū: Minoru OKI

Quick-Change Oyo: Tomomi SATO

Abbott Jikei: Akira YAMAUCHI

Kanbei Sazare: Shingo YAMASHIRO

Lord Kuroda: Yoshi KATO

Adapted from episodes 2, 13, 21, 38, 47, 57, 71 and 73 of the manga

6. **White Heaven in Hell**

Kozure okami: Jigoku e iku zo! Daigoro

[tr: “Wolf with child: we’re off to hell, Daigoro!”]

Japanese release: April 24, 1974

84 minutes

Director: Yoshiyuki KURODA

Producers: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA, Masanori SANADA

Screenplay: Tsutomu NAKAMURA

Original story: Kazuo KOIKE, Goseki KOJIMA

Director of photography: Chishi MAKIURA

Editing: Toshio TANIGUCHI

Music: Kunihiko MURAI

Art direction: Akira NAITO

Fight choreography: Eiichi KUSUMOTO

Costume design: Yasutada KAN

Assistant director: Yoji OGURA

Production company: Katsu Production

Distribution: Toho

Cast:

Itto Ogami: Tomisaburo WAKAYAMA

Daigoro: Akihiro TOMIKAWA

Kaori Yagyu: Junko HITOMI

Retsudo Yagyu: Minoru OKI

Hyohei: Isao KIMURA

Mujo: Daigo KUSANO

Muga: Jiro MIYAGUCHI

Mumon: Renji ISHIBASHI

Azusa: Chie KOBAYASHI

Adapted from episodes 54, 64, 67, 76, 77, 79, 80, 85 and 88 of the manga

Bibliography

- Arduini, Fabrice and Denis Brusseaux, *La légende de Zatoichi: Voyage en enfer*. Paris: Wild Side Video, 2004
- Bare Buehrer, Beverly, *Japanese Films: A Filmography and Commentary, 1921 – 1989*. London: St. James Press, 1990
- Brewster, Francis, Harvey Fenton and Marc Morris, *Shock! Horror! Astounding Artwork from the Video Nasty Era*. Godalming: FAB Press, 2005
- Brusseaux, Denis and Fabrice Arduini, *La trilogie du sabre: Kenji Misumi*. Paris: Wild Side Video, 2005
- Buruma, Ian, *A Japanese Mirror: Heroes and Villains of Japanese Culture*. London: Orion Publishing, 2001
- Clements, Jonathan and Motoko Tamamura, *The Dorama Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese TV Drama since 1953*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2004
- Collins, Max Allan and Richard Piers Rayner, *Road to Perdition*. New York: Paradox Press, 1998
- Corman, Roger, with Jim Jerome, *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime*. London: Muller, 1990
- Desjardins, Chris, *Outlaw Masters of Japanese Film*. London, New York: IB Tauris, 2005
- Desjardins, Chris, *Gun and Sword: An Encyclopedia of Japanese Gangster Film 1955-1980*. Poison Fang Books, 2013
- Frédéric, Louis, *Les dieux du Bouddhisme: Guide iconographique*. Paris: Flammarion, 2001
- Friday, Karl F., *Hired Swords, The Rise of Private Warrior Power in Early Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992
- Galloway, Patrick, *Stray Dogs & Lone Wolves: The Samurai Film Handbook*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2005
- Groensteen, Thierry, *l'Univers des mangas: une introduction à la bande dessinée japonaise*. Tournai: Casterman, 1991
- Horn, Carl Gustav, "The Return of Lone Wolf & Cub", in *Pulp*, Vol. 4, Issue 9. San Francisco: Viz, September 2000
- Jacoby, Alexander, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2008
- Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 1: The Assassin's Road*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2000

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 2: The Gateless Barrier*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2000

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 3: The Flute of the Fallen Tiger*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2000

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 4: The Bell Warden*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2000

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 5: Black Wind*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 6: Lanterns for the Dead*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 7: Cloud Dragon, Wind Tiger*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 8: Chains of Death*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 9: Echo of the Assassin*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 10: Hostage Child*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 11: Talisman of Hades*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 12: Shattered Stones*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 13: The Moon in the East, the Sun in the West*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 14: Day of the Demons*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 15: Brothers of the Grass*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 16: Gateway into Winter*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2001

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 17: The Will of the Fang*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 18: Twilight of the Kurokawa*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 19: The Moon in Our Hearts*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 20: A Taste of Poison*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 21: Fragrance of Death*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 22: Heaven and Earth*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 23: Tears of Ice*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 24: In These Small Hands*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 25: Perhaps in Death*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 26: Struggle in the Dark*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 27: Battle's Eve*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Koike, Kazuo and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub, Volume 28: The Lotus Throne*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2002

