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**Japanese Widescreen Cinema: Commerce, Technology and Aesthetics**

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# 

# Note on Style, Japanese Words and Names

Transliteration of Japanese words follows the modified Hepburn style. With the exception of ii (for î), macrons are used for long vowels. Well known words are written without macrons, so it is Tokyo instead of Tôkyô. Similarly, for film companies known outside of Japan, I have opted for the non-macronized spelling (e.g., Toei rather than Tôei; Toho rather than Tôhô), but have used macrons for the majority of companies or other organisations whose names are seldom written in English. Japanese names have been preserved in the Japanese name order, with the family name first. Transliteration similarly follows the revised Hepburn system used elsewhere, except in the rare cases where the individual is commonly known under an alternative spelling (for example, Yokoo Tadanori) or the name appears transcribed differently within citations.

Individual films are referenced within the text by their English titles, with the transliterated Japanese titles in brackets followed by the director and the year of release, as for example, *Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1952), unless any of this information appears elsewhere in the nearby text. The English-language titles have been drawn primarily from Alexander Jacoby’s *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors: From the Silent Era to the Present Day* (2008), which gives the official overseas release titles or those most commonly used in order to avoid the problem of contributing to the already large number of unofficial English translated titles for certain works. For those films not included in Jacoby’s book, I have referred to other reliable sources and, where necessary, have used my own translations from the original Japanese.

I have preserved the spellings and capitalisations of all widescreen systems or other branded technologies in accordance with their original marketting, so that it is, for example, ‘CinemaScope’ and ‘VistaVision’ as opposed to ‘Cinemascope’ and ‘Vistavision’, and ‘Eastmancolor’ as opposed to ‘Eastman color’, unless they appear written differently within citations. The abbreviated term ’scope is used to refer generically to anamorphic widescreen systems.

# 

# Abstract

The release of *The Robe* by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1953 brought about a revolution in motion picture production and exhibition practices that had profound implications for national industries across the world. It was the first film released in the company’s proprietary anamorphic widescreen format, CinemaScope, which, by fundamentally altering the size and shape of the projected image, represented one of a number of industry initiatives aimed at retaining audiences being lost to television. The rapid development of competing widescreen formats by Fox’s competitors in Hollywood and interests in other parts of the world was at least as significant to film aesthetics and the economics of the global industry as the transition to sound and colour.

Several features of the Japanese film industry of the 1950s meant that the transition to widescreen occurred several years later, with the first such production, *The Bride of Otori Castle*, released by Toei in 1957. Nevertheless, following the development by each of Japan’s major studios of their own branded widescreen systems, its adoption was a lot more abrupt and absolute than that of other national industries, and its usage persisted until a relatively late stage.

We are accustomed to looking at Japanese cinema at the level of individual titles. However, by detailing the peculiarities of the domestic film industry, its vertically-integrated structure, its relationship to television, its vast levels of production and its importance as an exhibition market for Hollywood, I detail the reasons as to why the Japanese industry embraced widescreen formats to such a significant extent. Furthermore, I explore the degree to which Japanese filmmakers have drawn upon traditional modes of visual representation to result in a widescreen aesthetic that has been singled out for attention by many overseas commentators.

# 1. Introduction: Changing Scope

Since the first major English-language overview of the cinema of Japan, Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie’s pioneering *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, which appeared in 1959, much of what has been published on the subject, be it academic or otherwise, has approached it through an auteurist framework or by way of textual analyses of individual films.[[1]](#footnote-2) In such cases as the various studies of the works of directors such as Kurosawa Akira, Ozu Yasujirô or Ôshima Nagisa, salient formal or narrative aspects are typically isolated and invoked in an attempt to describe the cultural environment, historical context or aesthetic traditions that they are seen to exemplify or which are posited to have informed or shaped them, particularly if these are seen as radically different from those of the cinema of the ‘West’, by which is typically meant Hollywood.[[2]](#footnote-3)

One of the problems associated with the auteurist approach is that emphasising the role of an individual director as the sole creative agent responsible for a resulting cinematic text so often ignores the broader context within which its objects of study operate. If taking into account the fact that ‘cinema’ is not only defined by the cinematic text itself, but the modes of production, dissemination, and consumption within which this text is the focal element, then this reductive focus on the texts or their creators presents the field of film studies with some serious lacunae.

It is essential to acknowledge in this respect the extent to which the predominant sense of what constitutes the field of Japanese cinema has been shaped primarily by the individual films and filmmakers familiar in the West and the transnational artistic elite that saw their introduction. This has particularly been the case for the classical period of the 1950s commonly referred to as the Second Golden Age of Japanese Cinema (*Ôgon jidai*) when the work of a number of Japanese directors first came to be shown in the West in significant quantities through a number of key titles submitted to foreign film festivals or released overseas.[[3]](#footnote-4) Japanese cinema’s “discovery” in the West is often traced to Kurosawa Akira’s *Rashomon* (*Rashômon*, 1950), which in 1951 received the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival and the Academy Honorary Award for the most outstanding foreign language film released in the United States. Following this, in 1953 Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953) received the Silver Lion Award at the same festival, while the following year the same award was shared by Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai*, 1954) and Mizoguchi’s *Sansho the Bailiff* (*Sanshô dayû*, 1954). 1954 also saw Kinugasa Teinosuke’s *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*) receiving the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the Academy Honorary Award for a best foreign language film at the Oscars. In 1955, when the Academy replaced the Honorary Award with the Best Foreign Language Film category for the first time, it was bestowed on another Japanese title, *Samurai: The Legend of Musashi* (*Miyamoto Musashi*, 1954), directed by Inagaki Hiroshi.

All of these films, one must note, fall under the category of *jidai-geki*, or period dramas, even though two thirds of the films produced in Japan during this era were actually set in contemporary times.[[4]](#footnote-5) This situation was balanced to some extent in 1956, when the science-fiction monster movie *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954), directed by Honda Ishirô, was released in the United States as *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* in a re-edited, dubbed version with new footage shot in America, arguably bringing Japanese cinema to its widest audience yet and giving overseas viewers a sense of the country’s vernacular culture.

## 1.1 Japanese Cinema’s Golden Age

The term ‘*Ôgon jidai*’ was not coined to refer to a ‘Golden Age’ for overseas viewers. Instead, it describes the flourishing of a film culture marked by a boom in domestic admissions and production that effectively began with the departure of the Allied Occupation (after the San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed on 8 September 1951, went into effect on 28 April 1952) and lasted for the rest of the decade. This Second Golden Age saw cinema attendances peaking at 1,127 million in 1958 and a historical high of 547 domestic releases in 1960, before, in commercial terms at least, the industry entered a period of inexorable decline. The number of exhibition venues also rose steadily throughout the decade, also peaking in 1960 with 7,457 screens, according to the statistics published by the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan(Nihon Eiga Seisakusha Renmei, hereafter referred to by its common Japanese abbreviation of *Eiren*).[[5]](#footnote-6) This represents quite a substantial growth from the 850 venues that had been left in Japan following the destruction wrought during the Pacific War, with the appearance of new cinemas ensuring that by August 1950 the exhibition sector had recovered to roughly around the same 2,466-theatre pre-war levels as December 1941, and any further screens appearing in the period after 1951 represented fresh expansion.[[6]](#footnote-7) The *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* puts these figures in a more global perspective, claiming that the ‘more than 5,000 movie-theaters in Japan today... while far below the total for motion picture theaters in the United States (17,000), can compare with the figures for movie-theaters in European countries having a highly-developed motion picture industry.’[[7]](#footnote-8)

Local audiences also favoured the domestic product, with a peak share in 1960 of 78.3% of distribution revenues for Japanese films against 21.7% for imports, although any interpretation of such figures has to take into account that strict import quotas had been introduced for foreign films after the peace treaty of 1952, ‘to prevent an unrestricted outflow of foreign exchange.’[[8]](#footnote-9) These were only dropped in April 1964 in accordance with requirements for Japan’s entry into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that year.[[9]](#footnote-10) The low market share for imports for this period is therefore largely attributable to the fact that a relatively small proportion of the films that screened in Japanese cinemas were foreign productions.[[10]](#footnote-11) The ramifications of this on Japanese production practices will be looked at in more detail later. The first recorded year in which the share of the market for Japanese films fell to below that of imported films was 1975, taking only 44.4% of the box office despite the fact that 333 domestic productions were released against 225 foreign productions. From this point on, the market share for Japanese films averaged around 50% until 1990.[[11]](#footnote-12)

## 1.2 The Major Studios: A Vertically-Integrated System

While the Japanese cinema of the 1950s may well have produced more than its fair share of internationally-recognised masters of world cinema, it was essentially a producer-driven studio cinema, not a director-driven one, with the industry operating under a vertically-integrated model in which a small number of companies effectively dominated production and distribution. These six companies (Shochiku, Toho, Daiei, Shintoho, Toei and Nikkatsu) acted in direct competition with one another in order to create an environment that allowed little possibility for anything in the way of a financially or creatively autonomous independent sector, and collectively their output was remarkable: to take a sample year, in 1955 Shochiku released 71 films; Toho released 66 (including the films of two closely affiliated companies that it distributed, Tokyo Eiga and Takarazuka Eiga); Daiei released 59; Shintoho released 66; Toei released 106 and Nikkatsu released 59; against 6 productions from ‘others’ (see *Table 1: Number of Japanese Films Distributed Per Company*). This amounted to roughly a new film every week for each of the companies except Toei, which began releasing double features in 1954, a practice that would soon be adopted by the others. Clearly the isolated works that made it to Western audiences only presented but a tiny part of the picture.

By producing their films at their own studio facilities, using their own contracted actors, directors, cinematographers, set designers, and other technical staffs, and releasing them through their own distribution chains (with each of the studios also owning a number of theatres), each studio was able to effectively establish its own recognisable brand, with production policy dictated by figures such as Shochiku’s president Kido Shirô and Hori Kyûsaku at Nikkatsu. Shochiku’s releases of predominantly romances, tragedies and family melodramas, for example, tended to be oriented towards women viewers, while Toei courted blue-collar males with such action-driven genres as the swashbuckling *jidai-geki* subgenre known as *chanbara* and later, when this became one of the staples of television in the early 1960s, its new *ninkyô eiga* (“chivalry films”) line of *yakuza* serials.

It is also worth emphasising that the balance of power across the six major studios was far from even. Nikkatsu operated only in an exhibition and distribution capacity at the beginning of the decade, recommencing production in 1954 after a 12-year hiatus following a mass restructuring of the industry by the government in 1942, which saw the company’s production arm merged with two smaller studios, Shinkô Kinema and Daito, to form Daiei. Shintoho, the smallest of the six major companies, was founded in 1947 by former Toho staff members after a series of labour strikes at the larger studio. With its limited capital and a minor distribution arm, it barely rated consideration as a major studio, but the almost reckless ambitiousness of its larger-than-life president Ôkura Mitsugi ensured that, before the company’s bankruptcy in June 1961, it had left a considerable mark on Japan’s cinematic landscape of the 1950s through its release roster of nationalistic war epics and near scandalous genre pieces.

Until the beginning of the 1960s, with the mass emergence of the low-budget *eroduction* genre (*erodakushon eiga*, or ‘erotic productions’, also known as *pinku eiga*, or pink films), the few independent feature films that were made in the postwar period tended to be produced by filmmakers who had previously worked within the studio system, and were distributed (and occasionally co-produced) by these major companies. After his departure from Shochiku in 1945 for example, Shimizu Hiroshi made *Children of the Beehive* (*Hachi no su no kodomotachi*, 1948), which was produced through his own company, Hachi No Su Eiga (“Beehive Films”) and distributed by Toho. The frequently political content of the work was closely linked to the context of their production. During the Occupation period (1945-52), with the Cold War situation escalating after the outbreak of the Korean War, on 25 September 1950 a large number of Daiei, Shochiku, and Toho staff members were removed from their posts by the commander of the Occupation, General Douglas MacArthur. These ‘red purges’ led to the establishment of a number of smaller production companies by the studios’ former employees. Shinsei Eiga, for example, was founded by former Toho union members in February 1950. With Iwasaki Akira as one of its central members, a leftist critic whose leftist viewpoints had seen him arrested by the military police and detained for a year in 1940, the company produced a number of politically-charged works by Imai Tadashi and Yamamoto Satsuo (who later set up his own independent company Yamamoto Pro in 1955). In April 1950, Shindô Kaneto and Yoshimura Kôzaburô left Shochiku to establish Kindai Eiga Kyôkai, while Gosho Heinosuke founded Studio Eight Productions (Eito Puro) in October of the same year, also in conjunction with several former Toho employees, with his first production, *Dispersing Clouds* (*Wakaregumo*, 1951), followed by works including his highly-regarded socio-realist piece *Where Chimneys Are Seen* (*Entotsu no mieru basho*, 1953), all of which were distributed by the non-unionised Shintoho.[[12]](#footnote-13) Finding capital to finance such films was one thing, but even then, their distribution was firmly in the hands of the major studios. The Dokuritsu Film Company, founded in July 1954 and described by *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* as ‘operated by “leftists”’, was the only company active at the time engaged in distributing ‘various minor independent productions’, including works by Imai Tadashi, Sekigawa Hideo and Yamamoto Satsuo. It found itself cultivating a market behind the Iron Curtain, exporting its films to Soviet Russia and Red China, due to the difficulties of competing in the Japanese marketplace.[[13]](#footnote-14)

By the mid-1950s, the short-lived boom in independent fiction film production was all but over, but would become a significant aspect of the following decade with the establishment of the Art Theatre Guild (ATG) on 15 November 1961, an organisation initially founded to distribute foreign arthouse films and cutting edge Japanese independent works by directors such as Teshigahara Hiroshi and Shindô Kaneto, which later produced works by directors such as Ôshima and Imamura Shôhei. Even then, it must be noted that this ostensible champion of the artistic and political avant-garde received significant financial backing from Toho.

## 1.3 The Domestic vs. International Market For Japanese Cinema

As the title of Anderson and Richie’s seminal book acknowledges, cinema is as much, if not more, about commerce as it is an art, and in this respect one should note that there was little correlation between international critical success and domestic box office performance during this period (as indeed is the case nowadays), a point that becomes clear when one analyses the data printed in the primary annual source of information about the Japanese industry, *Eiga Nenkan* (Film Yearbook). Of the major studios, it was Daiei and Toho in particular who were the most active in seeking acclaim at foreign festivals, but during a typical year between June 1958 and June 1959, it was Toei, which had little interest in pursuing foreign markets, that had by far the largest share of the domestic box office, at 27.08%, with Daiei and Toho on 16.69% and 15.69% respectively.[[14]](#footnote-15) Daiei similarly has only one entry in the list of top twenty highest grossing domestic productions of the year prior to this, with *Secret of Naruto* (*Naruto hichô*, Kinugasa Teinosuke, 1957) tenuously occupying the twentieth position (see *Table 3: Top Twenty Highest Grossing Domestic Productions released from April 1957 to March 1958*). One should also note that these latter two companies also earned significant revenues from the distribution and exhibition of foreign films, particularly Toho, which had been formally established through a merger of several smaller studios in 1936 by the railway entrepreneur Kobayashi Ichizô and which was substantially richer in capital than its rivals, owning a number of theatres that boasted capacities of between 1,500-2,000 seats. Furthermore, the list of the top twenty grossing domestic films of the postwar period published in *Eiga Nenkan 1960* does not list a single film by Mizoguchi, and only one by Ozu, *Equinox Flower* (*Higanbana*, 1958), the first in colour by, on a technological level at least, the notoriously conservative director (see *Table 2: Top Twenty Grossing Domestic Productions of the Postwar Period*).

There was, nevertheless, a small but steady increase in revenues from overseas sales throughout the postwar period (see *Table 4: Domestic and Overseas Earnings for Japanese Films*). In her book on the close relationship between the Japanese and Hong film industries, Yau Shuk-ting Kinnia cites the following figures for revenues generated from film export from *Eiga Nenkan*: $32,300 in 1947; $152,000 in 1948; $228,000 in 1949; $283,100 in 1950; $503,657 in 1951; $830,344 in 1952 and $l,124,860 in 1953.[[15]](#footnote-16) These are consistent with those contained in a report in *Variety*, entitled ‘Tokyo’s Take From O’Seas Markets’, covering the period from 1947 to 1958, which demonstrate the Japanese industry was already expanding its reach into overseas markets prior to Kurosawa’s win at Venice, undermining any simple explanations of what might be termed a ‘*Rashomon-*effect’ (although it is worth noting a peak percentage of revenues earned from overseas sales for the year 1953, the year when film festival interest in ‘*Japonisme*’ was at its height).[[16]](#footnote-17) Furthermore, as Yau points out, comparatively little of this income came from the countries hosting the festivals that celebrated the new vogue for Japanese exoticism:

From 1949 to 1959, the total number of Japanese movies exported to the United States was 1,906; to France it was 55, with 16 for West Germany and 13 for Italy. The figure for the United States was much higher than for other countries because it included movies released in Hawaii, where many Japanese resided. What American audiences appreciated most were mainly monster movies produced by Toho, such as *Godzilla*. Japanese movies were comparatively more popular in Southeast Asia. Taiwan and Hong Kong distributed 500 and 196 movies respectively between 1949 and 1959. The demand of Taiwan was second only to that of Okinawa, and Hawaii’s and was higher than that of Brazil, where a large number of Japanese lived. Despite the small population in Hong Kong, it was the fifth largest market for Japanese movies at that time. In other words, the recognitions [sic] of Japanese movies at Euro-American awards did not bring in any long-term or actual profits from the West, although it triggered the attention of Southeast Asian distributors.[[17]](#footnote-18)

*Japan Motion Picture Almanac* similarly points to the fact that the majority of exports to America went to ‘areas as Hawaii and Los Angeles where there were large colonies of Japanese immigrants... In these areas, there were movie-theaters specializing in Japanese motion pictures. At these theaters, Japanese films were shown in original version, and this hardly represented any contribution toward the popularization of Japanese motion pictures in Western countries.’[[18]](#footnote-19)

Certainly there were large profits to be made from foreign markets, and Japanese studios looked to surprising sources too, with *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* also reporting that ‘Toei planned to go into the Indian market and decided to produce a Japan-Indian joint film “Bengal no Kurohyo” through a tieup with an Indian firm. But the planned production was cancelled due to a divergence of interpretation of the contract provisions.’[[19]](#footnote-20) Japan’s centrality to other film industries in Asia during the 1950s and 1960s will be considered in some detail later, particularly in relation to Daiei’s 70mm productions of *Buddha* (*Shaka*, Misumi Kenji, 1961) and *The Great Wall* (*Shinno Shikôtei*, Tanaka Shigeo, 1962), the latter a co-production with Taiwan’s Zhongyang Dianying Gongsi (Central Motion Pictures Corporation). However, when one also takes into account that incomes from overseas sales remained at around one to two percent of the Japanese industry’s total distribution revenues for this period, it should become even clearer the extent to which Western historiographies of non-English language cinema in general, and Japanese cinema in particular, have tended to distort what was actually happening in the country by prioritising “international” critical or artistic successes over domestic commercial ones (see *Table 4*).

There are few better examples of this than *What is your Name?* (*Kimi no na wa*), directed by Ôba Hideo for the company Shochiku and released in three parts from 1953-54. A will-they-or-won’t-they romantic drama in which a couple who meet on a bridge during a wartime air raid fall in love, promising that one day they will meet again (although unfortunately neglecting to tell each other their names before they separate), it was the highest-grossing domestic release in Japanese film history until the mid-1950s, and yet this huge cultural phenomenon is barely mentioned in Western accounts of Japanese cinema from the period, and its director and his oeuvre remain virtually unknown. Similarly little known outside of Japan are the names of Matsuda Sadatsugu, Watanabe Kunio or Inoue Umetsugu. While such directors might hold tenuous claims to auteur status in the eyes of Western critics or film historians, their recurring presence in the list of the top-grossing films of the decade, collectively helming nine of the top twenty money-spinners, highlights their considerable status and significance within the domestic industry.

### Table 1: Number of Japanese Films Distributed Per Company

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Shochiku** | **Toho** | **Daiei** | **Shintoho** | **Toei** | **Nikkatsu** | **Others** | **Total** |
| **1945** | 5 | 1 | 6 | - | - | - | 0 | **12** |
| **1946** | 23 | 18 | 26 | - | - | - | 0 | **67** |
| **1947** | 33 | 28 | 36 | - | - | - | 0 | **97** |
| **1948** | 43 | 32 | 47 | - | - | - | 1 | **123** |
| **1949** | 51 | 49 | 50 | - | 6 | - | 0 | **156** |
| **1950** | 50 | 32 | 51 | 34 | 47 | - | 1 | **215** |
| **1951** | 53 | 29 | 52 | 44 | 26 | - | 4 | **208** |
| **1952** | 70 | 49 | 54 | 49 | 51 | - | 5 | **278** |
| **1953** | 75 | 59 | 53 | 55 | 51 | - | 9 | **302** |
| **1954** | 63 | 68 | 61 | 59 | 103 | 11 | 5 | **370** |
| **1955** | 71 | 66 | 59 | 56 | 106 | 59 | 6 | **423** |
| **1956** | 86 | 95 | 87 | 55 | 105 | 80 | 6 | **514** |
| **1957** | 62 | 87 | 75 | 56 | 104 | 57 | 2 | **443** |
| **1958** | 84 | 78 | 87 | 64 | 105 | 85 | 1 | **504** |
| **1959** | 92 | 72 | 69 | 59 | 103 | 98 | 0 | **493** |
| **Total** | **861** | **763** | **813** | **531** | **807** | **390** | **40** | **4,205** |

Sources: ‘Hôga meisha haikyû betsu honsû [Domestic films distributed for each studio]’, *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 48 (7A).

‘Films Released Through the Principal Channels’, *UniJapan* Vol. 3 No. 3 (1960), p. 2

*Notes:*

* *Eiga Nenkan 1960* only contains release data up to and including 1958. The use of the word *Hôga* (domestic film) shows that these figures represent only domestic productions distributed per company, not the total number of films, which could also include those foreign imports distributed by the studios.
* The *UniJapan* data is for 1957-1959, with the figures for the first two years corresponding with those given in *Eiga Nenkan*.
* The figures for 1945 are from August only, following Japan’s surrender at the end of the Pacific War.
* The sole independent title from 1948 is Shimizu Hiroshi’s *Children of the Beehive* (*Hachi no su no kodomotachi*).
* Toei’s releases begin from September 1949, Shintoho’s from April 1950, and Nikkatsu’s from June 1954.
* Six of Nikkatsu’s releases in 1955 were produced by minor independent companies (*Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 136).

### 

### Table 2: Top Twenty Grossing Domestic Productions of the Postwar Period (until June 1959)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Title** | **Japanese Title** | **Dir., Studio & Rel. Date (dd/mm/yy)** | **Gross**  **(1000s Yen)** | **Format** |
| 1 | The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War | Meiji tennô to nichiro dai-sensô  明治天皇と日露大戦争 | Watanabe Kunio  **Shintoho**  29/4/57 | 542,909 | Col. / Scope |
| 2 | Vendetta of the Loyal 47 Ronin | Chûshingura  忠臣蔵 | Watanabe Kunio,  **Daiei**  1/4/58 | 410,336 | Col. / Scope |
| 3 | Street in the Sun | Hi no ataru sakamichi  陽のあたる坂道 | Tasaka Tomotaka  **Nikkatsu**  15/4/58 | 400,707 | BW / Academy |
| 4 | Times of Joy and Sorrow | Yorokobi mo kanashimi mo ikutoshitsuki  喜びも悲しみも幾歳月 | Kinoshita Keisuke  **Shochiku**  1/10/57 | 391,089 | Col. / Scope |
| 5 | Crimson Wings | Kurenai no tsubasa  紅の翼 | Nakahira Kô  **Nikkatsu**  28/12/58 | 364,948 | Col. / Scope |
| 6 | The Loyal 47 Ronin | Chûshingura  忠臣蔵 | Matsuda Sadatsugu **Toei**  15/11/59 | 361,219 | Col. / Scope |
| 7 | Mito Komon | Mito Kômon  水戸黄門 | Sasaki Yasushi  **Toei**  11/8/57 | 353,335 | Col. / Scope |
| 8 | Port of Honor | Ninkyô Shimizu minato  任侠清水港 | Matsuda Sadatsugu **Toei**  3/1/57 | 353,188 | Col. / Academy |
| 9 | The Hidden Fortress | Kakushi toride no san akunin  隠し砦の三悪人 | Kurosawa Akira  **Toho**  28/12/58 | 342,642 | BW / Scope |
| 10 | A Chivalrous Spirit | Ninkyô Tôkaidô  任侠東海道 | Matsuda Sadatsugu **Toei**  3/1/58 | 341,777 | Col. / Academy |
| 11 | The Man Who Causes a Storm | Arashi o yobu otoko  嵐を呼ぶ男 | Inoue Umetsugu **Nikkatsu**  29/12/57 | 338,800 | Col. /  Scope |
| 12 | What is Your Name? pt.3 | Kimi no na wa? Daisanbu  君の名は・第三部 | Ôba Hideo  **Shochiku**  27/4/54 | 330,152 | BW / Academy |
| 13 | Tomorrow is Another Day | Ashita wa ashita no kaze ga fuku  明日は明日の風が吹く | Inoue Umetsugu **Nikkatsu**  29/4/58 | 321,504 | Col. / Scope |
| 14 | A Man Who Rode the Typhoon | Fûsoku 40-mêtoru  風速４０米 | Kurahara Koreyoshi  **Nikkatsu**  12/8/58 | 318,092 | Col. / Scope |
| 15 | Warriors of Ako | Akô rôshi  赤穂浪士　天の巻  地の巻 | Matsuda Sadatsugu  **Toei**  15/1/56 | 313,054 | Col. / Academy |
| 16 | Nichiren and the Great Mongolian Invasion | Nichiren to Môko daishûrai  日蓮と蒙古大襲来 | Watanabe Kunio  **Daiei**  1/10/58 | 305,118 | Col. / Scope |
| 17 | The Human Condition: Part 1: No Greater Love | Ningen no jôken: Daiichibu, Jun’ai-hen; Dainibu: Gekido-hen  人間の条件　第一部純愛篇、第二部激怒篇 | Kobayashi Masaki  **Shochiku**  15/1/59 | 304,044 | BW / Scope |
| 18 | What is Your Name? pt.2 | Kimi no na wa? Dainibu  君の名は・第二部 | Ôba Hideo **Shochiku**  1/12/53 | 300,018 | BW / Academy |
| 19 | Equinox Flower | Higanbana  彼岸花 | Ozu Yasujirô  **Shochiku**  14/9/58 | 294,220 | Col. / Academy |
| 20 | The Boring Retainer | Hatamoto taikutsu otoko  旗本退屈男 | Matsuda Sadatsugu  **Toei**  12/8/58 | 291,459 | Col. / Scope |

Source: ‘Sengo kôkai hôga haishuû besuto 20 [Best 20 postwar domestic film incomes]’ *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 50 (8D).

*Notes:*

* As well as adding English language titles and directors names, several columns have been combined from the original table in *Eiga Nenkan*, such as colour and format.
* For *Equinox Flower*,the release date 14/9/58 given in the original table appears to be incorrect, and has been adjusted to 7/9/58, one week earlier, which is the date given in other sources including the *Japanese Movie Database*, *Kinema Junpô* and the *National Film Center Film Catalog 2000*.
* A number of films with the main title *The Boring Retainer* were released during the 1950s and early-1960s, filmed at Toei’s Kyoto studios and evidently *jidai-geki* based on a popular character, although the lack of a subtitle for Matsuda’s film cited here suggests that this one might not have been part of the main series *per se*.

### Table 3: Top Twenty Highest Grossing Domestic Productions released from April 1957 to March 1958.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Title** | **Japanese Title** | **Dir., Studio & Rel. Date (dd/mm/yy)** | **Gross**  **(1000s Yen)** | **Format** |
| 1 | The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War | Meiji tennô to nichiro dai-sensô  明治天皇と日露大戦争 | Watanabe Kunio,  **Shintoho**  29/4/57 | 542,909 | Col. / Scope |
| 2 | Times of Joy and Sorrow | Yorokobi mo kanashimi mo ikutoshitsuki  喜びも悲しみも幾歳月 | Kinoshita Keisuke  **Shochiku**  1/10/57 | 391,089 | Col. / Scope |
| 3 | Mito Komon | Mito Kômon  水戸黄門 | Sasaki Yasushi  **Toei**  11/8/57 | 353,335 | Col. / Scope |
| 4 | The Man Who Causes a Storm | Arashi o yobu otoko  嵐を呼ぶ男 | Inoue Umetsugu  **Nikkatsu**  29/12/57 | 348,800 | Col. /  Scope |
| 5 | A Chivalrous Spirit | Ninkyô Tôkaidô  任侠東海道 | Matsuda Sadatsugu **Toei**  3/1/58 | 341,777 | Col. / Academy |
| 6 | The 47 Ronin | Daichûshingura  大忠臣蔵 | Ôsone Tatsuo  **Shochiku**  11/8/57 | 268,749 | Col. /  Scope |
| 7 | Rusty Knife | Sabita naifu  錆びたナイフ | Masuda Toshio  **Nikkatsu**  11/3/58 | 248, 514 | BW / Scope |
| 8 | Fangs of the Night | Yoru no kiba  夜の牙 | Inoue Umetsugu  **Nikkatsu**  15/1/58 | 237,212 | Col. /  Scope |
| 9 | Elegy of the North | Banka  挽歌 | Gosho Heinosuke  **Shochiku**  1/9/57 | 232,434 | BW / Academy |
| 10 | On Wings of Love | Ôatari sanshoku musume  大当り三色娘 | Sugie Toshio  **Toho**  13/7/57 | 227,400 | Col. / Scope |
| 11 | The Bride of Otori Castle | Ôtori-jô no hanayome 鳳城の花嫁 | Matsuda Sadatsugu  **Toei**  2/4/57 | 214,733 | Col. / Scope |
| 12 | Swords in the Moonlight | Daibosatsu tôge  大菩薩峠 | Uchida Tomu  **Toei**  13/7/57 | 212,807 | Col. / Scope |
| 13 | Secret of the Bronze Dragon | Tange Sazen  丹下左膳 | Matsuda Sadatsugu  **Toei**  18/3/58 | 204,337 | Col. / Scope |
| 14 | The Embraced Bride | Dakareta hanayome  抱かれた花嫁 | Banshô Yoshiaki  **Shochiku**  14/7/57 | 202,874 | Col. / Scope |
| 15 | The Mysterians | Chikyû bôeigun  地球防衛軍 | Honda Ishirô  **Toho**  28/12/57 | 193,260 | Col. / Scope |
| 16 | Antarctica  [documentary] | Nankyoku tairiku  南極大陸 | Hayashida Shigeo  **Toho**  12/6/57 | 188,793 | Col. / Standard |
| 17 | The Eagle and the Hawk | Washi to taka  鷲と鷹 | Inoue Umetsugu  **Nikkatsu**  29/9/57 | 188,300 | Col. / Scope |
| 18 | I Am Waiting | Ore wa matteru ze  俺は待ってるぜ | Kurahara Koreyoshi  **Nikkatsu**  20/10/57 | 165,451 | BW / Academy |
| 19 | Secret Scrolls | Yagyû bugeichô  柳生武芸帳 | Inagaki Hiroshi  **Toho**  23/4/57 | 162,200 | Col. / Academy |
| 20 | Secret of Naruto | Naruto hichô  嗚門秘帳 | Kinugasa Teinosuke  **Daiei**  29/9/57 | 161,084 | Col. / Academy |

Source: ‘Sakuhin betsu haishû besuto 5 [Best 5 individual productions’ distribution incomes]’ *Eiga Nenkan 1959*, p. 46 (8C).

*Notes:*

* There’s been considerable reformulation of the original data for this table. The original tables grouped the information on distribution income by each individual company, while here it is arranged in order of the largest distribution income to the smallest. As well as adding English language titles and directors names, several columns have been combined from the original table in *Eiga Nenkan* information about colour and format has been added.
* In the source table, the release date of *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* is incorrectly listed as 28/4/57, a day earlier than elsewhere.
* *Swords in the Moonlight* and *Secret Scrolls* are both filmed in Agfacolor. All other colour productions were filmed using Eastmancolor.
* For *Antarctica*, no director is credited, so the film’s cinematographer Hayashida Shigeo is listed instead.

### Table 4: Domestic and Overseas Earnings for Japanese Films

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Domestic Distr. Income (¥mils)** | **Domestic Distr. Income ($1000s)** | **Overseas Take ($1000s)** | **Percentage from Foreign Markets** |
| 1946 | 300 | - | - | - |
| 1947 | 1,100 | - | 32.3 | - |
| 1948 | 2,300 | 11,000\* | 152 | 1.4% |
| 1949 | 4,400 | 14,000\* | 228 | 1.6% |
| 1950 | 5,400 | 15,000 | 283 | 1.9% |
| 1951 | 7,200 | 20,000 | 503.7 | 2.5% |
| 1952 | 10,600 | 29,400 | 830.3 | 2.8% |
| 1953 | 14,100 | 39,200 | 1,200.7 | 3.1% |
| 1954 | 18,200 | 50,600 | 1,135.4 | 2.2% |
| 1955 | 20,993 | 58,300 | 1,037.8 | 1.8% |
| 1956 | 23,520 | 65,300 | 1,430.5 | 2.2% |
| 1957 | 25,988 | 72,200 | 1,409.9 | 2.0% |
| 1958 | 29,971 | 83,300 | 1,825.8 | 2.2% |

Source: ‘Sengo no nihon eiga haishû [Postwar Japanese film distribution income]’, *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 44,

‘Statistics of Film Industry in Japan: 1955-1999’, *The Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan* website

and ‘Tokyo’s Take From O’Seas Markets’, *Variety*, 22 April 1959, p. 15.

*Notes:*

* Until 1955, the figures in the first column for ‘Domestic Distribution Income ’ are taken from the bar chart in *Eiga Nenkan 1960*. This utilises the Japanese *oku* counter, with 1 *oku* equal to one hundred million. The table here lists the amount in millions of Yen, so that the ¥11 *oku* given for 1947 is rendered as 1,100 rather than 1,100,000,000, in order to make the data more readable.
* From 1955, figures are given on the *Eiren* website in more accuracy. While they do not correspond exactly (*Eiga Nenkan* gives 20,800 for 1955; 23,100 for 1956; 26,800 for 1957; and 29,900 for 1958), they are do not deviate wildly, and any discepancy is probably attributable to a rounding down to the nearest *oku* in the *Eiga Nenkan* bar chart. It is not entirely clear whether the data from *Eiga Nenkan* already includes income from exports, but as the table of statistics on the *Eiren* websitecontains an extra column for the ‘Distributor’s Income for Imported Films’, this is assumed not to be the case.
* The second ‘Domestic Distribution Income’ column gives the amount earned by domestic films in $1000s, calculated at an exchange rate of ¥360 to $1US, fixed by United States in 1949 under the Bretton Woods System for the years from 1950 and onwards. According to the document ‘PACIFIC Exchange Rate Service Foreign Currency Units per 1 U.S. Dollar, 1948-2011’, http://fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/USDpages.pdf [accessed 17 August 2012], the rate was ¥201 per dollar in 1948, and ¥314 in 1949 (rounding off all decimal places), and the results for the rest of the table have been calculated accordingly. No rates are available for 1946-1947. However, this same source cites an exchange rate of ¥361 for the years 1950-52. Given the approximate nature of my calculations, and that the Yen value give in the ‘Domestic Film Distribution Income’ column is only accurate to the nearest one hundred million up until 1955, I have proceeded with my calculations at the rate of ¥360, which remained constant from 1953 up to and including 1970. The results are therefore only rounded to the first three significant figures.
* Revenues generated from overseas markets are taken from ‘Tokyo’s Take From O’Seas Markets’, *Variety*, 22 April 1959, rounded down to the nearest $100. These corroborate those cited by Yau, p. 65, which are derived from the annual Yen totals published in *Eiga Nenkan 1955*, p. 48, and therefore only cover the years up to and including 1953. A table of ‘Export Revenue of Japanese Films’ for the years 1956-1960 is also given in *UniJapan* vol. 4 no 2. (1961), p. 3.
* While the final percentages of revenues earned from overseas sales must be looked at as only approximate ones, they do highlight certain trends. Using the same method, calculating the figures given in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 14 no 2. serial (April 1971), pp. 42-43, for the 1960s, yields similar results, with exports approximately 1.6% of domestic revenues for 1960-62, rising to 1.8% in 1963, then again to 2.3% in 1965, before stabilising at around the 2% mark for the rest of the decade.

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# 2. The Commercial Context to the Introduction of Widescreen Cinema in Japan

In recent years there has been a greater acknowledgement of the role played by the studio system in informing the work of individual Japanese filmmakers, with studies including Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano’s accounts of the films and filmmakers cultivated at Shochiku’s Kamata studios in the prewar period, Stuart Galbraith IV’s history of Toho, and Mark Schilling’s surveys of the genre films produced by Nikkatsu and Shintoho.[[20]](#footnote-21) However, there has been comparatively little analysis of how the history and practices of the industry as a whole have been informed by advances relating to the fundamental technologies of camera, film and projector, nor of the commercial imperatives that saw the major studios operating in Japan during this period striving to adopt new sound and image technologies (both developed overseas or domestically) to expand their share of the market, and of how these new technologies shaped the form and content of the resulting products.[[21]](#footnote-22)

Taking such an approach, it is instructive to note that the top-grossing domestic releases of the decade includes only one title by Kurosawa, *The Hidden Fortress* (*Kakushi toride no san akunin*, 1958) positioned at number nine, which represents Toho’s only showing in the top twenty. Significantly, it was the director’s first to be filmed in TohoScope, the company’s trademarked variant on the widescreen CinemaScope format. Even more dramatic was the runaway box-office success of Shintoho’s nationalistic war epic *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (*Meiji tennô to nichiro dai-sensô*, 1957), Japan’s second ever widescreen production.

Indeed, one salient development in the latter half of the 1950s is not only that fifteen of the decade’s top-twenty grossers were filmed in colour, but that thirteen were produced in widescreen formats. Alongside such interrelated trends as the relaxation of censorship, the emergence of films targeted specifically at a new après-guerre generation of teenagers and young adults, and an increase in international co-productions and overseas location shoots, this wholesale changeover to new production and projection practices, particularly those modelled on the CinemaScope system developed by the Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation and introduced with *The Robe* (Henry Koster, 1953), represents, as in Hollywood, one of the most significant developments within the Japanese film industry of the period.

## 2.1 The Impact of New Technologies

*The Robe* received its international premiere at the Roxy Theater in New York on 16 September 1953. It was the first film produced in the CinemaScope format, developed by Fox with the aim of attracting audiences back into cinemas following a marked decline in box-office admissions in the United States from circa 1948 onwards. With the decline in habitual cinema-going in the postwar period attributed to the large increase in alternate leisure activities available to American audiences, not least of which was the growing prevalence of televisions in the nation’s homes, the increased sense of scale and spectacle upon which the format traded was very much in keeping with previous attempts at providing theatrical audiences with something that they could not get at home, a more participatory entertainment experience that appealed as much to the audience’s sense of spectacle as their desire to be immersed more completely in an illusionary world.

Similar attempts by commercial interests operating within the American entertainment industry at the time, aimed at reviving cinema to its prewar and wartime boom periods, began with alternative exhibition modes such as the multi-screen Cinerama format (which had made its debut the previous year with the showcasing of the sensational *This is Cinerama* [Merian C. Cooper, 1952] documentary travelogue on 30 September 1952), and the stereoscopic anaglyph 3D format known as Natural Vision, with the first full-length, colour 3D motion picture, the independently-produced *Bwana Devil* (Arch Oboler, 1952) premiering in Los Angeles less than two months later, on 26 November. Neither these nor any of the other cinema formats that emerged later, such as Todd-AO or VistaVision, were ever adopted as rapidly or on such a global scale as CinemaScope, although as shall be demonstrated, Japan, boasting an industry of significant size, was more receptive to many of these new technologies than other countries.

With *The Robe* breaking box office records both internationally and domestically, the arrival of the new CinemaScope format marked the most significant turning point in Hollywood production practices since the introduction of sound. Released by Fox’s Japanese arm within a matter of months of the American premiere under the title of *Seii*, *The Robe* opened at Tokyo’s 1,610-seat Yuraku-za theatre in Tokyo’s fashionable Ginza district on 26 December 1953 and Osaka’s Nagai Gekijô on 30 December (both venues owned and operated by Toho).[[22]](#footnote-23) It caused an immediate sensation, leading to each of the major studios scrambling to adopt, adapt and develop their own proprietary widescreen systems such as DaieiScope, ToeiScope and Shochiku GrandScope. Just how these various systems ultimately differed from CinemaScope, not to mention from each other, is something that shall be examined in a later chapter. However, to this role call of processes used by the major studios, others can also be added. For example, there was IwanamiScope, used in a number of documentary films made by Iwanami Productions (Iwanami Eiga Seisakusho), the filmmaking unit established by the publishing company Iwanami Shôten, such as the four-reel Eastmancolor public relations film *Symphony in Steel* (*Atarashii seitetsujo*, Ise Chônosuke, 1959). There was NipponScope, used by Shindô Kaneto for *Lucky Dragon No. 5* (*Daigo Fukuryû Maru*, 1959), among other titles, a monochrome docudrama produced independently through his Kindai Eiga company, recounting the Bikini Atoll nuclear accident of 1954 that had inspired *Godzilla*.

While the lag of just over three years following the Japanese release of *The Robe* and the nation’s first domestic widescreen feature, *The Bride of Otori Castle* (*Otori-jo no hanayome*), directed by Matsuda Sadatsugu and released by Toei on 2 April 1957, was a relatively long one, the subsequent industry take-up of these widescreen formats was dramatic. They established themselves so quickly as the production norm that, by the 1960s, of the major studio releases, only really Ozu’s films at Shochiku were produced in the standard Academy ratio, up until his final work, *An Autumn Afternoon* (*Sanma no aji*, 1962), with Donald Richie stating that the director reputedly described the wide strip of the screen as being akin to ‘toilet paper.’[[23]](#footnote-24) Shochiku was also responsible for another noteworthy example of a film that eschewed the screen’s new dimensions, *King of the Silver Mountains* (*Ginrei no ôja*, Banshô Yoshiaki, 1960).[[24]](#footnote-25) As a vehicle for the Austrian skiing legend Toni Sailer, who was at the time immensely popular in Japan, the company hoped its star’s international renown would ensure overseas sales to European markets that had yet to convert as fully to widescreen exhibition as Japan. Released in Japan on 29 April 1960, the film nevertheless met with a cold response from the rest of the world, yet its isolated status as one of the last Japanese major studio productions to be released in Academy ratio at least serves to highlight that Japan’s conversion to the new widescreen format was considerably more rapid and extensive than that of many other countries.

If one examines the case of Japan’s cinema within a global context, it is clear to see that the industry’s wholesale conversion to widescreen film formats within the space of a few years was nothing short of phenomenal, taking place at a more thorough and rapid rate than comparable changes in film technologies, such as the conversion from silent to sound cinema and from monochrome to colour, and also that of many other national industries.

Generally speaking, throughout the 1960s only documentaries, experimental films and certain independent productions (many of which, for budgetary reasons, were filmed in 16mm) continued to be produced in Academy ratio. Even the low-budget independently-produced *eroductions* that began making up an increasingly significant proportion of releases throughout the 1960s were filmed in widescreen. As an example, *Eiga Nenkan 1963* boasts a prominent advertisement for a long-lost oddity entitled *Lara of the Wild* (*Yasei no Râra*, Kitasato Toshio, 1963) released by Naigai Films, which demonstrates how the format was used as a major selling point for such salacious low-budget independent fare. Accompanying a still from the film, of a large insect perched on the bare breast of a supine Caucasian woman (presumably the main star of the film, billed in the advert as Nina Vorganska), overlaid with text promising “a bloodsucking fly from the Soviet Union”, is the prominent slogan ‘Nihon no kantoku ga hajimete tsukutta YôgaSukôpu’ (‘The first film made by a Japanese director in YogaScope’), with the word *yôga* translating literally as “foreign film.”[[25]](#footnote-26) While almost certainly an anamorphic system derived from CinemaScope, this “Foreign Film Scope” was ultimately little more than a promotional tool used specifically for this one title. It was akin to such non-existent formats as Nudiscope championed by American producers similarly working in the exploitation fields, and as much a reference to the allure of the white-skinned actress being filmed as to the technology itself.

The history of widescreen processes in Hollywood has been well documented, with John Belton’s *Widescreen Cinema* providing the first thorough overview.[[26]](#footnote-27) However, prior to the appearance of Eric Crosby’s essay ‘Widescreen Composition and Transnational Influence: Early Anamorphic Filmmaking in Japan’ in the anthology *Widescreen Worldwide*, a study restricted by its exclusive reliance upon English-language sources, the only authors to cover the subject in any detail had been Anderson and Richie.[[27]](#footnote-28) Nevertheless, following on from the argument laid out by Belton’s study, that ‘the appeal of widescreen in the 1950s rests as much upon its production of greater spectacle upon that of greater realism’, the aforementioned examples of Japanese commercial successes and the number of widescreen titles among the top-grossing imports of the decade (see *Table 5: Top Twenty Grossing Foreign Imports*) indicate that audiences in Japan were initially as much lured by the promise of novelty and sensation as anywhere else in the world, and numerous articles from the period demonstrate that the form of the film was as much a topic for public and critical discourse as the content.[[28]](#footnote-29)

## 2.2 Defining Widescreen

John Belton defines widescreen as any exhibition system that results in a larger and, more importantly, wider screen image than that resulting from the Academy ratio of 1.37:1, or more specifically, any format with a screen width greater than its height by a factor of at least 1.66:1.[[29]](#footnote-30) The Academy ratio had been established as the standard for sound films by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1932. Though slightly wider, it roughly retained the dimensions of the silent era standard ratio of 1.33:1 (or 4:3), often referred to as full frame, by introducing a black bar (or matte) between each frame in order to compensate for the otherwise slightly narrower image due to the physical presence of the optical soundtrack included on the left-hand side of the film strip.[[30]](#footnote-31) Academy ratios remained the *de facto* standard for commercial theatrical releases for the two decades prior to the introduction of CinemaScope, while television, which was initially dependent on film as a recording medium for its pictures (though not its sound), adopted the full frame 1.33:1 ratio as its standard.[[31]](#footnote-32) This standard-definition television ratio has been superseded with the introduction of widescreen digital and high-definition television systems from the mid-1990s onwards, with the new universal standard screen ratio of 1.77:1 (16:9) currently closer to the ratios used for the majority of cinema presentations since the decline of anamorphic widescreen releases from the late 1960s onwards.

Widescreen formats were initially introduced by Hollywood to expand the visual possibilities of cinema in order to avoid being supplanted by television, with whose limited screen dimensions its previous films were already essentially compatible. Various techniques and systems have been developed to this end, including:

* the practice of masking the top and bottom of the Academy ratio frame to create an “ersatz widescreen”;
* multi-screen, multi-projector formats such as Cinerama;
* anamorphic systems such as CinemaScope, in which a specially-developed lens fitted to the camera compresses the image horizontally onto 35mm negative stock during filming, while its inverse fitted to the projector decompresses it again to give a wider presented image;
* two-frame systems such as VistaVision, which uses a double frame of 35mm negative stock exposed horizontally;
* wide-gauge systems (*ôgata eiga*, in Japan, literally ‘large scale’, although the term is used interchangeably to refer also to anamorphic widescreen films) such as Todd-AO, which utilises a 65mm camera negative to produce 70mm release prints, double the size of the standard 35mm, yielding a larger, higher-definition projected image;
* variations or amalgamations of all of the aforementioned, such as Technirama, Super Technirama 70, Ultra Panavision 70 and IMAX.

The history of the development of these systems and techniques and their adoption in Japan will be looked at in greater detail in the following chapter, but for now it will suffice to say that the various Japanese widescreen formats, throughout the 1950s and 1960s at least, were almost exclusively based on anamorphic systems, with the notable exception of Daiei, whose first DaieiScope productions used the VistaVision technology developed by Paramount.[[32]](#footnote-33)

At its most fundamental level, CinemaScope altered the dimensions of the projected image, potentially doubling its width from the full 1.33:1 ratio of silent film to produce an aspect ratio of 2.66:1. In reality, CinemaScope productions were somewhat narrower than this: Fox had originally intended that the format used a separate film strip containing the audio track, but when this proved an impractical option, a magnetic or optical soundtrack was included on release prints instead, in adherence to the Academy standard, thereby reducing the size of the frame. *The Robe* was actually released in 2.55:1, while for the majority of subsequent CinemaScope releases, the image was usually hard-matted to produce a projection standard of 2.35:1.[[33]](#footnote-34)

CinemaScope was originally intended to be packaged with another technical innovation, four-track magnetic sound. However, due to resistance from exhibitors unwilling to commit themselves to the further expense of equipping venues for the new sound systems, many productions were also released in versions adhering to the established monaural optical sound technology in order to attain more widespread distribution. CinemaScope remained the dominant format for widescreen film production in Hollywood until it was eventually superseded by rival systems, notably Panavision, with Fox’s final CinemaScope production, *In Like Flint* (Gordon Douglas), released in the United States on 15 March 1967.[[34]](#footnote-35) Variants of the technology persisted a lot longer, however, in independent and foreign productions. During this period, the abbreviated term ’scope became a generic byword for a number of widescreen processes, including those developed in Japan, that were either directly derived from or similar to Twentieth Century-Fox’s patented production and exhibition systems.

## 2.3 Television and the Adoption of Widescreen in Japan

The impact of *The Robe* was felt keenly in Japan. The transliterated term *Shinemasukôpu*, often abbreviated to *Shinesukô*, became one of the era’s buzzwords, and the major film magazines reacted with a string of articles appearing over the next few years with titles such as ‘All About CinemaScope’, ‘CinemaScope in Japan’, ‘Will CinemaScope Films Be Produced in Japan?’, ‘Opinions on CinemaScope’, ‘Widescreen Production: Performance’ and ‘The Future Possibilities of the Expanded screen’.[[35]](#footnote-36) Each offered its critical take on the new phenomenon, explaining the technology behind it and speculating when or whether Japanese cinema would be capable of producing a film of similar scale and screen dimensions. Even prior to the American release of *The Robe*, on 15 June 1953 *Kinema Junpô* published an article about the soon-to-be-unveiled technology entitled ‘CinemaScope: New Panorama-style Cinema.’[[36]](#footnote-37) A 1956 article in the same publication by Shimaji Takamaro, one of several that appeared during the period with the title ‘Cinemascope in Japan’, detailed the reaction of the Japanese industry, citing the film’s record-breaking first-day takings at the Roxy Theater of $43,000, the equivalent of 15,480,000 Yen.[[37]](#footnote-38)

It would be several years between the release of *The Robe* and the first Japanese widescreen features in 1957, a year that saw each of the major studios launching their own proprietary systems. There are two main factors that may account for the lag. The first is that television was introduced to the country at a relatively later stage. While the broadcasting of live images and sound had been pioneered almost simultaneously in both the United States and the United Kingdom several decades previously, with the British Broadcasting Company transmitting the world’s first regular public service from 2 November 1936, World War II had disrupted the widespread take-up of television as a consumer technology. Broadcasting resumed in Britain on 7 June 1946, and licenses for 150,000 receiver sets had been sold by 1949, while in America there was a 500 percent increase in the number of sets sold between 1947-48.[[38]](#footnote-39) As Lynn Spiegel observes in her account of the sociological impact of the new medium in America, ‘Between 1948 and 1955, television was installed in nearly two-thirds of the nation’s homes, and the basic mechanisms of the network oligopoly were set in motion.’[[39]](#footnote-40)

Though television arrived in the country’s households somewhat later, Japan was nevertheless the first outside of America and Britain to begin broadcasting in the postwar period, commencing in 1951, with NHK (Nihon Hôsô Kôsai a.k.a Japan Broadcasting Corporation) beginning the first regular national service on 1 February 1953.[[40]](#footnote-41) After peaking in 1958, falling cinema attendances in Japan were matched by a rise in television ownership throughout the next decade. Anderson and Richie state there were only 886 sets in the country in 1953, while by September 1958, 1,290,000 had been sold (covering roughly 10% of the population), although the source of these figures is not clear.[[41]](#footnote-42) The Unesco report *Statistics on Radio and Television 1950 – 1960* states that NHK issued 7700 licenses in Japan in 1953. This number grew to 40,000 in 1954, or one license for every 2000 members of the Japanese population, while the total number of licenses rose to 1,567,000 in 1958, and to 5,992,000 in 1960.[[42]](#footnote-43) Unesco’s *Latest Statistics on Radio and Television* show that by 1965, the number of licenses issued amounted to 18,080,000, while by 1970 this figure had risen to 22,883,000.[[43]](#footnote-44)

Meanwhile, *UniJapan* reported that ‘As of March 1st, 1962 there were 10,006,952 TV sets registered with N. H. K. (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) [sic]. This shows a coverage of 48.5 per cent of all Japanese households, which means that one in two has a TV set.’[[44]](#footnote-45) It is unclear how these various sources have gone about correlating the number of licenses issued or the number of sets sold with the per-capita or per-household coverage of the new medium, but Anderson and Richie claim that in the mid-1960s, ‘the new medium penetrated 60 percent of all Japanese homes’ and that ‘by 1970, televisions were in 95 percent of all households.’[[45]](#footnote-46) Meanwhile, by 1965, cinema attendances had dropped dramatically to 372.7 million, approximately a third of its 1958 high, a figure which had fallen further to 254 million by 1970 (see *Table 7: Cinema Admissions and Television Ownership in Japan*).

That this decline in cinema audiences occurred later than in the United States, where motion picture attendances fell drastically during the postwar period from an average weekly figure of 90 million in 1948 to 46 million in 1953, might be explained by the new medium’s relatively slow take-up.[[46]](#footnote-47) Nevertheless, the releases of Japan’s first widescreen films in 1957 can be seen as anticipating this downwards trend. While Belton lists a number of demographic factors that coincided with television’s appearance, including shorter working hours, increased suburbanisation and a rise in car ownership, which gave the average American citizen access to a wider range of competing leisure activities, Japanese sources are generally less equivocal.[[47]](#footnote-48) Even at the time, the English-language organ for the film industry, *UniJapan*, directly pinpointed the threat of television in very real terms, stating that ‘TV is called a “mass-communication-industry” and enjoys the warm support of the Government which is not extended in such degree to the film industry’, before detailing exactly the type of tax concessions afforded to ‘this new and popular medium of mass communication and entertainment.’[[48]](#footnote-49) A 1962 news report in *Variety* would later finger television as the main culprit behind the rapid 15% drop in cinema attendances in Japan, although instructively noted that the cinemas that had closed were being ‘replaced by markets, pachinko parlors, warehouses and striptease emporiums’, hinting at other social changes further down the line.[[49]](#footnote-50)

The introduction of the new film formats was concurrent with changes in the content of the films themselves. As producers began to court the youth rather than the family market, by providing the kind of entertainment that television could not provide, there was an escalation in the violent, sexual and political content of many releases. From the mid-1950s, there was a dramatic rise in the production of works falling within the exploitation genres of horror, gangster and crime movies, particularly from Shintoho, a trend that continued into the 1960s and beyond. Nikkatsu had significant commercial success with its *taiyôzoku* or ‘Sun Tribe’ films such as *Season of the Sun* (*Taiyô no kisetsu*, 1956), directed by Furukawa Tarumi, and *Crazed Fruit* (*Kurutta kajitsu*, 1956), directed by Nakahira Kô. These were rumbustious youth movies, equivalent to the new wave of Hollywood films such as *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955) and *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955), which reflected the realities and desires of the postwar baby-boomer generation audience. Just a few years later, Shochiku sought to emulate this success with the films of its so-called Nouvelle Vague (*nûberu bâgu*) directors, consisting of Shinoda Masahiro, Yoshida Kijû and Ôshima Nagisa, who added a dash of politics to the mix of rebellion and sexual liberation.[[50]](#footnote-51)

Again, television should not be held entirely accountable for these changes in the content of Japanese films, which unlike the conversion to widescreen, were symptomatic of other cultural developments too. They were ultimately attempts at targeting specific audience sectors rather than a wholesale switch over to a new technology. The major studios were not, after all, only competing with this new medium, but with each other, and also with foreign imports, which were often seen as receiving more lenient treatment from the censors.

Related to this is a second reason for the belated adoption of widescreen as a production standard. As Anderson and Richie explain, during this period Japanese theatres were divided between screening either domestic (*hôga*) or foreign films (*yôga*). With the thousand or so screens that were equipped with anamorphic projection equipment by the end of 1956 falling into the latter category (out of a total of 6,123 screens nationally), there was some resistance before the format was adopted by domestic producers. Theatres that specialised in domestic productions, in particular the smaller, provincial ones, were slower to convert to widescreen simply because of the costs entailed, cited by the authors as approximately $1500 per installation.[[51]](#footnote-52) It was a catch-22 situation; without an immediate supply of domestic widescreen films to show, there was no urgency to commit to the expense of upgrading to the equipment required to show them.

Shimaji elaborates on these cost aspects, stating that the expense of equipping theatres with the necessary anamorphic projection equipment was initially higher, at 1.5-1.6 million Yen, which at an exchange rate of 360 Yen per dollar equates to approximately $4200-$4500. However, the author notes that this sum had soon fallen to 500-600,0000 Yen (approximately $1,400-$1,650), a figure more in line with Anderson and Richie’s, with the introduction of “Metro sound equipment” (*metoro-shiki onkyô souchi*), a term Shimaji uses to refer to the Perspecta Stereophonic Sound system championed by the American studio MGM from March 1954.[[52]](#footnote-53)

Often referred to as a “pseudo-stereo” system, Perspecta utilised the same single optical soundtrack as that used traditionally, with the sound signal similarly reproduced monaurally if played on standard projection equipment. This meant it was unnecessary to buy a new sound head for the projector, as would have been the case for films with a magnetic soundtrack. However, this optical soundtrack contained three sub-audible tones that could be read if the projector were fitted with the Perspecta sound head, which would feed the signal to the left, right or centre speakers to produce a stereophonic effect. MGM initially adopted the Perspecta Sound system as standard for all foreign releases of its CinemaScope productions, in order to distribute its films more widely to cinemas yet to upgrade to real stereophonic sound, but within a year, along with the other American studios of Warner Bros. and Paramount, had announced it would use it for all its future productions.[[53]](#footnote-54) Japan’s own widescreen productions would be produced in both monaural and Perspecta stereo versions.

Despite the initial lack of domestic widescreen production, the number of cinemas capable of screening such films grew steadily. Eric Crosby states that ‘According to *Film Daily*, by 1 January 1954, ninety theatres had been equipped with anamorphic projection equipment... A survey conducted by Fox’s Japan office found that 479 theatres were showing CinemaScope films by 15 October 1955, and 889 theatres by 10 April 1956.’[[54]](#footnote-55) Shimaji’s article states that by 21 July 1956, 1022 venues (approximately 17% of the nation’s screens) were equipped to show CinemaScope productions, with 345 (6%) of these capable of four-track magnetic sound and 677 (11%) with optical sound.[[55]](#footnote-56)

As impressive as these figures seem, the installation of CinemaScope equipment actually took place rather more slowly in Japan than in North America and Europe. John Belton states that once Fox had relented with forcing magnetic stereophonic sound upon exhibitors as part of the full CinemaScope package, installations escalated to a rate of 200-250 a week, from 3,500 screens in April 1954 to 13,500 the following year.[[56]](#footnote-57) An article *Variety* published on 29 June 1955 stated that a year and a half after its introduction, CinemaScope had been installed in 14,340 venues across the United States and Canada, with a lower though still significant rate of over 100 conversions per week.[[57]](#footnote-58) By 30 July 1955, 14,882 theatres or 88% of all possible venues in the United States and Canada were equipped for CinemaScope (of which 10,312 were equipped for optical sound only and 3,593 for magnetic sound), while across Europe, virtually all British cinemas were capable of CinemaScope exhibition, compared with 90% of all screens in Italy, 85% in France and 50% in Germany.[[58]](#footnote-59) The conversion in Britain appears to have been particularly rapid, rising from 84 equipped venues in June 1954 to 3,272 less than two years later, although the country’s commitment to widescreen was far more pronounced on the exhibition than the production side.[[59]](#footnote-60) Across continental Europe, Italy held the record for the highest number of installations, with 3,011 theatres equipped for anamorphic projection by the end of 1956.[[60]](#footnote-61)

Nevertheless, though Japan’s transition to anamorphic projection might initially have taken off relatively slowly, perhaps because of, as these figures suggest, the larger number of venues across the country that needed refurbishment in comparison with European countries, the fact that the percentage of domestic widescreen productions leapt from 16.3% in 1957 to 75.2% in 1958 and 98.2% in 1959, with only 2 new films released in the standard academy ratio in 1960, conclusively demonstrates that by the end of the decade it was more or less complete (see *Table 8: Classification of Japanese Productions by Type*).[[61]](#footnote-62)

## 2.4 The Relationship between Exhibition and Production

This rise in the number of cinemas capable of anamorphic projection was related to an overall renewal and expansion in the exhibition sector. As *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* noted of this period of fresh growth after 1951, ‘In the immediate postwar years, many movie-theaters were temporary buildings set up in makeshift manner. In the passing years, most of them have been reconstructed. There are now many excellent, well-equipped, air-conditioned theaters capable of accommodating large audiences.’[[62]](#footnote-63) Furthermore, the statistics for the decade published by *Eiren* show that the overall number of screens rose from 5,184 in 1956 to 7,400 in 1959, a rate far faster than any growth in population, resulting in increased levels of competition for individual theatre owners. [[63]](#footnote-64) Because of this, exhibitors were forced into adopting a number of initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining local audiences by enhancing the cinema-going experience, of which widescreen presentation was only a part. For example, the quote cited above was not the only source to mention the lure of a cool, clean and odourless viewing environment in a country with a notoriously hot and humid summer climate. On 22 August 1962, *Variety* reported that to combat falling audience attendances in 1961, ‘Exhibs have improved conditions in their cinemas and leaned toward double and even triple feature programs. Around 70% of the Tokyo houses are now air-conditioned, almost double the count of 1959.’[[64]](#footnote-65) In some respects, the report was behind the fact by several years, as the introduction of the *nihondate* (double feature) and *sanbondate* (triple feature) had already taken place several years earlier.

One might therefore argue that this rapid transformation of cinema as a social institution throughout the 1950s was a case of the tail wagging the dog. It was led more by the exhibition side of the industry than the production side, and the changes in exhibition practices that emerged were not solely reducible to the impact of television. With a greater proportion of the newly-built or renovated venues designated as ‘first-run’ houses in order to attract larger audiences, films that before the war might have taken a year to reach the lower-echelon theatres in the provinces now completed their national circuit within six months.[[65]](#footnote-66) This resulted in faster returns for distributors, but an increased need for fresh product, which is what ultimately led to the introduction of the double/triple features. In January 1954, Toei initiated the practice of releasing ‘two films every week, one being a feature and the other a serial film.’[[66]](#footnote-67) The other studios soon followed, with *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* reporting that ‘All theaters outside of those for road shows of foreign films, have now been compelled to adopt the double-feature system.’[[67]](#footnote-68) In 1955, of the 423 dramatic films produced, with an average running time of 85 minutes per film, 336 (79.4%) were full-length feature films with an average running time of 93 minutes, against 87 (20.6%) medium-length films, with an average running time of 51 minutes.[[68]](#footnote-69)

There were those in the industry who were keen to point out that the mushrooming level of production wasn’t necessarily a positive thing. In April 1959, *Variety* reported:

The Japanese film industry placed a stranglehold on itself and foreign film distributors by going into virtual blanket double-feature programming in mid-1958. The result was that local producers once again led the world market in volume, this time with 503 feature-type pictures. But while the grosses were up, the net profits showed a decline.[[69]](#footnote-70)

While the tone of the article suggested that Japan’s levels of overproduction was crowding out the imported product (which is what was clearly happening, as the box office take for imports fell from 30.9% in 1957 to 23.9% in 1958 according to *Eiren* statistics), it made equally clear that there was concern among Japanese producers too. Masaichi is reported as claiming ‘the present situation as suicidal’ and announcing a reversion to a one-picture policy going into effect from June 1959 as ‘self-defence.’[[70]](#footnote-71) Meanwhile, in a report published in the *Journal of the Screen Producers Guild* in December 1959, the secretary-general of *Eiren*, Ikeda Gishin, wrote:

Judging from the above given numbers it can be said that we have the world’s largest production. However, we are not proud of the fact. Such a large production schedule is demanded by the history of the Japanese film industry, that the circumstances under which the national market came into existence, and our own exhibition system, formed under a certain kind of business practice that later became a tradition in the field.[[71]](#footnote-72)

A comparison between the structures of the American and Japanese film industries helps account for these increased levels of activity and competition across the studios. In America, an anti-trust suit against the studios of Paramount, Warner Bros., Loews/MGM, RKO and Twentieth Century-Fox initiated by the Federal Government in the late 1930s had succeeded in breaking up the vertically-integrated system in 1948, forcing the majors to divest themselves of their exhibition outlets.[[72]](#footnote-73) The so-called ‘Paramount Decree’ or ‘Consent Decree’ opened up new possibilities in America for independent producers and distributors, dramatically changing the landscape of its cinema from the pre-war era, in which independent studios such as Republic or Monogram had operated at a considerable disadvantage in trying to negotiate terms with studio-owned theatres. In fact, in the case of the Loews exhibition circuit, which held a controlling stake in MGM, the exhibitor had actually owned the distributor, thereby guaranteeing a market for its product.[[73]](#footnote-74)

No such forced change had taken place in Japan, allowing the dominance of the six major film companies to continue unabated due to the stronger, closer links between the production and exhibition sectors. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* summarises this somewhat complicated relationship thus:

Not only do they [the major companies] make pictures at their own studios at the rate of one or two films weekly for their own distribution, but they also own and operate, directly or through agents, scores of movie-theaters besides controlling hundreds of affiliated theatres through contracts with the proprietors.[[74]](#footnote-75)

While Fox’s attempts to impose its widescreen CinemaScope format as an international standard were hampered by resistance from American exhibitors, albeit to a limited extent, it was within the interest of each of the Japanese majors and the contracted theatres within their distribution chains to work together to secure their market share against their rivals, hence the development of the individual trademarked widescreen systems by each of the companies and the rush to get their first such productions into theatres.

At the end of May 1956, of the 176 theatres in the country directly operated by the studios (out of an estimated 5,590 total theatres across the country), 50 were managed by Shochiku, compared with 47 by Toho, 28 by Nikkatsu, 20 by Toei, 19 by Daiei, and only 12 by Shintoho. During the decade, a number of the studios established subsidiaries or affiliate companies to deal exclusively with theatre management, while Shochiku, Toho and Toei embarked on ambitious programmes of expanding their exhibition facilities.[[75]](#footnote-76) The symbiosis between the majors was far more complex than one might first assume: if one looks at a list of the leading theatres of the period, one notes examples such as the 1,160-seat Asakusa Denkikan and the 1066-seat Asakusa Tokiwa-za in Tokyo, both of which were managed by Shochiku, but which exclusively released films by Daiei and Toei respectively, while the 454-seat Toho Cinema in Yokohama released films produced by Daiei, distributed through this latter company’s distribution chain.[[76]](#footnote-77)

Meanwhile, Nikkatsu had operated only in an exhibition and distribution capacity at the beginning of the 1950s, dealing exclusively with foreign films, before entering into film production once again in 1954 for the first time since 1942. In order to streamline the company, Nikkatsu closed down a number of its directly-operated theatres in the provinces and began constructing new higher-class exhibition facilities in the urban centres, while retaining venues such as the 1520-seat Marunouchi Nikkatsu Theater in Tokyo, which was dedicated to showing high-profile imports. By far the smallest of the studios, Shintoho was ultimately hamstrung by its small exhibition network, while its limited production capacity meant it was unable to produce double-feature packages, as reflected by the company’s relatively lower number of releases compared with the others (see *Table 1*).

Unfortunately, there appear to be no readily available records comparing the conversion rate of the venues either contractually tied in or directly managed by each of the studios. However, with production and exhibition so uniquely linked in Japan, it is safe to assume that the new theatres constructed by these companies would have been automatically equipped for anamorphic projection (*Japan Motion Picture Almanac* projected a total of seven new venues built by Toho in 1956; eight by Shochiku; four by Daiei; eleven by Toei and four by Nikkatsu).[[77]](#footnote-78) Given this, it comes as little surprise to note that the beginnings of widescreen production in Japan accompanied this rapid expansion in the number of new venues, and that the studio most active in expanding its share of the exhibition sector, Toei, was also responsible for bringing Japan’s first widescreen feature to the screen.

## 2.5 Impetus from Outside

Competition from television and rival companies were all important factors contributing to the urgency for each of the studios to create a manifestly superior product, but a crucial stimulus came from Hollywood. The foreign market might have been, as we have seen, a relatively insignificant one for Japanese producers, but the opposite was certainly not true, despite Japan’s strict import quotas, with *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* reporting that ‘Earnings from the distribution of foreign motion pictures in Japan amounted to ¥11,250 million [$31.25 million] during the past year [1956]. This testifies to the fact that Japan is a quite important market for foreign motion pictures.’[[78]](#footnote-79) Though these foreign films might have had a smaller market share than domestic productions (approximately 30% for 1956 and 1957), one of the side effects of limiting the number of films that importing companies were allowed to bring into the country was in ensuring America’s dominance of this relatively lucrative market in the East at the cost of other exporting industries.

Until 1951, the distribution of American films in Japan was handled directly by an agent of the Motion Pictures Export Association (MPEA) known as the Central Motion Picture Exchange (CMPE). The Allied Occupation also allowed one company to handle the imports of any one particular country, giving rise to the establishment of such organisations as the British Commonwealth Film Co. Ltd (in August 1947), the Syndicate d’Exportation de Film Francais (August 1947), the Soviet Union Film Exporters Association (August 1947), Italifilm (February 1949) and the North European Film Co. Ltd (August 1950). The effective result was that of the 55 foreign films imported to Japan in 1947, 51 (or 92.7%) were American. This percentage dropped with the foundation of the new companies entrusted with other national cinemas, but nevertheless, the American product predominated with 62 out of 104 films (59.6%) in 1948, and 90 out of 151 films (59.6%) in 1949, rising again to 133 out of 185 films (71.9%) in 1950 (see *Table 6: Classification of Foreign Films Released in Japan by Type*).[[79]](#footnote-80)

This pattern continued even after control of imports passed to the Japanese Government in 1951 and the Allied Occupation ended. Throughout the decade, the major Japanese studios also began distributing a small number of foreign films, while several further Japanese companies were also established for this purpose, such as Shingaiei (founded in December 1952), Union Film (in August 1954) and the Daiwa Film Corporation (in May 1956). The premier film import-export company of the prewar period, the Towa Trading Partnership, recommenced its activities in 1950, with its founder Kawakita Nagamasa resuming his presidency following temporary suspension from the industry for his wartime activities (in 1951 the company became a subsidiary of Toho and continues to operate to this day as an importer under the name of the Toho-Towa Company).

However, though the American studios had been forced to separate their production, distribution and exhibition interests on their own turf, the establishment of head offices in Tokyo for MGM, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Bros., Paramount, RKO, Universal, Columbia, Allied Artists and a number of smaller concerns (for example, Republic Pictures of Japan), all in January 1952, coupled with the Japanese practise of having distinct venues dedicated to domestic films and imports, meant that Hollywood had a more-or-less direct access to the Japanese market after the Occupation. Acting as importers and distributors of their own product, most of the American companies possessed an equal number of branch offices, based in the regional centres of Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka and Sapporo, as the Japanese major studios. While they didn’t actually own any production facilities or exhibition venues within Japan, they were a mighty presence, especially compared with those companies distributing the non-Hollywood product. In 1952, *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* shows that 147 of the 191 foreign films (77%) released in Japan were American, with 133 out of 181 (73.5%) in 1953, 138 out of 206 (67%) in 1954 and 132 out of 196 (67.3%) in 1955.[[80]](#footnote-81) In other words, the Japanese market was worth $20.4 million to American film companies in 1955.[[81]](#footnote-82)

The quota system was actively criticised in its day for protecting American corporate interests, and because of this its key points were drastically changed by the Ministry of Finance in 1958, resulting in the establishment of the Foreign Film Importer-Distributors Association of Japan (FFIDAJ).[[82]](#footnote-83) (As previously mentioned, quotas were dropped completely in 1964, in order for Japan to meet the requirements for entry into the OECD). Though America’s market share declined in the immediate years following 1958, it nevertheless remained significant. Later statistics for example, show that of the 183 films released between the second half of 1958 and the first half of 1959, 108 (59%) were American. The next largest source of foreign imports was France, with 23 films (12.6%), then Britain with 13 (7.1%). Virtually all of the non-American imported films came from Western or Eastern Europe, from countries such as Italy, West Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, with eight films coming from the Soviet Union. The only exceptions to this dominance of Japan’s foreign film market by America and European interests were two films from Mexico and one from Australia.[[83]](#footnote-84) No films from other Asian film-producing nations were imported for commercial release in this year, although excluded from these figures are those films that screened at film festivals such as the Southeast Asia Film Festival, a regional event co-founded in 1954 by Daiei’s Nagata Masaichi and Run Run Shaw of Hong Kong’s Shaw Brothers company, which was hosted in various countries across Asia throughout the decade, including Japan.

The details of how the quota system operated prior to its revision in 1958 are complex, but take into account such factors as the purchasing price of each film title, the percentage of imports by each importer against their total imports from the preceding year, and the percentage of revenues for each importer. It also allowed import licenses to be traded between companies, while extra licenses were granted to companies that imported ‘excellent revenue-earning films’, resulting in a winner-takes-all situation that favoured the more popular films imported by the larger companies.[[84]](#footnote-85) It is worth observing that in terms of the amount of income per film, American films fared rather better than European ones, as can be ascertained by the strong Hollywood presence in the list of top twenty grossing foreign imports of the decade (see *Table 5*). The more the fixed number of imported films from the major studios earned, the more these same studios consolidated their market positions. Even among the American importers a pecking order was maintained, in which MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros. and Fox, each of which had allocations to import around 15 films in the years 1955-56, remained in an advantageous position against smaller competitors like RKO, Republic and United Artists, with less then ten allocations each. Ostensibly to counter this, bonus licenses were also awarded, somewhat arbitrarily, to ‘culturally commendable pictures.’[[85]](#footnote-86) This, naturally enough, proved particularly controversial when they didn’t always go to the worthiest recipient, as can be judged by a short news article that appeared in *Variety* in 1955:

For the third year in a row, Paramount has been awarded an extra import licence for showing a film which has been judged to be “superior” by a board of Japanese judges. “Rear Window” earned the latest bonus. Last year Par [sic] won an extra license for “Stalag 17” which had been a bonus import earned by the 1953 “superior” film, “Come Back, Little Sheba.”[[86]](#footnote-87)

This state of affairs was not always disadvantageous for those Japanese major companies releasing American productions. In 1949, Daiei’s president Nagata became the first Japanese citizen outside of the military or civil service to travel to the United States during the Occupation, where he made vital contacts with a number of companies that were not members of the MPEA, and therefore were not granted import licenses for their productions. These were Samuel Goldwyn studios and, more crucially, Walt Disney, whose films, before the establishment of its distribution arm Buena Vista in 1953, were handled by RKO in America.[[87]](#footnote-88) In 1955, Daiei distributed Disney’s nature documentary *The Living Desert* (James Algar, 1953), the live-action Jules Verne adaptation *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Richard Fleischer, 1954) and the animated feature *Lady and the Tramp* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske, 1955). The first of these became the top-grossing foreign film of its year and the third highest grossing foreign film of the decade, while the second, which incidentally was Disney’s first live-action film to use the CinemaScope process licensed from Fox, became the ninth highest grossing foreign film of the decade, positioned just one place ahead of Fox’s *The Robe*. The decade’s thirteenth highest grossing film, *Lady and the Tramp*, was the first animated feature to be shot in CinemaScope, although Disney had earlier produced the short film *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom* (1953) using the process (see *Table 5*).

