

JAPAN, GODZILLA AND THE ATOMIC BOMB

A Study into the Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Japanese Pop Culture

by

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From Desperation to Inspiration



During the flight back to Tokyo Tomoyuki Tanaka sat in his seat a worried man. Ordinary looking, having inherited the short stocky build characteristic of many Japanese men, he had just celebrated the passing of his forty-fourth birthday, and was about to celebrate his tenth year as a producer at the Toho Motion Picture Company. Until now he had done quite well for the studio, having produce a number of hits. But this time things had not gone so well. "On the plane ride back to Tokyo, I was desperate," Tanaka recalled. "I was sweating the whole time."

The year was 1954, and the film he intended to make was to have been *In the Shadow of Glory*, co-produced in cooperation with the Indonesian government. The plans for the film, however, fell through when Tanaka could not get work permits for the film's stars. Having a budget for a war film, but having no film to shoot, Tanaka agonized at the prospect of losing face in the eyes of his company. But it was during that plane ride that, as Guy Tucker argues, "desperation became his friend ... and would lend him an idea that would develop into something far larger and more enduring than the project he left behind."

That "larger and more enduring" something was the film *Godzilla*, released by Toho in 1954. Fans of the Japanese science fiction/fantasy genre around the globe will celebrated the 50th anniversary of the birth of Godzilla, the "King of the Monsters," on November 3rd, 2004, for it was on that date in 1954 that Toho Studios unleashed Godzilla on an unsuspecting public. However, one could argue that the true date of Godzilla's birth was not November 3rd, 1954, but August 6th, 1945, the day the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.



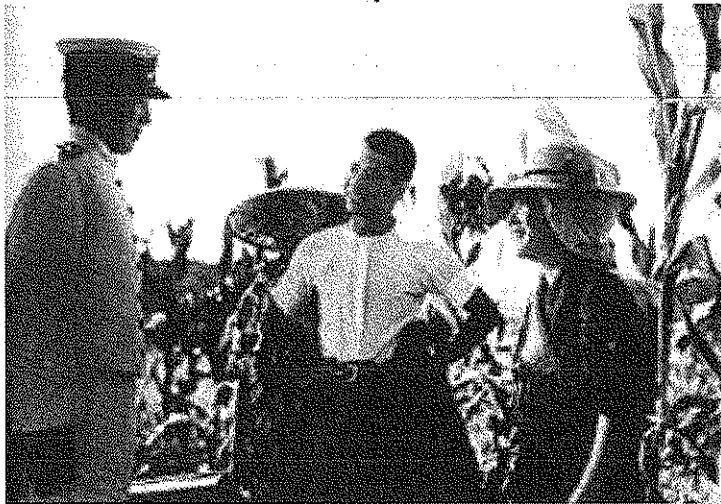
At the end of the Second World War Japan was devastated; physically, politically and financially. The people of the nation were starving and homeless, and their spirits had been broken.

There was an atmosphere of hopelessness, known only too well to Haruo Nakajima, who served in the Imperial Army during the war, and who would go on to play Godzilla in eleven films. "There was a feeling of great despair [all around]. It was very difficult for people to find work at this time," Nakajima recalled. The intensity of the Japanese reaction to their defeat, and the devastation brought on by it, is evident in their present anti-nuclear policies. Their inner feelings towards this defeat, however, have never been fully examined. But one place to start that examination could be through analyzing two important Japanese films in the context of their times: *Godzilla* (1954) and *Gigantis the Fire Monster* (1955), known in Japan and in this discussion by the titles *Gojira* and *Gojira no Gyakushu* respectively.

Japan After the War

The history of Japan's film industry after 1945 provides the context for the making of these films. Japan's post war industries made one of the most remarkable recoveries in the history of the modern world. One of their most vital was their film industry, which had started back in 1896 when the first Edison Kinescopes were imported into the country. In 1912 the Japan Cinematograph Company was founded, and by 1932 a businessman named Yasuji Uemura founded Shashin Kagaku Kenkyu-jo (Photo Chemical Laboratories, or PCL), which produced Japan's first musical *Intoxicated Life* (1933). Directed by Sotoji Kimura and sponsored by the Dai-Nippon Beer Company; perhaps it is not surprising, given the Dai-Nippon Beer Company's sponsorship, that *Intoxicated Life* was about the pleasures of drunkenness.

PCL's success in producing musicals attracted the attention of Japanese railroad magnate Ichizo Kobayashi, who in 1935 absorbed PCL into his own expanding entertainment empire. In 1936, after having acquired two other film production companies - J.O. Studios (the "O" stood for Osawa, the founder of the studio and the "J" for Jenkins, after the name of the American made sound system), and Osaka Mainichi Talkie Newsreels - Kobayashi united with Iwao Mori to meld the three film companies into one distribution company. Kobayashi and Mori named this new studio Toho, which was the abbreviation for Tokyo Takarazuka.



When the Japanese Imperial Army invaded China in 1937, the Japanese film industry came under the control of Japan's fascist propaganda unit, the Office of Public Information. As a result, the Toho Company's facilities would be employed to produce such propagandistic smash hits as *The War At Sea from Hawaii to Malay* (1942). The company's success with the war film genre was thanks in large part to the efforts of Toho's co-founder Iwao Mori, who was instrumental in developing the studio's visual effects department. Upon Japan's defeat, and during the following American

occupation, Mori was exiled from the industry by the U.S. Army's Civil Censorship Division (SCAP), due to his involvement in Toho's war propaganda films. The SCAP office imposed a list of prohibited subjects, which included:

"...anything infused with militarism, revenge, nationalism, or anti-foreignism; distortion of history; approval of religious or racial discrimination; favoring or approving feudal loyalty or treating human life lightly; direct or indirect approval of suicide; approval of the oppression or degradation of wives; admiration of cruelty or unjust violence; anti-democratic opinion; exploitation of children; and

opposition to the Potsdam Declaration or any SCAP order.”

Under SCAP guidelines Japanese directors were to stress how all Japanese “were endeavoring to construct a peaceful nation [and] how soldiers and repatriates were being rehabilitated into civilian life.” The result was a series of poor films half-hearted in their execution. Some films, like Kaneto Shindo’s *Genbaku no Ko* (Children of the Atomic Bomb, 1953), which sole theme was the horror of the bombings, and Keisuke Kinoshita’s *Nijushi no Hitomi* (Twenty-four Eyes, 1954) which tackled the subject of militarism and political repression in 1930s Japan, rose above SCAP restrictions. Most films produced at this time, however, were flat and did not reflect their director’s personal vision. By the early 1950s Toho, plagued by strike and tax difficulties, was tottering on its last legs. Something had to be done, and that something turned out to be the rehiring of Mori. Kobayashi argued that Mori was “the only company man for whom Toho’s filmmakers felt affection.” Mori returned once again as chief executive at the company. His knowledge of what made a good film and his expertise both in front of the cameras and behind them, almost single-handedly reversed the company’s postwar fortunes.

The "Second Atomic Bombing of Mankind"

Other events beyond the confines of the film industry also shaped the making of *Gojira* and *Gojira no Gyakushu*. In March of 1954, Japan suffered from another nuclear disaster, though far smaller in scale than the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the early morning hours on March 1, the twenty-three-man crew of the fishing ship, *Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon) inadvertently sailed into the range of an American hydrogen bomb test site. The "Bravo" hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll was about 85 miles away from the *Fukuryu Maru*. The blast, equivalent to about twelve million tons of TNT, was 750 to 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. It was also twice as powerful as U.S. scientists had led the world to expect. “The sky in the west suddenly lit up and the sea became brighter than day,” *Fukuryu Maru* crew member Yoshio Misaki recalled. “We watched the dazzling light, which felt heavy. Seven or eight minutes later there was a terrific sound; like an avalanche. Then a visible multi-colored ball of fire appeared on the horizon.” For several hours after the test, white ash began falling onto the decks of the *Fukuryu Maru* and crew members began collecting bags of it as souvenirs. Before nightfall that day, everyone on board the fishing boat was ill.

