

Martial Arts
MOVIES

Martial Arts **MOVIES**

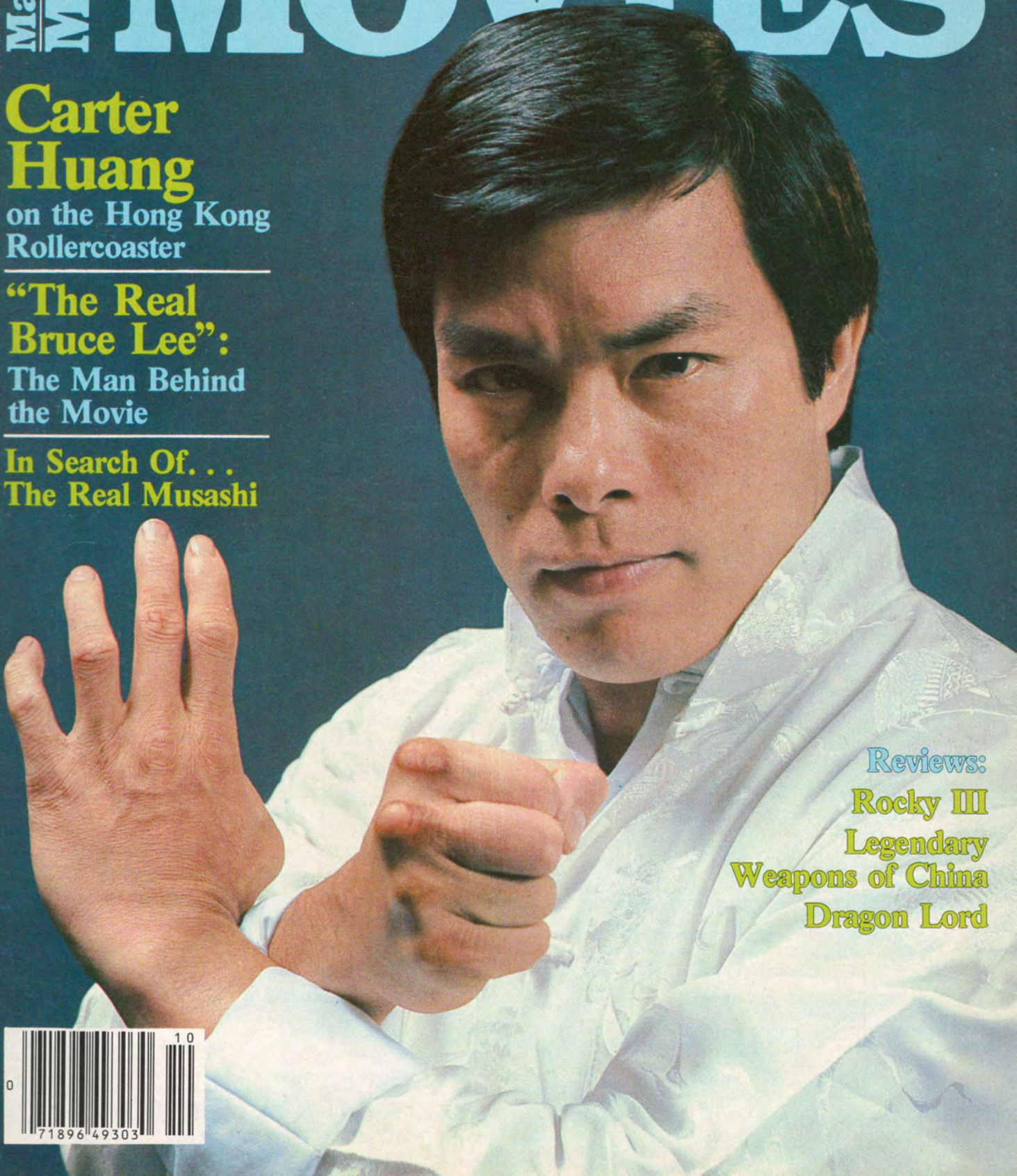
Carter Huang

on the Hong Kong
Rollercoaster

“The Real Bruce Lee”:

