

Where MOVIES are not "COLOSSAL"



The villain of the Japanese screen, Sojin Kamiyama, in a scene with Miss Yoshiko Tsubonchi.

By Rose McKee

TOKIO.

THE Japanese motion picture industry does not go in for things magnificent and stupendous.

Its studios, although representing an investment of 22,500,000 yen, or about \$7,000,000, are on the dinky side.

You get into the largest studio in Japan, that of Shochiku at Ofuna, simply by walking in through the wide, open gate which is unguarded. You hail a passing employe and send in your card. You have no appointment but in 10 minutes you are closeted with the big shot of the lot, General Manager Osamu Rokusha.

His office is a cubicle opening directly onto the long, narrow hall which runs the length of the administrative building. There are no telephones in his office. There is no outer office, no circle of secretaries or stenographers. When the Big Shot wants tea, he yells out the window to a girl passing by.

In addition to his plain, inexpensive desk, the office is furnished with one tall, thin filing cabinet and a small table around which are four chairs. The offices of the 12 directors are similar. One has a crude davenport. One has a bed.

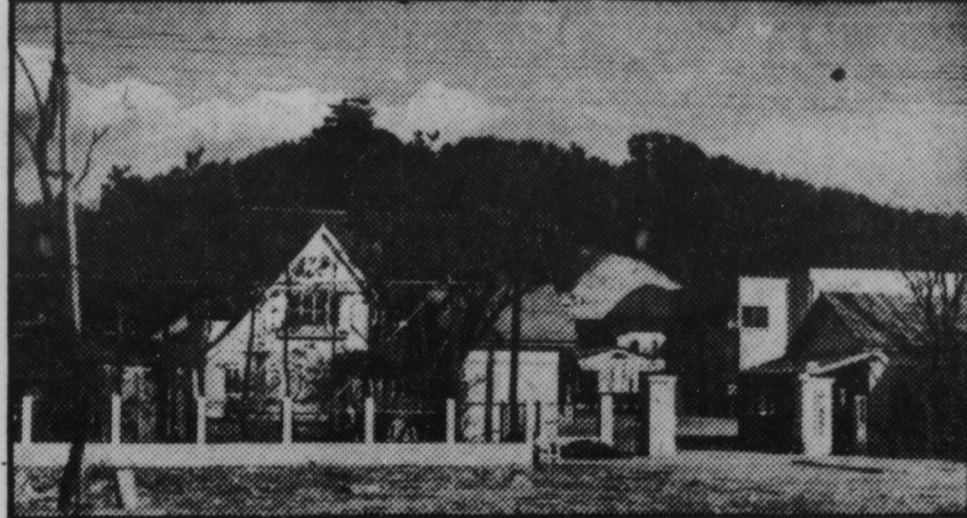
The stars lack the off-stage glamour of their Hollywood colleagues. They do not roll up to work in streamlined roadsters done in two-toned yellow and brown. Instead they come by electric train from Tokio, an hour away, and walk from the station to the studio.

ONLY one star, Kimuyo Tanaka, has a dressing room to herself. It is a little Japanese room, damp and cold in winter. Her dressing table, not as large as an apple box, has a mirror in which she can manage to see herself full length if she stands just so.

Two cushions take the place of chairs. Instead of cosmetics, her little table is cluttered with tea cups and a toothpick holder. When Kimuyo wants to wash, she must put on her shoes and go out in the hall to the general washstand. If she wants a bath, she must go to another building.

Six other stars share two similar dressing rooms, three girls to a room. All the other 250 players prepare to go before the camera in one long, general room. They use portable dressing tables which they provide themselves and which they bring with them each day.

Two narrow benches, punctuated by spotlights, run the length of the room. At her place at the bench, a leading lady opens her dressing table and begins her make-up, with as little elbow room as she would have at a crowded lunch counter.



The Japanese "Hollywood"—the largest film studio in Japan, that of Shochiku Films at Ofuna, a Tokio suburb.