Macias, Patrick, "Samurai & Son", in *Pulp*, Vol. 4, Issue 9. San Francisco: Viz, September 2000

Maltin, Leonard, *Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2004*. New York: Signet, 2003

Mes, Tom, *Agitator: The Cinema of Takashi Miike*. Godalming: FAB Press, 2003

Mes, Tom, *Re-Agitator: A Decade of Writing on Takashi Miike*. Godalming: FAB Press, 2013

Mes, Tom and Jasper Sharp, *The Midnight Eye Guide to New Japanese Film*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2004

Mes, Tom, *Unchained Melody: The Films of Meiko Kaji*. Shenley: Arrow Books, 2017

Meyvis, Ludo and Willy VandeWalle, *Japan: het onvoltooide experiment*. Tiel: Uitgeverij Lannoo, 1989

Mishima, Yukio, *Hagakure nyumon*. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1983

Mishima, Yukio, *Martyre précédé de Ken*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997

Miyao, Daisuke, *The Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Japanese Cinema*. Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2013

Murdoch, James, *A History of Japan, Volume II*. London: Routledge, 1996

Nogueira, Rui, *Le cinéma selon Jean-Pierre Melville*. Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile / Cahiers du cinéma, 1996

Novielli, Maria Roberta, *Storia del cinema giapponese*. Venice: Marsilio, 2001

Nozawa, Kazuma, *Ken: Misumi Kenji no yoen naru eizobi*. Tokyo: Yotsuya Round, 1998

Richie, Donald, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, Revised edition. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005

Sato, Tadao, *Le cinéma japonais, Tome II*, Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1997

Schilling, Mark, *The Yakuza Movie Book: A Guide to Japanese Gangster Films*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2003

Schodt, Frederick, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983

Sharp, Jasper, *Behind the Pink Curtain*. Godalming: FAB Press, 2008

Silver, Alain, *The Samurai Film*. Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1983

Tessier, Max, *Images du cinéma japonais*. Paris: Éditions Henri Vergier, 1990

Tessier, Max, *Le cinéma japonais: une introduction*. Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1997

Whitney Hall, John (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 4: Early Modern Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991

Yamamoto, Tsunetomo, *Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2000

Online sources

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/AJ201309120047

<http://www.allcinema.net>

<http://www.animeigo.com/SamLiner/LWCLINER.t>

<http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2013-05-30/justin-lin-continues-script-work-on-lone-wolf-and-cub>

<http://www.darkhorse.com/>

<http://www.furyu.com/archives/issue9/jubei.html>

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/lone-wolf-cub-movie-remake-coming-paramount-1048107>

<http://homepage1.nifty.com/edonokuroneko/director/misumi.htm>

<http://www.jmdb.ne.jp>
<http://www.koikekazuo.jp>
<http://www.koike-shoin.co.jp/>
<http://www.mangajima.com/manga/dossiers/lonewolf/lonemenu.htm>
<http://www.midnighteye.com>
http://news.ncmonline.com/news/view_article.html?article_id=951264300ba52b16e7f240422d4770eo
<http://www.raizofan.net/>
<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/news/nno2-2005/nn20050209a8.htm>
http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/04/30/last_samurai.html
<http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/kozurefinal/index2.html>
<http://twtd.bluemountains.net.au/Rick/BCATRS72.htm>
<http://twtd.bluemountains.net.au/Rick/sov.htm>
<http://variety.com/2016/film/asia/manga-wolf-and-cub-set-for-remake-1201804811/>
http://www.yuushin.org/12_wakayama/04_01.html

Documentaries

Baby Cart: Lame d'un père, l'ame d'un sabre. Director: Robin Gatto.

Distribution: Wild Side Video, 2006

Kenji Misumi, Raizo Ichikawa: Au fil du sabre. Director: Robin Gatto.

Distribution: Wild Side Video, 2005

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Gerry Malir for providing the spark that eventually led to this book, and Francesco Simeoni and all at Arrow Films for making it a reality. I owe a debt of gratitude to Robin Gatto, for sharing his fascinating interviews with some of the surviving crewmembers of the *Baby Cart* series and for his fine documentaries on the subject, all of which were of great value in writing this book. The same thanks is due to Shunichi Nagasaki and to Cyril Descans, who unearthed many a rare Kenji Misumi film and allowed me to explore the uncharted depths of a truly great filmmaker's oeuvre. Kuriko Sato was on hand whenever my grasp of the Japanese language proved insufficient.

