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Chapter 1

One Big Happy Family? The Social Relationships and Legacy of the Kinoshita-gumi

Lauri Kitsnik

In her best-selling memoir, the actress Takamine Hideko (1924–2010), who starred in key Kinoshita films such as *Karumen kokyō ni kaeru* (*Carmen Comes Home*, 1951) and *Nijūshi no hitomi* (*Twenty-Four Eyes*, 1954), reminisces about her first encounter with the director. As their lunch at the legendary Ginza restaurant Hanabasha was drawing to its close, Takamine noticed a swarm of smartly dressed young men standing impatiently outside the window; she describes them as "unmistakably Kinoshita-gumi" (Takamine 1976 [1998]: 175). A leading 1960s New Wave director Shinoda Masahiro (1931–2025) accounts the same sight of a dashing band of assistant directors (*jokantoku*) wearing matching suits and ties (Shirasaka 2008: 209) that seemed to orbit Kinoshita wherever he went and would have been familiar to anyone working at the Shōchiku studios in the 1950s and early 1960s. While similar groups of associates formed around other prominent directors of the day, the Kinoshita-gumi seems to have possessed a distinctive prestige and aura that set it apart from the rest. Above all, its presence poses intriguing questions about the industrial roles and homosocial relationships between its members, and its significance within the broader landscape of Japanese cinema and the studio system.

Japanese studio filmmaking has sometimes been taken to resemble a tightly knit family structure, highlighting both the hierarchical and collaborative nature of the industry. Kinoshita Keisuke stands as both an example and an exception. This essay aims to re-evaluate the social dynamics and production methods, focusing on a group centered around the director during his long tenure at Shochiku: the Kinoshita-gumi. This provides a unique lens through which to

examine the dynamics between the director and his collaborators, as Kinoshita's nurturing and supportive approach contrasts with similar working units formed by his contemporaries. By delineating the roles and inner relationships and contextualizing the production methods of this group, this essay sheds light on the shifting semi-familial structure at Shochiku and its impact on creativity in filmmaking. Extending this line of thought into Kinoshita's later career as television writer and producer, the existence of the Kinoshita-gumi raises additional questions about the director's legacy and the opportunities and challenges faced by his protégés in carving their own paths within the industry.

The Kinoshita-gumi and the Roles Within

In the context of the hierarchical structure of major film studios, "kumi" (group, team, gang) indicates a production unit built around a director. Kimata Kimihiko (1998: 166) astutely points out the yakuza-like connotation of the term, hinting at the connections between early cinema and organized crime. He also posits that it is through Shimazu Yasujirō (1897–1945), perhaps the quintessential prewar Shochiku director, that a lineage including Gosho Heinosuke (1902–81), Toyoda Shirō (1906–77), Yoshimura Kōzaburō (1911–2000), Nakamura Noboru (1913–81), and Kinoshita, all of whom at some point worked as his assistant directors, first emerged. While such industrial genealogies have at times been a popular device for structuring film history (in English language scholarship, Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie's *Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (1959 [1982]) is a notable proponent), they tell little about the exact mode of the working relationship and the extent of influence on the subsequent work of younger filmmakers. In this regard, the Kinoshita-gumi appears to be a helpful example not only because of the numerous recorded accounts of the generally nurturing atmosphere within the team, but also the way Kinoshita facilitated the careers of his associates.

Kinoshita's most frequent collaborators include several members of his own family. His younger brother Chūji (1916–2018) composed scores (forty-three in total) to all of Kinoshita's films between *Waga koi seshi otome* (*The Girl I Loved*, 1946) and the director's final feature, *Chichi* (*Father*, 1988), with the notable exception of *Narayama bushikō* (*The Ballad of Narayama*, 1958) which employed *nagauta* repertoire to match its faux-Kabuki visual style. Kinoshita's brother-in-law, Kusuda Hiroshi (1916–2008), served as the cinematographer on all forty-two features between the director's debut, *Hana saku minato* (*Port of Flowers*, 1943), and *Natsukashiki fue ya taiko* (*Lovely Flute and Drum*, 1967), save for *Rikugun* (*Army*, 1943) which he, ironically, missed due to being conscripted. Kinoshita's sister, and wife of Hiroshi, Kusuda Yoshiko (1924–2013) received

