

The Early Development of the *Gendaigeki* Screenplay: Kaeriyama Norimasa and the *Jun'eiga Undō*

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Throughout the teens, the formative years of their development, the moving pictures rapidly succeeded in attracting more interest in less time than any other means of entertainment – capturing, as one early commentator wrote, “the heart of the civilized world.”¹ In the West the recognition of their unique potential, and an early break with both the legitimate stage and vaudeville, allowed the movies to follow a course of rapid narrative development culminating in the classic films of the Hollywood thirties. Samples of shooting scripts from the early days of the industry prove that the screenwriter and his craft played an important role in this development from the very beginning.²

In Japan, the popularity of the theater and its deep-rooted conventions delayed the cinema's domination of the older, more traditional forms of popular entertainment until the 1920s. In spite of these conventions, however, a gradual maturing of the narrative of the contemporary drama is evident throughout the teens and early twenties.

Four films produced between 1918 and 1922, in particular, mark different stages in this development, and together they represent the various influences that combined to bring about the modernization of the genre by the 1930s. In the earliest of these films, Kaeriyama Norimasa's *Sei no Kagayaki* (The Glow of Life, 1918), the director put into practice the reforms he had been advocating for several years. Although he made other films together with his fellow members of the *Eiga Geijutsu Kyōkai* (Motion Picture Art Association), this first work is considered the representative model for his *jun'eiga-undō* (henceforth the Pure Film Movement), which was inspired by foreign technique and theory. In addition, Kaeriyama's experimental films were influential in the founding of the Shōchiku and Taikatsu Film Companies in 1920 for the purpose of producing “artistic” films that challenged the dominance of *shimpageki*.³ In 1921 the Shōchiku Cinema Institute, an offshoot of Shōchiku, followed Kaeriyama's lead with *Rōjō no Reikon* (Souls on the Road, 1921), directed by Kaeriyama's former colleague, Murata Minoru, and at Taikatsu, Kurihara Tōmas⁴ joined the popular author Tanizaki Jun'ichirō to make the

first modern Japanese comedy, *Amachua Kurabu* (Amateur Club, 1920). Finally, at Nikkatsu's Mukōjima studio another member of the *Ibsen Kai*, Tanaka Eizō, directed *Kyōya Eriten* (The Kyōya Collar Shop, 1922), officially marking the end of the *oyama's* presence on screen.

These four films were very different in both form and content, but their creators had in common a desire to revolutionize the contemporary film drama, rooted in their appreciation of the realism they perceived in the films of Europe and the United States. They also recognized the important role of the screenplay in this modernization process. The script for *Rōjō no Reikon*, for example, was modelled after the American continuity scripts regularly published in film magazines at the time, and Kurihara rewrote Tanizaki's original scenarios in the continuity style he learned at the Ince studios in Hollywood.⁵ It was Kaeriyama, however, who laid the foundations for reform, and who was responsible for what is considered the first screenplay of the Japanese cinema.

The First Writers

The earliest account of a screenwriter's name appearing in the titles of a Japanese film is in 1911. The movie industry was fifteen years old, and Onoe Matsunosuke was at the peak of his popularity in theatrical swordfight films. The same year, however, early attempts at modernization included the first appearance of an actress in a Japanese film, and while *shimpageki* still dominated contemporary screen drama, on stage the Shingeki actress Matsui Sumako was captivating audiences with her performance as Nora in *The Doll House*. Imported films continued to be a great attraction, and that year the theaters specializing in foreign films were offering *Anna Karenina*, *Hamlet*, and documentary footage of Tolstoy's funeral. *Zigomar*, the enormously popular French detective film, came under fire for inspiring an outbreak of criminal behavior among Japanese youths, and in the secluded garden of a remote country villa, the Meiji Emperor experienced his first moving picture⁶.

Actually, screenwriting as a craft had appeared on the horizon two years earlier. In 1909, Kawaura Kenichi, the head of the Yoshizawa Company in Tokyo, set up a separate story department at the company headquarters in Shinbashi. It was called the "*koan*" ("idea" or "plan") department, and it is doubtful there was a standard format for the material handled by the members of the staff.⁷ Still, it was the first time a unit of its kind appeared within the production system, and the staff members, like their counterparts in the American studios, were responsible for both original material and rewrites of scenarios submitted by the general public.

Kawaura's innovative move to set up a permanent story department was remarkable for several reasons. To begin with, in Kyoto around 1909, Makino Shōzō was still narrating film dialogue from behind the camera. This *kuchidate* narration (a familiar technique for his actors, many of whom were members of travelling troupes where it was used for last minute changes in the program) was then jotted down by an actor who could write, and this became the script for the *benshi's* narration.⁸ This procedure, where the film script was written after the film was shot, was an interesting departure from the growing tendency elsewhere to treat the silent screenplay as a plan for shooting the film.

