



JAPAN 2021 100 YEARS OF JAPANESE CINEMA

Tampopo

+ intro by Catherine Wheatley, King's College London
(Monday 13 December only)

Juzo Itami and Nobuko Miyamoto talk about sex, food and death

Juzo Itami was born in Kyoto in 1933. His father Mansaku Itami was a well-known film director. Apart from directing and acting, Itami is an essayist. He is married to Nobuko Miyamoto who has major roles in his three feature films.

JUZO ITAMI: I began by acting in films and played a Japanese colonel in Nicholas Ray's *55 Days at Peking*. It was not at all a happy time for Ray and he was finally taken off the film. The experience left me with no desire whatever to direct a big-budget epic. I have also acted in the theatre, in Shuji Terayama's *The Strange Mandarin*. Terayama was a good friend and in some ways I feel very close to him, but he was a wild schizophrenic and compared with him I am very commonsensical. And I appeared in Oshima's *Japanese Pornographic Songs*. You could say our preoccupations are similar, but Oshima looks at things from a very different point of view from my own.

The concern with ritual, with the correct way of doing things, is probably a common element in my work. We enter a world in which the rules governing things already exist. I see human beings as always prey to feelings of isolation. There doesn't seem to be a perfect fit between themselves and the outside world. Rules are to do with the alignment of the self and the world.

For a long time, I wanted to make a film about food and eating. The idea is already there in *The Funeral*, in the scene in which the old man who is going to die returns from seeing his doctor in Tokyo having been given a clean bill of health, with a selection of delicacies for the evening meal. After that he has a heart attack. Food too is governed by rules regarding its preparation and consumption. Food also has an erotic side; it is a physical pleasure. And once there are rules and taboos, there exists at once the possibility of breaking those rules. I thought this possibility would introduce a note of suspense.

Originally, I wanted to structure my second film, *Tampopo*, around a series of anecdotes about food. It was supposed to work like a kind of endless nightmare, with one story shading into another leaving no possibility of escape. I wrote some 30 episodes and tried to arrange them in various sequences to give the film some sense of development, but it didn't work. It was spineless. It needed a strong plot, a clear narrative, and suddenly I had the idea of using a Western story. I thought of a stranger riding into town, finding a shabby restaurant, turning it into the best in town, and drifting away again. The plot, of course, is straight from Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo* in which everyone tries to help John Wayne, who doesn't want help. His character was the prototype for Goro.

In *The Funeral*, my first film, the family must undertake a ritual which originated within a very different kind of community, a traditional community. Japan is, of course, no longer such a society even though foreigners tend to see us that way. It is a very highly developed capitalist consumer society and our behaviour and our ways of thought are quite different. The film shows the difficulties that arise when contemporary Japanese are asked to perform rituals associated with a society with which they no longer have much in common.

Goro says that he is not from a good home and that he doesn't know how to behave in one. He understands the right way to do things and can recognise excellence, as can all the other characters in the film. In some ways, Japan is a very egalitarian society – it is understood that culinary excellence is not a matter of cost – and he turns a mediocre restaurant into an excellent one and then leaves. The other anecdotes, the sequences with the couple in the hotel room who explore the erotic aspect of food, or the lesson in etiquette, or the story of the wife who on her husband's command leaves her deathbed to cook a meal, only to expire as it is served while the husband cries out 'Eat! Eat! It is mother's last meal!', all those anecdotes fall into place around this main story.

My latest film, *A Taxing Woman*, is also about the enforcing of strict rules, this time to do with money. It is about the struggle between those who collect taxation and those who avoid payment.

NABUKO MIYAMOTO: I play the 'taxing woman' of the title, a tax inspector. Although I have been acting since the 60s in theatre and television as well as film, my roles until *The Funeral* were fairly minor ones. In *The Funeral*, the part I played was very close to my own life. I had just lost my father and the house used in the film was my own. It was very difficult for me to maintain a distance between myself and my personal feelings and the character in the film.

Tampopo was quite different. I tried to suggest a very jolly sort of person who dedicates herself to the perfecting of a particular task. The image I had in mind was the sort of woman who works in McDonald's. I tried to make her not too Japanese but more dry and less emotional. She is a woman who is led and protected by a man. In *A Taxing Woman*, my character is a very professional woman, a woman completely at home within the professional world, a woman who can act independently.