Tezuka Yoshiharu claims that the arrangement was ‘an unbelievably bad deal for Daiei’, with most of the profits going to Disney.[[88]](#footnote-89) However, these successes ensured that Daiei retained its licenses, allowing once more for the import of six films in 1956. In the meantime, while two other major Japanese companies that imported films, Shochiku and Shintoho, were restricted to releasing one foreign film each, Toho was able to increase its number of import licenses from two in 1955 to three in 1956 through its involvement with arguably the greatest entertainment phenomenon of the postwar era, Cinerama.[[89]](#footnote-90)

## 2.6 Cinerama and 70mm ‘Roadshow’ Exhibition

Although not without its prewar antecedents, to be detailed in the following chapter, the widescreen revolution of the 1950s, was largely prompted by the arrival of television into American homes, among other broader social changes. The watershed moment was the premiere of *This is Cinerama* on 30 September 1952 at the Broadway theatre in New York, the first film to utilise the sensational tri-panel, tri-projector Cinerama format. It was directed by Merian C. Cooper, co-director (alongside Ernest B. Schoedsack) of the legendary *King Kong* (1933), and was bankrolled by Mike Todd Sr, a Broadway theatrical impresario, and Lowell Thomas, a famous journalist and broadcaster of the day known for his globe-trotting adventures who also appeared as the compere within the onscreen extravaganza.[[90]](#footnote-91) A lavish travelogue of Europe and North America, its shots of such famous landmarks as the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls were designed primarily to exemplify the virtues of the new Cinerama technology, a non-anamorphic format developed by pioneering Hollywood research scientist Fred Waller, which utilised three interlocked projectors that cast synchronised images onto a vast, deeply-curved louvered screen. This ‘cinematic panorama’, the origins behind the system’s name, had a 2.59:1 aspect ratio, with the projected images supposedly occupying the viewer’s entire visual field, a wide arc of approximately 146°, so that the edge of the frame, the proscenium and all other features external to the cinematic experience remained outside of the viewer’s perception.[[91]](#footnote-92)

In tandem with this overwhelming sense of spectacle, Cinerama presented the further innovation of high-fidelity stereophonic sound, giving an even fuller sense of breadth to the presentation. Clearer, crisper and with a higher range than that which audiences were accustomed to from the optical soundtracks of standard 35mm release prints, its multi-directional surround sound system, with seven tracks recorded magnetically on a separate strip of film and with the speakers positioned judiciously throughout the theatre, gave the illusion that the sound was actually coming from an onscreen source.[[92]](#footnote-93) Cinerama dramatically underscored the limitations of the then-standard 17” monochrome, monaural television screen, and pointed to new ways of how the film industry could retain its share of the market, as noted in the introduction to the anthology *Widescreen Worldwide*:

Within a matter of two years, Hollywood had converted to widescreen in an attempt to provide audiences with some of the new experiences associated with Cinerama, such as the illusion of depth, a sense of quasi-theatrical participation, and the novelty of stereo sound, without the technological complications or prohibitive exhibition costs of Cinerama itself.[[93]](#footnote-94)

The technical complications and added costs were due to Cinerama’s three-projector technology requiring significantly more film than conventional cinema systems (the description of the system as ‘three-strip’, due to its simultaneous use of three reels of film instead of one during shooting, was also shared by the Technicolor process, to be outlined later). The system necessitated multiple projectionists (sometimes as many as 17) to screen its films at a limited number of specialist exhibition venues. There were other issues that ruptured the illusionary sense of immersion, namely that projector synchronisation problems frequently meant the overlap between the three projected images was visible. Furthermore, three-strip Cinerama operated at a non-standard 26 frames-per-second, until the production of the only two narrative features to be shot using the system, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* (Henry Levin and George Pal) and *How the West Was Won* (John Ford, Henry Hathaway, George Marshall and Richard Thorpe), both of which were released in 1962. This made it impossible to reduce the original prints to a format that could be played in conventional theatres at 24 frames-per-second.[[94]](#footnote-95) The technology did not lend itself well to dramatic subjects anyway, with close-ups or even medium shots resulting in visible edge distortion and depth of field issues (a shortcoming of CinemaScope too, as shall be detailed in the chapter on widescreen aesthetics), and the use of zoom lenses impossible due to the problems of matching the three images. There were also complicated eyeline-matching issues for the actors during the filming process, typically when talking to other performers filmed with a separate camera and thus appearing within a separate panel of the image: in order to capture its panoramic vista, each of the three cameras covered a different aspect of the scene from a different angle, so that subjects appearing in the left- or right-hand side would be displayed at a different orientation to the screen’s plane than if in the centre.[[95]](#footnote-96)

Nevertheless, even today the thrill of a Cinerama presentation provides an unforgettable experience for those lucky enough to experience it.[[96]](#footnote-97) It is instructive to note that CinemaScope, which debuted less than a year later on 16 September 1953, was initially labelled “the poor man’s Cinerama” by some industry insiders and pundits.[[97]](#footnote-98) By overcoming many of Cinerama’s drawbacks, and by using a technology more in accordance with existing production and exhibition practices, CinemaScope was able to quickly establish itself as a new industry standard. However, with its reduced screen dimensions and four-track stereo (when available) rather than the seven-track sound of the earlier format, it presented a palpably less immersive or exhilarating experience for the viewer.

It was because of this that Cinerama managed to maintain its niche in the market until the late-1970s, where the limited number of films specifically made for the system and, later on, 70mm releases, ‘would be shown in a prestige city-centre venue for months at a time and then move on, rather than for two or three days at hundreds of venues across a country.’[[98]](#footnote-99) It was a format that traded on scale and exclusivity. In 1953, only four Cinerama venues existed, in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit and Chicago, a figure which, according to Belton, had grown to only 22 theatres by 1959.[[99]](#footnote-100) It is not clear whether these figures only include those theatres in North America, but advertising material put out by the Stanley Warner Cinerama Corporation, which had begun investing heavily in the conversion of theatres for the process from the Summer of 1953, lists 13 cinemas in the U.S. by October of 1954, while an article entitled “Expansion of Cinerama is Forecast” from 7 May 1955 mentions ‘19 such theaters throughout the world.’[[100]](#footnote-101)

It took two years for Cinerama to premiere overseas. The first, and most profitable, permanent exhibition venue outside of America was in the United Kingdom. Installation of Cinerama projection equipment began at the London Casino Theatre on Old Compton street on 7 Aug 1954, with the European premiere of *This is Cinerama* held on 30 Sept 1954. This was quickly followed by the Imperial Theatre in Montreal, Canada, with Cinerama presentations beginning on 27 December 1954.[[101]](#footnote-102)

A political dimension to Cinerama’s overseas expansion emerged at an early stage, and indeed, it might have been more than just a happy accident that the very name of the system is an anagram of “American”. Belton describes it as an ‘overt agent of ideology, functioning as a means of displaying the scenic wonders of America to both domestic and foreign audiences’, and evokes the self-consciously ostentatious displays of its own technology in the final scenes of the first film, as:

The Cinerama camera, mounted in the nose of stunt pilot Paul Mantz’s B-25, fetishizes the American landscape, climaxing its erotic fascination with it by barnstorming through Bryce Canyon, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Zion Canyon in Zion National Park.[[102]](#footnote-103)

By all accounts, President Eisenhower, who attended an early screening at the Warner Theater in Washington after having being invited by Lowell Thomas, was reduced to tears of patriotic rapture as the Salt Lake City Tabernacle choir sang “America the Beautiful” in these final scenes, and was convinced that Cinerama would be a wonderful showcase of the many wonders of America for viewers overseas.[[103]](#footnote-104)

In 1954, but a few weeks before the London Casino Theatre’s European premiere, the first ever Cinerama presentation outside of the U.S. took place in a specially constructed outdoor theatre at the International Trade Fair in Damascus. The first screening, on 2 September, was attended by some 1,500 of the great and the good of Syrian society, including President Atasi, and it caused a tremendous stir. There were reportedly numerous injuries as hordes of people without tickets climbed trees surrounding the makeshift venue, scrambling to get a glimpse of this new American marvel. The Cinerama equipment, consisting of four projectors and 72 speakers for this first international airing, was supplied by Warner Brothers and shipped over by the U.S. Air Force, along with a 62,000 Watt generator to light up the screen, which at the time would have been capable of powering the whole of the Syrian capital alone. The Russian Pavilion, despite being the largest at the International Fair, occupying 40,000 square meters and costing $500,000 to build, found itself distinctly overshadowed.[[104]](#footnote-105) The Russians subsequently lodged a complaint of unfair competition to the international fair officials, the incident reported by *Variety* in a characteristically crass fashion under the headline “Reds Claim ‘Foul!’ in Syria ‘Cinerama’ Exhibit.”[[105]](#footnote-106) The travelling installation soon moved on to the Bangkok International Fair in January 1955, leading to this report from *Life* magazine:

While the U.S. stood aside, the Soviet Union has been using the world’s trade fairs to peddle its politics with exhibits that are shrewd mixtures of commerce and propaganda. But last month the U.S. abandoned its snooty attitude and moved actively into combat in Bangkok, Thailand... The big show-stopper was Cinerama, which packed the 2,000-seat open-air theater twice nightly, scaring and delighting the audiences... And at Bangkok the Russians, who last year won a top prize at the fair, declined competition and failed to appear.[[106]](#footnote-107)

The Russians would retaliate by introducing the largely similar Kinopanorama system at the 1958 Brussels World Fair, where the film *Great Is My Country* (*Shiroka Strana Moya Rodnaya*, Roman Karmen) was awarded a major prize.[[107]](#footnote-108) Curiously this film would later be shown in New York, where the process was compared favourably with Cinerama, with Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* writing:

This Soviet “cinerama,” which is being presented here by the Soviet Ministry of Culture in conjunction with the Soviet exhibition at the Coliseum, is a generally handsome and impressive wide-screen-and-color travelogue, notably short on people and propaganda and long on spectacular views.[[108]](#footnote-109)

Later, in a new spirit of collaboration, scenes from various Russian Kinopanorama films were compiled to make *Cinerama’s Russian Adventure* (1966), with Boris Dolin and Vasily Kafanian the credited directors and Bing Crosby presenting.

In the immediate aftermath of the Damascus and Bangkok Cinerama affairs, a plan was seriously considered to build a Cinerama theatre on a retired World War II aircraft carrier, which was to be sent around the world as a floating theatrical flagship extolling the virtues of the nation.[[109]](#footnote-110) Ultimately this came to nothing. However, it is no particular surprise to discover that Cinerama’s first permanent venues in Asia should be in Japan, given the role that the country played during the Cold War as host to U.S. military bases, long beyond the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 effectively signalled the end of the occupation, and long beyond the 1953 cease-fire in the Korean War in which America was heavily involved.

*This is Cinerama* was released mere months after its European premiere in London to the only two venues in Japan equipped to show it, on 5 and 15 January 1955 respectively. These were the 970-seat Imperial Theater (Teikoku Gekijo) in Tokyo and the 1300-seat OS Theater in Osaka. The first of these venues, overlooking the Imperial Palace, was conspicuously situated next to the Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg, which had housed the headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Douglas MacArthur during the Occupation Years of 1946-1951. Both Cinerama theatres were operated by Toho, who had earned 336,540,000 Yen (almost one million dollars) from this one title alone by the end of its year-long run, with 694,448 attendances in the Tokyo venue, and 651,089 in Osaka. Unfortunately, 60% of this went as royalties to its American exporter Robin International, and while Toho was also able to profit from the release of the second film using the process, *Cinerama Holiday* (1955), released in Japan on December of that same year, this high remittance of earnings from the picture to the exporting country led to the Ministry of Finance’s decision originally to restrict the number of Cinerama venues in the country to just two.[[110]](#footnote-111)

Cinerama arrived in Japan after the first CinemaScope releases had, but before the country started producing its own widescreen features. Japan never produced any Cinerama films of its own. The specificity of the camera and projection equipment and the exclusivity of the market meant that the production of the three-strip quasi-documentary spectaculars, consisting of just the five films *This is Cinerama* (1952), *Cinerama Holiday* (1955), *Seven Wonders of the World* (1956), *Search for Paradise* (1957) and *South Seas Adventure* (1958), remained the sole domain of the Cinerama Production Corporation. The one notable exception to this was another American production, *Windjammer* (1958), a documentary account of an epic voyage undertaken by the Norwegian sailing ship *Christian Radich*, filmed in a similar format called Cinemiracle.[[111]](#footnote-112) Nevertheless, Japan remained an important overseas market for the company, even after it had abandoned three-strip presentation in favour of 70mm, and it is instructive that though by September 1957 there were only eight theatres outside of the United States and Canada equipped to show Cinerama, Japan should play host to two of them (an honour shared at the time only by Italy, which boasted venues in Rome and Milan). [[112]](#footnote-113)

Japan did, however, become involved in 70mm production, albeit on a small scale, with the first such film, *Buddha* (*Shaka*), directed by Misumi Kenji in Daiei Super 70 Technirama in 1961. The production of films in wide-gauge formats in America had begun in earnest with the development of Todd-AO, financed by Mike Todd Sr., one of the original backers of Cinerama and later (between 1957-58) the husband of Elizabeth Taylor. Todd had become disillusioned with the evident technical flaws in the three-strip system at an early stage. In October 1952, the maverick entrepreneur contacted Brian O’Brien, a former professor of optics of the University of Rochester, with the relatively simple request to design a premier-quality motion picture system “where everything comes out of one hole.”[[113]](#footnote-114) On 13 October 1955, the film adaptation of the Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma!*, directed by Fred Zinnemann, premiered at the Rivoli Theatre in New York, the first film to be produced using the system that bore its financier’s name.[[114]](#footnote-115)

Like Cinerama, Todd-AO required specialist production and exhibition equipment, this time in the form of cameras and projectors capable of handling film double the width of standard 35mm release prints. However, the quality of the presentation, in terms of image size, clarity and reliability, was far superior to anything that had come before. John Belton, writing in the pre-digital age of 1992, noted that ‘The words *70mm* on a theater marquee or in a newspaper advertisement have become identified in the public’s mind with the highest quality in motion picture presentation.’[[115]](#footnote-116) While never intended to replace conventional theatrical exhibition, formats such as Todd-AO and later systems compatible with its projection equipment, such as Super Technirama 70 and Super Panavision 70, elevated the status of film screenings to “events”, presenting new possibilities for the future of cinema, in which the context of the presentation was as critical as the content. The bigger and more luxurious the venue and the greater the pomp and ceremony surrounding the actual screening, the more the film industry distinguished itself against the new upstart medium of television.

The films made for large formats such as Cinerama and Todd-AO were given what is known as “roadshow” theatrical releases, opening in a limited number of venues in major cities for a brief period where they were shown on a reserved-seat basis with a maximum of two screenings a day, before going on general release. Roadshow presentations attempted to elevate the cinematic experience to the level of more highbrow live performance-based art forms such as musical theatre or ballet, with the films presented with an intermission midway, souvenir programmes for sale and ticket prices accordingly higher. For Mike Todd Sr., the issues of spectacle and elevation of each performance to an event were paramount: ‘I’m not interested in making movies’, he famously claimed. ‘Movies are something you can see in your neighbourhood theatre and eat popcorn while you’re watching them.’[[116]](#footnote-117) Popcorn was subsequently banned at Todd-AO presentations. The higher ticket prices were easily justified too, as he explained:

The carriage trade will swim a river of crocodiles to see it. To show they got class and appreciate the arts, they’d be insulted if you didn’t charge premium prices and make it a little hard to see. Besides, if you get the reviews and have a hot ticket, the gum chewers will figure out how to get in as well. Once you’re a hit in New York, you’ll have to fight the out-of-town exhibitors off with a stick.[[117]](#footnote-118)

The roadshow market had all but died by the end of the late-1960s in America, and in Japan it was only really used for foreign releases, or for its own limited number of 70mm productions during the 1960s (although interestingly the loan word *rôdoshô* is still used to this day in a slightly different sense, to refer to a general nationwide theatrical release). The typical exhibition practice in Japan was outlined by *Eiren*’s Ikeda Gishin in his report of the domestic film industry in 1959:

It is the Japanese way of exhibiting films that exhibitors have nation-wide premieres as soon as films are completed. They neither wait for a favorable time nor choose a particular theater for a premiere. Immediately after completion, films are released either in chain theaters or contract theaters throughout the country. They do not follow a roadshow system.[[118]](#footnote-119)

The first such 70mm roadshow presentation in Japan was, unsurprisingly, of *Oklahoma!*, which opened on 28 December 1956 simultaneously at the newly constructed Koma Stadiums in Tokyo’s Shinjuku and Osaka’s Umeda districts, just over a year after its world premiere.[[119]](#footnote-120) By 30 June 1962, some six months after the premiere of Japan’s first 70mm feature, *Buddha*, at Tokyo’s Yuraku-za theatre on 1 November 1961 (where *The Robe* had opened some eight years before), *UniJapan Film Quarterly* reported that the number of venues in Japan equipped for 70mm had reached 55, with seven more under construction (see *Table 11: Number of 70mm Cinemas in Operation in Japan as of 30 June 1962*).[[120]](#footnote-121)

The Cinerama Corporation appears to have been a major driving force in this expansion of the wide-gauge roadshow exhibition sector in Japan, as can be discerned from a report that appeared in *Variety* around this time, entitled ‘Cinerama Planning Seven Cinemas to Handle Super Pix in Japan’, that is highly revealing of both the way non-standard theatrical presentation developed throughout the 1960s, and of the path of Cinerama’s fortunes.[[121]](#footnote-122) Now under the management of Nicolas Reisini, in the very release year of the only two narrative features shot using the three-strip Cinerama system, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* and *How the West Was Won*, the company originally co-founded by the man who had made 70mm exhibition commercially viable began to systematically abandon its unique process. Under its new president, the troubled Cinerama Company began instead to focus on developing its share of the global market for single-strip wide-gauge exhibition through the management of national chains of ‘Super Cinerama’ venues, while simultaneously:

The business decision to simplify production and cut the recurring exhibition costs (including multiple projectionists) resulted in the adoption of the use of Ultra Panavision 70 and, later, Super Technirama 70 and Super Panavision 70 for the remaining Cinerama productions.[[122]](#footnote-123)

Japan presented an obvious territory for expansion, with Reisini justifying his decision to open a regional office in the country thus: “Our business here since 1954 has brought 16,000,000 people to the two theatres. To our amazement, repeat showing sometimes brought bigger b.o. than the original runs.”[[123]](#footnote-124) According to the *Variety* report, the new Super Cinerama theatres would seat between 1,000-1,500, with tickets costing between 83c to $2.22 (approx. 300 to 800 Yen), the cheapest over two and a half times that of the average admission cost in 1962 of 115 Yen.[[124]](#footnote-125) There would be 16 weekly showings on a reserved-seat basis. Roland Lataille’s *Cinerama* website lists a total of eleven Cinerama theatres that operated in various cities across Japan (Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kyoto, Kanazawa, and Fukuoka) until the late-1970s, although not all of these were in operation at the same time, nor were they all operated by the Cinerama Corporation.

Tokyo’s Imperial Theater, one of the two original venues capable of screening films produced using the original system, remained under the management of its original owners Toho, who removed all the specialised multiple projector equipment following its run of *Windjammer* in the year that Reisini announced the plans the company’s future path.[[125]](#footnote-126) From 22 December 1962, the venue began projecting from 70mm, and within two years it had switched from cinema exhibition completely to become a live theatrical and musical performance venue, and is still operated by Toho as such as the Imperial Garden Theater to this day. The Imperial Theater’s projection equipment was installed at the Theatre Tokyo, which took over as Cinerama’s showcase venue in Japan. Its three-strip presentations continued until 30 April 1965, before this venue also switched to 70mm projection from 5 May 1965 (it was closed and demolished in 1981). The OS Theater in Osaka transferred to 70mm projection from the end of 1964. The building was closed in 1991, although was subsequently reconstructed and continues to function as a cinema, operated by Toho. As a counterpoint, the London Casino Theatre’s final three-strip presentation took place on the 26 March 1965, with the same film that, some ten years beforehand, had premiered at this first venue outside of America capable of screening it. It continued to operate as a 70mm venue until September 1974, when it reverted to standard 35mm projection, and is now a venue for musical theatre.[[126]](#footnote-127)

Cinerama’s decision to abandon its three-strip process made sense on an immediate financial level, but ultimately presaged the slow decline of the brand in America, Europe and Japan. Its subsequent presentations, which include *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (George Stevens, 1965), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *Krakatoa, East of Java* (Bernard L. Kowalski, 1969), ‘were essentially no different from the standard roadshow fare of the period (though they were shown on huge curved screens in Cinerama theaters)’, with special optics used to project the 70mm prints onto the venues’ deeply-curved screens to mimic the effect of the original three-strip process.[[127]](#footnote-128) The Cinerama Releasing Corporation, a division set up in 1967 to produce and distribute 35mm films, even turned to material that seemed the very antithesis of the early system’s ground-breaking spectacle, with releases including *For the Love of Ivy* (Daniel Mann, 1968), a relatively inert romantic drama featuring Sidney Poitier.

Though the Cinerama trademark lost its unique identity, one side of the company’s legacy was that for a period of just under two decades, before it went into liquidation in May 1978, it played a major role in increasing the number of venues across the world capable of 70mm projection, and certainly played a significant role in Japan’s exhibition culture of the era. Nevertheless, concomitant with Cinerama’s decline was the steady loss in kudos of the roadshow market as a whole from the mid-1960s onwards. Though the number of venues across the world capable of projecting 70mm rose, the costs involved in filming in the format remained high.

To alleviate this very problem and to keep such first-run venues supplied with product, in 1963 Robert Gottschalk of Panavision developed an optical system that allowed for 70mm ‘blow-up’ prints to be made from 35mm negatives without any noticeable loss of image quality. At a time when there were approximately 1,100 theatres worldwide capable of projecting wide-gauge prints, the test cases of titles such as Columbia’s *The Cardinal* (Otto Preminger, 1963) and Paramount’s *The Carpetbaggers* (Edward Dmytryk, 1964) demonstrated the commercial viability of such practices. However, similar to the trajectory followed by Cinerama, and indeed, as we shall see, for so many exhibition technologies, this expedient method of producing films for roadshow release cheaply, as Belton points out, ‘effectively pulled the rug out from under wide-film production.’[[128]](#footnote-129)

While such roadshow theatres could charge significantly higher admission prices than the norm, and this particularly seemed to be the case for overseas venues, as the examples of the Super Cinerama venues in Japan demonstrate, when films were no longer put into production to exploit the virtues of the system, such venues ultimately had little more to offer over a standard 35mm presentation than a bigger, brighter screen. Gone was the quite the same sense of extravagance and exclusivity of the original Todd-AO screenings some ten years before. Meanwhile, the simultaneous rise of the multiplex circuit, whereby exhibitors could reduce their overheads by increasing the number of screens in a single venue, ultimately presented a more efficient business model. It seems almost perverse that as television became more deeply ingrained within societies across the world, the cinema screen tended to revert back to a smaller size in order for exhibition to remain competitive. By the end of the 1960s, many long-established film industries across the world had reacted to the rise of television not by increasing demand through a superior product, but by cutting costs and increasing the number of titles circulated.[[129]](#footnote-130)

Belton writes that since the advent of the print-up process, less than 30 films have been shot on wide-gauge formats, while over 230 have been blown up from 35mm for first-run exhibition, regardless of the format they were filmed in. The include such diverse titles as *Dr Zhivago* (David Lean, 1965), the 1967 reissue of *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Gremlins* (Joe Dante, 1984), and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Martin Scorsese, 1988).[[130]](#footnote-131) One should note, however, a slight degree of Hollywood-centrism skewing the author’s estimates: Belton’s figures are derived from the list of titles published in Robert E. Carr and R.M. Hayes’ *Wide Screen Movies*, which the authors themselves acknowledge as representing only those films released in the United States, up until 1986. Carr and Hayes point out that such blow ups were far more common in Europe during the 1970s, with the number of 70mm films processed or printed by Spain’s largest lab Fotofilm numbering over 300.[[131]](#footnote-132) Moreover, Belton’s figures for the number of films produced originally using wide-gauge processes do not include, most significant among the output of other filmmaking nations, the vast number of Soviet titles filmed right up until the late 1980s in Sovscope 70, a format to all intents and purposes the same as Todd-AO, very few of which were released in North America (one notable exception being the 1975 *Dersu Uzala*, which was coincidentally filmed by the Japanese director Kurosawa Akira).[[132]](#footnote-133)

However, despite the example of the Soviet Union, it is evident that wide-gauge production was effectively over by the early 1970s, with the Panavision Super 70 productions of *Far and Away* (Ron Howard, 1992), starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, and *Hamlet* (Kenneth Branagh, 1996) representing two anomalous attempts at resurrecting the spectacle of Hollywood’s late-1950s heyday. The latter, in particular, notoriously struggled to find enough screens across the world capable of justifying its production methods in a new epoch where the multiplex and post-theatrical media represented the dominant channels of film distribution.

It is likely that none of the Japanese 70mm productions, all three of which were released domestically between 1961-62, were ever exhibited in such formats in North America. Though, for example, *Buddha* was advertised as being shot in Daiei Super 70 Technirama in the publicity for its Western release, there is no evidence to suggest it was ever presented in this manner, and the size of the market for such foreign arthouse films coupled with the cost of making 70mm prints would have made this extremely unlikely.[[133]](#footnote-134) It also appears that most of Japan’s roadshow presentations were of imported films, predominantly Hollywood titles, and it is not yet certain which, if any, domestic 35mm productions might have been circulated to Japan’s 70mm venues in blown up prints.

## 2.7 Eastmancolor-ing and CinemaScope-ing the East

The examples of Daiei’s distribution of the films of Walt Disney Studios and Toho’s involvement with Cinerama should give some indication of the ramifications of the import quota system. As the restrictions had been established to prevent an outflow of money from the country as much as to protect Japan’s own film industry, increases in per-picture distribution income in any given year resulted in fewer films being imported the next and, in general, the type of films that made money were the ones that were more spectacular or visibly more technologically advanced than the competition. In volume 4 of his *Developments in Japanese Film History*, subtitled *The Historical Highpoint of Cinema*, the film historian Tanaka Junichirô includes a section giving an overview of the foreign titles released in Japan during the mid-1950s that made an impact. Tellingly, it bears the heading ‘Imported films, Accomplishing Widescreen and Colour’ (‘Yunyû eiga, ôgata shikisai to naru’).[[134]](#footnote-135) While it might seem overly simplistic to equate the addition of colour and the size of the screen with the overall quality of the film, such factors nevertheless played a decisive role in attracting audiences, as can be seen from the highest earning imports of the decade in *Table 5*.

For example, it is worth noting that, with the exception of Paramount’s *Roman Holiday* (William Wyler, 1953), released in Japan on 19 April 1954, all of the decade’s top twenty highest-earning foreign films are colour productions, including the only non-American title, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (*Notre Dame de Paris*, Jean Delannoy, 1956), an Italian-French co-production of Victor Hugo’s novel starring Anthony Quinn and Gina Lollobrigida, which was filmed in Eastmancolor and CinemaScope. Even though it was actually made in 1939, prior to the war, the highest-grossing film of the decade is MGM’s *Gone with the Wind*, one of the first and most successful productions filmed using the three-strip Technicolor process, which was only released in Japan in 1952. Similarly, thirteen of the twenty highest-grossing pictures were made using some kind of widescreen process.

The boom in colour film production at this point in America, and indeed worldwide, was largely attributable to the introduction of Eastmancolor tri-pack 35mm stock which, by using a single negative, made colour photography a relatively simple and inexpensive affair compared to the then-dominant Technicolor process. With Technicolor, the primary colours were filmed on three separate negatives that were combined by a process known as imbibition, or dye transfer printing, to create a single release print (the term ‘three-strip’, like that of the Cinerama process, refers to this requirement for three separate negatives during shooting, although Technicolor differed in that there was only one print at the point of exhibition).[[135]](#footnote-136)

Eastman Colour Negative film EK5247 was first released onto the market circa 1950, with Barry Salt mentioning that ‘the first feature films shot and printed on Eastman Color positive and negative stock appeared in 1951 (e.g. *Sword of Monte Cristo*), though the SuperCinecolor lable attached by the processing laboratory concealed the process’s true identity.’[[136]](#footnote-137) The first officially-recorded Eastmancolor feature was *Royal Journey* (David Bairstow, 1951), a record of a royal tour of Princess Elizabeth produced by the National Film Board of Canada.[[137]](#footnote-138) The new stock only entered regular commercial usage by the Hollywood studios from late-1952, after it was refined to produce the higher-quality EK5248 negative, which would later come to be used in a significant number of Japanese productions.

By this time Shochiku, on 21 March 1951, had already released Japan’s first ever colour feature, *Carmen Comes Home* (*Karumen kokyô ni kaeru*), directed by Kinoshita Keisuke and filmed using the domestically-developed Fujicolor process. The technological and economic history behind colour film production in Japan will be detailed in a subsequent chapter. For now it will suffice to mention that the proportion of Japanese colour releases was fairly negligible until the studios also adopted the imported Eastmancolor stock as standard rather than domestically-developed Fujicolor or Konicolor.

*Japan Motion Picture Almanac* notes that in 1948, colour pictures ‘accounted for only four out of the entire lot of foreign pictures’, or in other words, 3.7% of the 104 features imported to Japan (see *Table 6*).[[138]](#footnote-139)Intriguingly, this source neglects to mention that the previous year the Soviet Union’s first postwar colour feature, *The Stone Flower* (*Kamennyy tsvetok*, Aleksandr Ptushko, 1946), which had been shot on Agfacolor negative stock seized in Germany during the war, was released in Japan under the title of *Ishi no hana*.[[139]](#footnote-140) It was the first colour feature released in Japan in the postwar period. This omission is interesting, as it suggests a subtle attempt to rewrite Japan’s film history in a publication that was targeted at a Western readership in the midst of the Cold War so that it appeared that America was the innovating and energising force for the industry’s postwar resurgence.

This wasn’t really even true of 1948 either, as the four colour imports included the British Technicolor production *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944), and the second Soviet colour production, the musical *The Ballad of Siberia* (*Skazanie o zemle sibirskoy*, Ivan Pyryev, 1947). The two American imports in this year, *State Fair* (Walter Lang, 1945) and the animation *Gulliver’s Travel*s (Dave Fleischer, 1939) were both Technicolor productions: like *Gone with the Wind*, the latter is a further reminder that colour productions was already well underway before the war.[[140]](#footnote-141) While *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* doesn’t mention any such titles released in Japan prior to 1945, at least a few such films from the 1930s had already been seen in the country, including the *Silly Symphony* omnibus of several Walt Disney cartoons, which was distributed in Japan by United Artists, and the first three-strip Technicolor live action feature, *Becky Sharp*, which premiered at the Toho-operated Hibiya Movie Theatre (Hibiya Eiga Gekijo) in Tokyo in September 1935.[[141]](#footnote-142)

The percentage of colour imports rose to 8 out of 151 (5.3%) in 1949 and 30 out of 185 (16.2%) in 1950. Though exact figures are unavailable for the years 1951 to 1955, *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* draws attention to ‘the sudden increase in color films among the imported American pictures after 1951.’[[142]](#footnote-143) By 1956, the number of colour imports (both widescreen and standard ratio) had increased to 115 out of 177 (65%). By contrast, in 1955 only 11 out of the total 423 (2.6%) domestic releases were in colour (see *Table 8*).

While precise figures are difficult to come by, it seems that in America during the mid-1950s, under half of domestic releases were filmed in colour.[[143]](#footnote-144) The fact that the proportion of colour imports was higher than this indicates that Japanese audiences were, quite understandably, only getting to see the brightest and boldest of Hollywood’s productions among the allotted quotas of foreign releases. Even allowing that not all of the imported films came from America, nor even just from the Hollywood major studios for that matter (although for the reasons outlined above, the majority were), it is obvious how this proliferation of colour imports would put the local market at a distinct disadvantage, as it ‘made Japanese motion picture producers color conscious, and they felt the urge to turn out their own color films to compete with imports.’[[144]](#footnote-145) The Finance Minister certainly felt so, and as part of the already complex import quota system, from 1 July 1955 took further measures to limit the number of full-colour prints coming into the country.[[145]](#footnote-146)

Although the transition from monochrome to colour occurred at a far slower pace than that of the switch to widescreen production in Japan, the catalysts were essentially the same. In fact, as shall be detailed in a forthcoming chapter, both colour and screen technologies were initially linked in Hollywood through a contractual arrangement between Fox and Eastman Kodak that tied any producers wishing to license the former company’s anamorphic process to using the new Eastmancolor stock. This was in line with Fox’s early policy that the CinemaScope system could be used only on the most lavish “quality” pictures. *The Robe* itself was one of the earliest titles filmed using this negative stock (although the first few CinemaScope productions were actually processed by the laboratories of the Technicolor Corporation, ‘with whom Fox had an outstanding contract’).[[146]](#footnote-147)

The question one must ask is to what extent were American-produced film stocks and widescreen processes actively forced upon the Japanese market. As an example, one crucial reason for the failure of 3D to take off anywhere in the world during this period, aside from the costs, the evident deficiencies in its technology and the slew of substandard films produced using the process, may have been that unlike Cinerama, CinemaScope, VistaVision or later Technirama (Technicolor’s patented widescreen process), it didn’t have any one single company of sufficient clout to push any stereoscopic format as a possible standard. The first full-colour 3D American feature, *Bwana Devil*, which premiered in Los Angeles on 26 November 1952, predating *The Robe*’s New York premiere, was a low-budget independent production filmed in a process known as Natural Vision.

One of a number of stereoscopic cinema systems developed at the time, Natural Vision was effectively the only one that was implemented on any sort of commercial level during this period. The brainchild of two Hollywood cameramen, Lothrop Worth and Friend Baker, it used a dual-camera rig and projection system to mimic the convergence effect of the human eyes (also referred to as binocular disparity) and give the illusion of depth. Without the backing of a major studio however, the system required the involvement of a certain Arch Oboler, a playwright, screenwriter and radio broadcaster, to bring it to the market. The maverick filmmaker wrote, directed, produced and even released *Bwana Devil* through his own company Arch Oboler Productions. Despite bad reviews, the film’s surprise profitability saw it picked up for wider distribution by United Artists, who also released it in Japan in conjunction with Shochiku. Various major studios including Warner Bros., Columbia and even Shochiku itself, went on to produce films using Natural Vision over the following few years, but the sheer costs and unreliability of the system meant it remained little more than a novelty that was quickly eclipsed by CinemaScope and other widescreen formats.[[147]](#footnote-148)

Incidentally, Japan produced three short monochrome 3D ‘solid body image’ (*rittai eizô*) films several years before its first widescreen releases. Toho’s double bill of *Everybody’s Watching Me* (*Watashi wa nerawarete iru*, Tajiri Shigeru) and *The Sunday that Jumped Out* (*Tobidashita nichiyôbi*, Murata Takeo) were produced using the company’s ToVision (*Tôbijon*) stereoscopic system, developed inhouse during the war. Released on 22 April 1953, they preceded the Japanese premieres of the initial cycle of films from Hollywood’s 3D boom by a matter of weeks: Columbia’s *Man in the Dark* (Lew Landers) opened in Tokyo on 5 May 1953; *Bwana Devil* on 9 May 1953; and *House of Wax* (André de Toth) was released by Warner Bros. Japan on 9 June 1953. On 1 July 1953, Shochiku released *The Duel* (*Kettô*, Tabata Tsuneo), filmed in Natural Vision. Nevertheless, as Anderson and Richie claim, ‘the 3-D films had no more success in Japan than elsewhere in the world’, and it is sure that these three domestic productions had no lasting impact on the industry.[[148]](#footnote-149)

Fox displayed great avidity in its pushing of CinemaScope as an antidote to the audiences being lost to television. After announcing on 2 February 1953, before *The Robe* had even been released, that all of its future productions would be filmed using the format, it quickly managed to convince other studios to license the system. The earliest adopter, MGM, officially committed itself to CinemaScope production on 18 March, to be joined by Walt Disney and United Artists in June 1953, then Columbia (signing with Fox on 29 October) and later Warner Bros and Universal. Only Paramount shunned Fox’s bold new process in favour of its own VistaVision system.[[149]](#footnote-150) The following few years marked what might be described as Hollywood’s last great gasp. As William Boddy writes in his study of the relationship between Hollywood and the television industry in the 1950s, the studios:

…produced fewer, more expensive films with higher promotion budgets (including spending for television advertising). The growing use of pre-sold material and the new widescreen adventure and spectacle films brought large revenues to the studios: between 1953 and 1956, thirty CinemaScope features each earned more than $5,000,000 at the box office, an amount that only 100 films had captured before 1953. Twentieth Century-Fox, the studio with the largest commitment to widescreen, earned $8,000,000 net revenues from 32 films in 1953; in 1954, it received $16,000,000 from only 13 films.[[150]](#footnote-151)

Fox’s expansion into overseas industries, either directly renovating or facilitating the equipment of theatres for CinemaScope in various countries across the world in order to boost the potential market for its product, took different forms. For example, by August 1954, the company was tempting British producers with the chance of U.S. distribution for any films they shot using CinemaScope, after the London premiere on 12 May of MGM’s very first title shot using the format, *Knights of the Round Table* (Richard Thorpe, 1953), filmed in England and with culturally English subject matter.[[151]](#footnote-152) Perhaps in deference to the sizeable British market, in 1955 Fox also released its CinemaScope production of *The Virgin Queen*, starring Bette Davis as Queen Elizabeth I and directed by *The Robe*’s Henry Koster.

Fox’s strategy in Japan appeared to be to demonstrate to local audiences just how good their country could look using the new American screen technologies. In 1955, Samuel Fuller’s cross-cultural gangster thriller *House of Bamboo* was released, opening in the US on 1 July and in Japan on 28 August, with the Exhibitor’s Campaign Sheet for the American release proudly announcing that:

Twentieth Century-Fox brings to the screen in CinemaScope and De Luxe [sic] color the bizarre beauty of Tokyo and a suspense thriller which utilizes new concepts in Oriental thinking brought about by World War II. To accomplish this Twentieth Century-Fox transported a troupe of 40 players and technicians to Japan to film all the exterior scenes for the melodrama.[[152]](#footnote-153)

Beginning with the first feature produced using the early two-strip subtractive Technicolor Process Number 2, *The Toll of the Sea* (Chester M. Franklin, 1922), a version of *Madame Butterfly* that launched the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong to stardom, fantasy ‘exotic Orients’ were regularly invoked in the various films produced to showcase new colour technologies.[[153]](#footnote-154) Whether the settings were Middle-Eastern or Far-Eastern seemed of little importance, a fact highlighted by Wong’s casting in films such as the Douglas Fairbanks-vehicle *The Thief of Bagdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924) and the British musical comedy *Chu Chin Chow* (Walter Forde, 1934), an adaptation of a 1916 stage musical based on *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*. The crucial point was that they self-consciously depicted otherworldly fantasy settings far removed from the experiences of their intended audiences, using only the more cosmetic elements of the culture they purported to represent. As such, all exemplify what Edward Said refers to as ‘Orientalism’, in which:

The Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some previous bit of imagining, or an amalgam of all of these.[[154]](#footnote-155)

Early three-strip Technicolor films include *The Garden of Allah* (Richard Boleslawski, 1936), a Selznick International Pictures production that won an honorary ‘Special Achievement’ Academy Award in 1937 for its colour cinematography, and the first batch of British Technicolor films such as *The Mikado* (Victor Schertzinger, 1939), adapted from the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, and the new version of *The Thief of Bagdad* (Michael Powell, Ludwig Berger and Tim Whelan, 1940).[[155]](#footnote-156) There was even a short-lived colour process named Exotic Colour that was used for only one film in 1952, an American *Arabian Nights* parody shot in Spain entitled *Babes in Bagdad* (Edgar G. Ulmer).[[156]](#footnote-157)

Despite the prominent mentions of ‘DeLuxe color’ cited in the film’s publicity materials, *House of Bamboo* was essentially an Eastmancolor production, shot on Eastman Kodak’s negative stock and printed on its print stock; DeLuxe color, like other labels such as Warnercolor that appeared during the 1950s, referred to nothing more ‘than the laboratory or studio carrying out the Eastman Color process’ (In a similar vein, it is quite common to see ‘Prints by Technicolor’ appearing on the credits of monochrome films that were processed at the Technicolor laboratories).[[157]](#footnote-158)

However, while colour is employed to capture this distant, alien culture in all its vibrancy, the plot template of the very American genre of the crime drama, the contemporary metropolitan setting and, in particular, the heavy use of location shooting combine to give a more vivid, realistic approach than previous cinematic representations of Japan by Hollywood such as in, for example, the scenes in *Penny Serenade* (George Stevens, 1941), which were shot entirely in the studio. Key to this was certainly the new possibilities opened up by single-strip colour stock (the cameras required to run the three strips of negative used by the Technicolor process were considerably bulkier than the norm and required more in the way of light), with the Exhibitor’s Campaign Sheet extolling director of photography Joe MacDonald’s use of the new widescreen format as he ‘maneuvered his CinemaScope cameras to take the spectator into the life, the tempo and atmosphere of Japan as it has never been portrayed to the Occident before.’[[158]](#footnote-159)

*House of Bamboo*’s dramatic raison d’être is heavily predicated by its depiction of two clashing cultures, for which it draws heavily on American stereotypes of the Japanese (complicated by the casting of two performers, Sessue Hayakawa and Shirley Yamaguchi, whose ‘Japaneseness’ would have been highly problematic for Japanese audiences).[[159]](#footnote-160) This aspect was certainly picked up by some Japanese critics upon its release in Japan, as *Tôkyô Ankokugai: Take No Ie* (‘Tokyo Underworld: House of Bamboo’), on27 August 1955.[[160]](#footnote-161) More than demonstrating ‘new concepts in Oriental thinking’, it perhaps better embodies a new era in Hollywood’s treatment of other locales (although not necessarily cultures), in which the intention is to present its subject with as high a degree of fidelity as possible, rather than to merely represent it. This was facilitated through an increased ease of global travel and a new postwar *entente cordiale* that saw overseas location shooting as much a feature of the decade as advances in camera and film technology, as the *House of Bamboo* director himself suggested in a quote that it is worth citing in full:

Fuller explained that Hollywood’s sudden awareness of the Orient stems from a number of diverse factors.

“I’d say that CinemaScope is the primary reason,” he said, “the wide screens show much more of the background and it is impossible to duplicate in Hollywood what we can capture for the screen on the actual locale. Secondly, one of the happier results of World War II has been the breaking down of barriers between East and West. Previously, we have been unable to go farther than ‘Madame Butterfly,’ in which lovers try but fail to clear the hurdle of tradition. Without giving away too much of the plot of ‘House of Bamboo,’ I can say that we break away from the limitations of ‘Butterfly.’ Incidentally, the romance between Robert Stack and Shirley Yamaguchi in this picture only recently has been made possible by revisions of the Motion Picture Code, the American film industry’s self-censorship agreement.”[[161]](#footnote-162)

Other Hollywood productions of the time that used Japanese backdrops include Paramount’s *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (Mark Robson, 1954), a Technicolor adaptation of James Michener’s novel of the same name set during the Korean War, and Columbia’s monochrome *Three Stripes in the Sun* (Richard Murphy, 1955), about an American G.I. posted to Japan during the occupation who helps to found an orphanage while falling in love with his interpreter. namefnre ﷽ ssy shot in England The following year saw another Hollywood CinemaScope production filmed in the country, MGM’s *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (Daniel Mann, 1956), shot in Metrocolor and starring Marlon Brando and Glenn Ford in an Okinawan-set satire about the country’s democratisation during the occupation.[[162]](#footnote-163)

The number of widescreen imports to Japan (both colour and monochrome) climbed to 86 out of 177 (48.6%) in 1956, then to 89 out of 194 (57.2%) in 1957.[[163]](#footnote-164) By this point, it had long been apparent that the patents behind the very fundamentals of the CinemaScope system, the ‘Hypergonar’ anamorphic lenses developed in 1926 by the Frenchman Henri Chrétien, had lapsed and were in the public domain. While Fox was reliant on the lenses specifically created for its system under contract by Bausch & Lomb, any company in any country that wanted to develop its own widescreen system need only source the lenses from other optics manufacturers capable of making them.[[164]](#footnote-165)

And thus emerged a number of systems from around the world based on the same principles. These include Cinépanoramic, Franscope and Dyaliscope in France; Hammerscope, J-D-C Scope and Megascope in England; Sovscope in the USSR; AgaScope in Sweden, Czechoslovakia and Hungary; Technovision in Italy and Ultrascope in Germany.[[165]](#footnote-166) The time was ripe for the production of Japan’s own widescreen films to begin in earnest.

### Table 5: Top Twenty Grossing Foreign Imports (until June 1959)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Title (country, dir, orig. release year)** | **Japanese Title** | **Distr., J. Rel. Date & Gross (¥1000s)** | **Venues**  **(Prints)** | **Format** |
| 1 | Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming, US, 1939) | Kaze to tomo ni sarinu  風と共に去りぬ | Metro  10/9/52,  421,092 | 832 (25) | Technicolor Academy |
| 2 | The Ten Commandments (Cecil B. DeMille, US, 1956) | Jukkai  十戒 | Paramount  5/3/58,  355,000 | 50 (12) | Technicolor VistaVision |
| 3 | The Living Desert (James Algar, US, 1953) | Sabaku wa ikite iru  砂漠は生きている | Disney / Daiei  14/1/55, 318,047 | 1,113 (30) | Kodachrome (Technicolor) Academy |
| 4 | Roman Holiday (William Wyler, US, 1953) | Rôma no kyûjitsu  ローマの休日 | Paramount  19/4/54, 296,597 | 1,682 (30) | BW Academy |
| 5 | War and Peace (King Vidor, US, 1956) | Sensô to heiwa  戦争と平和 | Paramount  5/12/56, 290,257 | 844 (25) | Technicolor VistaVision |
| 6 | Giant (George Stevens, US, 1956) | Jaiantsu  ジャイアンツ | Warner  22/12/56, 273,845 | 837 (23) | Eastmancolor (WarnerColor)Academy (m) |
| 7 | The Bridge on The River Kwai (David Lean, UK/US, 1957) | Senjô ni kakeru hashi  戦場にかける橋 | Columbia  25/12/57, 265,736 | 1,047 (16) | Technicolor  CinemaScope |
| 8 | Shane (George Stevens, US, 1953) | Shên  シェーン | Paramount  1/10/53, 235,848 | 1,937 (21) | Technicolor  Academy (m) |
| 9 | 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Richard Fleischer, US,1954) | Kaitei niman mairu海底二万哩 | Disney / Daiei  23/12/55, 230,780 | 802 (20) | Eastmancolor (Technicolor) CinemaScope |
| 10 | The Robe (Henry Koster, US, 1953) | Seii  聖衣 | Fox  26/12/53, 183,430 | 688 (22) | Eastmancolor (Technicolor) CinemaScope |
| 11 | The Greatest Show on Earth (Cecil B. DeMille, US, 1952) | Chijô saidai no shô  地上最大のショー | Paramount  25/4/53, 213,487 | 1,150 (21) | Technicolor Academy (m) |
| 12 | East of Eden (Elia Kazan, US, 1955) | Eden no higashi  エデンの東 | Warner  4/10/55, 212,739 | 1,221 (16) | Eastmancolor (WarnerColor)  CinemaScope |
| 13 | Lady and the Tramp (Clyde Geronimi et al., US, 1955) | Wan wan monogatari  わんわん物語 | Disney /Daiei  8/8/56, 209,028 | 691 (12) | Eastmancolor (Technicolor) CinemaScope |
| 14 | Gunfight at the O.K. Corral (John Sturges, US, 1957) | OK bokujô no kettô  OK 牧場の決斗 | Paramount 3/7/57, 208,093 | 935 (12) | Technicolor  VistaVision |
| 15 | The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Notre Dame de Paris, Fr / It, 1956) | Nôtoru damu no semushi otoko  ノートルダムのせむし男 | France / Towa  1/3/57, 207,00 | 770 (12) | Eastmancolor CinamaScope |
| 16 | The Teahouse of the August Moon (Daniel Mann, US, 1956) | Hachigatsu jûgoya no chaya  八月十五夜の茶屋 | Metro  22/1/57 | 771 (21) | Metrocolor CinemaScope |
| 17 | The Glenn Miller Story (Anthony Mann, US, 1954) | Guren Mirâ monogatari  グレンミラー物語 | Universal  8/1/54, 206,480 | 1,324 (15) | Technicolor Standard |
| 18 | Trapeze (Carol Reed, US, 1956) | Kûchû buranko  空中ぶらんこ | United Artists  8/8/56, 195,627 | 651 (12) | Eastmancolor  (DeLuxe Color) CinemaScope |
| 19 | The Conqueror (Dick Powell, US, 1956) | Seifukusha  征服者 | Nihon RKO  17/2/56, 194,666 | 1,053 (17) | Eastmancolor (Technicolor) CinemaScope |
| 20 | Vera Cruz (Robert Aldrich, US, 1954) | Wera Kurusu  ウェラクルス | United Artists  6/4/55, 187,759 | 933 (24) | Technicolor SuperScope |

Source: ‘Sengo haishû besuto 20 [Postwar distribution incomes best 20]’ *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 58 (15D)

*Notes:*

* As well as adding English titles, directors names, country of production and original release year, several columns have been combined from the original table, and additional information such as colour and widescreen processes included in the format column.
* Following the original table in *Eiga Nenkan*, Cinerama productions are not included.
* Exact Japanese release dates have been added using information from *Kinema Junpô* and Tanaka (1980), and in the case of *The Ten Commandments,* corrected from 53.3 in the original source.
* Colour and other format information is taken from from Limbacher, James L. (1968).
* For *The Living Desert*, Kodachrome (Technicolor) denotes the film was shot using 16mm Kodachrome stock and processed at Technicolor labs.
* Eastmancolor (WarnerColor) denotes Eastmancolor stock was used and processed at Warner Bros laboratories. Eastmancolor (Technicolor) denotes Eastmancolor stock processed at Technicolor’s laboratories. Eastmancolor (DeLuxe Color) denotes Eastmancolor processed at DeLuxe laboratories etc. Note, all VistaVision productions were processed by Technicolor.
* Academy (m) is masked projection of standard prints to yield an “ersatz widescreen” effect.

### Table 6: Classification of Foreign Films Released in Japan by Type

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Col. wide** | **Col. std.** | ***Col. tot.*** | **BW wide** | **BW std.** | ***BW tot.*** | ***Wide***  ***tot.*** | ***Std. tot.*** | ***Tot.*** | **U.S. imports**  **(% )** |
| **1946** | - | - | *-* | - | 43  (100%) | *-* | *-* | *43*  *(100%)* | ***43*** | **39 (90.7%)** |
| **1947** | - | 1  (1.8%) | *1*  *(1.8%)* | - | 54  (98.2%) | *54*  *(98.2%)* | *-* | *55*  *(100%)* | ***55*** | **51**  **(92.7%)** |
| **1948** | - | 4  (3.8%) | *4*  *(3.85%)* | - | 100  (96.1%) | *100*  *(96.1%)* | *-* | *104*  *(100%)* | ***104*** | **62**  **(59.6%)** |
| **1949** | - | 8  (5.3%) | *8*  *(5.3%)* | - | 143  (94.7%) | *143*  *(94.7%)* | *-* | *151*  *(100%)* | ***151*** | **90**  **(59.6%)** |
| **1950** | - | 30  (16.2%) | *30*  *(16.2%)* | - | 155  (83.8%) | *155*  *(83.8%)* | *-* | *185*  *(100%)* | ***185*** | **133 (71.9%)** |
| **1951** | - |  |  | - |  |  |  |  | ***232*** | **180**  **(77.6%)** |
| **1952** | - |  |  | - |  |  |  |  | ***191*** | **147**  **(77%%)** |
| **1953** | 21\*  (11.6%) |  | *??*  *(11.6%+)* |  |  |  |  |  | ***181*** | **133**  **(73.5%)** |
| **1954** | 59\*  (28.6%) |  | *??*  *(28.6%+)* |  |  |  |  |  | ***206*** | **138**  **(67%)** |
| **1955** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ***193***  ***[196]*** | **132**  **(67.3%)** |
| **1956** | 80  (45.2%) | 35  (19.8%) | *115*  *(65%)* | 6  (3.4%) | 56  (31.6%) | *62*  *(35%)* | *86*  *(48.6%)* | *91*  *(51.4%)* | ***177*** | **116**  **(65.5%)** |
| **1957** | 89  (45.9%) | 39  (20.1%) | *128*  *(66%)* | 22  (11.3%) | 44  (22.7%) | *66*  *(34%)* | *111*  *(57.2%)* | *83*  *(42.8%)* | ***194*** | **124**  **(63.9%)** |
| **1958** | 68  (40.2%) | 31  (18.4%) | *99*  *(58.6%)* | 26  (15.4%) | 44  (26%) | *70*  *(41.4%)* | *94*  *(55.6%)* | *75*  *(44.4%)* | ***169*** | **111**  **(65.7%)** |
| **1959** | 70  (33.3%) | 41  (19.5%) | *111*  *(52.8%)* | 18  (8.6%) | 81  (38.6%) | *99*  *(47.2%)* | *88*  *(41.9%)* | *122*  *(58.1%)* | ***210***  ***[211]*** | **112**  **(53.3%)** |
| **1960** | 55  (25.4%) | 49  (22.7%) | *104*  *(48.1%)* | 22  (10.2%) | 90  (41.7%) | *112*  *(51.9%)* | *77*  *(35.6%)* | *139*  *(64.4%)* | ***216*** | **121**  **(56%)** |
| **1961**  **(first half)** | 31  (29.2%) | 25  (23.6%) | *56*  *(52.8%)* | 5  (4.7%) | 45  (42.4) | *50*  *(47.1%)* | *36*  *(34%)* | *70*  *(66%)* | ***106***  ***[229]*** |  |

Source: *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, *Eiren* website

and Crosby, Eric, *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 195).

*Notes:*

* The basic data is taken from ‘Table 3: Number of foreign films released in Japan: black and white, colour, standard, and widescreen, 1946 – 1966”, from the appendix of Eric Crosby’s chapter ‘Widescreen Composition and Transnational Influence: Early Anamorphic Filmmaking in Japan’ in *Widescreen Worldwide* (2010), p. 195. Crosby’s table does not include the percentages of overall imports for each column.
* Following Crosby, the total number of imports and the number of American imports from which the percentage in the final column is calculated are taken from *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 27 for 1946 to 1950, while between between 1951-55, the figures are taken from p. 31 of the same source. The import figures from 1955 to 1960 are taken from the *Eiren* website. Note, *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* gives a total of 196 for 1955, slightly higher than the 193 amount cited by *Eiren*, and so this figure is given in square brackets for that year. Figures for the country of origin for imports between 1956-60, from which the number of American imports in the final column is derived, come from *UniJapan Film Quarterly 1961* vol. 4 no. 2, p. 3. However, in this source, the total of 211 imports for 1959, listed in square brackets, is given.
* The number of colour imports between 1948-50 is given in *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 31, which predicts that in 1956, ‘color films, numbering 123, will represent 62.8 per cent of total imports.’ The actual per cent was higher, at 65%, with total imports less, at 115. No figures are given for 1950-51. Strangely, this source does not list the single colour import of 1947, the Soviet production of *The Stone Flower* (*Kamennyy tsvetok*, Aleksandr Ptushko, 1946), which is cited in *Tanaka*, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi III* (1980), p. 282, as being the first colour film released in Japan in the postwar period.
* *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 31 explicitly states that the 21 films in 1954 and 59 in 1955 that Crosby cites as simultaneously colour and widescreen were exclusively CinemaScope releases. The figures therefore do not include the films shot in Paramount’s non-anamorphic VistaVision process developed by Paramount, a number of which were released in Japan during these years. Nor do they include 3D releases such as Columbia’s film noir *Man in the Dark* (Lew Landers, 1953) of which even such monochrome (or in this instance ‘sepiatone’) releases are listed in the Japanese sources as being colour productions. With the Japanese sources Crosby draws upon not clearly distinguishing between monochrome and colour imports for widescreen for these two particular years, Crosby (p. 95) argues, quite reasonably for CinemaScope releases of this period, that ‘it is likely that many of these films were probably in colour and widescreen, especially if they were imported from the US’. Nevertheless, the reverse assumption that all colour films were widescreen is certainly not true, and undoubtedly the number of colour imports for these years would have been much higher when you consider that the figure for 1953 is lower than that for 1950, the final preceding year for which such data is available.
* There is no information in any of the sources consulted detailing the number of widescreen and colour releases for 1955. For the following years, the figures are taken from Crosby’s data in table 3, which is derived from *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* and the various *UniJapan* yearbooks. *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 52 (12A) lists numbers of imports in different scope and colour formats for the last six months of 1958 and the first six months of 1959, while *Eiga Nenkan 1961*, p. 60 (20A) provides the same information for the following year. As the period covered in the *Eiga Nenkan* data is not synchronous with that of Crosby’s data, I reference these only as sources to be consulted for further possible research.
* Crosby covers the period 1946-1966, although due to the paucity of data available from his sources from 1961 onwards, I have restricted my focus up until this date. Crosby notes ‘an almost 50 per cent decrease in imported pictures in 1961 due to quota restrictions’ (p. 197n13), citing a figure of 106, although *Eiren* gives the total as 229, suggesting Crosby’s sources only cover half of the year in question, supported by the fact that the totals for each column are roughly half of the previous year. I have included the *Eiren* total imports in square brackets.
* Despite the piecemeal nature of the sources consulted and the obscurity of much of the data, especially for the critical years until the mid-1950s, the figures do serve to indicate the general point being made here, that against the imported, predominantly American product, with its more colourful, wider and deeper images, Japanese film was beginning to look rather antediluvian.

### Table 7: Cinema Admissions and Television Ownership in Japan

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **1955** | **1956** | **1957** | **1958** | **1959** | **1960** | **1961** | **1962** | **1963** |
| Admissions  (millions) | 868.9 | 993.9 | 1,098.9 | 1,127.5 | 1,088.1 | 1,014.4 | 863.4 | 662.3 | 511.1 |
| TV Licenses (per cent ) | 0.15 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 3.7 | 6.4 | - | - | - |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Year** | **1964** | **1965** | **1966** | **1967** | **1968** | **1969** | **1970** | **1971** | **1972** |
| Admissions  (millions) | 431.5 | 372.7 | 345.8 | 335.1 | 313.4 | 284.0 | 254.8 | 216.8 | 187.4 |
| TV Licenses (per cent ) | - | 18.3 | - | - | - | - | 21.9 | - | - |

Source: *Eiren* website; *Statistics on Radio and Television 1950 – 1960* (Paris: Unesco, 1963), p. 78 and 81,

and *Latest Statistics on Radio and Television* (Paris: Unesco, 1963), p. 78.

*Notes:*

* Eiren statistics give the number of admissions rounded up to the nearest thousand. For the sake of clarity, here they are to the nearest million.
* Statistics for the number of television licenses held in Japan during the 1950s come from the 1963 Unesco report, *Statistics on Radio and Television 1950 – 1960*, which states that NHK issued 7700 licenses in Japan in 1953 (representing less than 000.1% of the population). The organisation’s 1987 publication *Latest Statistics on Radio and Television*, only gives figures for 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1982 and 1983. Unesco’s *Statistics on Radio and Television: 1960-1976*, published in 1979, was unavailable for this study.
* *UniJapan* vol. 5 no. 4 (1962), p. 5, claims that ‘As of March 1st, 1962 there were 10,006,952 TV sets registered with N. H. K. (Japan Broadcasting Corporation). This shows a coverage of 48.5 per cent of all Japanese households, which means that one in two has a TV set.’

### Table 8: Classification of Japanese Productions by Type

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Col. Scope** | **Col. Std.** | ***Col. Tot.*** | **BW Scope** | **BW**  **Std.** | ***BW***  ***Tot.*** | ***Scope***  ***Tot.*** | ***Std. Tot.*** | ***Tot.*** |
| **1951** | - | 1  (0.5%) | *1*  *(0.5%)* | - | 207  (99.5%) | *207*  *(99.5%)* | *-* | *208*  *(100%)* | ***208*** |
| **1952** | - | 1  (0.5%) | *1*  *(0.5%)* | - | 277  (99.5%) | *277*  *(99.5%)* | *-* | *278*  *(100%)* | ***278*** |
| **1953** | - | 3  (1%) | *3*  *(1%)* | - | 298  (99%) | *298*  *(99%)* | *-* | *301*  *(100%)* | ***301*** |
| **1954** | - | 5  (1.4%) | *5*  *(1.4%)* | - | 365  (98.6%) | *365*  *(98.6%)* | *-* | *370*  *(100%)* | ***370*** |
| **1955** | - | 10  (2.4%) | *10*  *(2.4%)* | - | 413  (97.6%) | *413*  *(97.6%)* | *-* | *423*  *(100%)* | ***423*** |
| **1956** | - | 32  (6.2%) | *32*  *(6.2%)* | - | 482  (93.8%) | *482*  *(93.8%)* | *-* | *514*  *(100%)* | ***514*** |
| **1957** | **35**  **(7.9%)** | 50 (11.3%) | *85 (19.2%)* | **37 (8.3%)** | 321 (72.5%) | *358 (80.8%)* | ***72 (16.3%)*** | *371 (83.7%)* | ***443*** |
| **1958** | **135 (26.8%)** | 15 (3.0%) | *150 (29.8%)* | **244 (48.5%)** | 110 (21.7%) | *354 (70.2%)* | ***379 (75.2%)*** | *125 (24.8%)* | ***504*** |
| **1959** | **164 (33.3%)** | 3 (0.6%) | *167 (33.9%)* | **320 (64.9%)** | 6 (1.2%) | *326 (66.1%)* | ***484 (98.2%)*** | *9 (1.8%)* | ***493*** |
| **1960** | **238 (43.5%)** | 1 (0.2%) | *239 (43.7%)* | **307 (56.1%)** | 1 (0.2%) | *308 (56.3%)* | ***545 (99.6%)*** | *2 (0.4%)* | ***547*** |

Source: Crosby, Eric, *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 196 (table 4),

*UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 2 ( April 1961), p. 2-3.

*Notes:*

* Basic table data is derived from “Table 4: Number of domestic Japanese feature films released yearly: black and white, colour, standard, and widescreen, 1951-1966”, which appears in the appendix for Eric Crosby’s chapter ‘Widescreen Composition and Transnational Influence: Early Anamorphic Filmmaking in Japan’, in *Widescreen Worldwide* (2010), p. 196. Crosby’s table does not include the percentages of overall production for each column.
* Crosby’s figures for the total number of black and white, colour, widescreen releases (including the non-anamorphic VistaVision format) and standard Academy releases between 1957-60 are taken exactly from *UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 2 (April 1961) pp. 2-3. These figures also include the percentage of overall production these comprise, with the total number of releases corresponding with the data on *Eiren*’swebsite.
* Prior to 1957, when the first domestic widescreen films were released, the figures for the number of colour releases come from *Eiga Nenkan* 1960, pg 48 (table 6), which lists the number of colour productions per studio. These figures are reproduced below as Table 9. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 28, gives the number of domestic colour features produced until 1955, predicting this would exceed 30 by 1956. It later lists the titles of all colour features (p. 133-134), although for 1955, the titles of eleven features are listed.
* The *UniJapan* publications stop giving figures for the number of widescreen releases from 1960.

### Table 9: Number of Japanese Colour Films Produced Per Company

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Shochiku** | **Toho** | **Daiei** | **Shintoho** | **Toei** | **Nikkatsu** | **Others** | **Tot. Col.** | ***Tot. Rels.*** | **% of Total** |
| **1951** | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | **1** | **208** | **1%** |
| **1952** | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | **1** | **278** | **0.7%** |
| **1953** | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | **3** | **302** | **1%** |
| **1954** | - | 1 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | **5** | **370** | **1.4%** |
| **1955** | 2 | 3 | 5 | - | - | 1 | - | **11** | **423** | **2.6%** |
| **1956** | 5 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 3 | **33** | **514** | **6.4%** |
| **1957** | 18 | 17 | 22 | 3 | 20 | 8 | 0 | **88** | **443** | **20%** |
| **1958** | 29 | 21 | 34 | 7 | 52 | 9 | 7 | **159** | **504** | **31.5%** |
| **Tot. col.** | **56** | **48** | **75** | **12** | **79** | **21** | **10** | **301** | **3042** | **9.9%** |
| ***Tot. Rels.*** | ***564*** | ***531*** | ***528*** | ***438*** | ***651*** | ***292*** | ***38*** | - |  |
| **%** | 9.9% | 9% | 14.2% | 2.7% | 12.1% | 7.2% | 26.3% | **9.9%** |  |

Source: ‘Hôga tennenshoku seisaku honsû [Numbers of domestic film natural colour productions]’, *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 48 (6).

*Notes:*

* Toho’s figures include the affiliated companies Takarazuka Eiga and Tokyo Eiga whose films it distributed, which are contained in separate columns in the original source table. In 1957, Toho released 10 of its own colour productions and 5 by Takarazuka. From the *Takarazuka Eiga no Sakuhin Risuto* (List of Works by Takarazuka Film) webpage http://hyogo.ivory.ne.jp/drama/takarazuka04.html, [accessed 14 March 2013], I have been able to identify four of these: *Paradise Island Story* (*Gorakujima monogatari*, Saeki Kôzô), *Birth of Romance* (*Romansu tanjô*, Mizuho Junkai), *Geisha in the Old City* *(“Kottai-san” yori: Nyotai wa kanashiku*, Inagaki Hiroshi) and *The Green Voyage* (*Seishun kôro*, Mizuho Junkai). In 1958, it released 15 of its own colour productions, 3 by Takarazuka and 1 by Tokyo Eiga. The Takarazaku Eiga colour releases have been identified as *The Badger Palace* (*Ôatari tanuki gotten*, Saeki Kôzô), *Romance and Rhythm* (*Romansu matsuri*, Sugie Toshio) and *Sazae-san’s Honeymoon Trip* (*Sazae-san konyaku ryôkô*, Aoyagi Nobuo). The single colour Tokyo Eiga production of 1958, shot in TohoScope, was *The Hotelman’s Holiday* (*Kigeki: Ekimae ryokan*, Toyoda Shirô), which initiated the long-running *Ekimae* (‘In front of the Train Sation) comedy series. It is interesting to note that most of the titles listed here fall within the categories of musicals, comedies and romances.
* Also included in Toho’s figures are four feature-length documentaries produced by the company Nichiei Shinsha: *Antarctica* (*Nankyoku tairiku*, 1957), Japan’s first scope documentary *Mesopotamia: Record of an Expedition to Iraq and Iran* (*Iraku Iran tanken no kiroku*, 1957), *Crossing Africa: 10,000 Kilometres Along the Equator* (*Afurika ôdan: Sekidô chôka ichiman kiromeitoru*, 1958) and *The Third Asian Games: Youthful Beauty and Power* (*Daisankai ajia kyôgitaikai: Wakabi to chikara*, 1958).
* Shochiku’s figures include films by the affiliated Kabuki-za Eiga company. This short-lived enterprise made some dozen or so films between 1957-59, produced by Kaga Jirô, Uchiyama Yoshishige and Minoura Jingo. In 1957, Shochiku released Kabuki-za’s Eastmancolor production of *The Yellow Crow* (*Kiiroi karasu*, Gosho Heinosuke), while the two colour titles released in 1958 were another social realist title by Gosho, *Maria of the Ant Village* (*Ari no machi no Maria*), filmed in Agfacolor (according to its poster), and Watanabe Kunio’s *Female Samurai: Just Arrived* (*Onna zamurai: Tadaima sanjô*).
* Total colour releases cited in the *Eiga Nenkan 1960* table correspond with those given in Table 7 until 1954. After this they are slightly out, with *UniJapan* giving 10 in 1955; 32 in 1956; 85 in 1957; and 150 in 1958. The reason for the discrepancy is unclear. However, the 159 figure for the number of colour films released in 1958 matches with that in Table 9, whose data also comes from *Eiga Nenkan*.
* The ‘Tot. Rels.’ row, giving the total films released by each studio from 1951-1958 is taken from *Table 1: Number of Japanese Films Distributed Per Company*. The ‘Tot. Rels.’ column, giving the total number of films released in any given year, is taken from *Eiren*.

### Table 10: Number of Domestic Colour Features Produced Using Specific Films Stocks

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Eastman** | **Agfa** | **Fuji** | **Konicolor** | **Other** | *Total*  *Col.* | **Total** | ***%*** |
| 1951 | - | - | 1 | - | - | *1* | **208** | ***0.5%*** |
| 1952 | - | - | 1 | - | - | *1* | **278** | ***0.4%*** |
| 1953 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | - | *3* | **302** | ***1%*** |
| 1954 | 4 | - | - | - | - | *4* | **370** | ***1.1%*** |
| 1955 | 9 | - | - | 1 | 1 | *11* | **423** | ***2.6%*** |
| 1956 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | *33* | **514** | ***6.4%*** |
| 1957 | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | *88* | **443** | ***20%*** |
| 1958 | 110 | 37 | 5 | 6 | 1 | *159* | **504** | ***31.5%*** |
| 1959 | 117 | 36 | 16 | 1 | - | *170* | **493** | ***34.5%*** |
| 1960 | 169 | 40 | 30 | - | - | *239* | **547** | ***43.7%*** |
| 1961 | 194 | 50 | 7 | - | - | *251* | **535** | ***46.9%*** |
| 1962 | 167 | 33 | - | - | - | *200* | **375** | ***53.3%*** |

Source: *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* and *Eiga Nenkan*, 1960-64.

*Notes:*

* The number of films produced using different colour stocks from 1958-1962 are given as pie charts in *Eiga Nenkan* for 1960 (p.44), 1961 (p. 44), 1962 (p. 44), 1963 (p. 37) and 1964 (p. 37), after which the information no longer appears. Note, however, that the total number of colour releases for these years are slightly different from those cited in Table 6, taken from *UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 2 (April 1961), p. 2-3. The reason for the anomaly is not clear, but might be due to such factors as the two different sources counting the number of productions rather than releases, or using different year cut-off points (i.e. calendar year or tax year).
* Total number of releases for 1951-1954 come from the *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 137. The figures for 1955-1962 are taken from the *Eiren* website.
* The text in *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 28, states that in 1954, ‘five Eastman Color pictures were produced.’ This is contradicted later (p. 133) when it is stated that ‘Four color films were produced in 1954 including Konjiki Yasha (Golden Demon) (Daei Eastman color), Hawaii Chindochu (Shintoho, Eastman color), and Miyamoto Musashi (Samurai) (Toho, Eastmancolor). The confusion is probably due to the fact that the last of these listed titles, Inagaki Hiroshi’s *Samurai*, was actually a trilogy, with the first part released in 1954, the second in 1955, *Duel at Ichijoji Temple* (*Ichijôji no kettô*), released in 1955 and the third, *Duel At Ganryu Island* (*Kettô Ganryûjima*), released in 1956. While the first part would have been well known in the West, due to its award for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 1955 Academy Awards, the latter instalments were not released until much later, and therefore *Japan Motion Picture Almanac*, a publication intended for English-language readers, might have included the first two films as one. Tanaka Junichirô’s *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi IV: Shijô saikô no eiga jidai* (p. 26) lists a further Eastmancolor production from Daiei, *Messenger from the Moon* (*Tsuki yori no shisha*, Tanaka Shigeo, 1954).
* Again there is a discrepancy in *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, with p. 26 claiming a total of ten films were made, while eleven titles are explicitly listed on p. 133. This is easily explained in that one of the two non-Eastman Color productions was actually a Toho international co-production, *Madam Butterfly* (*Chô-Chô fujin*, Carmine Gallone, 1955), filmed in Italy by a non-Japanese Italian director, and filmed in Technicolor. The other was Nikkatsu’s first colour film, *Far Off of Green* (*Midori haruka ni*, Inoue Umetsugu), filmed in Konicolor. Note, Daiei made five colour films in this year alone, all in Eastmancolor, accounting for almost half domestic colour output.
* Figures for the years 1956-57 are unavailable in their entirety, with *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* stating ‘14 color films were produced in the first half (January-June) alone’ with the number ‘expected to exceed 30 for the whole of 1956’ (p. 133-134). Of these 14 films explicitly listed in its pages, all are Eastmancolor productions, with the exception of two Nikkatsu films filmed in Konicolor, *Drumbeat* (*Doramu to koi to yume*) and *The Happy Dancers* (*Tôkyô baka odori*, 1956), both directed by Yoshimura Ren. Totals for number of colour releases are given in *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 48, but these are subdivided to give the total per studio, not for each stock.
* The ‘other’ film stock counted for 1958 is the Italian FerraniaColor, used to film the ToeiScope suspense-thriller *The Dead End* (*Ten to sen,* Kobayashi Tsuneo), released 11 November 1958. It appears to be the only time this was ever used in Japan.
* *UniJapan* vol.2 no. 3 (1959), p. 2 states that during the six months from January-June 1959, of the 278 features films produced, distributed and exhibited, ‘Colour films comprised 86, or 30% of the total, 53 being made in Eastmancolor, 21 Agfacolor, 11 Fujicolor and one in Konicolor.’ This is in accordance with the data for the entire year given here.

### Table 11: Number of 70mm Cinemas in Operation in Japan (30 June 1962)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **City** | **Number** | **City** | **Number** |
| Tokyo | 6 | Kumamoto | 2 |
| Osaka | 6 | Omuda | 2 |
| Nagoya | 3 | Hamamatsu | 2 |
| Kyoto | 3 | Sendai | 2 |
| Kobe | 2 | Kanzawa | 2 |
| Fukuoka | 2 | Sapporo | 2 |
| Kokura | 2 | Others | 19 |
| **Total** |  |  | **55** |

Source: ‘Number of 70mm Cinemas Now in Operation Reaches 55’, *UniJapan Film* vol. 5, no. 4 (1962), p. 5.

# 

# 3. A History of Widescreen Technology

The previous chapter looked at the economics of film distribution and exhibition in the studio-dominated landscape of Japan of the 1950s, and how this was transformed by an increase in foreign imports (particularly those produced by the Hollywood studios that utilised new advances in screen, colour and sound technologies). In order to understand this process more fully and to gain a better insight into how this influenced Japanese cinema at the level of the individual text as well as shaping the wider industry, it is necessary to examine these technological trajectories more thoroughly.

I shall do this firstly in this chapter by charting the historical evolution of the various widescreen systems developed and employed by Hollywood and other industries outside of Japan, and in the following chapter, with particular regard to the country’s own context. Doing so will elucidate the processes through which Japan moved from being an importer of moving image and sound technologies to becoming a major innovator and exporter over the following decades. It also will go some way in explaining why Japanese cinema managed to retain its unique flavour during this same period. As Noël Burch wrote in 1979:

The wide-screen processes developed from Henri Chrétien’s anamorphic lens (Cinemascope *et al*.) were actually in general use the world over for only about a decade and a half. However, long after they had come to be regarded as an obstacle to the economically indispensable compatibility with the television frame and been all but abandoned in the West, two of the world’s major film industries went on making ’scope films almost exclusively: those of Japan and Hong Kong.[[166]](#footnote-167)

The stylistic aspects of the usage of the extended frame that Burch goes on to discuss will be explored in the chapter on Japanese widescreen aesthetics. However, it is worth mentioning that ‘Shawscope’, the anamorphic system used by Shaw Brothers and first used for the musical extravangaza, *Les Belles* (*Qian jiao bai mei*, Ching Doe, 1961), was essentially Tohoscope, introduced to Hong Kong with Toho’s approval by Japanese technical personnel, the most instrumental of whom was Nishimoto Tadashi.[[167]](#footnote-168)

## 3.1 Widescreen Systems of the Prewar Period

Though anamorphic systems based on CinemaScope quickly became the production standard in Japan, it is instructive to look in more detail at the various technologies and systems labelled at one time or other as ‘widescreen’ in order to place such ’scope formats as Shochiku GrandScope, TohoScope et al. within a wider international frame of reference and gain a better understanding of why they succeeded in their market.