screenwriting credits for *Yūyakegumo* (*Farewell to Dream*, 1956), before becoming a prolific writer for both cinema and television. In addition, Kinoshita had a long working relationship with the sound recording and lighting units led by Ōno Hisao and Toyoshima Ryōzō, respectively, credited for all his films between 1950 and 1964. Not to be overlooked is the indispensable role of the sole female member of the Kinoshita-gumi, the editor Sugihara Yoshie (1912–2001), who played a pivotal role in the post-production process. Sugihara edited nearly all of the director's films, missing only three in the late 1940s and Kinoshita's single venture outside Japan, *Suriranka no ai to wakare* (*Love and Separation in Sri Lanka*, 1976). However, it is the shifting and ever-expanding group of assistant directors that arguably formed the core of Kinoshita-gumi, both in the vivid recollections of its contemporaries and in terms of the director's legacy beyond his own film career.

A few words are in place about the institution and function of assistant directors who played a significant role within the Kinoshita-gumi and the overall system at the Shochiku studios. According to Masumoto Kinen (1988: 241), the process of examining, employing, and managing fresh recruits at Ōfuna was the responsibility of the Directing Assistants Office (*Enshutsu joshushitsu*), a committee chosen by the existing assistant directors. Rather than being attached to any particular department, the committee reported directly to the head of the studio, which made it relatively autonomous from the rest of the organization. Although paid meagerly, the assistant directors enjoyed a level of freedom rarely seen within the studio system and were allowed to explore their creativity and develop their skills in a less restrictive environment. Masumoto (1988: 239) also highlights the opportunities given to assistant directors to start their directing careers with shorter "sister pictures" (*shisutaa eiga*) between 1953 and 1956; this is how Kobayashi Masaki (1916–96) and Nomura Yoshitarō (1919–2005) received their first directing credits and then moved on to bigger projects, while others often returned to their former positions as assistant directors.

Those aspiring to become directors at Shochiku first had to undergo examinations where they were often in competition with other recent graduates from elite universities. For instance, the recruitment process for assistant directors in 1953 was highly competitive, with only eight applicants out of 2,000 being selected. Notable figures in this cohort include Shinoda Masahiro, but also Kamimura Tsutomu (1929) and Sakurai Hideo (1930–2011), both of whom went on to work with Kinoshita. Kamimura was scouted by the Kinoshita-gumi right after the exam and joined the crew for *Nihon no higeki* (*A Japanese Tragedy*, 1953). He recalls his first encounter with the director that took place on the second floor of the main studio building where the directors' personal offices were located, being led to a room with a sign "Kinoshita-gumi" hanging outside. Kamimura

admits to expecting to be intimidated by the great director, but Kinoshita's gentle smile and how he immediately felt a sense of familiarity and acceptance pushed these fears aside. After a script-reading session, the entire crew was invited to Kinoshita's home in Tsujidō for a night of drinking and entertainment: this recurred at regular intervals. "There was an intimacy exceeding that of a family or relatives" (Masumoto 1988: 243–4). A neophyte, Kamimura thought that this was precisely how films were made; only later did he find out that the atmosphere of other "kumi," depending on which director they were built around, could be very different.

Shochiku's "kumi" commonly included four assistant directors, with a clear division of labor between them with particular roles assigned to each. Masumoto (1988) uses precisely the example of Kinoshita-gumi to elucidate the inner workings and roles within such production units. Starting from the bottom, the newest member or the fourth (*fōsu*) was in charge of the clapboard (*kachinko*), placing of which within the frame was also considered an art of its own. The third assistant director (*sado*) was responsible for "taking the sheet" (*shiitō o toru*), in other words overseeing the continuity, the task of the script supervisor (*sukuriputa*) and as such crucial for the subsequent editing process. For *A Japanese Tragedy*, Kobayashi, who had then already directed his first (short) feature, briefly returned to the Kinoshita-gumi in that role for one final time. Provided that all future directors at Shochiku had undergone apprenticeship in this aspect of filmmaking as assistant directors, there is an implication of their deep understanding of film editing. This is also true of Kinoshita himself, who before even becoming an assistant director for Shimazu and Yoshimura took on various roles within the crew ranging from film developer to assistant cinematographer.