About the Author

Tom Mes wrote *Unchained Melody: The Films of Meiko Kaji*, also published by Arrow Books. He is the author of several other widely praised volumes on Japanese film: *Agitator: The Cinema of Takashi Miike*, *Iron Man: The Cinema of Shinya Tsukamoto*, and *Re-Agitator: A Decade of Writing on Takashi Miike* (all published by FAB Press). He also co-wrote *The Midnight Eye Guide to New Japanese Film* (Stone Bridge Press) with Jasper Sharp, and *Tokyolife: Art and Design* (Rizzoli International). He was the co-founder and editor-in-chief of *MidnightEye.com*, which, during its fifteen-year run, was the foremost publication on Japanese cinema in the English language. His writings have appeared in *Film Comment*, *Sight and Sound*, *Fangoria*, and *Rue Morgue*, as well as in numerous countries' print media, including Japan, Hong Kong, Russia, Poland, Croatia, France, and Holland. He also regularly contributes audio commentaries and liner notes to Blu-ray and DVD releases of Japanese films worldwide.

Index

- Adachi, Masao, 30
Aeba, Koji, 118
Akai kageboshi, 13
Akasen chitai see *Street of Shame*, 35
Akira, 13, 35, 38, 39, 41, 46, 66, 76, 88, 93, 94, 102, 107, 118, 119, 135, 136, 139, 140
Ako-jo danzetsu see *Fall of Ako Castle, The*, 24
Albatross View, 12
Alone in the Pacific, 28
Along with Ghosts, 107
Ambitious, *The*, 114
American Beauty, 132
Aronofsky, Darren, 133
Art Theatre Guild (ATG), 27
Asataro garasu, 35, 48
Ayukawa, Izumi, 136
Azuma, Michi, 96, 99, 101, 136, 138
- Baby Cart at the River Styx*, 50, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 81, 96, 107, 110, 122, 124, 125, 127, 136
Baby Cart in Peril, 69, 75, 77, 84, 93, 94, 95, 96, 99, 101, 103, 170, 110, 116, 121, 138
Baby Cart in Purgatory, 55, 118
Baby Cart in the Land of Demons, 51, 101, 102, 105, 107, 109, 119, 139
Baby Cart to Hades, 50, 65, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 88, 93, 108, 116, 128, 137
Bacon, Francis, 20
Bad News Bears Go to Japan, The, 55
Bakuchi-uchi: Socho tobaku see *Big Time Gambling Boss*, 55
Bakumatsu see *Ambitious, The*, 114
Bakuto gaijin butai see *Sympathy for the Underdog*, 53
Band of Assassins, 54
Bando, Tsumasaburo, 32
Bang the Drum Slowly, 124
Bara no soretsu see *Funeral Parade of Roses*, 118
Battles Without Honour and Humanity, 29
Ben-Hur, 75

Benten, 73
Bernhard, Sandra, 124
Berry, John, 55
Besson, Luc, 131
Big Time Gambling Boss, 53, 54
Big Trouble in Little China, 131
Black Rain, 55
Black Snow, 29
Blade of the Immortal, 130
Bonnie and Clyde, 29
Bohachi bushido, 13
Bokko, 12
Buddha, 34, 37, 49, 107
bushido, 10, 16, 20, 21, 30, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 47, 59, 62, 63, 81, 82, 83, 84, 120

Capital, 14
Capone, Al, 132, 133
Carpenter, John, 124, 131
Ceremony, The, 14
Chang Cheh, 29
Checkmate, 55
Chiba, Sonny, 122
Chow Yun-Fat, 131
Chuji tabi nikki see *Diary of Chuji's Travels*, 86
Ciao! Manhattan, 124
Citizen Kane, 94
Clavell, James, 124
Collins, Max Allan, 131, 141
Columbia Pictures, 10, 128
Corman, Roger, 124, 141
Craven, Wes, 124
Crossroads, 96
Cruise, Tom, 47
Crying Freeman, 11
Cutie Honey, 121

Daibosatsu toge see *Satan's Sword and Sword of Doom*, 35, 42, 49

Daibutsu kaigan see *Saga of the Great Buddha*, 34

Daiei, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 46, 54, 66, 88, 93, 94, 107, 114