During the prewar period, there were a number of attempts by Hollywood at enlarging the size (in particular the width) of the projected image. However, such systems as MagnaScope and Fox Grandeur were never adopted on any significant industrial scale, and effectively remained one-off novelties.[[168]](#footnote-169) This was largely because they placed such a large burden on the exhibition sector to upgrade at a time when theatres had just finished outlaying a considerable amount on the transition to sound, which took place in North America and Western Europe between 1926-32. During the 1930s, a decade blighted by the Great Depression, not only was there relatively sparse investment in the industry, but there was simply no necessity for change, with little to compete with cinema as a form of cheap mass entertainment.[[169]](#footnote-170)

Generally speaking, these early pioneering processes formed the basis of those employed in the widescreen revolution of the 1950s. Their appearance was related to that of the new large-scale movie palaces constructed throughout the 1920s and 1930s, which were designed to accommodate from 3,000 to over 6,200 customers. Such venues, which played host to a variety of entertainments, including musical spectacles, dance revues and other stage extravaganzas as well as cinema, were constructed with prosceniums of approximately 35-45 feet in width, with the Radio City Music Hall in New York boasting a proscenium of over 70 feet wide and 40 feet high. However, because of such limitations as the quality of film stocks, screen brightness and projector illumination, even in such imposing venues, screens tended to be no more than 24 by 18 feet. This relatively small size would have been immediately apparent to audiences, particularly those seated towards the rear of the auditorium, increasing the psychological distance between the viewer and the onscreen spectacle.

The first example of a widescreen system put into commercial practice was Paramount’s Magnascope. This used a specially-designed wide-angle lens, developed by Lorenzo del Riccio in 1924, attached to the front of the projector to increase the image size from a standard 35mm print both horizontally and vertically to roughly four times that of a regular theatre screen.[[170]](#footnote-171) In December 1926, Paramount installed a 40-foot wide screen in the Rivoli Theatre in New York (the same venue that would later play host to the 70mm premiere of *Oklahoma!*) for presentations of *Old Ironsides* (James Cruze, 1926), an epic tale of naval warfare set in the 19th century. In two sequences, the curtains parted to reveal the expanded screen, as the U.S.S. *Constitution* featured in the film sailed directly towards the camera, looming out towards the audience and giving the ‘illusion of the image’s movement into the space of the theater auditorium, breaking down the spectator’s sense of the barriers of the proscenium.’[[171]](#footnote-172) The Magnascope system was also employed in specific sequences in several other films, including the aerial scenes of *Wings* (William A. Wellman, 1927) and the shots of elephants stampeding from the screen in *Chang* (1927), co-directed by Merian C. Cooper with Ernest B. Schoedsack, the directing team behind *King Kong* (1933).[[172]](#footnote-173) Indeed, Cooper’s predilection for such spectacles found itself perfectly suited to his work on *This is Cinerama*, some 25 years later.

However, there were several evident drawbacks that precluded the system’s wider adoption. The Magnascope lens was of fixed angle, so rather than actually zooming into the scene, it required the projectionist to slowly manipulate by hand the black maskings framing the projected image on the top and right and left-hand sides after switching to its usage, in order to achieve its magnification effect. Related to this, the use of a standard 35mm print stock resulted in a noticeably increased grain and dimmer illumination of the screen image, the latter shortcoming mitigated to some extent by the projectionist switching to projection lamps with a greater amperage during the requisite scenes. But crucially, like all of the systems from this era under discussion, Magnascope could only be used in the small number of movie palaces with screens large enough to accommodate the larger image.

Polyvision, a multi-screen, multi-projector system developed exclusively for Abel Gance’s *Napoléon* (1927), similarly found its usage restricted to a limited number of presentations in a limited number of venues, and only for the film’s final climactic scenes. Its employment of three interlocked cameras anticipated Fred Waller’s work on Cinerama and allowed the French director to capture the epic breadth of its subject matter by accommodating the thousands of extras hired for these specific sequences within three horizontally-arranged screens, each filmed and projected in the full frame silent ratio of 1.33:1. As well as expanding the dimensions of the projected image in these specific scenes, Gance also included a number of audacious montages of juxtaposed images projected concurrently, while at the end of the film, the ‘flanking strips were tinted blue and red and the tryptich became a tricolour.’[[173]](#footnote-174)

As with Magnascope, the employment of Polyvision for such dramatic and experimental flourishes meant that the ‘expanded screen size functioned largely as a novelty – as a special effect that was underscored by its isolation within the film as a whole… much as the presence of color sequences within black-and-white films during the same period drew attention to the new technology as a novelty item.’[[174]](#footnote-175) As a one-off system never intended for commercial exploitation by other filmmakers, Polyvision arguably has more in common with the various practices associated with experimental filmmaking that flourished in the 1960s, mentioned in the final chapter, in which the performative aspects of the presentation were given as much, if not more, priority as the content. Premiering in 7 April 1927 at the prestigious Palais Garnier opera house in Paris, the film screened in only eight major cities in Europe before MGM bought the rights and released it across America in standard 35mm prints that retained just the central panel of the triptych. Today, the most fully-restored version that best approximates Gance’s original vision, running at a monumental 5 hours and 13 minutes, is shown only very rarely.[[175]](#footnote-176)

Both Magnascope and Polyvision operated essentially in accordance with existing production standards in their adherence to 35mm film and aspect ratios conforming to the full frame standard of the silent era of 1.33:1. Other prewar widescreen formats began to appear, coinciding with the introduction of sound, that achieved their greater projected images sizes without any noticeable loss in clarity by way of non-standard wide-gauge negatives and release prints. Fox’s 70mm Grandeur, Paramount’s 56mm Magnafilm, Warner Brothers’ 65mm Vitascope and George K. Spoor and P. John Berggren’s 63.5mm Natural Vision, used for four pictures produced by RKO, are better seen as attempts to impose new standards in film production and exhibition.[[176]](#footnote-177) Because of this, they required specialised equipment that matched the new specifications. Fox, for example, commissioned the Mitchell Camera Company to build 70mm cameras and projectors for Grandeur. These same 70mm cameras were also used by MGM for its Realife process, identical in all but name, while Warners, First National and United Artists all used a 65mm gauge film stock for filming.

All of the systems produced a wider projected image size than the existing standard, typically of 2:1, although RKO’s 63.5mm Natural Vision was slightly narrower, at the same 1.85:1 ratio later adopted by Paramount’s VistaVision in the 1950s. Image breadth was given a priority over height, due to the existing architecture of the larger movie palaces in which the top of the projected image risked being cut off by the overhanging balcony. As such, they can be counted as the first genuine widescreen formats, and the subject matter of the productions for which they were used was typically chosen to showcase the new panoramic dimensions of the screen. The films were often Westerns, or other types of “outdoors” films set in epic landscapes, including Fox’s *The Big Trail* (Raoul Walsh, 1930) starring John Wayne, MGM’s *Billy the Kid* (King Vidor, 1930) and RKO’s railroad drama *Danger Lights* (George B. Seitz, 1930). Other releases exploited the format’s ambit across the full width of the proscenium by presenting a variety of filmed performances that were arguably better suited to the stage itself: *Fox Movietone Follies of 1929* (David Butler, Marcel Silver, 1929), a legendary lost musical comedy film that featured colour sequences; *Happy Days* (Benjamin Stoloff, 1930), a full-length musical revue filmed in Grandeur featuring arrays of minstrels and chorus girls, which is also considered lost; and, somewhat perversely, less evidently cinematic Broadway adaptations such as *The Bat Whispers* (Roland West, 1930), produced by United Artists in “Magnifilm”.[[177]](#footnote-178) There were also short films, like the Natural Vision productions of *Rollercoaster Ride* (1926) and *Niagara Falls* (1926), their subject matter anticipating the later contents of *This is Cinerama*.

It is worth remembering that at the time each of the systems were being developed, the 1.37:1 Academy ratio had yet to become the established standard for sound films. Wider gauge film stocks were discussed seriously as a possible new norm, in order to overcome the problems of image grain and projector stability that were apparent during screenings in theatres with screens wider than 24 feet. It should also be noted that all of these wide-gauge releases were talkies, and the increased film width not only expanded the frame area on release prints, of which 2mm had been lost from the 35mm frame through the addition of optical sound, but by expanding the width of the soundtrack (to 7mm wide in the case of Fox Grandeur), it also allowed for a greater volume range in recording.[[178]](#footnote-179)

John Belton cites a report on the first page of *The 1930 Film Daily Yearbook* that declared that ‘double width screens that fill the proscenium arches are forecast for the larger theaters long before this year comes to a close.’[[179]](#footnote-180) This was not to pass, however - not at this juncture, at least. Aside from the complexities resulting from each of the formats pushed by the individual studios vying to become adopted as the single standard (in which, as Belton notes, ‘potential competitors could and did merely vary the gauge of the film that they used and modify existing cameras slightly to establish a “unique” system’), the number of venues capable of screening releases in a manner that best displayed their virtues was negligible.[[180]](#footnote-181) William Fox, for example, who financially backed the development of Grandeur, ‘was unable to equip more than a handful of his theaters for 70mm projection’, and was ousted from the company that bore his name, at the time suffering from substantial financial difficulties, just as shooting began in April 1930 on *The Big Trail*, the feature intended to best demonstrate the system. The two films shot using MGM’s Realife were only ever presented in 35mm optically-reduced prints (that preserved the original aspect ratio but not the image resolution), as was United Artists’ *The Bat Whispers*.[[181]](#footnote-182)

The other issue was timing. Disregarding advances in colour and sound technology, the actual principles behind such systems were essentially the same as those employed by Mike Todd for the 70mm Todd-AO process he bankrolled in the post-Cinerama era. Todd’s grand design was to elevate his presentations above the level of the typical cinema experience, but one wonders if most audiences would have been able to distinguish between 35mm or 70mm projection in 1930. The repercussions of the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 also had numerous ramifications for the major studios, as they struggled to stay afloat throughout the early 1930s. Most had already appeared to have lost interest in wide-gauge cinema even as the first wave of such titles were being released. By the time the Academy ratio was established as the sound-film standard in 1932, the first widescreen revolution was already over.

None of the aforementioned forays into widescreen systems were ever adopted for production outside of North America and Europe, and certainly not in Japan in the 1930s. The cost of film stock alone during this decade would have prohibited the use of multiple-screen Polyvision or the wide-gauge systems promoted by the Hollywood studios. Neither does it appear that any of the wide-format films were ever shown in these non-standard gauges outside of the United States.[[182]](#footnote-183) It seems ironic therefore, that at the same time the major studios were flirting with these widescreen systems, the technology that was to revolutionise Hollywood in the 1950s had already been developed in France.

## 3.2 Anamorphosis, Chrétien and the Hypergonar

The technology underpinning Twentieth Century-Fox’s CinemaScope is a lens device, known as an anamorphoser which, when fitted in front of a standard prime lens, compresses the image along the horizontal meridian. This allows for a wider horizontal angle of view to be accommodated on a 35mm gauge strip of film. The dimensions of this wide image are restored by use of an inverse anamorphic projection lens at the point of presentation.

The term anamorphosis refers to both a drawing or other two-dimensional picture presenting a distorted image that appears in natural form under certain conditions (for example, when viewed at a raking angle, reflected from a curved mirror, or viewed through a distorting lens), and the process by which such images are produced. The principles behind anamorphosis have been understood at least since the 16th century, with one of the most familiar examples provided by Hans Holbein’s painting *The Ambassadors* (1533), with its foreground skull, positioned between the two main subjects of the picture, elongated along a diagonal axis so that it only appears as it should when viewed at an acute angle from the right-hand side.

In 1897, the German optometrist, Ernst Abbé(1840-1905), one of the co-owners of the German optical systems manufacturer Carl Zeiss AG, patented an anamorphic lens for stills photography.[[183]](#footnote-184) It was not until the 1920s, however, that its potential for moving images started to be investigated. In 1927, Dr Henri Chrétien applied for a patent for what he termed the Hypergonar, a cylindrical lens (as opposed to a standard spherical one) in which a concave cylinder shape is hollowed out of the front surface, diffracting the incoming light to squeeze the image along one of its planes.[[184]](#footnote-185) Chrétien described the lens as ‘suitable for filming and projecting scenes involving extreme width or height.’[[185]](#footnote-186)

The Hypergonar’s vertical capabilities found little use by filmmakers, although Claude Autant-Lara’s *Construire un feu* (begun in 1927 but not released until 1930) and the documentary *L’Exposition coloniale* (1931) used it for scenes shot in a number of configurations along the vertical and horizontal planes, while Jean Tedesco’s two-strip *Panorama au fil de l’eau* (1937) was shown on a large screen on the façade of the Palais of Light during the international Expo 1937, its images cast by two projectors to form a kind of proto-Cinerama that was taller than it was wide.[[186]](#footnote-187) One should note that neither of these latter examples were conventional narrative features, and that the Hypergonar’s bearing on the future form of cinema would be along horizontal lines.

Belton positions Chrétien’s lens as something of a compromise between Polyvision and Magnascope, achieving its expanded dimensions with the use of but a single strip of 35mm film. Though the system was acquired by Pathé-Nathan in 1929, its usage was restricted to specific sequences in only two films, André Hugon’s *La femme et le rossignol* (André Hugon, 1929) and *La merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d’Arc* (Marco de Gastyne, 1929), where it ‘served primarily as a novelty rather than a new standard.’[[187]](#footnote-188) Characterised as ‘more of a scientist than a showman’, Chrétien had apparently explored a number of alternate applications to widescreen presentation in his initial experiments with anamorphic optics. These included combining two images simultaneously within one frame to facilitate stereoscopic projection, and avoiding the problems of colour fringing and excessive film consumption associated with early successive-frame colour systems such as Kinemacolor by similarly recording three colour records of each image within a single frame.[[188]](#footnote-189) It was only after witnessing a performance of Abel Gance’s *Napoléon* (1927) that he became aware of its potential for panoramic presentation.[[189]](#footnote-190)

Chrétien’s Hypergonar initially went largely unnoticed outside of France, by film producers at least. In 1928, Paramount, then still exploring the potential of the widescreen market with its Magnascope system, secured a six-month option on the lens that expired without it ever being used and was never renewed. The following year, Chrétien voyaged to the United State to try and interest the other studios, without any immediately apparent success.[[190]](#footnote-191) Anamorphic widescreen was far from a technological dead end, however, and what might have remained a footnote in the history of widescreen production found itself the subject of continuing research, long before its resurgence in the 1950s. Even after the failure of the various wide format systems outlined above, as early as 1933 a paper published in the *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* stated that:

...from the point of view of sharpness of image, the results attained by the compression or anamorphosing objective are superior to those afforded by wide film. This advantage is by no means the sole merit of the method. The anamorphoser comes into play only twice in the entire sequence of operations from the taking of the picture to its projection on the screen; namely, at the beginning, when it is placed in front of the ordinary camera equipment used to take the picture, and at the end, when it is placed in front of the projector to expand the picture on the screen. In all the stages of processing and handling, the film is treated as ordinary standard film, and the tremendous expense involved in providing special equipment for processing, packaging, and projecting wide film is all avoided. The anamorphoser permits wide screen pictures of excellent quality to be shown interchangeably with standard pictures, and the method may be used for either whole features or particular scenes as desired. Contrary to current opinion it is extremely easy to mount cylindrical compression systems on both cameras and projectors.[[191]](#footnote-192)

The author of this paper, Dr. Sidney H. Newcomer, had been responsible for designing a similar lens for the C.P. Goerz American Optical Company in 1931. The Staats-Newcomer-Goerz “Cine-Panor” lens was marketed as taking and projecting a 50% wider picture. It was, however, only intended for 16mm cameras and projectors, although its designer was quick to point out that the same principles could easily be applied to 35mm. However, the technology never took hold in the marketplace of Depression-era America for the same reasons all of the above-mentioned technologies failed. Furthermore, an article explaining the technology behind CinemaScope, which appeared in the March 1953 issue of *American Cinematographer*, prior to *The Robe* commencing production, stated that Cine-Panor ‘was withdrawn from the market shortly afterward due to some patent difficulties’, presumably related to Chrétien’s system.[[192]](#footnote-193) However, following a hiatus of two decades, anamorphosis would rise to dominate the technical discourse of Hollywood.

## 3.3 Fox, CinemaScope and Anamorphosing Hollywood.

Chrétien’s Hypergonar, with its ability to expand the image horizontally when projecting from a standard 35mm print, formed the basis of the ’scope systems that were rapidly adopted by the film industry in the 1950s, revolutionising the way filmmakers conveyed narrative, emotional and psychological content visually. The more widespread deployment of its basic technology is attributable to a confluence of market forces provoking a change in industry practices, and a single company devoted to its implementation. The new commercial landscape, as detailed in the previous chapter, had been shaped by the breaking up of the major studios’ monopoly of the exhibition market following the 1948 ‘Paramount Decree’, the increased permeation of television into American households, and the commercial genesis of Cinerama, which ‘was invented and innovated outside the motion picture industry itself’ and demonstrated that there was a genuine hunger for a more immersive communal viewing experience on the part of the audience.[[193]](#footnote-194) The studio largely responsible for pushing the technology across the wider film world was Twentieth Century-Fox, who purchased Chrétien’s Hypergonar lenses in December 1952.[[194]](#footnote-195)

Although the Hypergonar system might have been the creation of a single figure, and one based far from the heart of Hollywood, CinemaScope ‘was a product of the industry, forged within its highly competitive and often chaotic marketplace.’[[195]](#footnote-196) It bundled together a number of pre-existing technologies, of which Chrétien’s anamorphic lens was the central, while taking advantage of advances in sound and colour in a way that revolutionised not only the exhibition sector, but also the production practices among competing studios. Presumably mindful of their experiences some twenty years earlier, the studio heads of the 1950s realised it was within their interests to work towards a common standard in their renewed drive for a superior exhibition format, and thus CinemaScope’s early adoptees include MGM, Allied Artists, Universal, Walt Disney and United Artists.[[196]](#footnote-197)

While Fox’s original intention was for CinemaScope to be used only for premier A-grade productions, the main advantage of the basic system was its flexibility. Put simply, it was relatively cost-effective and simple to roll out across the entire exhibition sector in contrast to Cinerama and the 70mm systems that emerged in the mid-1950s following the launch of Todd-AO. These were covered in some depth in the previous chapter, rather than here, because their greatest significance was that the means by which they attempted to elevate the cinema experience was primarily on the exhibition rather than the production side. The films made specifically for each of these systems could only be shown in those select theatres with the equipment capable of projecting them. For example, *This is Cinerama* could really only be seen at one of the handful of Cinerama venues across North America during in its three-strip heyday until the mid-1960s: the lure of the venue itself and of the associated experience was at least as important as the content of the film, so that ‘like the sights seen in its films, Cinerama itself became a tourist attraction.’[[197]](#footnote-198) In the case of the 70mm revival of the same era, in the early years at least, alternate 35mm versions of the films were also circulated within standard theatres, albeit substantially later in order to underscore their lowlier status in the exhibition hierarchy. However, it was always emphasised that audiences were really not getting the full Todd-AO experience unless they saw the films on their original 70mm roadshow releases, with full six-track sound, in the upmarket first-run venues for which they were intended. In the case of the first two Todd-AO productions, *Oklahoma!* (1955) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Michael Anderson, 1956), they would have literally been watching a different film. As well as wide-gauge prints, the Todd-AO process initially also used a faster frame rate of 30fps in order to reduce screen flicker, necessitating the shooting of alternative versions of both which could be released in 35mm prints of standard 24fps; the 35mm version of *Oklahoma!* was actually shot in CinemaScope. Both Cinerama and Todd-AO were not only the names of formats, but of the companies that developed and commercially exploited them, with Cinerama, Inc. established in 1950 and the Todd-AO Corporation in 1953.[[198]](#footnote-199) While these organisations operated in conjunction with the other Hollywood studios to realise their productions and were often reliant upon them for distribution purposes, they cannot really be described as operating *within* the industry in the same respect.[[199]](#footnote-200)

These reasons also precluded the widespread adoption of these systems by the industries of other countries, namely Japan, and so the emphasis of the various widescreen technologies in this chapter will be on those that could be rolled out across the entire exhibition sector, particularly those derived from ’scope principles.[[200]](#footnote-201) However, the specific case of the Super Technirama 70 system, which combined anamorphic projection with wide-gauge release prints, will be looked at in the later case study of Daiei’s production of *Buddha*. The large-format IMAX system developed in Canada will also be considered in a Japanese context in the final chapter along with a number of other non-standard formats. First demonstrated at the Expo ’70 World Fair in Osaka, IMAX uses 70mm film running horizontally through the projector to yield a larger projected image with a finer resolution and aspect ratios of 1.43:1, 1.78:1 or 1.9:1. It is essentially a specialist format unrelated to practices within the wider film industry.

CinemaScope, however, took the film world by storm. In an advertisement feature that appeared in *Wall Street Journal* on 16 September 1954, Fox proudly proclaimed that:

…the total number of theatres equipped for CinemaScope in the United States and Canada is 8,100 and the world-wide total is 11,100 which represents 75% of our income possibilities, this being an achievement far beyond out fondest expectations… After one year the estimated domestic theatre investment in CinemaScope equipment is $66,875,000; and that in foreign countries, $16,500,000.[[201]](#footnote-202)

There was some resistance among the Hollywood majors in the immediate adoption of CinemaScope. The staunchest opposition came from Paramount (ironically the company that had originally secured and allowed to let lapse its six-month option on the Hypergonar lens in 1928), whose competing VistaVision system will be looked at shortly, while RKO and Republic also spurned the new system. Meanwhile, following Fox’s initial industry screenings of test footage on 26 January 1953, Warner Brothers, reluctant to associate themselves with ‘a trademark that was so closely identified with a rival studio’, began work on its own widescreen process.[[202]](#footnote-203)

Aware that the anamorphic technology for the lenses developed by Chrétien was now in the public domain, Warners looked towards other sources to acquire them from. For its WarnerSuperScope process, later shortened to WarnerScope, it commissioned Zeiss-Opton in Germany to manufacture the lenses. When the company failed to deliver on time, the studio instead opted for ones developed for another very similar process named Vistarama. To all intents and purposes, there was little to distinguish WarnerScope from CinemaScope beyond its implementation of sound, and it ‘in reality, was Vistarama, another anamorphic lens system, just as WarnerColor was Eastman Color and WarnerPhonic Sound was RCA stereophonic sound.’[[203]](#footnote-204) Due to industry pressure, however, Warners ultimately released the WarnerScope production *Rear Guard* (David Butler, 1954), retitled as *The Command*, as a CinemaScope production, with Fox’s blessing, and had soon joined many of the other studios in their adoption of the system. The WarnerScope trademark was resurrected later in the decade, but to describe a very different process.

Fox had suffered its own problems in acquiring lenses of suitable quality, with the studio engineers noticing edge distortion problems and loss of sharpness of focus during the production of *The Robe* using Chrétien’s original Hypergonar designs. The flaws are quite conspicuous in the first CinemaScope film, namely *The Robe* and *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Jean Negulesco, 1953).[[204]](#footnote-205) This resulted in Fox commissioning the Bausch & Lomb company to make superior lenses. The new and improved lenses arrived in January 1954 and were first used in the production of Fox’s religious epic, *The Egyptian* (Michael Curtiz, 1954).[[205]](#footnote-206)

In the meantime, Vistarama had been developed by the businessman Carl Dudley who, after attending the early CinemaScope test screenings, had decided to develop a system compatible with Fox’s using lenses manufactured by Simpson Optical Manufacturing Company.[[206]](#footnote-207) Dudley candidly announced that:

CinemaScope, WarnerScope and Vistarama are all one in the same, each being merely a trade name for a squeeze-type motion picture employing anamorphic lenses… Any theatre equipped with any anamorphic lens can project any picture made under any of these trade names.[[207]](#footnote-208)

The Simpson lenses, however, were inferior to those later developed by Bausch & Lomb, whose usage was one of the main prerequisites for Fox to lend the CinemaScope endorsement to any rival studio’s productions. Vistarama quickly found itself redundant.

Nevertheless, the number of widescreen systems developed throughout the decade continued to grow. A 1954 article in *Variety* entitled ‘No End to Screen (R)Evolutions’, detailing the manifold developments in the studio scramble for widescreen in the immediate wake of *The Robe*, goes some way in explaining how and why this was so.[[208]](#footnote-209) The main reason was that licensing companies not only needed Fox’s seal of approval in order to brand their films as CinemaScope pictures, but also had to pay licensing fees to the studio in return for the use of the specially developed, precision-made Bausch & Lomb lenses.

One of the more interesting alternatives was SuperScope, which allowed anamorphic positive prints to be made from films shot normally on 35mm, without any anamorphic compression during the filming stage. That is, footage was shot spherically and then a widescreen image was optically extracted and converted from the negative in the processing laboratories of the Technicolor Corporation. The invention of Irving and Joseph Tushinsky, the projection lens was capable of showing prints of varying aspect ratios from standard 1.33:1 to an incredibly wide 3:1, including the regular CinemaScope releases between these ranges. SuperScope prints themselves were issued in the two ranges of 1.875:1 (which could be presented from 1.75:1 to 2:1) and 2.15:1 (which could be presented from 2:1 to 2.25:1). All projectionists needed to do was adjust the lens accordingly.[[209]](#footnote-210) The process was later improved and rebranded as SuperScope 235, following CinemaScope’s lead in establishing an anamorphic standard of 2.35:1.

SuperScope is of interest in that, like Vistarama, it did not originate at any particular studio, although it was quickly adopted by RKO Pictures, whose president Howard Hughes largely financed its development. The relative expediency and inexpensiveness of the process also resulted in its employment by a number of smaller independent companies.[[210]](#footnote-211) The first major SuperScope production was the Technicolor Western *Vera Cruz* (Robert Aldrich, 1954), released by United Artists in December 1954 and among the biggest hits of the decade in Japan following its release in the country mere months later in April 1955. Other SuperScope titles include *Underwater!* (John Sturges, 1955), a diving adventure intended to show off the assets of RKO’s biggest contracted star, Jane Russell, as much as the studio’s chosen projection process; another RKO picture, *Escape to Burma* (Allan Dwan, 1955); and the Allied Artists science fiction title *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956). A number of films originally released in 1.33:1 were also reissued using the format, including *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944) and *Fantasia* (1940), both re-released in 1956. Warners later resurrected the WarnerScope trademark for its releases of a number of SuperScope productions, including *The Naked and the Dead* (Raoul Walsh, 1958), an RKO production which Warners distributed after the company’s demise in 1957, and *Up Periscope!* (Gordon Douglas, 1959).

The crucial advantage for exhibitors was that no specialist equipment was required beyond the basic SuperScope projection lens, which was initially made available at an approximate cost of $350.[[211]](#footnote-212) Many theatres yet to equip for CinemaScope and biding their time to see which way the tide turned regarding the various competing widescreen standards therefore opted to rent or buy them outright, due to their versatility in catering for all existing and potential squeeze factors.[[212]](#footnote-213) However, this flexibility came at the cost of quality, and the disadvantages of SuperScope were particularly keenly felt on the production side. Because the top and bottom of the filmed image were lost in the process of creating anamorphic positive prints, a smaller negative area was required to create the same size image on positive prints. This resulted in a noticeable decrease in projected picture quality. Since it was already possible to project cropped standard prints to create an “ersatz widescreen” effect, as shall be covered shortly, obtaining similar dimensions with less visible grain, SuperScope was judged by at least one writer to be ‘a pretty worthless process… [which] was quickly phased out after Hughes sold RKO to General Tire in 1957.’[[213]](#footnote-214) This was not entirely true, as the concept behind SuperScope was to be resurrected in the 1980s with the Super 35 process, to be covered shortly.[[214]](#footnote-215)

The final and most noteworthy anamorphic alternative to CinemaScope was Panavision, a technology that would ultimately supercede Fox’s system. The projection lens, invented by Robert E. Gottschalk, was capable of showing both anamorphic and standard films by way of a series of prisms that could be moved in relation to one another to alter the level of expansion along the horizontal plane. Gottschalk subsequently developed a high-quality camera lens in 1958, which fared better in comparison tests with Bausch & Lomb’s lenses, specifically with regards to the “mumping” distortion effect of close-ups.[[215]](#footnote-216) A number of studios began using the Panavision lenses in 1959, with Paramount, which had held out on anamorphic production in favour of its own VistaVision system, adopting it for its widescreen films in 1961.[[216]](#footnote-217) Fox, too, would ultimately switch to Panavision in 1968, after its final CinemaScope productions of the previous year.

The success of the Panavision company was due to its superior and more flexible technology, in which ‘the prime lens and anamorph could be combined into a single unit, making focusing easier and enabling quick and straightforward changes between lenses of different focus distances: by 1963 the lenses available ranged from 25mm to 360mm.’[[217]](#footnote-218) The company also introduced its state-of-the-art Panaflex camera in 1963, and continued to refine the quality of its products over the coming decades. Most crucial to Panavision’s dominance over the ensuing decades was its system of marketing, in which integrated camera and lens packages, far superior to those that the studios’ own research departments could develop, were supplied on a for hire basis only, rather than sold outright.

## 3.4 “Ersatz Widescreen” Systems and Screening Practices

On 23 April 1953, within months of Fox’s purchase of Chrétien’s Hypergonar lenses in December 1952 and its highly-publicised demonstrations of CinemaScope test footage to the industry on 26 January 1953, Paramount released the Western *Shane* (George Stevens), opportunistically stipulating to exhibitors that it be presented in a 1.66:1 ratio, with the top and bottom of the screen masked. One might conjecture that this cut-price method of altering the screen’s dimension was nothing more than a resentful attempt at stealing a march on the company that had now adopted the very same lens technology Paramount had let slip from its grasp some 25 years before. Indeed, two months later, it rereleased Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) with similar recommendations in an attempt to squeeze more money out of the film at the box-office. Such releases can be considered widescreen by dint of the obvious fact that the picture was wider than it was high: there were no special processes employed during the shooting or printing stages, nor additional expenses to exhibitors. As such, John Belton labels such practices “ersatz widescreen.”[[218]](#footnote-219)

Such a strategy evidently worked. Both of these “flat” pseudo-widescreen releases from Paramount feature among Japan’s top-grossing foreign imports during the 1950s, as indeed does director George Stevens’ follow-up to *Shane*, *Giant*, released by Warners in 1956 in a masked spherical format (see *Table 5*). Presumably this was because they offered a relatively early opportunity for Japanese audiences to experience some form of “widescreen” presentation at a time when the new technology was already the topic of much discussion in magazines such as *Eiga Hyôron* and *Kinema Junpô*, and yet very few of the country’s screens were equipped for anamorphic projection. Anderson and Richie suggest such presentational choices might also have been rather arbitrarily employed by the country’s exhibitors for other films, as was the case ‘when a Tokyo theater masked off the top and bottom of the 3-D *Man in the Dark* and projected it on a long screen to make not only Japan’s first widescreen film but maybe the world’s first widescreen 3-D process.’[[219]](#footnote-220)

A good example of “ersatz widescreen” as a commercial practice was provided by the first studio to follow Fox’s lead in adopting CinemaScope. MGM filmed alternate Academy ratio versions of its CinemaScope productions and released them cropped under the Metroscope trademark for exhibition at venues yet to upgrade to anamorphic projection. Alternate prints of titles including *Knights of the Round Table* (Richard Thorpe, 1953), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (Stanley Donen, 1954), *Brigadoon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1954) and *Moonfleet* (Fritz Lang, 1955), as well as a number of titles from the back catalogue of the company’s pre-widescreen era, were projected either masked or hard-matted to give an aspect ratio of approximately 1.75:1.[[220]](#footnote-221) Criticisms such as those about Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse’s feet being cut off by the bottom of the frame in *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953) ultimately led to the discontinuation of Metroscope, although the proportion of cinemas equipped for CinemaScope in the major international markets by the mid-1950s removed the necessity for such alternate versions anyway.[[221]](#footnote-222)

The vogue for faked widescreen presentation resulted in a glut of new brand names, including Wide-Vision, a trademark adopted by a number of major studios, including Fox, to indicate cropped widescreen; Paravision, Paramount’s trademark for such releases; Vast-Vision, used on all of Republic’s features issued from 1953, which were cropped between 1.66:1 and 1.85:1; and ScenicScope, similarly used for RKO’s cropped widescreen. Essentially such branding equated to little more than a promotional tool, as there was nothing special or patentable about the masking process. One can also find one-off examples of specific films where the label seldom appeared beyond the advertising material: SinAscope used for the comedy *Happy Anniversary* (David Miller, 1959) starring David Niven and distributed by United Artists, and Monstavision used in *Valley of the Dragon*s (Edward Bernds, 1961), a monochrome science-fiction feature distributed by Columbia.[[222]](#footnote-223)

It is interesting to note that Hollywood was still promoting such subpar alternatives to bona-fide widescreen some time after the Japanese film industry had turned almost completely to anamorphic production. This is probably in no small part due to the increasingly closer relationship in the United States between cinema and television, as shall be detailed later. While it is clear that B-movies such as *Valley of the Dragons* were hardly representative of Columbia’s more prestigious releases of the time, it is worth emphasising that equivalent Japanese productions, such as the low-budget *eroduction* titles, were being filmed in ’scope, with the theatrical market obviously intended as their primary site of consumption.

Another salient point regarding the practice of cropping was that the exact manner of presentation was ultimately left in the hands of the projectionists at each venue, not at the single point of film production. While the studios could stipulate the ratio each particular film was to be shown in, they could not rigidly enforce this, as was clearly the case in foreign markets such as Japan in the example already given of *Man in the Dark*. Undoubtedly more care would have been taken over projection at premier events or first-run theatres, but it is equally probable that there would have been a large number of projectionists at provincial or low-grade venues who were less conscientious about preserving the carefully-framed compositions intended by directors and cinematographers. In the worst case scenarios, films intended for cropping could be presented full frame, occasionally revealing such unwanted elements of the production as intrusive microphone booms straying into the picture. Anamorphic projection therefore presented a far more attractive alternative to cropping in that it provided a means of standardisation and control at the exhibition stage.

Another major flaw associated with these cropped widescreen methods became immediately apparent when the pictures were projected onto the large screens used by genuine widescreen processes. Pushing a standard 35mm negative area to yield positive prints that provided a larger projected image than the norm resulted in increased grain visibility. As noted earlier, this was also one of the drawbacks of the Magnascope system adopted by Paramount in the late-1920s. Image definition was also, to a lesser extent, a problem with the early CinemaScope releases, with the picture similarly magnified through the lens, albeit this time only along the horizontal axis.

These definition issues, for both genuine and anamorphic widescreen methods, were exacerbated by the slow emulsions of the colour negative stock available for much of the 1950s. Indeed, it should be remembered that during the first few years following the launch of CinemaScope, at the behest of its licenser, all early widescreen films were in colour. As well as increased grain visibility, the slow speeds of early colour stocks limited the depth of field, restricting the use of staging in depth as a dramatic device open to filmmakers.[[223]](#footnote-224) The depth-of-field constraints were compounded in genuine anamorphic processes by the loss of light through the camera lens during shooting. Focal depth was therefore actually less of a problem for the ersatz methods.

The problem of grain visibility diminished from 1959, when the faster, finer grained Eastman 5250 color negative stock went on the market which, with a speed of 50 ASA, ‘decisively established the dominance since maintained in this field by Kodak, and also completely eliminated competition in the U.S.A. by its superiority’, according to Barry Salt.[[224]](#footnote-225) As shall be detailed in the following chapter, this wasn’t entirely true, as Kodak’s dominance began to come under threat from Fuji from the 1970s onwards.

Throughout the following decades, further advances in negative and print stock, meant that masking or cropping films shot spherically was no longer seen as a poor man’s option, but as valid a method of creating widescreen images as anamorphic techniques. For American or European producers, the flexibility of the masking methods and of extracting widescreen images at the processing stage from films shot non-anamorphically became more of a consideration as the narrower dimensions of the television screen increasingly became the window through which films were viewed. In America, the VistaVision aspect ratio of 1.85:1 became the default standard, while in Europe this was generally a slightly narrower 1.66:1, both centre matted from a standard 4-perf 35mm frame at the projection stage, so that theoretically both could be screened in the Academy ratio standard of 1.37:1, which was effectively the same as television.[[225]](#footnote-226)

Meanwhile, alongside the prestigious Todd-AO system that used 65mm negative stock and 70mm print stock to create a higher definition picture, came another system that would use standard 35mm negative stock in a non-standard manner to create 35mm prints, in an attempt to create a widescreen system that could be quickly adapted by the mass-market without any loss of image quality. That system was called VistaVision.

## 3.5 Paramount and Two-Frame VistaVision

VistaVision was devised by Paramount as a practical alternative to anamorphic formats such as CinemaScope. It was first used to film the musical *White Christmas* (Michael Curtiz, 1954) starring Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye, released on 14 October 1954 and shortly afterwards in Japan, on 17 December 1954. Other notable VistaVision releases include *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1956), *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), *War and Peace* (King Vidor, 1956) and most of Alfred Hitchcock’s films from *To Catch a Thief* (1955) up through *North by Northwest* (1959).[[226]](#footnote-227)

The system was put into development after the studio’s engineers noticed that positive prints had a better resolution than the negative stock from which they were derived. Therefore, if a larger negative area the equivalent of two frames (or 8 perforations) were used, better-quality release prints could be produced. This was achieved by running the film horizontally through modified cameras during filming to give a negative image with a width the equivalent of twice the height of the Academy ratio frame and a height approximately the same as its width, of just under an inch.[[227]](#footnote-228) The high-definition prints, which could be played on any standard projection equipment, were created at the processing stage by the special optical process of rotating the image through 90 degrees and reducing it to fit a standard 35mm frame.

VistaVision had the sharpest image definition of all standard gauge non-anamorphic processes. A projected 35mm print could give a larger screen image with a much finer grain than if a standard 35mm negative were used. This image could be masked to give varying aspect ratios of 1.66:1, 1.85:1 and 2:1. Generally VistaVision films were composed to yield an aspect ratio of 1.85:1, narrower than CinemaScope, but the system yielded a projected image of greater height without losing resolution. These reduced-grain positive prints also resulted in an increased depth of field and avoided the distortion effects of the early anamorphic lenses.[[228]](#footnote-229)

VistaVision had greater advantages beyond the quality of the projected image. Because it utilised regular 35mm film and non-anamorphic projection, the image dimensions were compatible with existing architecture and projection equipment. To this end it also adopted the Perspecta optical stereo system.[[229]](#footnote-230) There was no need to renovate theatres to accommodate the wider dimensions of the extensive CinemaScope screen nor rewire for magnetic sound. VistaVision productions could be shown anywhere.[[230]](#footnote-231) According to Duncan Petrie, this was the reason for its early adoption in Britain:

VistaVision therefore did not require special projection facilities and could also be accommodated on most existing screens. The economic factor proved attractive to the Rank Organisation, keen to keep costs down after the extravagances of the 1940s, which subsequently announced its intention to adopt VistaVision rather than CinemaScope for its own widescreen productions.[[231]](#footnote-232)

VistaVision was less financially appealing on the production side. The process used twice as much negative stock and needed specially-developed cameras that could run the film horizontally. This, in combination with the special optical printing processes required, raised basic production costs to approximately four times that of spherical 35mm.[[232]](#footnote-233) The printing process was undertaken by the Technicolor company, with whom Paramount had historically enjoyed a close relationship. Indeed, the cameras required by VistaVision’s double-frame exposure of a single negative were created especially by Technicolor by modifying those original cameras used for its three-strip colour process. [[233]](#footnote-234) While there were a number of VistaVision films shot in monochrome, with Paramount itself releasing *The Desperate Hours* (William Wyler, 1955), its first of a number of such productions, and the Rank Organisation producing *Hell Drivers* (Cy Endfield, 1957) and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s wartime drama *Ill Met By Moonlight* (1957), according to the American Widescreen Museum website, ‘the process specifications virtually demanded processing and printing by Technicolor. Much of VistaVision’s image quality must be credited to the Technicolor imbibition (dye transfer) printing process.’[[234]](#footnote-235)

This effectively restricted VistaVision’s usage to producers who had close access to Technicolor’s laboratories, which outside of the Hollywood plant and Boston test facilities in the United States, were limited to the British Technicolor laboratories in London (established in 1938) and Technicolor Italiana in Rome (established in 1955).[[235]](#footnote-236) The majority of American VistaVision releases were produced by Paramount, with notable exceptions including a number of titles from MGM (*North by Northwest*) and Warners (*The Searchers*). Outside of Hollywood, the most systematic adherent of the process was the Rank Organisation in Britain.[[236]](#footnote-237) Its trial adoption by Daiei will be looked at later.

Production costs issues aside, despite its virtues in terms of image clarity, colour reproduction and focal depth, VistaVision rapidly became redundant for other reasons, with the last known feature filmed completely using the process being Paramount’s *My Six Loves* (Gower Champion, 1963), starring Debbie Reynolds. Advances in lenses and the introduction of the new Eastmancolor 5250 negative stock allowed for better resolution for films produced using CinemaScope and its superior successor of Panavision, which Paramount itself first turned to for the Elvis Presley musical *Blue Hawaii* (Norman Taurog, 1961).

In addition, by the end of the 1950s, most cinemas were fully equipped with anamorphic projection facilities. However, VistaVision’s higher definition saw the process revived in the 1970s specifically for special effects work, for which it was first used to shoot certain sequences in *Star Wars*.[[237]](#footnote-238) With the adoption of digital technologies, even this usage has declined, although has still been surprisingly commonplace even in the 21st century, with the director Christopher Nolan, for example, using it for the aerial sequences in *Inception* (2010).[[238]](#footnote-239)

## 3.6 Other Widescreen Systems

It was at least partly due to the proliferation of competing widescreen formats, be they anamorphic or others such as 8-perf double-frame VistaVision or 70mm wide-gauge Todd-AO, that Fox toyed with a hybrid system in the mid-1950s. CinemaScope 55 was a variant on the original CinemaScope system that used a 55mm gauge negative (with an area four times that of standard 35mm), making it well-suited for both widescreen projection and for generating superior 35mm prints. The two films shot using the process, *Carousel* (Henry King, 1956) and *The King and I* (Walter Lang, 1956) were both tradeshown using the wider gauge prints they were originally intended to be screened in, but as no cinemas were ever equipped with the necessary specialist projection equipment, they were distributed in standard 35mm release prints. *Japan Film Almanac* states that both films were shown in Japan, at Osaka’s Nangai and Shochiku-za theatres on 13 April 1956, and at the Takarazuka Theatre in Tokyo on 18 April 1956, but does not make clear whether these were the standard or wide-gauge screenings.[[239]](#footnote-240) *Eiga Nenkan 1957*, however, while omitting the dates of the Osaka screenings, mentions the demonstration screenings at the Toho-operated Takarazuka Theatre and Scala-za in Tokyo on 18 April, stating that both films were shown from standard 35mm positive prints.[[240]](#footnote-241) With the former film a resounding commercial failure in America, the new system was abandoned and certainly had no influence on Japanese production practises. Belton considers CinemaScope 55 a “failed” technology that ‘was successfully invented and innovated, but it failed in the marketplace.’[[241]](#footnote-242)

Meanwhile, as wider aspect ratios became an established trend in cinema presentation, other ‘inferior’ processes, which purported to deliver similar results at lower costs, achieved a greater permeation and longevity within the international film market. One of these, Techniscope, might be considered the stark opposite of VistaVision. Developed by Technicolor Italiana in 1961, it achieved its widescreen ratio by effectively dividing the negative area containing the image in half. Filming was conducted using standard lenses and cameras, with the camera pull-down modified to expose a two-perforation area rather than the usual four perforations. During processing, the negative image was compressed to half its width and then enlarged to twice the size, to fit the standard frame area of 35mm release prints. Such prints were compatible with CinemaScope projection equipment, giving the same aspect ratio of 2.35:1.

Techniscope had one very clear cost advantage over other widescreen systems, in that it used half the amount of negative stock as the standard four-perforation pull-down method, and consequently cost half as much for the footage to be developed. On the production side too, there was no need for anamorphic lenses to be fitted to the camera during shooting. Such savings were offset by the slightly more expensive laboratory work during the printing stages, which initially could be only handled by Technicolor. However, the system was so cost effective for producers that its popularity, in Europe in particular, led to Technicolor licensing other processing plants to handle development, with the resulting prints in Europe released with the credit Cromoscope.[[242]](#footnote-243)

The first feature released in Techniscope was the Italian production *The Pharaoh’s Woman* (*La donna dei faraoni*, Viktor Tourjansky, 1960). It became the system of choice for low-budget producers during the 1960s and early-1970s, used for such films as *The Ipcress File* (Sidney J. Furie, UK, 1965), *Dracula, Prince of Darkness* (Terence Fisher, UK, 1966), Sergio Leone’s Spaghetti Westerns including *A Fistful of Dollars* (*Per un pugno di dollari*, Italy, 1964) and *Once Upon a Time in the West* (*C’era una volta il West*, Italy, 1968), George Lucas’ *THX 1138* (US, 1971) and *American Graffiti* (US, 1973), *The Valley: Obscured by Clouds* (*La vallée*, Barbet Schroeder, France, 1972) and Lucio Fulci’s zombie films such as *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (*Zombi 2*, 1979). A number of Hollywood studios also used it for their low-budget releases, including Paramount for a series of Westerns that included *The Law of the Lawless* (William F. Claxton, 1964). As far as can be ascertained, the system was never used in Japan, presumably because genuine anamorphic systems were so well-established and the lack of nearby access to processing facilities would have negated any savings in film stock.

There has been some debate as to the quality of Techniscope. Like the “ersatz widescreen” films of the 1950s, the use of spherical lenses resulted in a clearer and sharper image than that yielded by anamorphic processes, with an increased depth of field, as ‘spherical lenses effectively became double focal length because of the smaller frame area covered.’[[243]](#footnote-244) But this was compromised by the blow-up of the half-size negative image during processing, resulting in a highly-visible grain to the film, although this can also be seen as part of the format’s charm. Haines, in his history of Technicolor’s dye transfer printing process, described Techniscope as an ‘economy process… Its poor quality made it as worthless as SuperScope.’[[244]](#footnote-245) The fundamental similarities between the two systems is highlighted by the fact that at one point films shot using the SuperScope 235 technique were billed as Super Techniscope when processed by Technicolor and as System 35 when processed by other labs.[[245]](#footnote-246)

## 3.7 A Short-lived Standard: Resistance, Compromise and Rationalisation in the Global Market for CinemaScope

CinemaScope emerged as the first dominant widescreen standard for the mass market, and enjoyed this status for nearly two decades, from the early 1950s until the late 1960s. The critical features of the original system that led to the emergence of such rivals, and which led to its ultimate phasing out, were that it was originally developed to be sold as an integrated package, all of whose parts were substitutable by other parties who could, and did, undercut Fox’s own suppliers.

This package consisted not only of the anamorphic lenses produced for Twentieth Century-Fox by Bausch & Lomb, but also a proprietary curved screen, known as the Miracle Mirror, embossed with millions of tiny lenses to reflect more light, and a stereophonic sound system. All of this combined resulted in considerable expenses for exhibitors needing to refurbish their venues to accommodate the new system. The main costs were due to the fact that ‘major renovation of the theatre architecture was required to rip out or cover old proscenia in order to install wide, Miracle Mirror screens and to wire theatres for four-track, magnetic stereophonic sound.’[[246]](#footnote-247) Belton cites figures of as much as $25,000 for large, first-run houses with over 2,000 seats, $15,000-17,000 for a mid-ranged theatre seating 1,500-2000, and $10,000-12,000 for a smaller theatre. Of this amount, the actual projection lenses represented a comparatively small amount (although still far in excess of the Tushinsky lenses for SuperScope, for example), marketed initially at a price of $2,800, which had dropped to as little as $1000 by April 1954.[[247]](#footnote-248)

These figures are comparatively higher than those of the early Japanese installations quoted by Anderson and Richie and Shimaji in the previous chapter (approximately $4200-$4500 for the full stereo package, dropping to as low as $1,400-$1,650 with Perspecta sound). Presumably Fox would have priced the system at different levels for its various overseas markets, but clearly Japanese exhibitors were also cutting corners elsewhere. A significant percentage of the original system’s costs came from the new screens needed because the same arc lamps used in standard projectors were now required to light a wider screen area. The necessity for more reflective screen materials had also become apparent with the 3D releases of the early 1950s, due to the loss of light from the polaroid filters and glasses that mediated between the projector and viewer. Fox was not the only company which had been working on better screens and, in fact, its patented Miracle Mirror had its basis in original research conducted by a German company, Siemens Halske, between 1928-30. Not only was the actual material used by Miracle Mirror (and other screens such as the Magniglow Astrolite that the company also endorsed) over double the price of conventional screen material on a per-foot basis, but twice as much of it was needed for the new wider screens capable of accommodating the CinemaScope image. A new screen could cost a theatre anywhere between $800-3,200, depending on its size.[[248]](#footnote-249)

Fox relented on its insistence that smaller theatres use only its approved screens at a relatively early stage, in December 1953, shortly after the premieres of the first three CinemaScope productions, *The Robe*, *How to Marry a Millionaire* and *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* (Robert D. Webb, 1953).[[249]](#footnote-250) Such venues could source their screens from other suppliers. They were still a prerequisite for larger theatres, however, although it is unclear what the situation was for overseas installations. In *Eiga Nenkan 1955* there is an advertisement from the Yanagiya Sound Company, offering its own Japanese-patented alternative to the Miracle Mirror screen, the *Yanagiya Waidosukuriin* (Yanagiya Widescreen), promoted with such slogans as ‘Miracle Screen for use with CinemaScope, wide-use silver screen.’ The same advertisement offered another lure for venues in the form of luxury theatre seats.[[250]](#footnote-251)

Another stipulation for the CinemaScope endorsement that was soon dropped was four-track magnetic sound. Many Hollywood studios saw stereophonic sound as a vital dimension to Fox’s system. With the number of equipped venues across North America exceeding 1800, on 17 February 1954, *Variety* reported that ‘Nicholas M. Schenk, president of Loew’s-Metro, revealed this week that Metro will license its CinemaScope product only to the theatres which are fully equipped with C’Scope screens and stereophonic sound.’ The article went on to quote the head of MGM, which had just released its first CinemaScope title, *Knights of the Round Table*, as stating “CinemaScope is great and stereophonic sound is part of its greatness.”[[251]](#footnote-252) Warners’ first CinemaScope release, *The Command* (which as previously explained, was not technically a CinemaScope production), was distributed in both stereo and standard versions, where requested by the exhibitor, but by March 1954, *Variety* was reporting that the company ‘appears to have joined 20th-Fox and Metro in their policy of releasing CinemaScope pix with stereophonic sound only.’[[252]](#footnote-253)

However, there was considerably more resistance from overseas markets for Hollywood’s product, who saw this added extra as rather less of a necessity than any increase in image size. On 27 February 1954, *Variety* carried a report following a trip to the United Kingdom by Fox’s president Skyros P. Skouras entitled, “Europe Very Unlike U.S. In Stereo Strategy”, which stated that ‘Opposition by Britain’s Cinematograph Exhibitors Assn. to 20th-Fox’s Stereophonic sound dictum has highlighted the fact that 20th is in for a tough time trying to sell its four-track magnetic sound to theatres abroad.’ The article goes on to outline a number of differences between the domestic and international markets that are worth citing in full:

(1) Where many distribs, like Metro, may follow 20th’s lead on sound in the U.S., it’s already clear that they don’t intend to keep the harmony pitch in the foreign market. (2) Exhibs abroad have their local as well as Hollywood product to draw on. (3) The foreign market has less money to spend, and (4) With hardly any tv competition yet, exhibs abroad don’t have the same sense of urgency as their U.S. confreres.[[253]](#footnote-254)

All of these points are worth considering in the Japanese context, particularly MGM’s decision to back the pseudo-stereo Perspecta sound system for its overseas releases. As noted in a previous chapter, those Japanese widescreen productions that were released in stereo versions utilised the Perspecta system, though many continued to be released with a monaural track. It was the domestic market, however, that was to play the most decisive role in Fox’s decision to relax its stance on stereophonic sound in May 1954. As lucrative as *The Robe* had been in its first few months, there was still plenty more money to be made from the circuit of drive-ins, neighbourhood houses and second-run theatres yet to convert to CinemaScope, and Paramount was poised with its VistaVision system to exploit this very market. Fox’s decision to ease its restrictions on where its pictures could play saw the number of CinemaScope installations across North America and the rest of the world soar.[[254]](#footnote-255) By the end of 1956, of the 41,000 theatres worldwide in which it was possible to screen CinemaScope films only 10,000 had equipment capable of playing multiple-track stereo magnetic sound.[[255]](#footnote-256)

## 3.8 Colour and ’Scope

Another of Fox’s provisos, which this time impacted on the production rather than exhibition side, was that all films made using its licensed system were to be made in colour, and more precisely, Eastmancolor. This condition, too, was waived within a few years of CinemaScope’s launch. While colour was initially part and parcel of the new screen’s new look, once the initial furore surrounding widescreen had died down, monochrome anamorphic productions began appearing in Hollywood with, for example, Regal Film’s B-movies produced under contract for Fox during the years 1956 through 1959 using a process called RegalScope (identical to CinemaScope but for the lack of colour).[[256]](#footnote-257)

This relaxation of standards by Fox would have been one factor behind the peak in the percentage of widescreen imports to Japan, of 111 (57.2%) in 1957, as noted by Crosby (see *Table 6*). There were simply more of them, as the Hollywood studios began to ease off on their policy of ‘consciously making fewer but higher-budgeted pictures to attract audiences back into the theaters.’[[257]](#footnote-258) Only 6 of the 86 (or 7%) imported widescreen features in 1956 had been monochrome, but this figure had risen to 22 out of 111 (19.8%) in 1957 and 26 out of 94 (27.7%) in 1958.

It should be emphasised that not all the features imported to Japan listed as widescreen were CinemaScope productions, and that the growing number of monochrome widescreen releases itself was symptomatic of Fox’s lapsing control of this market. According to *Eiga Nenkan*, of the 183 total imports released in the second half of 1958 and first half of 1959, there were 77 widescreen films. Of these, 36 (46.6%) are listed as CinemaScope, with 14 VistaVision productions, four released in RKO-Scope (i.e. SuperScope), four in Metroscope (i.e. “ersatz” cropped spherical), four in Technirama and the rest categorised as “other” widescreen systems.[[258]](#footnote-259) Between the second half of 1959 and the first half of 1960, the number of overall imports rose to 223, as did the number of widescreen imports, to 92. However, the number of CinemaScope imports only grew by one, to 37; in other words, CinemaScope accounted for only 40.2% of the widescreen imports. The others included 22 VistaVision productions and four 70mm releases, with the remainder spread evenly among a variety of systems including Metrosope, Technirama, Dyaliscope, TotalScope and Superama.[[259]](#footnote-260)

From the very offset of anamorphic production in Japan, a significant proportion of films were shot in monochrome; in 1957, they accounted for 37 (or 51.4%) of the 72 widescreen releases and Japan’s peak year of production of 1960 saw 307 monochrome films out of the 545, (56.3%) ’scope films released (see *Table 8*). As shall be detailed in the next chapter, monochrome scope films were still a feature of the industry right up until the end of the 1960s, with Nikkatsu’s *Branded to Kill* (*Koroshi no rakuin*, Suzuki Seijun, 1967) providing one of the best known examples.

This suggests that audiences, exhibitors and producers alike found colour of secondary importance to the increased size and width of the image, and with its rapid transition to anamorphic systems, this seems to be particularly the case in Japan. In fact, while the percentage of colour imports (both widescreen and standard ratio) had increased to 66% in 1957, it had fallen again to 48.1% in 1960 (see *Table 6*). This is partly attributable to the decreasing proportion of American releases amongst these imports. Though a similar number of American films were released in this year as the previous, this was matched by a dramatic growth in imports from France and other countries, which may also partially account for the decrease in widescreen imports (both colour and monochrome) from 57.2% in 1956 to 35.6% in 1960.[[260]](#footnote-261)

Nevertheless, as Gorham Kindem notes of the American industry, despite decreasing costs, colour production actually declined between 1955-58.[[261]](#footnote-262) Hollywood studios, following the sale of their pre-1948 features to television in 1956, were beginning to become more reliant on collaborating with the younger monochrome, small-screen broadcast medium, and the full-scale adoption of colour for all studio releases was considered an unnecessary luxury.[[262]](#footnote-263) The additional expenses of colour came at the production stages, due to more expensive film stock and processing costs, and they were ongoing. Anamorphic productions theoretically needed not be any more expensive than Academy ratio ones, once the initial outlay for the anamorphic adaptors for the cameras was taken into account. Any additional costs were one-off, and they were partially shouldered on the exhibition side. For all of these reasons, at a time when colour film production had yet to establish itself as a norm in Hollywood, let alone overseas, Fox’s attempt to enforce the use of Eastmancolor as industry standard upon all those who used the CinamaScope system, as with magnetic stereo, was ultimately doomed to failure.

## 3.9 The Squeeze from TV

Cinerama, CinemaScope and other related widescreen processes were introduced by the film industry to counter the threat of television. However, as Kindem’s observations regarding the slow adoption of colour by Hollywood and the quote by Burch that introduces this chapter make clear, it was the increasing convergence between the two media that led to what Belton refers to as cinema’s ‘“devolution” back into a narrow-screen phenomenon.’[[263]](#footnote-264) Films shot in the 2.35:1 ratio, almost double the width of the previous Academy Ratio from which the television industry took its cue, needed to be substantially re-edited for broadcast far more drastically than those produced in less dramatically wide dimensions such as VistaVision, or cropped spherical formats.[[264]](#footnote-265)

There were other related reasons for the global decline in films shot using anamorphic formats. As the theatrical market across the world for cinema declined, cinema chains rationalised their assets, with venues subdivided to create smaller screens, upon which scope films lost much of their impact. The output of the major Hollywood studios dropped too, matched by an increase in production from smaller new independent outfits, whose output, in keeping with relaxing censorship standards throughout the 1960s, was more reliant upon the sensationalism of its content rather than its manner of presentation.

Meanwhile, the severity of these associated drawbacks shared by the “ersatz widescreen” presentations and the Technivision and SuperScope systems diminished with the emergence of faster, finer-grain stocks. From the 1970s onwards, widescreen films shot spherically became increasingly commonplace as a production method. SuperScope was occasionally used in the Soviet Union for a number of productions that were released ‘under their all-embracing “SovScope” tag.’[[265]](#footnote-266) Later in the 1980s, the format made an unexpected comeback under the guise of Super 35, which used the slightly wider full-frame negative area of the silent era (i.e. including the space normally reserved for the optical soundtrack). Although the quality is considered ‘vastly inferior to a conventional Panavision anamorphic production’, Super 35 has nevertheless provided an expedient method of emulating the spectacle of more genuine widescreen sytems.[[266]](#footnote-267) Films made using the system include *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986), whose aerial sequences benefited from the use of smaller lenses than those required by anamorphic camera systems, a number of James Cameron productions including *The Abyss* (1989), *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) and *Titanic* (1997), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003) and the films in the *Harry Potter* series (various directors, 2001-2011).[[267]](#footnote-268) Such films also have the option of being presented full frame in their television versions, rather than using pan-and-scan techniques, resulting in more of the top and bottom of the screen visible than the left and right sides that would have been visible in theatrical presentations.[[268]](#footnote-269)

How Japanese producers adapted to the contours of the local market with regards to television will be detailed in due course. However, it should be clear that the processes used by the various widescreen systems, both anamorphic and non-anamorphic, were not reducible to the cameras used to shoot the films (i.e. the camera) nor that with which they were shown (the projector). The fact that Fox was unable to enforce a single standard on global exhibition, as well as the fact that the patents for the anamorphic lenses used by its system had fallen into the public domain just prior to the studio acquiring them, is key to our understanding of how companies across the world were able to develop their own systems and avoid paying licensing fees to CinemaScope’s originators. However, it still seems a curious quirk of history that in the very year widescreen imports to Japan began to decline, domestic widescreen production exploded. The factors behind this massive expansion in Japanese widescreen production will be explored in the next chapter.

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# 4. Widescreen Production and Colour Technology in Japan

## 4.1 The Emergence of Domestic Anamorphic Processes

The first Japanese studio to release a film using an anamorphic process developed in-house was Shochiku, and it named its system Shochiku GrandScope. The resulting two-reel short, *Birth of a Revue* (*Rebyû no tanjô*, Yuge Susumu, 1955), shot in Eastmancolor by the cameraman Nagaoka Hiroyuki, was a straightforward song and dance performance by the all-girl Shochiku Revue troupe filmed at the Kokusai Theatre in Asakusa. GrandScope was effectively a reverse-engineered version of the CinemaScope process which, like all of the initial Japanese systems that attempted stereo, utilised a Perspecta Sound optical soundtrack. These initial trial productions reputedly yielded an even wider aspect ratio of 2:75.1, despite the claims of Anderson and Richie that ‘it was made in a ratio about equal to CinemaScope.’[[269]](#footnote-270) The film is currently unavailable for viewing, but in his 1956 article for *Kinema Junpô* entitled ‘CinemaScope in Japan’, Shimaji Takamaro states that the technology did not allow for any camera movements or pans.[[270]](#footnote-271) The film was released on 11 August 1955, but only to the theatres specialising in foreign productions equipped with the necessary anamorphic projection lenses.[[271]](#footnote-272) Shimaji mentions a second similar title that had been completed by the time of publication, *Parade of the Century* (*Seiki no parêdo*), although there appears to be no record of this film ever being released. The article ends by stating that Shochiku’s research department at its Ôfuna studios was about 90% of the way to developing a system that could be used for dramatic feature films.[[272]](#footnote-273)

Ultimately, Shochiku would be the last of the studios to release a widescreen feature, with its first such production, the romantic comedy *The Embraced Bride* (*Dakareta hanayome*, Banshô Yoshiaki), premiering on 14 July 1957. Like Fox’s CinemaScope films of the period, it was filmed in Eastmancolor and presented in a 2.35:1 aspect ratio. Anderson and Richie claim that the company resorted to using imported Bausch & Lomb lenses for this production rather than the substandard ones it had developed for its early shorts.[[273]](#footnote-274) However, an article by the director Matsuda Sadatsugu, which appeared in the March issue of *Scenario and Studio* magazine while his first widescreen feature, *The Bride of Otori Castle* (*Otori-jo no hanayome*), was still in production stated that, at the time of press, Shochiku was preparing its first such work using SuperScope; in other words using the cheaper Tushinsky lenses.[[274]](#footnote-275) This was likely a mistake on Matsuda’s part, but in any case it is probable that he was not referring to *The Embraced Bride*. *Eiga Nenkan* states that earlier on in 1957, the company was planning to shoot another film using Shochiku GrandScope, *Flowers Never Lament* (*Hana wa nagekazu*, Tabata Tsuneo). Principal photography began on this title on 19 January, although the use of the nascent system was abandoned shortly after due to unsatisfactory results. Production continued regardless, with the film released in Academy ratio on 3 March 1957.[[275]](#footnote-276) The company persevered with a further film, a *jidai-geki* produced at its Kyoto studios entitled *Edo Wind and Snow Picture Scroll: Eyes of Heaven* (*Ôedo fûsetsu emaki: Ten no me*, Ôsone Tatsuyasu), the reference to *emaki* pictures scrolls within the title suggesting a natural affinity with the ’scope format. This time, *Eiga Nenkan* states that the company opted for the American ‘Baltur’ lens, developed by the Bausch & Lomb company, although again early test results showed deficiencies. Although production continued, this film too was released in Academy ratio on 16 April 1957.[[276]](#footnote-277) It seems feasible then, that *The Embraced Bride* was shot using Bausch & Lomb lenses, although as this film was released with the Shochiku GrandScope branding, it is not clear which of the company’s subsequent releases can lay claim as the first actually shot utilising its own system developed inhouse.

The example of Shochiku is indicative of the problems faced by many of the studios in their rush to release their first widescreen films. Meanwhile, high-quality projection lenses had already been produced domestically for some time by enterprises such as Japan Optical Company (Nihon Kôgaku Kôgyô, renamed Nikon Corporation in 1988), Kowa Company (Kôwa Sangyô) and Keihan Optical Instruments Company (Keihan Kôgi).[[277]](#footnote-278) The release of the P-Fujinon anamorphic adapter for projectors to the market in 1956, developed locally by Fuji Film, provides a clear indication that the industry as a whole was ready for widescreen formats, at the point of presentation at least, if not production.[[278]](#footnote-279)

The historical watershed of the first domestic widescreen feature went to Toei, whose *The Bride of Otori Castle* opened on 2 April 1957. A lightweight period drama directed by Matsuda Sadatsugu, the film tells the tale of a young lord’s attempt to find a bride by disguising himself as a commoner (its alternate English titles are *The Lord Takes a Bride* and *Samurai Bride Hunter*). Barely remembered today, the film will be discussed at length in a later chapter.

While many Japanese sources refer generically to ToeiScope as a version of CinemaScope, the reality was a little more complicated.[[279]](#footnote-280) Toei had initially experimented with the SuperScope system, but due to the complex procedures involved in deriving release prints from the negatives, especially for colour films, it turned to a French system named Franscope for its first widescreen releases.[[280]](#footnote-281) Franscope was effectively a rebranding of another system developed in France, Cinépanoramic.[[281]](#footnote-282) In their entry on this system in *Wide Screen Movies*, Carr and Hayes write that:

The lens was built by Professor Ernst Abbe [sic], who, in his announcement of the availability of the unit, clearly stated that the anamorphic process was public domain and not patentable. This was no doubt unsettling to 20th Century-Fox, who had paid much to Henri Chrétien for exclusive rights (which they fully intended to franchise to others) to the lens they called CinemaScope.[[282]](#footnote-283)

This rather vague passage has been taken to mean that it was Abbé who invented Cinépanoramic, which was first introduced for commercial usage in 1953.[[283]](#footnote-284) Carr and Hayes further obfuscate the issue by stating that it was Abbé himself who managed to sell a number of Cinépanoramic units to companies across the world (where the process was subsequently rebranded by the companies who adopted it so that, for example, in Britain it became CameraScope, whereas under Republic Pictures in America it became Naturama), so that they would not have to pay the expensive licensing fees to Fox. However, this clearly cannot be the case, as this pioneer of anamorphic lenses for stills photography had passed away some fifty years beforehand, in 1905.

Despite this confusion, it must be assumed to be the case that Abbé had originally announced the scientific principles behind the anamorphic lens in general were not patentable, and that the manufacturers of Cinépanoramic maintained this claim. While Fox owned the exclusive rights to Chrétien’s lenses for its CinemaScope system, they could not prohibit the use of lenses manufactured elsewhere for alternate systems. Nevertheless, it seems that there was little to distinguish Cinépanoramic from CinemaScope in practice (aside from Fox’s embellishments of four-track magnetic sound and the Miracle Mirror curved screen), although Limbacher does claim that the system yielded a wider 2.5:1 aspect ratio.[[284]](#footnote-285)

Nevertheless, Cinépanoramic presented a significant rival to CinemaScope. One of its chief advantages, aside from cost, was its use of a corrective lens to avoid the ‘mumping’ effect of the anamorphic lens, although this in turn resulted in a slight concave distortion that was most noticeable in pan shots.[[285]](#footnote-286) In reality, any difference between ToeiScope’s implementation of Franscope and CinemaScope were neglible. One critic reporting on the film’s opening at the Asakusa Toei Gekijo noted that the image was of the same dimensions as the then CinemaScope standard of 2.35:1, which is backed up by the account of ToeiScope’s development given in *Eiga Nenkan*.[[286]](#footnote-287)

Toei was able to release a further widescreen title (this time in monochrome), *Chronicle of the Gallant Kuro Genji: Wet Hair Fighting School* (*Genji Kurô: Nuregami nitôryû*, Katô Tai) on 16 April, before any of the other companies’ first widescreen features, although *Eiga Nenkan* reports that its early monochrome widescreen releases were filmed using SuperScope and released in the narrower 2:1 ratio.[[287]](#footnote-288) Ultimately, despite using two different systems that were both branded as ToeiScope, it seems Toei experienced few of the teething problems suffered by Shochiku.

In stark contrast to Toei’s forgotten early widescreen works, the next widescreen feature to be produced by another company proved the biggest money-spinner of the postwar period, and yet ironically came from the smallest of Japan’s six major studios, Shintoho. Shot in Eastmancolor and released within a matter of weeks ofToei’s first widescreen feature, *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (*Meiji tennô to nichiro dai-sensô*, Watanabe Kunio, 1957) attracted vast audiences eager to witness the first depiction of a historical Emperor in a fictional film, with former star of the silent screen, Arashi Kanjûrô, playing the title role. One significant factor behind the film’s triumphant reception was that its release date of 29 April marked the annual Shôwa Day public holiday, held to honor the birthday of the reigning Emperor Hirohito.

As well as Perspecta Stereo, Shintoho opted to use the Cinépanoramic lenses imported from France, although the film was marketed as being produced in *Dai-Shinesukô* (‘Big CinemaScope’), suggesting a scale even bigger than both the Fox system and the ToeiScope releases that preceded it. Shimaji cites an aspect ratio of 2.55:1 in his overview of Shintoho’s early experiments with Cinépanoramic, although there is no mention of any film title in his article, which was published some six months before the public opening of this blockbuster.[[288]](#footnote-289) With few of its contracted venues yet to convert to widescreen, Shintoho distributed the film to venues specialising in foreign productions.[[289]](#footnote-290) An alternate Academy version was also issued for cinemas not yet capable of showing widescreen films.

The film chronicled the events of the 1904-5 Russo-Japanese War, with its scenes of the Emperor and his assorted generals, politicians and military strategists counter-pointed with lavish recreations of the campaign’s naval and land battles, all making optimal use of the ’scope format and outdoor locations. Ôkura staked almost all of the faltering Shintoho’s financial resources on the production, investing the equivalent of $560,000, the highest to date for a Japanese movie.[[290]](#footnote-291) While budgets of Japanese films are difficult to come by, to put this figure in perspective, the average production cost of a (black and white) Japanese film in 1954 is cited in one souce as $61,000 (22 million Yen).[[291]](#footnote-292) The gamble paid off, as by June 1959, it had grossed 542,909,000 Yen, the equivalent of just over $1.5 million, a commercial success that would never be replicated by Shintoho. *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* remained the highest grossing domestic production of all time until overtaken in 1965 by *Tokyo Olympiad* (*Tôkyô orinpikku*), Ichikawa Kon’s documentary record of the 1964 Tokyo Summer Oympics, distributed by Toho.[[292]](#footnote-293)

The only account of a foreign screening was on 23 January 1958, as part of the ‘Japanese Film Week’ held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where *The Bride of Otori Castle* was also shown. Despite its popularity in Japan, the film was not well received, with a reviewer for *Variety* giving the none-too-positive assessment that it was ‘an ambitious undertaking in terms of physical production but is primitive in terms of motion picture technique’, before going on to state that ‘Commercial values in the states are nil, excepting, of course, regular Japanese outlets... Numerous walkouts at the screening of “Russo-Japanese War” when shown during the Jap Film Festival at N.Y.’s Museum of Modern Art attest to the production’s inadequateness.’[[293]](#footnote-294) Nevertheless, although its domestic success was certainly connected with a number of factors beyond the scale of the production, the novelty of its *Dai-Shinesukô* presentation was undoubtedly a crucial component of the bombastic approach taken by its producer Ôkura.

The next company to release a widescreen title, Daiei, initially opted to use the VistaVision system. The factors behind this decision and its swift abandonment will be looked at shortly after the anamorphic systems used by the remaining two companies are covered. Following shortly after Daiei’s film and preceding Toho and Shochiku’s entries into the widescreen market by a matter of days, came the first NikkatsuScope production. Directed by Fuyushima Taizô, *A Young Samurai in the Moonlight* (*Gekka no wakamusha*) opened on 9 July 1957. Nikkatsu’s research into widescreen is not documented alongside that of the other studios in Shimaji’s article from September 1956. However, the company, like Shochiku, had embarked on its explorations into anamorphic formats at an early stage, from September 1953, shortly after it had announced it was recommencing production (although some time before its first releases). Soon after, it similarly announced that its new system, which it branded as both *Nikkatsu-shiki Rittai Eiga* and NK-Scope (*NK-sukôpu*), was close to completion.[[294]](#footnote-295) It is interesting to note that this former label, which translates as ‘Nikkatsu-style solid body film’, adopted the same word, ‘*rittai*’, used for both stereoscopic 3D and for stereo sound. The usage of the word echoes early claims made by Fox that the ‘enhanced illusion of depth’ offered by he immersive ’scope format was both similar to and superior to that offered by 3D processes such as Natural Vision.[[295]](#footnote-296) The irony is that, as shall be discussed in the following chapter, the depth-of-field constraints and wider image size of the anamorphic processes encouraged a very different mode of viewing to that of “true” 3D, and the failure of the stereoscopic processes in the wider international film market saw ’scope swiftly moving on to define itself in its own terms.

It was Nikkatsu’s attempt to consolidate its new process with the concomitant emerging technology of colour that hampered its attempts to bring its first widescreen feature to the screen. All of the majors’ first widescreen productions were released in colour, suggesting that, as Fox had insisted with CinemaScope, colour was intended to be a crucial component of the new revolution in Japanese filmmaking practices. For any company to launch its new proprietary system with a monochrome production would be tantamount to conceding that the technology used for it was in some way inferior to those of its rivals. To this end, Nikkatsu had originally planned to use the same Konicolor system it had used for its first colour release of the musical *Far Off of Green* (*Midori haruka ni*, Inoue Umetsugu, 1955). This system and the introduction of colour to Japanese cinema will be detailed shortly, but for now it is enough to say that the Konicolor technology was a cumbersome and short-lived one which, like the original three-strip Technicolor system, required dedicated camera equipment.

Attempts to develop a Koniscope (*Konisukôpu*) system that combined anamorphic lenses with the specialist Konicolor cameras introduced numerous hurdles. Instead of the standard four perforations at the sides of the 35mm negative to move it through the camera, the plan was to develop a negative with just one perforation, situated between successive frames, thus allowing for a fuller exploitation of the negative area to compensate for the increased grain of the film stock. However, in order for standard release prints to be made, a special printing process akin to that used by SuperScope was required. [[296]](#footnote-297) Clearly aware of the rush of widescreen development by its competitors, and not wanting to be left behind, Nikkatsu changed tack to use the Dyaliscope anamorphic system, launched in France in June 1954 by the Société d’Applications Techniques et d’Exploitation Cinématographique (SATEC) as a successor to the Cinépanoramic system.[[297]](#footnote-298)

Released under the NikkatsuScope branding, the resulting *A Young Samurai in the Moonlight* was, according to Anderson and Richie, ‘a very run-of-the-mill period-film.’[[298]](#footnote-299) Still, as with Cinépanoramic, Dyaliscope had a number of advantages over CinemaScope, in this instance by offering a number of different anamorphic lenses that corresponded to the focal lengths of each prime lens, which gave ‘a more constant squeeze across the visual field.’[[299]](#footnote-300) While the original CinemaScope system offered only one prime lens with a fixed focal length of 50mm (corresponding to natural human perception), this variety of anamorphosers, in theory, allowed for the use of wide-angle and telephoto shots. It can only be conjectured to what extent this advantage was exploited by the director Fuyushima; *A Young Samurai in the Moonlight* appears to be unavailable in any viewing format today, and is not listed among the holdings of the National Film Center, with its earliest listed example of a colour NikkatsuScope production, *The Dangerous Ages* (*Kiken na nenrei*, Horiike Kiyoshi) released on 15 September 1957.[[300]](#footnote-301) It is unclear whether either film was shot using the Konicolor process or with imported Eastmancolor stock, although according to the *Japanese Movie Database*, both were colour productions.[[301]](#footnote-302) However, within a matter of years Konicolor had been abandoned by the industry as a viable alternative to either Eastmancolor or Fujicolor, and it would seem that the Koniscope widescreen system was never realised. *Eiga Nenkan* also makes reference to another system in development, Konirama, which similarly never seems to have been used for any released film.[[302]](#footnote-303)

Toho’s first widescreen production was *On Wings of Love* (*Ôatari sanshoku musume*, Sugie Toshio), a musical comedy-romance referred to by Anderson and Richie as *Three Types of Girls Make a Big Hit*, which starred the popular singing trio of Hibari Misora, Chiemi Eri and Izumi Yukimura and was released on 13 July 1957. [[303]](#footnote-304) While filmed in Eastmancolor, a number of subsequent TohoScope films such as the period drama *The Men from Tohoku* (*Tôhoku no zummutachi*, Ichikawa Kon), released on 27 August 1957, and most notably Kurosawa Akira’s first widescreen film, *The Hidden Fortress* (*Kakushi toride no sanakunin*) released on 12 December 1958, were shot in monochrome.