The second assistant director (*sekando*) was already trusted with major artistic decisions during the production, which included improving the script, casting and directing actors, and assisting with the overall content of the work. Together with the third assistant director, he was also in charge of costumes and props. As I will discuss later, a major responsibility of the second assistant director in the Kinoshita-gumi was to help with completing the script by taking down notes dictated by the director. Between 1950 and 1955, this role was filled by Matsuyama Zenzō (1925–2016), who was to become a notable screenwriter and director in his own right. Subsequently, the same task was assigned to the future New Wave director Yoshida Kijū (1933–2022) and the seminal television writer and novelist Yamada Ta'ichi (1934–2023); the latter was to stay with Kinoshita even after the director's departure from the film world in 1964. Another notable director who has been often associated with the Kinoshita-gumi is Teshigahara Hiroshi (1927–2001), although his role

seems to have been closer to that of an observer rather than having any specific place within the hierarchy of assistant directors.

The chief assistant director (*heddo*) held a distinct position with significant authority and responsibility, acting as the leader of the entire crew within the Kinoshita-gumi. Unlike other studios, Shochiku did not have a separate production head (*seisaku shunin*), and so the chief assistant director took on the role of discussing the budget and representing the director's interests with the management. Supported by the director's authority, the chief assistant director managed production expenses, scheduling, and communication with actors. This also meant that it was common for him to be absent from the shooting set. Before embarking on his acclaimed directing career, Kobayashi had been Kinoshita's chief assistant director since 1947. After his departure, Kawazu Yoshirō (1926–72) who had been a member of the Kinoshita-gumi since the director's first postwar film, *Ōsone-ke no asa* (*Morning for the Ōsone Family*, 1946), was briefly elevated to the role before moving on to a directing career in 1955. Ōtsuki Yoshikazu (1927–2011), who had entered Shochiku in 1951 along with the future director Imamura Shōhei, served as the chief assistant director between *Tōi kumo* (*Distant Clouds*, 1955) and *Fuefukigawa* (*The River Fuefuki*, 1960), then made six films at Shochiku before becoming a prolific television director. In 1961, Sakurai took over and stayed until the end of Kinoshita's Shochiku career and later worked for television. Yokobori Kōji (1935), who joined the Kinoshita-gumi for Kōge (*The Scent of Incense*, 1964), became the chief assistant director for Kinoshita's five final features between 1979 and 1988 upon the director's return to the big screen.

In sum, there were fair and clear opportunities for upward mobility within the Kinoshita-gumi and further on to individual directing careers. As we have seen, this was precisely what became available to former chief or second assistant directors Kobayashi, Kawazu, Matsuyama, and Yoshida. However, this progression model became problematic as the fortunes of the film industry declined beginning in the early 1960s, leaving the emerging medium of television as the only and perhaps obvious outlet for the skills and creativity acquired as members of the Kinoshita-gumi. At any rate, the apprenticeship within that group proved to be a lucrative opportunity for aspiring filmmakers, offering a valuable professional experience as well as an industrial network in preparation for their future endeavors. There was certainly an aura of exclusivity surrounding the Kinoshita-gumi. Yamada Yōji (1931), undoubtedly Shochiku's most commercially successful director, who never had an opportunity to join the group, somewhat enviously remarks that "besides, you couldn't be included to the Kinoshita-gumi if you weren't an elegant, well-groomed young man (laughs)" (Yamada and Satō 1998: 20). This and similar quips that surface here and there

in the contemporaries' recollections might call into question the exact motivations behind the director's selection principles and the nature of the interpersonal relationships within the group, hence the question mark in the title of this essay. However, Yamada is quick to add that, in comparison to directors like Mizoguchi Kenji (1898–1956) or Ozu Yasujirō (1903–63), Kinoshita did exhibit a remarkable ability to foster and produce talented individuals. The next section tries to identify the methods through which the knowledge, skills and general attitude toward filmmaking were passed on within the Kinoshita-gumi and the results this yielded in the subsequent careers of the crew.