Daimajin, 50, 107

Daito, 33

Dark Horse Comics, 10, 141, 142, 143

Darkside Reborn see *Samurai Reincarnation*, 55

Daydream, 29

De Niro, Robert, 124

Destiny's Son, 39, 40, 41, 44, 49

Diary of Chuji's Travels, 86

Dojinki, 13

Douglas, Michael, 55

Dragon Quest, 12

Efron, Marshall, 124

Eigamura, 33

Eisenstein, Sergey, 68

Endo, Tatsuo, 98, 138

Enter the Dragon, 87

ero-guro, 118

Evans, Gibran, 124

Evans, Jim, 124

Fall of Ako Castle, The, 24

Fellini, Federico, 22

Female Prisoner Scorpion, 30, 60

First Comics, 9, 10

Fist of the North Star, 12

Flower of Carnage, 11

Fujita, Yoshiko, 60, 135

Fukasaku, Kinji, 24, 29, 30, 53, 55, 101

Funeral Parade of Roses, 118

Gate of Hell, The, 34, 35, 38

Gate of Youth, 55

Genji monogatari see *Tale of Genji, The*, 34
Ghost in the Shell, 133
Gibson, William, 10
Gishiki see *Ceremony, The*, 14
Godzilla, King of the Monsters, 122
Gokuaku bozu see *Wicked Priest*, 53
Gokudo, 54, 55, 131
Gokudo kuroshakai: Reini doggu see *Rainy Dog*, 131
Gokudo no chi: Iwashitare!, 55
Golgo, 13, 11
Gosha, Hideo, 24, 29, 39, 42
Goyokiba see *Hanzo the Razor*, 11, 46, 51
Goyokin, 42
Guns of Navarone, The, 37
GZA/Genius, 122

Hagakure, 20, 40, 82, 83, 143, 144
Hagiwara, Ryo, 24, 53
Hakujitsumu see *Daydream*, 29
Hama, Yuko, 81, 116, 137
Hamamura, Jun, 137
Handful of Sand see *Lone Wolf and Cub: The Final Conflict*, 119
Hanks, Tom, 132
Hanzo the Razor, 11, 46, 47, 55, 87, 93, 94, 101, 108
Hanzo the Razor: Sword of Justice, 51, 93
Hara, Tetsuo, 12
Harakiri, 40, 42, 59
Hard Boiled, 131
Hasegawa, Kazuo, 34
Hasegawa, Shin, 86
Hayashi, Yoichi, 98, 121, 138
Hills Have Eyes, The, 124
Hissatsu shikake-nin see *Sure Death*, 46, 101
Hitokiri see *Tenchu*, 42
Hitomi, Junko, 110, 140
Honda, Shozo, 39

Hongo, Kojiro, 37, 54
Horii, Yuji, 12
Horror of Malformed Men, The, 118
Houston, Robert, 122, 127, 128
How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime, 124, 141
Hung, Sammo, 53
Hurt, William, 127

Ichikawa, Jukai, 45
Ichikawa, Kon, 28, 94
Ichikawa, Kudanji, 45
Ichikawa, Raizo, 35, 37, 39, 40, 41, 44, 54, 145
Ikegami, Ryoichi, 11
Ikehata, Shinnosuke see Peter, 118
Ikehiro, Kazuo, 54, 107, 114
Imamura, Shohei, 27
Inagaki, Hiroshi, 24, 33
Inoue, Akira, 107, 119
Inoue, Noriyoshi, 11
Ishibashi, Renji, 108, 140
Ishihara Production, 28
Ishihara, Yujiro, 28
Ishii, Teruo, 118
Itami, Juzo, 33
Itami, Mansaku, 33
Ito, Daisuke, 39, 86, 114
Ito, Shunya, 30
Ito, Yunosuke, 60, 135

Jigokumon see *Gate of Hell, The*, 34
Jin, 12
Jingi naki tatakai see *Battles Without Honour and Humanity*, 29
Jinsei gekijo see *Theater of Life*, 55
Jo, Kenzaburo see Wakayama, Tomisaburo, 54
Jodorowsky, Alejandro, 127
Joiuchi see *Samurai Rebellion*, 42

Johnson, Lamont, 124
Joshu sasori see *Female Prisoner Scorpion*, 30
Jujiro see *Crossroads*, 34