The Man Behind
the Movie

**In Search Of. . .
The Real Musashi**



Reviews:
Rocky III
Legendary
Weapons of China
Dragon Lord



In Search Of . . . The Real Musashi

By Daniel Furuya

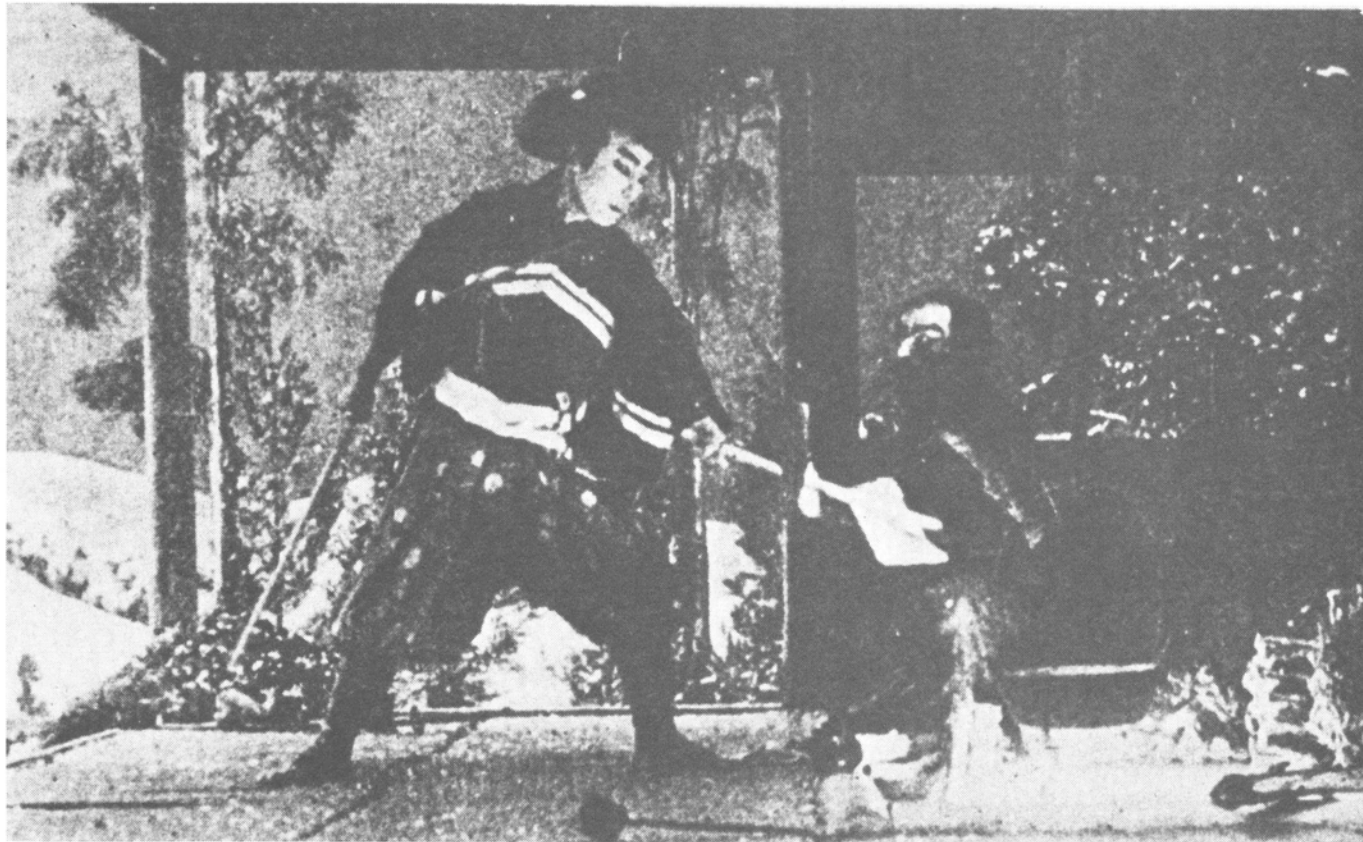
The most famous duels in chambara film history were fought by a single man: Miyamoto Musashi, swordsman par excellence, immortalized in countless epics. His popularity spans a half-century of filmmaking, and has done as much to influence the character and direction of the chambara film as the chambara film has done to sustain the legend.