Kinoshita's Working Methods and Their Influence

Kinoshita's final chief assistant director Yokobori (2000: 112) points out the frequency of teachers appearing as main characters in the director's films, suggesting that Kinoshita himself felt an affinity for this role. While Kinoshita was something of an exception in preferring to be addressed by his crew as "Kinoshita-san" rather than the more common "sensei" (teacher), there is enough evidence to claim that he made use of this position by taking serious interest in advancing the filmmaking skills and careers of his protégés. The former members of the Kinoshita-gumi have attested to experiencing a sense of personal growth and mentorship under Kinoshita's guidance beyond their professional interactions, with the director frequently inviting closest associates to his home, taking them out for food and entertainment, and imparting life lessons along the way. He was known for generous gestures such as sending a tailor over to the house of each assistant director to take measurements for a suit when a film was finished. Later, after having made the shift to a new career in television producing, Kinoshita developed a habit of making personal phone calls with detailed advice immediately after that evening's show's credits had rolled (Yokobori 2000: 16–17). In this sense, he was clearly committed to grooming and supporting the next generation of filmmakers.

While the things mentioned above are difficult to quantify, certain methods that Kinoshita used during his own directing career proved influential for his students. In particular, it was Kinoshita's intuitive and linear approach to screenwriting that closely involved members of his team. The process of producing a script basically meant that Kinoshita would dictate it to his second assistant director, who would then transcribe it (*kōjutsu hikki*). Sakurai reminisces about being holed up in an inn at a hot spring resort where it took three or four days to write out the story from the notes taken by the assistant director (Sakurai and Tanaka 1998: 164). In many instances, parts of the script were even acted out in the process, with the director imitating the actions and voices

of different characters (Yoshida and Nomura 1998: 160). While Kinoshita is typically credited as the sole screenwriter for his films, there is a good reason to believe that there was in fact a healthy share of collaborative effort involved, which also suggests how shrewdly Kinoshita made use of the particular talents of his team members.

Kinoshita's scripts tend to have a much higher proportion of dialogue in relation to descriptive and directional passages (*tōgaki*). However, this does not necessarily mean that Kinoshita would have denied the importance of the latter; rather, the images had already sufficiently formed in his mind and could later be recreated from the dialogue. At the same time, Kinoshita was known for particularly praising the skills of writing descriptive passages in the work of his protégés: it was based on their writing samples that Kinoshita first decided to recruit both Yoshida and Yamada. It is Yamada in particular, later admitting that working with Kinoshita on a script often felt like taking valuable private lessons, who has displayed an influence of his teacher's approach to screenwriting in his subsequent work on acclaimed television dramas. Unlike the more conventional method of meticulously pre-planning the writing process, commonly called *hakogaki* (writing in boxes), Yamada adopted a style where the first draft served as a substitute for this planning device, allowing for later adjustments and revisions as the writing progressed, a method that echoes the intuitive approach favored by Kinoshita.

While the term Kinoshita-gumi has been used here to denote the director's crew, particularly a group of assistant directors, an adjacent notion, Kinoshita-gakkō (Kinoshita School), commonly refers to a string of actors whom the director was first to discover and then regularly cast in his films. According to Yoshimura Kōzaburō, this concept of a creative school or even family (Kinoshita-ikka) had already begun to take shape during Kinoshita's days as an assistant director at Shochiku Kamata studios in the early 1930s (Yokobori 2000: 50). From Shimazu, a mentor to both Kinoshita and Yoshimura, the director inherited a softer touch which allowed him to establish a more nurturing and supportive relationship with his actors. As noted by Satō Tadao in his commentary for the DVD release of *Kotoshi no Koi* (*This Year's Love*, 1962), this approach was also in stark contrast with the more authoritative directing style of the likes of Naruse Mikio (1905–69), Kurosawa Akira (1910–98), Mizoguchi, or Ozu.