Anderson and Richie state that ‘Toho was the only company to successfully use an exclusively developed anamorphic system and had been using it from 1953.’[[304]](#footnote-305) In the years running up to the release of its first TohoScope feature, the company had filmed a number of test reels, including several scenes of its earlier Eastmancolor musicals *So Young, So Bright* (*Janken musume*, 1955), *Three Men Get Engaged* (*Konyaku sanbagarasu*, 1956) and *Romantic Daughters* (*Romansu musume*, 1956), all part of the same ‘Three Dolls’ series shot by Sugie, which were ultimately released in Academy ratio. The exact specifications of TohoScope are unclear. Shimaji’s article, published before these first widescreen releases, states that the test films realised using the prototype system included two-track optical stereo sound and, presumably because of the space these occupied on the positive release print, produced a slightly narrower than usual aspect ratio of 2.30:1.[[305]](#footnote-306) Anderson and Richie, however, claim that ‘the sytem was patterned after CinemaScope, using identical lenses and the same aspect ratio, the idea being a compatibility with what Toho thought was probably the safest of the widescreen systems.’ [[306]](#footnote-307) This is supported by *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, which cites an aspect ratio of 2.35:1. This source goes on to mention that TohoScope productions were released in separate monaural and stereo Perspecta Sound versions, and that the company were working towards four-track magnetic sound.[[307]](#footnote-308) David Bordwell writes that the anamorphosers were provided by the Japanese optics company Kowa and were placed behind the prime lens, not in front of it, as with CinemaScope, and that:

The result, while flawed in many respects, corrected some common Bausch & Lomb distortions. Just as important, the Kowa arrangement enabled filmmakers to use as a prime lens a 10:1 zoom, and this yielded a great range of focal lengths. This practice allowed Kurosawa and his peers to mount bold wide-angle and telephoto shots at a time when American filmmakers had difficulty creating such imagery with CinemaScope.[[308]](#footnote-309)

TohoScope was also used to film *Mesopotamia: Record of an Expedition to Iraq and Iran* (*Iraku Iran tanken no kiroku*, Kuwano Shigeru), produced by the newsreel company Nichiei (Nihon Eiga Shinsha). Released by Toho on 15 October 1957, the film counts as Japan’s first feature-length documentary released in widescreen and colour. However, *Crossing Africa: 10,000 Kilometres Along the Equator* (*Afurika ôdan: Sekidô chôka ichiman kiromeitoru*, 1958), a subsequent Nichiei documentary released by Toho, is listed as shot in NichieiScope, although Shimaji states that the system was, to all intents and purposes, identical.[[309]](#footnote-310)

Other widescreen alternatives were mooted in these early days, with the director Yamamoto Satsuo, to cite but one example, announcing his intention to shoot an independent production using the UltraScope lenses made by the German company Arnold and Richter (nowadays known as Arri), although the film was never realised.[[310]](#footnote-311) UltraScope was later used on at least one independent Japanese production, Shindô Kaneto’s *The Man* (*Ningen*, 1962), produced through the director’s own Kindai Eigasha company and distributed by ATG from 1 Dec 1962.[[311]](#footnote-312)

Shimaji similarly notes a number of further processes, including AoiScope, ShigaScope, and the Mainichi Film Company (Mainichi Eiga-sha) newsreel producer’s MainichiScope, while *Eiga Nenkan* also makes mention of a further system, NagamaScope.[[312]](#footnote-313) As already mentioned, from 1963, a number of independent pink film production companies also opportunistically branded their releases as being produced in their own widescreen formats. Essentially there was nothing substantially different about the technology behind any of these, other than the sources of the lenses. Of the major studios, three (Shintoho, Nikkatsu and Toei) initially used either the Cinépanoramic lens or its near-identical renamed variants of Dyaliscope and FranScope imported from France, while Shochiku initially used the Bausch and Lomb lenses from America. Only Toho developed its own system for its first widescreen releases. For this reason, while the drive for widescreen in Japan can justifiably be attributed as being motivated by the “invention” of CinemaScope, it would not be wholly accurate to describe these systems as being based on Fox’s technology.

It is unclear to what extent each of the companies’ branded systems subsequently evolved, what refinements were made to the basic technology, and whether they persisted with the same lenses, or more likely took to sourcing them from local manufacturers of optical equipment, a field in which Japan is internationally renowned. It is interesting to note that of the four widescreen films included in the ‘Nikkatsu Noir’ DVD box-set released by Eclipse in 2009, the three produced by Nikkatsu after 1960 are presented in an aspect ratio of 2.45:1, wider than the 2.35:1 ’scope standard of the representative title produced in 1958, *Rusty Knife* (*Sabita naifu*, Masuda Toshio). Whether this is because they are masked to produce a wider image or whether they were shot with anamorphic lenses that yielded a great degree of compression is an area requiring further research.

One thing that becomes clear is that the use of such patented brand names as NikkatsuScope and DaieiScope was initially so broad as to be near meaningless. In any case, within a few years, widescreen had become so standard it had lost its novelty, and such labels soon disappeared from the title cards and publicity materials of the various companies’ productions, with Toho dropping its ‘TohoScope’ logo from its films’ opening credits by the mid-1960s. Toho also was responsible for the country’s first-ever release filmed using the superior Panavision system, *Goyôkin* (1969), a *jidaigeki* directed by Gosha Hideo, which was released overseas under a number of titles, including *Steel Edge of Revenge*. As the lenses were rented directly from Panavision, this film and the small number of others that Toho produced using the system, which include *To Love Again* (*Ai futatabi*, Ichikawa Kon, 1971), a cross-cultural romantic drama set in Paris starring Asaoka Ruriko, were branded as Panavision productions to distinguish them against the company’s other widescreen releases.

The main conclusion we can draw with any degree of certainty is that none of the propriety systems remained consistent from their earliest implementations in terms of the lenses or sound systems used at either the production or exhibition stages, a point that becomes abundantly clear when one looks at the example of DaieiScope.

## 4.2 Daiei and VistaVision

The third widescreen domestic production released in Japan was Daiei’s *Flowers of Hell* (*Jigoku-bana*), starring Kyô Machiko. This period drama was directed by industry veteran Itô Daisuke and released on 25 June 1957, a matter of weeks before Nikkatsu, Shochiku and Toho’s first such films. Little has been written about the film in Western sources, and it appears not to have been circulated overseas. Even in Japan it is barely remembered today, so one can assume it was neither a critical nor a commercial success, and in fact, it is not listed among Daiei’s top five grossing features in the year of its release.[[313]](#footnote-314) However, it stands out among the other titles previously discussed, as it was shot in the non-anamorphic VistaVision process developed by Paramount.

Nagata had travelled to the United States in 1956, during the period when all of the studios were poised to make their first forays into the widescreen market. It was one of a number of visits to the country undertaken by the Daiei president throughout the decade, this time made with the dual aim of assessing the reaction of the American market to his company’s products and, crucially, setting up a deal to use Paramount’s system. Throughout the decade, Nagata proved the most regular and candid of all the Japanese studio heads of the era in providing commentary on his country’s industry to the Western media, as spelt out by the headline in the report of his trip in *Variety*, ‘Jap Producer Nagata Very Frank’, in which he outlayed his plans to make 52 productions in the coming year, “10 good ones and the rest quickies.” [[314]](#footnote-315) He also proved not shy of talking up his company’s achievements, with the report describing Daiei as ‘the country’s top production-distribution-exhibition outfit’, although in reality it was anything but. Speaking in New York, he claimed he favoured VistaVision for the same reasons given by British producers previously cited by Petrie, that ‘Japanese exhibitors using it need not modify their theatres beyond using a wide angle projection lens.’[[315]](#footnote-316)

Clearly Nagata was well aware of the box office successes of Paramount’s own productions using its proprietary high-fidelity system: *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1956), *War and Peace* (King Vidor, 1956) and *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (John Sturges, 1957) were also significant hits in Japan. He was probably also aware of the 16-minute short, *Vistavision Visits Japan* (James A. Fitzpatrick, 1955), one of a series of travelogues produced by Paramount to showcase the system, which included *Vistavision Visits Norway* (1954), *Vistavision Visits Spain* (1955), *Vistavision Visits Hawaii* (1955) and *Vistavision Visits Austria* (1956).[[316]](#footnote-317) A review in *Today’s Cinema* described the film as ‘Latest in the series designed to show the paces of the high-fidelity system. Subjects chosen – Tokyo by night, Fujiyama, the formal gardens – are pretty well known, but the camera work is outstanding. James FitzPatrick [sic] does the commentary in his individual style.’[[317]](#footnote-318) *Kinematograph Weekly* summarised it as a ‘camera trip covering Japanese countryside, crops, dyeing industry, beauty spots, cities and Fuji Yama, all brightly-hued. Fairly familiar stuff, but useful programme balance.’[[318]](#footnote-319)

What impact this Techicolor and VistaVision portrait of his homeland might have had on winning Nagata over to Paramount’s high-fidelity alternative to CinemaScope is open to conjecture, as is the extent to which Nagata himself played any role in facilitating the travelogue’s production. What is known, however, is that during this particular trip to America in 1956, Nagata ‘brought his ace cameraman, Kazuo Miyagawa’, and that he played a valuable part in assisting producer-director Arthur Lubin in the production of RKO’s *Escapade in Japan* (1957), which another article that appeared in *Variety* reported was due to commence its three-month shoot on 2 October 1956.[[319]](#footnote-320) *Escapade in Japan* was the first feature to be filmed in the Technicolor Corporation’s own new widescreen process, Technirama, which combined the double negative area of VistaVision with anamorphic compression.[[320]](#footnote-321) The Technirama process will be described in more detail later, as it was this system that formed the basis of the Daiei Super 70 Technirama process used for Japan’s first 70mm feature, *Buddha* (*Shaka*, 1961).

Carr and Hayes mention that two VistaVision cameras were sold to Daiei, although the authors state that these were used for just the two Super 70 Technirama features of *Buddha* and *The Great Wall* (*Shinno Shikôtei*, Tanaka Shigeo, 1962), rather than for its first widescreen productions in 1957.[[321]](#footnote-322) Ultimately, however, Nagata’s arrangement to use the system proved shortlived when it became apparent during the production of *Flowers of Hell* that there were substantial drawbacks to VistaVision. As Anderson and Richie write ‘All the other Japanese production companies experienced a budget rise of from ten to twenty percent thanks to widescreen. Daiei, however, found that its budgets went up fifty percent.’[[322]](#footnote-323) The inflated production costs were mainly due to those already outlined in the previous chapter: that it used double the amount of negative stock, and that it required a special printing process to transpose the 8-perf negative area onto a single frame of 35mm positive stock. The creation of positive prints was undertaken, at some expense, with the assistance of the Eastman Kodak company in America, although this also had the effect of delaying the release of the film, which had completed shooting prior to April 1957.[[323]](#footnote-324)

In any case, Daiei did not persevere with VistaVision. *Eiga Nenkan* mentions that a subsequent DaieScope production, *The Migrating Snow Bird* (*Yuki no wataridori*, Kato Bin), released on 29 October 1957, was filmed using an anamorphic system called ScanoScope.[[324]](#footnote-325) This is described by Carr and Hayes as ‘a variable-compression anamorphic lens once marketed in the United States by F & B / Ceco.’[[325]](#footnote-326) Meanwhile, Daiei’s next widescreen title included in the catalogue of films held at the National Film Center, *Secrets of the Russo-Japanese War: 300 Ri into the Enemy Territory* (*Nichiro sensô shôri hishi: Tekichû ôdan sanbyakuri*, Mori Issei), released on 28 December 1957 and presumably made in response to the success of Shintoho’s Russo-Japan War blockbuster, is listed as anamorphic monochrome.[[326]](#footnote-327)

The National Film Center catalogue presents the most complete and reliable source of information about the technical specifications of most of the existing domestic productions released throughout the twentieth century. As such, it provides a useful indication of the pace of the changeover to widescreen formats by the various Japanese companies. However, it is important to note that it only includes a fraction of the total number of domestic releases ever produced. For example, the catalogue lists only 97 films in the archive holdings from the total of 443 releases in 1957. Furthermore, the data given for individual films is limited, particularly with regards to aspect ratio, providing only the three separate categories of ‘S’ for ‘Standard, ‘CS’ for ‘CinemaScope’ and ‘V’ for ‘Vista’. The designation ‘S’ does not differentiate between the full-frame silent or Academy ratios, and similarly, ‘CS’ indicates merely that the title in question was produced using an anamorphic format and not the specific system used in its production, nor in which of the possible ’scope ratios it was intended to be presented. Crucially, ‘V’ denotes only that the film is in a non-anamorphic widescreen format and to be presented between the European standard of 1.66:1 and the American standard of 1.85:1. It could denote either genuine VistaVision productions, or masked or matted “ersatz widescreen” releases, of which the vast majority of listed entries were released from the home-video age of the 1980s and onwards.[[327]](#footnote-328)

Given the problems experienced by Daiei, it seems likely that *Flowers of Hell* was the only genuine VistaVision film ever produced in Japan. The second and final listed ‘Vista’ production of the 1950s, *The Precipice* (*Hyôheki*), a mountaineering adventure directed by Masumura Yasuzô, was released on 18 March 1958, considerably later than *Flowers of Hell*. The words ‘VistaVision Size’ (*bisutabijon saizu*) are prominently emblazoned across the film’s poster, as opposed to a direct reference to Paramount’s system, and it is most likely that this was shot in Academy ratio to be presented in a masked widescreen format. Certainly it was not long before the brand ‘DaieiScope’ was being used to refer to an exclusively anamorphic system, although which technology the company finally settled for is unclear.

## 4.3 Colour in Japanese Cinema

The examples given of the studios’ first forays into widescreen production demonstrate how the history of these formats cannot be neatly separated from the technologies of sound and, in particular, colour. For this reason, even though the Japanese systems were not tied in with colour technologies in the same way that CinemaScope was with Eastmancolor and VistaVision was with Technicolor, it is worth exploring in some depth the adoption of colour by the local producers.

There are several reasons as to why such an analysis is instructive to any discussion of widescreen cinema. First, on an international level, widescreen and colour production were both defining and interlinked aspects of the technological and aesthetic evolution of cinema as spectacle throughout the 1950s, with both introduced on a significant commercial basis at the beginning of the decade. Second, Japan’s own development and production of the rival colour film systems of Konicolor and, more significantly, Fujicolor, were among the few early challenges to the Eastman Kodak company. Fujicolor provides an example of a film technology innovated and refined outside of America, and is arguably Japan’s most important contribution to the global film industry. By the turn of the millennium, the world market for photographic and imaging products as a whole, including motion picture film, was dominated by Fuji and Eastman Kodak.[[328]](#footnote-329) Thirdly, though monochrome production predominated throughout the 1950s, Japan’s use of colour drew particular attention internationally, as the authors of the *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* were quick to note:

Although it lagged behind foreign nations largely in starting the color film production, Japan surpassed advanced nations in coloring technique and its products are being received well abroad for their beautiful shades. This is ascribed principally to the superiority of photography, advanced technique of developing and exhaustive research work prior to starting the color film production. Another factor which cannot be overlooked is that Japanese since olden times have been keen in color sense and their clothing, fixtures and paraphernalia are all fit for color photography.[[329]](#footnote-330)

This quote is pertinent not so much with regards to the qualities of Japan’s own domestically-developed stocks, because at the time of writing Eastmancolor was the favoured process for Japanese producers (see *Table 10: Number of Domestic Colour Features Produced Using Specific Films Stocks*). It draws attention to the way in which Western audiences reacted to the Japanese Eastmancolor productions they were able to see, such as Daiei’s 1954 Palme d’Or recipient *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*, Kinugasa Teinosuke, 1953). As has been mentioned, such films typically fell under the category of historical dramas. More importantly, it demonstrates the role played by studio traditions and production practices in Japanese filmmakers’s expressive use of colour.[[330]](#footnote-331)

Japan’s involvement in colour film production had stretched back several decades prior to this. Such artificial processes from the silent era as hand-colouring, ‘tinting’(applying a layer of coloured dye to the base of the release print) and ‘toning’ (applying dye to the emulsion layer that holds the actual recorded image, rather than the base) fall outside of the scope of discussions of the widespread adoption of colour film stocks in the postwar period.[[331]](#footnote-332) However, it is worth mentioning that there was another early colour process that enjoyed a short-lived period of existence in Japan.

Developed in Britain by George Albert Smith and the American-born Charles Urban, Kinemacolor was first publicly demonstrated in London on 1 May 1908, and received its commercial debut on 26 February 1909. It was a two-colour additive system, which utilised a rotating shutter mechanism fitted with coloured gels attached in front of the camera, registering the filtered images alternatively as successive frames on the negative. The filters were typically red and cyan during shooting, although different combinations could be used to suit the scene. Positive prints would then be made as if from regular monochrome stock. During projection, a similar rotating shutter system fitted with the associated filters for the alternate frames were employed (again, usually red and green), with the resulting single-colour images projected quickly enough to give the illusion of combining to emulate the hue of the filmed object. In other words, the colours were not contained on either the negative or positive print of the film itself.[[332]](#footnote-333) Whereas the system enjoyed a brief period of popularity in Britain until the beginning of the First World War, it ultimately failed for technical and commercial reasons, largely due to its requirements for dedicated production and projection equipment. Nevertheless, the patents were sold to a number of territories, including Japan, where for a brief period, it was adopted by Tenkatsu, or the Natural Color Moving Picture Company (Tennenshoku Katsudô Shashin Kabushikigaisha) to present both foreign films made using the process and to produce domestic films. The company’s first Kinemacolor production, *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* (*Yoshitsune senbonzakura*, Yoshino Jirô), premiered on 3 April 1914, although it is unclear how many such films were eventually produced in Japan.[[333]](#footnote-334)

As a non-standard film production and exhibition system promising a more vividly ‘real’ viewing experience, and with a higher ticket price to consumers than normal, Kinemacolor has clear similarities to Cinerama.[[334]](#footnote-335) Although it did not require purpose-built venues, it did require expensive custom-built projectors, thereby restricting screenings to a relatively small number of outlets. Similarly, there appears to have been an attempt to mark out its productions as something more than popular entertainment. One notes that while there were many more films produced for Kinemacolor than for the later three-screen system, the majority of these could also be categorised as non-fiction; for example, actuality films and travelogues like *Venice and the Grand Canal* (1910), *Nubia, Wadi Halfa and the Second Cataract* (1911), *The Making of the Panama Canal* (1912) and *The Alps* (1913), containing ‘scenes and sequences designed to highlight the properties of colour cinematography in the representation of nature and in the production of spectacle.’[[335]](#footnote-336)

Still, Kinemacolor and other similar successive frame systems represented technological dead ends in the search for processes that could accurately reproduce the colours of the natural world in a manner that could be rolled out across the wider industry. A large factor in this was their voracious appetites for film stock, with Kinemacolor adopting a frame rate of 32fps (double that of the standard for the silent era). Aaron Gerow notes that during this period, ‘the average four-thousand-foot Japanese film at the time cost ¥2,270 to make, but with Japan importing all its raw stock at fairly high prices during World War I, the price of one positive print accounted for 16 percent of the cost. This means it would take striking only six prints to double production expenses.’[[336]](#footnote-337)

The high cost of film stock is one of the key reasons for the low survival rates of Japanese cinema from this period, as individual films were not ‘treated as mass-produced commodities to be sold, as prints to be offered to bidders competing to show the best films, but as one-time-only, uniquely produced objects that merely supplied an entertainment experience that really originated in a theatre managed by the film company itself.’[[337]](#footnote-338) Essentially, there were a plethora of individual titles being offered in fewer prints. In such a context, it is not so surprising that none of Tenkatsu’s colour works have survived to this day. However, there are other largely-unexplored aspects to Japan and other countries’ reliance on overseas suppliers for the raw materials of film production that seem relevant to discussions of colour film technology. As Michael Chanan notes:

Perhaps the neglect of celluloid as a subject for historical study came about precisely because, of all the elements which came together in the invention of cinematography, celluloid had the least to do with film itself; although ironically it became a synonym for the word ‘film’ as one of the common names for the medium... Yet it constituted the first permanent monopoly which operated in cinema, a monopoly with extremely serious but so far largely unstudied consequences.[[338]](#footnote-339)

By the mid-1930s, the Japanese film industry had its own major supplier of film stock in the form of the Fuji Photo Film Company, established in 1934 (the company changed its name to Fujifilm Holdings Corporation in 2006). Its existence would have proven essential during the war years, in which film stock was considered a precious war resource whose supply from other overseas sources could easily have been halted, and indeed ultimately was. As *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* states, initially ‘output of raw film in Japan was very small, but the wartime suspension of imports caused raw film producers to expand production sufficiently to meet all domestic requirements.’[[339]](#footnote-340)

As noted, by this stage, colour motion pictures were being produced in America and Great Britain using the three-strip technology of the Technicolor Corporation. This required specialised camera equipment capable of handling three separate negatives, each registering the blue, green and red wavelengths of the incoming image. These were then combined by using ‘an extraordinarily complex method of physically transferring three organic dyes onto the surface of the release print stock.’[[340]](#footnote-341) The cumbersome cameras were supplied and maintained by Technicolor’s offices in Hollywood and London. They were never sold outright to studios or rental houses, and their usage was strictly supervised by representatives from the company. The specifics of the camera technology limited the range of lenses that could be used in Technicolor productions, and these were specifically designed and made by a single company, Taylor-Hobson Ltd.[[341]](#footnote-342) Technicolor was comprehensively responsible for most aspects of the production process, from the supplying of negative stocks and cameras, and the delivery of release prints processed at its own laboratories in Hollywood and later a London laboratory, established in 1938 (a third laboratory was established 1955 in Rome).[[342]](#footnote-343) Colour film production was thus a costly endeavour in which the studio in question was almost completely dependent upon the Technicolor Corporation, and as such, remained out of the hands of Japanese producers. It was not until the advent of monopack dye-coupler stocks during the war, in which a single roll of unexposed film could be used in standard motion picture cameras, that more widespread adoption of colour across the world became viable.

The technology behind the single-strip colour processes was pioneered by the Agfa Company in Nazi Germany, where it was used to produce a number of features during the war, including the musical *Women Are Better Diplomats* (*Frauen sind doch bessere Diplomaten*, 1941), the fantasy film *Münchhausen* (Josef von Báky, 1943) and the historical epic *Kolberg* (Veit Harlan, 1945), as well as numerous propaganda newsreel shorts.[[343]](#footnote-344) Following Germany’s defeat, the patents were considered the spoils of war, and thrown open to form the basis of various colour stocks developed subsequently, including the Soviet Union’s Sovcolor, Gevaert in Belgium, Ferraniacolor in Italy, Anscocolor in the United States, and ultimately Eastmancolor, which rapidly came to predominate in Hollywood, in no small part due to such agreements as that between Eastman Kodak and Fox for its CinemaScope process. Meanwhile, production of the original Agfacolor negative stock continued in West Germany.[[344]](#footnote-345)

A more detailed analysis of the ongoing refinements to the original Agfa technology by manufacturers across the world and the specifics of the various stocks in question belongs to another study. However, before looking at how Eastmancolor came to be adopted by the Japanese industry following the enthusiastic critical reception of *Gate of Hell*, it is worth remembering that the country’s first colour feature, *Carmen Comes Home*, had been shot using colour stock produced domestically by the Fuji Photo Film Company. The film was released in 1951, before Eastmancolor had even entered regular commercial usage in America, to commemorate Shochiku’s 30th anniversary. Not confident of supplying its chain of over 1200 theatres with enough colour prints, Shochiku also filmed an alternative monochrome version, similar to Shintoho’s strategy of releasing *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* in an alternate Academy ratio print. In the end, only eleven colour prints of *Carmen Comes Home* were produced.[[345]](#footnote-346)

The specifics of early Fujicolor and how it differed from other processes derived from Agfacolor are too technical to detail here. However, it had been trialed as early as 1946, when it was used for the opening sequence of Toho’s *Eleven Girl Students* (*Jûichi-nin no jogakusei*, Oda Motoyoshi). A further twenty or so works followed prior to Shochiku’s first all-colour feature, including newsreels, part-color features, corporate public relations films and records of Kabuki performances, of which 75 seconds of *A Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani* (*Ichinotani futaba gunki*) and 90 seconds of *Secrets of Calligraphy* (*Sugawara denju tenarai kagami*), both filmed in 1950, survive to this day.[[346]](#footnote-347)

Contemporary critics of *Carmen Comes Home* found the end results somewhat wanting. As *Variety* reported at the time, ‘Fujicolor produces fairly good color rendition, although effect is one of soft tints similar to Agfacolor. Biggest weakness shown in its initial screening is lack of stability, with almost perceptible shifts in hue. Critics agree that the industry will have to improve the color process if Nipponese tinters hope to get anywhere in the foreign market.’ As well as remarking that local critics had criticised the ‘frothy story material’, the report noted that ‘Local producers have been pressing for the development of native color film, with repeated demands for a government subsidy, on the grounds that it will give the industry an exportable item capable of earning badly-needed coin abroad.’[[347]](#footnote-348)

The cries for government support were answered in July 1952, when the Japanese Diet passed a law to subsidise the production of domestic color stocks, giving a research grant of 10 million Yen to both Fuji and a second enterprise then developing a colour system, Konishiroku Photo Industry Company (Konishiroku Shashin Kôgyô, now Konica Minolta Holdings Inc.). On 14 January 1953, Shochiku released its second Fujicolor feature, *Natsuko’s Adventure* (*Natsuko no bôken*, Nakamura Noboru), while on 15 September that same year, Toho released *Girls in Flowers* (*Hana no naka no musumetachi*, Yamamoto Kajirô), using what has been described as an improved version of the system, although in what way is unclear.[[348]](#footnote-349) Nevertheless, the results were still not considered up to standard, and Fuji temporarily discontinued its production of colour negative stock until June 1955, when after a period of intensive research, it launch an improved version. From this point, local producers began using Fuji’s colour film for positive prints. In June 1956, the company began constructing a new plant at its Ashigara laboratories in Kanagawa prefecture dedicated to the production of colour stock.[[349]](#footnote-350)

From Japan’s first such production, *Gate of Hell* (1953), development of Eastmancolor was undertaken by the Toyo Laboratories (Tôyô Genzôjo) plant in Gotanda, Tokyo.[[350]](#footnote-351) This was originally established in 1942 as the Far East Laboratory (Kyokutô Genzôjo), and renamed in 1942 (it was renamed once more in 1986 as IMAGICA). In 1955, it expanded to a second plant in Kyoto, not only due to the rising number of domestic colour productions (from this year the company began processing other stocks as well as Eastmancolor), but also because of ‘orders flowing in from Southeast Asian nations.’[[351]](#footnote-352) This highlights Japan’s prominent technological position among the region’s motion picture industries.

Meanwhile, it is instructive to note that 9 of the 11 colour features made by the Japanese studios in 1955, the year colour production escalated in Japan, were produced using Eastmancolor. One of these non-Eastmancolor releases was an Italian co-production with Toho, *Madam Butterfly* (*Chô-Chô fujin*, Carmine Gallone, 1955), filmed in Italy in Technicolor by an Italian director, and processed at the Technicolor Italiana laboratories established that same year. Incidentally, the use of the three-strip camera as a negative source for Technicolor had been quickly abandoned by this point, after the appearance of improved Eastmancolor stocks in 1953. While Technicolor was still considered a superior technology, its better results in terms of registration, saturation and flexibility weren’t enough to justify the additional expenses. By 1955, the Technicolor label only signified the dye-transfer printing process carried at the company’s laboratories, often, as had been the case with *The Robe*, from Eastmancolor negatives.[[352]](#footnote-353)

The second colour system developed in Japan, Konicolor, was the invention of the Konishiroku company and first used by Toei for the period film *The Sun* (*Nichiren*, Watanabe Kunio). The film was released on 18 November 1953, within months of *Gate of Hell* and the final of the first three Fujicolor productions. If anything, the process represented a step backwards in that, similar to Technicolor, it required specialist camera equipment to split the incoming image into three colours that were recorded on three separate monochrome negatives. The difference came at the processing stage, in that whereas Technicolor used contact printing with colour dyes to create release prints, Konicolor utilised a coated emulsion to develop each colour in a triple process using Konishiroku’s own Sakura film stock. Nevertheless, the camera equipment was as unwieldy as that of Technicolor, not to mention noisy.[[353]](#footnote-354) Certainly, as Nikkatsu discovered, it was particularly ill-suited to the anamorphic age.

No copies of *The Sun* exist in the holdings of the National Film Center, and comparatively little research has been undertaken into the Konicolor system.[[354]](#footnote-355) However, a refined version of Konicolor was used for *Far Off of Green*, released in 8 May 1955, the second non-Eastmancolor production of its year and the first ever colour feature from Nikkatsu.[[355]](#footnote-356) Konicolor was also used for a further six titles produced in 1958 (see *Table 10*), while Okajima states that ‘between 1953 and 1959, 59 movies (including many shorts/test films) were made by this Konicolor oneshot camera/Sakura film process, and it was said that several million feet of show prints of foreign films were also processed by Konicolor.’[[356]](#footnote-357) This appears to be supported by one of the few Western sources to mention the process, James Limbacher, who writes that it was used at the processing (not filming) stage ‘by MGM for 16mm color prints of three preview “trailers,” for KIM, THE YEARLING and LITTLE WOMEN. Several MGM cartoons followed, with prints by Konicolor. Soon Konicolor was making 16mm reductions of MGM features, including KING SOLOMON’S MINES and THE YEARLING, plus prints of MGM CinemaScope films.’[[357]](#footnote-358)

Both the Fuji and Konishiroku companies had been heavily involved in the stills photography business since their establishment, and also produced photographic papers, lenses, cameras and chemicals as well as cellulose film. However, with Eastmancolor rapidly taking hold in Japan, by the end of the decade Konicolor had withdrawn from the motion picture market. Fuji remained an active player however, at least in the production of print and negative stock, with *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* reporting:

Monthly consumption of raw film for motion pictures in Japan averages around 25 million feet. Most of the film is supplied by the Fuji Photo Film Company… Fuji turns out no less than 95 to 98 per cent of Japan’s motion picture film, and the remaining few percent is met with Eastman film imported from the United States.[[358]](#footnote-359)

Fuji also started producing non-flammable cellulose film in 1953 to replace the highly volatile nitrate bases (on which the emulsion holding the image is contained), with the switchover completed by end of the following year.[[359]](#footnote-360) The almost overnight transition to cellulose triacetate safety film bases from the cellulose nitrate bases that were used exclusively during the first half century of cinema’s history, alongside the Paramount Decree and the gradual introduction of colour, is seen as another of the key developments that occurred in the American industry in 1948. [[360]](#footnote-361) In this aspect, Japan lagged behind Hollywood by a matter of five years.

The complexities surrounding the introduction of colour in cinema should be now apparent, and details on the processes developed outside of the American industry, particularly of systems such as Konicolor that only enjoyed a short period of use, have been vague, piecemeal and largely of a non-technical nature.[[361]](#footnote-362) The lack of clarity in differentiating the camera systems employed during production (i.e. Konishiroku’s three-strip camera), where the negative stock originated from and the laboratory practices at the processing stages, suggest fruitful avenues of research.

For example, the passage from *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* quoted above suggests that while the small percentage of imported film stock was supplied by Eastmancolor, the actual time period under discussion is vague; one assumes it must have been 1956, prior to the source’s publication. During this time, only 6.4% of Japanese feature production was in colour, although no figures are available for 1956 and 1957 as to how many of these were in Eastmancolor or the other colour systems. That the percentage of domestic colour production had grown to 20% in 1957 suggests that the amount of imported film stock must have consequently risen. The same source, however, states that domestically produced print stock was used to make release prints of films shot on imported Eastmancolor negative stock, and that ‘Daiei not only imported Eastman color raw film from the United States, but also worked out its own facilities to develop the film in Japan. The company thus succeeded in giving its color film a special shade – different from pictures produced in other countries with the same Eastman Color System.’[[362]](#footnote-363)

Some confusion emerges because such companies often rebranded the colour processes they adopted as their own, as was the case with their widescreen systems, so that labels such as Daiei Color were used generically and inconsistently to refer to different systems. While the Daiei Corporation eagerly kept abreast of technological developments in the United States, it is unclear what the general policies of the other studios were with regards to the film stock they adopted. From the figures in *Table 10*, it is possible to see that, following the introduction of the improved Fujicolor process in 1955, the number of productions using it grew steadily from 5 in 1958 to 30 in 1960.

## 4.4 A Survey of the Use of Specific Colour Stocks by the Japanese Studios

There appears to be no exhaustive, centralised source detailing which colour stocks or processes were used for specific films in Japan.[[363]](#footnote-364) Colour stocks are listed for some titles in Stuart Galbraith IV’s *The Japanese Filmography*, although this information does not always match other sources such as, for example, when it appears on the title cards of individual productions.[[364]](#footnote-365) One source where it is detailed, curiously, is in the *Unijapan Film Quarterly* publications, although similarly the information is not always accurate, and furthermore, can hardly be described as complete. As a promotional organ for the industry, the *UniJapan* catalogues do not list every film ever produced in Japan, only more exceptional titles deemed worthy of overseas attention by an anonymous sample of the country’s leading critics and industry figures. Many of the low-budget B-movie potboilers produced, for example, by Toei, or by Shochiku’s second studios in Kyoto specialising in *jidai-geki* production are excluded from its pages, intended as they were for local consumption.[[365]](#footnote-366)

A survey of the individual quarterly issues of *Unijapan* between October 1958 (vol. 1, no. 2) and April 1972 (vol. 15 no. 2), underlines the limitations of drawing fixed conclusions from this source about the patterns of usage of competing film stocks by the major studios, or of drawing solid conclusions as to the reasons for these. In the sample of eighteen films released between June and October 1958 included in the earliest issue consulted, typically each of the six studios are represented equally with three films.[[366]](#footnote-367) It is worth remembering the output of the individual studios was in no way comparable, particularly in the case of a smaller company such as Shintoho, which throughout the year in question released only 64 films against Toei’s 105 (see *Table 1*). Moreover, of the eighteen titles listed, ten (55.56%) are in colour widescreen formats, two (11.1%) are in colour Academy ratio (with one of these, Shintoho’s *Black Cat Mansion* / *Bôrei kaibyô yashiki*, directed by Nakagawa Nobuo, actually listed as part-colour Fujicolor), three (16.67%) are monochrome widescreen, while the remaining three (16.67%) are filmed in monochrome Academy ratio. Comparing this with the overall figures for the year in *Table 8* (in which monochrome widescreen titles comprise 48.5% of the year’s releases and colour widescreen 26.8%), demonstrates how unrepresentative a sample the films included in *UniJapan* are, although it is understandable that the colour widescreen titles would be deemed as the more worthy of attention by the serial’s editors.

Nevertheless, these entries already points towards certain early trends and are indicative of certain studio practices for the top end of Japanese film production. Some conclusions can be drawn when cross-referenced with other sources such as the statistics in *Table 10*, detailing the number of colour features produced using specific film stocks in any given year. Firstly, as previously mentioned, Eastmancolor was the default negative stock used by most of the studios in the latter half of the 1950s. It was used exclusively for all of the listed releases by Nikkatsu and Toei until the mid-1960s. As mentioned, Nikkatsu had used Konicolor for its first ever colour feature, *Far Off of Green* in 1955, but the issues that arose when the company turned to anamorphic production led to it opting for the more reliable, tried and tested imported negative stock.

Toei, the winner in the scramble to release the first widescreen feature just a year later, had been the last of the major companies to enter colour production, with its first such title, *Warriors of Ako* (*Akô rôshi*, Matsuda Sadatsugu), released on 15 January 1956. Its transition was more rapid than its competitors, however, and in 1958, 52 (49.5%) of Toei’s 105 releases were colour. All of its colour releases listed in *UniJapan* until 1972 used Eastmancolor, save for the strange anomaly of Kobayashi Tsuneo’s ToeiScope production, *The Dead End* (*Ten to sen*, 1958), which used the Italian FerraniaColor negative stock.[[367]](#footnote-368) According to *Eiga Nenkan*, in 1959, the same year the improved Eastmancolor EK5250 stock went on the market, Toei announced a policy of making all further theatrical features in colour.[[368]](#footnote-369) Nevertheless, this simply wasn’t the case, as directors such as Katô Tai continued to work in monochrome in the early 1960s, and Fukasaku Kinji did not direct a colour film during his tenure at the studios until *Exploding Dragon of the North Sea* (*Hokkai no abare ryû*) in 1966.

It is also the case that a significant number of Toei productions from the 1960s that are not listed in the *UniJapan* catalogues used Fujicolor, as can be ascertained in the opening titles of a random selection of films falling within the low-budget programme picture category. Fujicolor, with its slight cyan tinge, provided a vital part of the aesthetic of such films as the various entries in the nine-part *Tales of Showa Era Chivalry* series of *yakuza* films (*Shôwa zankyô-den*, Saeki Kiyoshi, Makino Masahiro and Yamashita Kôsaku, 1965-1972), *Snake Woman’s Curse* (*Kaidan: Hebi onna*, Nakagawa Nobuo, 1968) and *Horrors of Malformed Men* (*Kyôfu kikei ningen*, Ishii Teruo, 1969), Again, this highlights the limitations of exclusively relying on the *UniJapan* catalogues.

At a time when most of its films were shot in monochrome, Shintoho made a virtue of the fact that, in order to celebrate the company’s tenth anniversary, *Holiday in Japan* (*Shin Nippon chin dôchû*) was filmed in Eastmancolor and ShintohoScope. Co-directed by Magatani Morihei and Ômi Toshirô, the film was released in two parts in June and October of 1958, presenting ‘a tour of Japan within a Shin Toho All Star Cast contributing to make it a most hilarious comedy.’[[369]](#footnote-370) However, despite a few notable exceptions such as the ShintohoScope release of *The Pacific War and the International Military Tribunal* (*Daitôwa sensô to kokusai saiban*, Komori Kiyoshi, 1959), shot in Agfacolor, the company predominantly used Fujicolor for all of its subsequent listed colour productions. This included Nakagawa Nobuo’s horror magnum opus *Jigoku* (1960, referred to in *UniJapan* under the English title of *The Sinners to Hell*), whose high-production costs and disappointing box office returns led to the demise of the company. Nevertheless, *Unijapan* also lists the company’s blockbuster *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (1957) as filmed in Fujicolor, when it states clearly on the film’s opening title card and publicity materials that it was in Eastmancolor.

As the smallest, least capital rich of all the Japanese majors, cost would have played a decisive role in the choice of colour stocks, especially as *Japan Motion Picture Almanac* notes that ‘Shintoho early in 1956 adopted a drastic policy of austerity and placed emphasis on production of melodramas and comedies which cost low but are strong in box-office earning.’[[370]](#footnote-371) It is also worth emphasising that the Fuji Eiga rental studios of which Ôkura Mitsugi was also a president (and therefore made available to Shintoho when he assumed presidency in 1955) were an entirely separate entity to the Fuji Photo Film Company, despite the similar name.[[371]](#footnote-372) Nevertheless, the bankruptcy of Shintoho in June 1961 accounts for the dramatic drop in the number of features produced using Fujicolor negative stock, of which none are listed for 1962 in *Table 10*. Figures for the total number of productions using Fujicolor, or indeed any other stock, are unavailable in *Eiga Nenkan* from this year onwards.

Ôkura retained the Fuji Eiga studios, swiftly establishing the new company Ôkura Eiga, which essentially carried on the traditions and studio practices of Shintoho before moving completely into pink filmproduction in the mid-1960s. Interestingly, his new company’s war epic *The Pacific War and the Star Lily Corps* (*Taiheiyô sensô to himeyuri butai*, 1962), directed by Komori Kiyoshi (a.k.a. Komori Baku) and the last of three domestic 70mm productions in Japan, is listed as using Technicolor (for reasons that will be explained in relation to Daiei’s 70mm productions of *Buddha* and *The Great Wall*), while the 188-minute epic *The Life of the Great Emperor Meiji* (*Meiji taitei goichidaiki*, 1964), directed by Ôkura himself, was filmed in Eastmancolor ‘Okura Scope.’

The remaining companies, Shochiku, Toho and surprisingly, given its early championing of the American stocks, Daiei, were less consistent, with a number of Fujicolor and Agfacolor releases complementing their Eastmancolor productions. One assumes that a combination of cost and the aesthetic decisions of individual filmmakers must have played some role in his. Kinoshita Keisuke, the director of Japan’s first colour feature shot using Fujicolor, used the improved domestic stock for the Shochiku GrandScope presentation of *Ballad of Narayama* (*Narayama bushiko*, 1958). The period drama *The Scarlet Cloak* (*Akai jinbaori*, 1958), produced by the pioneering independent director Yamamoto Satsuo through his own company but released by Shochiku, was one of the final run of films shot using Konicolor. However, a number of Shochiku’s other colour widescreen films listed in *UniJapan* from the same year, *Love in the Deep - “Underwater” Series* (*Zoku Kindan no suna*, Horiuchi Manao), a romantic drama set in the at-the-time popular milieu of female pearl-divers (or *ama*), and the historical drama *Taikoki* (*Taikoki*, Ôsone Tatsuo), both use what is listed as Eastman-Shochiku Color. It is not clear whether this was Eastmancolor processed at Shochiku’s own laboratories, or just as likely a piece of rebranding by the company. However, from 1962 onwards, the *UniJapan* catalogues simply list Shochiku’s releases as Eastmancolor.

Shochiku’s most celebrated director of the era, Ozu Yasujirô, is known to have preferred the more subtle tones of Agfacolor, which he used for the six features he made between his first colour film, *Equinox Flower* (*Higanbana*, 1958) and his last as a director, *An Autumn Afternoon* (*Samma no aji*, 1962).[[372]](#footnote-373) These include his two titles made for other studios, *Floating Weeds* (*Ukigusa*, 1959) for Daiei, and *Early Autumn* (*Kohayagawa-ke no aki*, 1961) for Toho. Indeed, Agfacolor presented the main rival to Eastmancolor during this period. It was used in a number of Shochiku Grandscope productions such as *Days of Evil Woman* (*Akujo no kisetsu*, Shibuya Minoru, 1958) and TohoScope productions including Naruse Mikio’s first colour film *Summer Clouds* (*Iwashigumo*, 1958), *The Naked General* (*Hadaka no taishô*, Horikawa Hiromichi, 1958) and *Tatsu* (*Doburoku no tatsu*, Inagaki Hiroshi, 1962).

Daiei also produced a number films using what is listed in 1958-59 as ‘Daiei Agfa Color’, then subsequently referred to simply as Agfacolor. Again, the earlier ‘Daiei Agfa Color’ labelling was undoubtably little more than a piece of rebranding by the studio. The DaieiScope Agfacolor productions include *My Son’s Revolt* (*Musuko no kekkon*, Shima Kôji, 1958), *The Swishing Sword* (*Hitohada kujaku*, Mori Issei, 1958) and *Odd Obsession* (*Kagi*, Ichikawa Kon, 1959). Throughout the 1960s, Agfacolor’s usage declined among the other studios, although Daiei persisted in its use with films including two titles directed by Inoue Yoshio, *Wolf Girl* (*Junanasai no okami*, 1964) and *Green Fruit* (*Aoi sei*, 1965), and another, *The Night of the Honeymoon* (*Modae*, 1965), by the former Nikkatsu director Inoue Umetsugu.

Against the decline of Agfacolor and the predominance of Eastmancolor in the early 1960s, from the middle of the decade Fujicolor begins to make a reappearance, mainly in the films of Nikkatsu and, for the first time, Daiei. Nevertheless, all listed releases by Toho, Toei, Shochiku use Eastmancolor, a trend that remains throughout 1968 and 1969. For Nikkatsu and Daiei, the division between Fujicolor and Eastmancolor is about equal by 1967. By 1969, most of Daiei’s releases and virtually all of Nikkatsu films and are listed as Fujicolor, with Nikkatsu’s one exception in Eastmancolor, *The Wild Sea* (*Arai umi*, Yamazaki Tokujirô, 1969), a drama about two brothers who work as whalers, produced by an independent company, Shinjû-sha, and only distributed by the larger studio.

In 1970, all of Daiei’s listed releases are in Fujicolor. In June of this year, Daiei and Nikkatsu integrated their distribution network as Dainichi Film Distribution (*Dainichi Eihai*).[[373]](#footnote-374) Nevertheless, the arrangement was dissolved in August 1971 with the withdrawal of Nikkatsu from the partnership. On 20 November 1971, Nikkatsu dramatically changed its strategy, devoting its resources almost exclusively to the production of erotic films marketed under the Roman Porno banner, while just over a week later, on 29 November, Daiei declared itself bankrupt.

The early adoption of Fujicolor by Shintoho, its use by Toei for its programme pictures, and its increased use by Nikkatsu and Daiei during a period when both companies were facing financial difficulties in the latter half of the decade strongly suggest that the domestic stock offered significant cost advantages over Eastmancolor, and that further improvements had been made to the stock at some point during the 1960s. Moreover, both Nikkatsu and Daiei were still releasing black and white films as late as 1970, such as’s *Cruel Woman’s Love Suicide* (*Zankoku onna jôshi*, Nishimura Shôgorô), produced by the former studio. The erotic content of this portrait of a lesbian love affair points towards other ways in which the studios were reacting to the new broadcast medium as a way of retaining audiences.

Despite the aforementioned methodological drawbacks to this survey, one can draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, as previously noted, the transition to colour took place at a far slower rate than that to widescreen, though by the end of the 1960s it was more or less complete. Although statistics for the growing percentage of colour releases throughout the decade are unavailable, from the April 1967 (vol. 10 no. 2) issue of *UniJapan*, non-colour films begin to be listed as such, instead of the tacit assumption that monochrome was the default production standard. This normalization of colour production is concurrent with developments in Hollywood, where in 1968, the Academy Awards for the American motion picture industry merged the two separate categories for colour and black-and-white cinematography. The former category had been introduced in 1940, when the award went to *Gone with the Wind*, while 1967 saw the final award specifically for black-and-white cinematography going to Haskell Wexler for his work on *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Mike Nichols, 1966).[[374]](#footnote-375)

A notable strand of films that continued to be produced in monochrome in the late 1960s were the significant number of independent films that were either distributed, produced or co-produced by the Art Theatre Guild (ATG).[[375]](#footnote-376) Many of these subsequently screened widely overseas and are arguably among the decade’s more familiar Japanese productions in comparison with the mainstream studio releases. Just as many of these political or socially-engaged works were filmed in monochrome, they also accounted for most of the non-anamorphic productions of the 1960s, being presented in either Academy or masked formats, as can be seen in such titles as *She and He* (*Kanojo to kare*, Hani Susumu, 1963), *A Man Vanishes* (*Ningen jôhatsu*, Imamura Shôhei, 1967), *Death by Hanging* (*Kôshikei*, Ôshima Nagisa, 1968), *Human Bullet* (*Nikudan*, Okamoto Kihachi, 1968) and *Funeral Parade of Roses* (*Bara no sôretsu*, Matsumoto Toshio, 1969).

This can be partially attributable to the limited funds with which they were made. Roland Domenig states that ‘ATG’s films were referred to as “10 million yen movies” (*issenman’en eiga*).’[[376]](#footnote-377) Yomota Inuhiko similarly states that while budgets for the average commercial studio film at this time was 40-50 million Yen, ATG was only able to put up 10 million Yen for the 28-minute *Patriotism* (*Yûkoku*, 1966), directed by the renowned novelist Mishima Yukio.[[377]](#footnote-378) Colour would have added significantly to production costs in terms of the expenditure on raw film stock, although the examples of Nikkatsu, Daiei and Toei, suggest that this would have been proportionately less the case as the decade progressed. The rejection of widescreen formats by certain ATG directors is more worthy of consideration, as the technology would have been readily available by the late 1960s, and as mentioned, by this point would not have added significantly to production costs. Even accounting for the fact that such films were not intended to be exhibited in mainstream cinemas (nor indeed television), but across ATG’s own limited network of, initially, ten theatres, this perhaps suggests that the rejection of colour and widescreen technologies by the more critically-regarded ATG directors, many of whom came from a background in experimental or documentary filmmaking, may have been something of a self-conscious strategy to position their work outside of the mainstream.[[378]](#footnote-379)

The biggest problem behind the use of the *UniJapan* catalogues to chart the technological progress of Japanese cinema from 1958 onwards is its focus on the practices of the major studios. Crucially, *UniJapan* totally fails to take into account the flourishing field of low-budget independent ‘eroduction films’, which is commonly held to have begun with *Flesh Market* (*Nikutai no ichiba*,Kobayashi Satoru), released on 27 February 1962 by Ôkura Eiga, the company founded by former Shintoho president Ôkura Mitsugi. These were considered so far beyond the mainstream that during the 1960s, the term ‘independent film’ (*dokuritsu eiga*) was synonymous with the sex film.[[379]](#footnote-380) Nevertheless, throughout the decade, they came to represent a significant proportion of the industry’s output, so much so that on 12 May 1965, Donald Richie writing in *Variety* reported:

The 1964 production figures indicate what is occurring. Shochiku made 48 films; Shochiku made 46 [sic]; Daiei 54; Nikkatsu 61; and Toei 65. This leaves 69 films (from 343 total) unaccounted for. They are all independent. For the first time there were more independent pictures than the total of any single company. There are all kinds of independents, however, and the majority of these come under the heading of what the Japanese call “pink” movies – a concept not too far from the western concept of “Blue.”[[380]](#footnote-381)

This figure had grown to 213 out of the total of 487 domestic releases in 1965.[[381]](#footnote-382) Their minuscule budgets gave rise to another euphemistic term for them - that of *sanbyakuman eiga* (‘three-million-yen films’), an amount equivalent to just under $10,000 at the exchange rate of the 1960s. Despite this, it should be noted that all such films were shot in widescreen formats.

In contrast to the low-budget art titles released by ATG, even with the limited means available to the *eroduction* producers, there appears to have been a conspicuous attempt to raise the bar in terms or production values, firstly by introducing colour sequences. The first *pâto karâ* (‘part colour’) pink film, *Mistress* (*Mekake*, Ogawa Kinya), was released on 1 May 1964.[[382]](#footnote-383) It too was produced by Ôkura Eiga, and it is interesting to note that the practice of integrating colour sequences in otherwise monochrome films, a hallmark of the pink film of the 1960s, can be traced back to Shintoho’s horror titles such as *Black Cat Mansion*. In 1967 came the release of the first *Ôru karâ* (‘All Colour’) ’scope pink films, including *Pleasures of a Hussy* (*Abazure no etsuraku*, Kobayashi Satoru), *College Girls’ Forbidden Garden* (*Joshi daisei no kinjirareta hanazono*, Ogawa Kinya) and *New: Chronicle of an Affair* (*Shin: Jôji no rirekisho*, Yamashita Osamu), although adoption of colour resulted in considerably larger budgets than average for films of this type.[[383]](#footnote-384) No information is available as to which negative stocks these films used. While the part-colour format persisted in the pink film until 1974, the sector was forced to adapt to full colour after Nikkatsu, on 20 November 1971, launched its Roman Porno range of erotic programme pictures with a double bill of *Castle Orgies* (*Irogoyomi ôoku hiwa*, Hayashi Isao) and *Apartment Wife: Afternoon Affair* (*Danchi-zuma: Hirusagari no jôji*, Nishimura Shôgorô). Incidentally, unlike the pink films, a selection of Nikkatsu’s Roman Porno productions are listed in *UniJapan*. While this source states that the first two Roman Porno titles were filmed in Eastmancolor, subsequent Nikkatsu releases are all listed as Fujicolor.

After 1970, there a number of releases from Toho appear listed in Fujicolor, with titles including *Space Amoeba* (*Nankai no daikaijû*, Honda Ishirô, 1970), *Lake of Dracula* (*Chi o suu me*, Yamamoto Michio, 1971), *The Wolves* (*Shussho iwai*, Gosha Hideo, 1971) and *Under the Flag of the Rising Sun* (*Gunki hatameku moto ni*, Fukasaku Kinji, 1972). Toho also released *Zatoichi at Large* (*Zatôichi goyôtabi*, 1972), the next entry in the series inaugurated by Daiei, following the latter company’s bankruptcy. It was the final film by a director formerly-contracted to Daiei, Mori Issei, and produced by its star Katsu Shintarô’s production company Katsu Pro. While the earlier installents in the *Zatoichi* saga had been filmed in Eastmancolor DaieiScope, this was shot in Fujicolor, as was another Katsu Pro title from the same year, *Sword of Vengeance* (*Kozure ôkami*, 1972). Other significant films released by Toho shot using Fujicolor include Kurosawa’s first independent production, *Dodes’ka-Den* (1970), which was produced in Academy ratio and, somewhat remarkably, was the director’s first colour film.

Most significant, however, was the documentary *Expo ’70* (*Nihon bankokuhaku*, 1971), produced by the Newsreel Producers Association of Japan, with Taniguchi Senkichi credited as the ‘General Director’.[[384]](#footnote-385) Given the historical importance of the Expo ’70 World Exposition (*Nihon bankoku hakuran-kai*), held in Osaka, the decision to film this production in Fujicolor is particularly interesting and suggests that the domestic stock had now been refined to the point that its results were considered as equal to the task as Eastmancolor. It is equally likely that a domestic company such as Fuji would play a vital role in an event intended as a showcase for the technological prowess of the nation. As shall be detailed in the final chapter, the Fuji Pavilion was to play host to the world premier of another new screening format at the Osaka Expo, the Canadian-developed IMAX format.

The World Exposition at Osaka seems to mark the turning point of Fujicolor’s dominance in the domestic market, and its later expansion into the world market for motion picture film stocks. Barry Salt states that it was in the 1980s that Eastman Kodak’s near dominance of the global professional film market began to waver for the first time due to the fact that ‘the Fuji and Agfa companies were prepared to undercut Kodak prices slightly in search of a larger share of the market.’[[385]](#footnote-386) Furthermore, at the end of 1980, came the introduction of the Fuji A250 (Type 8518) fast negative stock, with a speed of 250 ASA. According to Salt (who neglects to mention the Japanese market), ‘it was most used in Europe, where a small saving on stock costs was important, but it was also used on a number of American features for filming night scenes.’[[386]](#footnote-387) This prompted Kodak to respond in 1981 by introducing its Eastmancolor 5293 negative stock, which also had a speed of 250 ASA, and once more in 1984 with the introduction of Eastmancolor 5294. Throughout the following decades, the two companies (and to a lesser extent the German Agfa-Gevaert company) continuously refined their stocks in competition with one another. Nevertheless, Salt only details these developments from the 1980s onwards, and the development of Fuji’s motion picture stock prior to this point remains a subject for further research.

From the above, one can conclude that the Japanese industry had made a more-or-less wholesale changeover to colour motion picture production by 1970, and that this was facilitated by the more affordable availability of colour film stocks, in particular Fujicolor. As Enticknap notes of the American film industry, ‘by the mid-1970s, black-and-white had become an exception which proved the rule.’[[387]](#footnote-388) Similarly, in Japan, those directors who continued to film in monochrome did so out of aesthetic rather than financial reasons, and worked almost exclusively in the independent sector. There was another critical factor in this mass adoption of colour, and one that would impact on the practices of the Japanese film industry in more significant ways. Again, the focus returns to the subject of television.

## 4.5 Television’s Role in the Decline of the Japanese Studio System

Gorham Kindem states that in America, the major shift to network colour broadcasting took place between 1965-70, and that in the Autumn of 1967, *Broadcasting* announced that 80% of the movies that played on the ABC network were in colour.[[388]](#footnote-389) With television now a lucrative outlet for the Hollywood studios, he asserts that ‘television had a tremendous impact on feature film conversion to color in the 1960s.’[[389]](#footnote-390) In Britain, BBC2 became the first television station in Europe to begin regular scheduled colour broadcasts, with live transmissions of the tennis championships from Wimbledon commencing on 1 July 1967 and three quarters of the channel’s programming in colour by the end of the year.[[390]](#footnote-391)

Television’s role in the decline in cinema attendances in Japan and its influence on film production practices becomes clear when one notes that, in 1968, it was a Japanese company, Sony, that officially introduced the Trinitron three-in-one cathode ray tube to the world market. Various broadcast colour technologies had been developed in the postwar period, but they were unwieldy and priced outside of the range of most consumers. Sony’s innovation effectively established colour television as an affordable norm in Japan and elsewhere.[[391]](#footnote-392) By this point, attendances at Japanese cinemas had fallen to almost a quarter of their highpoint a decade earlier, with 313 million admissions in 1968 against the 1958 peak of 1,127 million. The beginning of an era for the Japanese consumer electronics industry effectively spelled the end of an era for its cinema, and marks a convenient cut-off point for any discussion of the traditional Japanese studio system. It also spelt the beginning of the end for Japanese widescreen production.

Television had presented a threat to Japanese cinema for at least a decade before the wholesale adoption of colour, so it is worth briefly sketching the relationship between the major Japanese studios and country’s broadcasting industry. Anderson and Richie note that while feature films had aired on Japanese television from the very beginning, the studios were initially very reluctant to release their films to this small-screen medium.[[392]](#footnote-393) As already mentioned, an early response from the Hollywood studios had been to make available their early features for broadcasting.[[393]](#footnote-394) The low survival rate of Japan’s prewar output and the poor condition of those prints and negatives still extant meant this was not an option for the Japanese companies. Seeing that television rights brought in extra revenues (and with no royalties system in place, there was no need to make additional payments to the directors or other staff who made the films), the Japanese studios nevertheless took to releasing their new films often only a year after their theatrical release. However, in the Summer 1956, the major companies banded together under the umbrella of the *Eiren* and refused to release films for television, perceiving it, justifiably, as a threat to their own interests. The result of this was that Japanese broadcasting companies immediately turned to American films, which they could acquire at a price that dramatically undercut domestic feature film producers.[[394]](#footnote-395)

The response from the major studios was an attempt to gain their own stake in the burgeoning new industry. Fuji Television was established through the cooperation of Toei, Shintoho and Nikkatsu in 1957.[[395]](#footnote-396) The same year, Toei established a subsidiary specifically for television production.[[396]](#footnote-397) The previous year it had already established Toei Animation (*Tôei Dôga*) for the production of animated works which, despite producing some notable theatrical features, throughout the 1960s was to increasingly focus its resources on TV animation production. Toei’s lead was followed in 1958 by the establishment of a similar subisidiary of Daiei (Daiei’s television production department continued to operate as a separate entity after the studio went into receivership in 1971).[[397]](#footnote-398) All of these developments are concurrent with the mass introduction of widescreen production for feature film releases. However, by 1963 *Variety* was reporting that, despite its relatively late arrival, the massive expansion of television in Japan (with its ‘15,000,000 sets in the nation, placing it second only to the United States in set count’) was clearly impacting on audience numbers and that:

The top execs repeatedly proclaimed that they would not duplicate the mistake of being unprepared. Yet the only apparent action they took was to hedge their bets by buying into several of the newer tv stations. They believed that Japan’s huge population, now estimated at 84,000,000, was sufficient to keep their picture palaces full even in the face of free entertainment provided by tv. No doubt the awakening was rude.[[398]](#footnote-399)

By this time, the Japanese studios had already recommenced selling their feature films to television, prompted by Shintoho when:

On the brink of bankruptcy in July of 1961, it sold broadcasting rights to 559 films from its archives to various television stations to cover its debts. It did so immediately after it left the Motion Pictures Producers Association of Japan (Eiren), under whose umbrella the anti-TV coalition had been formed. This de facto ended the ban on selling feature films to television, although it occurred too late for the majors to properly capitalize on it, as TV stations had begun to rely heavily on imported feature films.[[399]](#footnote-400)

This suggests that, initially at least, television provided a less lucrative revenue stream for the Japanese studios than their counterparts in Hollywood, and hence had less of an influence on how films continued to be produced. In his essay ‘Widescreen Composition in the Age of Television’, Steve Neale notes ‘the effects of the growing reciprocity between the film and television industries, of the existence of two very differently shaped and proportioned windows, on the visual composition of widescreen films, and hence on what we see in the windows themselves.’[[400]](#footnote-401) On 21 September 1961, *How to Marry a Millionaire* became the first widescreen film to be shown on television, when it was broadcast in NBC’s Saturday Night at the Movies slot. It was presented in a pan-and-scan version, which ‘entails either ‘cutting’ or ‘panning’ from one portion of the screen to another’ in order to present the wider picture within the 4:3 television frame. Throughout the following decades, at least until the introduction of 16:9 widescreen television in the mid-1990s, ‘itself a sign of the synergy that now exists between the film, television and video industries’, panning and scanning was the predominant technique by which films were prepared and recomposed for non-theatrical distribution.[[401]](#footnote-402) Neale goes on to ‘stress the need for further research on the impact of television, not just on widescreen composition, but on Hollywood aesthetics in general.’[[402]](#footnote-403) However, he does note that:

Post-1960s widescreen films are marked by a variety of compositional strategies, devices and styles. The over-the-disposable-shoulder shot and the deployment of significant but equally disposable motifs on the edge of the widescreen frame show that the demands of the safe action area do not necessarily result in large quantities of empty or unoccupied space. And the sectoral grouping or zoning of characters and actions, and in particular the asymmetrical framing of characters in conversational scenes, show that a distinct and interesting compositional style is perfectly possible.’

Little has been written comparing the adaptation of films for television in Japan, although Noel Burch suggests that a relative lack of care was employed in the transformation, writing that ‘Japanese television frequently shows these films using a scanner which transforms a profile two-shot into a reverse-field series with swish-pan articulations (*à la* Ito Daisuke!) or into a *tête à tête* between the handle of a sheathed sabre and the tip of a straw hat.’[[403]](#footnote-404) The persistence of anamorphic cinematography in Japan until the mid-1980s and the unique aesthetic that many have detected within Japanese ’scope films, detailed in the next chapter, suggest a degree of resistance by domestic film producers to this small-screen medium.

Nevertheless, in growing recognition of the very real threat television posed, alongside the problems of industry overproduction, a 1961 report in *Variety* announced that the ‘beginning of a move toward home-made blockbusters reflects a change of thinking on the part of Nipponese filmmakers’, citing the examples of Daiei’s 70mm production of *Buddha* and the Toho science-fiction spectacular of *The Last War* (*Sekai Daisensô*, Matsubayashi Shûe, 1961) which, ‘with special effects by Eiji Tsuburaya, [it] depicts the global destruction another war could bring.’[[404]](#footnote-405) The aim was to produce films that were not only successful in the home market, but also to create a product that was exportable and thus bring in more significant income from global markets, although as *Variety* pointed out, ‘Naturally the have nots (such as Daiei) are pushing this more than the haves (such as Toei).’[[405]](#footnote-406)

However, this was inevitably thwarted by ‘the operators of rival companies, like Toei, which controls the most theatres in Japan and was filling its coffers with the returns of assembly-line costume fare featuring swordplay [sic]’, which ‘overruled Nagata and forced Daiei and the others to remain competitive by continuing their suicidal production rate. How could Daiei houses offer single features when Toei theatres programmed double-headers and sometimes triple and quadrupal-feature shows in the hinterlands.’[[406]](#footnote-407)

The waning fortunes of Nikkatsu and Daiei are worth exploring a little further as symptomatic of the demise of the studio system. Throughout the 1960s, several of the era’s top stars had left the studios to which they were contracted and took their fates into their own hands by forming their own production companies (albeit with their films released by the majors). To provide one indicative example, Ishihara Yujirô left Nikkatsu in 1963, with Ishihara Promotion’s first production *Alone Across the Pacific* (*Taiheiyô hitori-botchi*, Ichikawa Kon) released the same year by Nikkatsu, while Mifune Toshirô left Toho to establish Mifune Pro, directing and starring in its first film, *The Legacy of the 500,000* (*Gojûmannin no isan*, 1963). The 1968 co-production between these two companies of the 196-minute *Tunnel to the Sun* (*Kurobe no taiyô*, Kumai Kei), distributed by Nikkatsu, and another Ishihara production, this time distributed by Shochiku, the 175-minute *Safari 5000* (*Eikô e no 5000 kiro*, Kurahara Koreyoshi, 1969), shot on location in Africa and starring Ishihara as a competitor in the famous Safari Rally, are both indicative of the limitations of the *taisaku shugi* (‘blockbuster doctrine’).[[407]](#footnote-408) Even when profitable (and *Safari 5000* was the top-grossing film of its year), the overall effect was of a diminished output by the major studios, resulting in a vacuum among exhibitors that was ultimately filled by the *eroduction* film.

Throughout the 1970s, Ishihara took to appearing more regularly on television, while his company produced an ever-dwindling number of theatrical works. After the theatrical releases of *Cockroach Detective* (*Gokuburi keiji*) and its sequel, *The Cockroach* (*Za gokuburi*), two police action movies in which Ishihara did not himself feature, both of which were directed by Kotani Shûsei and released by Toho in 1973, Ishihara Promotion moved almost completely into television drama production.

A large number of directors left their studios too. To list but a few examples from Nikkatsu, Masuda Toshio, who had directed Ishihara in some of his most popular works for Nikkatsu, abandoned his former employers to go freelance in 1968, with his first major work directing the Japanese sequences of Twentieth Century-Fox’s *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Richard Fleischer, 1970) alongside Fukasaku Kinji. That same year, Suzuki Seijun was fired from the very same company after the box office failure of his *Branded to Kill* (*Koroshi no rakuin*, 1967). His dismissal was widely seen as a scapegoating for Nikkatsu’s flagging fortunes. Suzuki turned to television first in 1968, with the one-off drama *A Duel* (*Aru ketto*), part of the TBS series *Good Evening Dear Husband* (*Aisaikun konbanwa*), and later made *A Mummy’s Love* (*Miira no koi*, 1973), an entry in Fuji TV’s Horror Unbalance Theatre series. He was unable to find work in the film industry for almost a decade. Imamura Shôhei, after the lengthy and problematic production and subsequent commerical failure of *The Profound Desire of the Gods* (*Kamigami no fukaki yokubô*, 1968), co-produced by Nikkatsu and his own company Imamura Pro, spent much of the 1970s making television documentaries.

In short, television was not only poaching cinema’s audiences, but its directing and performing talent, and wider changes across the whole industry would be needed to avert the inevitable crisis. The vertically-integrated structure of the Japanese industry, which had meant a large majority of films were simply made to fill up screen space rather than with some higher-minded artistic goal in mind, was no longer tenable in the age of television. At the turn of the decade, a mass restructuring process was set in motion that effectively marked the end of the studio system. As Alex Zahlten writes:

The transformation of the studios initially took place cosmetically through output reduction and increased free contracting of directors, until the seminal turning point in 1970 when the major studio Tôhô split off its production department. From this point on Tôhô, Tôei and Shôchiku actively phased from vertically structured production, distribution and exhibition companies to film dealers with a focus on exhibition and, especially, distribution. Production involvement was, within two decades, almost completely limited to outsourcing. This development in itself renders the often used dichotomy of “majors vs. independents,” still in common use by the end of the 1990s, meaningless.[[408]](#footnote-409)

It is instructive to note that it was these three companies of Shochiku, Toho and Toei that had embarked on an ambitious programme of expanding their exhibition facilities in the late-1950s. Many of Toho’s productions of the early 1970s fell into the category of big-budget, high-concept, Hollywood-style productions such as *Japan Sinks* (*Nihon chinbotsu*, Moritani Shirô,1973) and *E.S.P./Spy* (*Esupai*, Fukuda Jun, 1974), both adapted from the best-selling science fiction novels of Komatsu Sakyô, while the company also earned significant revenues from the exhibition and distribution and exhibition of foreign films, imported through its Toho-Towa subsidiary.

The launch of Nikkatsu’s Roman Porno series in 1971 is best seen as a survival tactic from a studio with fewer directly-operated cinemas. By devoting its resources to the production of the kind of adult material with which the *eroduction* sector had threatened to overwhelm the industry’s output in the previous decade, it managed, initially, to retain audiences by providing them with material that television couldn’t.

Over a period of just under twenty years, Nikkatsu remained the only company to maintain the same production practices and levels of output as the studio heyday of the 1950s and 1960s. Its 80 released films in 1956 were matched in 1972 by 64 of its own productions, with many more films contracted from independent pink companies in order to fill up the fortnightly-changing triple-bill programs that played across its nationwide cinema chain.[[409]](#footnote-410) These production-line release patterns, and the *kohei*-*senpai* mentorship system that provided assistant directors with a near-guaranteed path to the director’s chair if they waited long enough, were hangovers from the studio era that became less and less sustainable as the decade progressed.

## 4.6 The End of the Widescreen Era

In 1975, the domestic share for Japanese films fell below imported films for the very first time, taking only 44.4% of the box office, despite 333 domestic productions being released against 225 foreign films.[[410]](#footnote-411) That these foreign films included the Steven Spielberg blockbuster *Jaws* (1975) is indicative of the beginning of the new era of Hollywood’s global dominance. This same year, Sony dropped its next bombshell, when it introduced the first video player for the home-viewing market, the Betamax system. In 1976, another competing format pioneered in Japan was introduced to the market in the form of VHS, developed by JVC (Victor Company of Japan Ltd, or Nippon Bikutâ Kabushikigaisha). A third channel through which to view films had now opened, albeit with the same point of delivery of the television screen. It would be several years before movie consumption began its steadfast march into the solitary viewing environs of the home, but it is to video that one can attribute the ultimate decline of widescreen production in Japan.

A survey of the National Film Center holdings gives an indication of the pace of Japanese cinema’s devolution to narrower formats. In the early half of the decade, these were predominantly independent releases such as those of ATG, with titles such as *The Iron Crown* (*Kanawa*, Shindô Kaneto, 1972), *Dear Summer Sister* (*Natsu no imôto*, Ôshima Nagisa, 1972), *The Wanderers* (*Matatabi*, Ichikawa Kon, 1973) and *Himiko* (Masahiro Shinoda, 1974) filmed and released in Academy ratio or cropped ‘Vista Size’ widescreen. There seems to be no clear reason for this. As mentioned, television was not a significant market for such films, and one notes that the directors of all of these films had produced noteworthy titles in the previous decade that exploited the aesthetic potential of the 2.35:1 frame to the full.

Ichikawa, in particular, had been widely praised for his bold use of the ’scope format in *An Actor’s Revenge* (*Yukinojo henge*, 1963), as well as shooting *To Love Again* for Toho in Panavision in 1971. Shindô’s *Onibaba* (1964) and *Kuroneko* (1968), similarly, yielded some of the most meticulously composed widescreen images of the 1960s. Surprisingly though, Ichikawa shunned the widescreen format even in subsequent films intended for release by the major studios. These include his 1975 adaptation of the novel by Natsume Sôseki, *I Am a Cat* (*Wagahai wa neko de aru*), produced independently but distributed by Toho; *The Inugami Family* (*Inugami-ke no ichizoku*, 1976), the first production of Kadokawa Haruki, the mogul president of the Kadokawa Shoten Publishing company which, by bringing in substantial capital from outside of the industry in an attempt to create a product that could succeed in the global market, was a major presence in the Japanese film industry throughout the next fifteen years; and *Queen Bee* (*Joôbachi*, 1978), produced and distributed by Toho.

There were other directors who’d begun their careers in the postwar period who conspicuously moved away from widescreen production. *Sandakan No. 8* (*Sandakan hachiban shôkan: Bôkyô*, 1974), directed by Kumai Kei, was the Best Foreign Language Film nominee at the 1976 Academy Awards. The film, starring Tanaka Kinuyo in her final major role as an old woman living in abject poverty who, as a young woman in the 1920s, was sold to a brothel in Borneo as a *karayukisan* (or overseas prostitute), was produced and released by Toho in Academy ratio. So too were late career works from the directors Yamamoto Satsuo, Imai Tadashi and Toyoda Shirô released by Toho from the mid-1970s, and several of Nomura Yoshitarô’s films released by Shochiku, including *Perennial Weeds* (*Shôwa karesusuki*, 1975), *Demon* (*Kichiku*, 1978), although the director’s *Village of Eight Gravestones* (*Yatsuhakamura*, 1977) was filmed in Panavision.

In general, however, the more generic pictures of the major studios continued to be produced in ’scope formats until the early 1980s, as did those of pink film companies such as Ôkura Eiga and Shintoho - the latter having adopted the name of Ôkura’s former company during a complex buyout of a number of its assets in 1964, originally naming itself Shintoho Entertainment (Shintôhô Kôgyô) to distinguish itself from the former studio.[[411]](#footnote-412) The eventual demise of widescreen can be largely attributed to the permeation of home video, and one can recognize to what extent pornography acted as a benchmark for this transition when one notices that, at a time when virtually all major studio releases were being produced in non-widescreen formats, the last anamorphic Nikkatsu Roman Porno production listed in the National Film Center catalogue, *Zoom Up: Rape Report* (*Zûmu appu: Bôkô hakusho*, Katsuhiko Fujii), was released as late as 9 October 1981.[[412]](#footnote-413) Until mid-1983, a number of pink films are also listed as ’scope, but their switch to cropped 16:9 aspect ratios highlights how the cinema had ceased to become the primary point of consumption for erotic material.

Somewhat surprisingly, the last studio scope productions came from that most traditional of the majors, Shochiku, which continued to release entries in Yamada Yôji’s long-running popular *It’s Tough Being a Man* (*Otoko wa tsurai yo*, 1969-95) series in ’scope right up until the death of its star, Kiyoshi Atsumi, in 1996, with the 48th and final entry, *Tora-san to the Rescue* (*Otoko wa tsurai yo: Torajirô kurenai no hana*), released on 23 December 1995. The age of widescreen cinema was effectively over, with those rare films produced anamorphically after this, such as *Love Letter* (Iwai Shunji, 1995), somewhat ironically co-produced by Fuji Television, and *Eureka* (*Yuriika*, Aoyama Shinji, 2001), doing so for artistic reasons. The latter title, in particular, with its epic 218-minute runtime and stunning monochrome photography, was widely seen as a self-consciously cinephilic harking back to the earlier heyday of Japanese cinema.

The above is presented as an overview of the technological developments within Japan’s cinema, from its postwar boom through its steady decline into the age where, by 1999, the alternative viewing platforms of television and home video had brought attendances down to 144,762,000 (12.8% of the peak year of 1958), the number of screens down to 2,221 (29.8% of its 1960 highpoint of 7,457) and 270 domestic productions earning only a 31.9% share of the market out of the 568 total releases. Developments in the use of digital technologies for production, distribution and exhibition, would further revolutionise the industry in the new millennium, as shall be seen in the concluding chapter.

The research shows up many areas in need of further investigationwith regards to studio production practices and film aesthetics, specifically the development of Fuji negative and print stocks and the role of the Far East Laboratory (now IMAGICA) at the processing stage. What should be clear, however, is that the situation of the Japanese film industry during the 1950s and into the 1960s was less one of stasis, as the cosy, nostalgic connotations of the very term ‘Golden Age’ suggest, than of ferment. Contrasting with the narrative of a monolithic studio system succumbing to complacency by failing to take into account changing audience patterns, only to be superseded immediately in the following decade by a dynamic new revolutionary independent ‘New Wave’ cinema represented by directors such as Ôshima and Imamura, is an alternate, less-politicised one in which technical and related stylistic innovations developed within the studio system would become a crucial aspect of a modern commercial cinema. The next chapter will focus on how these technological transformations made an impression on the style and content in a number of works that symptomized the widescreen age prior to end of the traditional studio system in 1970.