Since the beginning of chambara filmmaking, Musashi has been the ideal samurai hero. Just about every chambara superstar has looked upon the role of Musashi as his crowning achievement. These stars include Ohnoue Matsunosuke, Bando Tsumasaburo, Arashi Kanjuro, Kataoka Chiezo, Konoe Jushiro, Tsukigata Ryunosuke, Mifune Toshiro, Mikuni Rentaro, Takahashi Hideki, and Yorozuya (Nakamura) Kinnosuke. (Kinnosuke once stated that he shaped his own life on the life and philosophy of Musashi.) It is impossible to tell how many other chambara characters have been modeled after him. Certainly, his exploits have been copied in all manner and form.

There are over two dozen films which deal directly with Musashi's life. Inagaki Hiroshi's 1954 classic, *Samurai Trilogy (Samurai)* which starred Mifune Toshiro and won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, first brought Musashi to international attention. Many of us have also seen, or at least caught



Several film Musashis modeled their appearance on Musashi's self-portrait, done when he was about sixty years old. Unfortunately, this gave the cinematic warrior-heroes the hairstyle and garb of a retired gentleman!



Above, this 1924 film version, starring Ohnoue Matsunosuke as Musashi, shows Musashi's duel with Tsukahara Bokuden (Nakamura Sentaro, right), a famous swordsman. Left, a rare photo shows Kataoka Chiezo playing Musashi (Chiezo Productions, 1930). Kataoka, veteran chambara star, played Musashi roles for over 26 years.



parts of, Uchida Tomu's ambitious five-part epic, *Miyamoto Musashi*, starring Yorozuya Kinnosuke. While these two versions are the most popular cinematic renderings, there are many rarer versions which have contributed to the Musashi legend.

Films about Musashi, like films about any legendary hero, are always a curious blend of fact and fiction: the myth takes events beyond the realm of normal experience, and the facts bring realism to fantastic events. Much of Musashi's obscure life is over-shadowed by his legend, and that legend has, through the films, come to be accepted as fact.

The Legendary Musashi

According to most chambara films and popular accounts of his life, Musashi, formerly of samurai lineage, was born to a poor family in a small farming village of Miyamoto in Bizen Province (present day Okayama Prefecture). This was a period of many civil wars, just as the nation was about to be consolidated under the powerful warlord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. At the age of nineteen, Musashi went off to war to fight in the great Battle of Sekigahara (1598) to prove himself as a samurai and perhaps become a warlord himself. Having chosen the losing side, he barely managed to escape with his life. Eventually, he met the famous Zen priest, Kyushu. He was twenty-nine years old when he reached this peak of his career. According to

The Real Musashi



Above, the late Arashi Kanjuro, considered one of the greatest of all chambara stars, appeared as Musashi in *Miyamoto Musashi Chi no Maki* (*Miyamoto Musashi, The Earth Scroll*, Kanjuro Productions, 1937). Right, Kataoka Chiezo, as Musashi in a 1940 production, faces his archenemy, Sasaki Kojiro, on the beach of Ganryu-jima. Below, Kurokawa Yotaro (right) appeared in *Miyamoto Musashi Fu no Maki* (*Musashi, The Wind Scroll*) directed by Ishihashi Seiichi, 1938.



Takuan, who taught him the meaning of life. Locked up in a tower of Black Crow Castle (Ujo) for two years under the watchful eye of the powerful Lord Ikeda, Musashi studied the classics and mastered the principles of military strategy and martial arts.

