

# MAFFAPA

# 42

JAN '93





Welcome to the 42nd issue of MAFFAPA, Martial Arts Film Fan (and Asian Culture) APA, for January 1993. Contributions were sent by the following people:

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The deadline for Maffapa 43 is April 30, 1993. If your name is not listed above as a contributor, you must contribute to the next issue to receive it. Your contribution, at least one page, much must reach Laurine White by the end of April. Minimum contribution is one page per issue or 2 pages every other issue. The copy count is 16. Please send 16 copies of each page plus \$1.50 to cover return postage. If you don't send 16 copies, send your original pages plus \$1 per page to cover copy costs. I prefer checks or stamps (\$1.50 minimum in stamps) instead of cash, which is dangerous to send through the mail. And don't forget a 9 x 12" self-addressed envelope, so I can send Maffapa 43 to you. I need \$1.50 minimum, because I have been losing at least 40¢ per copy that I send out, the last few issues. This apa costs more to produce than you know.



\*\*\*\*\*  
 Dave Barry Does Japan (Random House; \$18) in the author's new book. OK, you take a writer who is arguably the funniest writer in America and you send him to a country that is arguably the flattest weirdest country on Earth. This makes for 11 - no argument - hilarious chapters. (There are 12 chapters in the book, and the one that isn't hilarious shows that Barry is an even better writer than some of you may realize.) Barry explores Japanese culture, plastic squid, rock music, humor, baseball, and more, paying particular attention to the importance of having Random House pay for everything. Which is why Barry appears in a skillion newspapers and I'm playing around with my Tightwad Publisher Barbie. Or, as the Japanese might more genteelly put it:  
 "Yo, batter! Loudly make it fly!"  
 \*\*\*\*\*



Greetings from Hawaii -

MAFFAPA contribution from Jeffrey C.F. Wong, somewhere in Hawaii  
(from his letters)

DRAGON INN was great -- better than SWORDSMAN 2. But I agree with the INSIDE KUNG FU magazine critic that the ending left much to be desired in every respect. It's like the sweetest apple you ever ate until you take your last bite near the core - and find a worm.

During the week of finals in December, the Hawaii International Film Festival came to town. In theory, it is a 2-week event. But since this state is composed of a number of islands, the 2 weeks are split up among the islands. Fortunately, Oahu, the biggest tourist island and business center (and the one I am on), gets the majority of these films. But even then it comes down to one week of engagements and the films are split up all over the various (or should I say the few) theaters willing to participate. This year there is a huge number of films of main attraction coming out of China, Hong Kong and Japan. Also the Philippines, Australia, local Hawaiian films and a lot of Pacific/Asian films in origin. In fact, for the first time, a movie from Mongolia, and the first ever, a film about, by, and with the native dialect from the Japanese-ruled islands of Okinawa - PINEAPPLE TOURS (I saw it and loved it). I saw CAGEMAN [TAKEN FROM THE real lives of "cagemen" - some 100 single men living crammed together in an apartment in dog-like cages made of barbed wire and stacked in layers of three, this black comedy portrays the dilemma of Hong Kong citizens in the path of the country's economic growth and its drastic demand for housing] and it was a powerful film. I also sneaked into the theater and saw 15 minutes of the PRC HEARTSTRING before the guards caught me and kicked me out for not having a seat. That is a great film for the 15 minutes that I saw. I, like about 150 people who were told to go home after both theaters were filled up, didn't get to see Zhang Yi Mou's QUI JU GOES TO COURT. With his recent acceptance by the American foreign art movie crowd in JU DOU and RAISE THE RED LANTERN, I hope it will come around again.

THE LOVER, directed by Jean Jacques Annaud, of Marguerite Dura's autobiography when she was living in Vietnam in the 1920s and her affair with a local Chinese rich merchant's son, was probably the steamiest sexiest movie I have seen in a long time. Further, the sets are incredible; an old Vietnamese guy at the school said the sets are almost exact duplicates of what he remembered. A lot of research was done. A truly powerful film.

With the success of SWORDSMAN 2 and DRAGON INN, a stack of similar films has come out. Frankly, none of them cut it. THE ROYAL TRAMP 1 and 2, or the film version of Jin Yu's best-known novel, LU DING JI (literally, the Chronicle of Deer Urn), who also wrote the original novel which gave birth to the Swordsman films, simply didn't work. The special effect was contrived, and in spite of some very funny moments, it fell apart early on. THE HANDSOME SIBLING, yet another version of THE TWINS (both the old movie and the tv show), or THE FORCE OF BUDDHA'S PALM, the comicbook, which all come from the original novel by Gu Long (or, literally, penname Old Dragon), was decent at the start but after two-thirds of the movie, I guess the directors/script writers must have all decided to throw the script away and ad-lib everything. And further, the biggest discrepancy of these flying ghost and swordsman movies, the spotting of the wires which swing our actors across the screen, were just all over. This is an indication of lack of attention and carelessness. It has the same effect as seeing the



spitting flame of the rocket with a 90° turn upward bend near the tail of the flame, which is so typical of those bad 40s and 50s sci-fi flicks.

As for THE ZEN OF SWORD, the Taiwanese contribution to this recent trend - AVOID IT!

I finally saw OPERATION SCORPIO, which just showed up on the screen a couple of weeks ago. It really isn't that good. It took forever to take off. Where the potential for a great martial art match was there, the guy playing the bad guy is fantastic with his forms - and his flexibility and perfection in forms make Jean Claude Van Damme look like a wooden jointless puppet - it never made it because there is too much unnecessary wire works and too many corny jokes and not enough fighting. I was disappointed because there was so much potential.

Tsui Hark helped produce (not direct or anything) the live action version of MONSTER CITY, same as the animated title in Chinese: Yojitoshi. In English it is called THE WICKED CITY. Hopefully, this is not another bad live action theft of another Japanese manga/animation title. Yes, it is giving the proper credit to the original Japanese novelist. I don't know if that means quality, but I intend to find out when it is released this week.

I saw KID FROM TIBET, but it was lousy, and so I didn't tape it. I did like Yuen Biao's ICEMAN COMETH from awhile back. KID FROM TIBET is just another rehash of it. I liked HARDBOILED, but I didn't think it was John Woo's best. The hospital ending was spectacular, but somehow it was a bit too influenced by DIEHARD. I just feel that John Woo's films stand out too much to have that "influence" attachment to it. Incidentally, he just finished directing Van Damme's new movie (not the one that's playing now). I am not a Van Damme fan but I will be looking out for this one. It should be John Woo's last chance to redeem himself for an American production ever since that terrible movie, KING OF THE KICKBOXERS. Trivia - did you know John Woo directed Jackie Chan's movie which propelled him into stardom, SNAKE IN THE EAGLE'S SHADOW?

YOJITOSHI (Demon City) didn't have the sex, like the Japanese version, but it was a good SFX movie in its own right. I decided to skip by at the local theater, KING OF BEGGARS (although some fellows have said it was good) and MOON WARRIOR (directed by Sammo Hung). They are just another trend rider (sword flying SFX movies).

Just got the word that USA will be playing the original animated movie, JOHNNY'S GOLDEN QUEST (from Johnny Quest, of course) on March 14, 6/7 Central.



## CHINESE ANIMATION: MARRIAGE OF FOLK AND FINE ART

By David Ehrlich



FEELING FROM MOUNTAIN AND WATER

Unlike live-action films, which depend on dialogue for dramatic exposition, good animation may use only the dramatic power and visceral beauty of the moving image to communicate a story, a feeling, a mood, or an idea.

In China, where there is a long tradition of visual arts, many animated films have been created with remarkably strong story lines without resorting to dialogue. For decades, Chinese animators have been exploring and adapting traditional Chinese folk and fine arts to the moving image.

For instance, Te Wei, one of the founders of the Shanghai Animation Studio, was trained in both Western and Chinese classical painting techniques. He became one of China's greatest animators, adapting the very rigorous discipline of brush-painting on rice paper to animation. His *Feeling From Mountain and Water*, completed in 1988, took over five years of painstaking work.

Traditional brush-painting (*Ch'an* in China and *Sumi-e* in Japan) aims to express the spirit of both the artist and what is being depicted by the movement of the brush itself. Animation presented Te Wei with an exciting opportunity to show not just the completed strokes, but also a bit of the actual movement that produced those strokes.

Zhong Quan and Wang Gang's *The Flight of Wild Geese* displays a masterful brush-painting technique both reminiscent of and quite different from Te Wei's style. In *Wronged Cattle*, Zhong uses the cut-paper technique.

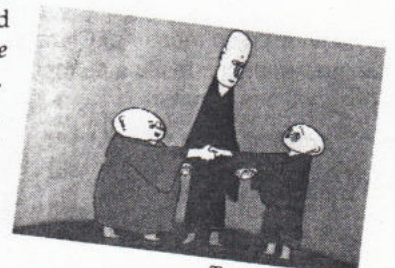
One of the great folk arts of the Chinese countryside is cut-paper design. Using long,

thin scissors, these artists have mastered the creation of the most intricate birds and landscapes simply by the cut of the scissors and by adding a bit of color here and there. Hu JinQing (*The Mantis That Stalks the Cicada*), the undisputed master of animated cut-outs and an astute observer of Nature, brings his observations to vibrant life in all his films.

In the Chinese folk art of decorated pottery, dishes and bowls molded or turned in clay are fired, painted with images of birds and fish, and glazed. In Fang Runnan's *Fishdish*, the Shanghai animator painted a fish that swims off what appears to be a real three-dimensional dish. We ask, "What is real and what illusion?" and of course "How on earth did he get this effect?!"