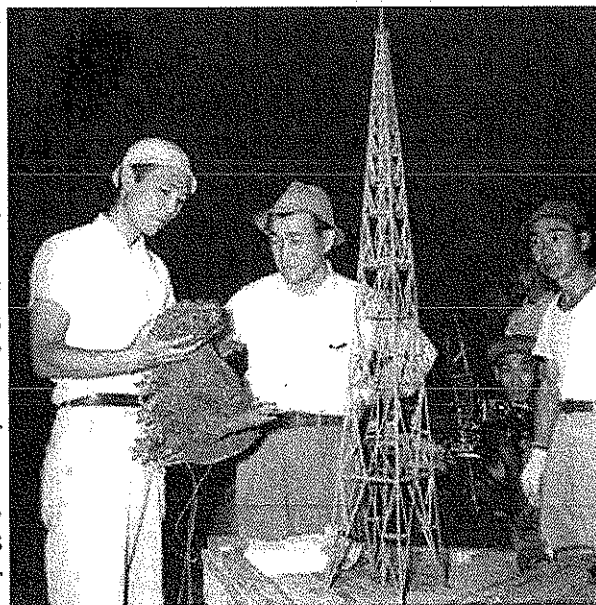
The crew of the *Fukuryu Maru* is believed to be among the first civilians ever confirmed to have been accidentally exposed to fallout from a nuclear weapon. All twenty-three people on board the boat were hospitalized after returning to Japan, and one of them, radio operator Aikichi Kuboyama, died seven months later of kidney failure reported to be caused by radiation (although it was later revealed that he had in fact died of an unrelated case of hepatitis). Several hundred inhabitants of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific, as well as nearly thirty U.S. personnel connected with the tests, also became ill from the nuclear fallout. The *Fukuryu Maru* incident triggered a crisis in relations between the United States and Japan, in part because of Washington’s attempted to maintain secrecy over its nuclear tests. The debate centered on whether the ship’s crew was at fault or whether the radius affected by the test far exceeded the estimated range and had in fact caught the ship in supposedly safe waters. The incident was dubbed “The Second Atomic Bombing of Mankind” by the Japanese press. Eventually the U.S. government issued an apology and paid \$2 million in compensation to the Japanese Government, but the incident continued to generate controversy. Fearing nuclear contamination, the Japanese destroyed tons of fish caught in the affected area of the Pacific. As a nation, the Japanese avoided fish for months after the *Fukuryu Maru* incident, resulting in millions of dollars in losses for the country’s fishing industry and related businesses.

It was this situation that inspired the Toho Company to make its first movie monster a radiation-mutated sea creature terrorizing mankind, and planted the seed in Tanaka’s mind as to how to replace

his aborted war film, *In The Shadow of Glory*. Tanaka had impressed Mori with his idea to replace *In The Shadow of Glory* with his idea about “a monster that invades Tokyo the way King Kong attacked New York,” and without Mori’s support it is doubtful that the project would have ever gotten off the ground. But Mori liked the project and the go ahead was given. Now the task of producing Tanaka’s “radiation monster” film (which would be *Gojira*) was in the hands of director Ishiro Honda and special effects supervisor Eiji Tsuburaya.

The Age of the Gods

Eiji Tsuburaya was a veteran cinematographer who Mori knew could produce the extravagant, special effects-laden films, which the Japanese called “special techniques” films. Few technicians in the field of visual effects have ever achieved his notoriety or respect. Tsuburaya’s particular knowledge of special techniques far outstripped that of any of his contemporaries. Mori knew this, and in 1940, he chose Tsuburaya to head the Japanese film industry’s first special effects department. “I was the only one in the department,” Tsuburaya later wrote. “That was pretty weird.” Tsuburaya would work, usually alongside director Kajiro Yamamoto, on highly ambitious war pictures. His special effects were of such high quality that, following the war, the American Occupation forces frequently mistook his surviving fictional films for Japanese-produced newsreel footage. Unfortunately for him, Tsuburaya, like Mori, would also be exiled from the industry by the SCAP after the war. But when the occupation ended, Tsuburaya was invited back to Toho, where he and Mori took up where they had left off, producing the first Japanese war picture in eight years, *Eagle of the Pacific*, which was directed by Ishiro Honda.



Ishiro Honda, Mori’s choice for director, had served in the Imperial Army during the war. Before the war Honda had worked under director Sadao Yamanaka at Toho. With director Kajiro Yamamoto, he co-directed such works as the subtly antiwar film *Humanity and Paper Balloons* (1937) and *Tojuro’s Love* (1938), before being sent with the Imperial Army to China. Yamanaka died a common soldier, but Honda survived to become a sergeant. In 1944, between his second and third tours of duty in the Imperial Army, Honda returned to Tokyo to work with Yamamoto as second assistant on *Colonel Kato’s Falcon Squadron* (1944), a wartime-spirit picture made during the period when Tokyo was being fire-bombed by the U.S. Air Force. Eventually he returned to China just as the Japanese regime was collapsing, and spent the last part of the war as a prisoner of war there. In 1946 he returned to Japan, passing through the atomic-bombed shell of the city of Hiroshima. It was then that he became interested in publicizing the horror and devastation of war through his chosen medium (Honda did not agree with Japan’s wartime ideology, and believed that war was a great wast of human life. His attitude is reflected in “The Tunnel” sequence of Akira Kurosawa’s *Dreams*, which Honda co-wrote and directed. The sequence depicts a returning war veteran being confronted by the ghost of his fallen men, who, even in death, are ready to follow their commander’s orders. Honda however, understood and respected the age-old system of honor. He enlisted in the Imperial Army out of a sense of duty). When examining *Gojira*, it is important to remember that Japan was the only nation in history to have been the victim of nuclear weapons. As Honda said, “When I returned from the war [in China], and passed through Hiroshima, there was a heavy atmosphere, a fear that the

world was already coming to an end.”

Also as important to Honda were Japan's attitudes and fears of the early 1950s. The Second World War was less than ten years ended and the Japanese were still laboring under the consequences of their failure and defeat. America had shaped the rebuilding and restructuring of Japan, affecting everything from industry to the political structure. Around Japan the Cold War expanded and nuclear tests took place, adding to Japan's fears for its people, country, and for the world. The shaky post-war situation and the “heating up” of the Cold War in Southeast Asia combined with the Japanese peoples' shock over the *Fukuryu Maru* incident to set the stage for *Gojira*.

In producing *Gojira*, special effects master Eiji Tsuburaya, producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, and director Ishiro Honda accomplished a feat unequalled at the time. In the guise of a typical Hollywood-style “monster movie,” they made Japan, and ultimately the world, experience the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki all over again.

Gojira



Gojira opens with the mysterious disappearances of several Japanese fishing ships. Natives of nearby Ohto Island rescue the survivors of these shipwrecks. In the hopes of discovering the causes of these disasters the Japanese government sends a small research team to the island. While on the island, the research team observes a traditional ritual to appease a sea demon called Gojira. That night, during a storm, a strange force destroys several houses in the village.

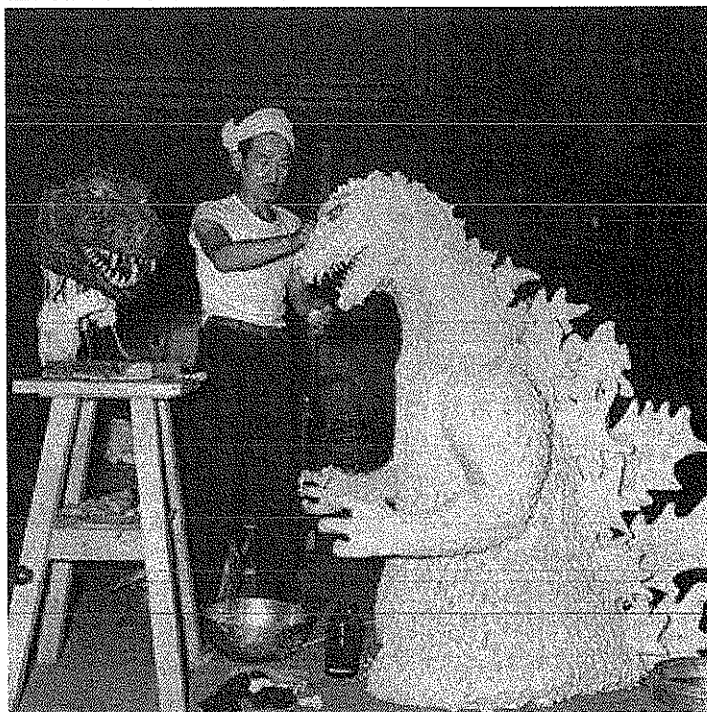
On the mainland, the survivors of the night's devastation describe the events to the Japanese officials. In a speech to the Japanese government, noted paleontologist Dr. Yamane advises the authorities to sponsor a full research team to the island. During the investigation the next morning Gojira appears over the hill tops. Meanwhile, Dr. Yamane's daughter, Emiko, who is engaged to controversial research scientist Dr. Serizawa, has fallen in love with a sailor named Ogata. But when she tries to tell Serizawa of her love for another, he reveals to her the secret weapon he has developed - the Oxygen Destroyer - and swears her to secrecy. With this terrible knowledge, Emiko cannot bring herself to break off the engagement with Serizawa.