Resolving to devote himself to mastery of the sword, Musashi began traveling the country as a warrior in training (*musha-shugyo*) seeking to perfect his skill and achieve enlightenment. His most notable duels were against the Yoshioka Fencing School in Kyoto: he soundly defeated Yoshioka Seijuro in the fields of Rendaiji Temple; his brother, Yoshioka Denshichiro, at Sanjusangendo Temple; and finally the entire school of over 70 students at the "hanging pine" (*sagari matsu*) behind Ichijoji Temple.

Later, he defeated the monks of the Hozo-In Temple in Nara and their nine-foot crescent lances. He also ran into Yagyu Sekishusai, one of the greatest swordsmen of the age, and barely escaped with his life. At this time Musashi developed the "Two Sword" style. Musashi wrote later that it was ridiculous for a warrior to wear two swords but die using only one of them.

Finally, Musashi fought Sasaki Kojiro of the "Swallow Cut" style on Ganryu-jima Island in





Left, Kataoka Chiezo as Musashi (1940) faces the Hozoin monks in Nara. Right, veteran actor Kawaharasaki Chojiro as Musashi developed the two-sword style while facing the Yagyu School. This film was directed by the noted Mizoguchi Kenji (Shochiku Productions, 1944).

the legend, Musashi mastered the sword by the age of thirty, and no longer used a real sword in combat.

Although there is little known about the following 30 years of his life, we do know that he eventually returned to Kyushu and, as a guest of Lord Hosokawa, died after writing his classic, the *Gorinsho* (*The Book of Five Rings*).

The Historical Musashi

This is the general outline of the Musashi legend which is embodied in most of the films. However, the information available on the historical Musashi is much more ambiguous and contradicts major elements in the legend. There are important reasons for this ambiguity. Almost all that we know for certain about Musashi was written by his own hand in the *Gorinsho*. He discusses his life in the book's introduction before he begins to explain his art. However, Musashi was vague about his personal life: the few duels that he mentions cannot be traced, and the few rivals he lists cannot be identified. Most scholars have concluded that his opponents were of minor importance or that they are pure inventions.

Several years after Musashi's death, his students wrote the *Nitenki* (*Records of Two Heavens*). *Niten*, or "Two Heavens" is Musashi's pen name (*ki* means record). This book attempts to fill in all the gaps left by Musashi's own work. Ninety percent of the *Nitenki* cannot be verified in any way but, ironically, has become the primary source of information on Musashi's life. Since the *Nitenki* was written by ardent admirers of Musashi who wanted to glorify his name, it is filled with heroic episodes. This work became the inspiration for Yoshikawa Eiji's classic novel, *Miyamoto Musashi*. This novel, along with the *Nitenki*, are the major sources of all Musashi films.

The facts about Musashi that scholars have been able to trace and verify contradict the legend at almost every point. First, Miyamoto Musashi is not his formal name, although it is the name by which he is most often recognized today. Miyamoto Musashi means "Musashi of Miyamoto Village"—Miyamoto is the name of his birthplace, and not his surname. In the *Gorinsho*, Musashi proclaims himself to be a "samurai from Mimasaka Village in Harima Province." Although both Miyamoto Village and Mimasaka Village have landmarks commemorating his birth place, most scholars concur that Musashi is from Mimasaka. Musashi's family name is Shimmen, and he is more accurately known as Shimmen Musashi. Early records refer to him correctly as Shimmen Musashi or Shimmen Musashi no Kami which means, "Shimmen, Constable of Musashi." This title was bestowed as a sign of respect. He is also referred to as Shimmen Musashi no Jo or Shimmen Fujiwara Musashi no Kami. Musashi's pen or poetic name was *Niten*, which means "Two Heavens." He often used the epithet, *Niten Doraku*, which means, "Enjoying the Way of Two Heavens" or "Two Heavens Enjoying Life." The exact meaning is still a moot point among scholars and has not been cleared up as yet.

The Fish That Got Away?

The following are names of prominent swordsmen who were active during Musashi's life. It is odd that Musashi never ran across any of them and did not even travel into their home provinces. The few swordsmen that Musashi does mention as having fought cannot be traced, probably because they were not well known. We might speculate that Musashi was able to survive some 60 odd duels because he never fought anyone better than himself. Was this part of his military strategy?