Interview by Verina Glaessner, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1988

TAMPOPO

Director: Juzo Itami

Production Companies: Itami Productions,
New Century Producers

Producers: Juzo Itami, Yasushi Tamaoki, Seigo Hosogoe

Assistant Directors: Kazuki Shiroyama, Nobuhiro Kubota,
Suzuki Kenji

Casting: Kosaburo Sasaoka

Screenplay: Juzo Itami

Director of Photography: Masaki Tamura

Visual Effects: Ochiai Inoue

Graphic Design: Kenichi Samura

Editor: Akira Suzuki

Art Director: Takeo Kimura

Costumes: Emiko Kogo

Wardrobe: Kunio Nakayama

Make-up Design: Kenji Zuga

Make-up: Masaji Pakase

Music: Kunihiko Murai

Selections from Symphonies by: Gustav Mahler

Music Performed by: Tokyo City Philharmonic Orchestra

Music Conducted by: Hiroshi Koizumi

Synthesizer: Minoru Mukoya, Shikou Anzai

Sound Recording: Fumio Hashimoto

Sound Recording Assistants: Hayashi Daisuke,

Katsuki Makoto, Chibayama Nobuhiro

Sound Effects: Saito Masatoshi

Fights: Uetake Kanichi

Food Design: Izumi Ishimori

Cooking Stylist: Seiko Ogawa

Dialect Coach: Joko Onaru

Cast

Tsutomu Yamazaki (*Goro*)

Nobuko Miyamoto (*Tampopo*)

Kôji Yakusho (*Gangster*)

Ken Watanabe (*Gun*)

Rikiya Yasuoka (*Pisken*)

Kinzo Sakura (*Shohei*)

Manpei Ikeuchi (*Tabo, Tampopo's son*)

Yoshi Kato (*Sensei*)

Shuji Otaki (*rich old man*)

Fukumi Kuroda (*gangster's girlfriend*)

Setsuko Shinoi (*rich old man's mistress*)

Yoriko Doguchi (*girl oyster-fisher*)

Masahiko Tsugawa (*supermarket manager*)

Motoo Noguchi, Yoshihei Saga, Tsuguho Narita, Akio Tanaka, Choei

Takahashi (*businessmen*)

Toshimune Kato (*office junior*)

Isao Hashizume (*waiter*)

Akira Kubo (*owner of rival ramen restaurant*)

Saburo Satoki (*owner of efficient ramen restaurant*)

Mario Abe (*owner of ramen street stall*)

Hitoshi Takagi (*owner of Chinatown ramen restaurant*)

Tadao Futami (*Chinatown restaurant's neighbour*)

Akio Yokoyama (*Chinese ramen chef*)

Masato Tsujimura (*small vagrant*)

Ei Takami (*thin vagrant*)

Gilliark Amagasaki (*long-faced vagrant*)

Norio Matsui (*fat vagrant*)

Noboru Sato (*red-nosed vagrant*)

Kyoko Oguma (*woman owner of Soba restaurant*)

Toshiya Fujita (*man with toothache*)

Tadakazu Kitami (*dentist*)

Izumi Hara (*crazy old woman*)

Kazuyo Mita (*dying woman*)

Hisashi Igawa (*dying woman's husband*)

Nobuo Nakamura (*intended victim of con man*)

Ryutaro Otomo (*master of ramen eating*)

Mariko Okada (*teacher of etiquette*)

Japan 1985

114 mins

JAPAN 2021

100 YEARS OF JAPANESE CINEMA

Philosophical Screens: Tampopo Mon 13 Dec 20:15 Blue Room

After Life (Wandafuru raifu) Mon 13 Dec 20:40; Wed 29 Dec 14:20

Funeral Parade of Roses (Bara no sôretsu) Tue 14 Dec 14:30; Mon 27
Dec 15:50

Silence Has No Wings (Tobenai chinmoku) Wed 15 Dec 18:00

Woman of the Lake (Onna no mizûmi) Wed 15 Dec 20:50

The Man Who Stole the Sun (Taiyô wo nusunda otoko)

Thu 16 Dec 20:10

Death By Hanging (Kôshikei) Fri 17 Dec 18:00

Tampopo Fri 17 Dec 20:45; Tue 28 Dec 15:10

The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On (Yuki Yukite, Shingun)

Sat 18 Dec 11:40; Mon 27 Dec 18:20

Straits of Hunger (aka A Fugitive from the Past) (Kiga kaikyô)

Sat 18 Dec 14:30

Woman of the Dunes (Suna no Onna) Sat 18 Dec 17:30

Moving (Ohikkoshi) Sat 18 Dec 20:35; Wed 29 Dec 20:30

The Long Darkness (Shinobugawa) Sun 19 Dec 12:40

The Demon (Kichiku) Sun 19 Dec 16:00

Pale Flower (Kawaita hana) Sun 19 Dec 18:20

Fire Festival (Himatsuri) Mon 20 Dec 17:50; Mon 27 Dec 13:20

Suzaku (Moe No Suzaku) Tue 21 Dec 17:45; Thu 30 Dec 21:00

Shall We Dance? (Shall we dansu?) Tue 21 Dec 20:30; Thu 30 Dec
17:40

In the Realm of the Senses (Ai no corrida) Wed 22 Dec 18:20

Love Letter Wed 22 Dec 20:50; Tue 28 Dec 12:10

Tokyo Drifter (Tôkyô nagaremono) Thu 23 Dec 18:30

Muddy River (Doro no kawa) Thu 23 Dec 20:40

Black Rain (Kuroi ame) Tue 28 Dec 18:15

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