Kaji, Meiko, 11, 30, 88, 118, 143
Kamayatsu, Hiroshi, 137
Kamimura, Kazuo, 11
Kamishibai, 12
Kan, Yasutada, 140
Kasahara, Reiko, 136
Kato, Go, 81, 137
Kato, Sayoko, 137
Kato, Tai, 53
Kato, Yoshi, 63, 135, 139
Katsu Production, 28, 46, 55, 93, 101, 111, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140,
Katsu, Shintaro, 6, 11, 28, 30, 35, 37, 46, 54, 87, 88, 93, 101, 107, 114, 135, 136, 137
Kawaite soro, 13
Ken, 40, 45, 49
Kenki see *Sword Devil*, 41, 49
Kennedy, Mike, 133
Kikuchi, Kan, 32, 34
Kill Bill, 11, 122, 133
Kimura, Isao, 24, 110, 140
Kineya, Katsutoji, 53
Kinugasa, Teinosuke, 34, 35, 88, 107
Kiru see *Destiny's Son*, 39
Kishida, Shin, 79, 96, 136, 138
Kiss of the Spider Woman, 127
Kitaoji, Kinya, 121
Kobayashi, Akiji, 136
Kobayashi, Akira, 93
Kobayashi, Chie, 110, 140
Kobayashi, Masaki, 39, 42
Kobayashi, Senro, 136
Kobayashi, Shoji, 63, 135
Kobayashi, Tsubasa, 121

Kogarashi Monjiro, 51, 101,
Kohata, Yasuo, 39
Koike, Asao, 98, 138
Koike, Kazuo, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 23, 24, 30, 46, 55, 62, 88, 103, 109, 111, 119, 130,
133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140,
Koike Kazuo Gekiga Sonjuku, 11
Koike Kazuo Juku, 11
Koike Shoin, 111
Kojima, Goseki, 6, 9, 12, 30, 55, 66, 110, 115, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143
Kozure okami: Kita kara minami, nishi kara higashi, 116
Kozure okami: Meifumado no shikaku-nin see *Lone Wolf and Cub: An Assassin
on the Road to Hell*, 118
Kozure okami: Sono chisaki te ni see *Lone Wolf and Cub: The Final Conflict*, 119
Kunisada, Chuji, 86
Kuroda, Yoshiyuki, 69, 107, 140
Kuroi yuki see *Black Snow*, 29
Kuroki, Kazuo, 27
Kurosawa, Akira, 13, 35, 39, 41, 94, 118
Kurutta ichipeiji see *Page of Madness, A*, 34
Kusano, Daigo, 108, 137, 140
Kusumoto, Eiichi, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140
Kyo, Machiko, 37
Kyofu kikei ningen see *Horror of Malformed Men, The*, 118

Lady Snowblood, 11
Last Laugh, The, 38
Last Samurai, The, 46, 47, 51, 105, 118, 133
Law, Jude, 133
Lee, Bruce, 128
Léon, 131
Letzte mann, Der, 38
Lewis, Michael, 124
Lightning Swords of Death, 50, 128
Lin, Justin, 133, 144
Lindsay, Mark, 124
Liu, Lucy, 11

Lone Wolf, 10, 13, 14, 111, 118, 119, 121, 130, 131
Lone Wolf 2100, 133
Lone Wolf and Cub, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 23, 24, 30, 45, 46, 55, 62, 63, 65, 66, 107, 111, 114, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 130, 131, 133, 134, 141, 142, 143
Lone Wolf and Cub: An Assassin on the Road to Hell, 118
Lone Wolf and Cub: The Final Conflict, 107, 116, 119
Lucas, George, 124
Lupin III, 9
Lupine Wolf, 50, 128
Lyon, Nelson, 124

MacArthur, Douglas, 33
Mad Bull 34, 11
Maiko to ansatsusha, 49, 54
Makai tensho see *Samurai Reincarnation*, 55
Makino, Masahiro, 33, 34
Makiura, Chishi, 35, 46, 66, 76, 94, 107, 135, 136, 137, 140
Maltin, Leonard, 125, 143
Manga Action, 9
Manual of Ninja Martial Arts, 14
Man who left his will on film, The, 14
Marvel Comics, 9
Marx, Karl, 14
Masakiri, Ima, 136
matatabi mono, 86
Matsubara, Hisaharu, 135, 136, 137, 138
Matsuda, Kazuo, 139
Matsuda, Yusaku, 55
Matsumoto, Toshio, 118
Matsuo, Kayo, 75, 136
Matsushima, Minoru, 114
Mayama, Tomoko, 63, 135
Mazinger Z, 11
Melville, Jean-Pierre, 94, 95, 144
Mendes, Sam, 132
Mifune, Toshiro, 28, 30, 114