Of particular interest, however, was the Yoshizawa Company's practice of soliciting scenarios (or stories) from outside the studios. In the United States this had become commonplace at least as early as 1907. The first staff writers were for the most part former journalists or popular fiction writers drawn to the trade by the rumor of very large payments for very short stories, but within a few years the rapid increase in the length of films outdistanced the output of the story departments' staff. The studios were forced to accept material from among the "ten thousand people" who were hastily writing scenarios.⁹

A direct result of this was a flood of "how-to" literature for the budding screenwriter as well as books and articles debating the qualities of the silent screenplay. Much of this material crossed the ocean and was avidly read by Japanese movie fans (later such material would appear in translation). Epes Winthrop Sargent's pioneering articles in *Moving Picture World*, for example, were compiled in book form and published in 1912 as *The Technique of the Photoplay*, which became one of the references Kaeriyama used five years later for his own "how-to" book, *Katsudō shashingeki no sōsaku to satsuei hō* (henceforth *The Production and Photography of Moving Picture Drama*).

In the United States this period of "scenario fever," when the opportunities for the amateur screenwriter seemed limitless, lasted only a few years, from around 1907 to 1914, but it is pointed out that this was an important period of development in the concept of film narrative structure. In the very least, the bulk of literature created by the growing popularity of the craft helped to standardize the format for silent film scripts. As early as 1909 a magazine article laid out the ground rules to this format for freelance hopefuls, and it was no coincidence that sometime between 1911 and 1915 the use of a continuity script became standard practice on American sets, allowing, for example, an increase in film length, more freedom in location shooting, and the development of more complex, psychologically developed narratives.¹⁰

In the story departments of the American studios, a scenario (or story)

editor reviewed submitted manuscripts and reworked any material that showed possibilities for filming. At the Yoshizawa Company, scenarios were entered in regularly held competitions, and the winning material was reworked and filmed. In addition, these screenplays were published in the company's publicity magazine, *Katsudō shashinkai* (Moving Picture World, no relation to the magazine published with the same title in the United States).¹¹ This practice of collecting and circulating screenplays is perhaps the earliest evidence of a popular interest in writing for the screen, although this interest was probably limited to the young intellectuals who more commonly frequented the theaters and were likely to pick up the latest copy of *Katsudō shashinkai* before heading home.

The scenario competitions sponsored by the Yoshizawa Company lasted only one year. Whatever enthusiasm they aroused for the craft of screenwriting, it scarcely had the chance to develop into the "scenario fever" that broke out in the United States, but it was a starting point, and it set a precedent for the competitions that continue to provide a foothold into the industry for aspiring screenwriters to this day. Nor did the practice continue long enough for a significant debate on standard format to evolve, but the publication of screenplays provided an opportunity, if only temporarily, for young film fans to debate the unique qualities of screenwriting as opposed to writing for the stage. Yoshizawa's magazine also provided a forum for a more general discussion of the nature of this new entertainment. This would continue throughout the teens in subsequent publications, and the focus quickly shifted from a preoccupation with technical aspects to the consideration of the value of film as art.

In 1910 the head of the Yoshizawa story department, Satō Kōroku, wrote an article expressing his disappointment after reviewing the entries in a recent competition. His comments are surprisingly farsighted, touching on problems that would continue to plague filmmakers attempting to reform the contemporary drama over the next two decades. In the United States, the people involved in this great shuffling of paper complained of practical problems— incompetent editors and amateurs with little knowledge of the basic requirements of "plot, cohesion, and technique"¹²—but the lack of knowledge Satō laments concerns the less tangible problem of expressing cultural identity. He listed the following complaints about amateur screenplays:

- (1) they should be more natural;
- (2) they should advocate a Japanese lifestyle for Japanese people;
- (3) even the manner of dress for a magician, for example, is different

- depending on whether he is American or Japanese;
- (4) however, the poor quality of Japanese acting is deplorable;
 - (5) the recognition of the difference between a stage play and the script for a moving picture is necessary in order to overcome the above problem.¹³

Two years later the Yoshizawa Company merged with the Yokota, M. Pathe, and Fukuhodo companies to form Nikkatsu, and a story department was organized under Masumoto Kiyoshi, a member of the *Bungei Kyōkai*. From then on the story department was considered an essential unit within the production system.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the merger also resulted in the discontinuation of *Katsudō Shashinkai*. One year later, to compensate for the loss, a group of young and particularly enthusiastic former contributors led by Kaeriyama Norimasa put together the first issue of *Film Record*, soon considered the most progressive film magazine in circulation.

“Observe to Learn”

Kaeriyama Norimasa did not officially enter the film industry until 1914, when he joined the short-lived Kinetophone Company, and it wasn't until 1918, when he was employed in the import division of the Tenkatsu Company (Tennenshoku Katsudō Shashin, “Natural Color Moving Picture Company”), that he had the opportunity to direct. By then, however, he had a clear idea of the manner of film he wanted to make because he had been developing his ideas in numerous magazine articles since his early youth.

Kaeriyama was born in Tokyo in 1893. His father was a chemistry professor at a secondary school in the downtown district of Kanda, and he grew up within a short distance of the Kinkikan, a popular theater for foreign films. He went to the theater often, but it wasn't until around 1910, when he became a mechanical engineering student at a secondary technical school, that he became a passionate filmgoer. The school was located near the theater district in Asakusa, and he soon became a regular at the Denkikan theater, which was managed by the Yoshizawa Company.¹⁵

As the story goes, the young Kaeriyama happened to buy a copy of *Katsudō Shashinkai* one day at the theater, and to his surprise he came across an article written by one of his classmates. In no time he was submitting articles of his own. A large number of these dealt with technical issues, but he also wrote reviews of foreign films and eloquent criticism of the domestic product. In a 1911 article concerning the educational value of moving pictures, for example,

he condemns the typically uneducated *benshi* for coining vulgar expressions children in the audience would only too eagerly mimic after leaving the theater.¹⁵ The article seems all the more perceptive when we consider the fact that the author was only 18 years old.