Each star is her own beautician until it comes to her coiffure. For that she goes to what is euphemistically called "the hairdressing parlor." It is a messy little "two-chair" room without booths. She sits in an old, sawed-off wicker armchair while an untidy "operator" marcel her hair with irons heated over a charcoal fire. Employes lounge about watching the process.

Screen clothes are provided for all the players, but a single dress is used over and over again after slight alterations from a designing department which, although it qualifies in ingenuity, rates low in chic.

SHOCHIKU has a restaurant on the lot, a two-story Spanish building which offers food but no enchantment. Employes eat on the ground floor, players and guests upstairs where the elevation is only a matter of height. There is no swank, and not even a tablecloth.

As the working day frequently runs well into the night, sleeping facilities are provided. The "actors' bedroom," a raised platform covered by straw matting, is bare except for a pile of bed clothing in a corner. Each actor takes

a mattress and quilts and makes up his own bed on the floor. There is space for 50 men to sleep, provided they lie side by side in one long row.

Japanese movie stars do their twinkling for meager sums, by Hollywood standards. The highest paid get only 1000 yen or \$290 a month. Half that pay is considered good by many who are popular on the Tokio screen but are frowned on by country audiences. Many featured players trail along at about \$60 a month and are content. There is no temperament or breaking of contracts by Japanese film luminaries.

The "big names" fatten their salaries by outside work. A favorite means, as in Hollywood, is endorsement of advertised products. Personal appearances are believed to help out many purses but Miss Masako Ohara, a Nikkatsu star, declares that the outlay in new clothes, which a personal appearance necessitates, eats up all the profit.

Nor do the stars glitter wickedly in their private lives. The "moral discipline" department of the studio sees to that. This department is maintained "to prevent loose relations between ac-



A bit of comedy in a Japanese movie. From the left, the players are Jitsuyo Takase, Denjiro Okochi, Yonosuke Toba and Momonosuke Ichikawa.

tors and actresses." The manager of one of the studios explained that there are few offenses "because the faces of stars are well known to the public and the public would know immediately if actors and actresses were to go about together. And the public would instantly disapprove."

It isn't done in Japan. The stars would lose their popularity first, their jobs next.

The moral discipline department allows smoking but no drinking with the exception of "a little" beer or sake. One studio restaurant sells drinks to guests but only one slim glass of beer to a player.

The stars have no spare time to get into mischief—a motion picture industry which in 1935 turned out 444 films supplies them with plenty of work. The subjects of their pictures are varied, with a tendency toward a serious view of life.

Japanese audiences are fond of tragedy and a Japanese motion picture without tears is not a success. Women feel cheated if they have not had the opportunity to sniffle over a heart-rending scene. Influenced by American movies, comedies are coming to be appreciated but they do not satisfy unless they have 30 per cent of tear-jerking elements.

The most popular theme is that of relations between parents and children. Serials and silent pictures are still being made extensively, 178 silent movies having been turned out in 1935 in comparison with 133 talkies and 133 pictures with sound accompaniment.

Two hundred and fifty-seven of these movies were heroic melodramas of the feudal days in Japan, corresponding in type to "westerns" in the United States. Their popularity is marked by a decline in the cities and one studio has already stopped making them.

American movies are supreme in Tokio and other large cities where they are preferred to Japanese films which Young Japan deems slow and stodgy. Taste for American pictures changes periodically but the popularity of "G-Men" has yet to be equaled. The Japanese love to see federal men get the best of gangsters, with lots of shooting, and as a result, Tokio has had a seven-month run of pictures such as "Mary Burns, Fugitive," which the Japanese film critics promptly renamed "G-Woman."

When box office receipts of American movies were compared at the end of 1936, "Follow the Fleet," a Ginger Rogers-Fred Astaire picture, led all the others. For a while one had to be a friend of the manager to buy a ticket for the theater when this picture was being shown.