At the same time, there was a quasi-hierarchical structure to the Kinoshita School as well, with the director himself being considered *kōchō* (principal) and other leading members of the crew *kyōjujin* (faculty) (Yokobori 2000: 53–4). The first "graduate" was Igawa Kuniko (1923–2012), followed by other notable actors, such as Sada Keiji (1926–64), Katsuragi Yōko (1930–2007), Kobayashi Toshiko (1932–2016), Mikuni Rentarō (1923–2013), Ishihama Akira (1935–2022), and

Tamura Takahiro (1928–2006). Takamine (1976 [1998]: 175) is among many to recall how Kinoshita was able to make the often harsh and tedious work of film acting pleasant. The director also played a pivotal role in Takamine's marriage to Matsuyama, his second assistant director at the time, in 1955. Kinoshita personally devised a special press conference announcing the engagement, lest the gossip journalists should obtain the information beforehand; subsequently, this became something of a template for similar occasions when the entertainment industry needed to make public the news about personal lives of its biggest stars. One can only guess the pleasure (and possible projection) that such opportunities to facilitate new familial relationships between his closest associates might have provided to the lifelong bachelor.

Kimata (1998) has attempted to delineate Kinoshita's influence on the subsequent work of his crew members. For instance, he points out how Matsuyama succeeded in emulating Kinoshita-style screenwriting, with its emphasis on narrative flow rather than rigid structure, and as a director often displayed a preference toward tackling social issues. Kawazu, who directed twenty-four features at Shochiku between 1955 and 1969, to a number of which Kinoshita provided the screenplay, has often been characterized as the most faithful student of Kinoshita's particular brand of melodrama; his career was cut short by his death at the early age of forty-six.[1] In contrast, Kobayashi, the earliest of Kinoshita's assistant directors, after beginning his directing career with rather conventionally melodramatic features such as *Magokoro* (*Sincerity*, 1953, screenplay by Kinoshita), seemed to have deliberately avoided becoming a second Kinoshita and instead pursued his own distinct worldview in widely acclaimed films that include *Ningen no jōken* (*The Human Condition* trilogy, 1959–61) and *Seppuku* (*Harakiri*, 1962), while the general humanistic values inherent to Kinoshita's work remained deeply ingrained in his films. The careers of former assistant directors Ōtsuki, who moved on to direct TV thrillers, and Sakurai, who at one point specialized in pop song films (*kayō eiga*) seem to bear even less similarities to the thematic preferences of their teacher; Kamimura, after directing two features, continued to work at Shochiku as the producer for early 1970s popular comedies by Morisaki Azuma (1927–2020) and Yamada Yōji.

Among the former Kinoshita-gumi members, Yoshida Kijū has been by far the most successful in preserving a reputation on the strength of his late 1960s–early 1970s work informed by European art cinema and made after parting ways with Shochiku. Yoshida himself has noted Kinoshita's determination to force his assistant directors into directing features of their own (Yoshida and Nomura 1998: 159). Apparently, this often happened without too many strings attached as to whether a student should stay loyal to the style of the teacher, as the case of Yoshida clearly shows.

According to Yoshida, if there was anything he learned from Kinoshita apart from a peculiar approach to screenwriting, it was a general composure toward filmmaking, or strong morals as a director: to be first and foremost demanding toward oneself and not the others (ibid.). Kimata (1998: 171) goes as far as saying that Kinoshita was a genius not only as a director and writer, but in equal measure as an educator. This statement should probably be taken with a grain of salt, but Kinoshita's lessons were certainly not about submitting his students to a hierarchic relationship nor restricting them to some particular mode of filmmaking but rather providing them enough experience and support to eventually embark on careers of their own. This attitude alone sets Kinoshita clearly apart from many of his contemporaries and his legacy may well lie in his commitment to education, the versatility and flexibility he instilled in his disciples, and the opportunities he provided for emerging filmmakers.

The influence of Kinoshita's working methods on his students would be somewhat easier to identify if only the studio system had not experienced a deep slump by the mid-1960s which partly prompted the director to leave Shochiku. The already more established former Kinoshita-gumi members were able to continue directing amid the admittedly reduced opportunities but ostensibly more creative freedom allowed by independent film production. For the slightly younger generation represented by Ōtsuki, Sakurai, and Kamimura, losing the backing of a major studio became a much bigger issue. For them, as well as their former teacher Kinoshita, the new medium of television provided a much-needed lifeline in order to keep working in the realm of audio-visual storytelling. However, while connecting their work with the new audiences, this also proved problematic vis-à-vis Kinoshita's reputation as a filmmaker beyond his 1950s heyday. The final part of this essay focuses on Kinoshita's work after his departure from Shochiku in 1964 and its implications for the legacy of his career in cinema.