By the time Kaeriyama started *Film Record* with his friends in 1913 (after the third issue the name was changed to *Kinema Record*), he had been collecting foreign film magazines for a few years and was familiar with the increasing volume of criticism stressing the distinction between the screen and the stage. Through this literature he also kept up with the latest developments in equipment, and his familiarity with imported films from the United States and Europe enabled him to comment with authority on the advancements in film technique abroad.

The material covered in *Film Record* reveals the extent of Kaeriyama and his colleagues' enthusiasm for foreign films. It was an enthusiasm close to reverence. The staff, headed by Kaeriyama, called themselves the *Katsushin Koyūkai* (Friends of Moving Pictures) and consisted of about a dozen members. They published their magazine twice a month, and the responsibilities of each staff member changed every two weeks. Each member was assigned a theater, and beginning with basic information—the title, subject, cast—they would give a detailed report on the film being shown. In this way, the magazine functioned as a kind of guide to imported films, with an emphasis on film criticism.¹⁷ It reflected an attitude toward foreign films that continued to play an essential role in the formative period of the Japanese cinema, reaching a high point with the complete transcriptions and analyses published in Murata's quarterly *Eiga kagaku kenkyū* (Scientific Film Research) in the late twenties.

"Observe to learn" appears to have been the guiding principle among the members of the *Katsushin Koyūkai*. This was common advice found abroad in virtually every "how-to" book of the period ("'Study the screen.' There, in three words is contained the one big secret of success in the picture field"),¹⁸ but for these young intellectuals the advice applied, specifically, to the foreign screen. When their fascination with this new medium did bring them to cross the threshold of a theater featuring *kyūgeki* or *shimpageki*, they were highly critical of what they saw. Kaeriyama particularly condemned the popular *rensageki*, a combination of moving pictures and vaudeville that featured histrionic *kowairo* narration by a *benshi*. In 1916, when this form of entertainment was most popular, Kaeriyama wrote:

The common fault of the makers of moving pictures is that they are driven by instant profit and make no long-term plans. They

demean themselves by giving little importance to their ideals, regarding the moving pictures merely as a way to make excessive profit through the seduction and deception of others. This is what they call entertainment, and they exhaust all possibilities for profiting from this entertainment. They are gravely mistaken... The filmmaker must have an ideal for his work... If he is incompetent he will impress audiences by capitalizing on man's weaknesses, but the capable filmmaker will arouse emotion by appealing to man's conscience and sincerity. This is what distinguishes the filmmakers who have an ideal from the "entertainers" who lack one.¹⁹

In July, 1917, Kaeriyama published *The Production and Photography of Moving Picture Drama*, combining some of his major articles from *Film Record* with material culled from foreign film books and magazines. In it he plotted a course for the future of domestic film drama by stressing the need for *jun'eigageki* (pure film). By this he meant films free of stage conventions such as the *benshi* and *oyama*, because he was convinced that as long as these conventions governed the industry, the Japanese film had no chance of reaching the level of narrative development increasingly visible in films from abroad.

Kaeriyama used the word "*eiga*" (film) to refer to his ideal motion picture in order to distinguish it from *katsudōgeki* (moving pictures), which he clearly saw as a lesser form of entertainment. In addition to the use of actresses in place of *oyama*, and "spoken titles" (dialogue inter-titles) that would eliminate the need for a *benshi*, he advocated location shooting, complex camerawork (in particular, close ups and moving camerawork) and the application of dramatically sophisticated editing techniques. In step with the trend overseas toward psychologically developed characters, he advocated a more realistic style of acting. Above all, he believed that only a well-developed screenplay could guarantee the success of these reforms.

After publishing his book, Kaeriyama became more involved in his work at the Tenkatsu Company and the staff at *Film Record* quietly disbanded. Once again young critics were without a magazine, but in 1919 *Kinema junpō* was started based on the format of *Film Record*, and it has continued to circulate since then. It is no exaggeration to say that Kaeriyama's small magazine marked the beginning of serious film criticism in Japan.

"The Scenario is the Foundation"

The critic Kishi Matsuo tells us that when Kaeriyama died in 1964 his obituary appeared in only a few newspapers. Even then, this leading figure in the history of Japanese cinema was mistakenly described as the first man to use "super impose" titles (subtitling) instead of "spoken titles." Although his pioneering work ended by 1921, Kaeriyama continued to teach in several universities and was an honorary member of the Association of Film Technicians, but at his funeral, Kishi writes, the single flower before the altar was placed there by an actress who had starred in his early films.²⁰ In spite of the volume of his film criticism, including the first serious work to address the cinema's artistic value as well as its practical side, today he is largely forgotten.