During the Cultural Revolution which began in 1966, A Da (*The Three Monks*) who was sent to the countryside to dig ditches and feed the pigs, was forbidden to draw. But he hid under his mosquito net at night and quietly sketched from his imagination and memory. The *Three Monks*, completed in 1981, carried his personal plea, after the pain of the Cultural Revolution, that human beings cooperate equally with one another in order to survive.

Created with a disarmingly simple drawing technique, it is a perfect integration of Chinese cartoon-drawing style with Western synchronization technique, and expresses simply but powerfully A Da's own integration of East and West.



THE THREE MONKS

David Ehrlich teaches animation workshops for children in the U.S., Europe and Asia and has produced a number of collaborations with international animators. His abstract animated films have been awarded at film festivals around the world.





# JARS VIDEO NEWSLETTER

P.O.Box 113 Little Neck NY 11363

FEB 1993

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Vol. I

## Debut Issue

Welcome to our new JARS Video Newsletter ! We've been working on this news letter for about two years with the hope of bringing you the best information and news in the video world of Chinese movies, Martial Arts, Horror, Comedies, Japanese Animation, Science Fiction and Samurai Movies. We would also like to remember the past twelve years in video that is no longer available.

We have only the best group of people to help us put together our newsletter, Jeff Goodhartz, Bill and Karen Palmer, and Merlin David.

Also, Ronald Lee will assist us with the Hong Kong movies and Chinese pre-recorded video tapes and laser discs.

We'd like to hear from you, let us know your views and opinions.

Write, call us, or just send up smoke signals. One feature of our newsletter will be the top 10 videos that are sold by JARS VIDEO and the worst 10 videos of 1992, and the top movies in the theatres.

We will write about our own personal favorites and dislikes, which will be written by myself Joseph Ragus Sr. I will give you my expertise on the martial arts movies. I have been in the martial arts mail order video business for 12 years, since 1981. I have been privileged to bring in Ocean Shores videos and if people can remember Inter Continental video, directly from Hong Kong. After 12 years in the mail order business, I am the only survivor that still caters to the martial art movie collectors. If that's not good enough, I am also a martial arts movie fan since 1971.

I boast that Jars Video is the only mail order house that sells thousands of martial arts and other movies in English and Chinese. There is no other retailer like us. We think the time now is right for a newsletter like ours to come to you to inform you of what is coming out in the movies and the new releases in video, also what new companies emerge. The public has spoken out in numerous phone conversations and letters that this newsletter is something they've been

waiting for. So welcome to our premiere issue of the JARS VIDEO Newsletter. We are impatiently waiting for a response from our readers regarding this issue. Sit back, relax, and hopefully enjoy.

Joseph Ragus Sr.

## Hong Kong Report

by Ronald Lee

### Drunken Master II

Trying to raise money for H.K. stuntmen, Golden Harvest is going to make the movie "Drunken Master II" starring Jackie Chan (who else). Directed by Liu Chia Liang (Legendary Weapons of Kung Fu), Master Liu himself is also the producer, the martial arts consultant, and the actor in this big budget movie. Trying to save some of the workload from Liu, Eric Tsang (Shorty in "The Millionaires Express"), Tung Wai (the young kid who was instructed by Bruce Lee in "Enter the Dragon"), and Wong Siu Tong (the stick fighter in Tsui Hark's "Butterfly Murder"), will work as a team on producing the whole movie. As of January, we're still waiting for Jackie to start filming "Drunken Master II". Wait and see how this movie blows you away. More info to come while movie is in progress. "CITY HUNTER" is Jackie Chan's first movie in 1993. It brings out a lot of comedy and less action. The character is based on a Japanese comic P.I. who works with his buddy's young sister (Joey Wong), they get involved in the highjacking of the floating casino while they search for the newspaper tycoon Imamura's daughter (Shijuko). The final fight between Richard Norton and Jackie was less than expected. It was not a very powerful, dead or alive duel. Bruce Lee taught Jackie how to fight in this movie (no kidding). "City Hunter" is ok, not one of his best, but still worth seeing.



## Jeff Goodhartz

So here we finally are, after well over two years of planning, preparing, shelving and excessive vomiting, Joe finally was able to sweat his way through the completion of this newsletter. Personally, I feel very lucky (being merely an amateur writer) to be in such good company. Modesty aside, here's my first attempt at a professional (cough, choke) review.

Star Blazers-The Bolar Wars (\*\*\*\*): up worshiping Star Blazers, above virtually everything else, I was excited to see this third season again released on videotape. While I found this not quite as great as the two previous seasons (both of which get five stars) it is still a worthy addition. Unfamiliar fans may be surprised to find that this series is NOT a direct continuation of the "Comet Empire" story. In fact, there are two "movies" that came first and help bridge the series. They are the excellent made for T.V. Yamato III, the New Adventure (\*\*\*\*\*) and the terrible theatrical release, Be Forever Yamato (\*). Unfortunately these two have not been made available legally in the U.S.

## JUST FOR KICKS

By Bill & Karen Palmer

The following reviews will appear in our forthcoming book. THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MARTIAL ART MOVIES, co-written with Rick Meyers. Due from Scarecrow Press in early '93.

The book will be available from JARS Video. All films are rated on a 4 star system.

## Bloody Fists, The (1972)

(Death Beach ; Dang Kou Tan). Pro. Co: Empire Cinema Centre (H.K.) ; Dir: Ng See-yuen; Chen Sing, Chen Kuan-tai

Chen San, an exiled Japanese sympathizer, returns from Japan, intending to help the Japanese set up a gym and horde the dragon herb, a medication used against the plague. Fugitive Chang Wu-deh (Chen Sing) saves the town by defeating the Japanese leader (Chen Kuan-tai in his first film), but at the price of his own life.

During filming, Chen Kuan-tai was a contract actor for Shaw Brothers who recalled him before the completion of the movie. For this reason, many of his appearances are played by another actor hiding behind a black mask. This as Ng See-yuen's first directorial effort and, though the martial arts are rather primitive, its success as a low-budget independent production encouraged others to follow suit. 1 Star (\*)

## Just For Kicks Con't China O'Brien

(Pro. Co: Golden Harvest ; Dir : Robert Clouse)  
Cynthia Rothrock, Richard Norton

China (Cynthia Rothrock) quits the police force after accidentally killing a youngster in the line of duty, and goes to visit her dad (David Blackwell), the sheriff of a small town. She finds the town under the control of a drug-dealing murderer named Sommers (Steven Kirby). Since the judge (Will Hazlett) is also corrupt, Sheriff O'Brien is about to call in feds. His office is bugged by a deputy (Chad Walker), who is employed by Sommers. When her father and his trust-deputy are killed in a car explosion, China runs for sheriff against Sommers' organization and cleans up the town with the help of two friends.

Filmed in Utah, this film has a good story and better-than-expected acting and production values. The main villain, however, though as evil as they come, is no match for Cynthia, let alone her boy friend Matt (Richard Norton), and Dakota (Keith Cooke), who wants revenge for the murder of his mother.

2 1/2 Stars. (\*\*1/2)

China O'Brien II Next Issue.

## Top 10 at Jars Video

- 1- Book Of Heroes(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Yukari Oshima) \$39.95
- 2- Shaolin Temple(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Jet Lee) \$39.95
- 3- Drunken Master(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Jackie Chan) \$39.95
- 4- Prodigal Son(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Yuen Baio) \$39.95
- 5- Leg Fighters(English)  
(Tan Tao Liang) \$49.95
- 6- Better Tomorrow(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Chow Yuen Fat, Ti Lung) \$39.95
- 7- Better Tomorrow II(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Chow Yuen Fat) \$39.95
- 8- Bullet In The Head(Chinese w/English Sub's)  
(Jacky Chuang) \$39.95
- 9- Duel Of The Iron Fist(English)  
(David Chiang, Ti Lung) \$59.95
- 10- Crystal Fist(English)  
(Billy Chong) \$49.95





More greetings from Hawaii, from Jean Takeuchi -

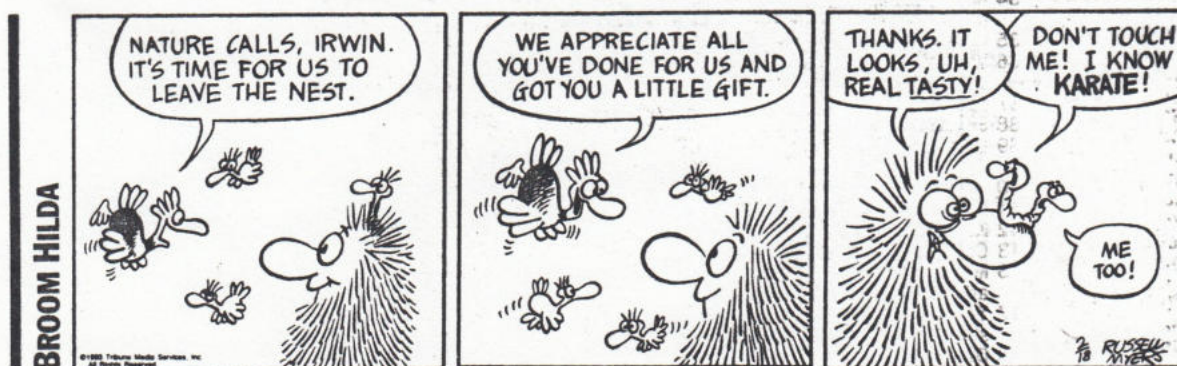
I've been getting to know the Waldens Bookstore people pretty well lately, being that I've been ordering book practically every other week, or so it seems. The last books I ordered were 4 of the Wizard of - books by Simon Hawke. I was interested after reading one of the books, and definitely got hooked when I saw that one of the series was titled THE SAMURAI WIZARD; it was pretty good as far as light reading goes.