After the discovery of Gojira, Dr. Yamane begs the authorities to study the creature. Instead, the Japanese Defense Force attacks Gojira at sea with depth charges. That night, the citizens of Tokyo celebrate Gojira's destruction, until the monster appears in Tokyo Bay and wrecks the dock area. The next day, the authorities surround Tokyo with electrical towers, but when Gojira returns that night, the monster pushes right through them and destroys the city. The next day, thousands of people are victims of Gojira's rampage.

Emiko tells Ogata about Serizawa's work; perhaps the only hope humanity has against Gojira. But later, when she and Ogata confront the doctor, the scientist refuses to use his invention. Finally, convinced that Gojira is a greater threat than his invention, Serizawa agrees to help Ogata plant the

device. As Gojira sleeps in Tokyo Bay, the two detonate the Oxygen Destroyer. Serizawa remains behind to die, taking the secret of his ultimate weapon with him. As the sea foams, Gojira surfaces briefly, then sinks to the bottom, where the Oxygen Destroyer melts the flesh from his bones.

In *Gojira*, the monster Godzilla is the United States' atomic bomb, devastating Tokyo and reducing it to a radioactive cinder all in one night. Originally conceived by Tsuburaya as a giant mutated octopus, producers Tanaka and Mori felt that a giant dinosaur-type creature (mutated through the effects of atomic testing), would have more appeal and be more threatening to land-based civilizations; after all, an octopus which lived in the ocean could only be threatening to coastal communities. Honda agreed, saying that "Ever since I was little, I have been fond of the fact that there was once an awesome era of the Earth, when dinosaurs were living in the Jurassic and Cretaceous. When word went out about the production, images of dinosaur-monsters were already brewing in my head." In Honda's conception, the monster Godzilla would not merely be awakened by the bomb; instead "He would be twisted and mutated by it, into a rampaging uncontrollable force; the A-bomb made flesh."



To capture Honda's vision, the task of designing and constructing the main Godzilla costume went to Ryosaku Takayama, and the role of playing the creature went to Haruo Nakajima. "It was the first time I met Eiji Tsuburaya," Nakajima recalls, "and Godzilla was in pre-production. I was introduced by the casting director. Mr. Honda, the director, and Mr. Tsuburaya were smiling. I was asked if I would take the role of Godzilla and I said okay." With Takayama's design and Nakajima's portrayal, the result was one of the most inspired creations in film history, combining the appearance of a theropod dinosaur with the distinctive "oriental" look of a dragon. "My first impression was the feeling of something new and exciting. The atomic bombings did not immediately come to mind, [but] shortly after I was offered the role I realized, that although it would be possible

to replace all of the members of the staff and all the other actors, it would not be possible to replace me. I also realized that if I didn't go into work, none of the members of the special effects staff would be able to do their work. All this gave me a tremendous sense of pride. I studied the movements of large animals to re-create the lumbering walk of a large creature."

As production got under way and the shooting script was finalized, Honda and Tsuburaya explored Tokyo looking for locations Godzilla could destroy. The two scouted from the roofs of department stores and it was while they sat atop of the roof of the Matsuzakaya Department Store, gleefully planning the city's destruction that one of the funniest stories of the production occurred. "We were discussing the possibility of starting a fire at Shimbashi and having it spread to Ginza," Honda said. "We wondered what people would be thinking if they overheard our conversation. Sure enough, at the first floor exit, we were stopped and investigated." However, it was not only the monster, but also the story behind Gojira, which set the production apart.

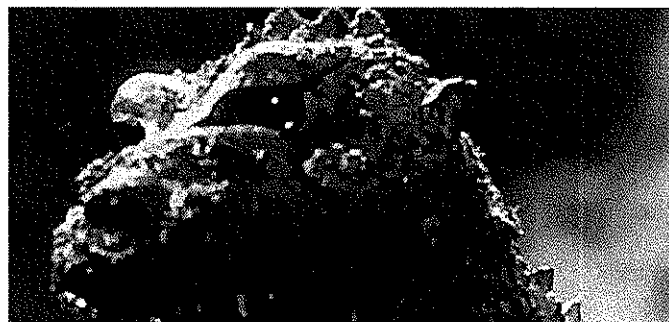
Takeo Murata and Ishiro Honda's screenplay is a subtle retelling of the Second World War through the eyes of Japan. Unlike typical monster films of the time, the strong character-driven plot and the special effects combined to present a glimpse of the Japanese psyche in a time of war.

Gojira opens as the Japanese merchant ship Eiko-Maru disappears below the surface of the ocean as a blinding flash of light explodes from the sea, accompanied by searing heat and an unearthly, deafening roar. As rescue ships are deployed into the area they too become victims of this unseen force. Japan is threatened and the country gears up to defend itself as the suspense builds. Japan "entering" the war is represented by these numerous ship disasters at the beginning of the film. The disappearance of the merchant ships mirrored Second World War events. As Guy Tucker reports, "Many such merchant vessels were literally wiped from the face of the sea by American submarines, and this fact was greatly played upon by Honda."

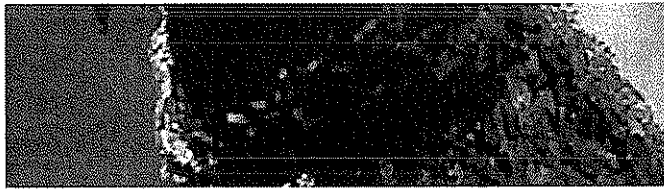
The conflict quickly escalates as a fishing village on the small island of Ohto is attacked; the horror of war having hit home on the innocent is portrayed as the faceless enemy destroys the village. It is at this point in the film that Honda introduces Dr. Kyohei Yamane, Japan's leading paleontologist, who heads the investigation into the disturbing phenomena. Yamane is played by Takashi Shimura, a regular member of Akira Kurosawa's stable of actors and star of Kurosawa's *Ikuru* (1952) and *Seven Samurais* (1954). It is while Dr. Yamane investigates the disaster on the small island of Ohto that Honda finally reveals the face of the enemy. Assisted by his daughter Emiko (played by Momoko Kochi), and her fiancée Hideto Ogata (played by Akira Takarada), Dr. Yamane stumbles upon Godzilla's hulking bulk peering over the mountain tops. Although a product of atomic testing, Godzilla's symbolization of the atomic bomb is not yet made evident to the audience.

It is at this point in the film that Honda includes two important plot references to the Second World War. After Godzilla's initial appearance on Ohto Island, Dr. Yamane returns to Tokyo to address the Japanese Diet. While explaining the possible origins of Godzilla based on his findings on Ohto Island, Yamane makes a startling announcement. "...how can we explain the presence of such a creature during the present day?" Yamane reports. "It probably survived by eating deep sea organism occupying a specific niche. However, recent experimental nuclear detonations may have drastically altered its natural habitat." Yamane continues, "I would even speculate that an atomic explosion may have removed it from its surroundings." This statement causes a stir of discussion to circle the conference chamber, and Yamane is questioned on it. "Professor, how do you know that this has something to do with the atomic bombs?" a reporter asks. "Because our Geiger counter readings of the radiation in [the] sand indicate the presence of Strontium-90." Yamane replies. "...this sand that came from Godzilla has absorbed a massive dose of radiation the type only generated from an atomic explosion." At this news the delegates fall into heated debate over whether the information should be released to the general public.

