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# *An Invitation to Travel*
# *The Marketing and Reception of Japanese Film in the West 1950-1975*

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# ABSTRACT

*An Invitation to Travel – The Marketing and Reception of Japanese Film in the West 1950-1975* is a reception study which presents the events and efforts that characterize the reception of Japanese film in France, Great Britain and the United States, after World War Two.

Chapter One presents the research questions informing this study and discusses the historically located Western cultural concepts involved such as the aesthetics of art cinema, *Japonisme*, and the notion of 'Japaneseness'. The argumentation as such is based on the presumption of a still prevailing Orientalist discourse at the time.

The thesis discusses the Japanese film industry's need to devise a new strategy of doing export business with the West in relation to the changed postwar context in Chapter Two. The preparations on the part of the Japanese to distribute their films in the West through different modes of transnational publicity are in focus here, from introductory 'film weeks', to marketing vehicles such as *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, and the first Western books on Japanese film history. The thesis then proceeds to deal with the groundbreaking introduction of this first non-occidental national cinema from four different angles; exhibition (Chapter Three), critical reception (Chapter Four), publicity (Chapter Five) and canon formation (Chapter Six).

Chapter Three looks into the history of Western exhibition of Japanese film in the countries involved in this study and identifies divergent attitudes between institutional and commercial screenings. It also locates possible changes in exhibition policy over time.

Chapter Four establishes the main players in the critical reception of Japanese cinema in the West and examines national divergences in attitude towards this 'new' national cinema. In order to do so, it necessarily discusses the development of Western auteurism in the late 1950s, and its effect on the film periodicals in the countries involved.

Chapter Five presents an alternative venue of research through the image of Japanese cinema induced by Western poster design. It explores Western responses based on concepts involving *Japonisme* and national stereotypes in both commercial (capitalistic) and non-commercial (communist) aesthetic contexts.

Chapter Six explores the history of canon formation and the evaluation of Japanese film in the West. The thesis argues that the extant Western canon on Japanese film is inconclusive and that it could be exchanged, in part, for at least three other versions of the same national cinema, enough to make the current image of Western postwar Japanese film history seem utterly unsatisfactory.

The conclusion in Chapter Seven presents the outcome of the effects of exhibition, critical reception and publicity, as well as the trajectory of canon formation in the previous chapters. By looking back again at its components, this study indicates several areas that warrant further research in order to extend the existing Western conceptualization of Japanese film history.

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# CHAPTER ONE

> What is required by the hermeneutics of the Other sought out in non-Western national cinema scholarship is neither a simple identification with the Other nor an easy assimilation of the Other into the self. Instead, it is a construction of a new position of knowledge through a careful negotiation between the self and the Other.
> Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto[1]

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The historiography of Western reception of Japanese film product has not yet been addressed in academic studies. Until now, this national cinema has mainly been approached in terms of the historical or geopolitical development of its industry and/or the textual structure of its product. Neither focus necessarily concerns itself with either the export or the overseas exhibition of film and have therefore remained studies of the national circumstances. This study is concerned with a contextual and comparative history of the postwar marketing and reception of Japanese film product in France, Great Britain and the United States.

The main reason for my focus on the early postwar decades is the interesting historical relations that have existed between Japan and the West since the United States forced the Asian country to open up for trade in 1868. Most Western countries had become deeply influenced by Japanese aesthetics and fine arts by the 1880s and thus developed a strong cultural relationship with Japan within disciplines which are artistically and culturally connected to film practice. This new art form embraced Japan from early days and thus strengthened the cultural bond between the continents although no data suggest that this bond involved Western commercial exhibition or reception of Japanese film product before World War Two. This is of course not the same as saying that exhibition of this product did not take place, but it indicates a very limited interest in Japanese film at the time, possibly involving mainly private exhibition and ethnical reception aspects.