NAME (STYLE)	DATES
Miyamoto Musashi Genshin (Enmei Ryu)	1584 - 1645
Ito Ittosai Kagehisa (Itto Ryu)	1560 - (?)
Ono Jirouemon Tadaaki (Itto Ryu)	1565 - 1628
Ono Jirouemon Tadatsune (Itto Ryu)	1608 - 1665
Ito Tenzen Tadanari (Itto Ryu)	1603 - 1680
Yagyu Tajima no Kami Munenori (Yagyu Shinkage Ryu)	1571 - 1646
Yagyu Sekishusai Muneyoshi (Yagyu Shinkage Ryu)	1529 - 1606
Yagyu Jubei Mitsuyoshi (Yagyu Shinkage Ryu)	1607 - 1650
Yagyu Hida no Kami Munefuyu (Yagyu Shinkage Ryu)	1615 - 1675
Yagyu Heishinnosuke Toshiyoshi (Yagyu Shinkage Ryu)	1579 - 1650
Yagyu Renyasai Toshikane (Yagyu Shinkage Ryu)	1625 - 1694
Toda Echigo no Kami Shigemasa (Toda Ryu)	1564 - 1625
Hikita Toyogoro Kagekane (Hikita Kage Ryu)	1537 - 1605
Sekiguchi Yarokuemon Ujimune (Sekiguchi Ryu)	1598 - 1670
Katayama Hoki no Kami Hisayasu (Katayama Hoki Ryu)	1575 - 1650
Kakuzenbo Inei (Hozoin Ryu Lance)	1521 - 1607
Matsuyama Mondodaikichi (Nikaido Heiho Ryu)	(?) - 1635
Marume Kurondonosuke Nagayoshi (Taisha Ryu)	1540 - 1629
Abe Gorodaiyu Yoritoh (Abe Ritsuken Do)	1521 - 1607
Tojo Tobei Shigetaka (Jigen Ryu)	1561 - 1643
Matsubayashi Henyasai Nagayoshi (Ganritsu Ryu)	1593 - 1667
Okuyama Kyugasai Kimishige (Okuyama Ryu)	1526 - 1602
Tokugawa Yoshinao (Shinkage Ryu)	1600 - 1650
Nabeshima Kii no Kami Motoshige (Shinkage Ryu)	1602 - 1654
Araki Mataemon Yasukazu (Shinkage Ryu)	1598 - 1643