Honda then follows this sequence by introducing us to three people (two men and one woman), reading about Godzilla while riding on a train. "It's terrible," the woman comments. "Atomic sea life and radioactive fallout, and now this Godzilla to top it all off! What will happen if it appears in Tokyo Bay?" Her companion answers, "First, he'll probably eat you in one bite." "You're horrible," she responds hitting him. "They seem certain about the accuracy of their report. How could we create such a thing?" Her second companion replies, "I guess I'll have to find a shelter soon." "Find one for me too," she answers. Groaning her first companion answers, "The shelters again. That stinks!"



Japan is now at war against Godzilla; the military buildup, and the Japanese Self-Defense Force's attempts to destroy Godzilla with depth charges all symbolize Japan's military might. Dr. Yamane is a scientist torn between his scientific desire to study Godzilla and learn about the creature's ability to survive radiation, and his need as a Japanese citizen to see Godzilla



destroyed before Japan is devastated. Dr. Yamane's internal conflict is symbolic of Japanese feelings during the war; not everyone supported the wartime government's militaristic views, represented in *Gojira* by the Japanese Self-Defense Force's quick response in trying to

destroy Godzilla. The point is brought further home by the revelation that the love interest between Dr. Yamane's daughter, Emiko, and Naval Officer Hideto Ogata, conflicts with an arranged marriage between Emiko and Dr. Daisuke Serizawa, a long-time friend of her family. Their characters represent the many young wartime couples struggling with the often-conflicting demands of honor, duty and love. The conflict between Emiko's engagement to Serizawa, her love for Ogata and her desire to honor her father's wishes to study Godzilla (even though her own desire is to see the monster destroyed), symbolizes how the old ways of Japan are coming to an end at the same time as a new and possibly terrible era is about to be born. "Japan was changing," Tanaka said, "the world was changing, and the youth reflected these changes in abandoning the old ways."

As the film progresses, and Dr. Yamane, Emiko and Ogata debate the most likely way of destroying Godzilla, Godzilla attacks the harbor district of Tokyo. His thundering footsteps can be heard throughout the great city, sounding hauntingly similar to the American bombs which exploded there ten years before. Honda had been on furlough during the fire bombings of Tokyo, and had witnessed much of the worst destruction. Much of *Gojira* recalls not only the atomic bombings, but also much of the total devastation Japan endured during the war. Honda stated, "It was a matter of getting to the feeling I wanted of an invisible fear that ... this technology has now even become an environmental problem." Up until this point Godzilla is still just a standard monster-on-the-loose creature; he has not employed his atomic breath. The Japanese Self-Defense Force makes new plans to stop Godzilla as Japan begins to "lose" the war.

Although he is spoken of earlier in the film, it is at this point that Honda finally introduces the character of Dr. Daisuke Serizawa (played by Akihiko Hirata), Japan's leading scientist, wounded during the Second World War, and engaged to Emiko. The Dr. Serizawa character pulls the entire story together, and leads to the most direct references to the Second World War. Of all the actors to appear in *Gojira*, it was Akihiko Hirata's superb portrayal of the intense Dr. Serizawa that helps set the film apart from the average monster flick. The Serizawa character makes the analogies between the story line and Japan's experiences during World War II explicit. Locked in his Frankensteinesque laboratory, Serizawa is torn between his betrothal to Emiko (and the Japanese tradition this represents) and the terrible new weapon of his making, the Oxygen Destroyer, which when deployed, will "destroy all oxygen" in water and thus dissolve all living matter (of course if one looks at the actual physics involved, subtracting the oxygen from water would create a pool of pure hydrogen).



It is also through the Serizawa character that Honda makes the strongest connection between Godzilla the monster and the Second World War. After Godzilla has destroyed the harbor district, newspaper reporter Hagiwara (played by Sachio Sakai), having received a tip that the doctor's work could help defeat Godzilla, convinces Emiko to introduce him to Dr. Serizawa. Hagiwara is determined to learn about Serizawa's work, and questions the doctor (off camera) intensely about its nature. "I'm afraid you're mistaken," Serizawa replies to Hagiwara's questioning. "Besides, that's not even connected with my field." Hagiwara persists: "Well, the fact is that our reporter in Switzerland met with your German friend and heard directly from him that 'Dr. Serizawa's project,

when successfully concluded, could rid Japan of Godzilla’.” “I have no German friends,” insists Serizawa. His adamant denial of not having any “German friends” suggests a sinister tie between Serizawa’s experiments and the Nazis, symbolizing Japan’s wartime alliance with Germany. Failing to get the story he had hoped for, Hagiwara takes his leave, but Emiko remains, determined to tell Serizawa about her and Ogata. But before she can speak to him, Serizawa, obviously troubled by Hagiwara’s questioning, reveals to Emiko his secret. Emiko is shaken by the Oxygen Destroyer, but promises to keep the doctor’s secret. When she returns home, Ogata, learning that Emiko did not tell Serizawa, refuses to speak with her. But soon the distant sounds of the air-raid siren breaks the somber mood. What is important here is that Honda is once again exploring the conflict within Japanese society; tradition vs. the modern (or American) way.

Godzilla attacks Tokyo for the second time and levels the city; the bomb is dropped. Honda said of this section of the film, “What was most special was [the idea of] making radiation visual. By opening his maw and simply exhaling, Godzilla can vaporize an entire building.” Honda thought that “The destruction itself is not singular; as a tangible substance, radiation is probably much like [Godzilla’s breath].” “Ever since those days,” Honda added, “I’ve felt that the ‘atomic fear’ would hang around our necks for eternity.”



The hospital scenes after Tokyo is destroyed show exactly what it must have been like for the unfortunate survivors of the Hiroshima blast. For the first and only time in a kaiju film, the suffering of the innocent victims is depicted. Here we see the bodies of the dead, piling up in the halls of the hospital. We see a doctor, holding a Geiger counter to a young boy’s face and shaking his head, as the reading is far beyond the danger point. We are shown a group of children, watching, as a sheet is pulled over their dead mother’s head. They begin to cry as her body is carried away, Emiko holding the smallest of the children. “I wanted to say that after this disaster [the bombings],” Honda said, “no one could know what might happen in the world.”

Mirroring Japan’s failure to surrender immediately after the Hiroshima bombing, the threat of Godzilla still exists. However Dr. Serizawa is reluctant to use the Oxygen Destroyer, and when Emiko, the only person entrusted with his secret, informs Ogata of the weapon, the two visit the doctor to confront him. This confrontation between Serizawa, Emiko and Ogata near the end of the film, even after the destruction brought by Godzilla fails to convince Serizawa, clearly represents Honda’s questioning whether the atomic bomb should have ever been used. Although Honda had served during the war, he was opposed to all forms of military operation. “Bombs vs. Bombs, missiles vs. missiles, and now a new super weapon to throw upon us all!” Serizawa argues with Ogata. “As a scientist, no, as a human being I can’t allow that to happen!” Ogata sees no other way of destroying Godzilla and tries to convince Serizawa to use the weapon. But Serizawa is adamant, even if used in secret, the knowledge of its existence would get out. “Even if I burn my notes, the secret will still be in my head.” Serizawa explains. “Until I die, how can I be sure I won’t be forced by someone to make the device again?” Honda is clearly commenting on the proliferation of nuclear devices developed and built by both America and the Soviet Union immediately after the Second World War.

It is only after the sight of Japan's youth praying for peace (broadcast over scenes of the destruction and indicating the nation's weariness of war), that Serizawa is finally moved to use the Oxygen Destroyer. But not before burning all of his notes and diagrams, insuring that no trace of the weapons construction can be reproduced. "Ogata you are right. But this will be the first and last time I will ever allow the Oxygen Destroyer to be used." However, in Serizawa's mind that is not enough, and as the Oxygen Destroyer is set off in Tokyo Bay directly in front of Godzilla, and as Ogata is pulled towards the surface, Serizawa cuts his own lifeline, telling Ogata, "Be happy together," his last words. Serizawa's sacrifice at the end of the film not only illustrates the loyalty and self-sacrifice of the Japanese people (for he knows Emiko is in love with Ogata, not him), but it also demonstrates Serizawa's willingness to ensure that not only is Godzilla destroyed, but that the Oxygen Destroyer, a weapon "more horrible than Godzilla" (the H-bomb?) is never used again.