Japan fought on the same side as France, Great Britain and the United States during World War One. Similar to most Western film product, the Japanese counterpart became markedly nationalistic during the inter-war years in the hands of their respective governments and Japan went on to fight World War Two against the three Western countries concerned in this study. Under the severe command of the Americans the Japanese film industry then began to explore the possibilities of exporting its film product in the late 1940s although no Japanese films were exhibited in the West before 1950. The

continued presence of mainly French and American military forces in the Asian region between 1950 and 1975, implies that the Japanese film product was marketed and exhibited in the above Western countries at the same time as they remained deeply politically and economically involved in the Asian region. I have therefore decided to apply the same time frame to this study in order to see how these circumstances impacted on the reception of Japanese film in the West.

I understand Yoshimoto Mitshuhiro's call for 'a construction of a new position of knowledge through a careful negotiation between the self and the Other', as a call for new aspects on Japanese film studies and I am therefore interested to see how the reversed focus implied by a change of geographical locale may effect Western studies of the Japanese cinema and its historiography. Given the time frame of this study, I have used sources dating from around 1951 until the emergence of Western academic writing about Japanese cinema in the second half of the 1970s. Another way of constructing a 'new position of knowledge' is thereby attained by examining how these early sources informed the now established historiography of Japanese cinema.

Prompted by Yoshimoto's use of the 'Other' in the above quotation I have followed suit and thus refer my findings to the influence of Orientalism on the Western reception of this product. Another reason to situate my work within an Orientalist discourse is also motivated by the fact that the notion of *Japonisme* had already been embedded in our reception of Japanese culture for centuries. Interestingly, an application of a reversed focus in this case involves the possibility of a deliberate use of Orientalism by the Japanese, thus implying a certain degree of self-Orientalization on their part. This study has addressed both instances of Orientalism and shows several clear instances of how it was used to culturally inform Western reception of Japanese cinema at the time.

The publication of Noël Burch's study of Japanese film history in the late 1970s, is traditionally said to begin Western academic writing about Japanese cinema.[2] A general assessment of Western scholarship concerned with Japanese cinema, indicates a continued focus on hermeneutic, semiotic or textual studies of this cinema during the 1980s and early '90s. Aided by the perspectives of scholars such as Robert Cohen[3] and David Bordwell[4], most studies of this cinema relied on a formalist set of aesthetics which allowed Western Academia to limit their research to textual sources which were considered to be characteristic of a certain image of this particular national cinema. Scholars like Darrell William Davis have since then continued the task of re-defining and deconstructing certain aspects of the Japanese national cinema along broader lines in accordance with a post-structural agenda.[5] The discursive limitations inherent in these attempts at identifying an

Other national cinema through mainly textual analysis have however been pointed out in recent studies by for example Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto[6] and Peter Lehman[7] - not so much based on lack of individual suitability or proficiency on behalf of the scholars, but based on whether or not a final generic identification of the Japanese national cinema is actually feasible. Since then, attempts have been made to apply a new focus when writing the history of Japanese film, based for example on research of the Japanese film industry itself and its studio production policies.[8]

Instead of making yet a contribution to the academic debate above; I have researched the postwar history of Japanese cinema in the West inspired by Hollywood's film industrial and political strategies as presented by scholars such as Ian Jarvie. The present study thus evolves around the contextual factors which informed a particular segment of Japanese film industry, and is therefore concerned both with the image and marketing vehicles chosen for its overseas diffusion, and the reception of this product in the West. Beginning with the official introduction of Japanese cinema in the West in September 1951, when Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon* (1950) was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, I demonstrate in Chapter Two that the Japanese film industry did not enter the realm of the Western film world by accident, but came well prepared and with a pronounced intention of becoming a firm part of it. There is however no data suggesting that the Japanese came anywhere near Hollywood's post-war marketing strategies in Europe,[9] as documented by Jarvie, but I suggest that the Japanese film industry was deeply influenced by Hollywood when it came to merchandizing its product. In terms of Western publicity, exhibition and critical reception of Japanese film, my study has focussed on how and on what basis the Western understanding of 'Japanese cinema' was construed during this period, thus approaching the double-ended issue of projected national identity vis-à-vis the ethnical/racial issues provoked by the projection.