# 5. The Aesthetics of Japanese Widescreen Cinema

In the preceding chapters, the economic and structural landscape of the Japanese film industry from the 1950s onwards was detailed at some length, with an emphasis on how domestic practices were influenced by imported films, in particular those produced by Hollywood that exploited new colour, sound and screen technologies, and the emergence of television. The various widescreen processes that originated overseas and the refinements made to them by the Japanese studios to fit the requirements of the local marketplace were subsequently described in order to support explanations as to why the conversion to anamorphic production and exhibition was far more rapid and extensive in Japan than in other national cinemas.

Thus far it has been taken as a given that the new widescreen technologies resulted in a tangibly “superior” experience for the viewer, at least in terms of spectacle and impact, to those produced in the monochrome, monaural Academy ratio standards of the first half century of cinema history. This chapter will explore in further detail how these new widescreen technologies shaped the medium at the level of the individual text, in terms of the new narrative, aesthetic and expressive potentials that were afforded by the expanded dimensions of the frame. There will be an initial emphasis on Hollywood production practices in order to lay the foundations upon which to draw comparisons with Japanese filmmakers’ use of the new formats.

It has been argued that widescreen technologies not only gave rise to new modes of storytelling within cinema by redefining the relationship between spectator and screen, but in doing so encouraged new types of stories suited to exploiting the screen’s wider dimensions.[[413]](#footnote-414) In Hollywood, these often took the form of historical or religious blockbusters, typified by Twentieth Century-Fox’s first CinemaScope release, *The Robe* (1953), and the 70mm production of *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963), whose legendary inflated production costs anticipated the end of Hollywood’s more grandiloquent attempts at redefining the theatrical experience in the age of television.

The widened frame allowed for a more participatory form of viewing that encouraged the spectator’s eye to rove around the scene exploring its individual details while simultaneously taking in the bigger picture, so to speak; the overall gestalt of set décor, staging and image composition. This brought the experience closer in line to that of established artistic media such as painting and theatre that were seen as possessing a more highbrow cultural integrity than cinema, which had traditionally been viewed as a mass-market divertissement. This was something that filmmakers and studio marketing departments were quick to exploit. Belton reports that ‘publicists compared the panoramic CinemaScope image to the oblong *skene* (scene) of the ancient Greek theatre’, and there thus evolved an entire new cinematic genre that took pains to marry the new form with a content of corresponding cultural kudos.[[414]](#footnote-415)

Japan had its own strong artistic traditions and cultural narratives to draw upon, which shaped both the style and content of its cinema. The theatrical forms of Noh, Kyôgen, Kabuki and Bunraku (or *Ningyô jôruri* puppet theatre) had long evolved highly stylised and codified performance styles in which the manner of presentation was given equal, if not more, precedence, than that which was being presented. The classical style of Japanese art from the pre-modern period known as *Yamato-e* (literally ‘pictures of Japan’), with its flattened compositions and non-converging perspectives, represented an alternative means of pictorial representation to that of classical linear perspective, which had dominated Western painting since the Renaissance.

It has been argued that such compositional traditions made Japanese filmmakers inherently predisposed to exploit the wider dimensions of the cinema screen. In the introductory text to a season held at London’s National Film Theatre in 1991 entitled “The Power of the Image: A Celebration of Japanese Scope Films”, the curator John Gillett writes:

The fact remains, however, that it was Japan in the late 50s and 60s who really showed the world what could be done with the Scope format (though one must not forget some Korean films made around the same time). Many Japanese critics and historians find it difficult to analyse why this came about, although one could hazard a guess that scroll paintings and the shape of the Kabuki stage may have had something to do with it (the Western concept of the proscenium arch here gives way to the elongated, letter-box shape). Whatever the reason, the best Japanese Scope films reveal a mastery over this format which makes it impossible to envisage them in any other form. Spectacle, of course, thrives on the wide screen, but these films also reveal an acute awareness for the placement of individual figures within the frame to create fluid, harmonious patterns...

It’s all here: elaborate battle scenes and individual duels, a riot of colour, costuming and decor and, in the more intimate films, a quiet poetic sense to allow you to catch your breath (as in Naruse’s *Yearning*). If *you* yearn for big-screen excitement (after a diet, perhaps, of cramped little teleplays), this is the season for you.[[415]](#footnote-416)

That such an institution as the National Film Theatre saw fit to single out the achievements of Japanese filmmakers working with the widescreen format is worthy of note in itself. One can find many other examples of Western observers drawing attention to Japanese filmmakers’ use of widescreen, such as John Zorn’s comment in the liner notes accompanying the DVD of Suzuki Seijun’s *Branded to Kill* that:

Nobody utilized Cinemascope like the Japanese (its similarity in shape to the Kabuki stage is suggested as a possible reason) and the scope screen reached extravagantly delirious heights in the hands of master cinematographers like Shigeyoshi Mine and Kazue Nagatsuka, and directors like Suzuki.[[416]](#footnote-417)

However, one must be wary of positing too strongly the influence of essentialist aesthetic and cultural traditions on an international medium such as cinema. As argued in previous chapters, the seemingly effortless transition to widescreen by the Japanese studios and the industry’s adherence to production in this format throughout the 1970s can also be attributed to a number of commercial imperatives such as the vertically-integrated studio system and the different relationship between the film and the television industries compared with other nations.

Nevertheless, Japanese traditions of staging and pictorial representation have undoubtedly had a bearing on its cinema, particularly in the *jidai-geki* period dramas that drew upon Kabuki narratives or historical source material. Certainly one can find examples of widescreen productions in Japan that deliberately evoke indigenous artistic traditions. Kinoshita Keisuke’s *Ballad of Narayama* (*Narayama bushiko*, 1958), an adaptation of a 1956 novel by Fukazawa Shichirô, drew upon many of the formal elements of Kabuki in its portrait of an impoverished mountain community’s practice of abandoning its elder members on a mountaintop to die upon reaching their seventieth birthday, lest they become too much of a burden to their families. Donald Richie described Kinoshita’s later *Fuefuki River* (*Fuefukigawa*, 1960) as filmed ‘in a period manner: partial colouring of scenes in the manner of early *ukiyo-e* prints, long scroll-like dollies and asymmetrical compositions – a self-conscious reconstruction of a Japanese style.’[[417]](#footnote-418) Similarly, the *Hôichi the Earless* (*Mimi-nashi Hôichi*) segment of Kobayashi Masaki’s *Kwaidan* (*Kaidan*, 1964), a portmanteau of four supernatural tales adapted from the English-language anthology of the same name by Lafcadio Hearn (published in 1904), begins with a depiction of the Battle of Dan no Ura of 1185, as chronicled in the 14th-century literary epic *Tale of Heike* (*Heike monogatari*), which is staged across the full horizontal plane of the screen to resemble an *emakimono* picture scroll (an illustrated narrative form depicting such topics as historical battles, folk tales and religious stories that was popular between the 11th and 16th centuries, and which was read from right to left).

Other directors have playfully reworked such artistic forms to suit the widescreen medium. In 1963, Ichikawa Kon directed *An Actor’s Revenge* (*Yukinojo henge*, 1963), an innovative and flamboyant remake of a story first filmed by Kinugasa Teinosuke and released in three parts between 1935-36, in which the veteran actor Hasegawa Kazuo, to celebrate his 300th screen appearance, reprised his original role as a Kabuki *onnagata* (female impersonator) performer seeking revenge against those who drove his parents to suicide. As Ian Breakwell writes in his monograph on the film:

Then one night along came *An Actor’s Revenge* and the doors of perception were flung open wide. Here was that theatre of gesture, tableaux, illusion, colour, light, music and sound which I had yearned for. And all transformed by a visual artist into a CinemaScope canvas as traditional and subtle as a picture scroll, yet as contemporary as the wide, saturated abstractions of New York loft painters and the Technicolor dazzle of Pop Art.[[418]](#footnote-419)

As has been already emphasised, historical dramas represented only about a third of all films actually produced in Japan during the 1950s. However, these were the most visible for those Western film critics and festival curators first exploring and attempting to define their subject. Furthermore, such producers as Nagata Masaichi were not averse to exploiting foreign audiences’ predilections for Eastern exoticism. For these reasons, it has been tempting for writers on the subject to dwell on superficial differences in presentational style, editing rhythms and narrative patterns and to seek cultural explanations for why these might exist, based on a limited range of titles, rather than looking towards similarities with other national cinemas.

Still, it would be churlish to suggest that such differences do not exist, and echoing Thomas Rimer’s point in his introductory chapter to *Cinematic Landscapes*, an anthology of essays that examine the relationship between film and the visual arts in both China and Japan, a further exploration of this area can be fruitful and ‘help to sharpen our own visual perceptions and make articulate, and so understandable, elements central to what has made the work of the great Japanese film directors so distinctive.’[[419]](#footnote-420)

Nevertheless, as Rimer himself cautions, ‘To suggest Japanese “commonalities” between different films and directors, on the other hand, is not to suggest that their individual accomplishments, unique to each, can or should be examined in any purely reductive way’ but that ‘the rich variety of responses that Japanese directors have drawn from their own traditions reveals their individual gifts to be all the more striking.’[[420]](#footnote-421) Bearing this in mind, the discussion on Japanese widescreen aesthetics will proceed on a case-by case-basis to avoid the pitfalls of generalisation, while suggesting a heuristic framework through which to facilitate descriptions of the compositional strategies adopted by filmmakers. However, before exploring the validity of framing Japanese cinema in terms of its artistic antecedents, it is worth considering more broadly the impact the specificities of the scope format had on the form and content of those films produced using it.

## 5.1 Reading the Screen

In the essay ‘CinemaScope: Before and After’, Charles Barr notes how many critics had initially been immune to the charms of Fox’s new widescreen format and ‘had condemned it from the start as a medium for anything other than the spectacular and the trivial.’[[421]](#footnote-422) Core to this critical resistance was the manner in which widescreen formats fundamentally overturned notions of what cinema was and how films were meant to look.

The “traditional” film aesthetic had been heavily predicated on the use of editing techniques, for a number of reasons that ultimately came down to the fact that it was difficult to generate full impact within a single shot in a 1.33:1 ratio unaccompanied by sound. An analysis of the various approaches to editing in the pre-widescreen era and the ideologies surrounding it is beyond the ambit of this study.[[422]](#footnote-423) However, it is worth making a distinction between such basic terms as editing (the process, fundamental to cinema, of selecting and joining individual shots), scene dissection (the breaking down of a scene into a series of shots) and montage, which explicitly relates to the approach of dynamically editing shots or images together to create ideas not present within the individual shots themselves.

The fact remains, however, that the individual shot was regarded as a straightforward record of reality, the authenticity of which ran counter to notions at the time of what constituted art.[[423]](#footnote-424) Filmmakers and theoreticians, most notably Sergei Eisenstein, argued forcefully for the development of a new cinematic language that took the individual shot as its base semantic unit, which could be employed to create associative meanings that weren’t yet present when combined with other shots, a process that was termed intellectual montage.[[424]](#footnote-425) Individual shots were cut together in a manner that was more obviously “creative”, manifesting the controlling hand of the filmmaker in the fabrication of illusionary onscreen realms.[[425]](#footnote-426) Narrative, psychological and didactic content were thus constructed through an accumulation or juxtaposition of individual details, with an emphasis on framing, the close-up, lighting, camera angles and camera movement.

The introduction of sound in the late 1920s added a further dimension to these manufactured filmic worlds, yet also gave rise to less sophisticated editing styles by lifting the onus from communicating meaning through images alone. Furthermore, the sheer bulkiness of sound recording equipment in the early years of its adoption, the necessity to keep the camera “blimped” in a soundproof box during filming and to keep microphones out of shot meant that ‘acting styles often coarsened, camera positions became far more limited, editing options were reduced.’[[426]](#footnote-427) To some cinéphile critics of the era, such as Rudolph Arnheim, the addition of naturalistic sound marked a regression, the first step on a path of technological advances that would include realistic colour and three-dimensional images, which would see cinema ‘thereby leaving the domain of art and becoming an unprecedentedly realistic transmitter of stage performances.’[[427]](#footnote-428)

Nevertheless, there were those who did not view montage as such an integral component of the art of cinema, and argued that cinematic realism and spectacle should be celebrated for what they are, as something quite distinct from objective experiential realism. The most influential of these was the French theorist and linchpin of the circle of critics who contributed to *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 1950s, André Bazin, who even before experiencing his first CinemaScope screening, wrote enthusiastically that:

Widescreen cannot but help hasten what we love within the most modern tendencies of cinema: the shedding of all artifice extrinsic to the image’s content itself, of all expressionism of time and space. Cinema will further distinguish itself from music and painting, it will draw nearer to its profound vocation, which is to show before expressing, or more precisely, to express by the evidence of the real, that is to say, not so much to signify as to reveal.[[428]](#footnote-429)

Bazin was a little less sanguine about the virtues of CinemaScope after seeing *The Robe*, in his 1954 article ‘The End of Montage’ drawing attention to the ‘exceptional banality of the script and the directing’ and the optical defects of the process itself.[[429]](#footnote-430) Nevertheless, he adhered to his initial position of widescreen’s potential to ‘destroy montage as the major element of cinematic discourse’ and to alleviate its tendency of ‘condemning the director to the fragmentation of reality.’[[430]](#footnote-431)

Bazin viewed the possibilities brought about by CinemaScope as belonging to an evolution already in motion that had seen a decline in cinema’s reliance on montage. This had been brought about by new technologies that better enabled filmmakers to exploit the depth of the screen. From an early stage, the use of editing for scene dissection had presented a way of countering the more unnatural aspects of the narrow single shot, such as the instinct for early filmmakers ‘to huddle actors and décor unrealistically close together.’[[431]](#footnote-432) Instead, the relationship between figures within a scene could be symbolised through sequential close-ups, which in Hollywood cinema were conventionally filmed using selective focus, ‘making the faces sharp and the background and foreground planes hazy.’[[432]](#footnote-433)

The next screen revolution came with the adoption of faster film, shorter focal-length lenses and more intense lighting during the 1940s, allowing for a far greater depth of field and thus the possibility of staging in depth. The most widely-cited early example of these new staging techniques, which allowed for salient foreground and background elements to remain in sharp focus, is provided by the cinematographer Gregg Toland’s work on *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles,1941). David Bordwell draws attention to a scene in the film in which ‘the three striated zones of action in Welles’s shot highlight the key ingredients of the scene, but without cutting.’[[433]](#footnote-434)

The technological advances that permitted staging in depth, affording the viewer the liberty of scanning the individual shot in order to discover the relevant details within the scene for themselves rather than being obviously presented them by the filmmaker in such forms as the cutaway close-up, encouraged a similar sense of a participatory spectatorship as the widescreen formats. The mean average shot length in American cinema grew from 6.5 seconds for silent films made between 1918-23 to 8.97 seconds for films made between 1940-45 and 10.47 seconds for the period 1946-1951.[[434]](#footnote-435) Bazin notes the work of Jean Renoir and William Wyler’s *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), alongside the example of *Citizen Kane*, all of which feature a number of shots that are almost exactly the same length as the scenes they are in.[[435]](#footnote-436) To this we can add an example from Japan, the work of Mizoguchi Kenji, whose ‘one-scene-one-shot’ approach was a integral component of the director’s signature style.

The use of deep-focus staging began to wane in the 1950s, largely due to the arrival of the new widescreen technologies. This was not only because they removed any necessity for it, but because they were seen as incompatible with it. The distortion of the image by the anamorphic lenses used by processes such as CinemaScope, and the higher levels of light they required, severely limited the depth of field within an individual shot. Bordwell writes that ‘shooting at f/2.8, a common aperture setting in the early years of widescreen, and setting focus at ten feet, the cinematographer could obtain a well-focussed playing space starting eight feet from the camera and halting a mere four feet beyond that.’[[436]](#footnote-437)

Colour film also required more light than the faster emulsions of monochrome stocks, so that deep-focus colour shots were usually restricted to exterior scenes where the higher levels of sunlight permitted stopping down the aperture (i.e. decreasing the aperture size). Bordwell notes that ‘In the studio, cinematographers usually chose not to create great depth of field for colour shooting, especially if the director wanted a scene to contain significant patches of shadow.’[[437]](#footnote-438) Hence throughout the 1950s, shallow focus predominated in both anamorphic scope films and those filmed in narrow screen versions. Staging in depth would become a more viable option for filmmakers with the advent of faster film stocks such as the Eastmancolor negative films 5250 (introduced in 1959, discontinued in 1962), 5251 (introduced in 1962, discontinued in 1968) and 5254/7254 (introduced in 1964, discontinued in 1977), superior processes (such as VistaVision) and superior lenses (namely those made by Panavision).

There were further peculiarities to the original CinemaScope system. Because the supplementary anamorphic lens had to be focussed separately, the only prime lenses that could be fitted to the camera initially were ones of a standard 50mm focal length, which reproduces a field of view similar to direct natural human perception unaltered by distortions in perspective.[[438]](#footnote-439) The wide-angle lenses of shorter focal lengths (typically in the region of 25-30mm) used for deep-focus photography, which allow for more of the scene to be included within the frame and exaggerate spatial distances between foreground and background objects, and long-focus lenses (typically anywhere in the region of 70mm to 210mm), which flatten perspective and make distant objects appear magnified, could not be used initially, although this again was a limitation that was overcome by Panavision and other systems, including TohoScope.

This meant, however, that the pro-filmic space of the early CinemaScope films tended to be reproduced more or less “as is”. It also discouraged the use of close-ups, which could only be achieved by moving the performer nearer to the camera during shooting. However, the distortions inherent in Chrétien’s original lenses, which were still discernable in the Bausch & Lomb replacements, meant that the performers’ faces were magnified along the horizontal axis in the centre of the frame. This lateral distortion effect known as “mumping” was eventually overcome by Gottschalk’s Panavision lens, when it was adopted by several major studios in 1959.[[439]](#footnote-440)

While early CinemaScope productions tended to avoid close-ups, they were never entirely absent, with the limited number used for dramatic effect in *The Robe* particularly conspicuous in a production in which most of the scenes unfold in long- to mid-shot. A pronounced example of “mumping” in a Japanese production can be seen in Shintoho’s horror epic *Jigoku* (Nakagawa Nobuo, 1960). In the climactic scenes in which the various sinners are transported to the Buddhist hell for their earthly transgressions, such details as the victims’ screaming mouths and the leering faces of the giant, club-wielding demons meting out their brutal punishments are framed in dramatic extreme close-ups. Whether the resulting distortions are intentional or not, the effect is nonetheless powerful for it. Similarly, Breakwell draws attention to ‘a rapid-cut montage of grasping hands, abstract patterns of cascading rice and grotesque close-ups of anamorphically distorted faces’ in *An Actor’s Revenge*.[[440]](#footnote-441)

Even with the ability to use shorter focal length lenses afforded by Panavision, backgrounds were regularly thrown out of focus in close-up and medium shots. This was not always to the detriment of the image; the use of selective focus could encourage the spectator of the film to read the image in a different way, and also result in abstract patterns of light, shade and colour that had an aesthetic impact in their own right.

In terms of preserving the integrity of the pro-filmic scene, ’scope films nevertheless were more reliant initially on ‘traditional staging techniques, coupled with the horizontal compositional strategy of widescreen, [which] encouraged spectators both to scan across the width of the frame and to look into depth, positioning them on a bidirectional axis quite different from the one-dimensional axis of “deep focus” cinema that emerged in the mid-to-late 1940s.’[[441]](#footnote-442) However, the perceptible horizontal magnification at the centre of the image meant that figures or objects placed at the sides of the screen in long shots appeared relatively elongated along the vertical axis. This encouraged the action to be grouped in the central areas of the frame. The effect was also noticeable when the camera panned horizontally, although it should be remembered than in optimum conditions, CinemaScope films were initially intended to be shown on a curved screen, and the regular use of pans that did appear in anamorphic productions suggests that audiences were fairly forgiving.

However, there were evident advantages to the wider frame that diminished the dramas’ reliance on close-ups (between 1952-55, the size of the screen also expanded from an average of 20x16 to 64x24 feet in the largest downtown theatres in America).[[442]](#footnote-443) Belton points out that human vision perceives events through a process known as saccadic eye movements, with the eye moving rapidly between different fixation points to construct an overall picture. The visual field encompasses an angle ranging from 5 to 35 degrees, approximately the same coverage as films shot using lenses of 40-50mm focal length in 1.33:1 ratio. With roughly double the angle of view, CinemaScope and similar widescreen processes ‘encouraged the spectator to redirect his to her interest across a panoramic field of view’ rather than have it guided through the use of the edit.[[443]](#footnote-444) Human perception does not work in the same way as the camera, in that the images that fall upon the retinas are seldom static, even if the objects we are looking at are. Perceptually, humans are active participants in their environment, never mere passive observers. Our knowledge of the world is built up through complex processes, with the body and eyes actively moving through nature. If we assume a static physical position, in interpreting a fixed image, the eyes dart around the salient details of line and form, and these physical processes are transformed into experience, as the perceiver constructs an internal mental model of the external world.[[444]](#footnote-445)

Barr argues that by presenting details emphatically and sequentially, montage and traditional editing techniques can only give the viewer ‘a *digest* of what we might see, in real life, if we were experiencing a given scene’ and that the method of presenting ‘a complex image organized in such a way that we are induced to interpret it for ourselves’ is ‘a more strictly realistic one’ in the sense that it is more aligned with these perceptual processes.[[445]](#footnote-446) The hand of the filmmaker/cinematographer is, nonetheless, still apparent in what Barr terms the ‘gradation of emphasis’, as the spectators’ understanding of a given scene is guided through more subtle techniques of pictorial composition.[[446]](#footnote-447)

Perhaps a large degree of the “artlessness” perceived by critics and theorists in the long-take and wide-frame approach of the ’scope film was that individual scenes became far more difficult to deconstruct rationally and unambiguously than those reliant on the cause-and-effect logic of the edit. By affording viewers a greater degree of freedom in seeking their own meaning, cinematic language became far more amorphous and abstracted from the written word. The calls of the montage school for a cinematic grammar akin to natural language were based on specious assumptions in any case, as Barr points out in his observation that ‘there is no literary equivalent for “getting things in the same shot”.’[[447]](#footnote-448) This transformation to a style less predicated upon montage did not ultimately detract from the art of cinema, as much as it resulted in more organic modes of film production and spectatorship. As Barr continues; ‘One just has to sit in front of the films and see how space and décor and relationships are organized; how connections are made, and characters introduced, not being “added on” to the rest of the context but developing *out* of it.’[[448]](#footnote-449)

While editing between different shot sizes was originally seen as problematic due to the initial requirements for a lens fixed at a focal length of 50mm, correspondingly the wider angle of coverage also meant it was less necessary to cut between different angles to articulate the internal space of a location. Instead of the shot/reverse shot conventions typically used for dialogue sequences in classical Hollywood continuity editing (in which separate shots alternating between characters are edited together to emphasise the relationships between the various dramatic agents and reactors), multiple characters could be more easily accommodated within the wider frame. This removed the necessity for multiple camera setups at the production stages, and facilitated the arrangement referred to by French critics as the “plan américain”, in which dialogue scenes could be staged between several characters positioned so that all were visible within a single shot, with the various interlocutors appearing in medium- to long-shot arranged across the width of the screen. This equal emphasis on speakers and listeners meant that feasibly, individual viewers could be concentrating on any one of the characters that appeared within the frame, allowing for a wider range of readings of a scene. This technique of lateral staging, which Bordwell refers to as the ‘“clothesline” staging principle’, was initially seen as one of the key advantages of anamorphic composition.[[449]](#footnote-450)

The disadvantage to this abstention from scene dissection in favour of longer takes was that it removed the possibility of editing to elide or expand time through use of cutaways, leading to a certain stagy theatricality in the hands of less talented filmmakers. Nevertheless, in order to maintain visual interest, the camera was still free to move about within the scene before settling on the groups of characters within it. However, depth-of-field issues did mean that characters had to be positioned strictly along a horizontal axis at roughly an equal distance to the camera if they were all to have equal emphasis by remaining in sharp focus. This again encouraged a style that favoured long takes. While individual shots had been getting longer throughout the previous decade, this was even more the case with widescreen productions. Barry Salt quotes a mean average shot length of 13 seconds for CinemaScope films produced between 1952-57, against 11 seconds for a random sample of American films released in the same period.[[450]](#footnote-451)

All of the aforementioned issues were duly noted by critics of the day. To summarise, it is worth quoting from an article written by Kenneth MacGowan that appeared within five years of the launch of CinemaScope:

Productions in CinemaScope had some of the static quality of the “ice box” films of early sound days. The camera moved, of course, but, if it panned at all, the distortion of lines and masses near the sides of the screen became obvious. In a scene between three or more people there were fewer cuts-and there always will be, I think. This is partly because rapid cutting is disturbing on the wide screen, and partly because the wide screen can hold a wider group of actors than the narrower one. From the start, there were two-shots, as well as group shots, in CinemaScope, but over-shoulder shots came into use rather slowly. Inserts are harder to handle. The montage - with its series of many rapidly dissolving images - seems quite impossible. In sum, CinemaScope and Todd-AO do not and cannot use as many setups and cuts as the narrower screen.[[451]](#footnote-452)

Nevertheless, it seems that these limitations associated with widescreen were never quite as intrusive or insurmountable as some originally claimed. Among the young *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics and future directors who grouped around Bazin, François Truffaut noted that ‘the close-ups of Victor Mature in *The Robe* are entirely convincing; soft-focus surrounds the faces as in *Notorious*; a long scene with Lauren Bacall assures us of the persistence of the *plan américain*…’ and Eric Rohmer gave his opinion that ‘I do not believe that montage effects are henceforth forbidden. The new device brings more than it takes away. Matches on action, cuts from a detail to a long shot work no less smoothly.’[[452]](#footnote-453)

Regardless of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the new presentational style in its early years, Bordwell notes that by the end of the decade anamorphic production had been become naturalised within established production practices.

The initial ’Scope productions tended to favour fairly long takes because some editors and directors believed that extensive cutting would be disorienting in the wide format. Yet as early as 1953 an editor was claiming that one could cut ’Scope as rapidly as one might like, and certainly the opening sequence of *A Star is Born* suggests as much. By 1959, the range of shot lengths open to the ’Scope filmmaker was fully comparable to that available for non-’Scope productions.’[[453]](#footnote-454)

By this point, one might reasonably surmise that Japanese filmmakers working with anamorphic formats had learned from the lessons of Hollywood, as well as their own experiences of over a year of working in widescreen.

In essence, while widescreen did allow for longer takes of extended interest within the expanded frame, it didn’t demand them. The expressive possibilities of the format were largely dependent on the confidence of the director, as viewers quickly became acclimatised to reading films in a radically different manner, by focusing their interest on different areas laid out horizontally across the plane of the screen. Furthermore, the use of staging in depth that was such a feature of films from the previous decade did not disappear entirely. It would later re-emerge to great dramatic effect in works by a number of filmmakers from the 1970s onwards, which used an inventive method for circumventing the limited focal ranges of anamorphic systems through a bifocal special effects lens known as a split-focus or split-field dioptre (or diopter).

The split-focus dioptre is a supplementary lens that covers only a part of the lens’ field, allowing for different depths of focus in separate areas of the screen. In this way, objects framed in extreme close-up in one area of the frame can be made to appear in the same sharp focus as the background details contained in another area.[[454]](#footnote-455) Dioptres were a defining aspect of the look of a number of feature films made in the 1970s, notably *The Andromeda Strain* (Robert Wise, 1971), *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), and, most strikingly, a number of films directed by Brian De Palma including *Obsession* (1976), *The Fury* (1978) and *Blow Out* (1981). Paul Ramaeker’s observations on De Palma’s usage of the split-field dioptre demonstrate how its specificities could be exploited in service of a unique cinematic aesthetic:

Contravening the conventions by then established for diopter use, DePalma’s [sic] cinematographers, Ralf Bode and Vilmos Zsigmond, consistently reveal the focal split, withhold all but the most rudimentary depth cues in their compositional strategies, and in the process consistently emphasize the two-dimensionality and artifice of their diopter shots as much as any illusory depth of focus. This is an aggressively pictorialist use of the diopter lens wholly consistent with DePalma’s bravura stylistic play more generally. In baring the device, he both invokes and hyperbolizes Wellesian deep focus and insists on the artifice and aestheticization of images meant to be appreciated as images.[[455]](#footnote-456)

Unlike the deep-focus staging of *Citizen Kane* and its ilk, the dioptre does not preserve the volumes, depth cues and empty spatial areas of the pro-filmic scene in a realistic fashion. The result is a heightened, artificial-looking ciné-reality that facilitates the new modes of scanning the shot laterally for information, as encouraged by the widescreen aesthetic.

An extraordinary example of the dioptre’s potential for dramatic composition in a Japanese film appears shortly after the credit sequence of *Female Prisoner #701: Scorpion* (*Joshû 701-gô: Sasori*, Itô Shunya, 1972), the second in the four-film series produced by Toei. In the shot in question, the main character Sasori (Kaji Meiko), bound and lying prone on the floor, is caught attempting to dig her way out of solitary confinement using a spoon gripped between her teeth. The extremely low canted angle accommodates both the anxiety written on her face, framed in extreme close-up on the left-hand side of the screen gazing out towards the viewer, and the domineering figures of the three prison guards standing behind her in full-body long-shot on the right-hand side. Both areas of the screen are reproduced in sharp focus. This striking image reifies the themes at the heart of the series, of feminine fragility and resilience cowed by the force of a corrupt patriarchal state authority. It does so within a single frame, un-manipulated at the editing stage, while preserving an aesthetic integrity in keeping with the series’ original source material as a *gekiga* graphic novel.[[456]](#footnote-457)

Given that widescreen productions tended to exploit the anomalies of the anamorphic process by encouraging viewers to analyse a scene in width rather than depth, it seems a little ironic to learn that the CinemaScope system was originally sold as able to deliver a similar sense of immersion as stereoscopic formats such as Natural Vision. Nevertheless, John Belton sees such early taglines for the format as “the modern miracle you see without the use of glasses” as part of a marketing strategy that saw Fox trying to define its new system against a backdrop of Cinerama and the short-lived fad of 3D.[[457]](#footnote-458) It quickly became clear, however, that the format better lent itself to other forms of storytelling that referenced or addressed other visual art forms, both classical and modern. Within a matter of years, narrative content evolved to fit the form and the age of widescreen began in earnest.

## 5.2 Genre, Class and Commodification

In the introductory sequence of *This is Cinerama*, the narrator Lowell Thomas appears in standard gauge single-strip monochrome Academy ratio on the central panel of the system’s three screens to deliver a direct-to-camera lecture about the evolution of the visual arts, an evolution of which Cinerama is touted as representing the endpoint. This sequence culminates with the proclamation that “Movies are like looking through a keyhole. Cinerama breaks out the sides of the ordinary screen, and presents very nearly the scope of normal vision and hearing”, before the curtains part to reveal the full panoramic scope of the multi-projector process, accompanied by the legendary words “Ladies and gentlemen, This is Cinerama!” From this moment on, cinema would never be the same again.[[458]](#footnote-459)

Cinerama, CinemaScope and indeed all widescreen systems were able to deliver new modes of spectatorship by eliminating the sense of frame. This new sense of immersion, by taking the viewer through the keyhole and indeed opening the entire door to allow the viewer unprecedented access to the onscreen worlds, was at the heart of all of the new widescreen systems, which were marketed with such slogans as “Cinerama will put YOU in the picture!” and “You’re in the show with Todd-AO.” As Belton writes, ‘the experience of heightened physiological stimulation provided by wraparound widescreen image and multitrack sound’ altered the very processes fundamental to spectatorship.[[459]](#footnote-460) Meanwhile, the long leisurely takes encouraged by the processes permitted, to reiterate Bazin’s early expectation, ‘the shedding of all artifice extrinsic to the image’s content itself.’[[460]](#footnote-461)

The extent to which the widescreen formats represented a step towards Bazin’s Holy Grail of “total cinema”, defined as the unconscious desire for ‘a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, colour, and relief’, is debatable.[[461]](#footnote-462) Did the viewer now feel completely embodied within the diegesis, or just more of an active participant in a shared spectacle? With mise en scène replacing the edit as the primary mode of expression, the hand of the director, the set designer and the whole studio apparatus were often made conspicuously apparent, as the studios revelled in filling the enlarged frame size with larger, more elaborate sets crammed with colour and detail, and in the historical epics that came to define the era, regularly teeming with thousands of extras. Furthermore, many of the contemporary-set CinemaScope films contained scenes or images that self-referentially drew attention to the format itself.

Widescreen not only expanded the possibilities of what could be contained within the screen. In doing so, it expanded the range of films that were released, defining new market sectors by appealing to very different audience desires, as Belton suggests:

Motion pictures attempted to maximize their participatory potential by adopting two dramatically different models of recreational participation – the amusement park and the legitimate theatre – around which they then constructed new definitions of spectatorship. The coexistence of these different models marked a break with the monolithic notions of spectatorship which had preceded this era.[[462]](#footnote-463)

One can find no better example of Belton’s second category, of films that sought to emulate established culturally-sanctified forms of entertainment such as literature and theatre, than in the very genre to which the first CinemaScope production belonged, that of the historical or biblical epic. *The Robe*’s story of the death and resurrection of Christ as seen through the eyes of a Greek slave, Demetrius (Victor Mature), who later converts to the nascent Christian faith, bears all the hallmarks of the genre often seen as epitomising the widescreen era. Its ancient-world settings and the reverent subject matter of the source material (the 1942 best-selling novel of the same name by Lloyd C. Douglas) made it a logical production with which to launch Fox’s new system. It made it difficult for critics to slight the film on moral or cultural grounds and easier to forgive its dramatic shortcomings (although the New York Times’ critic Bosley Crowther described it as ‘a historical drama less compelling than the process by which it is shown.’)[[463]](#footnote-464)

The predominance of long shots throughout *The Robe* seems calculated to overwhelm audiences with an abundance of production detail, while showcasing the high levels of artistry and labour of the costume and set designers. The first reel bustles with movement and detail, unfolding in a lengthy establishing scene in which the camera tracks alongside the military tribune Marcellus (Richard Burton) in long, steady takes as he ambles through the crowded slave market where he first encounters Demetrius, coming to rest at a number of points in which he meets and converses with the various dramatic agents who will inform the narrative. In such exchanges, the characters settle along the horizontal axis of the screen in arrangements accommodating up to a dozen figures at a time, aligned across the full scope of the frame in long- to mid-shot, in a manner in which scene and screen become synonymous.

These long unbroken dialogue scenes, one of the associated drawbacks to CinemaScope’s depth-of-field constraints, led to Crowther drawing attention ‘to the slowness of the pacing through many of the major sequences.’[[464]](#footnote-465) In some of the instances, in order to avoid dialogue scenes becoming too theatrical, the camera position switches when characters walk into the depth of the shot beyond the focal range of the lens in accordance with the seamless continuity editing techniques of the classical Hollywood style.

Nevertheless, the air of theatricality is not entirely unwarranted. The deep crimson curtain backdrop over which the opening credits appear, before parting to reveal a scene-setting panorama of a coliseum and a succession of such shots as Roman legions marching towards the camera, not only acknowledges an association with the live stage, traditionally seen as a more selective medium than that of the mass-market entertainment form of cinema. It also underscores CinemaScope’s superiority over theatre in its ability to recreate Rome before the fall vividly in all of its grandeur and opulence. As Crowther writes, ‘The panoply and splendor of Emperor Tiberius’ Rome, the turbulence of Jerusalem and the dustiness of the Holy Land have never been shown with more magnificence or sweep on a movie screen than they are on the great arching panel installed for the showing of “The Robe.”’[[465]](#footnote-466)

In many of the scenes throughout *The Robe*, the extended tableaux of figures positioned within imposing and ornate architectural features are deliberately composed so as to invoke classical art of the 16th-century Renaissance era, notably the paintings of Venetian school artists such as Tintoretto and Veronese. This is echoed in the colour palette, and it should be remembered that colour was still a relative novelty at the time of the film’s release andwould have contributed significantly to its impact. Again, such strategies seem contrived to justify CinemaScope’s potential to elevate cinema to its rightful position within a more established artistic lineage.

Regardless of the film’s ambivalent critical reception, its phenomenal box office performance saw a marked rise in the number of similarly-styled historical epics, including a sequel, *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (Delmer Daves, 1954), and Fox’s *The Egyptian* (Michael Curtiz, 1954), adapted from a historical novel by Finnish writer Mika Waltari set during the reign of the Pharaoh Akhenaten, circa 14th century BC. Religious subject matter was a feature of many of these epics used to showcase the various widescreen systems that emerged over the decade, such as Paramount’s VistaVistion production *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1956), the Disney-financed *The Big Fisherman* (Frank Borzage, 1959), which was the first feature shot in Super Panavision 70, and *Ben-Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), filmed using MGM Camera 65, a wide-format anamorphic system developed by Panavision for use by MGM, which was subsequently renamed Ultra Panavision 70.[[466]](#footnote-467)

Though religion didn’t play a huge part in Japanese productions, one can draw parallels with the various financially successful widescreen remakes of classical literary sources such as *Vendetta of the Loyal 47 Ronin* (*Chûshingura*, Watanabe Kunio, 1958) and *Mito Komon* (*Mito Kômon*, Sasaki Yasushi, 1957), and historical dramas such as *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (*Meiji tennô to nichiro dai-sensô*, Watanabe Kunio, 1957) and *Nichiren and the Great Mongolian Invasion* (*Nichiren to Môko daishûrai*, Watanabe Kunio, 1958). The Daiei Super 70 Technirama production of *Buddha* (*Shaka*, Misumi Kenji, 1961) provides a textbook example of a Japanese studio wilfully emulating Hollywood. Like their American antecedents, such films regularly made use of exterior locations as a counterpart to their decorative sets, outdoor spaces in which to stage their action sequences and open up their expansive narratives.

## 5.3 Widescreen and Landscape

At an early stage, Fox’s head of production, Darryl Zanuck, had extolled the virtues of CinemaScope as suitable ‘in the production of large scale spectacles and big outdoors films.’[[467]](#footnote-468) With an increasing number of productions shot on location, physical geography assumed a greater prominence throughout the 1950s, most strikingly in the war film and the Western genre, which saw its heyday during this period through films such as *River of No Return* (Otto Preminger, 1954), *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), shot in VistaVision, *Ride Lonesome* (Budd Boetticher, 1959) and the first dramatic feature shot in Cinerama, *How The West Was Won* (1962).

Japanese filmmakers embraced the call of the wild in such films as Uchida Tomu’s fascinating *The Outsiders* (*Mori to mizuumi no matsuri*, 1958), the setting and subject matter of which was well-suited to demonstrating the strengths of the relatively newly-introduced Eastmancolor and ToeiScope technologies. Set against the expansive backdrop of Japan’s northernmost territory of Hokkaido, the film stars Takakura Ken as a modern-day Robin Hood outlaw character working for the future of his people, the Ainu, as tensions grow between this indigenous population and the Japanese settlers in the nearby coastal community. Featuring frontier-town settings, epic landscapes, horseback action sequences and the substitution of Native Americans for the local Ainu population, with their colourful costumes and exotic rituals (the title translates more literally as ‘Festival of forest and lakes’), *The Outsiders* seems consciously modeled on an otherwise all-American genre, although it deals with very Japanese issues. It led to a curious subgenre of so-called SukiyakiWesterns (referring to a hotpot dish containing a variety of foreign and Japanese ingredients) such as Saitô Buichi’s *Plains Wanderer* (*Daisôgen no wataridori*, 1960) and Nomura Takashi’s *Fast-draw Guy* (*Hayauchi Yarô*, 1961), both produced by Nikkatsu, which more obviously referenced the iconography of their American models.

With the new shape of the screen better suited to depictions of landscape than dramatic close-ups, the protagonists in these outdoors adventures were very much defined by their environment, in being either dominated or liberated by its open spaces. Comparing *The Savage Innocents* (1960), a drama directed by Nicholas Ray set in an Inuit community and shot in the Canadian Arctic, with Ealing Studio’s Academy ratio Technicolor production, *Scott of the Antarctic* (Charles Frend, 1948), Barr makes the following observations:

*The Savage Innocents* has a long empty snowscape: the camera is still: a sledge enters frame left, deep within the shot, and is drawn gradually toward us. One can contrast this with the opening of *Scott of the Antarctic*: a montage of snowy vistas, evocative music. We look *at* the scene instead of being involved in it, as we are in *The Savage Innocents*; and we accept, intellectually, for the purposes of narrative, that the characters are there, instead of genuinely feeling it.[[468]](#footnote-469)

The Japanese filmmaker Kurosawa Akira was noted for his invocation of landscape and the elements to heighten his action scenes and define the psychology of his characters. This can already be detected in Academy ratio productions such as *Stray Dog* (*Nora inu*, 1949), in which the swelteringly oppressive summer heat in which the drama unfolds climaxes in a violent storm, and the final rain-drenched battle scene in *Seven Samurai*(*Shichinin no samurai*, 1954), as well as in his later widescreen films. One of Kurosawa’s best examples, *Dersu Uzala* (*Derusu uzâra*, 1975), is not technically a Japanese film, but a Soviet production. Shot on location in Eastern Siberia in Sovscope 70, a 70mm format with 6-track magnetic sound modelled on the Todd-AO system, the film is based on the 1923 autobiography by the Russian explorer Captain Vladimir Arsenyev (1872-1930). It details Arsenyev’s life-changing encounter with the character who lends his name to the film’s title, a nomadic, nature-loving older man of the indigenous Nanai tribe who serves as his scout during an expedition to the area in 1902. In one standout scene, the two men find themselves stranded on a frozen lake as a blizzard approaches. Filmed from a distance using extremely wide angle lenses, the path they must take to avoid falling through the thin areas of ice is apparent to the viewer (although less so when viewed upon the small screen, a medium on which the sequence loses much of it power), although not to the main protagonists, giving rise to a significant degree of nail-biting suspense as they attempt to make their way to shelter.

Films such as this manifest what Donald Richie once described as the defining aspect of Japanese cinema, claiming that ‘if American cinema is basically about action, and European cinema is basically about character, then Japanese cinema is basically about atmosphere.’[[469]](#footnote-470) Although conceding the rather general nature of this remark, he elaborates on his argument by employing a number of binary oppositions between Japanese and Western culture. These include ‘Japanese philosophic tradition sees the individual as an integral part of his world; each man is an extension of the universe. Western philosophic tradition views the individual as unique, each man being the centre of his personal universe’ and, in Japan philosophy, ‘Nature is complementary to the individual, and one should live in harmony with it’ against the Western idea that ‘Nature is an enemy to be conquered, to be used violently if necessary.’

Despite the slightly tendentious nature of Richie’s argument, there are nonetheless many titles for which these observations ring true, in which landscapes emerge almost as characters in their own right while reflecting the internal psychology and emotions of the human elements inhabiting them. One thinks specifically of the marshland wilderness of Shindô Kaneto’s mesmerizing supernatural parable *Onibaba* (1964), set during the period of civil war in the 16th century known as the Warring States period (*Sengoku jidai*). The main protagonists, an older woman and her daughter-in-law whose husband is missing in battle, live in a ramshackle lakeside hut isolated from the conflict yet reliant upon it, eking out an existence through murdering passing combatants to sell their weaponry and armour. The film is permeated with startling monochrome scope compositions of the characters marooned within the undulating bulrushes that surround their abode, manifesting their helplessness and desperation, and the pent-up tension that gains full vent when a neighbour returns from the war with news of the son’s death and begins a sexual relationship with the daughter-in-law.

In *Onibaba*, the emotions of the characters are given external expression by their surroundings, rather than through recourse to dramatic close-ups. One can find many examples of such strategies in Japanese cinema, with the drama shaped by the environment in which the main protagonists are framed in a manner more emphatic than contemporaneous Hollywood productions.

## 5.4 Articulating Modernity

The subject matter of the new widescreen productions was ultimately far more diverse than period and action films. If the widened frame presented a greater area crying out to be filled with detail, then the genres that took root in the early widescreen era were contingent upon the type of details accommodated within the image. The second CinemaScope release, *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Jean Negulesco, 1953), starring Lauren Bacall, Betty Grable and Marilyn Monroe, exemplifies another category of films that would be firmly associated with the CinemaScope era. These were light comedies embedded within the same epoch of postwar extravagance and consumerism of which CinemaScope itself was very much a part. In an essay entitled ‘Conspicuous Consumption: The Spectacle of Widescreen Comedy in the Populuxe Era’, Kathrina Glitre writes how:

A cycle of “consumer comedies” emerged after 1955 that capitalized on the appeal of widescreen at the same time as parodying and critiquing consumer culture within the movie. Widescreen films like *Artists and Models* (1955), *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), *The Girl Can’t Help It* (1956), *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (1957), *Ask Any Girl* (1959), and *Pillow Talk* (1959) centred on industries such as publishing, marketing, advertising, and interior design, while exploring the ways in which consumerism interacted with fantasy.[[470]](#footnote-471)

Though Glitre states that such films emerged after 1955, the line can certainly be drawn back at least as far as *How to Marry a Millionaire*, the plotting of which revolves around the attempts of three models sharing a luxurious New York apartment to find a rich husband. Unlike the cycle of CinemaScope historical epics, the majority of the film plays out in interior scenes, built on a limited number of studio sets and containing a relatively sparse number of characters. The emphasis is on the interior décor, the fashionable costumes in which the characters are clothed and the way the figures and other desirable consumer objects are arranged within the CinemaScope frame, which at times seems calculated to resemble a department store shop window display. New York Times critic Bosley Crowther was quick to see behind the ruse in his review of the second CinemaScope release:

In the lingo of merchandising there is a neat word—“packaging” —for the business of putting up a product in a container of deceptive size and show. And that, in manner of speaking, is the word for what Twentieth Century-Fox has done in fetching an average portion of very light comedy in its “How to Marry a Millionaire.”… But the substance is still insufficient for the vast spread of screen which CinemaScope throws across the front of the theatre, and the impression it leaves is that of nonsense from a few people in a great big hall… The color, when firm, is very good. But the total effect of these glimpses is one of proud but nonessential showing off.[[471]](#footnote-472)

There are a number of ways in which this “packaging” manifests itself in *How to Marry a Millionaire*, not least of which is the incongruous musical overture in which the Twentieth Century-Fox Orchestra appear in long-shot, spread across the widened plane of the screen performing the film’s music, conducted by its composer Alfred Newman. The opening number “Street Scene” finishes and the orchestra takes it bow before launching into the next number, “Main Title”, which continues accompanying an image track of New York cityscapes before the film properly begins, some eight minutes in. This unconventional opening serves the dual purpose of showcasing the superior scope of the image and novelty of stereophonic sound, while making an association with live musical theatre in a manner akin to the velvet theatre curtains over which the credits of *The Robe* appear.

CinemaScope might have seemed ill-suited for such slightly plotted interior-staged dramas, but the set containing the girl’s extensive and roomy loft apartment is so constructed as to sit perfectly in tandem with the scope of both the screen and their consumerist ambitions. As the characters position themselves decorously within their spacious domain, the camera dollies smoothly around the scene to follow their actions, rather than cutting to close-ups. The distorting effect of the CinemaScope lenses transforms the space, de-emphasizing the corners of the set interiors and compressing the image into flat planes of colour. These condensed perspectives merge with the painted matte backdrop of New York visible through the large plate windows at the rear of the set ‘to fill the mammoth screen with extravagant scenic adornments and some fine panoramic displays.’[[472]](#footnote-473) Ironically, the set becomes progressively emptier and devoid of the defining aspects of their luxury lifestyle as the girls are forced into selling the expensive furniture and ornaments in order to pay the rent.

Such “must have” items as stereo record players, televisions, air conditioning, refrigerators, coffee percolators, gas cookers, toasters, food mixers and orange juicers were a defining feature of the aspiration age of the Populuxe era comedy. This was the case even when the characters who populated such scenarios had more down-to-earth professions than the trio of goodtime girls at the heart of *How to Marry a Millionaire*.

In Fox’s *The Seven Year Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1955), the family home of a middle-aged publishing executive named Richard Sherman (Tom Ewell), who is suffering a mid-life crisis, is rapidly transformed into a luxurious bachelor pad after his wife and young son depart on vacation, leaving him alone for the sweltering summer break. The film is based on a play of the same title by George Axelrod, and its simple three-act structure and the lengthy scenes of monologues from the main character and his dialogues with the girl upstairs (Marilyn Monroe) who inspires his thoughts of infidelity (most of which unfold within the single location of his home), reveal the film’s stage origins.

Sherman’s apartment, complete with a piano and a drinks cabinet from which an endless stream of martinis are produced, is just as spacious as that of the New York models. Similarly, the lateral pans of the camera encouraged by the widened image seem to justify the shop-window focus on its interior décor and the various accoutrements of modern consumerism with which it is crammed. With the areas of interest predominantly aligned across the horizontal axis, vertical tilts of the camera were largely redundant in such CinemaScope productions, unless motivated by setting (in this case notably the spiral staircase in the centre of his apartment through which Monroe periodically descends).

Two scenes in particular foreground CinemaScope’s own role within this environment of conspicuous consumption, as well as the technical superiority of cinema over the stage source material. In the first, Sherman conducts an imaginary conversation with his wife, reacting to her taunts “Just remember that although I have tremendous personal magnetism, I also have tremendous strength of character”, to which his wife replies, “And tremendous imagination. Lately you’ve begun to imagine in CinemaScope, with stereophonic sound.” Later on, upon discovering that the girl’s apartment upstairs is not fitted with the mod con of air conditioning, he uses this as a ruse to take her out on a date to an air-conditioned cinema. The film they are seen exiting from is *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (Jack Arnold, 1954), produced by the rival studio Universal. The omission of any mention within the dialogue that this title was produced in 3D seems a tacit acknowledgement of CinemaScope’s superiority over the stereoscopic format, and that the enticement to go and see it was instead due to the cool and comfortable environment in which it is shown.

Other Populuxe era comedies emphasized the superiority of the CinemaScope experience over other mediums. Midway through *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (Frank Tashlin, 1957) for Fox, the ad-man protagonist of the title emerges from behind a pair of theatre curtains with a fanfare, breaking the fourth wall to announce to the viewer, “Ladies and gentlemen, this break in our motion picture is made out of respect for the TV fans in our audience who are accustomed to constant interruptions in their programs for messages from sponsors. We want all you TV fans to feel at home, and not forget the thrill you get from television on your big 21” screens.” The screen shrinks and the colours fade to leave a poorly-framed flickering monochrome image that barely contains Rock Hunter’s face, spelling out the obvious, that “Ladies and gentlemen, this most certainly is not cinema!”

The ’scope screen provided a window through which such images of 1950s American modernity were projected, presenting a lifestyle of commodity-driven luxury for audiences across the world to aspire to. As such examples demonstrate, it also provided an arena to critique and lampoon the ideals of go-getting competitiveness and consumerist avarice insinuating across the globe. This was reflected in other national cinemas.

Two figures known for their satires on contemporary life and the creeping Americanization of Japanese culture during the 1950s, both of whom viewed as modernists linking ‘the tradition of the postwar “golden age” of Japanese cinema with the New Wave of the sixties’, were Ichikawa Kon at Daiei and his one-time assistant, Masumura Yasuzô.[[473]](#footnote-474) Ichikawa’s social satires from the pre-widescreen era include *Mr. Pu* (*Pû-san*, 1953), based on a popular newspaper cartoon strip, *A Billionaire* (*Okumanchôja*, 1954), and *A Full-Up Train* (*Manin densha*, 1957), also known as *A Crowded Streetcar*. However, it is the widescreen production of *Giants and Toys* (*Kyojin to gangu*, 1958), Masumura’s mordant critique of corporate competitiveness driven to absurd extremes, that represents one of the best responses to the Populuxe satires.

Adapted from a novel by Kaikô Takeshi, winner of the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for new novelists, *Giants and Toys* focuses on the internecine advertising wars between three rival confectionary companies, which become increasingly ludicrous after one player, World Caramel, plucks a young woman named Shima Kyôko (Nozoe Hitomi) from the obscurity of her impoverished Tokyo dwelling to be groomed as its campaign girl. As Shima’s fame increases, she becomes increasingly demanding and unmanageable, developing into a horrific caricature of celebrity culture that threatens to derail the entire enterprise.

A key work from a director who would prove highly influential upon a generation of New Wave directors, like Ôshima, who would make their debuts at Shochiku within the next few years, *Giants and Toys* signaled a break from the narrative patterns and staging techniques of the classical era of Japanese cinema, drawing upon Western philosophies and approaches to cinema in order to explore the relationship between the individual and society. As Michael Raine writes in his essay on the film:

Masumura’s fifth film, *Giants and Toys* (*Kyojin to gangu*, 1958) propagandized the importance of ‘speed’ in shaking off the ‘pre-modern’ trappings of mainstream cinema and society, but, at the same time, it recognized that individuality (*kosei*) in mass culture is also a commodity. The film’s absurdly rapid dialogue and formally overt techniques shocked contemporary audiences and recalled, for some recent viewers, the reflexive pyrotechnics of US director Frank Tashlin.[[474]](#footnote-475)

That this satire on the corporate-driven, consumerist culture that had been gathering critical mass throughout the decade appeared so soon after Japan’s adoption of ’scope formats might not be attributed to coincidence. The new cinematic possibilities open up by the widened frame and the film’s lurid use of Agfacolor results in ‘an intensity of film style, specifically mise-en-scène, that challenged prevailing modes of filmmaking’, something apparent from the very outset. [[475]](#footnote-476)

The film opens with a shot of Shima, framed in mid-shot against a clear blue sky, turning to face the camera as she stretches her arms into the air with a jaded yawn. With the click of a camera shutter, the image freezes to emulate a monochrome still snapshot, which is replicated as two identical images occupying the left and right sides of the screen. The screen divides and subdivides recursively to form mosaics containing four, eight, 32 then 128 repetitions of the original image, all accompanied by the drum-heavy staccato tempo of the soundtrack, to suggest the relentless proliferation of advertising imagery, before the title appears dramatically over this tessellated backdrop, accompanied by a horrified scream on the soundtrack. The cast and credits follow, ‘inscribed on rectilinear color blocks familiar, like the photographs, from the designs of the weekly magazines so important in this film and to Japan’s culture of celebrity.’[[476]](#footnote-477)

The conflict between old traditional work hierarchies and the ruthless back-biting practices of modern corporate conduct is deliciously embellished by the verve in which Masumura fills the ’scope image. Such fripperies of consumer capitalism as garish television commercials, musical performances and fashion shoots, are all presented in a flamboyantly hectic style to suggest a simultaneous fascination and horror at what Japan is becoming. Echoes of the opening sequence saturate *Giants and Toys* in its recurrent images of advertising hoardings, rows of magazine covers on newspaper stands, and a later scene set in a bookstore, its shelves crammed with the colourful covers of its wares. The walls of the open plan office spaces in which much of the film unfolds, crammed with ranks of white-collared workers, are adorned with jumbled arrangements of calendars, sales graphs and posters from previous marketing campaigns. The office desks are laden with telephones, typewriters and most significantly, gaudy promotional toys. A skyline crowded with skyscrapers is visible through the windows (a painted backdrop, as in *How to Marry a Millionaire*), complete with World Caramel’s spinning globe logo. Meanwhile, ludicrous pageants of characters dressed as cavemen or space travellers appear in the exterior sequences as part of the various promotional drives, the rival companies’ campaign vans blaring out tinny jingles.

The increasingly frenetic tempo of the campaigns are given visual form in the film’s recurrent montage sequences, superimposed over the clicking of a cigarette lighter that fails to catch, which detail the production line processes at the factory where the chocolate bars are manufactured, the photo shoots involving Shima, and other aspects of the production and marketing process. Banks of TV monitors occupy the top half of the frame in one scene set in the television studio in which a commercial featuring Shima, clad in a space suit, is being filmed, highlighting the extent to which, even in the peak year of theatre admissions when *Giants and Toys* was released, ‘cinema was also being challenged by television and by a growing culture of personal consumption.’[[477]](#footnote-478)

## 5.5 ’Scope and the City: Reframing the Modern Metropolis

As *Giants and Toys* highlights, the rapidly changing cityscape of Tokyo, symbolized by the erection of Tokyo Tower in 1958, provided a vibrant backdrop for filmmakers adopting new colour and widescreen technologies, as it had done for Joe MacDonald, the cinematographer of *House of Bamboo* (1955). The ’scope format presented new opportunities for its depiction by its own inhabitants, which reflected and reinforced notions of how the modern, international metropolis should look. Widescreen films in particular presented a mirror world through which Japanese viewers could gauge the progress of the nation’s postwar reconstruction which, as previously detailed, went hand-in-hand with the vast expansion of the exhibition networks that provided an outlet for such domestic productions in the first place.

For this reason, one can argue a new modernist Japanese cinema truly emerged with the arrival of widescreen. That is to say, a cinema emerged which emphasized and addressed the technologies and ideologies of representation. As Miyao argues, ‘Ichikawa and Masumura were considered modernist in the sense that they had an acute understanding of the history of Japanese cinema and were obsessed with the questions of what Japanese modernity was and how Japanee cinema could present a new mode of subjectivity that was genuinely liberated and modern.’[[478]](#footnote-479)

The works of these directors coincided with an increased exposure to foreign (largely American) cultural products, which were avidly consumed in the new postwar baby-boomer drive towards increasing internationalization and a break with the past. In 1958, Tokyo played host to the 3rd Asian Games, consolidating the city’s status as a major regional economic and cultural hub among many of the countries with which Japan was in conflict little over a decade previously. The same year saw the release of the independently-produced and independently-distributed documentary short, *Tokyo 1958*, directed by Teshigahara Hiroshi in collaboration with a number of other filmmakers, including Hani Susumu, who would become crucial figures in the Japanese New Wave cinema of the 1960s. Although not filmed in a widescreen format, this vibrant portrait of the Tokyo’s inhabitants, landscapes and burgeoning artistic scene marks the nascence of a more experimental and politically-engaged independent cinema that in many ways defined the next decade. (Interestingly, a 34-year-old Donald Richie makes an appearance in the opening scenes, a year prior to the publication of his and Joseph Anderson’s landmark study, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*).

Meanwhile, a new generation of audiences saw new genres catering for them. The boom in *taiyôzoku* youth movies, which began in 1956 with Furukawa Tarumi’s adaptation of Ishihara Shintarô’s novel *Season of the Sun* (*Taiyô no kisetsu*), led to the studio behind its production, Nikkatsu, cultivating a strain of exuberant populist contemporary dramas closely tied in with other aspects of youth culture. Ishihara Shintarô’s younger brother Yujirô, launched to stardom as an icon for his generation following his first lead role in *Crazed Fruit* (*Kurutta kajitsu*, 1956), became as known for his recordings of the theme songs for the movies in which he appeared as the films themselves, his star image carefully cultivated by the similar media processes of television appearances, magazine interviews and releases of music recordings as those depicted in *Giants and Toys*. While both of these films were produced in monochrome Academy ratios, Ishihara’s later starring roles would be in films in which widescreen and colour presentation played an integral part in the packaging.

*Man Who Causes a Storm* (*Arashi o yobu otoko*, Inoue Umetsugu), released on 29 December 1957, provides a wonderful example of the synergy between the new popular media forms, new screen technologies and a new openness to integrating elements of foreign culture in order to fashion an effective star vehicle for Ishihara. The second colour NikkatsuScope production in which Ishihara received top billing (*The Eagle and the Hawk* / *Washi to taka*, also directed by Inoue, was released on 29 September 1957), it was the eleventh top-grossing film of its decade. The story focuses on a hot-headed young man’s rise and fall from fame as a jazz drummer, caught in a maelstrom of conflicts between his family members, his female manager and love interest Miyako (played by Ishihara’s regular co-star and later wife Kitahara Mie), a jealous manipulative music critic and a usurped rival with gangster connections. The film opens with a scene-setting wide shot of Ginza district, before plunging the viewer into a giddy nocturnal montage of flashing neon signs and glaring car headlights over which the credits appear, accompanied by the raucous jazz soundtrack, before leading the viewer into its milieu of cavernous, garishly-decorated smoky nightclubs. Tokyo is presented as a gleaming beacon to the rest of the world, a place of seething energy and hedonistic abandon. As in the similar neon-lit uptown street setting in *Giants and Toys* in which two of the characters go courting at one point, its roadsides lined with gleaming cars, the city is presented as exciting and seductive, a lifetime removed from the locales of Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* (*Tôkyô monogatari*, 1953), released just five years previously in monochrome Academy ratio.

Much of the appeal of *Man Who Causes a Storm* can be attributed to the brio of its jazz performances and the exotic cabaret floorshows that accompany them (again, a feature in one scene of *Giants and Toys*). Inoue had previously directed *Tokyo Cinderella* (*Jazu onparêdo 1954-nen: Tôkyô Shinderera musume*, 1954), apparently the first ever jazz movie produced in Japan (as a Western import strongly identified with American culture, jazz had been banned by the wartime government), and today is ‘remembered particularly for his musicals.’[[479]](#footnote-480) Nikkatsu later attempted to repeat the success of *Man Who Causes a Storm* with a remake of the same name directed by Masuda Toshio in 1967 starring Watari Tetsuya. During the decline of the studio system in the late-1960s, Inoue directed a number of films in ShawScope, for Hong Kong’s Shaw Brothers, including a Cantonese-language remake, *King Drummer* (*Qing chun gu wang*, 1967), and in 1983 filmed the story a third time for Toho. Meanwhile the theme song became something of a signature tune for Ishihara, which he regularly performed in various television and live appearances throughout his career.

The unfamiliarity of the name of such a commercially-successful director as Inoue outside of Asia serves as a reminder of the extent to which Western histiographies of national cinemas are shaped by the films that first gained exposure at the time they were made via the international festival route.[[480]](#footnote-481) The musical remains a notably underexplored genre among foreign scholars of Japanese film, and has been all but neglected by film festivals and home video distributors. However, its lineage can be traced back right to the coming of sound, in titles such as Nikkatsu’s *Hometown* (*Fujiwara Yoshie no Furusato*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1930), a sound-on-disk part-talkie featuring the vocal talents of the opera singer Fujiwara Yoshie, and what might be described as Japan’s first ever musical, *Musical Comedy: Intoxicated Life* (*Ongaku kigeki: Horoyoi jinsei*, Kimura Sotoji, 1933), a sound-on-film production sponsored by Dai-Nippon Beer and produced by Photo Chemical Laboratories (P.C.L., an early specialist in sound production that was assimilated into Toho in 1936).

The musical genre’s prioritization of extravagant display and cosmopolitan exoticism over narrative sophistication made it particularly well-suited to the new widescreen era. Various Hollywood studios took to the genre to showcase many of their new widescreen processes (Paramount’s launch of VistaVision with Michael Curtiz’s *White Christmas* in 1954; Fox’s CinemaScope 55 process for Henry King’s *Carousel* in 1956 and Walter Lang’s *The King and I* in 1956; and the numerous adaptations of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Broadway hits for Todd-AO, from Fred Zinnemann’s *Oklahoma!* in 1955 through titles such as Joshua Logan’s *South Pacific* in 1958 and Robert Wise’s *The Sound of Music* in 1965). Similarly it is worth recalling Shochiku’s first GrandScope short, *Birth of a Revue* (*Rebyû no tanjô*, 1955), and the first TohoScope release of Sugie Toshio’s *On Wings of Love* (*Ôatari sanshoku musume*, 1957), fit comfortably within a genre in which local colour is downplayed in favour of culturally hybridised festivals of sound and spectacle.

The all-colour musical remained a significant genre throughout Japan’s widescreen era of the late-1950s and 1960s, particularly for Toho, who released such films as Furusawa Kengo’s *Japanese Age of Irresponsibility* (*Nippon musekinin jidai*, 1962) and *Operation Crazy* (*Kurêjii daisakusen*, 1966), featuring members of the band Hana Hajime and The Crazy Cats, and the long-running *Young Guy* (*Wakadaishô*) series, starring the singer Kayama Yûzô (the son of actor Uehara Ken), which began with *Young Guy at University* (*Daigaku no wakadaishô*, Sugie Toshio, 1961) and included entries such as *Young Guy in Ginza* (*Ginza no wakadaishô*, Sugie Toshio, 1962), *Young Guy in Hawaii* (*Hawai no wakadaishô*, Fukuda Jun, 1962), and *Young Guy in Rio* (*Rio no wakadaishô*, Iwauchi Katsuki, 1966). As such titles suggest, Japan’s new sense of internationalism was a strong component of such productions in an age when the postwar ban on overseas travel for ordinary citizens had just been lifted around the time of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Nevertheless, the market for such films was considered to be purely a local one.

*Man Who Causes a Storm* did, however, receive limited exposure in Europe. Distributed in the United Kingdom by Gala Films under the title *The Stormy Man*, its review in Monthly Film Bulletin is indicative of the tastes of contemporary critics for a “pure” Japanese cinema, concluding that ‘Usually the West is denied the worst excesses of the Japanese commercial film, but when one does slip through like *The Stormy Man*, one realizes how easily the Japanese have imbibed the ugliest characteristics of the American cinema adding, for good measure, some of the least likable aspects of their own.’[[481]](#footnote-482) Nevertheless, the ‘garish and extremely elaborate décor’ that proved so objectionable to this British reviewer was symptomatic of the way in which directors such as Inoue celebrated the carnivalesque aspects of a metropolis growing in stature and confidence.

This celebration of Tokyo’s cityscape manifests itself in other NikkatsuScope films starring Ishihara, including *Crimson Wings* (*Kurenai no tsubasa*, 1958), the fifth top-grossing domestic release of its decade. After launching Ishihara on his star trajectory with his debut *Crazed Fruit*, Nakahara Kô was reunited with the actor in a film that comfortably fits within Belton’s “amusement park” model of widescreen spectacle. Ishihara plays an airline pilot who volunteers on Christmas Eve to fly a Cessna light-aircraft to the remote island of Hachijô-Jima, some 300km across the sea, in order to deliver an urgently-needed tetanus serum to save the life of a young boy. His mission is thrown into hazard when he discovers he has a dangerous stowaway on board.

Following an opening credit sequence featuring the crimson-winged Cessna of the title flying through azure blue skies over an empty ocean, accompanied by the theme song sung by Ishihara, the film cuts abruptly to a plain grey textured surface, bisected dead centre by a dark line. The left and right panels part to reveal that the camera is filming from a subjective position within an elevator, facing outwards along an office corridor. The camera tracks forward in a long single take, arriving at a reception desk where an offscreen voice announces to the receptionist that he has come to see the boss. When asked whether he has an appointment, this invisible audience identification figure moves on regardless along the corridor towards a door marked ‘President’ and barges into the room. As a suited figure rises from his seat, a leather glove clutching a pistol enters the right side of the frame and fires, killing the company president, before the camera withdraws back along the corridor, the pistol still held up within the frame. The entire motion-in-depth sequence is rendered impressively as a single unedited, point-of-view shot.

As the killer escapes into the streets outside, a young girl is startled by the noise of the getaway car, and releases the yellow balloon she is carrying, which floats skywards. The roar of the car engine followed by the clamour of passers-by suggests she has been run over. The camera pans up from its elevated position looking down upon the crowds amassing in the street, charting the rising motion of the balloon over the city skyline. The scene then cuts to a mid-shot facing into the cockpit of a domestic airplane helmed by Ishihara and his co-pilot as they fly over Tokyo. In the seating area, a stewardess alerts her passengers to look down over the sites of the city’s fashionable Hibiya and Ginza area, which include the Imperial Palace, the National Parliament, Hibiya Park, and rather amusingly, “the famous Nikkatsu International Hall” to which the studio had relocated its headquarters in April 1953.

The aerial shots into which the opening murder scene elides not only introduce Ishihara’s character and set the context for the rest of the film, but can be viewed as spectacle in their own right. They show, for the very first time in widescreen colour, the city and its dominant landmarks in a manner that is analogous to the breathtaking displays of the American landscape in *This is Cinerama*. It must be remembered that domestic air travel was still viewed as something of a luxury in Japan at the time of the release of *Crimson Wings*. Haneda Airport, which provides the locus for many of the scenes, had opened its first passenger terminal in 1955, and was only just opening up to international air carriers.

Many of the film’s attractions after Ishihara embarks on his mercy mission in the tiny Cessna rest upon birds-eye views of the landscape surrounding Tokyo and the Izu Peninsula, before the ride develops into something more of a rollercoaster as the plane develops technical faults and one of its two passengers is revealed to be the killer of the opening sequence. A low pass over the smouldering crater Mount Mihara on the island of Ôshima and vertiginous plunges towards the ocean are shot predominantly from the vantage point of another plane, but there are also some breathtaking point-of-view shots from the cockpit. Although *Crimson Wings* appears never to have been circulated in the Western markets of America or Europe, it is easy to understand its success with local audiences, whisked from their mundane earthbound existence to above the clouds in a rapturous celebration of both cinema and aviation technology, echoed in the regular widescreen shots of the plane’s instrument panel and the abundance of maps and air traffic control gadgetry in such earthbound locations as Haneda Airport.

One other aspect of the widescreen aesthetic of *Crimson Wings* worthy of note is the use of split-screen techniques, in which two separate images are combined on the left- and right-hand sides of the frame. In an early scene, as one of the main characters telephones a medical research laboratory to locate the tetanus serum, the left-hand side of the screen containing a cage of white rats appears in perfect focus, as does the white-coated laboratory assistant who takes the call on the right, positioned much further back from the camera. Prior to the adoption of split-screen dioptres, such an image would have been impossible to achieve in one shot, due to depth-of-field constraints. That this would have been achieved by post-production compositing of two separate images is highlighted by a sequence later on in the film in which a series of phone calls are made to the Maritime Self-Defence Force District Headquarters, the Japan Coast Guard in Yokohama, the Japan Air Self-Defence Force and Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, when radio contact with the plane is lost in the midst of its mission. The interior of each location is portrayed on one half of the screen, the exterior on the other.

*Crimson Wings* represents one of the earliest examples in a Japanese production of the use of split-screen effects to portray synchronous action in separate locations. The effectiveness of such sequences in allowing for the portrayal of parallel action in two or even three separate strips approximating the Academy ratio, was contingent on the width of the new widescreen formats. An early example provided by a Hollywood production occurs in a sequence in the MGM CinemaScope musical *It’s Always Fair Weather* (Stanley Donen, 1955), in which Gene Kelly, Dan Dailey, and Michael Kidd are shown in one sequence performing, in perfect synchronization, the same dance number in different locations. Donen later utilized split-screens in the VistaVision production *Indiscreet* (1958), in a memorable telephone conversation between Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman as they lie in their separate beds (an inventive method of circumventing the MPAA ban of showing couples in bed together) and similar scenes featuring Rock Hudson and Doris Day were part of the conceit of the CinemaScope production *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959).

The increasingly sophisticated multiple-image montages to be found in such works as *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, 1968), *The Andromeda Strain* (Robert Wise, 1971) and *Sisters* (Brian De Palma, 1973) demonstrate the arsenal of aesthetic devices opened up to filmmakers within the expanded scope frame. However, they represented something of a step back from the Bazinian notions of realism that widescreen initially seemed to promise. By self-consciously foregrounding the hand of the director and filmmaking technologies in a way that could be described as gimmickry, such sequences were really only suitable for certain types of film, and were never wholeheartedly assimilated into conventional production practices. Outside of credit sequences (a particularly striking example of which can be seen in *Jigoku*), they remained a relative rarity in Japanese cinema, largely, one might conjecture, because of the demands of labour and cost that they imposed at the post-production stage, as much as any innate Japanese aesthetic that favoured simplicity.

’Scope cinematography provided a means of framing and interrogating the urban landscape in a far more vivid fashion than permitted within Academy ratio. During the 1960s, a number of filmmakers would make impressive use of widescreen to cast a critical eye on this rapidly changing environment and its inhabitants. Imamura Shôhei, to note but one example, adopted an observational documentary style to film *Insect Woman* (*Nippon konchûki*, 1963), utilizing long takes and long lenses (to flatten the perspective) in his tale of a country girl lured to the big city where she rises to become one of Tokyo’s top brothel madams. The film exemplifies the director’s hectic style in its portrayal of its characters within their natural (or unnatural) habitat; the seething termite mound of activity during the massive construction boom in the run up to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. It’s a style that the director himself referred to as “messy”, and as James Quandt elaborates:

It’s easy to see what he means. His Scope frames can barely contain the outsized performances, teeming energy and grotesque spectacle he is so fond of. Generically, his films conflate documentary and fiction in a confounding way that convention would deem “messy”.[[482]](#footnote-483)

Such contemporary-set productions detailed above are indicative of how widescreen lent itself to location shooting, creating a discourse between spectators and their environment during a period of immense social transition. In these films, Tokyo achieved a greater significance than as a mere stage for the drama, as the anamorphic formats opened up new vistas through which filmmakers were able to articulate and comment upon the modernization process.

These examples give some indication of the new types of material with which both Hollywood and Japanese filmmakers filled the screen in the widescreen colour era. The broader question remains of *how* they filled the screen, and whether this was in any way aesthetically or culturally distinguishable from the work of Western filmmakers.

## 5.6 Windows and Pictures: Japanese Presentational Approaches

‘It is well to remember that a picture before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order’, observed the French artist Maurice Denis in 1890.[[483]](#footnote-484) As well as foregrounding the decorative role of painting, Denis’ statement highlights the limitations of collapsing a three-dimensional scene onto a two-dimensional surface, something that has been keenly felt by many painters from the turn of the 20th century onwards.

Denis’ observation is just as applicable to the moving image. In the introductory paragraph of his study of the compositional practices of Hollywood filmmakers using the scope format, Marshall Deutelbaum echoes Denis’ opinion, noting that:

At one and the same time the motion picture image is both a flat, two-dimensional pattern of light and dark and an illusory three-dimensional reproduction of the scene that appeared in front of the camera. Critics and audiences almost never notice the two-dimensional pattern, responding instead to the stories that unfold in the illusory three-dimensional world… Eventually, I came to understand that these two-dimensional qualities served as formal keys to the disposition of three-dimensional elements. And in understanding this, I realised that traditional methods of cinematic analysis were no longer appropriate.[[484]](#footnote-485)

While our discussion of widescreen aesthetics has thus far concerned itself primarily with the technical constraints imposed by the anamorphic lens and the similarities between certain CinemaScope productions and live theatre, when looking at the compositional strategies employed by filmmakers, it is instructive to turn to art forms whose impact stems from the primacy of the still image. As the editors of *Cinematic Landscapes* note, following on from the observations of Anne Hollander in her study of the relationship between Western art and cinema, ‘films are closer to prints and paintings than to theatrical performances, in the sense that both films and visual arts remain as lasting artefacts, while a stage performance is ephemeral.’[[485]](#footnote-486)

Many of the authors of the essays in *Cinematic Landscapes* isolate instances of how traditional strategies of visual representation in Japan, which originated in China and were introduced along with Buddhism in the late 6th century, differ from those of the West, due to fundamentally different cultural, philosophical and aesthetic traditions. Before outlining these differences, it is worth looking in more detail at the social, historical and technological context in which Western orthodoxies of ‘realism’ in art were forged.

For over 500 years, the dominant form of pictorial representation in the West has been classical perspective (also referred to as linear or fixed-point perspective), developed by Renaissance artists and set in stone by the Classical painter and theorist Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72). Depth is signalled geometrically, with all lines converging towards a fixed point and distant objects appearing at a smaller scale than those closer to the viewer. Alberti’s observation that his paintings represented the visible world as if viewed through a window has led to this method being labelled Alberti’s Window, and it soon became the guiding principle for artists and draughtsmen.