After *Gojira's* release it was attacked by several quarters for "profiteering from the Lucky Dragon tragedy." Although none of the crew members actually died until September when the film was more than half complete, and later it was determined that the man had actually died because of an unrelated case of hepatitis. However what Honda was hoping to convey was the sense of realism in an unreal situation. "How would people react," Honda stated, "if such a huge monster came to the Japanese islands? How would politicians, scientist, the military react?" "Inevitably under those circumstances," Honda said, "the film came to feel like a documentary. [Godzilla would have been most successful] if there had been some way to convince the viewer that it was really happening."

Gojira no Gyakushu



Tsukioka and Kobayashi are pilots for a small Japanese fishing fleet. While on patrol searching for schools of tuna, Kobayashi's plane develops engine trouble and he is forced to land on remote Iwato Island. He is soon joined by Tsukioka, and the two men witness a terrible battle between two prehistoric monsters, one of which is Gojira. Back in Osaka, the pilots tell the authorities about the creatures. Dr. Yamane warns that these two creatures, one of which is another Gojira, are as dangerous as the original Gojira, who wrecked Tokyo months before but was killed by the Oxygen Destroyer. This "new" Gojira soon approaches Osaka. The city is evacuated, but escaping prisoners from a local jail start a massive fire, which attracts the attention of both Gojira and the new creature Angilas.

The two battle in the heart of the city until Angilas is killed and its body is set afire by Gojira. The monster departs leaving the city in ruins. Tsukioka and Kobayashi are transferred to Hokkaido because the Osaka cannery has been destroyed. News soon follows that Godzilla has struck again, sinking one of the fishing ships. While on patrol, Kobayashi spots Gojira in a huge ice field. Radioing Gojira's position,

Kobayashi's plane is hit by the monster's fiery breath, and crashes into the icy mountain.

Though Gojira can not be killed, Tsukioka realizes that Kobayashi's death may have given them

an idea. Deciding to bury Gojira under tons of ice, in a second attack, jet fighters bomb the mountains around the creature. Tons of ice falls on Gojira in a huge avalanche, entombing the creature in ice, hopefully forever.

As *Gojira* is to the bombing of Hiroshima, then *Gojira no Gyakushu* (1955), is to the bombing of Nagasaki. Although technically inferior compared to the first film, as this time Honda was not in the director's seat, the second film in the Godzilla series explores the reaction of the Japanese public both during and after the time of war. While sequels were as commonplace in Japan as in Hollywood, the success of *Gojira* took everyone at Toho, especially Tomoyuki Tanaka by surprise, and plans were quickly made to rush a sequel into production. This time Takeo Murata and Shigeaki Hidaka were to pen the script and Eiji Tsuburaya once again supervised the special effects. Motoyoshi Oda was given the task to direct, as Ishiro Honda was committed to the company's *Jujin Yukioto* (Half Human) film project, although Honda was involved briefly in developing the Godzilla sequel. Mere months after the release of the original film, on April 24th, 1955, *Gojira no Gyakushu* burst upon the Japanese public.

In *Gojira no Gyakushu* (Godzilla's Counterattack), the basic plot once again follows the lives of three people, and how their interaction with each other, as well as Godzilla, effects their lives. Employed by the Osaka based Kyo Canning Company, Shoichi Tsukioka and his friend Koji Kobayashi are spotters for the company's fishing fleet, searching the ocean in their planes for schools of fish, and radioing the position to the fleet when a catch is found. Hiroshi Koizumi, who would go on to star in several of Toho Sci-Fi films throughout the 1960s and 70s, plays the part of



Tsukioka. Kobayashi is played by Minoru Chiaki, who is best remember to fans of Japanese cinema as the monk in Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950). Tsukioka is engaged to Hidemi Yamaji (played by Setsuko Wakayama), a radio operator at the company who also happens to be the daughter of company president Koichi Yamaji (played by Yukio Kasama). It is Tsukioka and Kobayashi who discover the existence of another Godzilla on a small island, as well as a new creature, Angilas, which roughly resembles an Ankylosaurus with no real powers when compared to Godzilla. That Angilas never has a chance is probably the reason why the creature is so beloved in Japan to this day. "Other than David and Goliath battles, the Japanese are also fond of characters who are doomed from the start. Often how Japan views itself, especially after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but probably going back as far as the arrival of Commodore Perry's ships in 1853."

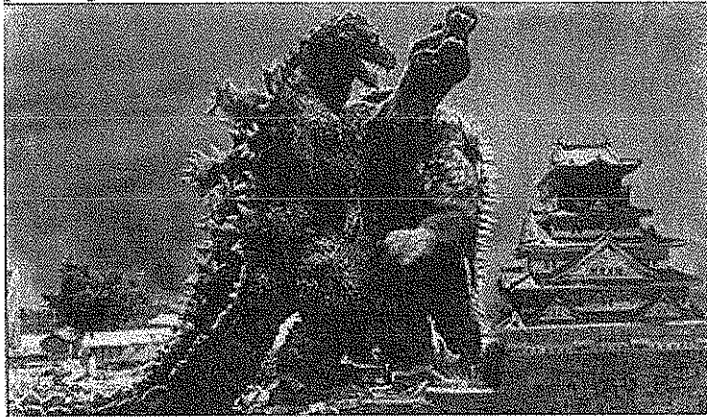
Concerned over what happened to Tokyo the year before, the military calls in Dr. Yamane (Takashi Shimura reprising his role from *Gojira*), who informs the officials of Osaka that there is no way to stop this new Godzilla, especially as the plans for the Oxygen Destroyer perished with Dr. Serizawa. Japan is once again at war, however unlike the first film, this time the story follows more closely on the effects the threat that Godzilla



(i.e. war), has on the personal lives of the main characters. The first half of the film represents Japan's war preparations, and how the threat of war impacts on the lives of the Japanese people.



A perfect illustration Oda uses to convey this sense occurs during the scene immediately following the conference room scene with Dr. Yamane: Tsukioka and Hidemi are looking over the skyline of Osaka from the roof of the canning company's factory. "It will be alright for Osaka?" Hidemi asks. "Well, I'm not sure what will happen." Tsukioka answers. "It's so quiet. Don't you think it's awful?" Hidemi remarks. "Yes, I'm not so used to it being so quiet." Tsukioka says looking over the city. "Well," Hidemi says smiling, "I don't think we stand a chance." Tsukioka laughs, "Idiot! Don't tell me that's what you believe too! We'll pull through it." "Then that's great," Hidemi adds absent mindfully. "When this is over," Tsukioka reassures her, "you can see it for yourself." "Oh really?" Hidemi asks, cut off suddenly, as a squadron of jet fighters passing overhead breaks the eerie silence of the moment.



Oda now shows us plans being made to try and cope with Godzilla. However, unlike the first film, where the bombing of Hiroshima (in fact the destruction of all Japan), is represented by Godzilla's attack on Tokyo at the end of the film, the bombing of Nagasaki is represented by the battle between Godzilla and Angilas in Osaka, about halfway into the film. Hoping to lure Godzilla away from the city using flares, an explosion caused by a group of escaping convicts (being transferred to a safe location), brings Godzilla

and Angilas into the heart of Osaka. Now the characters are left to pick up the pieces again. In fact the focus of this film is much more on the aftermath of the "bombing," so much so that Godzilla is not even shown being driven out or leaving Osaka after killing Angilas. Instead, Oda uses a scene of Hidemi, simply watching the burning ruins of the city from the window of her family's faraway country house. The dead silence of the land and the night contrast eerily with the unearthly light hovering over the beleaguered city.