I have been going to the Community library every week or so, and have been doing my best to check out the whole selection, book by book, but as tiny as the library is, some days it has been pretty slow and small pickings. I did borrow Lucia St. Clair Bobson's THE TOKAIDO ROAD.

Okay, that's enough about books for now, let's move on to something else. You mentioned the show TOKUGAWA BURAICHO. I have been watching it on my schizo tv, and I do enjoy watching it. Saijo Hideki's moves aren't that bad for someone who was a former teen idol... or being a fan, maybe I'm just being partial, but it still feels weird seeing a show with Yagyu Jubei in it, and not having Shinichi Chiba playing the part. Though I must admit, Saijo seems to have gotten the mannerisms and voice more like Chiba's Jubei, in the episodes that are playing now. I still think that Chiba is one of the most exciting to watch in a fight scene, but I too wish he'd do something about that ponytail of his. The first time I tuned in, I thought he was supposed to be some kind of Chinese character. Maybe we can send him some mousse or extra strength styling gel?

RAVEN seems to be history. For some reason I never got into that show. I seem to enjoy the new Kung Fu series more.

Nikki - do you<sup>know</sup> about a book by a real Crocodile Dundee? The movie was supposedly loosely based on the adventures of a real guy. I'd love to read the book, but I can't recall title or author. I don't know what it is, but I seem to have this affinity for Australia, whether it is the accent, actors, or books about the place.





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This issue of Maffapa, I'm including comments excerpted from letters from Jean Takeuchi and Jeff Wong, Joe Ragus' newsletter, and a page on Chinese animation from the Hawaii International FilmFestival 1992 program book.

Here's the latest news about Maffapa's cover artist: In March, Epic Comics will publish DRAGON LINES, written by Peter Quinones with art by Ron Lim, combines Chinese mythology, martial arts, and magic against such futuristic menaces as terrorists on the Moon.

More about comics, continued from last time - Fantagraphics has been publishing Usagi Yojimbo, but it's too different a comic from the rest of the Fantagraphics line, so the book is going to some other publisher, Malibu or something. Usagi, written and drawn by Stan Sakai, is still my favorite samurai rabbit. Eternity Comics publishes Ninja High School, created by Ben Dunn. It's manga style, and heavily influenced by Rumiko Takahashi, a Japanese manga writer/artist (Firetripper, Ranma½, Laughing Target, Urusei Yatsura). It's comedy/parody with a ninja heroine, rival alien princess, mad scientist, lots of in-joke references to Japanese manga, is up to 30+ issues now, with spinoffs like super-deformed issues (pint-sized Ninja H.S. characters) and Zetraman, with a sentai super-hero group, the kind that Damon likes.

Jademan is still publishing the translations of the Hong Kong comics, Blood Sword, Oriental Heroes, etc. I don't know anyone who is still reading the English-language versions. Mirage Press still publishes Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. After Eastman/Laird (the creators) became more interested in merchandising, and hired other writers/artists a few years ago, the Turtles looked more geriatric than teenage; I completely lost interest. The 3rd TMNT movie is due for release this year. The Turtles travel back in time to 16th century Japan. Mirage published a 3-issue mini-series recently of Space Usagi (a future descendant of Usagi Yojimbo), a direct translation of Usagi Yojimbo into space opera, with samurai in spaceships and daimyos ruling entire regions of space. So Usagi must have a romantic liaison, not yet covered in the comicbook, to have this remote descendant.

Nightwynd publishes Samurai - no info on this one. Valiant Comics started up a couple of years ago, publishing new stories about those classic characters from Gold Key Comics, Magnus Robot Fighter and Dr. Solar, Man of the Atom. Rai was introduced into the Magnus universe as a Japanese with some kind of family obligation to save the planet, fight criminals, heck, I don't remember. His face is painted with a kabuki character, and I couldn't work up any enthusiasm for him. Rai has his own comicbook now.

Sushi! has spicy adult stories drawn in the Japanese manga style. I've only seen an ad, not bought it.

At the world SF convention in Orlando last September, I went to the reading of a Samurai Cat story by Mark E. Rogers. The story will be included in the 5th Samurai Cat book, SAMURAI CAT GOES TO THE MOVIES, which won't be published for at least a year. Mark said the 3-part mini-series of Samurai Cat, published by Epic Comics (see above, re Ron Lim) in the summer of '91, sold poorly. Mark had a



suitcaseful of t-shirts for sale. I bought one showing Samurai Cat and nephew Shiro in space suits. The previously published Samurai Cat books are THE ADVENTURES OF SAMURAI CAT, MORE ADVENTURES OF SAMURAI CAT, SAMURAI CAT IN THE REAL WORLD and THE SWORD OF SAMURAI CAT. They are hilarious.

QUILLER BAMBOO by Adam Hall, published in pb by Avon Books, is the latest in a series of spy thrillers about British agent Quiller, who has been around since the Spy Who Came in From the Cold. One movie was made starring George Segal (THE QUILLER MEMORANDUM, 1966) as Quiller. I can't picture Segal as Quiller, since Segal usually plays the guy who stumbles into a situation, not a "man who leads a life of danger...", which Quiller does. QUILLER BAMBOO is set after the events of Tienanmen in 1989. The Chinese rulers are hunting Dr. Xingyu Baibing, a dissident they want to brainwash into publicly supporting their brutal regime. The British secretly fly Quiller into China, where he finds Dr. Baibing and takes him to Tibet, where they hide in a lamasery. Dr. Baibing is to be smuggled into Beijing and, with the support of sympathetic army units, announce the overthrow of the Chinese government, for a less conservative replacement. Not only does Quiller have to protect him from the current regime, but also from someone who wants him as a figurehead for a group of greedy opportunists. Besides, Dr. Baibing is convinced his wife has already been captured in Beijing, and he wants to throw everything aside, rush to Beijing and protect his wife, even if he must surrender. This is told from Quiller's point of view; it's about another difficult caper in the life of an agent. It's about the agent, not conditions in China or Tibet, what I was more interested in.

CHINA BOY - I lent out my copy and don't remember the author or the pb publisher - is a "novel" about a Chinese boy whose over-protective mother dies when he is about 7, and his father marries a white woman who hates Chinese culture, her new husband's memories of his dead wife, and his children's Chinese customs. She also hates his kids, beating the boy for speaking Chinese, and kicking him out onto the streets every day until bedtime. And these are the mean streets of a black ghetto in early 1950s San Francisco. (Nowadays it would be a 'hood.) The difference between then and now is that guns weren't available then. So every boy learned to use his fists at a young age. Here's this small, very nearsighted chinese kid picked on by every neighborhood bully, and he is the only Chinese kid in the neighborhood. His evil stepmother is so insecure, she explodes if anyone mentions "Hansel & Gretel". She washes the blood out of his clothes from numerous beatings, yet still forces him to stay outside. Finally, he is allowed to study boxing at the YMCA, and... Well, it's a martial arts story with boxing instead of an exotic Asian style. It's too vivid to be just a novel; the author dedicates the book to a stepmother who made him speak English, to the instructors at that YMCA, and to "Toos", his boyhood friend in the book.

I read RISING SUN by Michael Crichton, now out in pb from Ballantine, and don't consider it to be "Japan-bashing", not when the author backs up every point he makes about Japan with examples



that really happened. At the end of the book are 3 pages of bibliography. Somewhere among all the points being raised about the Japanese, is a murder mystery. I saw the movie prevue last week for RISING SUN, to be released this spring. It was obviously not made by one of the Japanese-owned Hollywood studios, since the "Japanese" in the movie are played by American-grown actors. One looks like (and may be) Buttkus in "A Fistful of Yen". Another is Carey-Hiroyuki Tagawa, whom I first saw in an SF mini-series called "Not of This World". He played an executive representing Japanese investment interests in an American power plant. And, wonder of wonders, he was supportive of the American heroine (a modern take-charge type, not a romantic lead). Next I saw him in THE LAST WARRIOR, a movie set on a Pacific island during WW II, with Gary Graham (ROBOT JOX, Alien Nation tv series) as the hero. Some hero! He's a bozo supposed to be spotting for a Japanese military presence. There hasn't been any, so he's taking life easy, chasing the native women. Suddenly the Japanese are there, removing the islanders elsewhere, so Graham is isolated (except for an American blonde) against a lone Japanese, obviously the last of an honorable samurai line. Hiroyuki Tagawa is the Last Warrior of the title. War isn't a fair game. The Japanese, obviously the superior fighter, is killed by the American, using any trick he can come up with.

After a couple of good roles, it was a shock to see Hiroyuki Tagawa as a vicious, cruel, sadistic (not to mention thoroughly ruthless) yakuza chief in SHOWDOWN IN LITTLE TOKYO. He was a nasty in KICKBOXER 2. In the RAVEN tv series he appeared as a yakuza in a couple of episodes. And, how demeaning, he wasn't even the opponent for the hero. No, he gets taken out by the boozy, bumbling old sidekick (played by Lee Majors). In fact, it's Majors' continued presence as a rummy sexist pig that keeps me from watching this show.