The Real Musashi

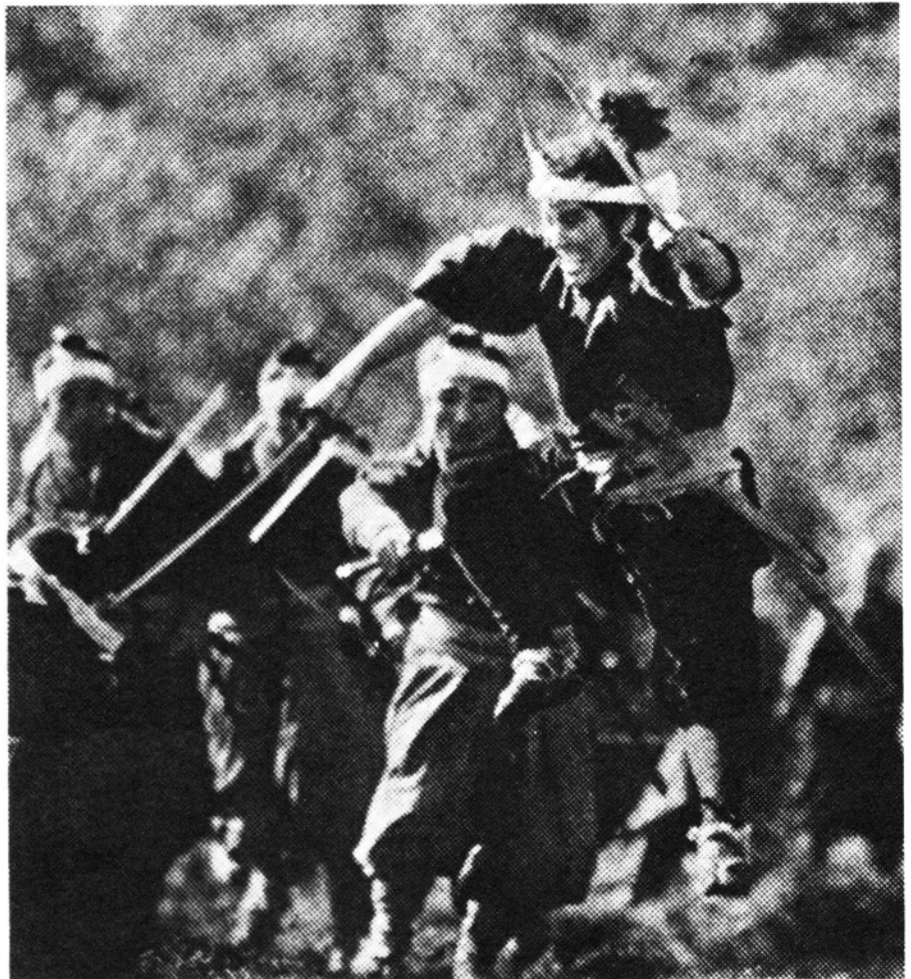


Left, Mifune Toshiro as Musashi faced Sasaki Kojiro (played by Tsuruta Koji, right) in Inagaki's 1954 classic. This is the final installment of the trilogy *Ketto Ganryujima* (*The Duel at Ganryu Island*, Toho, 1954). Right, Konoe Jushiro played Musashi in *Kessen* (*Decisive Battle*, 1943).

Two Heavens, Not Two Swords

While the scene in which Musashi discovers the "Two Sword" Style is a favorite episode in the films, the historical evidence does not clearly support this claim. Nowhere in the *Gorinsho* does Musashi describe the use of two swords, nor does he refer to his own style as the *Nito Ryu* (Two Sword Style). Rather, he calls it the *Enmei Ryu*, which means the "Full Circle Style" or the *Niten Ryu*, or "Two Heavens Style" after his pen name. This was a common custom in those days. He also has referred to his style as the *Niten Ichi Ryu* which means the "Two Heaven Into One Style" or "Two Heavens First Style." This name also puzzles modern scholars.

Why, then, was Musashi acclaimed as the inventor of this style? There are many reasons why an admirer might leap to this conclusion. In the *Gorinsho*, Musashi speaks of developing the ability to use both the long and short sword in either hand. What he means is that the warrior must be proficient with either the long or short sword in either the right or left hand. He does not refer to using both swords at once (which would drastically affect his balance and cutting power). In his self-portrait, Musashi does depict himself holding both unsheathed. In addition, it is quite possible to misread "Niten" as "Nito" (Two Swords) in the written text. Today, there exists the *Musashi Ryu* (Musashi Sword Style) and the *Nito Ryu* (Two Sword Style), but it is difficult to determine how closely they are linked with the historical Musashi. Some people believe the Musashi was half Portuguese and learned Western style fencing from foreigners in Nagasaki. This supposedly accounts for Musashi's height, which is believed to be over six feet, and for his dark



The third installment of Uchida's five-part classic is *Ichijoji no Ketto* (*The Duel at Ichijoji Temple*, 1963). Nakamura as Musashi fights 70 students of the Yoshioka School in one of the most memorable fight scenes in chambara film history.



Detail of Musashi's carving of Fudo Myoo (god of fire, patron deity of martial artists) in the *hasso no kamae* sword stance. Nakamura Kinnosuke adopts the same pose in his final duel with Kojiro.

complexion. None of these points have ever been verified.