In his *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*, British artist David Hockney hypothesizes the widespread use of lenses and mirrors by Western artists from the Renaissance onwards to render nature more efficiently and realistically. Lens-based devices such as the *camera obscura* and *camera lucida* allowed artists ranging from the Dutch and Italian schools of Jan Van Eyck (1395-1441) and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) to the Salon painters of the continental academic tradition such as William-Adolphe Bougeureau (1825-1905) to paint from a projected image rather than directly from nature, or at the very least, to use this projected image as a drawing aid. The use of optics accounted for the abrupt emergence of a kind of pictorial realism that to the modern eye still appears almost photographic, marked by a greater sense of detail, especially in the rendering of light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*).[[486]](#footnote-487)

Among the mountain of evidence Hockney presents is the close ties between painters and glass- and mirror-makers in the 15th century (who in the Low Countries shared the same guild), the emergence of the ‘still life’ genre at this point, and that Vermeer was a close friend and neighbour of Antonie van Leeuwenhook (1632-1723), known for his work on lenses and microscopy. Hockney also makes the analogy between artists’ studios (which employed assistants to aid in the image-making process in tasks ranging from mixing paint and arranging the scene to actually rendering parts of it on the canvas) and the image factory of Hollywood. Painters such as Rembrandt were not the solitary creative geniuses we imagine: the supervisory nature of their role in the creation of the works that bare their names is akin to that of today’s film director. The difference is that, rather than the commercial mass market, the artist was reliant upon the patronage of the Church or the wealthy or powerful individuals who commissioned them, who in this way effectively controlled the creation and distribution of their images.

Vanishing-point perspective is believed to have arrived in Japan at the turn of the 17th century, possibly with the establishment of the Jesuit painting school set up by Giovanni Niccolo (1560-1626). However, as Timon Screech notes, it was hailed as ‘a marvellous *invention*, not a *discovery*.’[[487]](#footnote-488) Japanese painters, operating in accordance with their own long-established artistic conventions, saw nothing intrinsically natural about this perspectival system of representation. Instead, they saw using such pictures as ‘a complex procedure quite unlike viewing open, empirical space.’[[488]](#footnote-489) As Shiba Kôkan (1747-1818), an early proponent of Western methods wrote in 1799:

Western pictures operate on a highly theoretical level, and no-one should view them offhandedly. There is a correct way to look, and to this end, Western pictures are framed and hung up. When viewing them, even if you only intend a quick glance, stand full-square in front. The Western picture will always show a division between sky and ground [the horizon line]; be sure to position this exactly at eye-level, which, generally speaking, will entail viewing from a distance of five or six *shaku* [ca. 180 cm]. If you observe these rules, things shown near at hand and things shown far off – the foreground and the rearground – will be clearly distinguished and the picture will appear no different from reality itself.[[489]](#footnote-490)

Shiba’s observation calls attention to the different cultural role played by art in Japan, and the resulting differences in compositional principles. Compare Western painting, for example, with the illustrations contained on *fusuma* sliding screens (vertical panels roughly three feet wide and six feet high) that are used as partitions to redefine spaces within Japanese architecture, and often contain scenes from nature such as landscapes and animals. The latter’s role is largely decorative, an embellishment and extension of the overall architecture of the space in which it is contained, as opposed to serving as an illusionary window onto a distant imaginary scene.

Nevertheless, as Screech details, Western perspectival techniques were being assimilated into Japanese art practices prior to the modernising drive of the Meiji period. Linda Ehrlich notes of the subsequent cross-fertilisation between Eastern and Western concepts of representation in painting that, just as European artists associated with the Impressionist school such as Vincent van Gogh and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (and indeed Maurice Denis) were heavily influenced by the ornamental qualities of the Japanese prints then gaining exposure in the West, ‘many Japanese artists of the Meiji period were inspired by Western art toward their own brand of modernism.’[[490]](#footnote-491)

The introduction of photography during the 19th century, upon which cinema’s lens-based monocular way of looking is predicated, must be seen as a crucial driving force in this breaking down of Japanese traditions of two-dimensional representation. The extent to which these local representational tropes persisted within the Japanese film is worthy of further consideration. A direct descendent of the *camera obscura* and *camera lucida*, the camera is inherently designed for mechanically reproducing the depth cues, volumes and empty spaces of the pro-filmic scene two-dimensionally using light and shadow. Yet as the artist David Hockney notes:

Shadows never occur in art outside Europe. The Chinese, Persian and Indian picture-makers, all sophisticated, never used shadows. Not one. There are no shadows in the pictures here: from the Lascaux caves, from Egypt, from early medieval Europe and from Byzantium. I once asked a Chinese lady, of very refined taste, why this was so. She replied, ‘They were no necessary.’ But why did the Europeans paint them? Because we see shadows. But do we? It seems to me we can choose to see them or ignore them. It’s an odd thing to think about, but I do.[[491]](#footnote-492)

Supporting Hockney’s observation, Richie notes with regards to Japanese painting that:

Light and shade are of use only to an artist concerned with modeling, with rendering objects in space, with the verisimilitude of the rendering. If the artist has no need for depth, no way to handle perspective, and no desire for illusionism, he or she will then see small attraction in the possibilities of light and shadow. Such an artist will be concerned with surface, with outline, with two-dimensionality. He or she would not be interested in the literal kind of art we know as mimetic.[[492]](#footnote-493)

Richie sees this preference for the lack of shadows in traditional Japanese art and the full, flat lighting of the Kabuki stage as carried into ‘the full flat lighting of the ordinary Japanese film.’[[493]](#footnote-494) It might be easy to dismiss this claim as a generalisation based on little more than observation. However, research published by the scholar Daisuke Miyao in *The Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Japanese Cinema*, which details the influence of American and European lighting technologies, techniques and practices on the first half century of Japanese cinema, reveals a large amount of supporting evidence. As the author points out:

Cinema is a medium of light and shadow. Cinema does not exist without the electrical light beam that passes through the celluloid strip to throw a shadow image onto a screen before a viewer. Even before the process of projection, the production of moving photographic images is a construction in light and shadow.[[494]](#footnote-495)

Miyao notes that while Japanese cinema was largely reliant upon technologies such as cameras, lighting equipment, projectors and raw film stock imported from Europe or America in its first few decades, its production practices evolved in relation to Hollywood cinema *and* Japanese theatrical conventions during the formative years of the industry.[[495]](#footnote-496) As such there was a constant negotiation between the dual goals of cinema lighting, of visibility and expressivity.

With regards to visibility, initially Japanese cinema took as its model Kabuki, in which ‘flat frontal lighting is used almost exclusively, in order to flatly illuminate the entire stage, eliminate shadows as much as possible, and make onstage acts visible to the spectator.’[[496]](#footnote-497) As for Hollywood production practices, Miyao details the role of Henry Kotani (Kotani Sôichi), a young American-born Japanese who had worked as a an actor and, more critically, a cinematographer at the Jesse L. Lasky Company and Paramount during the 1910s, in bringing American lighting techniques to Japan. Employed by Shochiku Kamata studios, which entered film production in 1920 with the aim of creating films that utilized the acting and stylistic techniques pioneered in Hollywood in order to develop a Japanese product that could compete globally, Kotani directed the studio’s first film, *Woman of the Island* (*Shima no onna*, 1920), introducing lighting techniques he brought from Paramount. However, Miyao notes that when the film played at Shochiku’s Kabuki-za, ‘the audience complained that the images of the film were so “unclear” that it was impossible to see the actors’ facial expressions.’[[497]](#footnote-498)

It is important to note that despite the modern stories, the *Shinpa* (“New School”) genre of *gendai-geki* contemporary dramas that Shochiku specialised in at the time were usually screened at Kabuki theatres and, in terms of lighting at least, audiences expected the films to adhere to Kabuki’s conventions, in which ‘light was more or less a neutral element in mise-en-scène and the visibility of actors’ faces was the most important thing.’[[498]](#footnote-499) Shochiku, whose motivations for the development of a new modern form of Japanese cinema were primarily commercial, severely restrained Kotani’s attempts to introduce high-contrast, low-key lighting to its productions, and by 1922 the company had already dispensed with his services. In June 1922, Kotani wrote in *Kinema Junpô* that‘In general, the only things that a cinematographer [in Japan] is allowed to do is to use the best of background, to make images cleanly visible, and, in particular, to photograph actors beautifully. He should not go beyond those.’[[499]](#footnote-500) None of the films Kotani directed at Shochiku Kamata are still extant. The only film in existence made during his tenure at the studio, *The Cuckoo* (*Hototogisu*, Ikeda Gishin, 1922), which survives only in partial form, is described by Miyao as exhibiting the ‘Lasky-style lighting and backlighting that Kotani brought from Hollywood to Kamata’, yet these were not used as a narrative device at all, even when they could have enhanced the film’s melodramatic content’, and more generally, Shochiku’s *Shinpa*-style films adopted ‘tableau-style flat lighting.’[[500]](#footnote-501)

The manner in which lighting traditions within the studio system both persisted and evolved over the ensuing decades falls outside of the scope of this study. The point remains that the use of *chiaroscuro* to convey a sense of volumetric depth was not originally seen as a primary consideration in Japanese cinema. One can think of examples of Japanese films, however, where low-key lighting is used to convey emotional content. Miyao goes on to chart how a more expressive and stylized approach to lighting was introduced with the *chanbara* genre of films in the 1920s which, despite their historical settings, adopted a more cinematic style that ‘enhances complex psychological states of the sword fighters’ and integrated such dramatic lighting flourishes as the flash of the sword blade in battle.[[501]](#footnote-502) There were also the two films produced independently by the director Kinugasa Teinosuke in association with Shochiku, *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta ippêji*, 1926) and *Crossways* (*Jujirô*, 1928), the second of which explicitly its lighting schemes on those of the German expressionist films of the early 1920s.

In the widescreen era, one returns to the example of Shindô Kaneto’s *Onibaba* (1964) and the director’s companion piece, *Kuroneko* (*Yabu no naka no kuroneko*, 1968), also set during the Warring States period, in which a woman and her daughter are brutally raped and murdered by soldiers, returning in the form of ghostly black cats to wreak their revenge. Both draw heavily upon the conventions of Kabuki and Noh theatre, although unlike the flat full lighting of their stage models, make strong use of dark shadows to create a dread sense of foreboding. Considering that both are predominantly shot in exterior locations, not the controlled environment of the studio, the control of light and shadow within their images is masterful. However, it should be emphasized that in these, as much as the aforementioned examples, the shadows are not used to convey a sense of volumetric depth. In both films, depth is all but eliminated in favour of striking compositions in which emptiness becomes a crucial compositional element.

In one haunting sequence in *Kuroneko*, the perpetrator of the assault encounters the ghostly form of the murdered younger woman while exiting through the Rashomon gate that marks the boundary between the city of Kyoto and the dark wilderness beyond. While he sits on horseback on the left side of the frame, she stands positioned on the far right, slightly further from the camera. Both figures are picked out from the Stygian gloom using spotlighting effects, the background area a gulf of pure darkness, save for the faintly lit vertical pillars of the gate positioned between them. The lack of depth cues within the frame makes the female figure appear much smaller than her murderer, highlighting her ethereal presence.

This shot demonstrates a further tendency of traditional Japanese (and to a lesser extent Chinese) painting, described by the art historian Sherman Lee in his essay in *Cinematic Landscapes*, which is:

to force large blank areas against complex areas which usually include complex silhouettes… The effect of this mode of decoration is allied to that often to be found in Braque, Matisse, or in other contemporary painters, founded on asymmetrical patterns, and depending upon a dynamic tension between nothing and something.[[502]](#footnote-503)

In the same anthology, Richie observes how ‘In the West, we feel that emptiness has no independent function. Only what is full is what is interesting and we are not encouraged to contemplate what we would find vacant. Eastern aesthetics, however, suggest that the “empty” carried its own weight.’[[503]](#footnote-504) Kathe Geist further elaborates on this philosophical difference:

The Taoist and Buddhist traditions of China and Japan saw the human being as merely an element in nature; they celebrated the void (*mu*) and tended to see space and time as relative and interdependent intervals (*ma*) rather than fixed measurements that could be pinned down and controlled. As a result, the Japanese painter approached space very differently from the Western painter. Nature rather than the human being was the dominant subject matter and was rendered impressionistically rather than exactly. There was no “horror vacui.” Nature contains a lot of vacant as well as unseen spaces, and traditional painters apparently felt no need to either lay bear or fill up all this space when rendering it two-dimensionally. Instead they used empty space as an active design element. Moreover, the Japanese painter seldom treated narrative space as a unified whole, separate from the surface on which it was rendered, but generally acknowledged the surface of the screen or scroll containing the painting.[[504]](#footnote-505)

This passage lends further weight to Richie’s observation earlier in this chapter of the role of location and atmosphere in Japanese cinema, of the human character’s position within a scene as object rather than proxy subject. Furthermore, it draws attention to Japanese artists’ acknowledgement of surface and medium. Geist highlights a tendency of traditional painters to flatten space ‘by using white, gold, or gridded backgrounds which tend to push forward and deprive three-dimensionally rendered figures in the foreground of a deep space to inhabit.’[[505]](#footnote-506) It is easy to detect such strategies in the (Academy ratio) compositions of Ozu, in which characters are often framed in mid-shot, filmed frontally against the grid-like patterns of traditional Japanese architecture.

The specificities of traditional Japanese interior architecture facilitate the use of empty space as an active design element, particularly in the field of *jidai-geki*, allowing irrelevant details within the image to be masked off by plain white *shôji* sliding panels or the more decorative surface of the *fusuma* screen. In contemporary-set films, one also notes the strategic use of long lenses by directors such as Imamura Shôhei, Hasebe Yasuharu and Fukasaku Kinji, ostensibly in service of a documentary realist aesthetic but which, by flattening the perspective, throws foreground objects out of focus to block off large areas of the overall composition. Geist goes on to argue that this concept of emptiness extends beyond the spatial to the temporal dimension, which she sees in Ozu’s use of “pillow shots”, the transitional empty shots between scenes featuring unestablished locations devoid of characters and narrative meaning.

The permanent record of a performance is what distinguishes cinema from live theatre, while the temporal aspects that it shares with theatre distinguish it from painting. Yet non-perspectival Japanese art forms such as the *emakimono* picture scrolls, and the ‘the ambulatory, panoramic point of view and freely expandable frame of classical Chinese painting’ from which such forms derived, acknowledge the interdependence of time and space within a single image.[[506]](#footnote-507) Unlike classical perspective and what Hockney describes as the ‘the tyrannical, monocular vision of the lens, which ultimately reduces the viewer to a mathematical point, fixing him to a particular spot in time and place’, they present spaces ‘seen not from a single fixed or momentary viewpoint but from many viewpoints. We feel we can move around the space… They are sophisticated representations of space, closer in fact to our physical experience of moving through the world.’[[507]](#footnote-508)

Belton has observed that ‘the linear perspective employed in pre-widescreen films encouraged the spectator’s eyes, via depth cues, to explore the depth of the frame. The films conformed, more or less, to the perspective system of the Renaissance.’[[508]](#footnote-509) The depth-of-field constraints and flattening effects of the anamorphic lens encouraged new forms of composition and staging that encouraged the spectator to scan the image laterally. Barr’s description of the more organic modes of viewing provided by the expanded CinemaScope image and the rejection of montage, which allowed for a greater degree of freedom for viewers to explore an image for themselves, suggests a natural affinity for the format on the part of Japanese filmmakers, given the compositional conventions adhered to by Japanese artists in the pre-modern period.

Ideas about the actual process of viewing, of piecing together meaning from a presented image, were already being acknowledged by certain Japanese filmmakers working in the pre-widescreen era. The cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo, in an interview with Linda Ehrlich, recounts a conversation with Mizoguchi:

About half-way through the shooting of *Ugetsu*, I went to Mizo’s place and he showed me some picture scrolls (*emakimono*). “Miya-chan,” he said, “movies are like picture scrolls. They’re not something you can go back and see again. You view a film from one scene to another, until the end. The themes of the story are packed within that picture, and whatever isn’t needed is hidden by clouds. If the eye moves toward one picture, it flows along from one part to the next, without ever going backwards...” When I heard about erasing and partitioning off unnecessary areas with clouds, or cutting the scene off at the roof area, I thought to myself: “I’ve just heard something really useful.” After hearing Mizo’s description, I began to be very conscious of the idea of the picture scroll while shooting. The idea of a scroll shot was really helpful when I filmed Ichikawa’s *Kagi* (*The Key* [aka *Odd Obsession*], 1959).[[509]](#footnote-510)

While Japanese critic Satô Tadao notes the similarities between cinema and *emakimono*, he cautiously reminds us that the latter contains no close-ups, montages, multiple points of views, or divisions between scenes.[[510]](#footnote-511) Nevertheless, Miyagawa’s anecdote highlights the active perceptual role of the film viewer, as well as Barr’s argument that ‘art does indeed involve organization, but this is just as possible within a complex image as in a montage sequence: it can in many ways be more subtle.’[[511]](#footnote-512) Mizoguchi was renowned for a style of long takes, lengthy fluid camera movements, a relative absence of montage and a strong consideration of the details and spatial relationships within a single shot. Although he never produced a film using any of the widescreen processes (passing away in 1956, a year before the first Japanese scope productions), a later conversation between Miyagawa and the director suggests how he might have embraced the new formats:

By the way, can you imagine a Mizoguchi film in Cinemascope? When I went to the U.S. to bring back a Vistavision camera, Cinemascope had already been developed. When I returned, I went to Kyoto Prefectural Hospital (where Mizoguchi was hospitalized with Leukemia). He asked me how Vistavision worked, and I drew him a picture in explanation. “This doesn’t allow for a lot of mobility, he replied. When I explained to him about Cinemascope, he was more interested - “That’s like a scroll (*emakimono*),” he said. Even after Mizoguchi had died, I often wondered what it would have been like to film a Mizoguchi film in Cinemascope.

For example, in Cinemascope, when there are three performance groups within one picture, it’s not “Where should I look among these three?” but rather “I’m looking at this one performance. It’s divided up into three.” If Mizoguchi had been the director of such a 3-in-1 scene, it surely would have been interesting. Probably he wouldn’t have used lighting cues as in stage-lighting – by turning off the lights in some areas while illuminating others. Rather, he probably would have tried to film all three areas straight, naturally, so that the viewer is guided to view one performance in one place, then is made to forget the first performance and go on to the other.[[512]](#footnote-513)

The widescreen format lent itself naturally to such compositional strategies as the inclusion of distinct areas of action and detail within the frame, and in this respect, the similarities between the unfolding scenes contained on *emakimono* scrolls, the multiple-panelled *fusuma* (sliding screens) and *byôbu* folding screens that began appearing in the 8th century with the dimensions of the scope frame is striking. Richie notes that:

All views are partial; all need to be framed or else they would not be views. Thus the position of the frame – what is shown and what is not – had long been considered important in the cultures of both East and West. Here, too, there is a dramatic difference in assumptions. Westerners often seem to believe that space is already so filled that all we need to do is cut out a portion, as it were, by placing the frame over it. Japanese, on the other hand, often seem to feel that space itself is so empty that we first place the frame and then, as it were, select the things to put into it.[[513]](#footnote-514)

Cynthia Contreras notes that ‘unlike sound and colour, innovations that have become basically standard in the commercial cinema, the anamorphic format remains but one possibility.’[[514]](#footnote-515) CinemaScope and its derivatives presented but one of many variations in aspect ratios among the various formats adopted globally, such as VistaVision and cropped or matted “ersatz widescreen” formats. At roughly double the width of Academy ratios, it allowed for the kind of subdivision of the frame into separate levels of detail that was noted by Miyagawa.

In her analysis of the works of Kobayashi Masaki, Contreras draws attention to Miyajima Yoshio’s cinematography for *Harakiri* (*Seppuku*, 1962), which is:

…characterized by a propensity for reframing the 2.35:1 aspect ratio into 1.85:1, 1.33:1, or vertically arranged rectangles, and triangles. Often the screen is divided into three distinct vertical or horizontal segments; but a single center [sic] of interest is consistently maintained through lighting, line, and the attention of characters to a particular focal area.[[515]](#footnote-516)

Contreras notes the use of selective lighting effects within the film ‘to focus attention, “reshape” the screen, delineate character, and suggest the passage of time’, and the way in which Kobayashi ‘structures his frames to suggest enclosure, confinement, and stasis’ in a series of ‘static, painterly compositions.’[[516]](#footnote-517) The positioning of the human elements amongst the traditional Japanese architecture ‘allows Kobayashi to emphasize visually the highly structured codes of behavior [sic] of the feudal society. The formal placement of characters within the same shot in relation to one another, determined by rank and propriety, and the confinement of characters within the squares and rectangles of surrounding architectural forms create an oppressive atmosphere despite the wide aspect ratio.’[[517]](#footnote-518)

The mise-en-scène of *Harakiri* highlights the possibilities of contextuality afforded by widescreen as described by Barr, in depicting the relationships between individual characters within a single frame, and their relationship with their environment. In this film, the predominant use of interior locations, the architecture rendered flat in meticulously-composed grid-like arrangements, serves to emphasize the hermetic repressiveness of the feudal hierarchy of the Tokugawa period. Conversely, in certain of his other works, ‘When exploring the horizontal dimension, particularly in *The Human Condition* and *Kwaidan*, Kobayashi suggests even more space beyond the already elongated screen.’[[518]](#footnote-519) Contreras observes how in the former title, Kobayashi’s epic war series *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no jôken*, 1959-61), ‘beyond the already expansive frame lies the vast foreign terrain of Manchuria, engulfing a people who have unwisely strayed too far from home.’[[519]](#footnote-520)

One of the methods described by Contreras of conveying this sense that the details contained within the frame represent only a small part of the overall environment in which the story unfolds is achieved through the use of lateral camera movements that reveal more of the scene across time. Although not without precedent in Western cinematic grammar, Contreras argues that this trope has a correlation in traditional Japanese art with the *emakimono*, a medium which, as previously described, Kobayashi deliberately invokes in the *Hôichi the Earless* segment of *Kwaidan*.[[520]](#footnote-521)

Another method of emphasizing offscreen space utilized by Japanese filmmakers is the placement of characters at the extreme edges of the frame, yielding compositions that often possess the ‘arbitrarily asymmetrical, decorative quality of the Japanese painting’.[[521]](#footnote-522) This feature of Japanese staging runs counter to Western filmmakers’ tendency, inherited from Renaissance art, of grouping the areas of interest towards the central areas of the screen. Many examples of this strategy can be found within *An Actor’s Revenge*. In ‘Ichikawa’s spectacularly sensuous indulgence in the painterly potential of the wide-screen format’, Breakwell draws attention to a notable sequence in which ‘a rope snakes across the darkness as the camera pans left, creating the impression that the screen has limitless width; then the rope resonates tautly in exaggerated perspective back into the inky night, implying that the screen has unfathomable depth.’[[522]](#footnote-523) In the next shot, the two policeman who have thrown the rope lasso stand at the extreme right-hand side of the screen, framed against a pure black backdrop, gazing to the left at the unseen space beyond the limits of the frame. The rope, stretched tight, leads the viewer’s eye leftwards across the otherwise empty pure blackness of the screen as the policemen attempt to reel in their unrevealed, mysterious quarry. The image is both striking and playful, possessing an exaggerated flatness and lack of balance that borders on pure abstraction while simultaneously possessing an innate dramatic tension as the viewer is forced to speculate what lies beyond the frame.

Another technique utilized by Japanese filmmakers is *fukinuki yatai*, the use of floating birds-eye shots to present an omniscient point of view detached from the objective perspectival systems of Western art, which specifically situate the spectator as the viewing subject.[[523]](#footnote-524) Contreras describes how this is deployed in *Kwaidan* to ‘provide the dramatic tension of the various stories, since ghosts inhabit the space outside and the camera occasionally assumes their point of view.’[[524]](#footnote-525) The representational style is a familiar one from both *Yamato-e* classical painting and *emakimono*, with the high-raking angles and parallel perspectival lines de-emphasizing the depth of the image and reducing the image to a flat plane, and the use of camera movements giving the sense that the viewer is only witnessing a fragment of reality contained within the frame. In discussing Mizoguchi’s famous use of crane shots in relation to Japanese art, Darrell William Davis cites the perceptual psychologist Margaret Hagen, who neatly summarises the crucial difference in representational objectives between Western Renaissance art and that which evolved in Asia:

The Japanese artist is not placed by perspective in the composition of the picture, nor is the observer. The work of art created is a separate entity unto itself, an object of contemplation, not an extension of the self. A Japanese composition does not depict a personal, momentary view through a window, subject to change from the slightest of observer movements.[[525]](#footnote-526)

The examples provided within the films of Mizoguchi, Kobayashi and Ichikawa as detailed above have been selected because they are emblematic rather than symptomatic of the various specificities of classical Japanese painting deployed by Japanese filmmakers. It should be noted that Mizoguchi trained as a young man at the Aohashi Western Painting Research Institute, Kobayashi studied Oriental Art at Tokyo’s Waseda University, which he entered in 1933, while Ichikawa’s early interest in painting saw him beginning in the industry as an animator.[[526]](#footnote-527) As such, all were well-equipped to think of cinematic form in terms of images and would have been aware of the differences in presentational approach between Western and classical Japanese art, differences which as directors they could choose to foreground, exaggerate and subvert to varying degrees. Furthermore, the works discussed were all produced at a time when Japanese cinema was gaining greater exposure at international film festivals, a fact which would have had some bearing on their aesthetic approach. In this respect it is useful to keep in mind Noël Burch’s distinction between ‘dramas of conflict in the Western style, and aestheticizations, in terms compatible with Western codes, of traditional material.’[[527]](#footnote-528)

As a counter example, one might present the case of Kurosawa Akira, a director whose work has been hugely popular in the West, and in turn, was heavily influenced by Western dramatic and cinematic styles. Sybil Thornton notes that Kurosawa’s period films, despite the director’s meticulous attention in recreating the historical details of costumes and sets of the time and place in which his films were set, very seldom drew upon traditional sources: they were either original fictional narratives, in the case of *Seven Samurai* and *The Hidden Fortress* (*Kakushi toride no san akunin*, 1958), or adapted from famous Western works, as in his celebrated transplantation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* to 16th century Japan, *Throne of Blood* (*Kumonosu-jô*, 1957).[[528]](#footnote-529)

In stylistic terms, too, Kurosawa’s films take a distinctively different approach to that associated with the classical Japanese cinema of the studio era. They regularly emphasized the depth of the image through use of striking compositions marked by dramatic close-ups, a volumetric rendering of space using *chiaroscuro*, depth staging techniques featuring characters moving freely within a scene, the use of weather effects such as rain and fog to accentuate or attenuate screen depth, the use of multiple camera setups to dissect the pro-filmic space from different angles, and a prevalence of camera movements into and within the scene rather than laterally across it.

Drawing comparisons between Kinugasa’s *Gate of Hell* and Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai*, Satô Tadao notes that ‘if Kinugasa’s method is a traditional one that places emphasis on the beauty of forms, then Kurosawa’s approach finds its conceptual basis in Western oil painting, which goes against the decorative and stylized approaches and attempts to give expression to that which comes within.’[[529]](#footnote-530) In his study of the director, Richie isolates a specific instance of Kurosawa’s exploitation of the TohoScope format in his first such production, *The Hidden Fortress*, that sits at odds with many of the stylistic characteristics of classical Japanese cinema previously described, emphasizing the depth of the space in which the scene unfolds in one single take:

There is an interesting sequence in which the action occurs most of the time at the extreme edges of the image. The two farmers are being made to dig a hole and the sequence begins with them in the middle of the screen, down in the hole (along with the camera) fighting. Disgusted with each other, they climb out, one on each side of the hole, and the camera tilts back to watch them. They begin walking forward, each far on the side of the hole, far on his own side of the screen, and the camera (still in the hole) dollies back. They walk back, but the camera does not follow – for the reason that they join and walk away, at which point the camera elevates itself, and pans to follow them.[[530]](#footnote-531)

Similarly, elaborating on Masumura Yasuzô’s attempts at introducing Western cinematic approaches to the Japanese film, Michael Raine notes how *Giants and Toys*’ use of ‘reverse cuts and deep staging open up new complexities, as when a cut reveals Goda in the background while a worker complains about his nepotistic rise.’[[531]](#footnote-532) As Raine states:

In the 1950s at least, Masumura was more committed to a cinephilic embrace of film style (specifically the mise en scène of setting, décor, and acting, coupled with the mobile deep space cinematography and disjunctive cutting that made those elements stand out) than populist ideologues or self-identified ‘theme oriented’ (*têma shugi*) newspaper critics. He aligned himself with a global post-war cohort of young filmmakers and claimed in a 1959 manifesto that abstract concepts were secondary to lived experience.[[532]](#footnote-533)

As previously mentioned, the films of Masumura from the late 1950s are seen as having paved the way for New Wave directors such as Ôshima Nagisa, Shinoda Masahiro, et al. The increased adoption of location shooting of such directors, and their interrogation of Japanese society, culture and history through formal experimentation followed not long after the introduction of widescreen formats to Japan. This further complicates any notion of a “pure” Japanese film aesthetic vis-à-vis the classical Hollywood style, not to mention other outside influences such as the films of the French New Wave. Richie makes a broad distinction between classical directors such as Mizoguchi, Ozu, Naruse, Kurosawa and Ichikawa, ‘who create compositions within the studio and transmit a view of reality which is closed and composed’ and this later generation of filmmakers ‘who are “Western” in the assumption that reality is outside the frame as well, and that the director chooses his portion of an already filled area.’[[533]](#footnote-534) Examples have already been given of films produced both within and outside of the studio that display traits of a traditionally Japanese approach to the image that conflict with Richie’s statement, particularly with regards to notions of offscreen space, and even within the oeuvres of single directors such as Ôshima there is a wide variation in a film style overtly married to philosophical content.

Clearly the weight of cultural tradition has been both consciously and unconsciously engrained within the work of Japanese filmmakers, while the dimensions of the scope screen have encouraged a mode of viewing compatible with that encouraged by Japan’s pre-modern art forms. Nevertheless, as Eric Crosby concludes, after surveying the use of widescreen in works by the directors Suzuki Seijun, Okamoto Kihachi and Katô Tai:

We do not need to claim that Japanese cinema is unequivocally oppositional to Hollywood’s mode of representation to understand it. If anything, such a claim limits the extent to which we can understand the different modes of Japanese film practice. In short, cultural-exceptionalist explanations of film style preclude more fruitful causal accounts of the transnational influence of widescreen composition.[[534]](#footnote-535)

The sheer abundance of Japanese cinema, the wide variety of genres contained within it, the influence of studio traditions, the input of cinematographers, set designers and lighting engineers, and the radical variations in the styles and approaches of individual directors caution against generalisations of a national film aesthetic, and confirm that analysis of Japanese cinematic form is best undertaken with specific regard to the films in question. This is the approach that shall be taken in the following case studies of two pioneering productions.

# 6. Case Study 1 - Towards a Japanese Widescreen Aesthetic: *The Bride of Otori Castle*

Despite its historical significance as Japan’s first domestic widescreen feature, *The Bride of Otori Castle* (*Otori-jo no hanayome*), released on 2 April 1957 and directed by Matsuda Sadatsugu for Toei, is a film that appears little known to Western scholars beyond its title. Alexander Jacoby is the only writer in the English-language to cast any kind of evaluative eye over it in recent years, writing in *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors* that:

This very lightweight period comedy was like Hollywood’s first Cinemascope film, *The Robe* (1953, Henry Koster), more notable for its pioneering status than for any inherit merit, but Matsuda earned some appreciation thereafter for his adept use of the ’Scope frame.[[535]](#footnote-536)

The only recorded screenings of the film in Europe and the United States were on 24 January 1958, as part of the ‘Japanese Film Week’ held at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, and much later at on 4 September 1991 at London’s National Film Theatre, as part of the season ‘The Power of the Image: A Celebration of Japanese Scope Films.’ The film was also shown under its alternate title of *Samurai Bride Hunter* in 2004, in the Nippon Cinema Classics section of the 17th Tokyo International Film Festival. The theme of this programme was ‘Nascent Japanese Cinema – A Collection of Early Works’, with each of the included titles representing a particular “first”, be it the first in a long-running series, the debut performance of a celebrated actor or actress, or the first adaptation of a literary work, with *The Bride of Otori Castle* offered as ‘the first color Cinemascope picture in Japan.’[[536]](#footnote-537)

Set at an unspecified time during the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), the film is essentially a romantic drama featuring a number of action set pieces. It follows the adventures of a young lord who, upon reaching the age of thirty, spurns his parents’ attempts at arranging his marriage and heads off into the outside world to find a bride. Despite the feudal Japanese period setting, the narrative trajectory is a familiar one and the story of a universal appeal. Still, one might argue that the choice of such slight, even frivolous, material with which to launch the new ToeiScope system seems a rather curious one, especially when compared with the epic approach and portentous choice of religious subject matter of Fox’s first CinemaScope release, *The Robe*. Nevertheless, the high levels of production of the Japanese studio system detailed previously coupled with a domestic audience already familiar with the imported widescreen films produced overseas, meant that a company such as Toei, which released a total of 104 films in 1957, was less reliant on the novelty of the format. There was simply less commercial imperative for Toei to release standout ‘blockbuster’ titles compared with its equivalents in America several years earlier or, as was the case of *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (1957), smaller local rivals such as Shintoho. The motivation behind the production can be largely seen as providing Toei with the kudos of being the first company to release a widescreen film into Japanese cinemas.

Toei’s output throughout the 1950s and the 1960s has been largely overlooked by Western researchers, save for the works distributed by the studio made by individual directors such as Uchida Tomu and Imai Tadashi, whose international status is largely due to their activities outside of the company.[[537]](#footnote-538) The simple reason for this is that Toei never significantly concerned itself with the overseas festival market. Nevertheless, by a relatively early stage, the company had secured a strong position within the domestic market through a combination of a rapid expansion of its exhibition interests and a readily-identifiable brand of popular entertainment titles made within well-established genres. One notes that six of the top-grossing productions of the 1950s were from Toei, against two from Daiei, five from Nikkatsu, five from Shochiku, and only one apiece from Toho and Shintoho. Furthermore, all of these titles fell within the category of *jidai-geki* period dramas.

The figures provide a clear indication of the extent to which Toei shaped the cinematic climate of the decade. Within years of the company introducing its double bill system in January 1954, the other studios followed, although never reached the same levels of production. Accordingly, the overall proportion of *jidai-geki* films also leapt dramatically between these years due to Toei’s increased output, from approximately 30% in 1953 to 45% in 1954.[[538]](#footnote-539) It is worth noting that Toei began operating a year before the Occupation ended, officially formed when the two smaller production companies of Tôyoko Eiga and Ôizumi Eiga were amalgamated into Tokyo Motion Picture Distribution (Tôkyô Eiga Haikyû) to form the new Toei Company on 31 March 1951, its name derived from the first two characters of Tôkyô Eiga.[[539]](#footnote-540) Toei can be held primarily responsible for the boom in *jidai-geki* historical action films during the 1950s, a genre discouraged by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and banned outright until 1949 for its promotion of feudal values. The company released *Ako Castle* (*Akô-jô*, Hagiwara Ryô), the first postwar adaptation of the enduringly popular *Legend of the 47 Loyal Ronin* (*Chûshingura*) story, on 24 April 1952, the Thursday before the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect on Monday 28 April, officially ending the Occupation. However, like the Hollywood Western, the content and ethos of the genre was far more mutable than might be inferred from its immediate postwar suppression, with later films such as Uchida Tomu’s *Bloody Spear at Mount Fuji* (*Chiyari Fuji*, 1955) implicitly criticising the feudal mindset of the militarist era. *The Bride of Otori Castle* similarly contains a critique of corrupt officialdom, with its negative depiction of the Akatsuka clan of *hatamoto*, a samurai group in the official service of the Tokugawa shogunate military government, who abuse their power and status for their own ends.

Another point of interest is that all bar one of these top-grossing Toei films were produced in or after 1957, the same year as *The Bride of Otori Castle*. This was a particularly propitious time for the company. As noted in a previous chapter, Toei rapidly expanded its exhibition arm from 1956 onwards and, along with Shochiku, led the way as the company with the largest number of directly-managed theatres, many of which were equipped for widescreen presentation. With exhibition leading production, it was those enterprises with the greatest number of outlets for their films that prospered, while those with a limited number of venues, such as Shintoho and Daiei, struggled and would eventually fail. It was for this reason that, by the end of the decade, Toei had secured for itself the largest share of the domestic box office.[[540]](#footnote-541)

Stylistically, *The Bride of Otori Castle* marries the seamless continuity editing approach of classical Hollywood with the attention to colour and period detail one associates with the best period dramas of the studio era. A review in *Variety* following its New York screening noted ‘Technically it’s superb. And once again the Japanese reveal their mastery of color photography.’[[541]](#footnote-542) Jacoby notes of Matsuda that ‘his films displayed the virtues of a classical training: economy, pace, and graceful choreography of action’, before adding that ‘these assets speak for the strength of the Japanese studio system and the vitality of its classical approach, a vitality demonstrated as much by the proficiency of its minor talents as by the genius of its masters.’[[542]](#footnote-543)

It is clear that Jacoby holds Matsuda in this former category, as ‘a representative example of the proficient but anonymous artisans working in *jidai-geki* between the twenties and the sixties.’[[543]](#footnote-544) A veteran of the studio system, Matsuda’s entry into the film industry was through family connections; he was the illegitimate son of the pioneering “father of Japanese film”, Makino Shôzô, and made his debut at Makino Productions with *Poor Daikuro* (*Kawaisôna Daigurô*, 1928). He had directed over seventy films for companies including Shinkô Kinema, Nikkatsu and Daiei by the time he entered Tôyoko Eiga in 1947, where he directed *The Man with Three Fingers* (*Sanbon no yubi no otoko*), continuing to work at the company’s Uzumasa studios after the smaller enterprise was subsumed into the new Toei company. Matsuda directed some eighty or so films for Toei until his final work for the studio, *Three Young Rebels* (*Baraketsu shôbu*, 1965),although his final directing credits, after a break of four years, were for the first two entries in the four-part *Crimson Bat* (*Mekura no Oichi*, 1969-70; also known as *Blind Oichi*) series for Shochiku, a response to Daiei’s popular *Zatoichi* films featuring a female protagonist played by Matsuyama Yôko. He died in 2003 at the age of 96.

Despite Jacoby’s dismissal of Matsuda as an ‘anonymous artisan’, given the fact that five of the director’s films were ranked in the top 20 grossing domestic releases of the 1950s, in purely commercial terms at least, he can be described, along with Watanabe Kunio, as one of the most successful directors of the immediate postwar period (see *Table 2*). One cannot solely attribute this success to the general popularity of Toei’s films, as only one other representative from the company, Sasaki Yasushi, is included in this list. In other words, rather than just another studio journeyman, Matsuda was clearly a lucrative asset to his employers.

Regardless of any claims to auteur status for Matsuda, as an example of an efficient, technically well-crafted studio production and the first anamorphic feature film to be produced in Japan, *The Bride of Otori Castle* warrants closer analysis. In order to explore how the new widescreen format was employed in service of the narrative, a detailed synopsis now follows.

## 6.1 Synopsis

As the young lord Gentarô approaches his thirtieth birthday, a selection of the land’s finest young noblewomen are assembled as prospective brides in the courtroom of his ancestral home of Otori Castle by his parents, the regional *daimyô* of the Matsudaira clan and his wife. Bored by the charade, the headstrong young man breaches protocol by exiting the castle gates with the stated desire to find a wife for himself who is capable of fulfilling her filial duties. On the road to Edo, he stops for an *onigiri* (rice ball), yet naïve to the ways of the world and having never carried money with him before, is surprised when he is asked to pay. A *ronin* (masterless samurai), gauging Gentarô’s high status, steps in to calm a potentially tricky situation, and after paying the debt, assists Gentarô in trading in his expensive kimono and medicine case, while making a modest profit for himself in the process. The two part company and vow to meet again in the capital, with Gentarô introducing himself to the stranger under his assumed name of Matsuhira Gennosuke.

At a Kabuki performance in Edo, Okinu and Omitsu, the two daughters of the Izutsuya merchant house, find themselves the subjects of the boorish attentions of Lord Nagano Gorozaemon and his vassals in the Akatsuka group of *hatamoto*, retainers operating in the service of the Tokugawa shogunate. The girls rebuff Nagano’s request that they join his table to serve him. That night, Nagano and his henchmen scheme to take the girls by force, asking a nearby stranger, Gentarô (freshly arrived in the capital incognito) to keep watch. The guileless young lord is overjoyed at this prospect of paid work, but during the planned abduction, becomes aware of the nature of his employment, and leaps to the defense of the two sisters, seeing off the members of Akatsuka group. Introducing himself as a homeless *ronin*, he is invited to stay at the Izutsuya household.

During Gentarô’s sojourn with the merchant’s family, rivalries to his affections emerge between the two sisters. He overhears the older Okinu protesting about his dirtiness and apparent low breeding, but nevertheless, her father begins to suspect the opposite might be true. A messenger from the Akatsuka group visits the family, demanding reparations for the embarrassment caused to Lord Nagano during his attack on the girls. Gentarô once more leaps to the Izutsuya family’s defense, and chases him off. That night, Gentarô romances Okinu under the moonlight and the two embrace, although a level of misunderstanding as to the nature of their affections soon develops.

At Otori Castle, Lord Matsudaira is on his deathbed. A call is sent out to find his heir Gentarô, with the elderly court retainer Kamon dispatched with a small force to the capital. It is revealed that Lord Matsudaira is half-brother to the shogun, and so the shogun’s forces are also enlisted in the search. Meanwhile, the Akazuka *hatamoto* group, still vowing revenge on the Izutsuya house, are approached by a *ronin* offering his sword for hire, the same stranger who assisted Gentarô at the beginning of his journey into the outside world, who gives his name as Higaki Gonkurô. Upon hearing from this new recruit that a young nobleman from the area of the Matsudaira clan’s fiefdom is in Edo looking for a bride, Lord Nagano begins to hatch a plan to get his hands on Okinu.

Rumours that a young *daimyo* lord from the Matsudaira clan has his eye on Okinu reach the Izutsuya family, and a blind meeting for the following evening is arranged by her father, unaware that the potential husband in question is, in fact, Gentarô. Okinu is unhappy with the arrangements, due to her affection for Gentarô, and becomes angry with the young lord’s feigned disinterest in the liaison as he continues to hide his noble identity. Okinu is led to her appointment with the unknown samurai suitor, only to find Lord Nagano sitting there masquerading as the young Matsudaira lord.

As Kamon discovers Gentarô’s location at the Izutsuya house, Gentarô realises the identity of the evil lord masquerading as him, and heads to Nagano’s manor. Here he meets Gonkurô, who recognises him from their initial meeting and, now aware of Nagano’s corrupt nature, the two join forces to confront and defeat the Akatsuka clan of unruly thugs. The police arrive and try to arrest Gentarô and Gonkurô for attacking these retainers of the shogun, but Kamon arrives with the Matsudaira clan troops, just in time to reveal to everyone Gentarô’s true identity, to the astonishment of all present. The following day, the Matsudaira forces depart homewards, leaving the Izutsuya family behind. Covertly, Gentarô dispatches one of the bearers of his palanquin, Gonkurô, to deliver a message to Okinu proposing marriage.

## 6.2 A Classical Aesthetic

Despite the reservations voiced by certain critics in the West following the immediate introduction of the CinemaScope system - that the expanded dimensions of the anamorphic frame would render aspects of the traditional approach to continuity editing, eye-line matching and scene dissection confusing for viewers - *The Bride of Otori Castle* adheres to the seamless storytelling techniques of classical Hollywood. Establishing long shots lead into familiar shot-reverse-shot sequences, with the characters framed in medium or close-up shots for the many of the dialogue scenes.

Shallow focus predominates throughout the film, with the areas of interest spread evenly across the full span of the screen. The wider image also permits a number of conspicuously lengthy takes, including several single-shot dialogue exchanges between characters positioned at the far edges of the frame. An early example of this is contained in a scene in which Lord and Lady Matsudaira discuss the young *daimyo* Gentarô’s departure from the castle. As they sit opposite one another in the foreground, occupying the extreme left and right quarters of the screen, framed in mid-shot, the court retainer, Kamon, and two further attendants are arranged, similarly seated, between them in the background, slightly out of focus due to the depth constraints of the anamorphic lens. A similar shot portrays the two sisters, Okinu and Omitsu, conversing from a seated position in their spacious boudoir, facing each other across the full width of the screen. These compositions not only allow for a richer sense of mise-en-scène through their presentation of period architectural and decorative details, but the characters’ positioning at the edges of the wider frame emphasizes the formal and psychological distance between them. It is also noteworthy that the approach to staging goes against the tendency of Hollywood productions to group speaking characters towards the central areas of the frame.

Shot lengths in general appear to be longer than the average for an Academy ratio film of the period (Salt, as cited in the previous chapter, details these for American films of the period, although there is no comparable data for Japanese productions).[[544]](#footnote-545) One particularly efficient example of how single shots are used to articulate time and space occurs in an 11-second take detailing the initial encounter between Gentarô and Gonkurô at the roadside stall. Following an opening close-up of the lantern baring the name of the establishment, suspended high above the doorway, the camera pans downwards and to the left, leading the eye to settle on a wide shot of the young lord seated just outside, consuming an *onigiri*. The road he is travelling upon occupies the bottom left-hand corner of the frame, while a minute figure can be seen strolling in the distance in the fields behind him, suggesting the leisurely passage of time in the world beyond the castle gates. After a while, the camera pans to the right, parallel to the side of the stall, picking up on the motion of the innkeeper as he walks from the kitchen area to serve a woman seated inside at the rear of the inn, leading the eye to the main figure of interest, the man seated in the foreground, Gonkurô, who has yet to be introduced. The scene then cuts to a medium close-up of Gonkurô peering bemusedly to the left, towards the off-screen Gentarô, as he begins to suspect that this finely-clothed traveller may not be all he seems.

Such lengthy takes are typical throughout the film. Another occurs in an ensuing scene of Gentarô and Gonkurô conversing while walking through street exteriors, the camera tracking sideways, parallel but slightly ahead of them, before coming to rest and the scene cutting to a more conventional shot-reverse-shot dialogue exchange. There are two major action scenes: the initially night-time melee in which Gentarô saves Okinu and Omitsu from abduction by Nagano’s group in a backstreet behind the Kabuki theatre, and the massive pitched battle in the courtyard of Nagano’s manor at the climax. The latter opens in a highly stylized theatrical fashion, with the two young women bound back-to-back on a stake besieged by the renegade *hatamoto* leader’s thugs wearing Oni masks, a brazier blazing in the foreground and crashing music playing on the soundtrack. Both similarly unfold in long takes, with the camera panning and tracking laterally to follow the action, occasionally dollying in to reframe the characters in mid-shot and with occasional cutaways to the sisters’ horrified reaction shots or the terrified faces of those facing Gentarô’s sword. The scenes are vivaciously choreographed, with *Variety* claiming:

…the hero out-Flynns Errol in feats of derring do… There’s a smashing climax… when the girls again fall in the hands of the bandits. Our hero arrives in time to rescue the girls as they are tied to a stake and single-handedly knocks over several dozen villains. It has all the earmarks of an American cowboy-Indian picture.[[545]](#footnote-546)

Aside from such establishing shots as the exterior of the Japanese castle, the vast majority of *The Bride of Otori Castle*, including such ostensibly night-time exteriors as the action and romantic scenes, was shot within the controlled environment of the Toei-owned Uzumasa studios in the suburbs of Kyoto, which were used exclusively for *jidai-geki*. Many of the Edo-period building interiors and outdoor streets in which the story unfolds were standing sets, utilized from film to film. The expansive studio layout facilitated the prevalence of such aforementioned lengthy tracks and pans, revealing the full extensiveness of the sets and suggesting a wider world outside of the frame.

*The Bride of Otori Castle* was clearly made with a domestic rather than a foreign audience in mind. Many of Toei’s productions from this period, as noted, fell within the *jidai-geki* category, and their nostalgic evocation of a more structured age, prior to the incursion of foreign interests, is more akin to that which can found in the American Western. They can be described as culturally pure, in as much as they were made for local audiences, and thereby reinforced notions of Japanese identity and tradition during a period of rapid modernisation, and, more crucially, internationalisation.

One can find many examples from the studio era of such evocations of Japan’s cultural heritage as those contained within *The Bride of Otori Castle*; the red lion dance that occurs on a stage within the castle grounds before Gentarô’s introduction to his prospective brides, or the performance in the Kabuki theatre in the scene in which Okinu and Omitsu are harassed by Lord Nagano and his underlings. Nevertheless, the colour widescreen format allows for these familiar theatrical set-pieces to be presented in a more vivid manner than previously imaginable, and with an authenticity to the original performance that is eye-catching.

The lateral staging techniques encouraged by the limited focal depth, combined with strong, even lighting, results in vibrant colours (filmed using Eastmancolor stock), with a minimum of shadows, and compresses the images into wide, flat planes, often in accordance with the compositional conventions associated with traditional Japanese art previously described. There appear several deliberate attempts to frame images in a manner that evokes classical *Yamato-e* painting. A scene at a traditional *hanami* (flower viewing) celebration, in which Nagano and his minions plan their extortion of the Izutsuya merchant house, opens with the frame filled with branches adorned with cherry blossoms, before the camera cranes downwards to the right to focus on a group of mask-wearing folk dancers and the assorted merrymakers surrounding them. After this establishing shot, the scene cuts to the corrupt Akatsuka group, including a number of female attendants, all wearing brightly-coloured kimonos and seated beneath a cherry tree. The space is rendered in one of these shots as a long, wide plane, with the characters arranged across its span to create a beautiful flat composition, framed by the overhanging pink blossoms above.

It is telling that Fujii Shigeo’s set report, published in *Eiga Hyôron* a month before the film’s release under the title ‘Towards a Widescreen Era for Domestic Films too’, is illustrated using an image from the beginning of the film, featuring Kamon, standing on a raised stage at the far right of the frame, addressing the ranks of the beautiful young prospective brides he has convened for Gentarô.[[546]](#footnote-547) The still in question provides a neat encapsulation of the film’s premise while pointing towards its stylistic exploitation of the widescreen format. The young noblewomen are arranged in four uniform rows of ten in the area occupying the left three-quarters of the image, seated on the *tatami* of the palace courtroom and stretching from the foreground to the *fusumu* screens painted with mountain landscapes that delimit the background depth of the location. The camera is positioned at roughly the level of Kamon’s eyeline, looking down at the women from a slightly elevated position. The effect is of a horizontally unbalanced image in which flatness is emphasized and the potential brides reduced to anonymous decorative elements arranged within the grid structure created by the edges of the *tatami* and *fusuma*, very much in adherence to the compositional conventions of traditional art forms such as the *emakimono* scrolls.

The fact that this pre-publicity still is the only one used depicting a scene from the film itself (the others in the magazine are behind-the-scenes stills featuring such details as the camera used to shoot it, and the director and members of the cast wearing modern clothes) signifies how Japanese commentators saw the anamorphic technology as very much compatible with the modes of presentation familiar from classical *Yamato-e*. Incidentally, the scene in question unfolds within the film in a manner that is subtly though notably different; not as a single fixed shot, but with the camera tracking from right to left, towards the back row of the assembled ranks of women, while simultaneously panning left to settle on the figure of Kamon as he addresses them from a seated, not standing, position. This suggests that Toei’s publicity department and the editors of *Eiga Hyôron* selected the image as a way of best demonstrating the virtues of the widescreen format as a still shot. The shot itself is mirrored, quite literally, when Kamon later announces the illness of the Lord Matsudaira and a call is made for the young lord to be found. However, this time it is filmed from the opposite side of the set, tracking right to left across the similarly-arranged seated male figures of the Matsudaira warriors, while panning left to focus on the standing figure of the court retainer.

The studio apparatus behind such productions as *The Bride of Otori Castle* should now be apparent, leading some weight to Jacoby’s aforementioned assessment of Matsuda’s anonymous directorial style. In this regard, it is worth noting earlier observations made by Marshall Deutelbaum in his analysis of the basic compositional strategies used in Hollywood anamorphic productions. Deutelbaum argues that these remained essentially unchanged throughout the studio era, and can be attributed as much to the contributions of other studio technicians as they can to the director. At their most basic level, these techniques involved treating the image presented within the fixed frame as a geometrically balanced two-dimensional composition that can be divided into quarters. To this end, ‘such decor elements as doorways and pieces of furniture often are designed as modular units to fit one or two quarters of the frame’s grid’, and the ‘quarterly divisions are more subtly designed into the architectural details of the set.’[[547]](#footnote-548) Deutelbaum goes on to explain how such features can be employed to limit the interest to certain areas of the frame, by masking the unnecessary quarters with, for example, the use of curtains in *The Robe*, which find their equivalent in Japanese period productions in *shôji* sliding panels and *fusuma*.

Deutelbaum argues that the role of cinematographers working in close collaboration with set designers was crucial to the creation of a balanced ‘CinemaScope composition [that] often depends upon the set’s ability to be photographed simultaneously as both a plausible setting and a geometrically patterned flatness.’[[548]](#footnote-549) Nevertheless, the traditional critical focus on the auteur meant that the effectiveness of such compositional strategies were often attributed to directors deemed worthy of such a status, and passed by unnoticed in the films of those who were not. Deutelbaum notes that ‘when CinemaScope was introduced, critics declared it would take a talented director to use the wide format artistically.’[[549]](#footnote-550) They praised George Cukor ‘for mastering the CinemaScope frame’ through his use of masking to focus interest on specific areas in *A Star is Born* (1954), although ‘that this had already been done in *The Robe* may have passed unnoticed because no critic expected such ‘artistry’ from its director, Henry Koster. In fact, both *The Robe* and *A Star is Born* employ the quartered frame to establish and maintain composition.’[[550]](#footnote-551)

So to what extent should one attribute the aesthetic virtues of *The Bride of Otori Castle* to its director, Matsuda Sadatsugu, and what was the input of other creative agents such as the screenwriter Nakayama Fumio, cinematographer Kawasaki Shintarô, art director Suzuki Takatoshi and lighting engineer Nakayama Haruo? Kawasaki’s first cinematography credit dates back to 1939, when he first shot a number of titles made by Shinkô Kinema at its second studios in Kyoto. He remained there following the company’s assimilation into the new Daiei company in 1942, although migrated to Tôyoko Eiga’s Uzumasa studios at Kyoto towards the end of the decade, where he worked almost exclusively after it was acquired to form Toei. Kawasaki first worked alongside Matsuda while at Daiei, on the two-part *jidai-geki* *Takadanobaba* (*Takadanobaba*,1944), while his first credit for Tôyoko Eiga was the Matsuda-directed *The G-Men of Japan* (*Nippon G-Men*, 1948). His 60-70 credits as a cinematographer, after Tôyoko Eiga was merged into Toei in 1951, were almost entirely collaborations with the director, up until *Three Young Rebels* in 1965, after which both Kawasaki and Matsuda left the studios. Kawasaki’s final cinematography credit was also on the first two entries in the *Crimson Bat* series directed by Matsuda for Shochiku and released in 1969. Similar to this close cross-career collaboration between director and cinematographer, the fourteen scenarios credited to the scriptwriter of *The Bride of Otori Castle*, Nakayama Fumio, were all filmed exclusively by Matsuda between 1953-63.

In comparison, Suzuki Takatoshi is credited as an art director/set designer on numerous Toei productions following the company’s establishment, right up until his last credit for the company’s 1979 remake of Nakagawa Nobuo’s 1960 horror classic *Jigoku*, directed by Kumashiro Tatsumi. While he worked exclusively on period action dramas throughout the 1950s, very few of these were directed by Matsuda. Their other collaborations outside of *The Bride of Otori Castle* were all directed within a limited period: these include *The Mysterious Snake Mansion* (*Yôja no maden*, 1956), *Komon Mito: The Shogun’s Adjutant* (*Mito Kômon: Tenka no fukushôgun*, 1959)*, The Shogun Crosses Iga: Duel at Dawn* (*Tenka no igagoe: Akatsuki no kessen*, 1959), the two-parts of *The 47 Masterless Samurai* (*Chûshingura*, 1959), *The Boring Retainer: The Mysterious Group of Assassins* (*Hatamoto taikutsu otoko: Nazo no ansatsutai*, 1960)and *Sazen Tange: The Mysterious Sword* (*Tange Sazen: Yôtô nuretsubame*, 1960). Lighting engineer Nakayama Haruo also worked, in equal measure, with other directors at Toei as well as Matsuda, including Katô Tai, Marune Santarô, Ozawa Shigehiro, Sasaki Yasushi and Uchida Tomu, his career stretching through the 1970s where he worked on, among other titles, a number of Fukasaku Kinji films including *Battles Without Honor and Humanity* (*Jingi naki tatakai*, 1973).

From the involvement of such long-serving employees, all of whom highly familiar with the studio environment in which they worked, one can surmise how a certain stylistic unity would emerge within the *jidai geki* produced by Toei, particularly with regards to the treatment of colour, lighting and set decoration. What is especially apparent, however, is the close collaborative synergy between the director and cinematographer.

The scenes involving Gentarô and the two sisters stand out in particular as clear examples of the how the widescreen format is able to effectively exploit the specificities of the studio sets through carefully orchestrated camera movements and a meticulous staging of the characters. In such sequences, secret lovers trysts are revealed to be not so secret through a deft deployment of horizontal pans and a judicious positioning of the characters within the pro-filmic space. In one such scene, the younger Omitsu flirts with the young lord as she shaves him in the sisters’ shared boudoir, playfully asking if he is in love with Okinu. A point-of-view shot from Okinu, eavesdropping on this private moment from outside, frames the seated Omitsu through the open shutters of her chamber, positioned in the third vertical quarter of the frame, with the blank *shôji* walls masking Gentarô, whom she is facing left towards, rendering his reactions invisible. Because the walls are literally paper thin, however, Okinu can hear all of their exchange. The camera pans left beyond the extent of the house to reveal the second figure of Seikichi, a young clerk in the service of the Izutsuya family business who harbours romantic feelings for Omitsu, crouching behind a bush, similarly spying on the couple inside. The viewpoint then switches to within the room, facing in the opposite direction towards its corner, with Omitsu positioned on the centre left of the screen and Gentarô on the right, directly facing one other. Framed through the open shutters behind on either side of them, the two snoopers can be seen outside, mesmerised by the couple’s flirtatious banter. This camera position offers the spectator a privileged view of the hierarchy of gazes in a scene in which the main characters remain unaware of who is looking and who is being looked at, while the strong, flattened grid-like geometric structure of the composition underscores how the traditional architectural features of Japanese interiors seem particularly well-suited to the strategies described by Deutelbaum.

Later that night, Gentarô approaches Okinu as she stands on a moon-viewing gallery across a small courtyard from the sisters’ room, the night sky rendered as a painted backdrop. The romantic nature of the scene is already apparent due to the presence of the full-moon above them (Satô Tadao notes how ‘in prewar films, directors often set love scenes under the cover of night, because romantic love was not considered a proper topic for daytime scenes. The moon constituted an important element of nighttime scenes, acting as a witness who affirms the lovers’ emotions’).[[551]](#footnote-552) The gentle strains of an unaccompanied female voice singing softly fills the soundtrack. As Gentarô moves toward Okinu, the camera pans left, revealing Seikichi once more as a silent witness to the seduction. After cutting to settle on a momentary mid-shot of Seikichi, the pan left continues to disclose that it is Omitsu, framed by the open shutters of her the room, whose serenade is setting the romantic tone, a subtle and witty way of enhancing the mood and revealing Omitsu’s complicity in bringing the suitors together.

## 6.3 The Legacy of The Bride of Otori Castle

Critical assessments of *The Bride of Otori Castle* in the relatively scant number of Western sources that cover the film in any detail agree it is a well-crafted piece of popular entertainment, albeit of a routine and unsophisticated nature. As *Variety* concluded at the end of its review following the New York screening, ‘It’s not the kind of a picture that will go over in the U.S. either in general or art situations, but it has its moments as a demonstration of what the masses in Japan probably go for.’[[552]](#footnote-553) In their brief discussion of the birth of widescreen production in Japan, Anderson and Richie state that *The Bride of Otori Castle* was ‘a very ordinary picture using the technically rather poor Toeiscope’, remarking rather pithily that ‘Its slogan was “Picture Size Three Times as Large; Interest One Hundred Times as Great.” One naturally doubts the veracity of the latter statement; even the former was not true, as the picture size was only twice as large.’[[553]](#footnote-554)

The examples detailed above, however, do show that Matsuda was able to rise to the task of demonstrating the virtues of widescreen within a commercial entertainment film typical of the kind in which Toei specialised. The film, which manifests a subtle yet sophisticated level of craftsmanship in which the hand of the director is not readily apparent, attracted a degree of interest from the Japanese press at the time, albeit with a focus on the technology rather than the merits of the film itself.[[554]](#footnote-555) Ultimately, however, *The Bride of Otori Castle* was only a modest commercial success. While it was the eleventh grossing title of its year of release (see *Table 3*), a year in which eight of the top ten grossing pictures were produced using anamorphic formats, it was not among the decade’s highest earners. Furthermore, it has been unavailable on any home-viewing format in Japan since a VHS release in 1996.[[555]](#footnote-556)

If little else, however, the feasibility of anamorphic production in Japan had been demonstrated. As Anderson and Richie note, through a strategy of lending its contracted theatres the money to upgrade to anamorphic projection equipment (already installed at its newly-built directly-managed venues), ‘Toei was the very first to launch a full-scale widescreen production program and the first to promise to make all pictures in widescreen.’[[556]](#footnote-557) While Matsuda’s next film as a director, *Rebellion of the Hayato Clan* (*Hayatozoku no hanran*), released within a month of *The Bride of Otori Castle* on 30 April, was filmed in Eastmancolor Academy ratio, he returned to ToeiScope with the one after, *Ghost Ship* (*Yûreisen*), released in two parts on 15 September and 23 September respectively.

By this time, Toei had released two monochrome titles, reportedly shot non-anamorphically in SuperScope and converted for anamorphic release as ToeiScope productions (as mentioned in a previous chapter). *Chronicle of the Gallant Kuro Genji: Wet Hair Fighting School* (*Genji Kurô: Nuregami nitôryû*, Katô Tai) opened on 16 April 1957, a mere fortnight after *The Bride of Otori Castle* (and presumably in production before the success of the former had been gauged), and *Quarrel on the Road* (*Kenka dôchû*, Sasaki Yasushi), on 12 May. Both preceded the first widescreen releases of all of the other studios, with the exception of *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War*, the Shintoho blockbuster that really opened the floodgates.

# 7. Case Study 2 - *Buddha* and the Selling of An Asian Spectacle

Seldom discussed nowadays, the Daiei Motion Picture Company’s production of *Buddha* (*Shaka*, Misumi Kenji, 1961) is a highly significant landmark in the history of Japanese cinema. At the time of its premiere, it was the most costly Asian production of all time, and bares the distinction of being the region’s first domestically-produced feature shot using a 70mm process, labelled by the company as ‘Daiei Super 70 Technirama’. The film portrays the life of Gautama Buddha, the young Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama who forsakes a life of privilege and luxury to embark on a quest for spiritual enlightenment that leads to the founding of the Buddhist faith. Its subject matter is in keeping with the type of films released by Hollywood exploiting the various widescreen technologies that emerged following Twentieth Century-Fox’s CinemaScope release of *The Robe* (1953).

Many critics at the time of the international release of *Buddha* were not slow to notice how its religious subject matter and manner of its presentationowed a clear debt to such recent Hollywood blockbusters, in particular Cecil B. DeMille’s VistaVision production of *The Ten Commandments* (1956) for Paramount. DeMille’s film was a huge hit internationally, and not only in Christian countries: released in Japan on 15 March 1958 as *Jukkai*, by the time of *Buddha*’s conception it was the country’s second highest-grossing foreign import of the postwar period (see *Table 5*). The aspiration of Daiei’s president Nagata Masaichi, a studio head notorious for his eagerness to explore foreign markets, of producing an Eastern religious epic on a similar scale is not difficult to understand. According to the publicity material provided by Daiei at the time of its release, the company committed itself to the production of Japan’s first ever 70mm film on 24 September 1960.[[557]](#footnote-558)

Nagata is now chiefly remembered for his crucial role in elevating Japanese cinema’s profile in the West in the early 1950s, entering films such as *Rashomon* (*Rashômon*, Kurosawa Akira, 1950), *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1953) and *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*, Kinugasa Teinosuke, 1953) into prestigious overseas festivals, where they were garlanded with prizes. Such critical successes did not necessarily equate to significant commercial gain for the studio, however, and rather than attempting the impossible task of competing with the Western major studios for audiences, Nagata began exploring potentially lucrative markets closer to home. In 1954, he co-founded the Southeast Asia Film Festival (renamed the Asia Film Festival in 1957) with Run Run Shaw of Shaw Brothers, and co-produced Mizoguchi’s late-career work *Princess Yang Kwei-fei* (*Yôkihi*, 1955) with the Hong Kong-based studio. Given this, Nagata’s desire to create a blockbuster based on the life of the founder of the region’s dominant religion is understandable.

*Buddha* was distributed throughout numerous territories across Asia, but it was also sold to a number of Western markets. In North America, the film was distributed by Lopert Pictures, a formerly independent art film distributor that had been operating under the umbrella of United Artists since 1958. Lopert first released it on 2 July 1963 in an English-subtitled version edited down from 156 minutes to 134 minutes, and reissued it on 25 January 1967. On 8 August 1962, *Variety* had reported that United Artists was soon expected to close its deal on the global rights, except for the exempt territories of Italy and Spain, where they had already been sold.[[558]](#footnote-559) The Japanese DVD from Kadokawa Entertainment features a trailer produced for this original Italian theatrical release, where it was distributed by Dino de Laurentis.

Curiously, the film is little remembered nowadays, and is conspicuous by its absence in English-language historiographies of Asian cinema. Released two years after Anderson and Richie’s *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (1959), it nevertheless fails to earn a mention in the essay covering developments in the 1960s and 1970s that appears in the 1982 Expanded Edition. There is no mention of it either in Richie’s *The Japanese Movie* (1966), although this book does at least include a still from the film.[[559]](#footnote-560) Nor is it mentioned in the same author’s *Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character* (1971).[[560]](#footnote-561) Perhaps taking their cues from Richie, subsequent overviews of Japanese cinema have similarly failed to make any mention of the film and its director.[[561]](#footnote-562)

One reason for this critical and scholarly neglect may be that, as far as can be ascertained, *Buddha* does not seem to have been shown widely anywhere in the West since its original release, and no 70mm prints appear to exist for the film, yet alone English-language subtitled ones. The film is not included in the catalogue of the National Film Center’s holdings, although a 35mm English-subtitled print is listed as held in the Pacific Film Archive in California.[[562]](#footnote-563) There has never been an English-language release for the home video market, and the Japanese DVD release does not contain subtitles in any language.

Most extraordinary is *Buddha*’s lack of inclusion in the *UniJapan* periodicals at the time of its release. Similarly ignored in these pages was Daiei’s second 70mm production, the Chinese-set historical epic of *The Great Wall* (*Shinno Shikôtei*, Tanaka Shigeo, 1962). Of the country’s three 70mm productions from this period, only *The Pacific War and Himeyuri Corps* (*Taiheiyô sensô to himeyuri butai*, Komori Kiyoshi, 1962) is included. Researchers solely reliant upon these publications might therefore be misled to believe that it was this war film, one of the last mainstream titles produced by Ôkura Eiga before it switched production over almost entirely to low-budget *eroduction* films, that was Japan’s first ever 70mm release. This misconception is reinforced by the inclusion in the introduction section of this same issue of a small article about the growth in the number of venues in Japan equipped for 70mm presentation (see *Table 11*). Admittedly, the *UniJapan* catalogues have never claimed to be exhaustive, but taking into account the ambition, widespread circulation and historical significance of Daiei’s achievement, it seems positively bizarre that it should be ignored by this official organ of the industry.

The omission of *Buddha* from English-language accounts of Japanese cinema becomes all the more curious when one considers that it did elicit a considerable degree of interest in a number of prominent American sources at the time it was made. A detailed account of the production appeared in the January 1962 edition of *American Cinematographer*.[[563]](#footnote-564) A year prior to this, even before its domestic release, no less than *Time Magazine* had published an article on the film, somewhat cornily-entitled ‘Movies Abroad: The Zen Commandments’, whose opening paragraph provides an illuminating insight as to how the Japanese industry was viewed in the West at the time, including a customary passing reference to the allegedly diminutive stature of the Japanese:

Around the clock and throughout the year, every 16 hours the Japanese movie industry completes a feature. Full of samurai swords, gangster gunfire, even Japanese cowboys short in the saddle, the movies are fed to the most ravenous audiences in the world. Some theaters actually book quadruple features. Although the country has been in a cecilbedelirium ever since it first saw The Ten Commandments, about the only type of film not made in Japan has been the religious epic. On location near Kyoto, the Daiei Motion Picture Co. is taking care of that—with The Life of Buddha, a 70-mm. Eastern variation on The Greatest Story Ever Told.[[564]](#footnote-565)

Before going on to explore the filmmaking talent involved in this landmark title, the technology behind it, and the film’s legacy, a detailed synopsis now follows.

## 7.1 Synopsis

Northern India, 6th Century BCE. The 20-year-old Prince Siddharta successfully defeats Devadatta in a duel to win the hand of the beautiful Yashodara. However, Siddharta is already weary of a life of luxury, and finds himself unable to ignore the poverty and suffering outside his palace walls. After consulting an oracle, he realises humans must take control of their own destiny and he rides off into the night, leaving his new princess wife. Three months later, while Siddharta leads the ascetic life of a monk, Devadatta enters the palace in an unsuccessful attempt to steal away Yashodara from the absent prince.

Six years pass, and Devadatta, masquerading as Siddharta, once more returns to the palace to take Yashodara by force. After being raped, Yashodara commits suicide. When the news reaches Siddharta, in the secluded forest glade where he spends his days meditating beneath the Bodhi tree, he is visited by demons representing the temptations of earthly pleasures. He manages to fend off the attack, thereby attaining enlightenment.

The Gautama Buddha wanders the land acquiring disciples, performing miracles and spreading his ideology. He puts an end to a drought and persuades the evil Kalidevi to give up her habit of eating children. Devadatta, concerned at Buddha’s increasing influence amongst his subjects, seeks supernatural help, using thousands of slaves to construct a temple to the old gods. Kunala, the son of King Ashoka, approaches Buddha with his beloved Usha, seeking enlightenment. He has been blinded and banished from his father’s palace due to his stepmother Takshakara’s false claims that he attacked her after he refused her sexual advances. Inspired by the teachings of Buddha, Kunala and Usha return to Ashoka’s palace to forgive Takshakara. Guilt-ridden, Takshakara kills herself by leaping from the palace wall and Kunala’s eyesight is restored.

A young slave girl, Matangi, falls in love with Ananda, one of Buddha’s disciples. As he rejects her advances, she approaches Devadatta for help. Devadatta, while espousing a return to the region’s old religions, attempts to ally himself with Prince Ajashatru by promising to make him king and turning him against his parents with the lie that they had attempted to kill him as a child. Ajashatru keeps his father imprisoned and starving in a dark cave, while Devadatta rounds up the followers of Buddha and has them crushed beneath the feet of elephants. After Ajashatru’s mother Vaidehi reveals to him that they have tried to keep the fact he was illegitimate from him, Ajashatru relents and releases his father from imprisonment, although too late. As Devadatta attempts to have Ajashatru and all the Buddhist priests killed, an earthquake destroys the monuments to his false gods that he has spent years building. Crying out to Buddha, he is saved. In a barren landscape, huge crowds congregate as Buddha dies and ascends into the heavens.

## 7.2 Producing an Epic

Despite overlooking *Buddha* in his earlier writings, in *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (2005), Donald Richie fleetingly mentions the film under its alternative title of *Life of Buddha* (although it appears that the film was never officially released as this anywhere), writing that:

Daiei, noting the early success of Henry Koster’s *The Robe* (1953), had Misumi Kenji make *The Life of Buddha* (Shaka, 1961) in 70mm, with every star on the lot in it. This was perhaps in emulation of Toho’s earlier *The Three Treasures* (Nihon tanjo, 1959), an Inagaki Hiroshi spectacular about the origins of Japan, with special effects from the people who brought you *Godzilla*.[[565]](#footnote-566)

The allusion to Inagaki’s film is an informative one. Similarly little-remembered nowadays, this Toho production, whose original title of *Nihon tanjô* translates as *The Birth of Japan* or *The Genesis of Japan*, was released in the United States as *The Three Treasures* (the film was also advertised in some parts of America as *The Age of the Gods*) on 20 December 1960, in a version edited from 182 minutes to 112 minutes. Its source material was Japan’s oldest historical text, the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*), a chronicle compiled in the 8th century that details the nation’s creation myths. The *Kojiki* is one of two primary sources for Japan’s indigenous Shinto religion, which co-exists alongside Buddhism as the country’s dominant faith.

It should be noted that, despite the existence of two non-conflicting belief systems to draw upon, there is not the same tradition of the religious epic genre in Japan as there is in the West. Both *Buddha* and *The Three Treasures* had little in the way of precedent within the Japanese film industry to compare with the Hollywood epics of the 1950s that they were clearly inspired by. By contrast, Cecil B. DeMille had made a silent version of *The Ten Commandments* as far back as 1923 (albeit one different enough for his 1956 version not to be labelled a remake). In the case of Shintoism, this is probably due to the religion’s misappropriation by the militarist government in the run up to and during the Pacific War, and its subsequent separation from state affairs under the new postwar constitution following Japan’s defeat. In the major studio productions of the 1950s, the origins of a nativist belief system of which ancestor worship formed a critical component was perhaps too incendiary a topic for an overly reverent treatment on film, and would also have been of little interest to non-Japanese audiences. Following the Emperor Hirohito’s renunciation of his divinity on 1 January 1946, the only truly plausible way to dramatise Japan’s founding mythology was as an out-and-out fantasy, and *The Three Treasures* was certainly a lavish one too, with special effects (*tokusatsu*) wizard Tsuburaya Eiji’s show-stopping creations (including an eight-headed dragon) perhaps more akin to what might be found in Toho’s famous *kaijû eiga* monster movies than a conventional religious spectacle.

In the new postwar ethos of international co-production and distribution, a film about the genesis of Buddhism, a belief system shared by many countries across the region, which had its origins in India and was introduced to Japan via China, had huge potential to cross over to local foreign markets. It is also worth highlighting Nagata’s prominent position as a founding member of the Southeast Asia Federation of Motion Picture Producers to understand how such an opulent, prestige production both demonstrated and required a certain degree of hubris on the part of the Daiei president.[[566]](#footnote-567)

The life story of Buddha had been singled out for early cinematic treatment outside of Asia, with *Prem Sanyas* (*The Light of Asia* / *Die Leuchte Asiens*), a silent German production directed by Franz Osten and Himansu Rai and shot in India with Indian performers, released in 1925. It was based on the Englishman Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, a book-length narrative poem published in 1879 that played a large role in popularising the Buddhist religion in the West. In Asian cinema, however, portrayals of Gautama Buddha were rare, and *Buddha*’s most noteworthy precursor within the Japanese industry is *Dedication of the Great Buddha* (*Daibutsu kaigen*, Kinugasa Teinosuke, 1952), although this actually depicted the construction of the Great Buddha statue in Tôdai-ji temple in Nara in the 8th century rather than the story that had unfolded in India a thousand years beforehand. Also a Daiei production, its submission by Nagata into competition at the 1953 Cannes Film Festival was a textbook example of the company’s strategy of packaging Eastern exoticism for Western markets, although its director, Kinugasa, would have better luck the following year when *Gate of Hell* (1953) was awarded the Palme d’Or. Incidentally, the assistant director on both of these Kinugasa films was *Buddha*’sdirector, Misumi Kenji.