So it was great to watch a tv series in which Carey-Hiroyuki Tagawa again plays an honorable warrior. He has obviously been working out regularly with weights, as you may have noticed under all those yakuza tattoos in SHOWDOWN IN LITTLE TOKYO. But he is one Seriously Ugly Dude. So he can play ugly Japanese thugs or ugly honorable alien warriors (kind of like Worf, except Worf is the best-looking Klingon I've ever seen). It's too bad that SPACE RANGERS has been cancelled, but there are still 2 unaired episodes that may yet be scheduled.

From good books by good writers, to the dregs - CASCA THE CURSED by Barry Sadler, reprinted by Jove. Casca returns to China in 1899, mixes it up with some Chinese, and is made warlord of the city of Tsungkow. As warlord, he is visited by a "Mr. Song, whose business is selling the Bible". Mr. Song says that he is not a Christian. "Nor are my three daughters Christians. I have great ambitions for them as I have not been blessed with sons. Perhaps I shall send Sun Yat-sen to America. If his revolution succeeds, I will marry my daughter Song Mai Ling to him. In this way I will achieve a say in the affairs of my country." When asked about his other 2 daughters, "I will marry them to his most promising rivals." Like H.H. Kung and Chiang Kai-shek. I did my research, looking through THE SOONG DYNASTY by Sterling Seagrave, and Charlie Soong's first son was born before 1899. And he and his family were Christians. Too late to complain to the author about sloppy research. He died of a bullet in the brain in 1989.



The time when a society faces the turn of the century is often a time when there is anxiety about the future and nostalgia for the past.

The recent popularity of the sixties era in Japan may be an intentional swinging back of the pendulum by baby boomers who are now in a position to revive the culture of their childhood.

Japanese entertainers who were popular two decades ago have been making comebacks. For the old, such revivals bring back sweet memories. For the young, they offer something new.

Fuji television is producing trendy dramas, usually love stories portraying sophisticated & fashionable city life. This kind of drama has been made into numerous series and has been quite popular.

One of the first trendy dramas that made it to the top of the ratings was: TOKYO LOVE STORY starring Honami Suzuki as a sleek career woman and Yuji Oda as the fellow she falls in love with.

The focal character was Rika Akana, played by Honami Suzuki, a bilingual career oriented girl. She unintentionally falls in love with a soft hearted man, Kanji Nagao, played by Oda Yuji, and she ardently pursues him. The teleplays are based on a cartoon story by Fumi Saimon.

What was a big surprise was: HYAKU IKKAIME NO PUROPOZU, starring Atsuko Asano and Tetsuya Taakeda. A shabby 40 year old bachelor rejected many times, wins the love of a beautiful woman called Kaoru, played by the very attractive actress, Atsuko Asano. (Believe me, she is beautiful!!!)

Love songs from these trendy dramas are in vogue. Chage and Asaka's SAY, YES! pleads "Don't hesitate, Say, yes!"

まよわすに、SAY, YES!

Kazumasa Oda's LOVE STORY WA TOTSUZEN NI song was the theme song from TOKYO LOVE STORY and was at the top of the charts too.

Behind the trend may be the skepticism and anxiety for the unpromising future of the Japanese society. (This also reminds me of the doubts about the future of the United States. Surveys show that most Americans believe that the future will not be as good as the past for Americans. Most children in the U.S A have negative thoughts about the future of America according to the surveys printed in the newspapers).

Adding to the anxiety is an aging Japanese society right around the corner. Death is a theme that has been popular lately. While the aging population is on the rise, the number of Japanese children is steadily decreasing. Some Japanese women prefer careers instead of marriage and family life.

Nostalgia and angst may be two sides of the coin that



may keep flipping back and forth until the end of this century.

### THIS & THAT

A book containing a series of essays written in 1990-1991 by singer Kondo Masahiko, entitled MOO IPAI BUN HANASOO KA has been published. He writes about his personality, his thoughts of Nakamori Akina's suicide attempt, and the woman he is presently seeing.

There are booming careers that are note worthy.

Young Nakamura Toru is maturing as an actor by accepting a variety of roles.

Veteran singer & actor Noguchi Goro, who had disappeared from television for some time due to the decline of musical programs, is currently working in the theater in both musical and non-musical plays. He is still quite popular and has received critical acclaim in the theater and he is still making recordings that sell well although they appeal more to mature listeners.

Contemporary film director Juzo Itami brought his camera to bear on Japan's organized crime underworld in his latest effort, MINBO NO ONNA. The box-office has been booming since the release of the film to the theaters despite some bad reviews from the critics.

Entertainer Tahara Toshihiko's latest single, OMOIDE NI MAKENAI, released by Pony/Canyon, was a hit and then became the theme song for his TV series TOBOSHA which had gone to the top of the T.V. ratings. Tahara made a new movie, SHIMA KOOSAKU, for the cinema. Toshi-san is one of the top performers in modern Japan.

Singer Nakamori Akina is back in the limelight she deserves. She trying an acting career and acted in the Fuji T.V. drama series SUGAO NO MAMA DE.

Afro-Japanese reggae star P.J. has a new album titled ACTION! He is credited with giving reggae music respectability in Japan. I have heard him sing and I enjoy hearing his voice. He is constantly on tour and sings in both the Japanese and English languages.



TAIHEKI by Robert Walsdorff

I had higher than usual expectations for this NHK drama. For one thing, it was written by Yoshikawa Eiji, who wrote MIYOMOTO MUSASHI. The NHK drama based on his book (one of countless versions based on the novel) is my all-time favorite Japanese drama.

MIYOMOTO MUSASHI is considered the Japanese equivalent of America's GONE WITH THE WIND. Yoshikawa's writing is superb. His plots have all sorts of unexpected twists and surprises. His characterizations are colorful and unforgettable (even down to minor characters). His stories are also filled with many subtle underlying meanings and philosophies.

In addition to this, the year long drama starred my all-time favorite Japanese actor, Sanada Hiroyuki. Sanada is familiar to most MAFFAPA readers. Born on October 12, 1960 he made his first film with Chiba Shinichi when only 5. He went on to star as a young man in many films that have been shown in theaters in the United States, on cable and local television stations, and available on video. He also did several television series that have played on television in Hawaii, California, and other places. He started as an action star but went on to expand his talents to more diverse kinds of roles. He won the Academy Award in Japan for best male actor in 1989 for MAJAN HIROKI.

So, my expectations were high for this series. For the most part, I was not disappointed.

Sanada played Ashikaga Takauji, a historical figure in Japan who was born in 1306 and lived until 1368. He defeated the Kamakura bakufu administration and started the Muromachi bakufu, and also established the Emperor Komyo. This is what is commonly referred to as the era of the Northern and Southern dynasties of Japan. As a result of his wise rule, the Muromachi culture began to blossom in Kyoto in later years.

Takuji was a ruler who was loved by many. No matter how bitterly he opposed other historical figures, he was said to have never hated anyone and always showed respect.

The drama can be classified as historical drama: a combination of historical fact mixed with imaginative fiction. The series is filled with action, romance, and emotion. Sanada is perfect in the lead. He has the necessary authority that makes him believable as a great leader, but also the more gentler side that character Takuji possessed. He can play the great emotional scenes powerfully (and there are plenty of them), but can also play the quieter scenes just



as interestingly. He adds color to even the simplest scenes with a subtle but compelling performance. There are many excellent supporting performances, too. As is typical of Yoshikawa, the characters are unique and unforgettable.

TAIHEKI ranks as the second best NHK drama I have seen. I highly recommend it to everyone.



おとくです。  
べんりです。

放送受信料のお支払いは  
郵便局の自動払込みで。

NHK



## THREE KINGDOMS

A Historical Novel.

Attributed to Luo Guanzhong.

Translated by Moss Roberts.

Maps. 1,096 pp. Berkeley:

University of California Press/

Foreign Languages Press. \$100.

By Patrick Hanan

**W**HY is there no epic or saga at the beginning of Chinese literature? The question has puzzled several generations of scholars and given rise to a number of theories. Epics never existed, says one theory, because the Chinese mind in early times was somehow averse to the idea of narrative. They did exist, says another, but were suppressed by Confucian clerks for failing the test of political correctness. (Something, this argument runs, must lie behind all those references in early texts to heroic and mythical figures.) As a final possibility, a third theory maintains that an epic still does exist, in the guise of certain odes of the "Book of Songs," which dates from about the eighth century B.C. The question remains open.

There is no mistaking the presence of epic (in the broad sense of the word) in later times, long after other major literary forms had been established. From the ninth or tenth century A.D. to the present, we find an almost unbroken tradition of oral and written epic, in prose or verse or in the alternating (prosimetric) form. Two of the greatest works, usually called novels, are "The Journey to the West," a 16th-century comic epic with a basis in religion and myth, of which a complete translation is available, and "Three Kingdoms," a martial epic with an astonishing fidelity to history, which has been translated now into lively English by Moss Roberts, a professor of Chinese at New York University (he prefers the term "novel" to "epic"). His translation supersedes the old version by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor.

The subject matter of "Three Kingdoms" has long held an extraordinary grip on the Chinese imagination. The warrior Guan Yu, later deified as the god of war, the sublime strategist and tactician Zhuge Liang, the crafty and ruthless Cao Cao — these and other larger-than-life figures are still universally known in China, readily available as symbols in any discussion of conflict or competition. "Three Kingdoms" has also impressed readers as a repository of military and diplomatic expertise. No less an authority than Mao Zedong asserted that when he set out on the campaigns that would ultimately bring him to power, "Three Kingdoms" was the book he valued most.