Around the time Kaeriyama entered Tenkatsu and launched the Pure Film Movement, however, he was one of the most controversial figures in the filmworld, and *The Production and Photography of Moving Picture Drama* underwent no less than ten printings in seven years, from 1917 to 1924.²¹ Priced at a little over one yen,²² the book was intended for the amateur fan, and it helped bring a new generation of young filmmakers into the industry.

This focus on the amateur, clearly stated in the preface, and the careful introduction of foreign criticism and production methods allow us a glimpse of Kaeriyama's revolutionary vision for the future of Japanese films.²³ Most notable, however, is the extensive treatment of the proper elements of a screenplay and the inclusion of several samples (all written by Kaeriyama under the pen name Mizusawa Sakuhiko) that are the earliest examples of a format similar to what is used today. One of these, *Ai to Hana* (Love and the Flower) was to become the model for Kaeriyama's second film, *Miyama no Otome* (The Maid in the Mountains), made in 1918 and released the following year²⁴

Kaeriyama had a decent command of English, and parts of his book are apparently translations of material selected from the copious foreign references listed at the beginning of the book.²⁵ These include Sargent's *The Technique of the Photoplay*, Hugo Munsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1915), Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915), and in the 1924 edition, Victor Freeburg's *The Art of Photoplay Making* (1918). In view of this list, it is not surprising that Kaeriyama advises the novice screenwriter of the necessity for titles that are as "simple and few as possible," for example, or of the importance of "harmony between picture and subtitles [expository inter-titles]," and thinking in terms of the screen

(“the silent voices must be communicated by the screen”).²⁶ What Kaeriyama does contribute is a meticulous explanation of proper technical terms—he would always be drawn to the technical properties of the medium, sometimes to a fault—and a visionary forward to the chapter “Scenario Technique and the Scenario Writer”:

The scénario is the foundation of motion picture drama. The value of the drama depends on the scenario a great deal because the director decides the actions of the actor and all aspects of the film according to it... it is very different from the script for stage drama....²⁷

Here Kaeriyama not only states the importance of the screenplay, but he also introduces the idea of a movie as the creation of someone (a director) with a definite plan in hand (the screenplay). This was an entirely new concept at a time when audiences were still fascinated by adaptations of Shimpa plays and the acrobatic feats of Onoe Matsunosuke, and would greet the *benshi's* entrance with the same fan calls reserved for a popular Kabuki actor.²⁸ By a “pure film” Kaeriyama meant one dramatically explicit enough to be clear without a *benshi's* explanation or interpretation, and the best way for a director to realize such a well-rounded narrative was to make the film according to a plan, the screenplay, which would give him greater control over the finished product.

At least one important screenwriter of the period, Susukida Rokuhei (1899-1960), was inspired by the book. An avid movie fan, he came across a copy one day in the neighborhood library and was impressed by Kaeriyama's advice. Working in the *jidaigeki* genre, he adapted his own popular novels into original screenplays with psychological depth, and is considered one of the first screenwriters to express a personal individuality.²⁹

The first illustration in *The Production and Photography of Moving Picture Drama* is a photograph of two scenario editors reviewing stacks of manuscripts submitted to the story department at Universal Studios; perhaps this inspired amateur writers eager to find a way into the industry. Later in his career, Kaeriyama himself became disillusioned with the future of commercial film, however, and came to believe that “pure films” could only be made outside the studios.³⁰ After he directed his last film in 1924, he turned his full attention to the noncommercial amateur film, and conducted seminars in 9½ mm filmmaking. In addition, he continued to publish small manuals for the general reader, explaining the technical aspects of filmmaking in the simplest

terms possible (one thin pocket-sized book, for example, advises the beginner to remember, above all, to "Press the Button!").³¹ His fascination with the technical aspects of the medium, in fact, was an important factor in cutting short his directing career.

"The Glow of Life"

Kaeriyama entered the Tenkatsu Company in 1917. His first job was in the photography department, but because of his knowledge of English he was quickly moved to the import division. He continued writing screenplays, however, and experimented with various shooting and developing techniques in his spare time. Eventually, he approached the managing director of the company with the idea of making a movie for export that would help promote Japanese pictures abroad.

What he actually had in mind was a "film" that would enable him to put into practice the reforms he had been advocating on paper for the last several years. Apparently, the company had little confidence in the financial potential of his plan, but Kaeriyama's offer to make two films for the price of one proved persuasive; in addition, although *shimpageki* were still popular, audiences were showing signs of being restless for something new. The more innovative Nikkatsu studios, in fact, had just hired the young director Tanaka Eizō to revamp and revitalize their tired Shimpa dramas, and Tenkatsu was beginning to feel the strain of the competition.