The focus now is on the Confucian principle and work ethic to pull together and start rebuilding, instead of focusing on the dead and dying. The "war is over," and it is time to rebuild. We are shown scenes of total destruction, but also see workers toiling to clean out and rebuild Osaka where the characters all work for their living. From the rooftop where Tsukioka and Hidemi contemplated future events just days before, Hidemi's father (and company president) Yamaji surveys the destruction with company vice president Shibashi. "Shibashi, that smoke is rising from the area where our factory once stood," Yamaji says pointing into the distance. "The damage is much worse than I imagined." Shibashi comments. Yamaji turns towards



his vice president and adds "Shibashi, I'm going to rebuild it." Shibashi smiles, "This is good. Have you decided on a location for it?" "I am told Hokkaido is a nice place to operate from," Yamaji says as the two walk off together. This is just as it must have been as the Japanese accomplished the most speedy and thorough economic recovery of the century. These scenes are especially moving and add a sense of realism to the story. Certainly, Japan's kaiju-smashed cities are rebuilt over and over, but this is the first and only film to show the reconstruction. Godzilla is all but forgotten.

The film also conveys the sense that life goes on, as Kobayashi and the rest of the workers of the Kyo Canning Company are relocated to the company's Hokkaido branch to continue work. Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan, is pictured as a winter wonderland, where the workers are enjoying themselves, the threat of war long since past. The mood is so happy and serene that Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" would not seem out of place. The arrival of the company executives, including Tsukioka, Hidemi, and her father, further illustrates the joy of life returning to normal. The fishing fleet is out, the executives are enjoying themselves and Tsukioka is reunited with his old college buddies.



Then disaster strikes; Godzilla destroys the fishing fleet, and the threat of war again looms over Japan. As Guy Tucker points out, "Just as the Cold War had followed the Second World War, and just as the specter of worldwide nuclear destruction had haunted the world in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Godzilla remains a force to be reckoned with." However, unlike the first film, Godzilla is no longer a threat to Japan and he becomes the hunted instead of the hunter. Military forces track Godzilla and he is eventually trapped and attacked on Shinko Island,

representing Japan's determination to never again suffer the horrors of atomic devastation. This determination is never more evident than at the end of the film, when it is revealed that Kobayashi is in love with Hidemi. Her betrothal to Tsukioka sets up another love triangle as in *Gojira*, but this triangle is never given the chance to develop. As naval forces approach the island with the intention to destroy Godzilla, Kobayashi sacrifices himself, kamikaze style, in an attempt to keep Godzilla from leaving the island until the military arrives. This again marks one of the rare times that a main character and hero of a Godzilla film dies (though Dr. Serizawa is the eventual hero of *Gojira*, his original function is more of a supporting role). Witnessing his friend's sacrifice, and seeing the effects the falling ice has on Godzilla, Tsukioka convinces the military forces to bomb the mountain side, causing an avalanche, and burying Godzilla under tons of ice for all time. Of interesting note in regards to the continuity within the Godzilla series, when Godzilla would reappear seven years later in *Kingu Kongu tai Gojira* (King Kong vs. Godzilla, 1963), the monster would be seen emerging from an ice burg floating in Japan's northern sea.

It is the combination of many unique symbolic and narrative aspects that make *Gojira* and *Gojira no Gyakushu* the best films in the Godzilla series. It is unfortunate that the American versions of these films lose some of their impact when compared with the Japanese originals, but if looked at them objectively the intended premises can still be found.

Abbot & Costello Meet Godzilla

Several companies showed an interest in releasing *Gojira* in the United States after screening of the film in Los Angeles received rave reviews. Samuel Z. Arkoff, founder of the company that would become American International Pictures was among Toho's suitors. While A.I.P. would eventually release the bulk of Toho's Sci/Fi films in the 1960's (including the ever popular *Destroy All Monsters* in 1969), it would be Joseph E. Levine's Embassy Pictures that *Gojira* would go to. Levine would be one of Hollywood's top producers, pioneering the practice of "saturation booking," opening a film in as many theaters at once that, no matter how lousy, the film was bound to make a profit. After sitting on the rights for almost two years Levine finally got started, using *Gojira*'s special effects and the skeleton of its story to put together *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (1956). Levine was understandably worried about showing the Japanese version to American audiences, and thus the concept of an American "host" for the film became an necessary evil. But when considering the care that was taken by director Terry Morse to blend the American footage with the Japanese footage, the changes become insignificant.

In *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (1956), the American version opens with the destruction of Tokyo, as United World News reporter Steve Martin digs himself out from the rubble. He is taken to a nearby hospital where he recounts his experiences to Dr. Yamane's daughter Emiko. The film is then shown as a series of flashbacks, with Martin narrating the events of the story. It is during a brief stopover in Japan (on a flight from San Francisco to Cairo) that Japanese security officer Iwanaga questions Martin. Iwanaga informs Martin of the mysterious disappearances of several Japanese fishing ships, and he wishes to know if anything strange from the window of his airplane during his flight. Although he is in Japan to visit his old college friend Dr. Serizawa, these disasters peak the reporter in him, and Martin gets permission to accompany the Japanese government's research team to Ohto Island. While on the island, Martin questions several natives, all who seem unwilling to talk about the disasters. That night, Martin and the research team observe a traditional ritual to appease a sea demon called Godzilla. Later that evening, a "storm" destroys the research team's camp, and several houses in the village.

On the mainland, the survivors of the night's devastation describe the events to the Japanese officials as Martin looks on. In a speech to the Japanese government, noted paleontologist Dr. Yamane advises the authorities to sponsor a full research team to the island. Martin, who is an old friend of the family, convinces Yamane to grant him permission to attend. During the investigation the next morning, as Martin and Iwanaga accompany the research team through the forest, Godzilla appears over the hill tops.

Dr. Yamane begs the authorities to study the creature, but the Japanese Defense Force attacks the creature with depth charges. Meanwhile, Martian has telephoned the story into his Chicago news bureau, being told by his editor to keep on the story. That night, the monster appears in Tokyo Bay and wrecks the dock area. The next day, the authorities surround Tokyo with electrical towers, but when Godzilla returns that night, the monster pushes right through them. Steve Martian, recording the events on tape from the Tokyo News Building, watches in horror as Godzilla destroys the city. The next day, Martian awakens in the hospital to find Emiko and Ogatta watching over him.

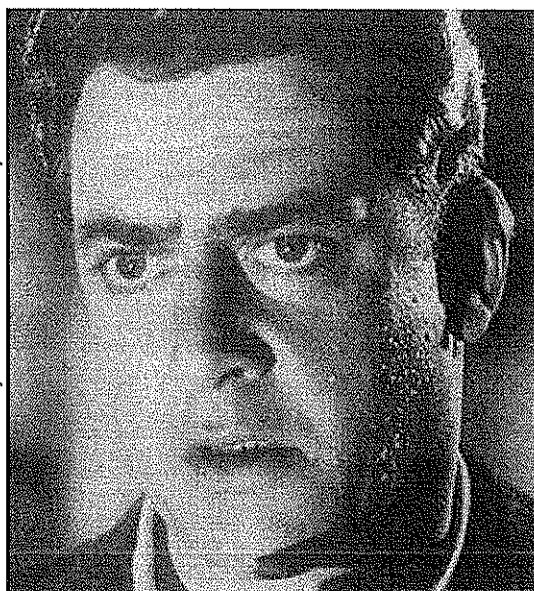
Emiko, who is engaged to scientist Dr. Serizawa, has fallen in love with Ogatta. But when she tried to tell Serizawa of her love, Serizawa revealed to her the secret weapon he has developed - the Oxygen Destroyer - and swears her to secrecy. Emiko tells Martian and Ogatta about Serizawa's work, and Martian insists that the Oxygen Destroyer is perhaps the only hope humanity has against Godzilla. Unable to see his college friend because of his injuries, Martian sends Emiko and Ogatta to confront the doctor. Serizawa refuses to use his invention at first, but convinced that Godzilla is a greater threat than his invention, agrees to help Ogatta plant the device. The next morning, as Godzilla sleeps in Tokyo Bay, Martian watches as his two friends detonate the Oxygen Destroyer. Serizawa remains behind to die, taking the secret of his ultimate weapon with him. As the sea foams, Godzilla surfaces briefly, then sinks to the bottom, where the Oxygen Destroyer melts the flesh from

his bones.