The Three Kingdoms period was a turbulent interregnum between the breakup of the Han dynasty and the Jin reunification. The book covers more than a century, including the end of the Han, but it concentrates on just three decades, A.D. 190-220. How could so relatively late and inglorious a period become the focus of the great historical epic? Precisely because of its turbulence, which gave full play to the martial (wu) side of the Chinese imagination, as distinct from the civil (wen) virtues celebrated in Confucianism. It is significant that Guan Yu, thanks in part to this book, was later officially designated the Martial Sage and placed on an equal footing with Confucius himself, the Civil Sage.

But, for fiction, the period held other advantages as well. It was turbulent, but not so turbulent as to make coherent narrative impossible, and the rightful succession was in doubt, so that leaders could aspire to the throne itself. Most important of all, the story happened to receive a brilliant literary rendering.

The great achievement of the author (probably Luo Guanzhong, a 14th-century playwright) was to match

Patrick Hanan teaches Chinese literature at Harvard. He is the translator of "A Tower for the Summer Heat" and "The Carnal Prayer Mat," by Li Yu.



CHURCH FARMINGTON

historiography with fiction and gain a synergistic effect from the combination of elite and popular tradition. The historical models available to him did not include large-scale narrative in the manner of Thucydides or Xenophon, only chronicles, short biographies, notes and anecdotes; in one sense "Three Kingdoms" is itself the first great Chinese narrative history. The author certainly aspired to write a work close to history — few of the many hundreds of characters in his book are fictitious — and in shaping his material he made full use of the historian's devices: the key anecdote revealing motivation or character, the pattern of events leading up to a climactic scene and the omens and

warnings that foreshadow what is about to happen.

But for much of his material and structure he turned to popular tradition about the Three Kingdoms material as it existed in fiction and drama. The most notable case is the famous oath of brotherhood, the main structural element of the book; it binds the heroes together but also leads, indirectly, to their defeat.

The frequent tripling of events, the long, exaggerated descriptions of men, horses and weapons — these are the stuff of popular tradition, as in the development of at least one major character, Guan Yu, a relatively minor figure in history. But even here the two traditions are combined, as C. T. Hsia has shown in his study "The Classic Chinese Novel"; the author has used the historical sources to modify the all-too-perfect hero of the popular tradition and make him into a complex, flawed, but still noble individual.

The martial imagination dominates the book, producing distinct variations on the Confucian values. Sworn brotherhood and loyalty to one's leader at any cost, almost regardless of his worth, are the paramount virtues. Family life is depreciated, and women and children are treated as little

more than pawns. War is less an occupation than an instrument for gaining power.

There is little, if any, private fighting; battles may sometimes be fought out by champions, but they are still battles. The art of leadership lies in attracting and keeping the ablest men, which is where the Confucian virtues play their part. Victory depends on strength, skill and courage, of course, but primarily on intellect; hence the search for a military genius. (If, like Zhuge Liang, he can "read the stars" and perform a little Taoist magic as well, so much the better.) The emphasis is all on the strategists and champions; the great mass of men fight and die with scarcely a mention.

### May I Borrow Your Head?

Maintaining the siege was proving a heavy burden for Cao Cao's army; it required vast stores of grain, but the surrounding districts, stricken by dearth, could offer no aid. Cao pressed for battle, but Gen. Li Feng kept within the walls. After another month Cao Cao, faced with dwindling supplies, borrowed 100,000 bushels of grain from Sun Ce. But he did not distribute it.

During the emergency Granary Officer Wang Hou . . . petitioned Cao Cao: "There is too little to feed so many. What shall we do?" "Distribute short rations," Cao Cao commanded him, "to tide us over." "And if they complain?" asked Wang Hou. "I have provided for that," Cao assured him. The officer gave out reduced rations as ordered. Meanwhile, Cao Cao sent his men around to the camps. From them he learned that soldiers were accusing him of cheating them. Cao Cao then summoned Wang Hou and said, "You have something I would like to borrow to quiet the soldiers. I hope you will not begrudge it." "What do I have," Wang Hou answered, "of use to Your Excellency?" "Your head," Cao replied, "to show the men." "But I have committed no fault!" the officer cried in fright. "I know that," Cao said. "I must act, or the army will revolt. I will see after your family personally, so have no concern on their account." Before Wang Hou could say more, the executioners were already pushing him out. They cut off his head and hung it from a pole with a signboard reading, "Wang Hou: Duly Punished by Military Law for Purposefully Assigning Short Rations and Stealing From the Granary." This measure improved the troops' morale.

From "Three Kingdoms."

**T**HE civil virtues are not entirely neglected; in fact, they serve as a critique of the wanton use of violence. Liu Bei, the contender with the best claim to the throne, owes his success not to his martial gifts, such as they are, but to his Confucian virtues and his ability to pick the right men. He once studied, we are told, with Zheng Xuan, the famous scholar of the Confucian classics, and he does his best to preserve the image of a virtuous, benevolent ruler (not entirely successfully; expediency gets the better of him on occasion). By contrast, his great adversary Cao Cao rejects the Confucian virtues altogether in favor of Realpolitik.

But epics are not to be analyzed solely, or even mainly, in terms of character and ideology. The essential element of this book is a great, momentous scene. When Cao Cao kills an innocent family for fear they may betray him, he justifies his action with the comment that he would rather destroy the whole world than have the world destroy him. (Next day, with characteristic ambivalence, he dismisses the comment as mere boasting.) Anticipating victory on the eve of a great naval battle, he chants a poem (a familiar poem by the historical Cao Cao), then flies into a rage over some criticism of his battle plan and kills the critic. (Next morning he is full of remorse.)

After he is defeated, he is caught by Guan Yu and then, astonishingly, released; Guan Yu, who is forever stumbling over his notion of honor, has been persuaded by Cao Cao to repay an ancient debt. When Guan Yu himself is caught and executed by an enemy general, his enraged spirit puts in a surprise appearance at the victory party, possesses the body of his nemesis and spews curses at him. The unfortunate victor, we are told, "collapsed on the ground, blood ran out of his orifices, and he died. There was general terror." Such scenes, moving as well as macabre, triumphant as well as tragic, help give "Three Kingdoms" its dimension of epic grandeur.

I KNOW NOBODY CAN AFFORD TO BUY THIS NEW VERSION OF THIS GREAT CLASSIC OF CHINESE LITERATURE BUT THIS REVIEW CONTAINS VALUABLE INFORMATION. I READ THE BREWITT-TAYLOR TRANSLATION WHICH IS WORTHWHILE FOR US PEASANTS BUT THIS STORY IS SO IMPORTANT IN THE CHINESE HERITAGE I CONSIDER IT A MUST FOR SERIOUS SINOLOGISTS TO READ - ALSO FOR PERIOD. PIECE MOVIE FANS - A NUMBER OF GREAT SWORD HERO FILMS ARE BASED ON THIS STORY NOT TO MENTION COUNTLESS TRADITIONAL OPERAS. OVER THE CENTURIES CHECK OUT CHANG CHEH'S "THE WILD MAN" (SHAW BROS. 1952) ONE GREAT MOVIE,



HAPPY 4691, THE YEAR OF THE ROOSTER WHICH I CELEBRATED WITH THE USUAL CLUSTER OF PERFORMANCES AND THEN ITS BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL — OCCASSIONAL, SPARSE BOOKINGS TOO FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.

Below is some info on the one film I MANAGED TO GET TO SEE WHICH WAS PART OF: 'SEOUL BEAUTIES': A FILM SERIES OF LEGENDARY ACTRESSES OF KOREAN CINEMA. ONLY THE 2ND KOREAN "ART" FILM I'VE EVER SEEN (NOT COUNTING CHARLIE CHOP SOCKIES), THIS WAS THE TYPE OF HISTORICAL PERIOD PIECE I LOVE FILLED WITH GORGEOUS COSTUMES, SETS, SCENERY, MUSIC, (NO MARTIAL ARTS). THE STORY IS ACTUALLY TRAGIC AS THE EYONYMOUS HEROINE IS ABANDONED BY HER HIGH STATUS PATRON AND HER CAREER DECLINES UNTIL SHE DIES AT A STILL YOUNG AGE, ILL, NEGLECTED AND ALONE, THE WRITERS/PRODUCERS ASSUME THE INTENDED FOR KOREAN AUDIENCE KNOWS THE HISTORY OF HWANG-CHIN-EE AND HER LIFE IS THEREFORE SHOWN IN A SERIES OF HIGHLIGHTED SCENES AND VIGNETTES WITH NO REAL EXPLANATIONS FOR ANYTHING IN THE SUBTITLES RESULTING IN SOME CONFUSION FOR AN IGNORAMUS IN KOREAN CULTURAL HISTORY LIKE ME. I NEVER REALLY FIGURED OUT WHY A BRILLIANT, TALENTED WOMAN. LIKE HWANG-

TO KOTARO KIMOTSUKI — THANKS FOR CONTRIBUTING THE ARTICLE ABOUT PAN QING FU WHOM I ADORE. I HAVE FOUR OF HIS MOVIES IN MY VIDEO COLLECTION. THE BEST IS 'YELLOW RIVER FIGHTER' IN WHICH MASTER PAN IS A TOTALLY NOBLE, HEROIC SWORDS-MAN IN A TRAGIC EPIC SET IN THE TURMOIL OF THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE T'ANG & SUNG DYNASTIES 900 YRS. AGO.

## HWANG CHIN-EE 황진이

(Republic of Korea, 1988). Directed by Bae Chang-ho. Produced by Lee Woo-suk.  
Written by Choi In-ho. Starring Chang Mi-bee, Ahn Sung-ki, Chun Moo-song.  
Color, 35mm, 120 min.

