

Time & the Japanese Zodiac:

“Hurry! We only have until the hour of the dragon.”

The hour of dragon is 8am.

“We'll surely have a huge crowd by the hour of the horse. Don't let the palisades slacken.”

The hour of the horse is 12pm (noon).

“The time: Today, the hour of the rooster.”

The hour of the rooster is 6pm.

“So when did you become a dragoon?”

The Japanese term used is “Uma-mawari,” or “Around the Horse.”

Uma-mawari were mounted guards, usually employed to guard high-ranking officers and convey messages across the battlefield. However, they would typically fight dismounted.

During peacetime, Uma-mawari would typically be employed as castle guards, and as low-ranking aides -- but higher in rank than a typical samurai retainer.

In the film, it is mentioned that the Ezaki family had a stipend of 40 koku; while this is enough for the family to live frugally, it does not leave much left over for the purchase and maintenance of a horse, which is why they ended up with “a nag”.

In the West, dragoons were originally mounted infantry, who were trained in horse riding as well as infantry fighting skills. During the 18th century, usage of dragoons altered into conventional light cavalry units & personnel. The name is possibly derived from a type of firearm called a dragon carried by dragoons in the French Army. Today, the title of Dragoon has been retained by a number of armored or ceremonial mounted regiments.

Magotayuu (Magota)'s position of Soujyaban (Chief of Protocol)

A Soujyaban is an etiquette educator & ambassador. Both fiefs and the Shogunate appointed Soujyaban. Shogunate Soujyaban had many roles, including:

- 1) Court manner and etiquette instruction, particularly with respect to rituals.
- 2) When a Daimyo bring gifts to the Shogun, they checked the contents and informed the Shogun.
- 3) Informing the Daimyo of important decisions of the Shogunate (such as moving of the fief positions) or representing the Shogun at fief events and ceremonies (such as funerals).

In the Shogunate, the 20-30 Soujyaban were as important as Ometsuke or Metsuke (Inspectors).

Magota is a fief-appointed Soujyaban, so he was less important, but had similar duties, although still an elite position in his fief.

“Mueki Heyazumi” (the word Magota used to insult Shinpachi)

Literal meaning: Unemployed and living in a room of father/brother's home.

Until an heir takes over his father's position and becomes the head of the family, he has no position and no income, and the position of a 2nd son or younger ones are even worse, since they cannot expect to inherit at all. Thus these men have to live with their family, and have no real occupation. The modern equivalent is “living in your parent's basement”.

A 2nd son like Shinpachi has few options: he might be adopted into a family with no sons, become a ronin, become a scholar or teacher, or join the priesthood. Unless his family is rich, he is unlikely to be able to officially marry and have children.

Kinnosuke NAKAMURA (aka Kinnosuke YOROZUYA) (November 20, 1932 - March 10, 1997)

Born in Tokyo to the son of a famous kabuki actor, Kinnosuke became one of the biggest stars in post-war Japanese cinema. Beginning with his first film in the early 1950s, Kinnosuke worked almost exclusively for Toei Studios during the decade, completing over 80 films, an average of over 13 a year.

By the start of the 1960s, Kinnosuke was a certified movie star and one of the top contract actors at Toei. Apart from the monumental Miyamoto Musashi series, some of his highlights of the decade include this film, Hideo GOSHA's *The Secret of the Urn and Gyokin*; Hiroshi INAGAKI's final film, the star-studded *Incident at Blood Pass*; and the Golden Bear winning *Bushido Zankoku Monogatari* (*Bushido: The Cruel Code of the Samurai*). Over the course of the decade, he appeared in almost 50 films.

During the 1970s, Kinnosuke split his time between television and film. His most notable small screen work was the hit Japanese television series *Lone Wolf and Cub*, playing OGAMI Itto from 1973-1976. At the end of the decade he appeared in two Kinji FUKASAKU films, *Ako-Jo Danzetsu* (*Swords of Vengeance*) and *Yagyu Ichizoku no Inbo* (*The Shogun's Samurai*).