Kaeriyama later wrote that his intention at the time was to make something that resembled a foreign film as closely as possible. To do this, he felt he needed to use foreign films as a model in every respect, and he began by writing a continuity "in a foreign manner." Following examples he found in imported handbooks, he included technical terms such as "close up," "insert," "bust," "fade-in," and "fade out." For his subject matter he settled for no less than the imposing question of the meaning of life. He explains:

....It was a youthful script entitled "The Glow of Life." The plot was my idea, however, and as a technician with a poor appreciation of literature, I wrote something that could be called a scenario in form only. I was trying to express on film the idea that "life is effort," and it ended up having a dry, scholarly air, but I thought the plot was substantial for breaking the dull monotony of the *shimpageki*.³²

Although he had the company's official permission, the rest of the staff was reluctant to cooperate with him in his attempt to make such a film. *Shimpageki* and the *benshi* who narrated them still dominated the industry, and Tenkatsu was no exception. Once the details of Kaeriyama's proposal became clear, there were grumbled complaints over the low budget, and when the actors realized he planned to shoot on location instead of using the usual studio stage, they refused to work with him.³³

Kaeriyama knew from the very beginning that working with Tenkatsu's *katsudōgeki* veterans was out of the question: in his book he had clearly stated, "naturalistic acting is the life of the silent moving picture."³⁴ Instead he met with an old acquaintance from his school days, Murata Minoru, who had organized a small Shingeki troupe that was receiving favourable reviews. Murata was interested in his idea, and worked out an agreement with Kaeriyama based on the following conditions:

- A. We will make a film different from all other Japanese films until now, using dialogue titles instead of *kagezerifu*, and resembling a Japanese translation of a Bluebird film;
- B. We will do away with female impersonators and use actresses instead. This is in line with the previous condition;
- C. We will make three experimental films by September. It will be necessary to limit ourselves to a modest budget;
- D. If these experiments are successful, we will form a group within Tenkatsu and become completely independent, including financially, relying on the company solely for the distribution of our films.³⁵

The next step was to find an actress to play the lead, and they chose Hanayagi Harumi, a member of a prominent Shingeki company. The cast was now complete.

After reading Kaeriyama's script Murata and two other members of his troupe decided it was essentially no different from the typical *shimpageki*. Kaeriyama agreed to their offer to rewrite it, apologizing, as usual, for his lack of artistic sensibility. Even so, the actors found themselves in an awkward position. The basic problem was with the story itself, an improbable love triangle between a young aristocrat, a struggling chemist, and a botanist's daughter: the "glow of life" Kaeriyama had in mind was none other than the sparks given off in an experiment with radioactive carbon. The fact that none

of the actors had any experience in screenwriting made their task more difficult, and after a few sleepless nights the best they could do was to replace a few of the numerous expository titles with "spoken" (dialogue) titles.³⁶

Sei no Kagayaki is indeed dry reading. The story is an ambitious attempt to unravel the meaning of life in four reels. Teruko, a country girl, falls in love with a young aristocrat, Yanagizawa (played by Murata), visiting from the city. In answer to her question about the meaning of life, the carefree Yanagizawa responds, "The meaning of life? . . .well, it is to fulfill every pleasure, of course... to eat whatever we want, to do whatever we like." Not surprisingly, he abandons Teruko after returning to the city, and when the heartbroken girl attempts to drown herself she is saved by Yamashita, the young chemist. She regains her strength after he reminds her that only the weak are broken by the struggle to live. In the end, Yanagizawa repents and returns from the city to beg her forgiveness, and the story ends with the somber statement "Life is Effort" emblazoned across the dawn.³⁷

In spite of the awkward story, the screenplay offers us a glimpse of the industry in its infancy, when it was on the verge of vast and important changes. There are scenes that were intended to give the film a foreign flavor; for example, Teruko reads Turgenev, and one wordless sequence cuts between Yanagizawa, Teruko, and Yamashita playing tennis, Teruko's little brother imitating Chaplin in the garden, and her father peering at bacteria through a microscope. On the other hand, the love story that forms the structure of the film still bears traces of Shimpa style romance. In the end, Yanagizawa leaves the tearful Teruko once again, although this time he is sailing abroad to pursue an honest living.

What clearly sets this screenplay apart from earlier attempts is its carefully planned format. *Sei no Kagayaki* includes directions for the actors' gestures and indications of close ups; the scenes are numbered, and the dialogue and expository titles are short, giving the screenplay a sense of balance. In addition to the dialogue titles, there are lines for the actors, which helped them create the proper atmosphere and a sense of continuity.³⁸ The screenplay even includes one dream sequence, when Teruko believes she sees both Yanagizawa and Yamashita in her room before she decides to commit suicide.³⁹

Shindō Kaneto describes the original manuscript for Kaeriyama's *Shiragiku Monogatari* (Tale of the White Chrysanthemum, 1920), concluding that the director's earlier scripts were probably written out in a similar manner.⁴⁰ If so, then the screenplay for *Sei no Kagayaki* was handwritten on lined paper imprinted with the name of the company. Four or five carbon copies were made,

and one copy was submitted to the Ministry of Interior in compliance with censorship regulations. Kaeriyama presumably kept the original for himself and distributed the remaining copies to be shared by the members of the cast.

Before the actual shooting began, Kaeriyama rented a room outside the studio and held a script reading. He later wrote that until then, "script reading" commonly meant, literally, reading the script, but he felt it was important to use the script to rehearse the actors. Although he had no directing experience, he did study the acting in foreign films and intended to use it as a model; this rehearsal was also an opportunity to practice a directing technique before they went in front of the camera. According to Kaeriyama, the reading, probably the first in the history of the industry, was not a complete success. He chose to work on the most difficult section, the love scene between Murata and Hanayagi, but the two ended it rather abruptly in a fit of embarrassed laughter.⁴¹

There was no money to build a set, and everything was shot on actual locations. These included the Tokyo YMCA in Kanda, Tokyo station, the lobby of the Kinkikan theater, Teikoku theater, and the Mitsukoshi department store. Additional shooting was also done in Hakone, a resort town near Tokyo.⁴² The staff always took a copy of the script to each shooting session, and the plot was often adjusted to accommodate the atmosphere of the particular location.⁴³ Kondō Iyokichi, a member of the cast, later wrote that in spite of the dialogue written for the actors there were many instances when they were only moving their lips. They were unhappy with this departure from realism, but felt that some progress was made by replacing a director reciting *kowairo* with one who was coaching some of the acting in addition to indicating when each scene should be cut.⁴⁴ In this respect, the director's script was undoubtedly indispensable.