Sunday, December 13

1:50, 5:50, 9:55



Poet, musician, seductress, and legendary beauty, Hwang Chin-ee was the most famous royal kisaeng (female entertainer) in Korean history. Renowned throughout Korea for her artistic accomplishments and her influence over 16th century court life, stories of her remarkable career have been passed on for centuries, telling the legend of a woman whose life transcended fame, and became mythical. Internationally acclaimed director Bae Chang-ho draws a fascinating portrait of this legendary heroine, bringing to life her ambition for spiritual and sexual freedom.

Hwang Chin-ee's quest began at age 16, when she was haunted by the spirit of a young man who had died pining for her. Moved by his devotion, she entered into a spiritual union with him, and started a journey to discover the pleasures of spiritual and sexual rapture.

CHIN-EE WOULD BE ABANDONED, SNUBBED, & UNABLE TO CONTINUE HER ART UNTIL SHE SICKENS AND DIES IN OBSCURITY STILL. THIS MOVIE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT AND SO FASCINATING ANYWAY — THAT IT WAS UTTERLY WORTHWHILE.



Mark Jackson/ 2043 SE Isabell Road/ Port St. Lucie, Florida, 34952/  
407-337-2303/

Hello, Everyone,

Today, I shall discuss the Morikami.

The Morikami Park, Museum and Gardens are located at Delray Beach (roughly two hours South of my house, by automobile). The complex is named for George Morikami, a farmer who was a survivor of the Yamato colony of Japanese who settled in Florida in 1906. The Museum is devoted to Japanese culture with exhibition galleries, classrooms, audiovisual center, 1,000 volume library and 225-seat auditorium. The Park consists of a one-mile nature trail through pine flatwoods while the Morikami brochure maintains that their Bonsai Gardens are the "only permanent exhibit in the world of the miniature works of living art." I am cautious when reporting accounts which use terms such as "only" but, even if there are other "permanent exhibits," you will find a pervading sense of tranquility if and when you ever find occasion to visit the Morikami.

Dear me, I have reached a conclusion for my report within the first paragraph. Please allow me to back up and regroup. It is Tuesday, 9:00 AM, February 2, and I have been awake since Five this morning, four hours ago, I have had duties to perform so please bear with me since I would like to catch some shuteye but the MAFFAPA deadline beckons so I must press forth.

On Saturday, January 30, the expanded Morikami opened for public view. I have described the features of the new building which consolodates the features of the old Museum under one roof (with the addition of the classrooms, the auditorium and the audiovisual center). I have not been able to visit the new Morikami as of yet so I am familiar only with the old building which was constructed to resemble a Japanese home. Rooms devoted to the tea ceremony and the bath provided the permanent displays while the other rooms had rotating displays of artifacts such as kites and weaponry. I look forward to my visit to the new Morikami and hope I have conveyed my joyful experience with the complex to all here present.

Now, my original intention for this contribution was to describe the selection of Japanese films available from a video distributor called World Artists. From an article in a recent issue of The Atlantic, I know their catalogue includes domestic dramas and Yakuza films from little known but highly regarded directors. I called their toll free number (1-800-821-1205) for information but it must've been lost in the mail since I don't have it here. They will inform you of the nearest outlet in your area that carries their offerings.

I have an important request. If anyone knows ANYTHING about a Japanese film called The Yellow Handkerchief please notify me of your valuable knowledge either via mail or through MAFFAPA. I would greatly appreciate knowing more of this film besides the title.



\*\*\*\*\* NEW DAY \*\*\*\*\*  
It is now 3:15 PM on Wednesday, February 3rd. Typing the page yesterday drained me so I wasn't too useful for anyone who needed my services. I am now ready for duty and shall proceed with my contribution.

On the writing front, I am entering a magazine short story contest which has a deadline of February 28. I have written my entry but it is 4,000 words long and the rules say the story must have a maximum length of 3,000 words so I am cutting and pruning (if I were on HEE-HAW I'd be pickin' and grinnin'). A Friendship Force group from Kiel, Germany is due to arrive on February 13 so I'll be busy from now through the end of the month.

I am pursuing other avenues and shall keep you informed of my progress. Missing sleep yesterday reminded me of an interview with a 100-year-old-man I read some time ago. The reporter asked the centenarian how he accounted for his longevity. His reply -- "I keep waking up."  
So ...

KEEP  
WAKING

UP!





J A C Q U E L I N E D . S I M S

3 0 9 1 6 T H A V E N U E N O R T H

B I R M I N G H A M , A L A B A M A 3 5 2 0 4 - 2 1 6 3

( 2 0 5 ) 3 2 2 - 3 8 5 0

This is a guide to episodes twenty-six to the final episode twenty-nine of the Miyamoto Musashi television series.

#### EPISODE 26: OTSU'S ACCIDENT

The message to Otsu turns out to be a trick by Osugi. But seeing how pathetic Osugi is Otsu takes pity on her and offers to live with and take care of Osugi.

Osugi has to take a break; Gon picks this moment to free Otsu as they walk along a mountain pass. When Osugi sees Gon freeing Otsu she attacks them with her sword. Otsu and Gon both fall down the mountainside. Osugi struggles to make it down the mountainside only to find Gon dead and Otsu seriously wounded.

Jotaro hearing of Otsu's kidnapping finds Musashi at a temple to tell him the news. He offers to help find Otsu.

Musashi and Jotaro trace Otsu to the bottom of the mountain.

Otsu stirs and Osugi tearfully holds and apologizes to her. Gon smashed his head on a rock on the way down the mountain. He does not survive the ordeal. Now that Osugi is totally and utterly alone her bitterness and hatred when faced with the truth about her son's behavior and about Otsu and Musashi causes her to lose her mind.

Kojiro returns home with a fabulous falcon he got in Edo. Knowing full well that Musashi visited his mansion Kojiro asks Omitsu if anything unusual happened. She lies and says no.

Later when they are alone Kojiro again asks Omitsu if anything happened. Again she says no. Kojiro suddenly becomes angry and slaps her for her insolence. He then orders her to leave the room. Omitsu visibly shaken obeys him.

Osugi reverts back to her second childhood believing Ogin is her mother and Musashi is her father.

Musashi personally takes care of Otsu after her fall; but he has to leave her to keep the duel with Kojiro. The duel is set for April 13 at 8:00 on Ganryujima island.

#### EPISODE 27: SURPRISE VISITORS



Musashi is invited to drink and socialize with Seijuro, Monk Takuan and Koetsu as a farewell dinner before the bout. Memories of the influence these three men have on his life overwhelm Musashi because he does not know how his life would have turned out if he had not met them. Musashi formally bows and thanks these three men before he takes his leave.

Otsu overhears about the duel and although she is still not fully recovered from her fall she insists on going to try to see Musashi before the duel. Since she cannot be talked out of going Ogin and Jotaro accompany her.

Kojiro and Omitsu's relationship understandably cools down after Kojiro killed her brother. She won't forgive him and he won't divorce her so they just stay together making each other miserable.

Kojiro's aunt Sawa and her adopted son Shizuma come to visit him. It turns out Shizuma is really Kojiro's son by a maid named Ofu.

On the beach Musashi meet fellow survivors of the Sekigahara wars who are now retainers of the Hosakawa clan. The survivors invite him to participate in their annual ceremony where they give thanks they are well and healthy and to never forget the way they suffered right after the war.

After the ceremony Musashi is more determined than ever to win the duel against Kojiro.

#### EPISODE 28: THE EVE BEFORE THE BOUT

Matahachi unable to cut the mustard as a monk leaves the temple and Priest Gudo. Akemi sees Matahachi being teased by the neighborhood children. Akemi takes Matahachi to a small house she is renting. There he meets their child a little girl named Mo-Mo.

Iori asks Musashi if he can use his last name. Musashi has to turn him down because he knows his name is enemy to the Hosakawa clan and since they were kind enough to hire Iori as a page Musashi does not want Iori to get into any trouble with the clan.

It's revealed that later in life Iori is made Elder of the Ogasawara clan. Nine years after Musashi's death Iori erected a monument in Musashi's memory on Mt. Tamukeyama which overlooks Ganryujima (the island where Musashi had his most famous duel against Kojiro).

Matahachi invites Musashi to come visit his family. While Musashi asks him to go visit his mother after he gives him the sad news of Osugi living in her second childhood. Matahachi declines to go.



Kojiro becomes more and more high strung the closer it gets to the duel date.

Kojiro's aunt Sawa apologizes to Omitsu on his behalf. She asks Omitsu to please save him so that he can fight calmly at the duel.

This request is difficult for Omitsu but she gathers her courage to go to Kojiro's room where he appears to be sleeping. She turns to leave.

Kojiro goes into a rage over his students sleeping on the eve of the bout. He bangs on doors to wake everyone up with Omitsu frantically trying to stop him. Finally she kneels and holds on to both of his legs. Totally spent Kojiro allows Omitsu to lead him to a room where they finally have a heart-to-heart talk to settle their differences. (Something they should have done a long time ago; but as I stated before human hearts work in strange ways.) Then they make love.

Musashi does some practicing the night before the duel to try to summon up enough hatred to fight Kojiro. He succeeds.

#### EPISODE 29: THE BOUT AT GANRYUJIMA (THE FINAL EPISODE)

Kojiro and Musashi both make preparations for the duel.

Musashi takes a dip in the cold ocean to brace himself for the duel.

Kojiro wakes up happy and calm and is attended by Omitsu. He promises to teach his son Shizuma swordmanship after the duel. He is about to give his son a gift but he changes his mind and decides to wait until after the duel. He asks Omitsu to wait for him, bows then he leaves to keep the duel appointment.