Beyond the Big Screen and Back

Looking at Kinoshita's filmography, one might easily get the impression that he suddenly stopped working and inexplicably disappeared from the scene after the 1964 release of *The Scent of Incense*. Indeed, this bears some similarities with career gaps of fellow filmmakers, notably Kurosawa who released nothing between the years 1965 and 1970. While the latter director's absence can be partly explained by his ultimately doomed detour to Hollywood, Kinoshita quickly followed up leaving Shochiku, his home studio, and the sole employer since the beginning of his career three decades earlier, with a very successful career in television production. This abrupt transition has commonly met

with neglect and criticism and has also jeopardized the director's reputation. Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie even characterize Kinoshita's subsequent TV work as "frankly soap opera." (1982: 460) While Kinoshita's involvement with television has been much maligned and seen as an unfortunate fall from his hitherto esteemed position, it is also worth noting that at least among comparable filmmakers, Kinoshita was one of the first to embrace the new, increasingly attractive medium and to capitalize on its popularity, amassing a small fortune in the process.

In 1964, with the aid of the advertising agency Hakuhōdō and the Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS), Kinoshita formed Kinoshita Keisuke Production, and began producing weekly television drama series under the label of *Kinoshita Keisuke Gekijō* (*Kinoshita Keisuke Theater*). The first series aired on the TBS channel on October 27, 1964, only five months after the release of *The Scent of Incense*. Nine series followed until 1967 when the Tuesday evening 9:00 p.m. slot was renamed as the *Kinoshita Keisuke Hour* (1967–74). This label that produced fifteen series proved even more successful and spawned *Kinoshita Keisuke ningen no uta* (*Kinoshita Keisuke's Songs of People*, 1970–77, 24 series) which aired on Thursdays at 10:00 p.m. For the first five series in 1964–65, Kinoshita took on the roles of producer and writer as well as director, but subsequently handed over the directing duties to his former assistant directors Kawazu, Sakurai, Ōtsuki, and Yokobori. His brother Chūji often featured as the composer and his sister Kusuda Yoshiko wrote several teleplays. The late 1970s even saw the addition of Kusuda Yasuyuki (1946), the son of Hiroshi and Yoshiko, as producer and director. By this time, Kinoshita was very little involved in the actual production but relied on others to carry on the brand (Nakajima 1998: 184). In 1979, the name of the company was slightly changed into Kinoshita Production, and it continued to churn out television series until the turn of the century when it was renamed Dreamax Television Inc.

Leaving Shochiku was certainly a turning point in Kinoshita's life and career. Yoshimura Hideo (2000: 169–74), who has written extensively on Kinoshita, provides several possible interpretations as to why the director decided to leave cinema. First, Kinoshita recognized the shifting landscape of the industry from 1958 to 1964 and saw the potential of television as the medium of the future. Second, he may have grown weary of Shochiku's conservative attitude and desired more creative freedom. Third, Kinoshita believed that cinema alone was no longer sufficient, and television offered both financial opportunities and the chance to reach a wider audience. He might have seen this as a new start, catering to the growing fan base of television dramas. Additionally, Kinoshita had concerns about the direction cinema was taking, with its increasing focus on sex and violence. However, according to Yoshimura, this came at the expense

of Kinoshita the auteur, who unwittingly lost his renowned skills for lyricism in the process.

It seems that Kinoshita's death in December 1998 acted as a catalyst for bringing about a collective attempt at re-evaluating his work, as a number of monographs were published within a relatively short timeframe (Mikuni 1999; Yokobori 2000; Yoshimura 2000). Even shortly before that, in August 1998, *Kinema Junpō* had released a special issue *Kurosawa Akira to Kinoshita Keisuke: Subarashiki kyosei* (*Kurosawa Akira and Kinoshita Keisuke: Splendid Giant Stars*), perhaps in anticipation (correctly, as it turns out) of the impending demise of both filmmakers. At that point, Kurosawa had secured his place as one of the true greats of world cinema, and aligning Kinoshita with him was a statement that arguably inaugurated a newly found interest in and laid the foundation for reconsidering the director's work. Notably, this highly informative volume included a full chapter on "Television's Kinoshita Keisuke" (*Terebi no Kinoshita Keisuke*) by Nakajima Shinsuke, and in another chapter on Kinoshita's associates, Kimata Kimihiko sought balance between cinema and television by discussing the contributions of Kinoshita's former students in both media.