The new 70mm production was not an adaptation of Arnold’s book, but filmed from an original script written by Fuji Yahiro, a prolific screenwriter who had started his career in 1927 writing scenarios for Makino Film Productions. *Sansho the Bailiff* (*Sanshô dayû*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1954) and *Bloody Spear at Mount Fuji* (*Chiyari Fuji*, Uchida Tomu, 1955) are among the best known of the 284 scripts credited to his name.[[567]](#footnote-568) Misumi had already directed a number of Fuji’s scripts prior to *Buddha*, including *The Shadow that Kills the Moon* (*Tsuki o kiru kagebôshi*, 1955) and a version of the oft-filmed supernatural period drama *Ghost of Yotsuya* (*Yotsuya kaidan*, 1959).

Misumi himself had joined Daiei’s studios after his repatriation from a prisoner-of-war camp in Siberia, and initially worked as an assistant to directors including Itô Daisuke and Yoshimura Kôzaburô, as well as Kinugasa. He made his debut with *Sazen Tange: The Monkey Pot* (*Tange Sazen: Kokezaru no tsubo*, 1954), and quickly came to specialise in Tokugawa-period *chanbara* action films, which were often highly popular with Japanese audiences. In 1960, he directed the first two entries in the *Satan’s Sword* (*Daibosatsu tôge*, 1960) trilogy, adapted from the monumental historical novel *The Great Buddha Pass* by Nakazato Kaizan that had been published in 41 volumes between 1913-41. It is likely that the reason he was replaced by Mori Issei for the concluding part was his appointment by Nagata to work on the company’s biggest ever production.

Ironically, Misumi’s best-remembered film today is one he made the year after *Buddha*, *The Tale of Zatoichi (Zatôichi monogatari*, 1962), which made a star out of Katsu Shintarô in his iconic role as the blind masseur and master swordsman of the title. Launching a long-running series that ultimately spawned 26 official entries, it is the *Zatoichi* films that perhaps best symptomise the cinematic landscape that came to dominate the 1960s, in which long-running pulp serials provided the studios’ bread and butter rather than big-budget blockbusters. In the West, Misumi is best known for directing the first three and the fifth entries in the six-film *chanbara* serial *Lone Wolf and Cub* (*Kozure ôkami*, 1972-74), based on the *gekiga* stories by Koike Kazuo about a masterless samurai who sets out with his infant son to avenge the death of his wife.[[568]](#footnote-569) The series was produced by Katsu’s production company Katsu Pro as a vehicle for the *Zatoichi* star’s elder brother, Wakayama Tomisaburô.

Despite his casting in *Buddha* in the major role of Devadatta, Katsu was only just beginning to make a name for himself as a leading man at Daiei. He had been contracted to the studio since *The Great White Tiger Platoon* (*Hana no byakkotai*, Tasaka Katsuhiko, 1954), a *jidai-geki* that also marked the screen debut of another of Daiei’s young action stars, Ichikawa Raizô, who in *Buddha* plays the role of the blinded prince Kunala. The role of Siddhartha is taken by the relative newcomer Hongô Kôjirô, or ‘23-year-old Rising Son’ as *Time Magazine* phrases it, among a supporting cast of some of the company’s biggest stars.[[569]](#footnote-570)

While the *Variety* review points out that the ‘excellent all-star cast of Japanese actors means very little to U.S. patrons’, it singles out the prominently-billed Kyô Machiko, familiar to Western audiences after playing against Marlon Brando in the MGM satire of the U.S. occupation of Okinawa, *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (Daniel Mann, 1956) as much as for her appearances in Nagata’s previous festival successes of *Rashomon*, *Ugetsu* and *Gate of Hell*.[[570]](#footnote-571) Kyô’s appearance as the sacred Nandabala who brings food to Buddha amounts to little more than a cameo intended to attract international interest, as indeed does the specially-billed guest appearance of the glamorous Filipino actress Charito Solis, a major star at one of her country’s biggest studios, LVN Pictures, although she occupies considerably more screen-time in her role as the princess Yashodhara than Kyô. The film also boasts a suitably epic score by Ifukube Akira, a composer best known for his work on Toho’s *Godzilla* (Honda Ishirô, 1954).

It was the work of the cinematographer Imai Hiroshi that gained the most attention in the *American Cinematographer* article on *Buddha*, concluding with the words ‘the picture is a photographic achievement that is a credit to the skill of cinematographer Hiroshi Imai’, and with director Misumi barely warranting a mention.[[571]](#footnote-572) Imai, whose previous credits include *Legend of the Taira Clan* (*Shin heike monogatari*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1955), followed Misumi onto the set of *Buddha* from the first two *Satan’s Sword* films. The new project presented numerous challenges on both technical and logistical level for both men, largely due to its status as the first ever production filmed using the Daiei Super 70 Technirama format, the details of which will be particularised in the following account of the film’s production.

## 7.3 Shooting in Daiei Super 70 Technirama

As with Hollywood’s religious epics of the 1950s, a major part of the marketing campaign for *Buddha* focused on the sheer scale of its production. The *American Cinematographer* article stated boldly that the film ‘reportedly is the most costly ever made by an Asian studio and it is the first ever 70mm production to be filmed in the Far East.’ It cited a budget ‘the equivalent of $1,500,000’ (in other words, 540,000,000 Yen), although considering Anderson and Richie’s claim that *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (1957) had cost $560,000, the assertion that this figure represented ‘five times the sum spent for Japan’s previous top-budget picture’ is slightly overstating the case.[[572]](#footnote-573) Nevertheless, with Daiei’s own publicity material citing the somewhat larger amount of 700,000,000 Yen (just under $2 million), it is clear that *Buddha* was a significant undertaking.[[573]](#footnote-574) To put this in context, according to Alexander Zahlten, in 1962/63, regular studio budgets would have been around 30-40 million Yen mark (around the $100,000) while ‘the more expensive end of the studio productions cost around 60 million ($166,666, at Shôchiku), 80 million ($222,222, at Tôei) or even 265 million Yen ($736,111, at Tôhô).’[[574]](#footnote-575) As high as the budget of *Buddha* was, however, one does get a good idea of the general efficiency of the Japanese studio system when one considers that *The Ten Commandments* had cost an estimated $13 million to make some five years earlier.

From commencement of production on 8 April 1960, a total of 30,800 staff worked on the film at Daiei’s Kyoto Studios for a period of 154 days.[[575]](#footnote-576) The Kyoto region was scoured to supplement the studio’s personnel with a total of 20,000 ‘available school boys, farmers and housewives who were put into costume as extras.’[[576]](#footnote-577) In order to showcase the money on screen, Daiei adopted, adapted and rebranded the Super Technirama 70 system developed by Technicolor, the latest in a succession of widescreen processes launched in the 1950s that promised viewers a larger, more immersive filmgoing experience.

By combining VistaVision’s horizontally-exposed two-frame negative with a series of lenses that added a 1.5x1 anamorphic compression, which was then compressed further as it was reduction printed to create release prints, the basic Technirama system ‘was able to offer an ultrasharp scope image that rivaled the quality of Todd AO’ but which used a standard 35mm negative.[[577]](#footnote-578) More technical details on the system and its development fall outside the scope of this study. For now it is sufficient to say that the image it yielded was not only potentially larger than VistaVision, but wider too, with an aspect ratio the same as CinemaScope’s 2.35:1 but without the limitations of depth of field and edge distortion.[[578]](#footnote-579) Haines notes that, as with VistaVision, ‘the cameras used for the Technirama features were modified three strip units’, adding that ‘the Panavision company supplied the lenses for the process.’[[579]](#footnote-580)

The system was introduced in 1956 with an Italian production, *The Monte Carlo Story*, a comedy-drama starring Marlene Dietrich and Vittorio De Sica and filmed in the English language by Samuel A. Taylor for the Italian Titanus company (it was released in North America by United Artists in 1957). The first American Technirama production was *Night Passage* (James Neilson, 1957), a Western starring James Stewart produced by Universal, which was followed by a number of further studio releases, including *The Vikings* (Richard Fleischer, 1958), distributed by United Artists. Intriguingly, Technirama was used for a number of films shot in Japan, including the children’s adventure story *Escapade in Japan* (Arthur Lubin, 1957), one of the final films produced by RKO Pictures (it was distributed by Universal when the company was dissolved); Warner Brothers’ adaptation of James Michener’s novel *Sayonara* (Joshua Logan, 1957) starring Marlon Brando; and Paramount’s *My Geisha* (1962), directed by the British cinematographer Jack Cardiff (although actually shot by Nakao Shunichirô, who had filmed a number of films by Imai Tadashi in the 1950s). Given that there were only around forty features produced in either Technirama or Super Technirama 70 between 1957-1964, the relative prevalence of these films shot in Japan could be interpreted as conscious attempt by Technicolor to introduce its system to this highly significant market for American studios, as Twentieth Century-Fox had done with CinemaScope for *House of Bamboo* but a few years earlier.[[580]](#footnote-581)

For the Super Technirama 70 process, Technicolor optically derived 70mm positive prints from the 35mm Technirama negatives.[[581]](#footnote-582) The fundamental difference therefore came at the exhibition stage. Whereas the 35mm Technirama release prints could be shown at any cinema with standard projection equipment, Super Technirama 70 required the same specialised venues equipped with 70mm projection equipment as Todd-AO. Its projected aspect ratio was slightly taller than both CinemaScope and the standard Technirama too, at approximately 2:1.[[582]](#footnote-583)

Technicolor’s Super Technirama 70 system briefly took over from Todd-AO as the 70mm production format of choice, as release prints were compatible with the projection equipment used to screen Todd-AO productions, and yet the use of 35mm negative stock during shooting kept production costs down. The first Super Technirama 70 release anywhere in the world was actually an animation, Walt Disney’s *Sleeping Beauty* (Clyde Geronimi, Les Clark, Eric Larson and Wolfgang Reitherman, 1959), and the fact that Daiei had secured the Japanese distribution rights for all Disney films during the 1950s might have been another motivating factor for Nagata’s consideration of the format. The first live-action feature released in Super Technirama 70 was the United Artists biblical epic, *Solomon and Sheba* (King Vidor, 1959), with other such releases including *Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960), *The Savage Innocents* (Nicholas Ray, 1960), *El Cid* (Anthony Mann, 1961) and *Zulu* (Cy Endfield, 1964), a selection into which *Buddha* fits comfortably.

As with DaieiColor and DaieiScope, the rebranding to Daiei Super 70 Technirama was essentially an attempt by Nagata’s company at obfuscating the exact specifications of the system it used. At this point it is worth noting that Super 70 Technirama was actually a little different from Super Technirama 70. According to Carr and Hayes, the similarly-named system ‘was actually VistaVision, which Technicolor in London optically converted to 70mm by cropping the frame slightly and blowing up the image somewhat to fill the larger picture area.’[[583]](#footnote-584) In other words, unlike the Super Technirama 70 productions, there is no evidence that the bulk of *Buddha* was shot anamorphically. However, there is another difference that accounts for the prefixing of the studio’s name, which is that certain sequences were shot in anamorphic DaieiScope rather than the higher quality Technirama.

*American Cinematographer*’s behind-the-scenes report details this further. For the majority of the shoot, Imai ‘employed two VistaVision cameras which had been modified for 70mm photography.’[[584]](#footnote-585) In addition to this, he used ‘two Mitchell NC’s equipped with DaieiScope lenses for added coverage on all large-scale “one-take” sequences.’[[585]](#footnote-586) The difference is actually detectable in the film. In a climactic scene where an 80-foot tall four-armed pagan idol crashes to the ground during an earthquake, the DaieiScope cameras were used to provide coverage from different angles, as well as to shoot a miniature of the cracking statue. Even in the film’s DVD release, this footage, which ‘was blown up to the Super-Technirama format’, has a perceptibly coarser grain, despite the article’s claim that ‘these shots blend exceptionally well with the life-size action in the corresponding long shots.’[[586]](#footnote-587) Carr and Hayes note that these scenes represent ‘the first conversions of 35mm anamorphic to 70mm spherical’ anywhere in the world.[[587]](#footnote-588)

The choice of technology had other ramifications too. Imai had been given a luxurious two months to plan for the shoot in a production climate where one week was the norm, but while the cinematographer claimed that ‘he found 70mm photography little more demanding than the conventional format’, because of the taller dimensions of the frame compared with that of conventional ’scope ratios, ‘no rear screen projection shots could be made on the sound stages; thus all exteriors were shot in real outdoor locations.’[[588]](#footnote-589) By such happenstance, the resulting film has actually dated rather better than *The Ten Commandments*, with its footage of such exotic Egyptian locations as the Pyramids and the banks of the river Nile realised as rear projections against the scenes shot on Paramount’s sound stages in a manner that looks crude and obvious to modern eyes. While Imai, Misumi and several other top production personnel spent two weeks travelling around India as part of the production research, the entire production was actually shot at Daiei’s Kyoto studio, on the biggest set ever constructed for a Japanese film, and its surrounding plains and hills.

The wide lenses used to capture the vast sets in the interior scenes raised issues with regards to lighting. Production was halted on three other films that were shooting simultaneously as Daiei’s largest sound stage took up the full electrical capacity of the entire studio. *American Cinematographer* highlighted two standout scenes that showcased Imai’s mastery of light and colour: Buddha talking to hundreds of his followers who are seated in a vast tiered hall, each holding small lamps that appear to illuminate the whole scene, and the scenes in the forest where the young priest meditates, the set of which was actually constructed on a sound stage.

*Buddha*’s beautiful colour palette comes as little surprise given that Imai had worked as one of the colour consultants on Kinugasa’s *Gate of Hell*, on which Misumi had been assistant director. However, the production differs from the vast majority of Japanese releases in that the negative stock was processed at at Technicolor’s London laboratories.[[589]](#footnote-590) It took two months for the first 70mm rushes to come back to Japan, and the resulting footage could only be viewed in Osaka, in one of the country’s few theatres equipped for 70mm projection. As Imai recollected, ‘I was a bit nervous. We all trooped into the theatre and sat down to see two minutes of film. There were only two hundred feet in that first shipment. And there wasn’t any accompanying sound.’[[590]](#footnote-591)

The addition of sound presented another issue. As Misumi himself acknowledged in an article for *Kinema Junpô* just prior to the film’s premiere, no director in Japan had ever had to consider how to fill six magnetic tracks before, nor how integral the role of multi-channel sound was to bolstering the sense of spectacle provided by the expanded image of the roadshow release print.[[591]](#footnote-592) Assessing how successful he was in this task is unfortunately impossible: while the original six track magnetic soundtrack of the 70mm release was rerecorded and remixed in London from the three unique tracks originally recorded in Japan containing the vocal performances, music and sound effects, the Dolby Digital soundtrack of the Japanese DVD release is derived from the original monoaural soundtrack of the Technirama negative source.

It was necessary for a Daiei representative to travel to London after principle photography to supervise the processing and post-production of the film at the Technicolor laboratories, including the integration of a number of process shots that had been filmed on separate negatives. One of the most conspicuous of these occurs in the scene in which Devadatta parts the curtains of the palatial chamber in which he is master of all he surveys to reveal a rear projection exterior shot containing swarms of bare-chested slaves labouring like termites over his temple complex. The shot is almost identical to the one in *The Ten Commandments* in which Moses invites Sethi to survey the construction of his great city, and provides but one of a number of examples of how Daiei’s cinematic monument to Nagata’s international ambitions opened itself up to criticism as being openly derivative of its western models.

The *American Cinematographer* article does provide one further more humorous detail about the production that elucidates other aspects of Japanese production practices. For the scene where Devadatta has Buddha’s disciples crushed by elephants, because of the absence in the country of a pool of trained movie animals, the elephants needed to be rented from a circus. However, trained not to harm humans, the animals performers refused to rear up on their hind legs in front of the actors, and so quite obviously fake elephant feet had to be used in the series of brief, close-up cutaway shots.[[592]](#footnote-593)

## 7.4 International Reception

On the occasion of *Buddha*’s North American re-issue, Bosley Crowther wrote in *The New York Times*:

Early Christians or early Buddhists – no matter which are being martyred on the screen – it’s all the same in the universal language of the religious spectacle film. “Buddha,” a Japanese picture, which opened yesterday at the Trans-Lux 85th Street and other neighborhood theaters, demonstrates that, when Japanese filmmakers choose to celebrate the legendary life and saintly teachings of the great Gautama (the Enlightened One), they do so in slavish imitations of a Hollywood-Cinecitta Biblical film... Buddhist captives are lashed by slave-drivers just as cruelly as are Christian captives were [sic.], and the martyrs are trampled to death by elephants instead of eaten by lions. Other martyrs are flung, kicking and screaming, into fiery pits.[[593]](#footnote-594)

Western critical opinion was firmly divided as to the merits of Daiei’s achievement, with reviews either denouncing the film for its sensationalist spectacle, or in the case of John Mahoney of *The Hollywood Reporter*, damning it with the faintest of praise as ‘an immensely pretty Oriental fairy tale [that] will probably find little appeal among general audiences who expect stronger stuff in their Japanese imports.’[[594]](#footnote-595) *Variety* was more generous, summarising the film as an ‘Epic-dimension, finely made biopic of life of Asia’s great religious figure’, following its original trade showing on 26 June 1963.[[595]](#footnote-596) The review goes on to describe it as ‘a colorful spectacle.... skilfully directed, generally well acted and a different, if at times gruesome, artistic story... Kenji Misumi’s direction is topflight while the lensing by Hiroshi Imai is a highlight of this pic. Screenplay by Fuji Yahiro is good enough considering how much territory he had to cover’. The review noted, however, that:

Boxoffice prospects in the the U.S.-Canada market must carry a question-mark. The film needs more trade and consumer selling than it will probably get... For U.S. audiences this pic has the added handicap of being subtitled and having a two hours and 19 minutes running time... The film’s length would hurt its turnover in arty theatres where it will find most of its American bookings.[[596]](#footnote-597)

Mandel Herbstman of *Film Daily* gave a more positive evaluation of its box-office potential, with his review, appearing under the headline “Elaborate Spectacle on the Life and Times of Buddha Stirs with Action and Excitement. Solid Box Office”, claiming that:

The picture, with English sub-titles, should give a good account of itself at the box office here... The finale is one of visual vividness as an enormous earthquake and fire sweep through the temple and destroy it....The music by Akira Ikufube is exotically beautiful and the photography by Hiroshi Imai is stunning to behold.’[[597]](#footnote-598)

*The* *Motion Picture Herald* was similarly positive, stating that:

...its values, visually are excellent... The resulting picture is deeply interesting, and most beautiful to view, albeit with perhaps a somewhat limited appeal among American audiences by reason of its subject matter and the fact that it has Japanese actors performing as Indian, which may create something of a problem of understanding and appreciation for American audiences... Here is an interesting and most unusual motion picture, certainly worthy of special attention, and perhaps destined for its best results in theatres which cater to that kind of audience which finds particular interest in this type of film... Rating: Excellent.[[598]](#footnote-599)

Both structurally and conceptually, *Buddha* is very similar to *The Ten Commandments*. In both, a young heir to the throne responds to a religious calling. Eschewing the hand of a beautiful princess who is ultimately lost due to his nemesis, he leaves a life of privilege to spend time in the wilderness where he undergoes an epiphany. Meanwhile, his nemesis usurps the hero from his rightful position as ruler of the land. This unworthy pretender to the throne proceeds to manifest ever increasing displays of brutality in order to keep his subjects suppressed, and begins to invoke older, dark elemental forces so as to retain his reigning position. The increasing grip of the nemesis is manifested visually by the Babel-like construction of a tower, which is ultimately destroyed in a righteous display of divine power as good triumphs over evil. The powerplay between the rivals unfolds episodically, as if an epic soap opera with supernatural overtones, full of intrigue, savagery, seduction and vice. Female characters are relegated to the periphery of the drama, though it is they who steer the various dramatic subplots, thereby reinforcing patriarchal ideologies of sexual dominion as a manifestation of ruling power, and despite the pretences of piety of their makers female sensuality and displays of sadism and savagery play a major role in both films’ appeal. Crucially both films’ retellings of their source mythos unfold against exotic backdrops that are far removed in both geography and history from that of their makers, as white Americans play ancient Egyptians and Japan’s top stars masquerade as Indians, thus presenting what might be perceived as a imperialistic dimension, as “The Greatest Story Ever Told” is depicted through a regional economic power for mass consumption within a global marketplace.[[599]](#footnote-600)

Of the two, the sensationalist aspects of the Japanese film are the most overt. *Time Magazine* was the first to draw attention a script that:

…spares nothing: the cartoon bevies of sensual maidens who surround the young prince, the rape of his wife by his malevolent cousin Devadatta, the visions of seminude sorceresses who tempt him to turn from the way of the spirit. There are also human sacrifices, torture, man-trampling elephants, death plunges, demons, ghosts and imps.[[600]](#footnote-601)

Even the generally positive review of *Film Daily* mentions that ‘Thrown around his story are elements of sex, sadism, lust for power and sweeping spectacle.’[[601]](#footnote-602) *Variety* similarly criticised the ‘stress on people being killed, dying of disease or being brutally punished’, drawing attention to the key dramatic turning point staged during the night following the suicide of Yashodara, during which Siddharta ‘resists demons, sensual dancing girls and semi-nude femmes to attain spiritual enlightenment.’[[602]](#footnote-603)

The scene in question represents one of the stylistic high-points of the film as, seated in meditation beneath the Bodhi tree, Siddharta is assailed by a bevy of dancing maidens, each clad in little more than a diaphanous strip of coloured fabric to mask her modesty. These are then dispersed by the arrival of a miscellany of demons that proceed to shower him in a hail of spears and arrows. The increased level of sexual frankness of such a scene in comparison with DeMille’s film has more to do with the relaxed censorship standards of the time rather than the country of release, but it is worth pointing out that even by Japan standards, such levels of nudity were then pretty rare. The demons, not to mention the lighting, colouring and other aspects of the mise-en-scène of this sequence, bare a strong similarity to Daiei’s horror films of the 1960s, for example, the colourful parade of apparitions that appear in its trilogy of ghoulish children’s films, *Yokai Monsters: 100 Monsters* (*Yôkai hyaku monogatari*, Yasuda Kimiyoshi, 1968), *Yokai Monsters: Spook Warfare* (*Yôkai daisensô*, Kuroda Yoshiyuki, 1968), and *Yokai Monsters 3: Along with Ghosts* (*Tôkaidô obake dôchû*, Yasuda Kimiyoshi and Kuroda Yoshiyuki, 1969).

While Daiei made much of its recruitment of Kimura Hideo, professor of Primitive Indian culture at the Buddhist Ryukoku University, as the film’s general advisor, it comes as no surprise to read the concluding words of the *American Cinematographer* report, that ‘Already the picture has started a storm of controversy in the Far East. Several countries have complained officially that the film is not a true representation of the life of Buddha.’[[603]](#footnote-604) No such furore seemed to be anticipated in Japan, however, with *Time Magazine* quoting the professor’s own words, saying ‘I think it is a good picture, and it will not offend devout Buddhists. As for the mass of Japanese people, they are not devout enough to be offended.’[[604]](#footnote-605)

## 7.5 The Legacy of Buddha

*Buddha* emerged from a confluence of thematic, technical and industrial influences, resulting in a far more expensive production than the norm. It was conceived with the aim of creating a work that would be profitable on a global stage. With the wealth of critical interest and coverage in the national film press that accompanied *Buddha*’s domestic release, the film undeniably represented a landmark in the history of Japanese cinema,though perhaps not of the type anticipated by its makers.[[605]](#footnote-606) Rather than usher in a new era, it represented the zenith of a transitional phase in which the cinema of Japan, and not only Japan, attempted to define itself in terms of scale. While the film represented Daiei’s highest grossing title in the year of its release, it attracted fewer admissions than each of the top three or four releases from Toho, Toei and Nikkatsu.[[606]](#footnote-607) *The Hollywood Reporter* claimed that it ‘was a major boxoffice disappointment in the Orient’, which explains its relative obscurity in accounts of Japanese film history.[[607]](#footnote-608)

On the other side of the world, the inflated production costs of *Cleopatra*, which began shooting in 1960, before *Buddha*, although was not released until some time afterwards, on 12 June 1963, would threaten to bankrupt Twentieth Century-Fox, despite it being the highest grossing film of its year. The tastes of those audiences not lost to television began to migrate away from the more mythic follies that Hollywood had specialised in, towards smaller works more rooted in a contemporary reality, with the studio product of both Japan and North America beginning to lose ground to a burgeoning independent sector.

Furthermore, for a year and a half after its premiere, the very exclusivity of the format that provided *Buddha* with its main selling point also served to confine it to a limited circuit of specialist roadshow venues where it was competing against far higher-budgeted foreign releases such as *Ben-Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *How the West Was Won* (1962).[[608]](#footnote-609) It did not go on general release in Japan in 35mm release prints until 4 March 1963, four months before it was trade shown in New York on 2 July 1963.

Before this wider national release, however, Daiei president Nagata had already put his next spectacle, *The Great Wall*, into production, to mark the 30th anniversary of the company. Filmed on location in Taiwan and set in the second century BCE, the film, over the course of a running time of 200 minutes, portrays the life of the First Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, and the country’s founding through the unification of its various provinces and the construction of the Great Wall of the title.[[609]](#footnote-610) Scripted once more by Fuji Yahiro, although directed by Tanaka Shigeo, it reunited a number of cast members from *Buddha*, with Katsu Shintarô in the starring role joined by Hongô Kôjirô and Ichikawa Raizô.

*The Great Wall* premiered on 1 November 1962, exactly one year after *Buddha*, and at the same Yuraku-za theatre. However, it went on general 35mm release on 27 January 1963, six weeks before *Buddha* commenced its wider run, suggesting that Nagata had already seen the writing on the wall with regards to Daiei Super 70 Technirama. *The Great Wall* received a limited release in North America from September 1965 by Magna Pictures, in an English-dubbed 35mm version that ran at 120 minutes, later reissued with further cuts to 104 minutes.[[610]](#footnote-611) The 120-minute dubbed version was released in the United Kingdom in February 1966 by Grand National, with a review *Monthly Film Bulletin* claiming it was ‘clearly inspired by a number of recent American epics (the ending is imitation of *El Cid*).’[[611]](#footnote-612) Daiei retreated from 70mm production, and scaled back its operations considerably throughout the rest of the decade. On 29 November 1971, the company that had presented the West with some of the most highly-regarded Japanese films of all time filed for bankruptcy.

The only film to be produced in a 70mm wide-gauge format by another Japanese studio, Ôkura Eiga’s *The Pacific War and the Star Lily Corps* (1962), was released between the two Daiei productions, on 7 April 1962. Directed by Komori Kiyoshi, it also used the Super Technirama 70 format (or more likely, Super 70 Technirama), although one can assume that it was similarly unprofitable, certainly in comparison with the micro-budgeted *Flesh Market*, which caused a sensation due to its scandalous content when released by the same company two months earlier, setting in motion a whole new genre, the *eroduction*, and with it a new filmmaking climate.

The next Japanese director to work with the 70mm format would do so overseas, when some ten years later Kurosawa Akira travelled to the Soviet Union to film *Dersu Uzala* (1975) in Sovscope 70, a Soviet variant of the Todd-AO format that was first introduced in 1961, the same year of *Buddha*’s domestic release, to produce *The Story of the Flaming Years* (*Povest plamennykh let*, Yuliya Solntseva, 1961). While one can’t describe *Dersu Uzala* as a Japanese film, funded as it was by Mosfilm, the Soviet Union’s largest film and TV production and post-production facility, the film’s receipt of the Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award in 1976 led to resurgence in overseas interest in Kurosawa, and as an ironic consequence, temporarily raised the international profile of Japanese cinema at a time when the era of the traditional studio system was all but over.

# 8. Conclusion: Expanding Scopes

In the previous chapters, it has been argued that the end of the studio era as it existed until the 1970s was prompted by pioneering developments in the country’s consumer electronics industry, with companies such as Sony and JVC playing a role in revolutionising new patterns of distribution, consumption and production through the introduction of affordable colour televisions and video cassette players to the global mass market.

A critical marker point for this beginning of a new era, in which Japan moved from importing and adapting foreign moving image technologies to developing and exporting its own innovations is the Japan World Exposition (*Nippon bankoku hakurankai*, also known as *Nihon banpaku*) held in Osaka, hereafter referred to as Expo ’70. The first World Expo to be held in Asia, this epoch-defining event is worth looking at in some detail because it demonstrates how attempts to create ever more immersive, more exhilarating and more impressive visual spectacles didn’t end with the dominance of television. The rise of this small screen broadcast medium merely shifted such endeavors into other realms.

## 8.1 Large Format and Multi-Screen Exhibition at Osaka Expo ’70

Historically, as the case of Cinerama highlights, World Fairs and World Expos have played a major role in showcasing emerging screen technologies, and even if such technologies are never adopted as the future of cinema, they do point towards cinema’s possible futures. To cite but a few notable examples, as early as 1900, the Lumière Brothers premiered Lumière Wide at the Paris Exposition Universelle, capable of projecting an image onto a screen some 70 feet wide by 53 feet high from 75mm film.[[612]](#footnote-613) The system anticipated attempts by the Hollywood studios in the late-1920s to produce larger projected images through wide formats such as Fox Grandeur and Warner Bros.’ Vitascope. At that same event, the earliest multiple camera/projection process was also publically demonstrated. First patented under the name Cinecosmorama by Raoul Grimoin-Sanson on 27 November 1897, the renamed Cinéorama was used at the exposition to present a simulated hot air balloon ride over Paris. It consisted of ten radiating cameras, allowing for 360-degree filming and projection, connected to a single drive handle that required the efforts of two or three men to turn it.[[613]](#footnote-614) Over fifty years later, such 360-degree systems had lost none of their novelty, when at the Expo ’58 in Brussels, Disney premiered Circarama, which used eleven 16mm cameras to present *Trip Across the US*, produced by the company and the Ford Motor Company (as has been previously mentioned, this same Brussels Expo saw the Russians unveiling their rival - though to all intents and purposes identical - challenge to Cinerama, the Kinopanorama system).[[614]](#footnote-615) Similarly, the possibilities of Henri Chrétien’s Hypergonar lenses were first exhibited to the world at the 1937 International Exposition in Paris, with Jean Tedesco’s *Panorama au fil de l’eau* (1937) shown using two-projectors on a screen, 60 metres high and 10 metres wide, suspended from the Palais of Light. Meanwhile, prior to the release of *Bwana Devil*, pioneering stereoscopic 3D presentations were a major attraction at the Festival of Britain, held on London’s South Bank in 1951.[[615]](#footnote-616)

Numerous screen, multiscreen and sound installations were included among the various attractions at the Osaka Expo ’70, designed by some of the most feted creative agents in the Japanese film industry at the time, including the filmmakers Ichikawa Kon and Teshigahara Hiroshi, and the avant-garde composer Takemitsu Tôru.[[616]](#footnote-617) While many of these demonstrations of Japan’s creativity and technological prowess were designed to be unrepeatable and of the moment, the Expo did, however, provide a stage for the premiere of the only new format to emerge during the pre-digital era that was to achieve any degree of longevity, finding its niche within the new commercial climate of film exhibition in the final decades of the 20th century. Though the IMAX system was developed in Canada, Japan’s input into the subsequent evolution of the brand is significant, and shall be looked at within the context of the other moving image exhibits at this global event.

For the Japanese, culturally, Expo 70 was arguably more significant than the 1964 Olympic Games. If the Olympics symbolized a Japan that had risen from the ashes of wartime defeat to catch up with the West, Expo 70 signified a country looking far into the future, and confident of its own role within it. The first international exposition to be held in Asia, it ran for a total of 183 days from 15 March to 13 September 1970, attracting a record-breaking 64 million visitors with its theme ‘Progress and Harmony for Mankind.’ The exhibition site at Senri Hills in Osaka covered 330 hectares and contained 116 pavilions, playing host to 76 nations, with America represented by three different states, and Japan by 32 governmental, cultural and corporate organisations.[[617]](#footnote-618)

According to the artist and founder of the Superflat movement, Murakami Takashi, the event became ‘a much-beloved symbol for the first generation of otaku, with its optimistic vision of progress and vision of a peaceful future brought about by technology’, and provided the inspiration for a new generation of *manga* artists and animators, such as the founders of the GAINAX studio, creators of the legendary television anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (*Shin Seiki Evangerion*, Anno Hideaki, 1995-96).[[618]](#footnote-619) A bemused John Gillett, reporting of his visit to the site in *Sight and Sound*, wrote ‘Much of Expo looks like a cross between Disneyland and Things to Come (certainly the overhead funicular cars might have been designed by Menzies) and everywhere one sees yellow domes and vertical tube.’[[619]](#footnote-620)

Many of the featured installations by Japanese artists drew upon the activities of the countercultural avant-garde of the previous decade, specifically with regards to the use of multiple screens. While ill-suited to commercial exploitation, as amply demonstrated as early as Abel Gance’s *Napoléon* (1927), multi-screen projection had been used in the experimental filmmaking scene of the 1960s in a number of works that, by screening outside of conventional cinema networks, emphasised the performative aspects of the presentation while challenging conventional notions of a cohesive cinematic illusionism.

One notable work of this type by a Japanese filmmaker, although not produced in Japan, was *Great Society* (1967), realized by Oe Masanori alongside Marvin Fishman. Oe had moved to America in 1965 and soon found himself a part of New York’s experimental filmmaking scene, which included, among others, Jonas Mekas and Stan Vanderbeek.[[620]](#footnote-621) *Great Society* used six 16mm projectors arranged in two rows of three columns, each presenting collaged newsreel footage of such events as the ongoing Vietnam War, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the NASA space launches, and scenes of student protests, psychedelic “love-ins” and civil rights activism. This was set to a soundtrack of pop music from bands such as the Beatles, the Byrds, Bob Dylan, and Jefferson Airplane to present a portrait of America during the 1960s that was dynamic, chaotic and diverse. The various areas of the screen unfold for the most part as a chaotic and disconnected maelstrom of images that occasionally synchronise, culminating at one point in various shots of atomic mushroom clouds, and at another, with the colours of each frame coalescing to form the American flag.

While it is unclear whether *Great Society* had even screened in Japan prior to the Expo ’70, the later work *For the Damaged Right Eye* (*Tsuburekakatta migime no tame ni*, 1968), directed by Matsumoto Toshio shortly prior to the release of his critically acclaimed ATG feature film *Funeral Parade of Roses* (*Bara no sôretsu*, 1969), was realized in a purely Japanese context. Similar in content, if not intent, to the American production, and with a runtime of 12 minutes, its sequences of shots of Tokyo’s pop-cultural scene (including nightclub dancing, psychedelic imagery, dazzling neon signs and still shots culled from *manga*, fashion and pornographic magazines) were projected from three 16mm projectors running simultaneously. Two of the projections were arranged horizontally, left and right, to form an image of roughly the width of the CinemaScope frame, with the third larger image overlaid on top. Key to the positioning of such “expanded cinema” works as something distinct from the commercial mainstream was the spontaneity of the screening event. Matsumoto emphasized that, due to the fact that the projectors could never be synched accurately, resulting in a slightly different film experience each time, individual presentations took the form of more of a performance than a presentation. Another dimension worth highlighting was the use of stereo sound in *For the Damaged Right Eye*, with the soundtrack making expressive use of shifting the balance between the left and right soundtracks.[[621]](#footnote-622)

One can find other examples of expanded cinema in Japan during the late 1960s, many of which blurred the notions between cinema and performance art so much as to fall almost completely outside of discussions of the country’s cinematic history. Another piece by Matsumoto, for example, entitled *Projection for Icon* (*Ikon no tame no purojekushon*, 1969), consisted of multiple moving images and coloured light projections “screened” on the surface of twenty large balloons released in the second gymnasium of Yoyogi National Stadium, constructed for the 1964 Olympic Games, as part of the ‘Cross-Talk Intermedia’ event, held between 2-5 February 1969.[[622]](#footnote-623)

Matsumoto’s multiple-projection experiments were directly inspired by the various installations of this type he witnessed during his visit to the Montreal World Expo in 1967, along with the graphic designer Awazu Kiyoshi, who similarly made a number of multiple projection works around the same time. It seems fitting, therefore, that his final multi-screen work, *Space Projection Ako* (1970) was commissioned especially for Expo ’70, when he was appointed the managing director of the Textures Pavilion (*Senni-kan*). The piece utilised ten 35mm projectors and eight slide projectors all casting their images onto surfaces specifically moulded for this purpose, accompanied by six soundtracks channelled into 57 large speakers.[[623]](#footnote-624) As Julian Ross notes, *Space Projection Ako* cannot be described as a film, as such, in that the screening space of the pavilion itself was as much as part of the overall experience as the images projected upon its surfaces:

The architectural space, designed by graphic designer Yokoo Tadanori, realized an environment with multiple entrances with inner layers that were painted in red, connoting a womb, with sculptural body-shapes pasted within the surroundings that let off strobe-lights from their eyes. The space itself, along with the moving images, sculptures, lighting and soundscapes, became an integral part of the experiential narrative concocted by the event.[[624]](#footnote-625)

Expo ’70 can be seen as marking the point where the avant-garde merged with the mainstream, or was co-opted by it, depending on one’s point of view. Following a decade marked by the *Anpo* protests against the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty, the involvement of Matsumoto, Yokoo and other creative luminaries in an event that saw Japan ‘extolling its postwar accomplishments to both domestic and international audiences, pressing official themes such as “progress and harmony” to distance itself from its own history of war and disaster’ itself gave rise to much public debate, and gave rise to a Anti-Expo (*Hanpaku*) movement from a number of figures within the political left.[[625]](#footnote-626)

Matsumoto’s work in the Textures Pavilion was one of a number of multi-screen installations at Expo ’70. Under the tagline ‘the World of Rhythm’ (‘Rizumu no sekai’), the Automobile Pavilion (*Jidôsha-kan*) presented *For 240 Hours a Day* (*Ichinichi 240 jikan*), a 30-minute work scripted by the author Abe Kôbô and directed by Teshigahara Hiroshi, projected onto 4 screens with four standard 4-perf 35mm projectors. John Gillett described the experience as:

Disappointing - a kind of futuristic slapstick comedy with much wild posturing and dancing. Teshigahara’s technical skill is always apparent (goldfish are suddenly thrown upwards from the middle screen on to a mini-screen above), but his sense of humour seems limited.[[626]](#footnote-627)

Ichikawa Kon, who had directed *Tokyo Olympiad*, the official documentary of the 1964 Summer Olympics, received the honour of serving as the country’s principal representative from the film world, presenting *Japan and Japanese* (*Nihon to nihonjin*) at the official Japan Pavilion (*Nihon-kan*). The film was shot using eight cameras, using the double frame area of a standard 35mm negative, like VistaVision, and was presented on a huge screen, 48 metres high by 16 metres wide, comprised of eight smaller ones.[[627]](#footnote-628)

## 8.2 Astrorama, Astrovision and Other Site-Specific Motion Picture Systems in Japan

By far the largest installation on display was Astrorama, housed at the Green Pavilion (*Midori-kan*). It utilized five 70mm 8-perf projectors, which projected their images, shot on five 8-perf 35mm cameras (i.e. using a double negative size, again like VistaVision), as a seamless whole onto the dome of the pavilion, much like the segments of an orange. The screen contained within the dome itself, at 30 meters in diameter, was the largest in the world to date, and still remains the largest such screen ever used to this day. There was only one film produced especially for this system, a ten-minute colour work entitled *The Birth*. It was directed by Mayuzumi Toshirô, a classical composer who also composed the score, which utilized 515 loudspeakers to realize its 3D audio effect. It featured only one credited cast member, the legendary founder of the Butoh experimental dance movement Hijikata Tatsumi, playing a sorcerer who announces the birth of humankind, cavorting and dancing on a desolate mountain covered with belching volcanic smoke.[[628]](#footnote-629)

As with many of the films shown at the exposition’s pavilions, *The Birth* was not intended to be viewed in its entirety by a seated audience, with many of the estimated fifteen million visitors to the Green Pavilion more likely to have experienced the film passing through in tour groups.[[629]](#footnote-630) Unbelievably, just as the temporary pavilions that housed such spectacles were dismantled after Expo ’70, so too were the dedicated cameras and projectors used for their production and exhibition discarded with little thought for posterity. More seriously, as Stephen Barber writes, ‘the original celluloid film-cans containing *The Birth* were stored-away without being documented, and forgotten.’[[630]](#footnote-631) For many years, the only extant materials were frames cut out from the original Astrorama prints. However, in 2011, the film was rediscovered by researchers from the Hijikata archive at Tokyo’s Keio University ‘in the Osaka storage-facilities of the Sanwa Midori-kai alliance of corporations whose previous incarnation had sponsored the Midori-kan pavilion.’[[631]](#footnote-632) Ichikawa’s *Japan and the Japanese* suffered the same fate, although it too has recently been rediscovered.[[632]](#footnote-633)

Astrorama was developed by the Goto Optical Manufacturing Company (Gotô Kôgaku Kenkyûsho, now Goto Inc.), and is described by its manufacturers on the company website as ‘the world’s first pano-hemispheric motion picture system.’[[633]](#footnote-634) Established in 1926, the company started out as a telescope manufacturer, later moving into astronomical then specialist planetarium projection devices (it is now also involved in planetarium management and providing content for planetarium events). In 1967, Goto started to develop a wrap-around motion picture system known as Astrovision, which it completed in 1969. This earlier system used 35mm 5-perf film, which it projected through a fisheye lens onto a domed screen.[[634]](#footnote-635) The original Astrovision system was installed at the Fujikyû Highland amusement park (now known as Fuji-Q Highland), and was used at a total of eight events, with one other permanent venue. As well as the Astrorama system used solely at Expo ’70, the original Astrovision evolved into a further two systems for dome projection, Astrovision35 (using 8-perf 35mm film), and Astrovision70 (using 8-perf 35mm negative stock for filming which was then blown up to 10-perf 70mm print stock for projection).[[635]](#footnote-636) These systems were installed at 12 expositions and 41 permanent venues, such as planetariums and science museums.[[636]](#footnote-637) Despite having a longer operating life than Astrorama, which as Barber states, was ‘too complex and cumbersome for commercial exploitation’, they inevitably became redundant with the advent of new film technologies, particularly digital ones, and a large quantity of the films produced specifically for them was discarded in 2006 as industrial waste.[[637]](#footnote-638)

Such examples demonstrate the importance and problems inherent in film preservation in a new millennium that, as shall be seen, has been marked by a dramatic switchover to new modes of digital production and exhibition. As Oguchi Takaguchi notes in his 2007 survey of site-specific film formats developed in Japan:

One of the two major film laboratories in Japan, Tokyo Laboratory, does not offer any of the services for 65/70mm films including processing, printing, and media conversion. Another laboratory, IMAGICA, has no longer offered the service of processing 65mm films. Today it only processes 70mm positive films. As for optical printing and media conversion services of 65mm films, IMAGICA USA, a subsidiary company of IMAGICA, offered them until 2 years ago.[[638]](#footnote-639)

Oguchi notes a number of similar formats developed in Japan and only used at science museums, theme parks and subsequent expositions, including Tsugami-rama, a 5-perf 35mm single lens projection system that operated at the Mount Ikoma Space Science Museum from 1969 to 1999, and JAPAX, a large-format 65/70mm 8-perf film system first demonstrated at the Health & Sports Pavilion (*Kenkô Supôtsu-kan*) at the International Science Technology Exposition (*Kokusai Kagaku Gijutsu Hakurankai*) held in 1985 at Tsukuba. He labels such systems as Astrovision and JAPAX ‘Happy formats, since they enjoyed the status of established formats even for a short period of time’, although notes the difficulty in preserving these and other multi-screen installations as:

Since these media are closely related with the screens, projectors, acoustic systems, lighting, motion bases and so on that are all specifically made for that particular formats [sic], we need to preserve the entire theatre in order to preserve the format itself.[[639]](#footnote-640)

Further research is needed to establish the exact nature of the content exhibited by these site-specific systems. However, it should clear that due to the technical difficulties and sheer costs in involved in preservation and restoration, it is unlikely that we shall ever be able to appreciate the full impact or contextual backdrop to such presentations. Even the Cinerama system that set the widescreen revolution in motion has only one museum in the world that regularly recreates the original three-strip experience, the National Media Museum in Bradford.

As detailed previously, the Cinerama brand itself was never used to refer to one static mode of exhibition, its evolution running concurrent with the demise of even the more commercially viable widescreen systems modelled on CinemaScope. The example of the final motion picture system to debut at Expo ’70, that of IMAX, proves an instructive case in looking at how the experience provided by certain systems is shaped by not only technological changes, but transformations in the wider economic market.

## 8.3 IMAX and Japan

The most enduring legacy of Expo ’70 in terms of moving image technology was not of Japanese invention. IMAX had its roots in the previous Montreal Expo ’67. As mentioned, multi-screen exhibitions played a major part of this event, setting the standard for Japan to surpass three years later. Canada’s own contributions included Graeme Ferguson’s *Polar Life* (1967), depicting the vast expanse of arctic Greenland through a 12-projector system, and *Labyrinth* (1967), co-directed by Roman Kroitor and Colin Low of the National Film Board of Canada, which presented mankind’s journey through life in a walkthrough installation consisting of three separate chambers, the last of which contained five screens arranged in a cruciform pattern.[[640]](#footnote-641)

This latter work in particular attracted a large degree of attention, and led to Kroitor being approached by Fuji to created a new work for the company’s pavilion at Expo ’70. Kroitor invited Ferguson to join forces, and together with Ferguson’s business partner Robert Kerr they formed the Multiscreen Corporation. Instead of another multiscreen installation, they decided to create a single-screen work, developing a unique camera and projection system for this purpose that used 65mm film with a 15-perf frame area that ran horizontally through the camera (generically referred to as 15/70 film). This wider gauge and the increased rate at which the film travels through the projector (due to a frame area three times that of previous wide-gauge systems such as Todd-AO, which had 5 sprocket holes) yielded the best image definition and largest potential projection size of any single-projector system thus far. However, with a frame area ten times larger than that of conventional 35mm and three times larger than 70mm, and a six-channel magnetic soundtrack supplied on a separate 35mm film strip, the system also resulted in incredibly bulky film prints.[[641]](#footnote-642) To maintain the stability of the giant image and alleviate the problems of print deterioration due to the increased projection speed, the patented “Rolling Loop” system was devised by the Australian engineer Ronald Jones, which used an innovative air pressure system to advance the film across the projection lens.[[642]](#footnote-643) The system was named IMAX, a contraction of the words “maximum image”, and the first film produced for it, the 16-minute short *Tiger Child* (1970), premiered in the temporary inflatable Fuji Pavilion at Expo ’70 to great acclaim. As Gillett reported during his visit to the exposition:

After a brief look at the French Pavilion (very dark and full of little television screens), I make for the Fuji Pavilion where I have a pass. Here is one of the Expo’s main showpieces – a huge hall with a moving circular platform on which the audience stands, a centre area with 28 slide projectors throwing images on walls and ceiling, and a giant screen at the end on which a 210 mm. multi-image is shown (from one projector!). The work of a joint Japanese-Canadian team, this has the customary brotherhood of man theme but with often savage images of rioting, thalidomide babies and other contemporary horrors. The fully choral and orchestral accompaniment (through 126 speakers) must be the loudest stereo score ever; we all troop down the moving staircase at the end somewhat shaken and a little deaf.[[643]](#footnote-644)

Interestingly, Gillett’s mention of a ‘210 mm. multi-image’, if not a mistake, suggests that at the Expo ’70, multiple projectors were employed, although this is not corroborated elsewhere. Certainly by the time the first permanent sites were established, with the first, the Cinesphere opening in Toronto on 31 May 1971 with the specially commissioned 18-minute documentary *North of the Superior* (Graeme Ferguson, 1971), the IMAX brand was used exclusively to refer to the single projector 15/70 system. Before long, the Multiscreen Corporation had been renamed to the IMAX Corporation.

The history of IMAX reveals notable similarities to that of previous systems marketed as superior to conventional motion picture presentation, both in terms of technological development and refinement, and the patterns of expansion of its exhibition outlets. The initial decision to opt for a more reliable and less cumbersome single projection format echoes Michael Todd’s aforementioned stipulation for the Todd-AO system, that “everything comes out of one hole.” Like Cinerama, IMAX was ill-suited to dramatic features. In the choice of subject matter for the various productions filmed and presented using the system, in which travelogues, science films and other documentary spectacles that foregrounded the technology predominated, there are parallels to the earlier three-strip system. Crucially, the establishment of exhibition sites that ‘located large-format exhibition at a distance from the commercial world of the private sector’, before being increasingly drawn into a more commercial context that resulted in changes in both production methods and film content, follows a very similar trajectory to that of both Todd-AO and Cinerama.[[644]](#footnote-645)

In each of these cases, the demands of the marketplace compromised the very features of the systems that made them so exclusive and unique in the first place. In order to understand this aspect further, it is necessary to look in a little more detail at the history of the IMAX brand, of which Paul McDonald notes:

As an exhibit shown in the context of world expositions, IMAX remained an item of technological curiosity. Large-format presentation only became an industry after permanent purpose-built theatres were constructed in the 1970s, and during the 1980s an array of producers and distributors entered the market.[[645]](#footnote-646)

Following the first permanent IMAX site in Toronto in 1971, came the first U.S. venue, in 1973, at the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center in San Diego. Opening with the specially-commissioned *Garden Isle* (1973), it was the first site to use a refined version of the system, initially named OMNIMAX but subsequently rebranded as IMAX DOME, that projected its images onto the domed roof of its auditorium. This situation of IMAX within institutional venues such as museums and science centres was typical of the format’s early evolution, with further installations at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. (in 1976), the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul (in 1977), and the first venue outside of North America, the Hong Kong Space Museum (in 1979). Similar to Cinerama, the growth of IMAX venues was initially slow, with around twenty sites, virtually all in North America, by the end of the decade. One significant difference, however, was that the IMAX Corporation was not exclusively responsible for producing large-format content for its own system, with a number of other enterprises entering this market during the decade.[[646]](#footnote-647)

The first Japanese IMAX site did not open until relatively late, in 1982. However, by 1990, nine out of the total 68 IMAX sites worldwide were situated in Japan, making it second only to the United States in terms of total number of venues.[[647]](#footnote-648) By comparison, the United Kingdom boasted only one IMAX screen during the 1980s, installed at the National Media Museum in Bradford in 1983. Furthermore, a number of the IMAX Corporation’s later innovations were features of subsequent expositions in Japan. A black-and-white 3D system was showcased at the Fujitsu Pavilion at the 1985 International Exposition at Tsukuba with the eleven-minute *We Are Born of the Stars* (1985). Expo ’90 in Osaka not only saw the premiere of the new Solido dome projection system, which used liquid-crystal shutter headsets instead of polarised glasses to achieve a superior colour 3D effect, but also the IMAX Magic Carpet, which used two projectors, one of which showed its images on a screen visible through a transparent floor beneath the audience to give the illusion of flying.[[648]](#footnote-649)

The expansion of IMAX progressed, with the temporary installations at world fairs leading to new venues opening at major tourist attractions (one of the earliest in Japan was at the Space World theme park at Kita-Kyushu) and other commercial spaces, and finally, from the mid-1990s, a number of giant screens opening in conventional multiplex theatres, through deals between IMAX Corporation and conventional 35mm exhibitors.[[649]](#footnote-650) In Japan, the proliferation of venues not only coincided with the country’s dramatic economic growth, but also with large shifts in investment in the film industry by Japanese companies. However, as Tezuka Yoshiharu notes, this did not come from the established studio system:

For the down-and-out Japanese film industry of the 1980s, globalization and the arrival of the information age were a mixed blessing. All the big Japanese hardware companies suddenly became interested in film and other “software” businesses, but, ironically these Japanese companies were least interested in Japanese film per se. As part of the rise of Global Hollywood, these Japanese companies were widely buying into American and European film industries.[[650]](#footnote-651)

During this period, the economic boundaries between national industries eroded significantly as a number of ‘acquisitions and mega-mergers in the 1990s made Hollywood into a global institution owned by multinationals within which Japanese capital played a substantial role.’[[651]](#footnote-652) To name but two of the most noteworthy examples, the Sony Corporation bought Columbia Pictures for $3.4 billion in 1989, while in 1990, the electronics giant Matsushita Electronic (now Panasonic) acquired MCA-Universal for $6 billion. Sony, the conglomerate whose revolutions in the small-screen market had played such a deleterious role for Japan’s traditional film industry, invested substantially in the new giant screen market. This was initially, somewhat ironically, at the level of exhibition, with its American-based arm Sony Pictures Entertainment opening its first IMAX theatre at Lincoln Square in New York in November 1994, and Sony Music Entertainment Japan opening the SME Cinequest site in the Takashimaya Times Square building in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo in 1996.[[652]](#footnote-653) The company later opened further sites outside of Japan, including venues in San Francisco (in 1999) and Berlin (in 2000).

As had been the case with Cinerama, in an attempt to distance the format from conventional narrative cinema, the giant screen spectacles traditionally associated with IMAX were ostensibly educational in their nature, focussing on topics such as natural history, technology, foreign cultures and true tales of adventure. In 1995, the first dramatic feature shot in the IMAX format (which also included a number of 3D sequences) was released. The 40-minute *Wings of Courage* was directed by the French filmmaker, Jean-Jacques Annaud, and featured Val Kilmer as a real-life airmail pilot who survives a crash in the Andes. The production was financed by Sony Pictures Classics, a subsidiary of Sony Corporation established to distribute American independent and foreign-language titles in the United States. The film was not a commercial success, due to a combination of the high production costs of the format coupled with the limited amount of venues worldwide capable of screening it.[[653]](#footnote-654) Sony Pictures Classics persevered with a number of further 15/70 productions, including another dramatic feature, *Across the Sea of Time* (Stephen Low, 1995), but after producing and distributing *Cirque de Soleil: Journey of Man* (1999), it withdrew from the IMAX market.[[654]](#footnote-655)

In cultural terms, there is nothing tangibly Japanese about the IMAX titles produced by Sony Pictures Classics. However, the involvement of this subsidiary of a larger Japanese enterprise is indicative of the global nature of film financing from this period. More significant, from an economic perspective, is the fact that such format-specific productions were not financially viable, and today IMAX owes a good degree of its continuing existence to an increased synergy with Hollywood. With the introduction in 2002 of IMAX DMR, a computer programme that converts conventional 35mm productions to 15/70 print stock, IMAX venues have regularly played host to large-format “blow-up” versions of regular films produced by the Hollywood studios. *Apollo 13* (Ron Howard, 1995) was remastered and reissued by IMAX on 20 September 2002, and Twentieth Century-Fox optimised George Lucas’ *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) for ‘The IMAX Experience’ within 6 months of its original release date. As it became standard practice for the Hollywood studios to release IMAX DMR versions of its seasonal blockbusters, Sony once again entered the market through its subsidiary Sony Pictures Entertainment, releasing, among other titles, *Spider-Man 2* (2004) and *Spider-Man 3* (2007) to IMAX venues.[[655]](#footnote-656)

It is worth concluding by noting that only very few of the Hollywood films presented in IMAX versions have contained any sequences shot using the 15/70 cameras developed for the system, following the lead of *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008), which featured a total of 30 minutes of such footage. Like the optical blow-ups of 35mm films that came increasingly to fill Cinerama screens in the 1960s, the image quality of the IMAX DMR optimised versions of standard releases are tangibly inferior to those productions shot using IMAX cameras, for the simple reason that one cannot add details to the image that weren’t originally captured during filming. With IMAX’s expansion into smaller retrofitted auditoriums in multiplexes, rather than purpose-built venues, and with the introduction of digital projection systems in July 2008, IMAX has compromised many of the aspects that made it unique in an attempt to maintain its position within the global market.

It is worth noting that non-fiction films specifically intended for IMAX presentation have continued to be made, including such titles as *Volcanoes of the Deep Sea* (Stephen Low, 2003), *Ghosts of the Abyss* (James Cameron, 2003), *Mystery of the Nile* (Jordi Llompart, 2005) and *Hidden Universe 3D* (Russell Scott, 2013). Moreover, as Paul MacDonald points out, ‘Hollywood’s 15/70 releases were surpassed at the box office by the types of educational and informational filmmaking for which large-format cinema was most familiarly known.’[[656]](#footnote-657) While a digital camera has been developed by the IMAX Corporation, which was used to shoot approximately 10% of *Born to Be Wild* (David Lickley, 2011), films produced exclusively for the system continue to be shot on 15/70, and there are currently no plans to abandon the higher-resolution film format for which IMAX is renowned.

Nevertheless, digital projection was introduced to IMAX venues in 2008 and is now standard for the Hollywood optimizations. This adoption of digital technologies at the point of presentation echoes developments in the conventional exhibition sector, changes that have threatened traditional notions of the art and industry of cinema, and have forced a comprehensive reconceptualization of the medium’s very essence.

## 8.4 Cinema in the 21st Century: Japan and the Transition to Digital

Since the turn of the 21st century, cinema has been undergoing a transition of greater significance than that which accompanied the introduction of widescreen formats in the 1950s. The switchover from analogue to digital technologies has occurred at a far more rapid and absolute pace, impacting not only at the levels of production and exhibition, but also, significantly, at the point of distribution.

Leo Enticknap notes that by the end of the 1990s, ‘low-budget-feature films were being originated and edited entirely on digital video before being transferred to 35mm film for release.’[[657]](#footnote-658) The emergence of the Digital Cinema Package (DCP), a collection of files delivered to venues on hard drives, as the new global exhibition standard between the period of 2009 to 2012, has dramatically cut distribution overheads. The DCP circumvents the need for multiple copies of any given title on physical media such as celluloid film or digital tape, allowing for more widespread release patterns simultaneously across multiple territories.[[658]](#footnote-659)

A more comprehensive overview of this process across a decade in which digital and analogue technologies have co-existed belongs to another study. So too are the ramifications on other areas of moving image culture, although a number of commentators have pointed to the issues digitalisation raises with regards to archiving.[[659]](#footnote-660)

Nevertheless, in the early 2010s, there were a number of key incidents that serve as indicators as to the extent to which celluloid film had effectively become a thing of the past. In June 2011, Technicolor closed its Los Angeles laboratory, while in October that same year, the three major motion picture camera manufacturers of ARRI, Panavision and Aaton announced they would cease production of traditional 35mm cameras to devote their resources exclusively to the design and manufacture of their digital successors. A month later, in November 2011, Twentieth Century-Fox declared it would cease supplying exhibitors with 35mm prints imminently, while in January 2012, Eastman Kodak filed for bankruptcy protection. In March 2013, Eastman Kodak’s historical rival, Fuji, ceased selling 35mm negative and positive film stock.[[660]](#footnote-661) Meanwhile, in 2013 David Hancock reported in *IHS Screen Digest* that ‘for the first time, 35mm film in 2012 became the minority cinema format after nearly 90,000 screens went digital worldwide at the end of last year.’[[661]](#footnote-662)

It is instructive to frame the comprehensive transition to digital methods of production and presentation with reference to the introduction of widescreen in the 1950s. As Enticknap has observed, ‘history shows that new technologies which have required substantial investment at the exhibition end usually fail’, specifically citing the example of exhibitors’ rejection of Fox’s attempts to package CinemaScope with magnetic sound. [[662]](#footnote-663) He emphasises this to draw parallels with Hollywood’s drive to force digital projection as a standard in the first decade of the twenty-first century in order to cut studio distribution costs by shifting the additional expenses to the exhibition sector.[[663]](#footnote-664) Nevertheless, by the beginning of 2013 it was clear that the digital conversion of the global industry could be considered absolute and irreversible.

Several areas pertaining to the relationship between production, exhibition and film aesthetics with regards to the Japanese industry and its situation in the global market during this transition can be identified as starting points for further research. In September and October 2012 alone, Tokyo’s traditional entertainment district of Asakusa, where Japan’s first purpose-built movie house, the Denki-kan, was erected in 1903, saw the closure of its last five long-established theatrical venues as part of an urban redevelopment project that left the area bereft of any screens. In the following year, many further venues across the country were closed. However, though the number of screens in Japan fell from 3,412 in 2010 to 3,290 in 2012 (attributable in part to the ‘ongoing effects from the March 11 disaster, economic difficulties in regional areas, and independent art cinemas grappling with shrinking DVD and theatrical revenues’), the first decade of the new millennium saw the overall screen count rise steadily from its all-time low of 1,734 in 1993, with the 2012 figure roughly matching that of the 3,246 venue tally for 1970.[[664]](#footnote-665) Significantly, 2,765 of these 3,290 screens (84%) were contained in multi-screen cinema complexes.[[665]](#footnote-666)

Since the establishment of Japan’s first such venue, the Warner Mycal Ebina in 1993, the number of multiplex screens has risen dramatically, from 1,123 of the 2,524 total (44.5%) in 2000 through 2,454 out of 3,221 (76%) in 2007 to its 2012 level of 84%. A key driver in this expansion has been the T-Joy chain, ‘an exhibition joint venture backed by a total of 22 companies, including the Toei group.’[[666]](#footnote-667) Just as the construction of new exhibition outlets in the 1950s by several of the major companies (of which Toei, as has been detailed, was the most active) coincided with the start of widescreen production in Japan, so too has the growth of new cinema complexes facilitated the transition to digital. In December 2000, T-Joy opened its first ‘e-cinema’ complex in Hiroshima, which was capable of projecting digitised films downloaded from a communications satellite.[[667]](#footnote-668) In 2001, *Screen Daily* reported that:

Toei has been moving aggressively into digital filmmaking, producing a $11.6m (Y1.4bn) adaptation of a literary classic by Murasaki Shikibu, *A Thousand Year Love -- The Tale of Genji (Sennen No Koi - Genji Monogatari*), which is being shot and edited in both digital and non-digital formats. The film is currently in production and will be released domestically in January 2002.[[668]](#footnote-669)

The new cinema complex environment, equipped with Digital Light Processing (DLP) projectors and data-transmission systems that allow for live broadcasts, are now the typical point of delivery for the shared theatrical experience. The growth in this part of the exhibition sector has seen the percentage of the nation’s screens equipped for digital projection rising from 29% in 2010 to 88% in 2012.[[669]](#footnote-670) While this rise is impressive, it should be noted that Japan is slightly lagging behind other nation’s in this respect, with Bordwell reporting that by the end of 2012, 100% of screens in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and South Korea were equipped for the new format, with the United Kingdom at 93% and France at 92%.[[670]](#footnote-671)

In *Japanese Cinema in the Digital Age*, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano details how this change in viewing environments has significantly shaped the type of films produced, leading to a ‘prevalence of independent films with their low-spectacle and personal narratives, which are thoroughly compatible with the diminished size of the screen’ of the cinema complex. [[671]](#footnote-672) Such productions are in keeping with Belton’s observations of cinema’s ‘“devolution” back into a narrow-screen phenomenon.’[[672]](#footnote-673) In this context, it is important to remember that the adoption of digital filmmaking technologies, offering significant advantages in terms of production costs, preceded digital exhibition by several years. As early as 2000, titles such as Hiroki Ryûichi’s *Tokyo Trash Baby* (*Tôkyô gomi onna*) and Miike Takashi’s *Visitor Q* (*Bijitaa Q*) were filmed on video and blown up to 35mm for theatrical distribution.[[673]](#footnote-674)

Further research is required into the pace of adoption of digital filmmaking technologies in Japan across the decade. Moreover, a number of successive digital formats emerged to replace 35mm for exhibition during this transitional phase, beginning with tape-based media such as Digital Betacam (Digibeta), DVCam and HDCam, before the DCP became the standard method of delivery to exhibition sites. The exact periods of when and to what extent these various formats were adopted and remained in use is also unclear.

It is revealing that this same period saw an increased convergence with Japan’s broadcasting industry. Many of the decade’s most successful live-action domestic releases, including *Bayside Shakedown 2* (*Odoru daisôsasen The Movie 2*, Motohiro Katsuyuki, 2003), *Crying Out Love, in the Center of the World* (*Sekai no chûshin de, ai o sakebu*, Yukisada Isao, 2004) and *Boys over Flowers: Final* (*Hana yori dango: Fainaru*, Ishii Yasuharu, 2008), were theatrical spin-offs of popular television dramas. Also highly lucrative were the animated titles aimed at the children’s market, which featured characters and scenarios similarly established in alternate media fields such as video games and *manga*, and include the annual theatrical instalments of the *Pokémon* and *Detective Conan* (*Meitantai Conan*) films.[[674]](#footnote-675) All of these externally-produced titles were distributed by Toho, whose releases in 2008 gained a significant 38% share of the domestic market, once more emphasizing the centrality of exhibition to studio practices.[[675]](#footnote-676)

Meanwhile, while the number of domestic releases in Japan ran concurrent to the rising screen count, as had been the case in the 1950s, cinema attendances did not rise at the same rate. In 2000, the 282 domestic releases attracted a total of 135,390,000 viewers (an approximate average of 480,000 viewers per film). The 356 releases in 2005 attracted 160,453,000 viewers (approximately 450,000 per film), while the 408 releases in 2010 attracted 174,358,000 attendances (approximately 427,000 per film).[[676]](#footnote-677) In 2012, the Eiren figures for the number of releases in Japan began to include what is commonly termed ODS (‘Other Digital Stuff’), referring to the exclusive one-off broadcasting of live and pre-recorded material such as sports and music events to cinema screens. This accounts for the dramatic rise from 441 domestic releases in 2011 to 554 in 2012 (of which ODS constituted 75 locally-produced titles).[[677]](#footnote-678)

The situation has meant that individual titles, particularly those with more modest budgets, have struggled to find audiences in an environment that has increasingly favoured the major companies. According to Satô Naoki, the president of Nikkatsu, ‘While the majors produced less than 20% of the total number of Japanese releases in 2011, they earned more than 80% of the total box office. This polarization, the loss of the middle ground, exactly reflects the economic and social disparities in Japan. Films that don’t establish a defined target audience won’t succeed.’[[678]](#footnote-679) The situation is turning full circle to the Golden Age of the 1950s, in which low- and mid-budget independent releases have effectively been crowded out of the market.

Despite the issues facing conventional cinema exhibition, new digital technologies have also seen a rise in audiences for the domestic product via post-theatrical media such as DVD, Blu-ray and Video on Demand services. Wada-Marciano argues that when one takes into account the large numbers of such home-format viewers, the domestic industry is, in fact, in not such a different state of health as it was in its peak year of attendances in 1958, despite the very different manner in which audiences now consume cinema.[[679]](#footnote-680)

## 8.5 Increased Immersion: 3D and 4DX

The realisation by the industry at large that theatrical venues are no longer the primary site of consumption for its product has also influenced the form and the type of films produced. The most significant aspect in this regards is that whereas digital media preserve the innovations of the analogue era, such as wider aspect ratios, colour, stereophonic and 5.1 surround sound, all of which have become established aspects of modern film aesthetics, digital exhibition in itself does not add anything more to the theatrical experience. Debate rages as to whether a 4K digital scan of a film projected via the latest DLP technology is of a similar standard even to conventional 35mm.[[680]](#footnote-681) It is certain that digital projection doesn’t yield a perceptibly superior viewing experience in the way that the introduction of ’scope formats did. The inescapable fact remains that aside from experiencing a film in a communal environment on a larger screen (though often not substantially so in the era of the multiplex and widescreen television), for many consumers there is often not enough difference between viewing a film theatrically or on home-viewing media to justify the high cost of cinema admission.

To this end, exhibitors have needed to offer various incentives to lure audiences back into the auditorium in order to subsidise the costs of upgrading to digital projection. David Bordwell isolates two periods of significant digital adoption in the US: between 2004 and 2005, when the number of screens grew from 80 to 1500, and between 2009 and 2012, when the figure stood at ‘about 7400 digital screens; a year later there were nearly 15,000. Then the acceleration began. Ten thousand screens converted in 2011 and eight thousand more the following year.’[[681]](#footnote-682) On both occasions, he notes that the expansion was driven by the return of 3D, and that the conversion costs to digital for individual exhibitors was partly underwritten by surcharges on ticket prices for 3D films.

Whereas 3D had been offered as one particular panacea for falling attendances due to the increased saturation of television in the early 1950s, it ultimately failed because the equipment was unreliable and expensive to operate, and was superseded by widescreen technologies such as CinemaScope. In contrast, the more reliable projection of films in 3D provided by digital technologies was a clear driving force in the move away from celluloid, with the global box-office success of James Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009) leading the change.[[682]](#footnote-683)

In 2010, *Avatar* became the top-grossing film of all time at the Japanese box office, mirroring its success in other parts of the world. The year’s next four highest-earning imports were *Alice in Wonderland* (Tim Burton, 2010), *Toy Story 3* (Lee Unkrich, 2010), *Up* (Pete Docter, 2009) and *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2010), all of which were produced in 3D or, in the case of Burton’s film, post-converted for 3D release. The second highest-grossing domestic title, after Studio Ghibli’s *Arietty* (*Karigurashi no Arrietti*, ‎Yonebayashi Hiromasa, 2010), was *Umizaru 3: Last Message* (*THE LAST MESSAGE: Umizaru*, Hasumi Eiichirô, 2010), the third theatrical feature based on the Fuji TV series about scuba-diving Japanese Coast Guards and the first live-action 3D feature to be released by the distributor Toho. In 2011, *UniJapan* reported that:

In 2010, 3D lead the way to further digitalization of cinema. There are now 763 3D screens among the 980 screens [out of 3,412] equipped for digital projection across the nation. By 2011, most studio cinema screens will have been digitalized, and the era of celluloid-less cinemas will nearly be upon us.[[683]](#footnote-684)

The growth in 3D-capable digital screens in Japan in 2010 represented the fastest worldwide, with overall revenues from the format second only to those of the United States.[[684]](#footnote-685) The year also saw a 7.1% increase in box-office takings: this was partially attributable to the 300-400 Yen surplus ticket price on 3D films, although admissions in general rose by 3%, to the highest figure since 1974. This growth in overall earnings was largely attributable to the Hollywood 3D blockbusters such as *Avatar* (although the market share for foreign imports was only 46.4%).[[685]](#footnote-686) However, it should be noted that domestic 3D productions such as *The Shock Labyrinth 3D* (*Senritsu meikyû 3D*, Shimizu Takashi, 2009), *Garo: Red Requiem* (Amemiya Keita, 2010), and the post-converted re-release in 2010 of *Battle Royale* (*Batoru rowaiaru*, Fukasaku Kinji, 2000), overseen by its director’s son, Fukasaku Kenta, were not so profitable at the local box office, nor were they widely released overseas. Furthermore, although *Hara-Kiri: Death of a Samurai* (*Ichimei*, Miike Takashi, 2011) became the first 3D film from any country to play in competition at Cannes, it was only distributed outside of Japan in its 2D version.

In conclusion, it appears that 3D has yet to become a significant aspect of domestic production. Meanwhile, the drop in attendances for the higher-priced 3D releases in 2011, in Japan as in the rest of the world, suggests the novelty of such presentations has been short-lived.[[686]](#footnote-687) In this area, it is crucial to note that both foreign and domestic films have not been produced exclusively for 3D presentation, with flat 2D versions of the same titles released simultaneously. With only just over half of the digital screens across the world capable of 3D projection by the end of 2012, the financial reasoning behind this is obvious.[[687]](#footnote-688) More critically, unlike the introduction of widescreen formats in the 1950s, 3D has never been touted by the industry as a new standard, and the global trend has been that, within just two years of the groundbreaking release of *Avatar*, audiences were already tending to favour the 2D alternative versions of Hollywood 3D productions rather than pay the inflated ticket prices.[[688]](#footnote-689)

What is interesting abour how Japan has followed North American and Europe in its desertion of 3D, is that the most marked and continuous growth for the format has been in other Asian markets, particularly China and South Korea, with BBC News reporting in 2012 that:

China alone has around 10,000 screens equipped for 3D – that’s almost a quarter of the worldwide total. And where Chinese audiences have been offered a choice between seeing the same film in 3D or flat in 2D, they’ve overwhelmingly chosen the former.[[689]](#footnote-690)

As Bordwell notes of the more general adoption of digital technologies, by the end of 2012, the exhibition sector in South Korea had completely switched to digital projection, while ‘China is the growth engine. Rising living standards and swelling attendance have triggered a building frenzy. Over 85%, or 21,407 screens are already digital, and on average, each day adds at least eight new screens.’[[690]](#footnote-691) This pattern reveals marked similarities with Japan’s transition to widescreen production and exhibition in the late 1950s, which was spurred by a massive expansion of the country’s exhibition sector.

It is in mainland Asia that the next revolution in film exhibition practices is currently underway. Developed by the CJ 4DPlex subsidiary of the South Korea company CJ CGV, Asia’s largest multiplex chain, the 4DX system represents perhaps the ultimate attempt to elevate the cinema experience to a level over that provided by home-viewing media. As well as 3D’s added dimension of depth, the system includes mechanised seats that vibrate, roll, pitch and yaw in tandem with camera motion, and environmental effects such as jets of air or water that can be directed at the head and back of the neck, stroboscopic lighting in the auditorium and cascades of bubbles, billows of smoke and diffusions of aromatic vapours.[[691]](#footnote-692)

4DX is of interest in that it is purely an exhibition technology, not a production format. 4DX installations are situated in retrofitted multiplex venues, and the films presented using the system are fundamentally the same as those that can be seen in conventional theatres, albeit accompanied by the sensory embellishments created by the CJ 4DPlex programmers. The first 4DX presentation occurred in Seoul in January 2009, for the South Korean release of *Avatar*, and so far the system has been used almost exclusively for Hollywood blockbuster titles, although there have also been 4DX releases of two Japanese films; the horror film *Sadako 3D* (Hanabusa Tsutomu, 2012) and the 2D Toei Animation production of *Dragon Ball Z: Battle of Gods* (*Doragon Bōru Zetto: Kami to Kami*, Hosoda Masahiro, 2013).

In contrast to previous site-specific exhibition formats such as Cinerama and IMAX, one of the most significant aspects of 4DX is its rapid expansion across territories in Southeast Asia, South America, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, with no sites currently in North America or Western Europe, although these are planned.[[692]](#footnote-693) As of 2013, all of the 4DX installations were in countries such as China, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Poland, Hungary, Israel and Russia, with just one a Japanese installation, which opened in Nagoya on 26 April 2013 with a presentation of *Iron Man 3* (Shane Black, 2013).[[693]](#footnote-694)

Whether 4DX proves to be a long-term solution for declining theatrical attendances worldwide, or just one of the many alternative technologies that have fallen in and out of favour over the past century remains to be seen. At present, its expansion suggests that audiences are content to pay the inflated ticket prices for the experience.[[694]](#footnote-695) Along with the growth of digital and 3D projection, 4DX at the very least serves as a signpost that whereas cinema production is still strongly the reserve of Hollywood, with its global distribution networks ensuring a constant demand for its product, the future of cinema exhibition might well be defined within Asia. The close partnering of the CJ 4DPlex programmers with Twentieth Century-Fox and LightStorm Entertainment during the preparation of the 4DX version of *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) in 2012 suggests that a potentially fascinating synergy between Western and Eastern production partners is well within grasp if there should come such a time when films are explicitly produced with the technology in mind.

Nevertheless, the appeal of 4DX to audience demands for sensory satiation represents only one of many conduits through which viewers now consume moving images. There are types of narratives that are less well-suited to the display of spectacle for the sake of spectacle, and a large proportion of film consumption exists and will continue to exist via home-viewing media. The development of ever more immersive formats, aimed at recreating the human sensorium within a communal setting, need not threaten the existence of films that engage the viewer on a more intellectual level through dialogue, narrative construction and sophisticated montage or compositional techniques.

Whether at a national or international level, the evolution of cinema has never been towards a teleological endpoint, and Bazin’s myth of a “total cinema” is but one of the many directions in which the moving image media is moving towards. Films can be analysed or enjoyed as historical records, art and entertainment, for cinema is all of these things, but above all, as Belton writes, ‘the motion picture remains an experiential phenomenon whose existence continues to be abstract rather than concrete and whose essence cannot be located in any material source.’[[695]](#footnote-696)As the history of widescreen cinema demonstrates, throughout its relatively short history of little over a century, cinematic form and content has been influenced by a variety of external and internal factors, including technological changes, exhibition contexts, economic factors such as shifting audience demographics, historical events, cultural circumstances and the aesthetic tastes of the age. Change is the only constant.