Mighty Times: The Children's March, 128
Miike, Takashi, 130, 143, 147
Miller, Frank, 9
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 11
Mishima, Yukio, 40, 143
Mishima, Yuriko, 136
Misumi, Fukujiro, 32
Misumi, Kenji, 6, 11, 29, 30, 32, 34, 38, 40, 45, 47, 48, 53, 54, 55, 62, 63, 66, 86,
90, 93, 94, 101, 105, 107, 118, 119, 135, 136, 137, 139, 141, 145, 146
Miyagawa, Kazuo, 94, 95, 138
Miyaguchi, Jiro, 108, 140
Miyamoto, Musashi, 23, 114
Miyamoto Musashi, 39
Mizoguchi, Kenji, 35, 94
Mizuhara, Maki, 136
Mizushima, Michitaro, 137
Monkey Punch, 9
Mori, Hideki, 12
Mori, Kazuo, 38, 54
Mori, Seiji, 138
Morita, Fujio, 139
Motomiya, Hiroshi, 130
Mugen no junin see *Blade of the Immortal*, 130
Murai, Kunihiko, 108, 140
Murnau, Friedrich Wilhelm, 38
Mute Samurai, 51, 101

Nabe, Toshihiro, 137
Nagata, Masaichi, 34, 35, 54
Naito, Akira, 35, 38, 46, 66, 76, 88, 94, 107, 135, 136, 140
Nakadai, Tatsuya, 114, 119
Nakamura, Kinnosuke (see also *Yorozuya, Kinnosuke*), 6, 24, 28, 111, 114, 115
Nakamura, Tsutomu, 75, 103, 109, 119, 139, 140
Nakamura, Yutaka, 135
Nanatsu kao no Ginji, 34, 48
Nanno, Umeo, 139

Natsuyagi, Isao, 121
Nemuri Kyoshiro see *Sleepy Eyes of Death*, 35, 54
Nemuri Kyoshiro: Shobu see *Sleepy Eyes of Death 2: Sword of Adventure*, 41, 49
Ness, Eliot, 132
Newman, Paul, 132
New World Pictures, 124
Night and Fog in Japan, 14
Nihon no yoru to kiri see *Night and Fog in Japan*, 14
Nikkatsu, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 47, 93, 114
Ninja bugeicho see *Manual of Ninja Martial Arts*, 14
Ninjutsu Jiraiya, 53
ninkyo eiga, 29, 87
Nishijin no shimai see *Sisters of Nishijin*, 34
Nishikawa, Hinode, 136
Nishikawa, Kazutaka, 115
Nishimura, Ko, 116
Nishioka, Yoshinobu, 88, 137
Nitta, Shogen, 72, 136
NTV, 11, 114

Oboro junin-cho, 13
October, 68
Oda, Nobunaga, 14, 23
Oda Nobunaga, 13
Offered, 11
Ogura, Yoji, 140
Okada, Eiji, 139
Okami yo rakujitsu o kire see *Last Samurai, The*, 47, 51
Okamoto, Kihachi, 29, 39, 42
Okii, Minoru, 72, 102, 136, 139, 140
Okochi, Denjiro, 32, 34
Okusu, Michiyo see Yasuda, Michiyo, 139
Oktiabr see *October*, 68
Oshima, Nagisa, 14, 27
Oshizamurai Kiichi Hogan see *Mute Samurai*, 51, 101
Ota, Kichiya see Ichikawa, Raizo, 45

Ote see *Checkmate*, 55
Otomo, Katsuhiko, 9
Otoshiana see *Pitfall*, 27
Ozu, Yasujiro, 93

Page of Madness, A, 34, 38
Pasolini, Pier Paolo, 122
Paul Revere & The Raiders, 124
Peckinpah, Sam, 29
Penn, Arthur, 29
Peter, 118
Pitfall, 27
Popeye, 130
Portman, Natalie, 131
Preminger, Otto, 122
Professional, The see *Léon*, 131

Rainy Dog, 131
Rambling Guitarist, The, 93
Ran, 118
Ranma ½, 12
Rashomon, 35, 94
Rayner, Richard Piers, 131, 141
Red Army, 13
Reno, Jean, 131
Requiem for a Dream, 133
Road to Perdition (film), 132, 133
Road to Perdition (graphic novel), 131, 141
Roman Porno, 29
Ruiz Velasco, Francisco, 133

Saeki, Kiyoshi, 54
Saga of the Great Buddha, 34
Saito, Buichi, 55, 69, 93, 95, 99, 107, 116, 138
Saito, Mitsumasa, 114
Saito, Takao, 11