Besides members of Kinoshita's extended family and several former assistant directors getting chances to work for television, it was perhaps Yamada Ta'ichi, who had been responsible for transcribing screenplays during the director's final years at Shochiku, that most excelled in the new medium. After leaving the company in 1965 upon Kinoshita's insistence, he went on to contribute to several *Kinoshita Keisuke Theater*, *Kinoshita Keisuke Hour*, and *Kinoshita Keisuke's Songs of People* entries, such as *Oyaji daiko* (*Old Man's Drum*, 1968–69) and *Sorezore no aki* (*Separate Autumns*, 1973). For the latter, it was Kinoshita who encouraged Yamada to fully employ his own writing style. Yamada quickly established a reputation as the preeminent television writer, underlined by the decision of the Japan Broadcasting Company (NHK) to name its first screenwriter-focused television series after him. The Yamada Ta'ichi series produced such acclaimed dramas as *Kishibe no arubamu* (*Kishibe Album*, 1977) that depicted the breakdown of a middle-class family in a realistic manner hitherto unseen in the realm of Japanese television, and *Fuzoroi no ringotachi* (*Assorted Apples*, four seasons, 1983–1997) about a cohort of college students. Occasionally, Yamada wrote for cinema, receiving credits for films such as *Shōnen jidai* (*Childhood Days*, 1990, Shinoda Masahiro), as well as an adaptation of his own Yamamoto Shūgorō prizewinning novel *Ijintachi to no natsu* (*The Discarnates*, 1988, Ōbayashi Nobuhiko, remade in English as *All of Us Strangers* [Andrew Haigh 2023]).

Given the immense popularity of drama series bearing Kinoshita's name that were aired during prime time (*golden hour* in Japanese) there is an entire

generation that ironically associates him with television rather than cinema. Nakajima (1998: 181), who grew up in the 1970s, admits to being one, and claims that Kinoshita might have been one of the first people working in the film industry to recognize the real potential of television. It can be speculated that by 1964, the big screen was starting to feel too confined for Kinoshita's ambitious vision, and this led him toward the realm of television dramas, which offered more scope for expansive storytelling. In hindsight, it could be said that an increasing emphasis on seriality already present in Japanese cinema since the late 1950s, a trend that Kinoshita had resisted at the time, necessarily came to full force in his television work. At the same time, there is some evidence to suggest that even on the small screen, Kinoshita continued to think big. Nakajima (1998: 183) points out that there was a sense of testing the limits of television in Kinoshita's early work for the medium, such as *Akkerakan* (*Flabbergasted*, 1964) where the director experimented with shooting with only one camera. Occasionally, Kinoshita also insisted on employing 35mm film and location filming to enhance the visual quality of his television productions. Kinoshita's propensity for formal experimentation, which at times surfaced in his films such *Karumen junjōsu* (*Carmen's Pure Love*, 1952), *The Ballad of Narayama*, or *The River Fuefuki*, also carried over into his small-screen projects.

Even during the time when Kinoshita spent most of his energy on television work, he occasionally contributed to cinema, such as the screenwriter to *Chikogusa* (*Green Light to Joy*, Maruyama Seiji, 1967), a poignant tale of a burned-out student and an out-of-luck miner who keep meeting at an *oden* (fishcake stew) stand near a train station. The film features Atsumi Kiyoshi (1928–96) in a little-known but memorable role before his Tora-san fame. After completing tw films with the backing of Toho in 1967 and 1976, respectively, Kinoshita secured funding from his television station TBS for *Shōdō satsujin: Musuko yo* (*Oh, My Son!*, 1979) that also saw the director cross paths with his former employer Shochiku, a working relationship that continued until his final feature, *Father*, a decade later. This homecoming marked another turning point in Kinoshita's career. Returning to big-screen production also enabled the director to form what Yokobori (2000: 144) calls the New Kinoshita-gumi (Shin-Kinoshita-gumi), where trust among the members still played a crucial role, exemplified by Kinoshita's dictum: "I only hate people who lie" (*Uso o tsuku hito dake ga kirai*).