Godzilla, King of the Monsters actually holds up quite well when compared with its Japanese counterpart. American footage featuring Raymond Burr as newspaper man Steve Martin (replacing most of the footage of reporter Hagiwara), blends in quite well with the original footage, both because of the use of black & white film and the careful staging and costuming. It seemed as though Burr was interacting with the Japanese cast. The result is a film that retains its Japanese feel. One can readily imagine Burr's character standing off to the side or in the crowd when watching the original version, and the American version provides the rare experience of seeing the same story from two different perspectives.

In addition, the inclusion of Burr's added narration conveys a stronger sense of doom in the film, especially when Godzilla is destroying Tokyo, which is longer in the American version. In the original version the scenes are depicted silent, with very little narration or comments from the people involved. The American version has Burr's character narrating the entire attack from his vantage point in the Tokyo News Building.

"...George, here in Tokyo time has been turned back 2 million years. This is my report as it happens. A prehistoric monster that the Japanese call Godzilla has just walked out of Tokyo Bay. He's as tall as a thirty-story building. And now he's making his way towards the city's main line of defense. 300,000 volts of electricity strung around the city as a barrier, a barrier against Godzilla. I can hardly believe what has happened. Now it seems Tokyo has no defense. They're moving an entire tank corps to point blank firing range. I'm saying a prayer George, a prayer for the whole world. George the tanks have been wiped out by a wall of flames. Neither man or his machines are able to stop this creature. Nothing can save the city now. This is it George! Steven Martian signing off from Tokyo Japan."



Promotional material released for the film touted "Dynamic Violence! Savage Action! Spectacular Thrills!" and the 1956 theatrical trailer featured tag lines like, "You may wish to deny it, but your eyes tell you its true! A tale to stun the mind...more fantastic than any ever written by Jules Vern...more terrifying than any ever shown on the screen!" Of the film itself, gone from the American version is the strong "Japan at War" feeling one gets from the original, and Godzilla's representation of the American A-bomb is drastically downplayed. The most drastic changes come in the character of Dr. Serizawa, who is converted from an enigmatic scientist to an old college buddy of Steve Martin. Also certain mistakes are evident throughout the American version. Godzilla is referred to as being "over 400 feet tall," when in reality he is only 167 feet (50 meters). In the scene depicting the departure of Dr. Yamane's team to Ohto Island, Serizawa can be seen standing on the dock amid the crowd of well-wishers even though he is reported to be "away performing field experiments;" did Steve Martin not notice his friend standing there?

One of the most glaring mistakes takes place when Dr. Yamane is called to a conference to discuss the reason for the strange ship disasters near Ohto Island. The scene is actually taken from later in the Japanese film, when the scientist is pleading his case to study Godzilla. In the American version this footage is un-dubbed and the scene works quite well, as Defense Force Officer Iwanaga (played by Frank Iwanaga) tells Steve Martin, that Dr. Yamane is suggesting the natives of Ohto Island may hold the answer to these disasters. The problem, is that if you understand Japanese you would hear Dr. Yamane discussing Godzilla before the creature is even discovered! There are many other scenes of inappropriate Japanese dialogue in the film that were incomprehensible to the U.S.

audiences.

Godzilla, King of the Monsters was released in Japan in 1957. Ironically, the Japanese audience watched a Japanese movie dubbed in English and then subtitled in Japanese. This time, everyone knew Martin's interpreter was totally off the mark in his translations and that what the Japanese characters said often made no sense, a source of much humor during Japanese screening of the film, even to this day. Although the American plot is weakened by these and other flaws, the story otherwise remains intact with most of the inner struggles between the characters unaffected by the American frame. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for *Gojira no Gyakushu*, released in the U.S. as *Gigantis the Fire Monster* in 1959, and on home video as *Godzilla Raids Again*.

It is unfortunate that what was one of the best installments in the Godzilla series was completely changed by its American distributor. Released in America by Warner Brothers four years after its original release date of 1955, any similarities between the Japanese plot and the America one were purely accidental. Originally, *Godzilla's Counterattack* was intended to be completely reworked; retaining only the monster scenes, the footage of Japanese actors was to have been scrapped and replaced with new footage filmed in America. The new story, titled "The Volcano Monsters," involved a volcanic eruption uncovering the bodies of two hibernating dinosaurs. Discovered by a joint U.S./Japanese science team, the monsters are returned to the United States only to break free and run amok in San Francisco's Chinatown. Plans for this version were in such advanced stages that Toho even sent new Godzilla and Angilas suits to America for additional filming. However, as *Rodan* (1957) had been released to decent profits without an American setting, the plans were eventually dropped, and *Godzilla's Counterattack* was released as *Gigantis the Fire Monster* (Godzilla's name was apparently changed to Gigantis because Warner Brothers did not know they could use the name Godzilla, thinking that Embassy Pictures, who released *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* in 1956 copyrighted the name).

Unlike *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, *Gigantis* featured no new American scenes, however the dubbing, along with an added narration, turned the film from a serious look at the bombing of Nagasaki to Abbott & Costello Meet Godzilla! Stock footage is tossed into the film; scenes of Japanese commerce, crowd scenes, people praying, American war propaganda footage (complete with sloppily censored swastikas!), and animated cartoon graphics of the Imperial Japanese government's plans for world conquest (used in the film to illustrate the military mobilization), pad the film but add nothing. The opening sequence is a montage of ominously narrated, thrown-together A-bomb test footage, making one expect to see a typical run-of-the-mill 1950's "giant-insect-on-the-loose" flick. This footage replaces the original opening credits, shown over a cloud-bank, which included Masaru Sato's stirring original score.

The worst stock footage used in the entire film occurs in the early stages where, at the meeting of military and scientific authorities, Dr. Yamane explains the destruction wrought on Tokyo by the first (so-called), "Gigantis." Dr. Yamane begins a lecture on the creation of the world, "as science has been able to reconstruct it for you" and the age of the dinosaurs. What follows is a montage of film clips featuring silly special effects and stock footage from other movies to explain the birth and evolution of the dreaded "fire-monsters." Shots showing men in awful monster suits, real lizards suffering with glued-on plastic frills, and truly awful stop-motion animated dinosaurs precede footage of Gigantis destroying Tokyo. If the horrible haphazard "lecture" does not drive you mad, then Dr. Yamane's voice will. Sounding fine in the beginning, he rapidly ends up sounding like Elmer Fudd. In the Japanese original, only the footage from the first Godzilla film is shown, with no narration or background music. The grim footage of Godzilla destroying Tokyo truly speaking for itself. And if the stock footage was not bad enough, the dubbing should stand as a perfect example to film students (as well as distributors), on how not to dub a foreign film! The main character, Tsukioka, narrates every movement in the smallest detail, while Kobayashi, who is the actual hero of the film, is reduced to a comic-relief buffoon. The rest of the characters also suffer, spewing nonsensical dialogue. The

best way to illustrate this point, is to reexamine the the dialogue from the two previously quoted scenes:

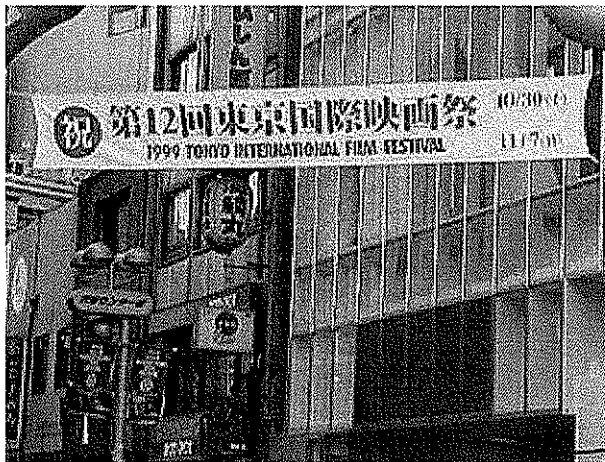
As in the Japanese version, after the conference room scene, the film cuts to a shot of Tsukioka and Hidemi looking over the skyline of Osaka from the roof of the canning company's factory. "I wonder if they will attack?" Hidemi ask. "No, because if they did Osaka would be a city of ruins by now." Tsukioka answers. "I've got to be brave, now that its erie and still." Hidemi remarks. "What can anybody do about this now?." Tsukioka says looking over the city. Hidemi says smiling, "I'm glad you're here, you're so brave Tsukioka. Absolutely darling." Tsukioka laughs, "Ah banana oil! I was desperate and worried and anxious. I'm not brave at all." "Sometimes you are," Hidemi adds. "You're wrong about that," Tsukioka corrects her, "you really think I've got courage." "Why, don't you?" Hidemi asks, cut off suddenly, as a squadron of jet fighters passing overhead breaks the eerie silence of the moment.