In the legends, several of Musashi's most famous duels were against the Yoshioka Fencing School. These duels are of particular importance in the *chambara* renditions, as they symbolize the power of an unknown swordsman against an established but moribund school. Uchida Tomu's version of the battle at Ichijoji Temple is considered one of the finest fight scenes in *chambara* movie history. At the commencement of the fight, the film switches to black and white, both depicting Musashi's frenzy in killing so many people and showing the "other-worldliness" of Musashi's heroic effort to take on over 70 warriors single-handedly. These duels cannot be historically authenticated. Although all three tragic victims are supposedly sons of Yoshioka Kempo, the founder of the Yoshioka School, the family records do not support this claim. Yoshioka Kempo had two sons, neither of whom have entered the legend. Since Seijuro, Denshichiro and Hachiro did not, in fact, exist, it is logical to conclude that the duels did not take place.

No Sasaki Kojiro

Musashi's greatest battle was against Sasaki Kojiro at Ganryujima Island. Almost all of the *chambara* versions of Musashi's life climax



Left, Nakamura Kinnosuke, in his best known role as Musashi, faces his nemesis, played by Takakura Ken (Toei, 1965). Right, the great Tsukigata Ryunosuke comes closest to the real Musashi in *Hiken* (*The Secret Sword*) produced by Toho and directed by Inagaki Hiroshi in 1964.

新しい剣豪小説を書
る「秘剣」(昭38年・)
市川染五郎の演じた
形龍之介が自画像に

The Real Musashi



In 1970, Nakamura made Part Six of Uchida's classic, entitled *Shinken Shobu (Duel to the Death)*. Here, Musashi fights Shishido Baiken, a master of the sickle and chain, played by Mikuni Rentaro (right). Mikuni also made a version of the Musashi epic.

Filmography of Miyamoto Musashi

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1924 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Ohnoue Matsunosuke (Nikkatsu).</p> <p>1930 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Kataoka Chiezo (Chiezo Productions).</p> <p>1937 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi Chi no Maki (Musashi, The Earth Scroll)</i> starring Arashi Kanjuro (Kanjuro Productions, 1937).</p> <p>1938 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi Fu no Maki (Musashi, The Wind Scroll)</i> starring Kurokawa Yataro.</p> <p>1940 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Kataoka Chiezo.</p> <p>1943 - <i>Kessen (Decisive Battle)</i> starring Konoe Jushiro.</p> <p>1944 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Kawaharasaki Chojiro (Shochiku Productions).</p> <p>1954 - <i>Samurai</i> starring Mifune Toshiro and directed by Inagaki Hiroshi.</p> <p>1954 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Mi-</p> | <p>kuni Rentaro and directed by Yasuo Kohata (Toei).</p> <p>1955 - <i>Ichijoji no Ketto (The Duel at Ichijoji Temple)</i> starring Mifune Toshiro. Part Two of <i>The Samurai Trilogy</i>.</p> <p>1955 - <i>Ketto Ganryujima (The Duel at Ganryu Island)</i> starring Mifune Toshiro. Part Three of <i>The Samurai Trilogy</i>.</p> <p>1960 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Nakamura Kinnosuke and directed by Uchida Tomu (Toei).</p> <p>1961 - <i>Hannya-zaka no Ketto (The Duel at Devil Mask Pass)</i> starring Nakamura Kinnosuke. Part Two. (Toei).</p> <p>1962 - <i>Nito Ryu Kaigan (Discovering the Two Sword Style)</i> Part Three. (Toei).</p> <p>1964 - <i>Ichijoji no Ketto (The Duel at Ichijoji Temple)</i> Part Four. (Toei).</p> | <p>1964 - <i>Hiken (The Secret Sword)</i> starring Ichikawa Somegoro and Tsukigata Ryunosuke as Musashi and directed by Inagaki Hiroshi (Toho).</p> <p>1965 - <i>Ganryujima no Ketto (The Duel at Ganryu Island)</i> Part Five. (Toei).</p> <p>1967 - <i>Sasaki Kojiro</i> starring Bando Chiyonosuke and Tatsuya Nakadai as Musashi. Directed by Inagaki Hiroshi (Toho).</p> <p>1970 - <i>Shinken Shobu (The Death Match)</i> starring Nakamura Kinnosuke and Mikuni Rentaro. (Toei).</p> <p>1974 - <i>Miyamoto Musashi</i> starring Takahashi Hideki as Musashi and Tamiya Jiro as Kojiro. Directed by Kato Daisuke. (Toho).</p> <p>1981 - <i>Sorekara no Musashi (Musashi, The Epilogue)</i> starring Nakamura (Yorozuya) Kinnosuke. (Television).</p> |
|--|---|---|