Sakamoto, Junji, 55
Sakamoto, Ryoma, 25, 114
Sakurai, Hideaki, 108, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139
Sakura no daimon, 51, 101
Salaryman Kintaro, 130, 133
Samaritan Zatoichi, 41, 50
Samura, Hiroaki, 130
Samurai see *Samurai Assassin*, 42
Samurai Assassin, 42
Samurai Executioner, 13
Samurai Film, The, 41, 141, 144
Samurai Rebellion, 42
Samurai Reincarnation, 55
Sanada, Masanori, 139, 140
Sanjuro, 40, 41
Satan's Sword, 35, 37, 38, 40, 49
Sato, Eriko, 121
Sato, Kei, 116
Sato, Tadao, 41, 144
Sato, Takumi, 116
Sato, Tomomi, 105, 139
Schodt, Fred, 12, 144
Scott, Ridley, 55
Secret Scrolls, 24
Sedgwick, Edie, 124
Seishun no mon see *Gate of Youth*, 55
Sekigahara (Battle of), 18, 25
Seppuku see *Harakiri*, 40, 42
Shaka see *Buddha*, 37, 49
Shaw Brothers, 29
Shibata, Renzaburo, 13, 39, 41
Shimoishizaki, Narinori, 138
Shimozawa, Kan, 86
Shindo, Kaneto, 34, 39
Shin Heike monogatari see *Tales of the Taira Clan*, 35
Shinko Kinema, 33, 34

Shin kozure okami see *Lone Wolf*, 12
Shinobi no mono see *Band of Assassins*, 54
Shinsengumi Chronicles, 49, 54
Shinsengumi shimatsuki see *Shinsengumi Chronicles*, 49, 54
Shinto, 27, 53, 54
Shirato, Sanpei, 14
Shochiku, 27, 33, 47, 119
Shogun, 124
Shogun Assassin, 6, 9, 122, 124, 125, 127, 128, 131, 132
Shogun's Joy of Torture, 118
Shogun's Samurai, 24
Shojo ga mita, 50, 54
Shura no hana see *Flower of Carnage*, 11
Shurayukihime see *Lady Snowblood*, 11
Silence de la mer, Le, 94
Silver, Alain, 41, 144
Sisters of Nishijin, 34
Sleepy Eyes of Death, 35, 54, 68
Sleepy Eyes of Death 2: Sword of Adventure, 41, 49
Sony, 10
SP International Pictures, 133
Spook Warfare, 107
Starky and Hutch, 46
Sterling, Bruce, 10
Suganuma, Kanji, 35, 68
Sure Death, 46, 51, 101
Sword Devil, 41, 44, 49,
Sword of Doom, 42

Sword of Vengeance, 31, 45, 50, 59, 60, 62, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 73, 75, 76, 77, 93,
94, 96, 99, 103, 120, 122, 124, 135
Sympathy for the Underdog, 53

Taiheiyo hitoribotchi see *Alone in the Pacific*, 28
Takahashi, Hideki, 47, 55, 118
Takahashi, Katsunori, 130

Takahashi, Koji, 116
Takahashi, Rumiko, 12
Takakura, Ken, 55
Takechi, Tetsuji, 29, 30
Takeuchi, Mikio, 139
Takeuchi, Yoshio see Ichikawa, Raizo, 45
Tale of Genji, The, 34
Tale of Zatoichi, The, 37, 49, 54
Tale of Zatoichi Continues, The, 54
Tales of the Taira Clan, 35
Tampopo, 33
Tamura, Masakazu, 119, 133
Tanaka, Tokuzo, 114, 118
Tanba, Tetsuro, 24
Tange Sazen: Hien iaigiri, 24
Tange Sazen: Kokezaru no tsubo, 34, 48
Taniguchi, Toshio, 66, 68, 69, 95, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140
Tarantino, Quentin, 11, 122
Tasaka, Masahiko, 107, 137
Telephone Book, The, 124
Tenchu, 42
Tenno no seiki, 46, 50
Teshigahara, Hiroshi, 27
Tessier, Max, 39, 78, 144
Tetsuo: The Iron Man, 133
Theater of Life, 55
Thurman, Uma, 11
THX 1138, 124
Toei, 27, 29, 30, 33, 35, 53, 54, 93, 144
Toho, 27, 28, 33, 111, 122, 124, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140
Tokaido obake dochu see *Along with Ghosts*, 107
Tokugawa, Hideyori, 18
Tokugawa, Iemitsu, 23
Tokugawa, Ietsuna, 23, 132
Tokugawa, Iyasu, 18, 19, 20, 23
Tokugawa onna keibatsushi see *Shogun's Joy of Torture*, 118