After Gigantis' attack, from the roof top where Tsukioka and Hidemi contemplated future events just days before, Hidemi's father (and company president) Yamaji surveys the destruction with company vice president Shibashi. "Shibashi, on that small hill top out there once was our fishing canary," Yamaji says pointing into the distance. "Several years of human heart ache." Shibashi comments. Yamaji turns towards his vice president and adds "Shibashi, I don't know if you know this, but I don't intend to quit." Shibashi smiles, "This is good to know. When do we begin?" "Right away. I'll go get the tools," Yamaji says as the two walk off together.

Although the premise of the two scenes remain the same the dialogue brings up plot points that were never intended within the original film, especially in regards to Tsukioka's cowardness.

Some of the dubbing actors are real Asians, like Star Trek's George Takei, and Chinese-born Keye Luke (who portrayed Charlie Chan's Number One Son), while American actors like Paul Frees poorly fake Japanese accents. Tragically, what was one of the best installments of the Godzilla series was ruined by Warner Brothers and is possibly the only film in the entire series that is in dire need of re-dubbing.

Japan and the Bomb in the 21st Century



On December 12, 1999 Toho Company released the 23rd film in the Godzilla series *Gojira 2000 Millennium*. Produced by Shogo Tomiyama, directed by Takao Okawara with special effects created by Kenji Suzuki, the film was not a box office success taking in less that 9 million dollars nation wide (the film had cost 12 million to make), making it the lowest grossing Godzilla film in the series history. Even with the four-year hiatus between *Gojira tai Destroyah* and *Gojira 2000 Millennium*, Japanese interest in Godzilla has waned.

Dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War has remained a heated and controversial debate in the United States to the present day. Whether the Japanese were about to surrender; whether the Soviet Union was about to enter the war; all remain good, but academic points in the 21st century. The bombs were dropped, and Japanese culture changed forever. On the surface, there is very little sign of pre-war Japan. American influence has completely embedded itself into every part of Japanese society. In fact when one travels to Japan, one is immediately taken with the lack of any sign that Japan suffered from nuclear attack. In fact there are very little signs that Japan ever lost the war. The average Japanese citizen drinks Coca-Cola, eats

breakfast at Dunkin Donuts, eats lunch at MacDonalds or Kentucky Fried Chicken, enjoys American sports such as Baseball and Bowling, and flocks to their local theaters to watch big-budgeted Hollywood films. There is no sufficient way to describe the experience of traveling in Japan unless you have actually experienced it. The best description would be to imagine Times Square in New York City multiplied by 100.

But if Japanese culture is overly American on the outside, the old ways of tradition and social structure retain its hold on Japanese private life, as it had done for hundred of years. The Japanese are a very private, and a xenophobic people. In their home life, the old way that the man rules and the women serves continues to be practiced, as Japanese women are still treated like second class citizens. The Japanese can also be somewhat racist at times. One Japanese restaurant chain, selling America style baby-back ribs, portrays as its store logo a stereotypical "black" face, with white lips, matted hair and large white eyes.

These attitudes, or fears of outsiders, extend itself to the Japanese business world. The late Henry G. Saperstein, president and chief executive officer of UPA Productions, knew first hand what it was like dealing with the Japanese as a business partner; he had owned the North American licensing and merchandising rights to Godzilla since the 1960s. "They were wary of any gajin," Saperstein said. "That doesn't mean foreigner, it means outsider. You're outside the 'kingdom of the sun' and they're wary of anyone coming in who wants to be involved in any meaningful way. Every time I had dealings with them, it was like we were meeting for the first time." Because this xenophobic fear permeates every aspect of Japanese life, discussions on the atomic bombings are hardly ever discussed with outsiders.



David Milner, Japanese film historian explains, "The Japanese deal with the subject in a very matter-of-fact way. It is not talked about in polite society, and even when it is discussed, it is only within the confines of the facts connected with the event." There is no discussion on whether or not the United States should have used the bomb. There are no discussions on whether or not Japan bears any blame for the events of the war. It is simply a matter of examining and stating the facts. This policy even extends to the way Japanese schools treat the events of the Second World War. Japanese students are taught about the events, but only within their factual content in relationship to Japanese history. There is no discussion or debate on the rightness, or wrongness, of Japan's position during the war; or America's action towards the end of it. To this day Japan has never accepted blame for the war nor do they acknowledge the brutality of their actions during the war.

Japanese Pop Culture and the Bomb



Beginning with the lifting of SCAP restrictions in the 1950s, several films began to address the issue of the atomic bombings, and films like Keisuke Kinoshita's *Nihon no Higeiki* (A Japanese Tragedy, 1953) and Akira Kurosawa's *Record of a Living Being* (1955), stand out as fine examples. But the issue quickly became a controversial subject, and several films and television episodes produced from the



1950s right through to the present have been banned because of their treatment of the nuclear issue.

In the 1960s television series *UltraSeven* (produced by Godzilla special effects supervisor Eiji Tsuburaya), the 12th episode, entitled *From the Planet with Love*, centered on a race of aliens whose world was destroyed by a nuclear war. There are survivors, but they have been irradiated and are in desperate need of pure human blood to stay alive. Arriving on Earth, they begin a plan to steal the human blood they need. Assuming human guise, the aliens use one of their agents to persuade a woman (played by Horoki Sakurai) to pass out watches to fellow women, whose blood is perfect for the alien's needs. These watches drain the woman's blood out of their bodies (in a crystal form), leaving the women in

a death like state. These events attract the attention of the Ultra-Squad (a government sponsored organization assigned to investigate strange occurrences) who looks into the situation. Team member Ann Yuri knows the woman personally, but while she is investigating the aliens make an important discovery; children's blood is richer than women's blood. The aliens switch tactics to get children's blood by means of a little boy (who is the brother of the woman). The alien's stage a contest for a group of kids, with the prizes being the "blood sucking" watches. The alien plan would have succeeded if it was not for the intervention of the Ultra-Guard, who foils the attempt. As a last resort, the aliens send one of their agents to destroy the Ultra-Guard, but *UltraSeven*, along with the help of the women (who discovers her "love's" true intentions) destroys the aliens.

It was the radiation story line that got this episode banned. The episode aired only once and has never aired again. A group representing radiation victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saw a synopsis of the episode's story line in one of the many published Ultra-Monster books. Outraged by what they saw, the organization protested against the episode's future airings, and as a result, Tsuburaya Productions banned the episode from its stable of Ultra sagas. The story has become so taboo that it is not even listed in any of the official episode guides, the episode numbers jumping from 11 to 13.

Amazingly, radiation groups in Japan ban anything that has to do with human mutant deformation usually. The 1974 Toho film *Catastrophe 1999* (released in the United States as *The Last Days of Planet Earth* in 1981) has been banned from theater and video release. The film, which is loosely based on the predictions of Nostradamus depicts the end of the world by nuclear war and the mutated survivors that would survive such a conflict. Interestingly enough, these films and television series are released in the United States (the banned *UltraSeven* episode played on TNT under the title *Crystallized Corpuscles*), making them much sort after collector's items in Japan.

Fans of the kaiju genre tend to be looked down upon or feel embarrassed because of their interest in the King of the Monsters. While most of Godzilla's installments after the 1950s did become increasingly juvenile and silly, the first two films (in their original Japanese presentations) are serious films which explore the effects on the Japanese psyche of being the only nation to suffer from nuclear bombing. And that is a fact no critic or skeptic can diminish.

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Suggested Reading:

Godzilla In America: Godzilla, King of the Monsters
Godzilla In America: Godzilla Raids Again
Godzilla and the Second World War
Godzilla and Post War Japan
Kaiju Conversations: Haruo Nakajima Interview
Kaiju Conversations: Henry G. Saperstein Interview

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