After hearing the thirty samurai are stationed around Ganryujima island Musashi comes up with a plan. He hires the fastest boatmen to get him off the island after the duel. He makes Kojiro and the Hosakawa men wait for two hours until the tides settle down so that he can leave island quickly.

Musashi passes the time drawing. Otsu is finally able to come his side and he gets to see her before he leaves for the duel. He picks her up and carries her to the site he will get off the boat after the duel. Then he asks her to wait for him because when he returns they will be together forever and ever.

Musashi finally makes it to the duel site.

The duel is over quickly; Kojiro's long sword is pitted against Musashi's heavy wooden stick. Both opponents are still. Musashi's headband comes off; Kojiro with blood pouring from his mouth falls to the sand.



Musashi bids Kojiro farewell, bows and then leaves by boat to see Otsu. Lord Sado orders the Hosakawa men not to pursue him since he knows that will only bring shame down on their good name.

Musashi will never have another opponent like Kojiro and he owes him a debt since he couldn't have become known as a great swordsman without him.



My friend August may have more enemies than geeks at a comic store, but the guy has uncanny luck at being in the right place at the right time. Like when he worked at some camera store in San Fransissy, guess who'd be a customer one day; the one and only Jackie Chan! That luck seems to continue, like about a year ago, I suppose, when he somehow met another HK action star, Californian-born Anthony Houk. Being a yankee barbarian like most



of you, Houk's roles in HK films are, of course, villainous. He's used his exceptional martial arts in approximately nine movies, including OUTLAW BROTHERS, STONE AGE WARRIORS, the third 'Ninja Turtle' fiasco, and most notably, THE DRAGON FROM RUSSIA, which happens to be one of my alltime favorites. In it, he plays some sort of assassin who betrays his ninjutsu teacher, but gets killed within the first 20 minutes.

So anyway, if any of you ever read my column, you know that my old video HOT DOGS ON THE RUN was finished long ago, so now I'm working on a much different independent production, AGE OF

DEMONS. Despite a couple robotic superheroes, and maybe a karate fight or two, AOD won't owe as much to Asian cinema, just a little. Since it's a comedy/fantasy adventure/sleaze/trash/horror/exploitation film, it won't be covered as regularly in MAFAPPA as H.D.O.T.R. was. AOD may be partially inspired by the likes of Hong Kong's ACES GO PLACES and Japan's KAMEN RIDER, but has just as much influence from Monty Python, NAKED GUN, and the films of George Romero, Fred Olen Ray and Russ Myer. However, as I said, it does have a couple short fights (no DF video would be complete without an obligatory battle), and that's

why I'm writing about the film here.

For the movie's kung fu scene, I wanted a really charismatic, or possibly wellknown person to play the kung fu teacher. I hoped Amy Harlib would be willing, since she would have been willing to appear in HDOTR, if I could pay the money to get her out to Calif. At the time, money was more scarce than a braincell at a Grateful Dead concert, so it proved impossible. By the time I began working on AOD, I had saved up most of the money for a roundtrip ticket, only to be told that Amy had raised her price significantly! Where the hell am I gonna' get a thousand bucks (or



**PHOTOS ABOVE: Anthony Houk leaps to attack Butch Portino(LEFT). And RIGHT, Damon F. gets a full contact kick from Houk.**

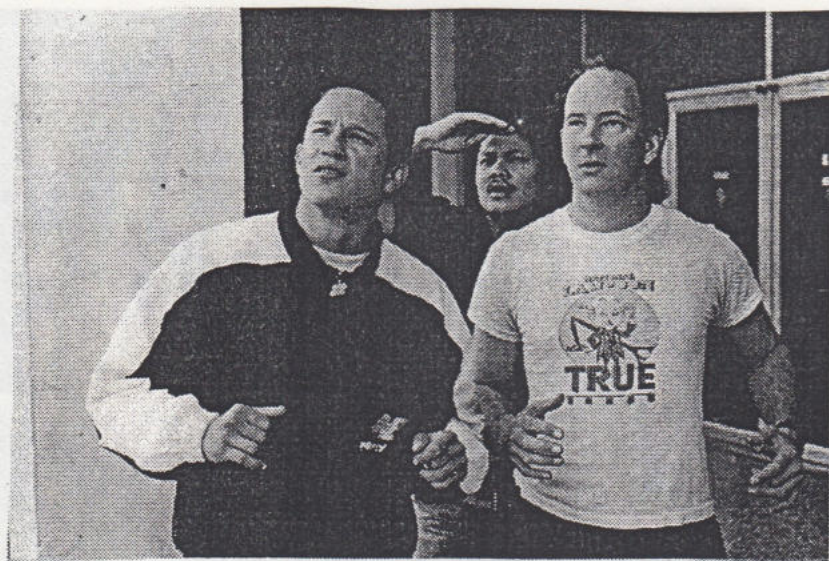


something like that)?!!? So I had to axe that idea, and later found out Steve James, of the awful 'American Ninja' films was up for playing the part for free, so long as I could get my videocamera and

came up with decent results. anthony's students were played by myself, John Grace, and DF video regulars Perry Wong, Butch Portilo, Barrie Evans and Ken Ko, all three

Working with a real Hong Kong stuntman was quite an experience. We'd expected him to be a stuck up snob with delusions of Godhood, but Anthony turned out to be one of the most polite, helpful, laidback dudes I'd ever hung around with. During the course of this amateur taping on the lawn at Cal-Sate University of Hayward, Anthony pointed out that our filming techniques were quite similar to those in HK epics. It's incredible to think that there are actually a few similarities between local low budget videos and mainstream HK blockbusters! Anthony has worked with professionals like Sam Hui, Frankie Chan, Nina Li Chi and Yukari Oshima. So I was relieved that he wasn't disappointed in working with such a small scale flick like mine! Working with a professional was great. He could easily have whipped all of us in a real fight, and managed to make the battle look convincing, yet amazingly, nobody got hurt!

After the videotaping, we all went back to my place to watch back the footage we taped. Later, I interviewed him, the whole interview to be in the next issue of OC, which practically none of you read anyway, because it lacks book reviews. Regardless, during the course of the interview, he talked about how he got into martial arts by watching kung fu movies in the 1970s. Living in San Francisco, he enrolled at some kung fu school in Chinatown, being its only non-Chinese student 'til this day! I believe he said it was one of his Chinese language teachers who, in 1989 (I think) found out that a HK company was working in San Francisco, producing DRAGON FIGHT, starring Ti Wei ('Dick Wei' in English) and Chiau Sing Chi ('Steven Chow' in English). So Anthony and perhaps a few other students auditioned and got bit parts (possibly as villainous



## ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Anthony Houk, Perry Wong and Damon Foster witness an attack by a destructive monster in 'A.O.D.'

cast down to LA! It seemed like a go, since we had all planned on going to LA for a Bruce Lee tribute (Lee's supposed upcoming star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame). The Bruce Lee Tribute got canceled, and we're too cheap to buy plane tickets unless we have several reasons to go there. Just when all seemed hopeless, and one of us would again have to play dual roles (somebody to play both his script character and the kung fu teacher), August reminded me of his friendship with HK's video villain, Anthony Houk, currently between films!!

So we all got together and spent a couple hours videotaping AOD's only kung fu class scene, and

of which were active in HDOTR and numerous stage shows. In this scene, we again attempt to spoof martial arts films, but without the intricate accuracy of HDOTR (after all, kung fu is just an added ingredient in AOD, not the main highlight). The shot starts off with me and Perry greeting our teacher in a humble manner (dropping to our knees, bowing, etc.), until he says: "Naah, don't be so formal. Just call me Zeek when I ain't in my kar-rattle uniform." Later, we're all dressed for class, working out, and I say to Anthony, "Howdy' there, Zeek." He loses his temper and says: "You damn bastards! Show some respect for teacher!"



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henchmen in the film. Once he caught the acting bug, it was off to HK, to further his career as an evil caucasian for HK films (that's how Chuck Norris, Cynthia Rothrock, Claude Van Damb, and Jeff Falcon got started). Last time I spoke with Anthony, no major HK flick is in his immediate future, but plans to go audition for something in Japan. Speaking of which, I just saw Sonny Chiba's latest directorial. **FIGHTING FIST** is an appallingly bad crime drama starring **CYBERCOP's** Shogo Shiyutani, and even HK actress Sibelle Hu. The whole film is as exciting as watching paint dry, in slow motion.

Better fun to be had stepping in a pile of dog droppings while eating chocolate pudding.



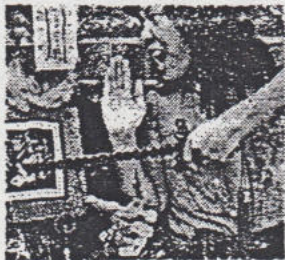
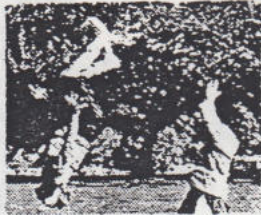
**ABOVE: Anthony Houk wastes Perry Wong in A.O.D. BELOW: The heroic robots of A.O.D.**

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**MIRROR OF THE FUMA #31: from Nikki White, 15 Duffus Place, Wanniasa, ACT 2903, Australia.**

Happy New Year of the Cock to everyone!. I hope you enjoyed the holidays.