His last film was 1989's *Sen no Rikyu* (*Death of a Tea Master*). During the 90s, he appeared in a handful of television dramas, culminating in an appearance on the Japanese television series *Kanpani* ("Company") in 1996. A year later, he died from pneumonia at age 64.

By the end of his career, Kinnosuke had acted in over 140 films.

He was twice nominated by the Japanese Academy, for the 1978 film *The Shogun's Samurai* and for the 1989 film *Death of a Tea Master*. A year before his death, the Academy presented him with a Lifetime Achievement Award and one year after his death he was bestowed a Special Award for his career.

Tadashi IMAI (Director) (January 8, 1912 - November 2, 1991)

Tadashi IMAI grew up the son a priest in the Shibuya district of Tokyo. While attending Tokyo Imperial University, he joined a communist youth league and was arrested a handful of times for "radical" activities. In 1935, Imai dropped out of school and joined J.O. Studio as an assistant director. Four years later, at age 27, he directed his his first film, *Numazu Military Academy*. Regarding his quick immersion into film, Donald Richie states, "Unlike other directors of his generation, notably Kinoshita and Kurosawa, who underwent long apprenticeships under directors SHIMAZU Yasujiro and YAMAMOTO Kajiro, respectively, Imai entered the cinema untrained. This does not mean that his point of view is amateurish or awkward, but it explains his stylistic diffusion or, another way of looking at it, his freedom from limitations."

During WWII, Tadashi was forced to direct pro-war propaganda films for the studio. However, his first film following the war, *Minshu no Teki* (*An Enemy of the People*), took a pro-Communist stance and attacked the rulers of Japan. As Donald Richie points out, Tadashi's film passed the US censorship boards "because it was anti-Zaibatsu and heaped scorn and ridicule on the emperor system." The film did not go unnoticed to Japanese critics, as they awarded him Best Director at the Mainichi Film Concours.

In 1951, Tadashi helped usher-in the postwar independent film movement with *Dokkoi Ikiteiru* (*Still We Live*). It is credited with being the first independently produced Japanese feature film made outside of the studio.

Over the next ten years, Tadashi became influenced by Italian neo-realism and focused his attention to several films that dealt with social injustice. *Himeyuri no To* (*The Tower of Lilies*) and *Nigorie* (*An Inlet of Muddy Water*) were released in 1953 and both films deal with the oppression of women in Japanese society. Three years later, he made *Mahiru no Ankoku* (*Darkness at Noon*), a film about four young men who were arrested, beaten, and coerced into confessing to a crime they did not commit; the film was based on a similar trial that was occurring simultaneously in Japan at the time. By the end of the decade, Tadashi's films had amassed over 30 nominations from various Japanese and international festivals.

His last film, *War and Youth*, was released less than one month after his death in 1991. Although Tadashi was not nominated for his direction, the film garnered nine Japanese Academy nominations (winning two); at the Montreal World Film Festival, Tadashi was awarded the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury.

In addition to winning the Golden Bear for *Bushido*, Tadashi won Best Director at the 1958 Berlin Film Festival for *Junai Monogatari* (*The Story of Pure Love*). Two of his films were nominated at the Cannes Film Festival: 1953's *Nigorie* (*An Inlet of Muddy Water*) and 1957's *Kome* (*The Rice People*).

Over a career in film that lasted over 50 years, Tadashi directed almost 50 films. Having never received a nomination from the Japanese Academy during his lifetime, he was awarded a posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992.

Shinobu HASHIMOTO (screenplay) (April 18th, 1918 - Present)

HASHIMOTO is a well-known screenwriter, director, and producer, and a frequent collaborator with Akira KUROSAWA .

Regarded as Japan's top screenwriter (*Rashomon*, *Seven Samurai*, *The Hidden Fortress*), he has won 16 awards for his writing. Born April 18, 1918, he was still working as recently as 2008, when he wrote the screenplay for "I want to be a Shellfish".