

LONE WOLF AND CUB WHITE HEAVEN IN HELL

See the Lone Wolf & Cub:Sword of Vengeance Liner Notes (also available online at <http://www.animeigo.com/samliner/lwcliner.t>) for general details on Tokugawa-era Japan.

The Sanyo-Doo Road

In Lone Wolf & Cub 5, Ogami Itto accepted an assassination request by the Kuroda Clan in Chikuzen - a southern province, approximately 100 miles north of Nagasaki (which is around the southernmost tip of Japan), in what is now the prefecture of Fukuoka.

We now find him a few hundred miles northeast, heading towards central Japan along a major roadway called the Sanyo-Doo; we are told that Ogami is heading towards the capital city of Japan, Kyo (which literally means "capital"), or what is now known as Kyoto.

Great political reforms took place in 8th century Japan, one of them being the establishment of a capital city. Prior to this, each ruler (the emperor) designated his own residence as the capital; as such, every new emperor had a new capital. The concept of the central government based inside an imperial court, and thus of a permanent capital, came from the Chinese. In 710 A.D., the city of Nara was selected as the capital, and massive architectural developments were undertaken. But, as the mid-700's were beset with a plague of all-too-powerful monasteries, in 784 A.D. the Emperor Kanmu decided to move the capital to the city of Nagaoka, and once again, in 794, to the city of Kyoto (called "Heian-Kyo", meaning "the capital of peace", at the time).

Kyoto continued to serve as Japan's capital and the home of the imperial family for the next thousand-plus years. Several hundred castles, temples and shrines were built there over the centuries, and we are told that it is here that Ogami's wife, Azami, was buried. Consequently, in this film, Ogami pays a visit there.

(Note how Daigoro pours water to cleanse his mother's tombstone. This is a ritual which continues to this day.)

During the Tokugawa period, the imperial family and the court aristocrats (who were actually living on Shogunate stipends) were almost totally powerless, and their activities were closely monitored by Shogunate officials. Their influence was limited to having a small say in certain literary matters. Nevertheless, Kyoto remained a major cultural and educational center.

Governmental affairs were administered in Edo, of course, the city which the Shogunate had made its primary home. However, when the Tokugawa Shogunate fell, in 1868, the new Japanese government changed the name of Edo to Tokyo (which is actually written with two characters for "To-", meaning "east", and "-kyo", from the Heian-Kyo and Kyoto) making Tokyo the new capital city. The imperial family were relocated to what was Edo Castle, and they continue to maintain residence there (albeit still without any governmental power whatsoever).

Kyoto, like other big cities of the world, is a busy one, yet it is full of beautifully-maintained castles

and monasteries from ancient times, as well as state-of-the-art educational and commercial centers, thanks to an expensive effort both to preserve the old and to develop the new. It is one of the most popular tourist locations in Japan.

The Tsuchigumo Tribe of the Kiso-Ontake Mountains

Running mostly east-west to connect Edo and Kyoto, another major road, the Nakasen-doo, measured approximately 400 miles in total length. It is said that during the Edo period, travellers spent anywhere between 2 to 3 weeks to travel from one end of the Nakasen-doo to the other. The Shogunate built 69 stations throughout the Nakasen-doo, which included lodgings, for the use of their officials. Several such stations were concentrated around the Kiso Mountain Range (in what is now Nagano Prefecture), which was a major source of high quality lumber for Shogunate building projects.

Ontake Mountain of Kiso, which is about 10,000 ft high, is one of the tallest mountains in Japan. It is here that the film's legendary Tsuchigumo Tribe is said to live.

The word "Tsuchigumo" literally means "Spider of the Ground (or Earth)". The Tsuchigumo are actually loosely based on the ancient, mythical natives that were said to exist in certain regions of Japan, mostly in the southern areas. The tales tell that these native people, who were referred to as "Tsuchigumo", were small but violent, had long arms and legs, and lived in caves or other dug-out places.

The Zeze Clan

From Kyoto, Ogami travelled a few miles to the east to Oomi Province (what is now called Shiga Prefecture), home of the Zeze Clan. Once there, Ogami enters a shrine by the Lake Biwa and waits to be contacted.

Lake Biwa, which measures almost 300 square miles, is Japan's largest lake, located just south-east of Kyoto.

Ogami's journey then continues hundreds of miles to the north-east, partly moving up along the Nakasen-doo. The Tsuchigumo and Retsudo's men make a stop in Kiso, but by then Ogami has travelled further north to unspecified, snow-covered mountain ranges. Compared to the southern (or the "bottom") half of Japan, which includes Kyoto, the northern parts of Japan are notorious for treacherous winters - the northwest in particular for large amounts of snow.

Other tidbits

In an early scene where Ogami is travelling through what appears to be a peasants' village near Kyoto, he takes a couple of daikon (a kind of giant, white radish) and leaves some coins. During the Edo period, daikon was among the basic staples. Its shape makes it the source of much earthy humor in Japanese movies.

In Memoriam

Katsu Shintaro died of cancer on June 21st, 1997 at the age of 65. The famous, multi-talented actor-director-producer, affectionately called "Katsu-shin" by most Japanese, began his career in

the 1940's, and was perhaps best known for his portrayal of the blind swordman, Zatoichi, in a long-running film series which was among the most successful in the history of Japanese cinema. As a producer, he fathered the hit movie series "Lone Wolf and Cub," which starred Katsu's brother, Wakayama Tomisaburo, which is now being released in the US by Samurai Cinema.

Known for his love of alcohol and cigarettes, in the last years of his life Katsu-shin spent increasing amounts of time in the hospital, only to be seen lighting up cigars at press conferences held to announce his recovery.

Two days after his death, five thousand people attended his memorial service at a Tokyo temple.

Among the many sources we have consulted in preparing these liner notes, the following were especially helpful:

- 1) "Tokugawa Japan - The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan" Chie Nakane, Shinzaburoo Ooishi and Conrad Totman, eds. Univ. of Tokyo Press, 1990
- 2) "Japan - A Historical Survey" Mikiso Hane. Scribner, 1972
- 3) "A History of Japan: 1615 - 1867" George Sanson. Stanford Univ. Press, 1963
- 4) "Kozure Ookami", vols.1-28, Koike Kazuo & Kojima Goseki, published by Koike Shoin, 1995 (re-issue)