*Ballad of Narayama* (1958), directed by Kinoshita Keisuke, was on SBS in late October. Every time a film of this title has been on before, I kept missing it. Just as well as those earlier showings were of the 1980s remake. This was the first time they'd shown the original. I found it a very appealing film, more engaging than Kinoshita's other film recently shown on SBS, *River Fuefuki*.

The story is very simple. It concerns a village in feudal times where it is the custom for elderly people to go to a nearby sacred mountain, Narayama, to die when they turn 70. The focus is on an old woman (Tanaka Kinuyo) who is 69 and hale and hearty (she even has a full set of teeth which is a shame to her) and her son. She accepts her fate and spends her remaining year setting things in order such as ensuring her widowed son has a new wife. He is distressed and doesn't want her to go but her mind is made up. In the new year she will leave and he will take her to the mountain. She will not be like the old man next door who is afraid to go and has stayed on past his time to be an embarrassment to all. She goes, it snows which is lucky because it means she will die quickly. The film concludes with a cut to the present day showing a train bringing skiers to Obasute (literally 'Old-woman-abandon').

The film is done in the style of a kabuki play, even beginning with a figure in front of the traditional striped curtain calling "*Tozai, tozai!*" There is a kabuki-style narration accompanied by shamisen, kokyū, shakuhachi and koto which bridges the spoken dialogue. However, the dialogue and acting are naturalistic and not kabuki-like. It is shot in beautiful soft colours, interspersing location and studio work, tracing events in the village from late summer (the Bon festival) through autumn to winter and New Year. Like a lot of Japanese films, it has lots of little incidents - humorous or sad - that make up life and lots of vivid characters.

**Peking Opera Theatre of Tianjin** toured Australia in November 1992 to mark the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Australia. I went to their only Canberra performance on 16th, on a night of an incredible downpour that made driving a real pain in the arse. But it was well worth it. I had an aisle seat only a few rows from the front so could see everything, including facial expressions and eye-movement (most important in order to appreciate the Monkey King). By coincidence next to me was a senior colleague from work and her friend, also a librarian, neither of whom had seen real Peking Opera before. Both were totally knocked out by the skill, exuberance, colour and variety of the performances. We enjoyed ourselves hugely.

There were six excerpts presented. The first half could be termed "martial arts". It began with *Borrowing the Fan* in which the Monkey King, finding his way blocked by fire, tries to get a magic fan off Lady Iron Fan who's not very cooperative as he'd tricked her daughter earlier. There was a lot of humour in his attempts to abstract the fan from the formidable Lady, all tricked out in the pheasant feathers of a general,



and they soon came to blows, displaying some truly stunning swordplay (she with two swords, versus him with his staff) and unarmed combat.

Next was *Autumn River* (or *Qia Jiang*) which was a gentler piece depicting a young nun's attempts to persuade a cantankerous old boatman to ferry her across the river to meet her lover. This featured some beautiful melodies sung by the heroine and some wonderful mime of the old geezer teasing her, then her boarding the boat and nearly falling in the river and him trying to cast off, then realising the reason they keep being pulled up short and nearly up-ending - he's forgotten to unmoor the boat! All this with no scenery and the only prop an oar.

The final item of the set was *At the Crossroads* which is a story of mistaken identity - a loyal innkeeper takes the friend of a wrongly exiled general for a murderer. It features a spectacular fight in a darkened room until both realise they are on the same side. That is, the actor-singers must mime being unable to see each other as, of course, the audience can see everything. This again featured some breath-taking sword-play and kung fu - and some stunning split-second timing - coupled with a lot of humour as each protagonist struck heroic poses only to miss completely his opponent, or accidentally tread on him or creep round each other utterly unaware how close they are with nearly sliced off noses or ears,

After intermission came three that seemed to feature virtuoso performances by solo artists, rather than pairs. The first was a wonderful study of remorse, guilt and anguish, *Crying in the Temple*, wherein an emperor of the Han Dynasty who had wrongly had an official put to death has gone to the temple crying and asking his ancestors for punishment. As he laments, he is seized with trembling fits, eyes staring as he 'hears' condemnatory voices and staggers about (the actor could make his whole body tremble from head to foot, even his long ponytail rippled like a black waterfall), then regains his composure until the next 'attack'. The end sees him dead at the foot of the altar.

The next item, *Paying a Call on the Emperor's Mausoleum* featured a startling solo aria consisting of long drawn out notes (eat your heart out, Ethel Merman). In fact, I was so wrapped up in the skill of doing this that I forgot to applaud the singer the first time he completed such a long note, but made up for my remissness later. It concerned a senior minister who comes to the tomb of his late emperor to bemoan his failure to persuade the emperor's widowed concubine not to abdicate at the behest of evil plotters. Hence the long drawn notes - a lament. His costume was a stunning gold, silver and black brocade and his face was completely red.

The final item was an ensemble piece, *Zhong Kui Married Off His Sister* which was about a bloke who'd fallen into a "Den of Devils" (literally) and become deformed; failed his literary exams and committed suicide. However, the Emperor of Heaven made him a deity, recognising his honesty, and he returned to Earth with some of his followers to arrange a marriage between his sister and the man who thoughtfully saw to his burial (or, as the program quaintly put it "Thankful to Dr. Ping's welfare project of burying him"...Ah, socialist countries). It is this part we see - Zhong Kui, still deformed but with that silvery-gold face-paint indicating a supernatural being and richly robed, with his motley crew of spectres who reminded me very much of merry-andrews and similar figures of medieval pageants. One carried a torn yellow



umbrella of state, another a paper lantern hung upside down and so forth. They performed all sorts of acrobatics and dances and it all ended with the arrival of the bride and a procession to the village. Oddly enough, no one seemed to be bothered he was supposed to be dead (maybe his other name was Collins....)

The costumes were beautiful and the music, while loud (obviously meant for outdoors) was appealing. The musicians (six in all) sat at the side of the stage and seemed to be having as much fun as the actors and audience in their exuberance. Before the performance, the Tour Leader and Deputy Director of Tianjian Bureau of Culture made a speech in Chinese (translated by a Chinese interpreter) explaining the significance of the tour and something of Peking opera, concluding that he hoped it would deepen and strengthen cultural ties between China and Australia.

At the end the entire company appeared on stage for curtain calls with two of the blokes getting into those stunning generals' costumes with the banners on the back and the long pheasant feathers in the head-dress you see in *Yentang Mountain* or *Si Ping Mountain*, one of whom did an acrobatic turn (a sight to see) and yelled out, "Thank you" in English. First time I've been thanked by a Chinese general in full panoply! Then the inevitable person (Australian) appeared with bouquets of roses for the artistes - only he couldn't work out who were the women under all the brocade and make-up! He got it right in the end as the audience laughed,

This was the second time I'd seen Peking Opera. The first time was in 1983 when it was the Jiangsu Peking Opera Theatre on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Sino-Australian diplomatic relations. Again I was right down the front which was a real worry when a general in full panoply and a big black beard breathed fire out at the audience! The pieces performed were *The Monkey King Makes Havoc in Heaven* where in Monkey steals the Celestial Peaches; *The Jade Bracelet* a gentle piece about a young girl who attracts a young scholar by dropping her bracelet; *Mulberry Town* about Prime Minister Bao, of the Sung Dynasty, having to condemn the son of a woman who brought him up and having to explain this to her while touring a drought-stricken province; *Donating a Pearl on Rainbow Bridge* which featured a heroic swordswoman, a nymph who defies the gods to love a mortal and then takes on their representatives in single combat while her lover stands on the sidelines and cheers (I remember thinking you wouldn't see Joan Sutherland somersaulting into the air, kicking spears and swords while tossing off an aria); *Crossroad Inn* (aka *At the Crossroads*, see above) and *Yentang Mountain* which featured a battle between two splendid generals and no dialogue, spoken or sung.

***Tokaido* by Lucia St Clair Robson.** This is finally available out here in paperback so I got a copy - UK edition with a cover by Mick Posen depicting two people garbed as pilgrims sitting on a mountainside with a gnarled tree in blossom, gazing across at Mt Fuji. The mountains look a bit precipitous like those in Kweilin and it's a bit too busy with a small arched bridge (like you get in gardens) over a gorge, a thatched farmhouse on the edge of a precipice and a tea-house above it.

As for the story, I enjoyed it as a whole. It was certainly an original idea to use a putative daughter of Lord Asano's around whom to write a picaresque with the Ako Vendetta as a background. There are colourful characters, a strong and resourceful



heroine, plenty of action and sound historical research. My main problem was that it seemed, at times, overburdened with detail, perhaps the result of too *much* historical research, as if the author couldn't bear to leave out any fascinating titbit whether germane to the tale she told or not. (So Sakura Sogoro, for example, under another name as he lived 50 years earlier, makes an appearance). This is a problem with *Shogun*, too.

Robson does not have James Melville's gift of using but a few words to conjure up an unfamiliar object or scene. She drowns the reader in words instead. This is particularly so in the first couple of chapters where she describes minutely everyday objects and clothing. It slowed the story down and made it a bit hard going, especially as the descriptions were such that one actually had difficulty visualising what she meant. It was like that game where a person describes an everyday item very literally and the others have to guess what it is. Or like read a foreign word written in *katakana* - you have to try it over in your head several times before you realise what it's supposed to be.

One question the need for such lengthy descriptions of material culture as most of her readers would be familiar with historical Japan through films and other novels. There were also some odd typos such as "Fugi" instead of "Fuji" (obviously Fuji seen through a fog), "norimon" instead of "norimono".

Obviously others must have found it a bit much because I saw a copy of the book already in a second-hand bookshop. Still, any novel which has Mifune Toshiro (sort of) as the main character can't be all bad!