It took one month to shoot all four reels of *Sei no Kagayaki*, and after the film was processed, each scene was tinted in the style of Italian films at the time. The titles were written horizontally on illustrated cards in the manner of Universal's Bluebird films, and as an additional touch of exoticism, they appeared in both Japanese and French.⁴⁵

This was all too much for the Tenkatsu executives, and when Kaeriyama insisted that *Sei no Kagayaki* and his second film, *Miyama no Otome*, be allowed to open in theaters for foreign films in the popular Asakusa entertainment district, both were held from release for one year.⁴⁶ It is possible the company reacted to pressure from the powerful *benshi*. Kaeriyama initially requested the films be shown without narration, and when that was refused he agreed to compromise on a *benshi* who specialized in foreign films.

Kaeriyama's concern about such details was understandable. He later wrote that if his work had been presented in the manner that was common for Japanese films at the time—narrated with theatrical *kowairo* in theaters that resembled the old vaudeville halls—the reforms that were so crucial to these “pure films” would be rendered meaningless.⁴⁷ Eventually, the company agreed to run the films in two of the better theaters located elsewhere in the city. Five years later he finally saw one of his pictures released at an Asakusa theater, but that was only after a friend translated the titles into French.⁴⁸

The Audience Responds

Sei no Kagayaki and *Miyama no Otome* opened on September 13, 1919, and ran for two weeks at two small theaters directly under Tenkatsu management. Before the first showing, Kaeriyama went to the theaters and had the managers remove the colorful banners that hung from the ceilings and asked for Western background music instead of the traditional Japanese tunes that usually accompanied a domestic release.⁴⁹ Even with these modifications, the critics generally agreed the films would have done better if they had been released in different theaters, although the fact that they shared a double bill with an American Vitagraph film helped boost attendance considerably.

Tenkatsu refused to jeopardize box office returns by granting Kaeriyama the use of the company's lucrative foreign film theater, but it invited several journalists to a special showing of *Sei no Kagayaki*, reportedly the first press screening in the history of the industry. After the film ended, the company manager announced to the bewildered reporters that what they had just seen was no ordinary *katsudōgeki*. It was a “film” (“*eiga*”), he explained, and asked for their support in promoting it for “the sake of the artistic development of moving pictures.”⁵⁰

The critics were enthusiastic about Kaeriyama's attempt to free contemporary film drama from the restrictions of the traditional theater and vaudeville, but they were disappointed in the films themselves. Some felt his efforts were premature, and while they admitted the films were an indication of hope for the future, they unfavorably referred to them as “*shimpageki* with imitation western titles.”⁵¹ The actors' good intentions were praised, but the acting itself was seen as “bland,” with gestures “more Western than Japanese.” Even the general audience felt betrayed.⁵² Yamamoto Kajirō wrote of his experience seeing the first run of *Sei no Kagayaki*:

...It was around the time I entered the preparatory department at Keio University.

I was taking a leisurely walk down Mita slope when I saw a young man passing out handbills. They were made of cheap pink paper about the size of a postcard, but the printed message caught my eye: "The first Film made in Japan!" This catch-phrase announced the opening of the first Tenkatsu Special Production, *Sei no Kagayaki*, and the actors appearing in the film were all active in the vanguard of the Shingeki movement.... I immediately headed for the theater, a small picture hall in Ginza....

It was the first Japanese film I had ever seen! Japanese titles of a modern design, close ups and moving camera work, the actors' faces untouched by elaborate stage makeup, the plain, unaffected presence of a real woman, and the slightly awkward yet straightforward and sincere acting—this was a genuine film. Yet somehow something was missing. The film was rooted in literature, and the acting lapsed into mannerisms from the stage. A true film would not be so crude. Surely film has a more pure, invulnerable, isolated beauty. I was impressed, but at the same time I burned with frustration and anger.⁵³

The critics were finally satisfied with Kaeriyama's third release, *Gen'ei no Onna* (The Girl in His Dreams, 1920), calling it the first Japanese film that could compare favorably with a film from the West.⁵⁴ By then Kaeriyama's group had left Tenkatsu, and were producing films under the official title of the *Eiga Geijutsu Kyōkai* (Motion Picture Art Association). For a few months they were managed by Shōchiku in the hope that they would provide competition for Osanai Kaoru's newly formed Shōchiku Cinema Institute, but on the second film Kaeriyama broke the conditions of their contract by refusing to submit the screenplay for approval. The original staff members soon drifted apart (Murata was one of the first to leave, joining Osanai's Institute in 1920 to direct *Rōjō no Reikon* the following year), and the group disbanded in July, 1921. Kaeriyama managed to keep the name of the Motion Picture Art Association alive for a few more years, supporting himself by making commercial films for soap and toothpaste.⁵⁵ His last film was a commercial failure, ending his career as a director in 1924.