Top, Takahashi Hideki (right) portrays a more rugged Musashi in this version directed by Kato Daisuke. Tamiya Jiro (left) portrays Sasaki Kojiro (Shochiku Productions, 1974). Above, Nakamura Kinnosuke plays an elderly Musashi in the series *Sorekara no Musashi (Musashi the Epilogue, 1981)* after the popular novel of the same name. Here Sawashima directs Nakamura for the role.

with this final match. Sasaki Kojiro, Musashi's nemesis, was a famous swordsman in his own right. He even figures in his own novel, *Sasaki Kojiro*, by Murakami Genzo which was later made into a two-part chamber movie of the same name starring Onoue Kikugoro. According to legend, Sasaki Kojiro had mastered the Tomita Chujo Style of swordsmanship from Kanemaki Jisai and later developed his own style called *Ganryu Tsubamegaeshi* or "Swallow Cut Style" which uses an especially long sword (about one foot longer than a normal sword).

In the movie renditions, Sasaki had developed a technique to cut down swallows in flight. *Tsubamegaeshi* literally means "Swallow Turn" which is popularly translated as "Swallow Cut." It is a technique which originally was developed from an obscure style called "Tiger Slashing Cut." *Tsubamegaeshi*, however, does not refer to the ability to cut swallows in flight but, in fact, describes the special twist executed on the returning second cut. The second cut comes after turning the sword back against the opponent. That "turn" resembles the movement of swallows in flight and the quick darting turns that they make. In the movie

version, Musashi utilized a long oar to out-reach Sasaki's long sword. As Sasaki executes the "Swallow Cut," Musashi leaps over his head and crushes Sasaki's skull, escaping with a cut headband and a slashed *hakama* (evidence of the "Swallow Cut's" returning slash).

Scholars have not been able to trace Sasaki Kojiro. According to legends, Sasaki comes from Iwakuni Province, but that area has no record of that family's existence. Kanemaki Jisai, master of the Itto Ryu style of swordsmanship lists no student under the name of Sasaki as having received a certificate of mastery. It is the same case with Tomita Chujo school. Finally, Musashi himself does not ever refer to or record such a battle. It seems that if his duel with Sasaki was the climax of his career, he would have at least made mention of it somewhere along the line.

There are many disparities between Musashi's cinematic exploits and the facts that scholars have been able to trace and verify. Although the facts often contradict the legend, they do not necessarily detract from it. Rather, the image of the premier samurai hero will take on an added dimension as we find out more about the "real" Musashi.

BEER DRINKING SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS REVEALED AT LAST!



Only initiates into the brotherhood of Beer Drinkers International, Inc. receive **ALL ABOUT BEER**®, the official publication of BDI. Join up and you'll also receive a boxful of beer drinkers ephemera (non-beer drinkers might call it junk, but what the heck . . . it's all new junk)

- membership card • badge
- certificate • beer rating sheets • bumper stickers • foreign and domestic beer coasters • a bottle opener
- cooking with beer recipes • Choice of 15 oz. glass tankard or color embroidered member patch, and so weiter. Membership fee is a piffling \$12.95.

Join tomorrow! Send \$12.95 with your name and address (U.S., Mex. & Canada) — All other foreign countries add \$5.00 to above for 1st Class Delivery to:
Beer Drinkers International, Inc. ©
P.O. Box 372- Calabasas, CA 91302

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

15 OZ. TANKARD MEMBER PATCH

Charge my credit card number

MasterCard VISA Expires _____

SIGNATURE _____

My check for \$12.95 enclosed.

Please allow six weeks for delivery