It is interesting to conjecture what part Japan will play in the medium’s unfolding process of development. As has been detailed, in the 1950s, the country played a central role within Southeast Asian film production. Nagata Masaichi was a key driver of the establishment of the first film festival in the region, a number of international co-productions were initiated by Japanese companies, colour film from other Asian producers was processed at Tokyo’s Far East Laboratory, and Japanese ’scope technologies formed the basis of the systems adopted by industries in countries such as Hong Kong.

However, as Tezuka Yoshiharu notes, ‘As the economic power of other Asian countries rapidly caught up with Japan’s, the latest cinematic technologies became available to them more or less simultaneously. This made Japan’s technological superiority much less evident.’[[696]](#footnote-697) Furthermore, although the box office share of domestic productions has continued to grow in Japan since 2000, none of the ‘Japanese TV-based blockbusters has made an impact in neighbouring Asian countries, let alone been successfully exported to Europe or the US market.’[[697]](#footnote-698) Meanwhile, in 2012, Japan slipped to third position behind China as the world’s second largest exhibition market.[[698]](#footnote-699)

However, since its inception, the industry of Japan has shown an extraordinary resilience and, in the long term at least, a remarkable ability to adapt to the circumstances of the day. There is no reason to assume that this cannot continue to be the case.

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2. The term the ‘West’ is here acknowledged as problematic, but one example of this approach is provided by Noël Burch’s *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1979). Burch posits that Japan’s relative cultural and geographical isolation from Hollywood resulted in its cinema developing a radically different representational system from what he terms the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR). Recent approaches have acknowledged the long-term influence of foreign cinemas in Japan. For a critique of Burch, see Malcomson, Scott L, ‘The Pure Land Beyond the Sea: Barthes, Burch and the Uses of Japan’, *Screen* 26 no. 3/4 (May/August 1985), pp. 23-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The 1930s are seen as the first Golden Age, when Japanese cinema first came of age as an art form before it was creatively stifled by the increasingly nationalistic and militaristic cultural climate of the era marked by the Film Law (*Eiga-hô*) going into effect on 1 October 1939, bringing the industry under the jurisdiction of the government for the duration of the Pacific War. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. *UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 2 (1961), p. 2. In 1956, the number of ‘Modern Plays’ released was 345 (67.1%) with 169 (32.9%) ‘Costume Plays’. This fell to 280 (63.2%) in 1957 then rose to 336 (66.6%) in 1958, 355 (72%) in 1959 and 385 (70.4%) in 1960. The high proportion of contemporary films was certainly not reflected in the Japanese films the were screened at overseas festivals throughout the decade. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. *Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan: Statistics of Film Industry in Japan Year 1955 – 1999*, http://www.eiren.org/statistics\_e/index.html [Accessed 1 September 2010]. The resumption of publication on 1 December 1951 of Japan’s oldest film journal, *Kinema Junpô* (after a 10-year hiatus due to the war), might also be seen as providing a marker point for the industry’s remarkable postwar resurgence. Launched in July 1919, the magazine is still considered the most powerful critical voice in Japan, with its critics’ annual Best Ten awards, beginning in 1924 for foreign films with a Japanese category introduced in 1926, providing a good indicator as to how Japanese critics and intellectuals have regarded their own cinema. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* (Tokyo: Promotional Council of Motion Picture Industry of Japan, 1957), p. 27. This source, an exhaustive English-language directory of industry statistics intended to promote Japanese cinema overseas, appears to have been intended as the first of a serial but in fact was only published for this year, to be replaced by the *UniJapan Film Quarterly* from 1958. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid., p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Ibid., p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Zahlten, Alexander. *The Role of Genre in Film From Japan: Transformations 1960s-2000s* (PhD diss., Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, May 2007), p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. In 1955, 193 out of the 616 films released in Japan were imports. Figures for the following years were 177 out of 691 in 1956, 194 out of 637 in 1957; 169 out of 673 in 1958; 210 out of 703 in 1959; and 216 out of 763 in 1960. In reality, the low market share for foreign films in 1960 can be attributed to the fact that it represented a peak in the number of domestic releases, with 547 Japanese films released. This would fall to 344 domestic releases in 1964, with 259 imports, according to the *Eiren* website [Accessed 15 June 2010]. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Sharp, Jasper, *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Cinema* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), p. xxxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Hirano, Kyoko*, Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945–1952* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1992), pp. 252-257. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, pp. 136-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. *Eiga Nenkan 1960* (Tôkyô: Jiji Eiga Tsûshin-sha, 1960), p. 49, table 8B. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Yau Shuk-ting, Kinnia, *Japanese and Hong Kong Film Industries: Understanding the Origins of East Asian Film Networks* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 65. The figures cited by Yau are taken from *Eiga Nenkan 1955*, p. 48. Note the inclusion of Okinawa as an export territory until 1972, the year of its reversion from U.S. to Japanese administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. ‘Tokyo’s Take From O’Seas Markets’, *Variety*, 22 April 1959, p. 15. This article also points out that ‘While income from the export of Japanese films is on a steady postwar climb, the bulk of these receipts are earned in communities of people with Japanese heritage. Leading importers of Japanese product continues to be the U.S. (Hawaii and Los Angeles), Okinawa, Formosa, Hong Kong and Brazil.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Yau, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Ibid., p. 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Wada-Marciano, Mitsuyo, ‘Construction of Modern Space: Tokyo and Shochiku Kamata Film Texts’ in Aaron Gerow and Abé Mark Nornes (eds.), *In Praise of Film Studies: Essays in Honor of Makino Mamoru* (Ann Arbor, MI: Kinema Club, 2001), pp. 158-175; Wada-Marciano, Mitsuyo, *Nippon Modern: Japanese Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008); Galbraith, Stuart IV, *The Toho Studios Story: A History and Complete Filmography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008); Schilling, Mark, *No Borders, No Limits: Nikkatsu Action Cinema* (Godalming, UK: FAB Press, 2007); Schilling, Mark, *Nudes! Guns! Ghosts! The Sensational Films of Shintoho* (Udine, Italy: Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. One noteworthy exception in recent years has been Miyao, Daisuke, *The Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Japanese Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Tanaka, Junichirô, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi IV: Shijô saikô no eiga jidai* (Developments in Japanese Film History IV: The Historical Highpoint of Cinema) (Tokyo: Chûô Kôron-sha, 1976), pp. 124-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Sharp, Jasper, ‘Donald Richie interview’, *Midnight Eye* website, 12 August 2003, www.midnighteye.com/interviews/donald\_richie.shtml [Accessed 9 December 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Tanaka, p. 322. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. *Eiga Nenkan 1963*, p. 32. Zahlten, pp. 88-89, provides some further information on the film, which was one of the earliest *eroductions* produced hurriedly in the wake of Ôkura Eiga’s *Flesh Market* (*Nikutai ichiba*, Kobayashi Satoru, 1962), more directly inspired by Seki Kôji’s highly-profitable “female Tarzan” film, *The Valley of Desire* (*Jôyoku no tanima*, 1962), the first such film to be produced by Kokuei, another company which would come to specialize in the adult independent genre. The film’s director, Kitasato Toshio, owned a strip club in Ikebukuro, and it seems likely that the actress Nina Vorganska was one of his strippers. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Belton, John, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Crosby, Eric, ‘Widescreen Composition and Transnational Influence: Early Anamorphic Filmmaking in Japan’ in John Belton, Sheldon Hall and Steve Neal (eds.), *Widescreen Worldwide* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 175-192; Anderson and Richie, pp. 250-254. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Belton (1992), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Ibid., p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Enticknap, Leo, *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital* (London: Wallflower, 2005), pp. 45-53. Note that for Academy Ratio, the area occupied by the image on the negative was 22 mm x 16 mm (0.866” x 0.630”), with the rest of the 35mm width of the film occupied by the sprocket holes needed to run the film through the camera/projector. The image size of 24.89 mm x 18.67 mm (0.980” x 0.735”) of the original silent standard, proposed by Thomas Edison at the dawn of film history, therefore occupied a larger area due to the lack of black matte bars and soundtrack, and subsequently resulted in a larger, better definition projected image. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Ibid, pp. 174-176. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Belton, p. 151-152. Hard-matting refers to the process of masking the top and bottom of the frame to alter its shape. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Ibid., p. 155. Fox released a further CinemaScope title shortly after on 18 April 1967, *Caprice*, a comedy-spy movie directed by Frank Tashlin and starring Doris Day, although it is assumed that this must have gone into production before *In Like Flint*. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. ‘Shinemasukôpu monogatari’ (All About CinemaScope), *Eiga no Tomo*, February 1954, pp. 100-104; ‘Nihon no Shinemasukôpu’ (CinemaScope in Japan), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 May 1954, pp. 71-75; Shimizu, Chiyota, ‘Shinemasukôpu wa Nihon de seisaku sareruka’ (Will CinemaScope Films Be Produced in Japan?), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 June 1954, pp. 46-47; Akieda, Tomijirô, ‘Shinemasukôpu kanken’ (Opinions on CinemaScope), *Kinema Junpô*, 15 October 1954, pp. 74; Uchimura, Naoya, ‘Waidosukuriin no enshutsu: Engi’ (Widescreen Production: Performance), *Eiga Hyôron*, November 1955, pp. 18-24; Kazuki, Minoru, ‘Kakudai gamen no shôraisei’ (The Future Possibilities of the Expanded Screen), *Eiga Hyôron*, November 1955, pp. 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Oka, Toshio, ‘Shinemasukôpu: Atarashii panorama-shiki eiga’ (CinemaScope: New Panorama-style Cinema), *Kinema Junpô*, 15 June 1953, pp. 44-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Shimaji, Takamaro, ‘Nihon no Shinemasukôpu’ (Cinemascope in Japan), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 September 1956, pp. 105-109. Shimaji’s conversion is consistent with the exchange rate of ¥360 per US$1, fixed by United States in 1949 as part of the Bretton Woods System, to stabilise prices in the Japanese economy. This exchange rate was maintained until 1971, when the United States abandoned the gold standard. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Enticknap, pp. 164-168. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Spiegel, Lynn, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (2nd ed.)(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Enticknap, p. 169. See also Ito, Masami, *Broadcasting in Japan: Case-Studies on Broadcasting Systems* (London: Routledge, 1978; 2011 reprint), pp. 13-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Anderson and Richie, pp. 254-55, 427, 451. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. *Statistics on Radio and Television 1950 – 1960* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1963), p. 78 and 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. *Latest Statistics on Radio and Television* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1987), p. 78. The report only gives figures for 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1982 and 1983. The organisation’s *Statistics on Radio and Television: 1960-1976*, published in 1979, was not available for this study. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. *UniJapan* vol. 5 no. 4 (1962), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Anderson and Richie, p. 451. Again, it is not clear what the source of these statistics is. Still, while these claims may seem vague or inflated, by 1970 around a fifth of the population owned television licenses. While the equation between the number of licenses and the number of televisions owned is far from exact, it is worth bearing in mind that the license payer would most likely be the homeowner rather than other family dependents such as spouses, children or grandparents, and so it seems evident that most Japanese would have had access to a television. Japan’s figures for these years are comparible to those given in the Unesco reports for countries such as Australia, Finland, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany. They lag behind the United Kingdom, in which 24.8% and 29.4% of the population owned licenses in 1965 and 1970 respectively, or the United States of America, in which the number of sets was at 36.2% of the population in 1965 and 41.3% in 1970. Note that because unlike Japan and the United Kingdom, the United States did not use a license system, these figures represent the actual number of sets owned, and might be misleadingly higher because it is feasible, albeit unlikely, for a license-payer at this time in the other countries to operate multiple televisions from one license. See also Desser, David, *Eros plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 8-9, 213. Desser notes that Anderson and Richie’s figures might also be somewhat deceptive in that television ownership began in the major cities, the same areas that constituted the cinema’s primary audiences. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Belton, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Ibid., pp. 69-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. ‘Motion Picture and TV’, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* no. 1 vol. 3 (1960), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. ‘Japan Film Attendance Off Over 15% in ‘61: TV Takes Most Blame’, *Variety*, 22 Aug 1962, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Sharp, Jasper, *Behind the Pink Curtain: The Complete History of Japanese Sex Cinema* (Godalming, UK: FAB Press, 2008), p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Anderson and Richie, p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Shimaji, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Belton, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Crosby, p. 177. These statistics come from Ireton, Glenn F., ‘Japan in 1954’, in *The 1955* *Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures* (New York: Film Daily, 1955), p. 884, and *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 139. Crosby, p. 197n9, notes an inconsistency in the latter source’s introduction that ‘suggests that 950 theatres across Japan had anamorphic projection facilities by the end of 1955.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Shimaji, p. 106. The figure of 6,123 for the total number of screens across the country is taken from the *Eiren* website, although one should note that it applies to the end of the year, and so it is likely that there were less than this at the time Shimaji’s article was published. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Belton, p. 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. ‘Scope Spread; Last Week: 116’, *Variety*, 29 June 1955, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. ‘C’Scope Ratio to ‘Possibilities’ Up’, *Variety*, Wed 10 August 1955. The *Variety* articles confusingly refer to the number of installations in relation to the number of “possibilities” (i.e, theatres any one picture can play), rather than the total number of venues in North America, presumably because some theatrical venues would be unsuitable for CinemaScope installation, for whatever reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Chibnall, Steve, ‘The Scope of their Ambition: British Independent Film Production and Widescreen Formats in the 1950s’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 159. Chibnall’s statistics come from *Kinematograph Weekly* (31 May 1956), p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Vitella, Federico, ‘Before Techniscope: The Penetration of Foreign Widescreen Technology in Italy (1953-1959)’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 165. It is not clear from this article what the total number of theatres in Italy was at this time. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. ‘Classification of Feature Films by Type’, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 2 (April 1961) p. 2, Table 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. *Eiren* website. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. *Variety*, 22 Aug 1962, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Ibid., p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Ibid., p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Ibid., p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. ‘New Woe in Japan: Dual Films. Yanks’ Product Outlook Bleak’, *Variety*, 22 April 1959, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Ikeda Gishin, ‘The Japanese Film Industry in 1959’, *The Journal of the Screen Producers Guild* (Dec 1959), pp. 19-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Hanson, Stuart, *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen: A History of Cinema Exhibition in Britain Since 1896* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Haines, Richard W., *Technicolor Movies: The History of Dye Transfer Printing* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1993; 2003 reprint), pp. 49-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Ibid., p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Ibid., pp. 123-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Ibid., p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. Ibid., p. 24. The *Eiren* website also provides more accurate figures for the distributor’s income and market share of foreign films from 1955 onwards, giving a not dissimilar figure of 11,317 Yen for 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Ibid., p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Ibid., p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. This figure has been arrived at by calculating 67.3% of the distributors income for imports in 1955 of 10,923 million Yen, at a rate of 360 Yen per 1 US$. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Originally founded as the Foreign Film Distributors Association of Japan, it very soon had changed its name to the Foreign Film Importer-Distributors Association of Japan (Gaikoku Eiga Yunyû Haikyû Kyôkai or Gaihaikyô) in 1959 and still functions to this day. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. ‘Gaiei fûkiri honsû (Numbers of foreign releases)’, *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 53 (table 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. UNIJAPAN International Promotion Department, *The Guide to Japanese Film Industry & Co-Production* (Tokyo: Japan Association for International Promotion of the Moving Image, 2010), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, pp. 30, 154-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. ‘Par Wins Extra Import 3d Year in Row’, *Variety*, 24 August 1955, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Howard, Christopher, ‘Beyond *Jidai-geki*: Daiei Studios and the Study of Transnational Japanese Cinema’, *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* vol. 3 no. 1 (2011), pp. 5-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Tezuka, Yoshiharu, *Japanese Cinema Goes Global: Filmworkers’ Journeys* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, pp. 156-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Born Avrom Hirsch Goldbogen to Polish-Jewish immigrants on 22 June 1909, Michael Todd adopted his new name in 1931, and is commonly referred to by the more casual appellation of Mike Todd Sr. Todd’s achievements beyond financing the Cinerama and Todd-AO systems are many, but he is also remembered as being Elizabeth Taylor’s third husband in a marriage that lasted from 2 February 1957 to 22 March 1958. It was actress’ only marriage not to end in divorce, tragically ending with Todd’s death in a plane crash. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Hart, Martin. ‘Cinerama Specification Sheet’, *American Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/cinerama\_specs.htm [Accessed 28 June 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Enticknap, p. 57. See also the documentary *Cinerama Adventure* (David Strohmaier, U.S., 2002) for a comprehensive and entertaining overview of Cinerama, and the film’s website http://www.cineramaadventure.com [Accessed 23 March 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. Belton et al, ‘Introduction’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Belton (1992), pp. 105-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Enticknap, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. At the time of writing, there are only three venues capable of projecting original three-strip Cinerama films left in the world, largely due to the efforts of a small number of enthusiasts who remember the format from its 1950s heyday. The Pictureville Cinema at the National Media Museum in Bradford, England, which opened on 6 April 1992, long after the demise of the original Cinerama, is currently the only one that hosts regular Cinerama screenings. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Belton (1992), p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Enticknap, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Belton (1992), p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Lataille, Roland. *Cinerama* website, http://cinerama.topcities.com/ [Accessed 23 March 2012]. The sources mentioned in the text are indexed by date and included as scanned images on the website. However, the names of the publications in which they originally appeared are not given. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Belton (1992), pp. 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. ‘The Celluloid Cold War’, *Cinerama Adventure* website, http://www.cineramaadventure.com/coldwar.htm [Accessed 23 March 2012]. This aspect is also covered in some detail in the *Cinerama Adventure* (2002) documentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Moubayed, Sami, *Syria and the USA: Washington’s Relations with Damascus from Wilson to Eisenhower* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012), p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. ‘Reds Claim ‘Foul!’ in Syria ‘Cinerama’ Exhibit; Tix Scalpers Ply Hot Trade’, *Variety*, 22 September 1954, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. ‘America Triumphs at Bangkok Fair: Balloons, Bathing Suits and Cinerama Help the U.S. take a first prize at Thailand’s International Fair’, *Life*, 31 January 1955, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. This episode is covered within the *Cinerama Adventure* website and documentary, and in substantially more detail by Krukones, James H, ‘Peacefully Coexisting on a Wide Screen: Kinopanorama vs. Cinerama, 1952-66’, *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* vol. 4 no. 3 (December 2010), pp. 283-306. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Crowther, Bosley, ‘*Shiroka Strana Moya Rodnaya* (1959): Kinopanorama Has Debut; Soviet 3-Panel System on View at Mayfair’, *The New York Times*, 1 July 1959. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. ‘Floating Flattop Show Boat Gets Congressional Nix’, *Variety*, 18 April 1956, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, pp. 139, 156-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. *Windjammer* was the only film produced using the Cinemiracle three-strip format, which was compatible with Cinerama projection equipment. It was effectively identical, and also yielded a 2.59:1 image. The only real difference came at the filming stage, which used two mirrors so that the left and right cameras had the same optical centre as the middle one, effectively reducing the joins visible between the projected panels of Cinerama. It was produced by Louis De Rochemont, who also co-directed with Bill Colleran, for Cinemiracle Productions. The film was therefore not technically a Cinerama production, although it was a Cinerama presentation, and in fact the Cinemiracle process was later assimilated into the larger company. See Limbacher, James L., *Four Aspects of the Film* (New York: Brussel & Brussel, 1968), pp. 99-100; and Belton (1992), p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. Belton et al, ‘Widescreen Worldwide’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Belton (1992), p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. Hauerslev, Thomas, ‘Todd-AO and DP70 timetable’, *in70mm.com* website. http://in70mm.com/todd\_ao/time/index.htm [Accessed 9 December 2011]. This public opening date was preceded by invitation premieres in New York from 10-12 October. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. Belton (1992), p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Ibid., p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. Ibid., p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Ikeda, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Tanaka, p. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. ‘Number of 70mm Cinemas Now in Operation Reaches 55’, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* vol. 5, no. 4 (1962). Tokyo: Japan Association for International Promotion of the Moving Image, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. ‘Cinerama Planning Seven Cinemas to Handle Super Pix in Japan’, *Variety*, 30 May 1962, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. Sherlock, Daniel J., ‘The Lost History of Film Formats’, *SMPTE Motion Imaging Journal* vol. 106 no. 3 (1 March 1997), pp. 151-155. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. *Variety*, 30 May 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. *Eiren* website. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. *Variety* (1962) [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. Lataille, Roland. *Cinerama* website. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Belton (1992), p. 110. As an example, according to Carr and Hayes, p. 171, *Krakatoa, East of Java* was shot in Todd-AO and Super Panavision 70 for its 70mm Super Cinerama presentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. Belton (1992), p. 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. Hanson, pp. 117-143, details this process in the US and the UK in the chapter entitled ‘Sub-dividing and falling, and the lessons from the USA: 1960s-1984’. The practice of splitting UK venues into two smaller auditoria was initiated by Rank in 1965, although the consequent decline in the quality of the viewing experience resulted in rapidly falling cinema attendances throughout the UK until the construction of new purpose-built out-of-town venues in the mid-1980s, following the model of the exhibition sector in the United States. Further research on such patterns of exhibition in a Japanese context is still required. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. Belton (1992), pp. 179-180. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. Carr and Hayes, pp. 196-206. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. Ibid., pp. 189-194. Carr and Hayes point out that a good number of the Sovscope 70 films listed in their book ‘were blown up from 35mm anamorphic or spherical’. They also note the titles produced in other 70mm processes, such as Kinopanorama 70, a single-negative variant on the Soviet variant of Cinerama. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. However, a German-dubbed 128-minute 70mm print of *The Great Wall* (*Shin Shikôtei*, 1962 was screened on 6 October 2012 at the “70mm Todd-AO Film Festival” in Karlsruhe, Germany. See Hauerslev, Thomas, ‘8th Todd-AO Festival at the Schauburg’, *in70mm* website, http://www.in70mm.com/schauburg/2012/index.htm [Accessed 6 October 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. Tanaka, pp. 226-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. Haines, pp. 17-37, 53-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. Salt, Barry, *Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis* (3rd ed.)(London: Starword, 2009), p. 267. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. Limbacher, pp. 67-69, gives the release date as 1952, although *Variety*,21 January 1952, contains a review of the film’s preview screening at the Nelson Theatre in Ottowa which occurred on 20 December 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. Tanaka, Junichirô, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi III: Sengo eiga no kaibô* (Developments in Japanese Film History III: The Postwar Liberation of Film) (Tokyo: Chûô Kôron-sha, 1976), p. 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. Ibid, pp. 283-289. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. Tanaka, Junichirô, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi II: Musei kara tôkii e* (Developments in Japanese Film History II: From Silent to Talkie) (Tokyo: Chûô Kôron-sha, 1976), p. 336, 348. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
142. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, pp. 27-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
143. Kindem, Gorham A., ‘Hollywood’s Conversion to Color: The Technological, Economic and Aesthetic Factors’, *Journal of the University Film Association* vol. 31, no. 2 (Spring 1979), p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
144. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
145. ‘The Finance Ministry allotted in 1955 the same number of film imports as in 1954. The Ministry, however, limited the number of prints of full-color films coming to Japan on a percentage income remittance basis to 12 as from July 1, 1955, with a view to economizing on foreign exchange holdings. The ceiling did not apply to pictures imported on a flat sum basis and black and white films.’ Ibid., p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
146. Belton (1992), pp. 142-143. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
147. For a fuller account of the history of 3D image production up to and including *Bwana Devil*, see Zone, Ray, *Stereoscopic Cinema and the Origins of 3-D Film, 1838-1952* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2007). The story of the various developments that either led to or coincided with the development of Natural Vision is a rich and complex one, but it is worth noting that just prior to the development of Natural Vision, in May 1951, a number of experimental 3D films, actualities and animations were shown at the Telecinema theatre constructed on the South Bank of the Thames for the Festival of Britain (Zone, pp. 176-179). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
148. Anderson and Richie, p. 252. The only subsequent attempt by local producers of a 3D film in the pre-digital age came from the world of the independent pink film, with a release by Nihon Cinema entitled *Abnormal Criminal* (*Hentaima*, 1967). Zahlten, p. 172, writes that the film, whose title he translates more literally as *Pervert Freak*, was typical of the use of ‘new gimmicks to capture attention’ by the *eroduction* sector in general in the late 1960s and the film’s director, Seki Kôji, in particular. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
149. Belton (1992), pp. 122-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
150. Boddy, William, ‘The Studios Move into Prime Time: Hollywood and the Television Industry in the 1950s’, *Cinema Journal* 24, No. 4 (Summer 1985), p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
151. Chibnall, p. 150. *Knights of the Round Table* premiered in America on 22 December 1953, before going on general release in the US from 15 January 1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
152. *House of Bamboo*, Twentieth Century-Fox Exhibitor’s Campaign Sheet. I am indebted to Ayako Saito for drawing my attention to this, with her paper ‘*House of Bamboo*: Cinemascoping Tokyo as an Object of Desire’ delivered at the Trans-Asian Screen Culture Conference, organised by Trans-Asia Screen Culture Institute in alliance with Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society, Seoul Art Cinema, Seoul, Korea, 9-11 October, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
153. Haines, pp. 2-7. This first subtractive process from Technicolor, in which the hues were contained on the release print rather than added by filters on the projector, was named Technicolor Process Number 2 and was used up to 1928. Technicolor Process Number 1 was an additive process that used a double frame image projected through coloured filters, and was first used for *The Gulf Between* (1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
154. Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
155. If one goes beyond Said’s concept of orientalism and includes other variants of exoticism or racialised “otherness” then we can also mention, among other titles, the first ever three-strip Technicolor movie shot in England, *Wings of the Morning* (Harold D. Schuster, 1937), which depicted a heated romantic affair between an Irish nobleman and a Spanish gypsy; *The Drum* (Zoltan Korda, 1938), set in India during the British Raj; and *The Four Feathers* (Zoltan Korda, 1939), a drama set during the British suppression of the Arab uprising in Sudan in 1882, based on A.E.W. Mason’s 1902 novel of the same name. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
156. Limbacher, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
157. Salt, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
158. *House of Bamboo*, Twentieth Century-Fox Exhibitor’s Campaign Sheet. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
159. For an overview of the controversial international careers of Hollywood’s foremost Asian actor of the silent era and the star of Cecil B. De Mille’s *The Cheat* (1915), Sessue Hayakawa, and the Manchurian-born actress Yoshiko ‘Shirley’ Yamaguchi who was sold as a Chinese star to the Japanese in the prewar period, see Sharp (2011), pp. 76-78, 301-303. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
160. Toda, Takao, ‘*Tôkyô Ankokugai: Take No Ie*’ (*House of Bamboo* )review, *Kinema Junpô*, 1 November, 1955, p. 92: ‘fake Japanese in fake Japan introduces Japanese habits. Watching this film only makes one smile wryly, but not necessarily with indignation because “national humiliation” is more applied to the US rather than to Japan.’ Once more, I wish to thank Ayako Saito for drawing my attention to this, and for providing the translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
161. *House of Bamboo*, Twentieth Century-Fox Exhibitor’s Campaign Sheet. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
162. It is not entirely clear whether this particular film was shot in Eastmancolor or not. MGM had championed the use of Ansco Color stocks since the Western *The Wild North* (Andrew Marton, 1952). According to Limbacher (p. 56), following the release of Ansco Color’s improved negative-positive process in 1955 it was re-named Metrocolor, and ‘was first used in LUST FOR LIFE, where it vividly recreated the mood and coloring of the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh… and was soon adopted for most MGM color films made at the studio.’ Limbacher explicitly states that the Metrocolor process used for *Teahouse of the August Moon* was Ansco Color. However, according to Haines (p. 59), ‘In 1956, MGM shot their last feature with Ansco color stock, *Lust for Life*, thereafter switching to Kodak negative/positive film and retitling their lab Metrocolor, which is now defunct.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
163. Crosby, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
164. Belton et al (2010), ‘Introduction’, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
165. ‘CinemaScope Clones’, *American Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/cinemascopeclones.htm [Accessed 5 April 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
166. Burch, p. 317. Burch omits mentioning that the widespread and continuing use of the ’scope format was also a feature of other regional industries such as South Korea, which is an understandable omission given that the output of such countries would not have been widely known to Western scholars at the time of his research. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
167. Bordwell, David, ‘Another Shaw Production: Anamorphic Adventures in Hong Kong’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, pp. 199-124. The article appeared originally on *David Bordwell’s Website on Cinema* (October 2009), http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/shaw.php [Accessed June 2, 2010]. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
168. In this section, I am deliberately restricting my focus to systems that were put into commercial use within an established industry. Early cinema systems such as Carl and Max Skladanowsky’s Bioscope, which used 45mm and whose first screening in November 1895 in Berlin’s Winter Garden predates that of the Lumière Brothers, are beyond the scope of this discussion, although are of interest in as much as they were early rivals to the standard established by Edison against which the term ‘widescreen’ is defined. For more information on this aspect of the issue of widescreen cinema, I refer the reader to Belton (1992), pp. 12-23. Also see Limbacher, pp. 85-105, for a number of other wide format or multi-projector systems that similarly never reached the market place, with names such as Widescope, Vitarama, and Tri-Ergon. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
169. Belton (1992), pp. 34-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
170. Limbacher, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
171. Ibid, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
172. More on Magnascope can be found in Limbacher, pp. 86-87. Other films cited by Limbacher that used the process at any one time, some of which predate the *Old Ironside* premier, include *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, 1925), *The Thundering Herd* (William K. Howard, 1925), *Twinkletoes* (Charles Brabin, 1926) and *The Iron Horse* (John Ford, 1924). Like the films listed by Limbacher that were later screened in Magnascope for presentations at specific venues, like *Niagara* (Henry Hathaway, 1953) and *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939), it seems a good number of these were not produced specifically with the process in mind; theoretically, it seems, any 35mm film could be shown using a projected fitted with a Magnascope lens. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
173. Brownlow, Kevin, *Napoleon: Abel Gance’s Classic Film* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983, 2004 edition), p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
174. Belton (1992), p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
175. Brownlow, p. 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
176. Vitascope is not to be confused with Edison’s early film projection device bearing the same name, nor Natural Vision with the 3D system of the 1950s. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
177. Coles, David, ‘Magnified Grandeur: The Big Screen 1926-31’, *in70mm.com* website, March 2001, http://www.in70mm.com/newsletter/2001/64/grandeur/index.htm [Accessed 27 June 2012]. The Magnifilm system is not to be confused with Paramount’s Magnafilm, nor indeed Magnascope. *The Bat Whispers* was the only film ever shot using the process, which used a 65mm camera. The film was never actually screened in a wide gauge format however, as all Magnifilm Presentations were from 35mm reduction prints with sound on film. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
178. Belton (1992), p. 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
179. *The 1930 Film Daily Yearbook*, ed. Jack Alicoate, New York: Film Daily (1930), p. 1, cited in Belton (1992), p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
180. Belton (1992), p. 59 [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
181. Ibid. pp. 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
182. Coles (2001). The author notes that *The Bat Whispers* was shown however in the London Regal from 4 April 1931 in a 35mm version. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
183. Abbé co-owned the company with Otto Schott and Carl Zeiss. Individually, he is particularly regarded for his research work on microscope lenses. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
184. Belton, p. 268n40, citing Stephen E. Huntley, ‘Historical and Technical Analysis of Early CinemaScope Lenses: 1952-1954’ (B.Sc. thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, June 1986), p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
185. Belton, p. 40. Belton cites Chrétien’s own intentions for the device, from the *Brevet d’invention* no. 644,254 granted to his brother Georges Chrétien on 4 June 1928, applied for on 29 April 1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
186. Belton (1992), p. 40-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
187. Ibid, p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
188. Ibid., p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
189. Brownlow, pp. 143-144. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
190. Belton (1992), p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
191. Newcomer, Sidney H., ‘Wide Screen Photography with Cylindrical Anamorphosing Systems and Characteristics of Motion Picture Lenses and Images’, *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 20:1 (January 1933), pp. 32-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
192. ‘Anamorphoscope Lens Not New: Goerz-American Marketed One For 16mm Movies Back In 1931’, *American Cinematographer*, March 1953, quoted on *American WideScreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/cscope-ac.htm [Accessed 1 April 2013]. See also, Kingslake, Rudolf, *A History of the Photographic Lens* (London: Academic Press, 1989), p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
193. Belton, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
194. Ibid. p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
195. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
196. Limbacher, p. 108-109. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
197. Belton (1992), p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
198. The Magna Theatre Corporation, founded in 1952, financed much of the development of the Todd-AO process, in return for a major stake in the Todd-AO company, and it also handled the 70mm roadshow exhibitions and overseas exhibitions for the early Todd-AO productions of *Oklahoma* and *South Pacific*. See ‘Magna Theatres’, <http://www.in70mm.com/todd_ao/trade_review/magna/index.htm> [Accessed 2 July 2012]. Fox later acquired the major stock in this company which controlled the system, and used it for a number of films including *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963), *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965) and *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines* (Ken Annakin, 1965). See Limbacher, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
199. Such relationships between the companies were rather complex, but for example, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* was a co-production between Cinerama and MGM, while Twentieth Century-Fox distributed the 35mm versions of the *Oklahoma* and *South Pacific*. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
200. Although as previously noted, there were a significant number of Soviet films released in Sovscope 70. See Carr and Hayes, pp. 189-194. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
201. ‘20th Century-Fox’s CinemaScope… is ONE year young TODAY!’, *Variety*, 22 September 1954, p. 16-17. Originally appeared in *Wall Street Journal*, 16 September 1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
202. Belton, pp. 117-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
203. Limbacher, p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
204. Released just over a month after *The Robe*, on 5 November 1953, *How to Marry a Millionaire* was actually the first feature to be completed using the process, although the former title was viewed by the studios as the better candidate for introducing CinemaScope to the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
205. Belton, pp. 143-148. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
206. ‘The Vistarama Story’, *American Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/vistarama01.htm [Accessed 6 July 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
207. Limbacher, p. 112, citing from *Independent Film Journal*, 5 September 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
208. ‘No End to Screen (R)Evolutions’, *Variety*, 10 March 1954, p. 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
209. Limbacher. P. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
210. ‘The Rich Man’s Poor Man’s Version of CinemaScope’, *American Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/wingss1.htm [Accessed 9 July 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
211. ‘New York Sees Tushinsky’s Lens (Now SuperScope) at RKO’s 86th March 22’, *Variety*, 10 March 1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
212. Carr and Hayes, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
213. Haines, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
214. ‘The Rich Man’s Poor Man’s Version of CinemaScope’, *American Widescreen Museum* website. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
215. Belton (1992), p. 155-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
216. Limbacher, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
217. Enticknap, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
218. Belton (1992), p. 116-117. Limbacher, p. 88, lists a number of other cropped Paramount releases, including *War of the Worlds* (Byron Haskin, 1953) and the 1955 re-release of *Gone With the Wind*. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
219. Anderson and Richie, p. 252. Whatever the rationale behind the manner of *Man in the Dark*’s presentation might have been, the 5 May 1953 premier of this first 3D release from Hollywood to be screened commercially in Japan came a fortnight after the American release date for *Shane* (on 23 April 1953), so it was certainly not the world’s first example of a cropped widescreen presentation. Note that the release date of *The Greatest Show on Earth* in Japan, on 25 April 1953, was only a week ahead of the premiere of *Man in the Dark* on 5 May, while *Shane*, the first film produced with this cropped presentation method in mind, was released somewhat later in the year, on 1 October. It is unclear whether DeMille’s film was shown in cropped widescreen upon this initial release in Japan; this might have come later. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
220. Hall, Sheldon, ‘Alternative Versions in the Early Years of CinemaScope’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, pp. 113-131. As Hall points out, p. 114, the exact aspect ratio ‘could ultimately be decided by each exhibitor.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
221. Limbacher, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
222. Carr and Hayes, p. 207-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
223. Salt, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
224. Salt, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
225. As an example of how diverse standards could be even within a single company, Britain’s Hammer Studios used a cropped ratio of 1.66:1 for many of its releases in the 1950s, including *Hound of the Baskervilles* (Terence Fisher, 1959). Its films in the 1960s were produced with the U.S. market also in mind, with its images composed so that no relevant picture information would be lost whether screened in Europe at 1.66:1 nor North America at 1.85:1. A few of its films were also shot in the wider 2.35:1 formats of Techniscope, in the case of *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (Terence Fisher, 1966), or CinemaScope, in the case of *Rasputin: The Mad Monk* (Don Sharp, 1966). This resulted in considerable controversy surrounding the Blu-ray/DVD releases of a number of the company’s films in 2012, as customers complained that some of the films were presented in the wrong ratios. In response, Hammer clarified the issue of original aspect ratio’s in the following blog post on its website, ‘The Curse of Aspect Ratios’, *Hammer* website [15 October 2012], http://blog.hammerfilms.com/?p=166 [Accessed 28 November 2012]. It is probably worth pointing out, however, that most viewers primary experience of a Hammer horror film would have been on television rather than theatrically, and if in the 1960s, probably in black and white too. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
226. The exception from Hitchcock’s films of this period is *The Wrong Man* (1956). [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
227. See Carr and Hayes, p. 147, for Paramount’s original VistaVision specifications. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
228. For more details on VistaVision see Vincent, Tom, ‘Standing Tall and Wide: The Selling of VistaVision' in *Widescreen Worldwide*, pp. 25-39, and Carr and Hayes, p. 144-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
229. Vincent, p. 32, Carr and Hayes, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
230. According to Vincent, pp. 34-36, Paramount originally accommodated for the possibility of producing ’scope as well as non-anamorphic VistaVision release prints. A limited number of projection prints were also created for the first VistaVision releases that were the same size as the negatives and ran horizontally through specially-built projectors. These 8-perf prints not only cost more to produce, but could only be shown on this specialist projection equipment, which was only ever installed at a limited number of venues across the world. Consequently only a limited number of 8-perf prints were made until, in August 1956, Paramount announced it was discontinuing this superior release format, and VistaVision ultimately adopted its 35mm non-anamorphic standard for release prints. VistaVision’s key strength, after all, was that of its universality in an industry in which a plethora of competing systems were emerging. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
231. Petrie, Duncan, *The British Cinematographer* (London: BFI Publishing, 1996), p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
232. Carr and Hayes, p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
233. Ryder, Loren L., ‘This is the story of VistaVision, an explanation of the process and its many advantages’, *American Widescreen Museum* website, www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/vistavision.htm [Accessed 28 June 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
234. Hart, Martin, ‘VistaVision page 1’, *American Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/wingvv1.htm [Accessed 28 June 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
235. Haines, pp. 32, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
236. Carr and Hayes, p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
237. Vincent, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
238. Heuring, David, ‘Dream Thieves’, *American Cinematographer* vol 91. no. 7 (July 2010), pp. 26-29, 31-33, 35-39. Online at http://www.theasc.com/ac\_magazine/July2010/Inception/page1.php [Accessed 14 August 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
239. *Japan Film Almanac 1957*, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
240. *Eiga Nenkan 1957*, p. 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
241. Belton, John, ‘Fox and 50mm Film’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, pp. 9-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
242. Carr and Hayes, pp. 72-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
243. Ibid, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
244. Haines, p. 125-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
245. Carr and Hayes, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
246. Belton et al, *Widescreen Worldwide*, ‘Introduction’, p. 1., ‘Themes and Formats’, pp. 108-109; [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
247. Belton (1992), p. 149. Judging by a news report ‘Find New Ways in Sight, Sound’ in *Variety*, 10 March 1954, p. 5, the rapidly falling cost of Bausch & Lomb lenses in the year following their introduction may well have been due to factors such as the development of the Tushinsky lens. According to the article, ‘Most striking aspect of the Tushinsky lens is not only its adaptability, but its price. It’ll sell for about $700 a pair, which compares to the $1,800 a pair now charged for the CinemaScope lenses.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
248. Belton (1992), p. 148-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
249. Ibid., p. 276n49, cited from *Daily Variety*, 11 December 1953, pp. 1, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
250. *Eiga Nenkan 1955*, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
251. Arneel, Gene, ‘M-G’s Schenk Avers Stereo Sound ‘Part of CinemaScope’s Greatness’: Confirms Licensing Agreements’, *Variety*, 17 February 1954, pp. 5, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
252. ‘Warners Seen with 20th, M-G on Stereo’, *Variety*, 10 March 1954, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
253. ‘Europe Very Unlike U.S. In Stereo Strategy’, *Variety*, 17 February 1954, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
254. Belton, p. 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
255. Belton, John, ‘CinemaScope: The Economics of Technology’, *The Velvet Light Trap: A Critical Journal of Film & Television* 21 (Summer 1985), p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
256. Dombrowski, Lisa, ‘Cheap But Wide: The Stylistic Exploitation of CinemaScope in Black-and-White Low-Budget American Films’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, pp. 63-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
257. Kindem, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
258. *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 52 (12A). [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
259. *Eiga Nenkan 1961*, p. 60 (20A). [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
260. *UniJapan Film Quarterly 1961* vol. 4 no. 2, pg. 3. American imports rose from 111 in 1958 to 112 films in 1959, while French imports rose from 17 to 31, British from 12 to 16, Italian from 5 to 14, German 6 to 13 and ‘Others’ from 12 to 23. The total number of imports grew from 169 to 211 (according to this source, although the *Eiren* website lists only 210 imports for this year, so presumably this is a mistake in *UniJapan*), with the only country to fare badly during this year being the U.S.S.R., whose exports to Japan fell from 6 to 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
261. Kindem, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
262. Boddy, William, ‘The Studios Move into Prime Time: Hollywood and the Television Industry in the 1950s’, *Cinema Journal*, vol. 24 no. 4 (Summer, 1985), pp. 23-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
263. Belton, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
264. Neale, Steve, ‘Widescreen Composition in the Age of Television’, in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds.), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 130-141. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
265. Carr and Hayes, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
266. ‘The Rich Man’s Poor Man’s Version of CinemaScope’, *American Widescreen Museum* website. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
267. James Cameron and the cinematographer Russell Carpenter give their views on the format in ‘Cameron and Carpenter discuss how care and rigid procedures can result in optimum images’, *American Cinematographer*, December 1997, p. 35. Online at http://www.theasc.com/magazine/dec97/titanic/pgs35/pg1.htm [Accessed 20 August 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
268. Berger, John L., ‘Matter Widescreen’, *widescreen.org: The Letterbox and Widescreen Advocacy Page – Defending the Visions and Intentions of Filmmakers…* website [1999-2012]. http://www.widescreen.org/widescreen\_matte.shtml [Accessed 28 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
269. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. Shimaji, p. 106, is the source for the aspect ratio of 2.75:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
270. Shimaji, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
271. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
272. Shimaji, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
273. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
274. Matsuda, Sadatsugu, ‘Shinemasukôpu daiichidan: Matsuda kantoku no hôfu wo kiku’ (First shot at Cinemascope: Hear Director Matsuda’s Aspirations), *Shinario to satsueijo* (Scenario and Studio) 3, March 1957, p. 22-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
275. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
276. Ibid. The text actually says ‘Barudâ renzu’ in katakana, which one can only assume is a typing error. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
277. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 150 and *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 414. Note that *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957* lists what one assumes must be the Kowa company as ‘Kosho Sangyo’, while *Eiga Nenkan* lists the company under its earlier name, with characters that can be read as ‘Kôfuku.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
278. Ibid., pp. 414-415. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
279. See, for example Matsuda, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
280. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
281. Full details on Cinépanoramic, Franscope and all the other systems developed in France, see the *FilmoScopeFR Référence* website, https://sites.google.com/site/filmoscopefr/ [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
282. Carr and Hayes, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
283. To name but one influential example, Limbacher, p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
284. Limbacher, p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
285. ‘Scope’, *Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.cinematographers.nl/FORMATS3.html [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
286. Miyazawa, Nodomitsu, ‘Tôeiskôpu no kyaku (Kisetsu shirushi)’ (ToeiScope’s Customers (Seasonal Evidence)), *Kinema Junpô*, 15 May 1957, p. 106; *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
287. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 425, although this source does not mention any film titles. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
288. Shimaji, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
289. Anderson and Richie, p. 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
290. Anderson and Richie, p. 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
291. ‘Statistics Dealing With the Japanese Motion Picture Industry in 1954’, *Japan Motion Picture Industry 1955* (Tokyo: Motion Picture Association of Japan, 1955), p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
292. *Eiga Nenkan 1966*, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
293. *Variety*, 29 January 1958. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
294. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
295. Belton (1992), p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
296. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
297. ‘Dyaliscope’, *FilmoScopeFR Référence* website, https://sites.google.com/site/filmoscopefr/dyaliscope [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
298. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
299. Bordwell, David, ‘Another Shaw Production: Anamorphic Adventures in Hong Kong’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
300. There is another film bearing the same title, a Toho production from 1938 directed by Nakagawa Nobuo, that exists on VHS. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
301. *Japanese Movie Database*, http://www.jmdb.ne.jp/1938/bn004580.htm and http://www.jmdb.ne.jp/1957/cg003610.htm [Accessed 18 October 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
302. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 427. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
303. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
304. Ibid, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
305. Shimaji, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
306. Ibid, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
307. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
308. Bordwell (2010), p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
309. Shimaji, p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
310. Shimaji, p. 108 and *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
311. Domenig, Roland and Andreas Ungerböck (eds.), *Art Theatre Guild: Unabhängiges Japanisches Kino 1962–1984* (Vienna: Vienna International Film Festival, 2003), p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
312. Shimaji, p. 107; *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
313. ‘Sakuhin betsu haishû besuto 5’ (Best 5 individual productions’ distribution incomes), *Eiga Nenkan 1959*, p. 46 (8C). [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
314. ‘Jap Producer Nagata Very Frank’, *Variety,* 8 August 1956, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
315. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
316. The first three of these were also directed Fitzpatrick, while the last was directed by Richard Goldstone. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
317. ‘*VistaVision Visits Japan*’ review, *Today’s Cinema*, 1 November 1955, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
318. ‘*VistaVision Visits Japan*’ review, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 November 1955, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
319. Lubin, Art, ‘Nips Yen Those Familiar U.S. Film Faces, Not the New, Reports Art Lubin’, *Variety*, 2 August 1956, p. 5. Miyao Daisuke, in *The Aesthetics of Shadow* (p. 277), notes how Nagata had similarly sent the cinematographer Midorikawa Michio to the Eastman Kodak laboratories in 1952 to investigate colour. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
320. Limbacher, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
321. Carr and Hayes, p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
322. Anderson and Richie, p. 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
323. *Eiga Nenkan 1958*, p. 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
324. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
325. Carr and Hayes, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
326. *National Film Center Film Catalog 2000: Japanese Feature Films* (Tokyo: The National Museum of Modern Art, 2001), pp. 181, 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
327. Ibid., ‘C3: Gamen hiritsu’ (Screen ratio), p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
328. Tsurumi, Yoshi and Hiroki Tsurumi, ‘Fujifilm-Kodak duopolistic competition in Japan and the United States’, *Journal of International Business Studies* vol 30. no. 4 (1999), pp. 813-830. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
329. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
330. This area is detailed more thoroughly in *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
331. See Enticknap, pp. 75-79 for a more detailed technical explanation of these processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
332. Technical information and a summary of the development of the Kinemacolor process can be found in a number of sources, including Neale, Steve, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 121-123; Salt, pp. 85-87; Enticknap, pp. 80-81; and McKernan, Luke, *‘Something More than a Mere Picture Show’: Charles Urban and the Early Non-Fiction Film in Great Britain and America, 1897-1925* (PhD diss., Birkbeck College, University of London, June 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
333. McKernan (2003), p. 45; Komatsu, Hiroshi, ‘From Natural Colour to the Pure Motion Picture Drama: The Meaning of Tenkatsu Company in the 1910s of Japanese Film History’, *Film History* vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 69-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
334. McKernan (2003) notes that this dimension of “realism” was emphasised in both the Kinemacolor catalogues and contemporary press reports, such as ‘Palace Theatre’, *The Times*, 28 May 1910, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
335. Neale (1985), pp. 122-123. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
336. Gerow, Aaron, *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
337. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
338. Chanan, Michael, *The Dream That Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain* (2nd ed.) (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
339. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
340. Enticknap, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
341. Salt, p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
342. Enticknap, pp. 85-90. For more precise technical details on the three-strip process, see also Haines, pp. 17-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
343. Enticknap, pp. 90-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
344. Salt, p. 267. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
345. Okajima, Hisashi, ‘Color Film Restoration in Japan: Some Examples’, *Journal of Film Preservation* 66 (October 2003), p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
346. Ibid. pp. 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
347. ‘First Full-Length Jap Color Pic, ‘Carmen’ Makes Its Bow in Tokyo Houses’, *Variety*, 10 April 1951, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
348. Okajima, p. 34. Note that the *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 133, includes *Natsuko’s Adventure* in its list of colour productions for 1952. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
349. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
350. Ibid. p. 134. This same source refers to the plant as the Oriental Development Station on p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
351. Ibid. p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
352. Salt, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
353. National Film Center, *The Japanese Film Heritage – From the Non-film Collection of the National Film Cente*r (Tokyo: The National Museum of Modern Art, 2001), p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
354. Okajima, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
355. Ibid., p. 35-36. This film was restored in 1995 from the original monochrome three-separation negatives. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
356. Ibid., p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
357. Limbacher, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
358. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
359. Ibid. p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
360. Enticknap, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
361. Writers such as Neale, Limbacher, Salt and Enticknap have written much on the introduction of colour film, though with only passing regard to the Japanese systems. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
362. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, pp. 28-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
363. Such information is not included in the National Film Center’s catalogue of holdings, for example, nor in the reviews contained in journals such as *Kinema Junpô*. In an email correspondence from 8 March 2012, Okada Hidenori of the National Film Center mentioned that it was unlikely that even the major film studios held such details. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
364. Galbraith, Stuart IV, *The Japanese Filmography: A Complete Reference to 209 Filmmakers and the Over 1250 Films Released in the United States, 1900 through 1994* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
365. Such films produced during the 1950s would have used the cheaper resources available to the studio, and would been filmed using monochrome stock. There are other omissions in the *Unijapan Film Quarterly* publications that might strike the modern-day researcher as curious, although it is not within the scope of this research to explore the political dimensions of a publication whose editorial board was comprised of figures from different sections within the industry, each with their own interests. For now it should be enough to mention that the Editorial Staff credits at the beginning of each of the volumes throughout the 1960s list Towa’s Kawakita Nagamasa and Nikkatsu’s Hori Kyûsaku as the Publisher, while *UniJapan’s* address is the ‘Shochiku Kaikan Bldg’, the same building as this particular studio operated from. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
366. Toho’s selection includes films that were produced by the affiliated Tokyo Eiga and Takarazuka Eiga companies, which the company distributed. For the quarter under discussion, this includes Tokyo Eiga’s *Go and Get It!* (*Buttsuke honban*, Saeki Kôzô, 1958). Toei’s selection includes productions by the company’s subsidiary, Toei Animation (Toei Dôga), which for this quarter included Japan’s first feature-length colour animation, *The White Snake Enchantress* (*Hakujaden*, Yabushita Taiji and Kazuhiko Okada, 1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
367. FerraniaColor is described by Limbacher, p. 64, as ‘another newly perfected version of the Agfacolor process’ which, after ‘it had previously been tested in several Italian documentary and newsreel films’ was used to produce the country’s first ever colour film, *Totò a Colori*, directed by Steno (Stefano Vanzina) and starred the comic actor Totò. It was used for the production of many Italian films, including the historical drama *The Queen of Babylon* (*La cortigiana di Babilonia*, Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia, 1954), released in America by Twentieth Century-Fox. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
368. *Eiga Nenkan* *1961*, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
369. *Unijapan Film Quarterly*, vol. 1 no. 2 (October 1958), p. 18. Ômi Toshirô was a pseudonym used by Ôkura Toshihiko, a popular singer as well as a director and producer, presumably used to keep his fraternal relationship to the company’s president Ôkura Mitsugi hidden. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
370. *Japan Motion Picture Almanac 1957*, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
371. Anderson and Richie, p. 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
372. Okajima, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
373. The two companies had close historical ties. As detailed in the first chapter, Nikkatsu’s production facilities formed the basis of Daiei when the latter company was established through government restructuring of the industry in 1942 [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
374. Early honorary Academy Awards for colour cinematography were given under the category ‘Special Achievement’ and went to W. Howard Greene and Harold Rosson for their work on *The Garden of Allah* (Richard Boleslawski, 1936), W. Howard Greene for *A Star is Born* (1937) and Oliver Marsh and Allen Davey for *Sweethearts* (1938), all of which were Technicolor productions. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
375. It could be argued that ATG productions were not wholly independent in that the organisation received financial backing from Toho. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
376. Domenig, Roland, ‘A Brief History of Independent Cinema in Japan and the Role of the Art Theatre Guild’ in *Against the Grain: Changes in Japanese Cinema of the 1960s and early 1970s*, *Minikomi* 70 (Vienna: Akademischer Arbetiskreis Japan, 2003), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
377. Yomota, Inuhiko, ‘Deux ou trois chose que je sais d’ATG’ in Roland Domenig and Andreas Ungerböck (eds.), *Art Theatre Guild: Unabhängiges Japanisches Kino 1962–1984* (Vienna: Vienna International Film Festival, 2003), p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
378. Domenig, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
379. Sharp (2008), p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
380. Richie, Donald, ‘Rise of ‘Independent’ Producers in Japan’s Boxoffice Wars’, *Variety*, 12 May 1965, p. 140. Presumably the repetition of ‘Shochiku’ in the figures should be ‘Toho’. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
381. Sharp (2008), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
382. Ibid., p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
383. Ibid., p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
384. *Japanese Movie Database* website, http://www.jmdb.ne.jp/1971/cu001000.htm [Accessed 25 October 2011], cites a running time of 173 minutes, with the film released through both Shochiku and the shortlived *Dainichi Eihai* distribution networks. *UniJapan* lists English and Spanish dubbed versions with an edited running time of 98 minutes, with Toho acting as overseas distributors. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
385. Salt, p. 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
386. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
387. Enticknap, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
388. Kindem, p. 35, citing *Broadcasting*, 2 January 1967, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
389. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
390. Elen, Richard G, ‘TV Technology 8. Britain In Colour - and UHF’, *BFI Screenonline* website, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/technology/technology8.html [Accessed 5 March 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
391. Enticknap, p. 167-174. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
392. Anderson and Richie, p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
393. Boddy, William, ‘The Studios Move into Prime Time: Hollywood and the Television Industry in the 1950s’, *Cinema Journal*, vol. 24 no. 4 (Summer, 1985), pp. 23-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
394. Anderson and Richie, pp. 254-255. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
395. Anderson and Richie, p. 256. *Fuji Television Network* website, http://www.fujitv.co.jp/en/corporate\_profile.html [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
396. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga hattatsu shi IV: Shijô saikô no eiga jidai*, p. 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
397. *Daiei Television* website, http://www.daiei-tv.com/company.html [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
398. Jampel, Dave, ‘No Samurai to Slay Video’, *Variety*, 8 May 1963, p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
399. Zahlten, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
400. Neale (1998), p. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
401. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
402. Ibid, p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
403. Burch, p. 317n18. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
404. Jampel, Dave, ‘Hollywood Earnings on The Increase in Japan As Nipponese Product Falters Both on Home Grounds and in Export’, *Variety*, 24 October 1961, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
405. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
406. Jampel (1963). [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
407. Zahlten, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
408. Zahlten, pp. 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
409. Yamane, Sadao, *Kannô no puroguramu pikuchâ – Roman Poruno 1971-1982 zen eiga* (Program Pictures of the Senses: Roman Porno 1971-1982 Complete Films) (Tokyo: Film Art-sha, 1983) provides full details of all the Roman Porno films released by Nikkatsu in the first decade. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
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412. *National Film Center Film Catalog 2000*, p. 326. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
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414. Ibid., p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
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417. Richie, Donald, *Japanese Cinema: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 58, cited in Ehrlich, Linda C., ‘Playing with Form: Ichikawa’s *An Actor’s Revenge* and the “Creative Print”’ in Linda C. Ehrlich and David Desser (eds.), *Cinematic Landscapes: Observations on the Visual Arts and Cinema of China and Japan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
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420. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
421. Barr, Charles, ‘CinemaScope: Before and After’ in Gerald Mast and Mark Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (New York: Oxford, 1974), p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
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432. Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (7th International ed.) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), p. 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
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435. Bazin (1953), p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
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439. Belton (1992), p. 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
440. Breakwell, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
441. Belton (1992), p. 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
442. Ibid., p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
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476. Ibid., p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
477. Ibid., p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
478. Miyao, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
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480. Similarly, in his essay on *Giants and Toys*, Raine, p. 156, notes that Masumura, who had studied film at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome for two years prior to returning to Daiei in 1953 to serve as an assistant director to, among others, Mizoguchi Kenji, expressed ‘a measure of impatience toward the preference in Europe for refined historical pictures from Japan.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
481. ‘*The Stormy Man*’ review, *Monthly Film Bulletin* vol. 27 no. 322, (November 1960), p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
482. Quandt, James, ‘Pigs, Pimps and Pornographers: A Brief Introduction to the Films of Shohei Imamura’ in James Quandt (ed.), *Shohei Imamura* (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario Monographs, 1997), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
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484. Deutelbaum, Marshall, ‘Basic Principles of Anamorphic Composition’, *Film History* vol. 15 (2003), p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
485. Ehrlich, Linda C. and David Desser, ‘Editor’s Introduction’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 4. Hollander, Anne, *Moving Pictures* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
486. Hockney, David, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001; revised ed. 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
487. Screech, Timon, ‘The Meaning of Western Perspective in Edo Popular Culture’, *Archives of Asian Art* vol. 47 (1994), p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
488. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
489. Shiba, Kôkan, *Seiyô gadan*, in *Nihon shisô taikei* vol. 64 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1976), p. 494, cited in Screech, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
490. Ehrlich, Linda C., ‘Playing with Form: Ichikawa’s *An Actor’s Revenge* and the “Creative Print”’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
491. Hockney, p. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
492. Richie, Donald, ‘The Influence of Traditional Aesthetics on the Japanese Film’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
493. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
494. Miyao, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
495. Ibid., pp. 6-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
496. Ibid., p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
497. Ibid, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
498. Ibid. p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
499. Ibid. p. 38, translated from the original source, Kotani, Henry, ‘Eiga ga dekiagaru made (1) [Until a film is complete (1)]’, *Kinema Junpô*, 11 June 1922, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
500. Ibid., pp. 44, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
501. Ibid, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
502. Lee, Sherman, ‘Contrasts in Chinese and Japanese Art’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, pp. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
503. Richie, in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
504. Geist, Kathe, ‘Playing with Space: Ozu and Two-Dimensional Design in Japan’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
505. Ibid., p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
506. Ni Zhen, ‘Classical Chinese Painting and Cinematographic Signification’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
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509. Ehrlich, Linda C, ‘Miyagawa Kazuo: My Life as a Cameraman’, *Post Script* 11 no. 1 (Fall 1991), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
510. Satô, Tadao, ‘Japanese Cinema and the Traditional Arts: Imagery, Technique and Cultural Context’ trans. by Ann Sherif in *Cinematic Landscapes* (1994), p. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
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512. Ehrlich, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
513. Richie, in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
514. Contreras, Cynthia, ‘Kobayashi’s Widescreen Aesthetic’ in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
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521. Lee, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
522. Breakwell, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
523. Stanley-Baker, Joan, *Japanese Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984; 1998 reprint), p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
524. Contreras, p. 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
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526. Dalle-Vache, Angela, *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 200; Bock, Audie, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1978), p. 248; Jacoby, p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
527. Burch, p. 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
528. Thornton, Sybil, *The Japanese Period Film: A Critical Analysis* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), pp. 87-88, 123-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
529. Satô (1994), p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
530. Richie, Donald, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (2nd ed) (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 137-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
531. Raine, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
532. Raine, pp. 158-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
533. Richie, in *Cinematic Landscapes*, p. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
534. Crosby, Eric, ‘Widescreen Composition and Transnational Influence: Early Anamorphic Filmmaking in Japan’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
535. Jacoby, p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
536. *17th Tokyo International Film Festival* catalogue (Tokyo International Foundation for Promotion of Screen Image Culture, 2004), p. 123. The film screened in Japanese from an unsubtitled print. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
537. Uchida Tomu made films for a number of studios following his debut in 1922, although was primarily based at Nikkatsu. In the postwar period, he also made a few films for Shintoho and Shochiku, although he worked almost exclusively at Toei between 1955-68. Imai Tadashi was a director who became known for his socially-engaged independent productions in the early-1950s. With the virtual demise of independent production in the late-1950s, he made a number of films produced by Toei, although these were hardly typical of the company’s output. See Sharp (2011), p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
538. ‘Sengo no Nihon eiga: Jidai-geki gendai-geki betsu honsû’ (Postwar Japanese Film: Numbers of Contemporary Films and Period Films), *Eiga nenkan 1960*, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
539. Tôyoko Eiga was established on 8 June 1938 as a subsidiary of the Toyoko Railway Company (Tôkyô Yokohama Dentetsu), while Ôizumi Eiga was another small concern, founded 15 October 1947 as a rental studio in Tokyo, operating from the former premises of Shinkô Kinema. Tokyo Motion Picture Distribution (Tôkyô Eiga Haikyû) was established on 1 October 1949. See Sharp (2011), p. 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
540. *Eiga Nenkan 1960*, p. 49, table 8B. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
541. ‘The Lord Takes a Bride’ review, *Variety*, 29 January 1958, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
542. Jacoby, p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
543. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
544. Salt, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
545. *Variety*. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
546. Fujii, Shigeo, ‘Hôga mo waido jidai e’ (Towards a Widescreen Era for Domestic Films too), *Eiga Hyôron*, March 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
547. Deutelbaum, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
548. Ibid., p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
549. Ibid., p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
550. Ibid., p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
551. Satô (1994), p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
552. *Variety* (1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
553. Anderson and Richie, p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
554. See Matsuda, Sadatsugu, ‘Shinemasukôpu daiichidan: Matsuda kantoku no hôfu wo kiku’ (First shot at Cinemascope: Hear Director Matsuda’s Aspirations) and ‘Waido eiga no rokuon ni tsuite: Onkyô kôka junbichû’ (About Widescreen Sound Recording: Sounds Effects In Preparation), *Shinario to satsueijo* (Scenario & Studio), 3 March 1957, pp. 22-24; Miyazawa, Nodomitsu, ‘Tôeiskôpu no kyaku (Kisetsu shirushi)’ (ToeiScope’s Customers (Seasonal Evidence)), *Kinema Junpô*, 15 May 1957, p. 106; Hashimoto, Shinobu ‘Nihon no Shinemasukôpu: *Otori-jo no hanayome*’ (CinemaScope in Japan: *The Bride of Otori Castle*), *Eiga Hyôron*, June 1957, pp. 40-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
555. The Amazon Japan website gives a VHS release date of 13 December 1996. http://www.amazon.co.jp/ [Accessed 13 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
556. Anderson and Richie, p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
557. *Buddha* (*Shaka*), Press Kit, Daiei, 1 November 1961. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
558. *Variety*, 8 August 1962, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
559. Richie, Donald, *The Japanese Movie: An Illustrated History* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1966; rev. ed. New York: Kodansha, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
560. Richie, Donald, *Japanese Cinema:* *Film Style and National Character* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
561. For example, Bock, Audie, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1978); Sato, Tadao, *Currents in Japanese Cinema: Essays by Tadao Sato*, trans. Gregory Barrett (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982); McDonald, Keiko I, *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2006); Standish, Isolde, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York: Continuum, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
562. *National Film Center Film Catalog 2000*; Provinzano Linda, Howard Besser, Stephanie Boris and Frank Motofuji (eds), *Films in the Collection of the Pacific Film Archive Volume I: Daiei Motion Picture Co., Ltd., Japan* (Berkeley, California: University Art Museum, 1979), pp. 109-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
563. Harrington, Clifford V., ‘Shyaka: Japan’s First Epic Production In 70mm’, *American Cinematographer*, January 1962, pp. 42-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
564. ‘Movies Abroad: The Zen Commandments’, *Time Magazine* vol. 78 no. 6, 11 August, 1961. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
565. Richie, Donald, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History, with a Selective Guide to DVDs and Videos* (New York: Kodansha International, 2005), p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
566. More details on Nagata’s international activities can be found in Howard, pp. 5-12; Tezuka, pp. 25-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
567. *Japanese Movie Database* website, http://www.jmdb.ne.jp/person/p0325910.htm [Accessed 22 October 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
568. The four films in the series directed by Misumi were *The Sword of Vengeance* (*Kozure ôkami: Ko o kashi ude kashi tsukatsuru*, 1972), *Baby Cart at the River Styx* (*Kozure ôkami: Sanzu no Kawa no ubagurama*, 1972), *Baby Cart to Hades* (*Kozure ôkami: Shi ni kaze ni mukau ubagurama*, 1972) and *Baby Cart in the Land of Demons* (*Kozure ôkami: Meifu madô*, 1973) [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
569. *Time Magazine*. [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
570. *Variety* (1963). [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
571. Harrington, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
572. Ibid., p. 42. This figure was also cited in a *Variety* news report on its global acquisition by United Artists, dated 8 August 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
573. *Buddha* (*Shaka*) press kit. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
574. Zahlten, p. 133. These figures originate from the *Eiga Nenkan* 1963, although exact references to the source are not provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
575. *Buddha* press kit. Harrington, p. 44, states that ‘Once shooting started on this picture it continued for 153 days without a break.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
576. Harrington, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
577. Haines, pp. 106-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
578. Hart, Martin, *American Widescreen Museum* website, http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/wingtr1.htm [accessed 7 December 2011]. Hart writes ‘In the early 1950’s Technicolor Corp. did research work with the Old Delft company in Holland on anamorphic projection attachments for CinemaScope. Delft’s “Delrama” anamorphic systems used two curved mirrors or prisms rather than cylindrical lenses. This work led to the development of the Technirama Delrama 1.5x anamorphic camera adapter. Technicolor mated these squeeze adapters to 3-strip cameras that had been converted to VistaVision. The resulting Technirama frame was very similar to VistaVision except that Technirama ever so slightly lowered the top of the aperture to create an aspect ratio of 2.35:1 and this left room for an optical soundtrack when printed directly to 35mm 8-perf film.” Exact specifications for Technirama and Super Technirama can be found at http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/techniramaspecs.htm [accessed 7 December 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
579. Haines, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
580. Ibid., p. 108. Haines lists forty-one ‘35mm dye transfer features derived from Technirama negative’, including non-Hollywood films such as *The Monte Carlo Story* (1956) and Great Britain’s *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (Ken Hughes, 1960), although overlooks the Japanese films in his list. Nevertheless, it doesn’t seem likely that the number is significantly larger than this figure. [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
581. Ibid., p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
582. Carr and Hayes, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
583. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
584. Harrington, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
585. Ibid., p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
586. Carr and Hayes, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
587. Ibid. The authors also mention that blow-up footage in the Magnifilm production of *The Bat Whispers* (1930) was done by a process photography technique as opposed to optical conversion by the laboratory. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
588. Harrington, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
589. Galbraith (1996), p. 129, states that the film was shot in Eastmancolor and processed by Daiei Laboratory, with only the prints of the U.S. version by Technicolor. Unlike its successor *The Great Wall*, no mention of the London laboratories, nor indeed any non-Japanese personnel, is made within *Buddha*’s onscreen credits [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
590. Harrington, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
591. Misumi, Kenji, ‘70 miri eiga no kadai: *Shaka no* enjutsu no owaete’ (On the Subject of 70mm Film: Finishing Off the Production of *Buddha*), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 October 1961, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
592. Harrington, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
593. Crowther, Bosley, ‘*Buddha*’ review, *New York Times*, 17 June 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
594. Mahoney, John, ‘Japanese ‘*Buddha*’ Has Little Appeal’, *The Hollywood Reporter*, Friday 20 January 1967, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
595. ‘*Buddha*’ review, *Variety*, 3 July 1963. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
596. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
597. Herbstman, Mandel, ‘*Buddha*’ review, *Film Daily*, 3 July 1963. [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
598. Aaronson, Charles S., ‘*Buddha*’ review, *Motion Picture Herald*, 24 July 1963. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
599. Many have commented upon these aspects within DeMille’s film, and indeed his other religious epics. See, for example, Nadel, Alan, ‘God’s Law and the Wide Screen: *The Ten Commandments* as Cold War “Epic”’, *PMLA* vol. 108 no. 3 (May 1993), pp. 415-430; Kozlovic, Anton Karl, ‘The Whore of Babylon: Suggestibility and the Art of Sexless Sex in Cecil B. DeMille’s *Samson and Delilah* (1949)’ in Dane Claussen (ed.), *Sex, Religion, Media* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), pp. 21-31; Kozlovic, Anton Karl, ‘Cecil B. DeMille: Hollywood Macho Man and the Theme of Masculinity within His Biblical (and Other) Cinema’, *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* vol. 2 no. 2 (June 2008), pp. 116-138; and Bernstein, Matthew and Gaylyn Studlar, *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 32-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
600. *Time Magazine* (1961). [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
601. Herbstman. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
602. *Variety* (1963). [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
603. Harrington, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
604. *Time Magazine*. [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
605. These include ‘Tokushû *Shaka*’(*Buddha* Special Edition) of *Jidai eiga*, November 1961; Tonomura, Kanji, ‘Nihon saisho no 70 miri *Shaka* no zenbô’ (The Full Story of Japan’s First 70mm Film *Buddha*), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 October 1961, pp. 93-95; Iida, Shinbi, ‘*Shaka*: Nihon saisho no 70 miri tanjô no igi’ (*Buddha*: The Significance of the Beginning of 70mm in Japan), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 December 1961, pp. 75-76; Ogura, Shinbi, ‘Nihon eiga no gorakusei: *Shaka* o hihyô suru’ (The Pleasures of Japanese Cinema: Reviewing *Buddha*), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 December 1961, p. 77; Etô, Fumio, ‘Nihon eiga no densetsu: *Shaka*’ (Legends of Japanese Cinema: *Buddha*), *Eiga Hyôron*, December 1961, p. 40-41; and Fuji, Yajiro, ‘Jidai eiga no 45-nen (29): *Shaka* tanjô: Nihon saisho no 70 miri eiga: Nagata Daiei no eidan’ (Forty-five Years of Period Films (29): The Birth of *Buddha*, Japan’s First 70mm Film: The Judgement of Daiei’s Nagata), *Kinema Junpô*, 1 November 1964, pp. 48-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
606. ‘Sakuhin betsu haishû besuto 5’ (Best 5 individual productions’ distribution incomes), *Eiga Nenkan 1963*, p. 43. The list of the most popular films for each studios are for titles released between April 1961 and March 1962. As an example, three Toho releases fared better than *Buddha.* These were *Yojimbo* (*Yôjinbô*, Kurosawa Akira, 1961), *Sanjuro* (*Tsubaki Sanjûrô*, Kurosawa Akira, 1962) and *The Last War* (*Sekai Daisensô*, Matsubayashi Shûe, 1961). [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
607. Mahoney. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
608. *How the West Was Won* actually opened in Japan before North America. It premiered in London on 1 November 1962, before it was released in Tokyo on 29 November 1962, as *Seibu kaitaku-shi*. It did not open in America until 20 February 1963. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
609. This is the currently accepted romanization of the Emperors name. In Japan, it is pronounced Shikôtei, as in the film’s title, while English language sources at the time of the film’s release referred to him as Shih Huang Ti. The *Japanese Movie Database* website lists a running time of 200 mins, as does Stuart Galbraith IV (1996), p. 201, although claims it was later reissued in Japan in a 35mm version edited to 160 minutes. The only DVD release, from the Hong Kong company Mei Ah, lists a running time of 161 minutes, and presumably derives from this 35mm print. [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
610. Galbraith (1996), p. 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
611. ‘*SHIN NO SHIKOTEI (The Great Wall)*’ review, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, no 385, vol. 33 (Feb 1966), p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
612. Belton (1992), p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
613. Limbacher, p. 91 [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
614. Belton (1992), pp. 87, 91; Limbacher, pp. 104-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
615. Zone, pp. 176-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
616. *American Cinematographer* (July 1970) is devoted to the various screen formats showcased at Osaka Expo ’70. [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
617. *Expo ’70 Commemorative Park* website, http://www.expo70.or.jp/e/contents/cts\_007.html [Accessed 15 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
618. Eng, Lawrence, ‘The Fans Who Became Kings - GAINAX and Otaku Culture’, in *Ga-netchu! The Manga Anime Syndrome* (Frankfurt: Deutsches Filmmuseum, 2008), p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
619. Gillett, John, ‘Coca Cola and the Golden Pavilion’, *Sight and Sound* 39 (Summer 1970), p. 154. Gillett is referring to the British science fiction film *Things to Come* (William Cameron Menzies, 1936), written by H.G. Wells. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
620. Couturier, Andy, *A Different Kind of Luxury: Japanese Lessons in Simple Living and Inner Abundance* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2010), p. 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
621. Ross, Julian, ‘Site and Specificity in Japanese Expanded Cinema: Intermedia and its Development in the late-60s’, *Décadrages* website, 1 March 2013, http://www.decadrages.ch/site-and-specificity-japanese-expanded-cinema-intermedia-and-its-development-late-60s-julian-ross [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
622. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
623. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
624. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
625. Suttmeier, Bruce, ‘Speculations of Murder: Ghostly Dreams, Poisonous Frogs and the case of Yokoi Shôichi’ in Nina Cornyetz and J. Keith Vincent (eds.), *Perversion and Modern Japan: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
626. Gillett, p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
627. Oguchi, Takayuki (trans. Akiko Mizoguchi), ‘Large-scale Motion Picture film Formats in Japan’in *Searching the Traces: Archival Study of Short-Lived Film Formats: Records of the International Film Symposium* (Tokyo: National Film Center, Tokyo, 2007), pp. 55-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
628. Barber, Stephen, ‘Hijikata in Astrorama’, *3:AM Magazine* website, 25 October 2012, http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/hijikata-in-astrorama/ [Accessed 15 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
629. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
630. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
631. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
632. Press release, ‘Nippon bankoku hakurankai no tenji eizou no kaibu no keiki to naru: Nihon-kan jouei firumu no genban o hakken’ (Chance for Japan World Exposition Image Archive: Projection Source Material for the Japanese Pavilion Discovered), *Kyushu University*, 14 June 2013, http://www.kyushu-u.ac.jp/pressrelease/2013/2013\_06\_14.pdf [Accessed 1 November 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
633. ‘History of Goto’, *Goto Inc.* website, http://www.goto.co.jp/english/corporation/corpo\_history.htm [Accessed 15 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
634. Oguchi, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
635. Technical specifications for a number of non-standard systems can be found at *Macaroni Ammonite* website, 9 January 2008, http://ammo.jp/weekly/neg/0801/neg080109.html [Accessed 15 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
636. Ibid., p.56. [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
637. Barber (2012); Oguchi, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
638. Oguchi, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
639. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
640. McDonald, Paul, ‘IMAX: The Hollywood Experience’ in *Widescreen Worldwide*, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
641. Sørensen, Rene, ‘The Basics of The Rolling Loop IMAX Projector’, *In70mm.com* website, http://www.in70mm.com/newsletter/1997/48/imax\_projector/index.htm [Accessed 20 November 2012]. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
642. McDonald, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
643. Gillett, p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
644. MacDonald, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
645. Ibid., pp. 43-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
646. Ibid., p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
647. Ibid., p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
648. Ibid., p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
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652. MacDonald, p. 50, notes that Sony Pictures Entertainment was the name of Japanese’ company’s subsidiary that took over the handling of Columbia’s re-organised production and distribution arm. [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
653. MacDonald, p. 50, states the film was rumoured to have cost $15 million to make, double that of the average IMAX 3D production of the time, yet as of 2005 had grossed only £34 million. [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
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