From 1918 to 1922, Kaeriyama divided the critics between proponents of the "pure film" and defenders of the *shimpageki* and *kyūgeki*. In 1923 a film

advertisement bills films belonging to the three genres separately, proof that the industry would never be the same again. It would take another decade until Japanese filmmakers were at last making contemporary dramas that dealt with the pertinent social problems of their society. The generation of directors and writers whose careers blossomed in this decade, however, matured during the debate on the artistic merit of film initiated by Kaeriyama's Pure Film Movement: many of them belonged to that group of amateur fans inspired by his efforts. *Sei no Kagayaki* was not a great financial success, and it failed to win the enthusiasm of the general audience, but as the first "eigageki" it represents an important step in the narrative development of the contemporary film drama.

Note: This paper is part of a study on the career of screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata.

NOTES

1. Robert E. Welsh, *A.B.C. of Motion Pictures* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1916), foreword.
2. Tom Stempel, *Framework: A History of Screenwriting in the American Film* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1988), p.15. Stempel cites four shooting scripts from 1910-11 in the J. Searle Dawley Collection at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library.
3. Kishi Matsuo, "Kaisetsu" in *Nihon shinario taikai*, vol. 1, Nihon Eiga Shinario Kyōkai, ed. (Tokyo: Eijinsha, 1973), p. 796.
4. Kurihara Tōmas was born Kurihara Kisaburo in Kanagawa, Japan, in 1885. After the failure of his father's business he went to America to look for work. In 1912 he joined Thomas H. Ince's Oriental Production unit, where he worked together with Sessue Hayakawa and his wife Aoki Tsuruko. It was at this time that he adopted the name "Tōmas," which was apparently suggested by Ince himself.
5. Ushihara Kiyohiko, foreword to script "*Rōjō no Reikon*," in *Nihon eiga shinario koten zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kinema Junpō, 1965): Kishi Matsuo, *Shinario taikai*, p. 797.
6. See "Shinario nenpyō," *Shinario taikai*, vol. 1, p. 814.
7. Kishi, *Shinario taikai*, p. 794.
8. Ibid.
9. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: The Mac-Millan Company, 1916) p. 17.
10. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristen Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985) pp. 165, 126, 137-9.
11. Kishi, *Shinario taikai*, p. 794. Although there were several fan magazines in circulation at the time, *Katsudō shashinkai* was the first publication to continue for as many as 26 issues. In *Katsudō shashin ga yatte kita* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1985), Tanaka Jun'ichirō quotes the premise of the magazine as published on the first page of the first issue:

There are three reasons for publishing this magazine. First, the films [accompanied by the phonetic reading "hirumu"] that are shown in entertainment halls contain various information related to astronomy, geography, history, science, and literature. There is no time for sufficient explanation of everything because

it is dealt with and shown in the space of two or three hours. This magazine will compensate for that and encourage deeper comprehension. Second, [the magazine] is useful as a souvenir to bring back to the members of the family who have not yet seen the film, in order to tell them what the film you saw was about. Third, we would like you to keep it as a reminder of all this new knowledge.

The custom of selling programs for films is still popular in Japan. The pamphlets typically contain a synopsis of the story, interviews, and an explanation of the production of the film.

12. G.A. Atkinson, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing* (London: McBride, Nast and Co., 1916), p. 28.
13. Satō Kōroku, *Katsudō shashinkai* (no. 4, 1910).
14. See "Shinario nenpyō," *Shinario taikei*, p. 814.
15. Kishi Matsuo, "Kaeriyama Norimasa no shi," *Jiji tsūshin* (Nov. 1964).
16. Kaeriyama Norimasa, "Jidō to katsudō shashin," *Katsudō shashinkai*, no. 21 (June, 1911), quoted in Yoshida Chiezō, "Kaeriyama Norimasa to *Sei no Kagayaki* no shuppatsu made," in *Nihon eiga no tanjō*, vol. 1 of *Kōza: Nihon eiga*, ed. Imamura Shōhei, Satō Tadao, Shindō Kaneto, Tsurumi Shunsuke, and Yamada Yōji, Tokyo: Iwanami, 1985) p. 238.
17. "Kaeriyama Norimasa," in *Nihon eiga kantoku zenshū* (Tokyo: Kinema Junpōsha, 1976), p. 110.
18. Welsh, *A.B.C. of Motion Pictures*, p. 90.
19. Kaeriyama Norimasa, "Katsudō shashin no shakai-teki risō to shakai kyōka no kachi," *Kinema Record* (Nov., 1916), quoted in Yoshida, p. 242.
20. Kishi, "Kaeriyama Norimasa no shi," p. 54. The actress Kishi refers to is Azuma Teruo, who starred in several of Kaeriyama's films beginning with *Gen'ei no Onna* (1920).
21. Kishi, *Shinario taikei*, p. 795.
22. Yoshida, "Kaeriyama Norimasa to *Sei no Kagayaki* no shuppatsu made," p. 242.
23. Kaeriyama Norimasa, *Katsudō shashingeki no sōsaku to satsueihō*, 2nd. ed. (Tokyo: Seikōsha, 1921), preface, p. 1.
24. Yoshida, "Kaeriyama Norimasa to *Sei no Kagayaki* no shuppatsu made," p. 245.
25. Kaeriyama, *Katsudō shashingeki*, pp.1-2. Under the heading "Honsho chosaku ni kansuru sankōsho" Kaeriyama cites references from France,

Italy, and Germany in addition to English language references.