Tokugawa, Tsunayoshi, 23
Tokyo Olympiad, 94
Tokyo senso sengo hiwa see *Man Who Left His Will on Film*, *The*
Toland, Gregg, 94
Tomikawa, Akihiro, 60, 65, 98, 115, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140
Tomoeda, Toshinori, 35
Topo, El, 127
Tsubaki Sanjuro see *Sanjuro*, 40
Tsuji, Mitsuaki, 135
Tsukamoto, Shinya, 133, 147
Tsuyuguchi, Shigeru, 60, 135
Tucci, Stanley, 132

Uchida, Asao, 96, 135, 138
Uedo, Haruo, 138
Ueno, Yoshio, 135, 136, 137
Union Eiga, 111
U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, 13

Van Cleef, Lee, 116
Van Gogh, Vincent, 10

Wakamatsu, Koji, 30
Wakayama, Tomisaburo, 6, 27, 30, 46, 53, 65, 93, 111, 118, 132, 135, 136, 137, 138,
139, 140
Wakayama, Yukari, 136
Warhol, Andy, 124
Watanabe, Fumio, 60, 135
Wazaki, Toshiya, 137
Weisman, David, 122, 124, 125, 127, 128
Welles, Orson, 94
White-Collar Worker Kintaro see *Salaryman Kintaro*, 130
White Heaven in Hell, 24, 69, 73, 75, 107, 108, 111, 119, 140
Wicked Priest, 53, 54, 55, 93
Wild Bunch, The, 29
Wolverine, 9
Woo, John, 131

Wounded Man, 11
Wu-Tang Clan, 122

Yagyu bugeicho see *Secret Scrolls*, 24
Yagyu ichizoku no inbo see *Shogun's Samurai*, 24
Yagyu, Jubei, 23, 24
Yagyu, Munenori, 23, 55
Yagyu, Muneyoshi, 23
Yagyu, Retsudo, 9, 14, 23, 31, 55, 59, 63, 83, 98, 102, 107, 119, 132, 135, 138, 139, 140
Yagyu Shinkage-ryu, 23
Yagyu tabi nikki: Tenchi musoken, 24
Yamagata, Isao, 137
Yamamoto, Fujiko, 41
Yamamoto, Jocho, 20
Yamamoto, Tsunetomo see Yamamoto, Jocho, 21, 144
Yamamura, So, 99, 138
Yamashiro, Shingo, 139
Yamashita, Kosaku, 53, 54
Yamauchi, Akira, 102, 139
Yasuda, Kimiyoshi, 107
Yasuda, Michiyo, 103, 139
Yojimbo, 30, 40, 41, 94
Yokai daisenso see *Spook Warfare*, 107
Yokai Monsters, 107
Yorozuya, Kinnosuke (see also Nakamura, Kinnosuke), 6, 111, 114, 115
Yoshida, Yoshishige, 27
Yoshimura, Kozaburo, 34

Zatoichi, 6, 28, 32, 46, 88, 94, 101, 107, 111, 114, 118
Zatoichi abare himatsuri see *Zatoichi at the Fire Festival*, 46, 50, 118
Zatoichi and the Chess Expert, 49, 86
Zatoichi and the Chest of Gold, 54
Zatoichi at the Fire Festival, 46, 50, 118
Zatoichi kenka daiko see *Samaritan Zatoichi*, 41, 50
Zatoichi monogatari see *Tale of Zatoichi, The*, 37, 49, 51, 54
Zatoichi senryo kubi see *Zatoichi and the Chest of Gold*, 54
Zoku Zatoichi monogatari see *Tale of Zatoichi Continues, The*, 54

FATHER, SON, SWORD

THE LONE WOLF AND CUB SAGA

TOM MES

The gripping saga of former shogunate executioner Itto Ogami and his son Daigoro, better known as Lone Wolf and Cub. Betrayed and exiled by the treacherous Yagyu clan, they wander feudal Japan as assassins on the road to hell.

An epic, multi million-selling manga that spanned six years and nearly 9000 pages. A long-running television series that is one of the staples of Japanese broadcasting. And six ferocious, inimitable films that are among the best that Japanese cinema has to offer. More than 40 years after they were made, these films continue to fascinate and enthral viewers the world over.

Lone Wolf and Cub and the *Baby Cart* films are among the true classics of Japanese pop culture. Read and watched all across the globe, they inspired countless filmmakers, comic book artists, and writers, including Quentin Tarantino, Frank Miller, John Carpenter, John Woo, and Takashi Miike.

Written by Japanese film expert Tom Mes, *Father, Son, Sword* is the full story behind the films, the manga, and the phenomenon *Lone Wolf and Cub*.



ISBN 978-0-9933060-9-9



9 780993 306099