Perhaps fittingly, it was Yamada Ta'ichi, having followed in his teacher's footsteps from cinema to television (and occasionally back), that delivered the eulogy at Kinoshita's funeral, who had no descendants of his own. By most accounts, he was a benevolent father-figure to his students and associates who, in turn, seem to have only laudatory things to say about him. At the same time, Kinoshita appears to have resisted the kind of reverent attitude often paid to a

sensei: "It gives me the creeps if someone calls me 'teacher.' I'll fire anyone who does that" (Ishizaka 1988: 96). Ultimately, the relationship between Kinoshita and his assistant directors would be better described as that between *senpai* and *kōhai*, senior and junior colleagues. At any rate, Kinoshita's ability to nurture talent and foster a supportive environment set him apart from other directors, perhaps offering a glimpse of an alternative to the toxic masculinity often associated with that generation of Japanese filmmakers. This gentler approach inevitably makes it more difficult to display and sustain an authoritarian image of a genius, something that the reception of other directors, notably Kurosawa, strongly relies on. Somewhat paradoxically, then, Kinoshita's strongest legacy might have been to allow his students to be and become filmmakers different from himself, as the case of Kobayashi and Yoshida clearly demonstrates. As his films often reflect a temperament that embraces subtlety, empathy, and a rejection of traditional power dynamics, frequently focusing on the struggles of the marginalized, it was Kinoshita's similarly balanced approach to social relationships within film production that stood in contrast to what was the norm of the day, making the Kinoshita-gumi a coveted environment in which to work and learn about cinema for an entire generation of young filmmakers.

Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP21K12900). I would also like to express my gratitude to Kubo Yutaka for kindly pointing me in the right direction when looking for reminiscences by Kinoshita's former associates and contemporaries.

Note

1. Kawazu's team could be seen as an extension of the Kinoshita-gumi proper: Kinoshita Chūji wrote scores for most of his films, Kusuda Yoshiko wrote screenplays for seven of them, and Kusuda Hiroshi's former assistant Arano Ryōichi became Kawazu's chief cinematographer.

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Chapter 2

Reading between the Lines: Contrary Messages in the Wartime Films

Earl Jackson

During the war years, Kinoshita Keisuke co-wrote the screenplay for *Kanchō imada shisezu* (*The Spy Is Not Yet Dead*, Yoshimura Kozaburō, 1942) and made his directorial debut with *Hana saku minato* (*Port of Flowers*, 1943) followed in short order by *Ikite iru Magoroku* (*The Living Magoroku*, 1943), *Kanko no machi* (*Jubilation Street*, 1944), and *Rikugun* (*Army*, 1944). Although *Army* received substantial attention during the war and is often cited for the ambivalence of its final scene, these works have generally received markedly less attention than Kinoshita's other films. In a 1949 interview that aims to cover Kinoshita's career from his apprenticeship in the Shochiku photography department to the present day, the interviewer, Imamura Miyoo, makes a rather startling leap. After mentioning *Port of Flowers*, Imamura immediately offers an observation about Kinoshita's later films: "After *Port of Flowers*, except for *Ōsone-ke no ashita* (*Morning for the Ōsone Family*, 1946), and *Yaburedaiko* (*Broken Drum*, 1949) five of your post-war films center on women (Imamura Miyoo 5)."[1]

Such elisions are unfortunate. The films made at that time in both Japan and the occupied regions such as China and Korea are an essential part of film history. Furthermore, although Kinoshita's wartime films show a degree of compliance to state coercion toward pro-war propaganda, the contradictions within his films also evince resistance to that message. To come to terms with that resistance, I will begin rather circuitously by considering subsequent vicissitudes in the appreciation of Kinoshita's work as an inroad into the subversive nature of these neglected films, which I will break into two differences that distinguish Kinoshita's films from other wartime features: the affective difference and the temporal difference.