26. Ibid. 42, 45.
27. Ibid. 41.
28. Iijima Tadashi, "Nihon eiga no reimei—jun'eigageki no shuhen," in *Nihon eiga no tanjō*, p. 105. Iijima recalls the audience calling out, "mattemashita" when the benshi came on stage.
29. Kishi, *Shinario taikei*, p. 798; Satō Tadao, "Nihon eiga no seiritu-shita dodai ni," in *Nihon eiga no tanjō*, p. 49.
30. Personal interview with Yoda Yoshikata, March 20, 1988.
31. Kaeriyama Norimasa, *Kogata eiga no satsuei to eisha* (Tokyo: Seibundō, Seibundō jūsen bunko, 1930), p. 123. "Press the Button!" appears in English.
32. Kaeriyama Norimasa, "Eigageki seisaku no omoide," *Eiga Jidai* (Oct., 1929).
33. Tanaka, *Katsudō shashin ga yatte kita*, p. 170.
34. Kaeriyama, *Katsudō shashin*, p. 42.
35. Kondō Iyōkichi, "Yukeru Eiga Geijutsu Kyōkai," n.d., quoted in *Kaeriyama Norimasa to Tōmas Kurihara no gyōseki* (Tokyo: Film Library Council, 1973), p. 36. The "Bluebird" films referred to here are the "light melodramas" made by the Bluebird Photoplay unit of Universal between 1916-1919. J.L. Anderson calls the Bluebird Photoplay the "ur-film of post-1920 mainstream Japanese cinema," noting their influence on Kaeriyama's Motion Picture Art Association, as well as Osanai Kaoru, Tanaka Eizō, Itō Daisuke, and Ushihara Kiyohiko, among others. He notes that it is difficult to examine this influence in great detail because no Bluebird Photoplay is known to exist. See J.L. Anderson, "Two Influences and the Japanese Film" in Richie and Anderson, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 448-451.
36. Ibid. 36-7.
37. Mizusawa Kiyohiko (Kaeriyama Norimasa), *Sei no Kagayaki* (1918, Tenkatsu), in *Nihon shinario taikei*, vol. 1, pp. 7-17.
38. In *Framework*, p. 39, Stempel states that such lines of dialogue were commonly used in Hollywood studios toward the end of the silent period to "help the actors get into the feel of the story."
39. Mizusawa, *Sei no Kagayaki*, p. 14.
40. Shindō Kaneto, "Shinario tanjō zengo," in *Nihon eiga no tanjō*, p. 182.
41. Kaeriyama, "Eigageki seisaku no omoide."
42. Yoshida, "Kaeriyama Norimasa to *Sei no Kagayaki* no shuppatsu made," p. 244.
43. Aoyama Sugisaku, "Eiga Geijutsu Kyōkai no omoide," (Aoyama Sugisaku, Sept. 1957), quoted in *Kaeriyama Norimasa to Tōmas Kurihara no gyōseki*,

- p. 43.
44. Kondō Iyōkichi, "Yukeru Eiga Geijutsu Kyōkai," p. 38.
 45. Kaeriyama, "Eigageki seisaku no omoide;" Iijima Tadashi, "Nihon Eiga no Reimei," p. 110.
 46. Asakusa theaters were considered first run theaters, comparable to what are now referred to in Japan as "roadshow theaters." See Tanaka Jun'ichirō, "Eigakan nyūjōryō," in *Nedan no fūzokushi*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1988). pp. 485-6. After opening in an Asakusa theater, foreign films were circulated to the better "second rank" theaters scattered throughout the city. These theaters often featured a mixed billing of one foreign and one domestic release, and charged one-third to one-fourth the Asakusa admission fee. There were also "third rank" theaters with admission rates one-third to one-fourth of what was charged in the "second rank" theaters.
 47. Kaeriyama, "Eigageki seisaku no omoide."
 48. Sakai Hiroshi, "Watashi no Gijutsu shi," *Eiga terebi gijutsu* (June, 1970).
 49. Kaeriyama, "Eigageki seisaku no omoide."
 50. Takada Mamoru, "Eiga kisha no shikisha," *Nihon eiga* (Oct., 1939).
 51. Kaeriyama, "Eigageki seisaku no omoide."
 52. Kirioka Kusanōsuke, "Miyama no Otome no sōshussha ni," *Katsudō Kurabu*, (Nov. 1919); Anon., *Katsudō zasshi* (June, 1920).
 53. Yamamoto Kajirō, *Katsudōya Suirō* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shōbō, 1965).
 54. Anon., "Gen'ei no Onna," *Kinema junpō* (June, 1920).
 55. Anon., "Jinbutsu gettan—Kaeriyama Norimasa," *Kinema junpō* (Jan. 1, 1922).