I will therefore argue that the interaction between Japan and the West was based primarily on overlapping displays of Orientalization and self-Orientalization, and that these socio-cultural and aesthetic blocks continued to characterize the interplay between the Japanese film industry and Western distributors and critics during the entire time frame of this study. Jarvie's and his colleagues' analysis of the impact of American post-war film politics on the reception of Hollywood film in Europe, also made me aware of the necessity to map the marketing strategies surrounding the introduction of Japanese cinema to the West in order to monitor its aim and significance in relation to its Western reception.

In Chapter Two I also discuss the consequences of the first two publications on Japanese film published in the West; the first was *Le Cinéma Japonais* written by the

French/Japanese journalist couple Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris and published in 1956, the second Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie's pivotal *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* from 1959. These books presented the history of Japanese cinema from different ideological vantage points, even though both texts are based on a historiographical, chronological approach.

This chapter also presents an analysis of the reports on the Japanese film industry that were published in the *Oriental Economist* between 1958 and 1966, in the hope that they will shed a light on the socio-economical implications informing the industry at the time. One of the production problems the economic journalists targeted was the tradition of double-billing at the national cinemas, and its repercussion on the entire Japanese film industry.

The case study of Chapter Two is concerned with Nikkatsu's effort to market its 'borderless action' films in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*.

Chapter Three focuses on the exhibition of Japanese fiction film in the three countries involved in this study, through a study of the socio-cultural agenda that determined the Western distribution of post-war Japanese films, and their different exhibition locale. Where was Japanese film screened in the West? Did the image of Japanese film differ from one Western location to another, from one country to another? Which film genres were programmed for commercial exhibition and how did these confer with the exhibition of Japanese cinema at film festivals and cinémathèques? Did the Western exhibition policy on Japanese film change at all between 1950 and 1975? What role did the programming of Japanese film play when it came to its canon formation in the West?

There are many modes of exhibition, and those primarily studied in this text are based on screenings at cinémathèques and other film institutions, as well as commercial film exhibition, and the screening of Japanese film at the film festivals in Cannes, London and New York, over the years. Each country's history of exhibition of Japanese film is primarily divided between institutional and commercial screenings. When it comes to the individual film prints that were screened, these mainly originated from film distributors and/or film archive collections. There is obviously no way of knowing with certainty if the films as we know them today, are exactly the same versions of the films that were reviewed and debated in London, New York or Paris, between 1950 and 1975.[10]

This chapter draws most of its contents from archival documentation and it should be noted that these document maps have not always been complete. The programming for the French Cinémathèque would be a case in point, since the original documents referring to its programming are incomplete either because the Film Library in Paris has not received all documents, or because the screenings were internally disrupted, an event which occurred on

several occasions during 1968, for example. The tables listed in the chapter however still provide ample information on each country's exhibition policy, as well as enhance the possibility of a comparative study of the countries involved.

The case study in Chapter Three revolves around the importance of locale, that is, the specific site of exhibition. Why was the Venice Film Festival chosen as the first Western locale for the screening of Japanese post-war fiction film? This case study furthermore implicates the art house cinemas as especially interesting venues for the exhibition of Japanese film during the time frame of this study. We shall also see that the designated exhibition locale was strongly connected to Western critics' labelling of Japanese film as primarily an art cinema during the time frame of this study.

The second set of research questions focus on the critical reception of Japanese cinema in France, Great Britain and the United States, and are presented in Chapter Four. I have looked at the general attitude to Japanese film in film periodicals and established the terms of critical awareness among the critics. I have also located the principal writers and identified the critical criteria that informed their reception of Japanese film.

The material involved in researching the critical reception of Japanese film mainly comprises critical essays and film reviews. I have had no ambition to cover all instances of critical reception of Japanese film in the countries involved, and this section therefore focuses on the more important contributions to this field. I have also tried to place the American journalist and writer Donald Richie's contribution to West's knowledge of Japanese film in the picture frame, only to find out that his most important contribution may have been overlooked.

In order to characterize the national differences in the critical reception of Japanese film, I have quoted profusely from the texts. The French quotations are given in both the original language, and (my) English translation, in order that the reader may be able to differentiate between changes in attitude and aesthetics, national predilections, temporary whims for certain directors, and so on. This chapter is also based on material covering the critical reception of Japanese film in Japan. The domestic critical reception is represented by the film reviews that were published in *The Japan Times* between 1956 and 1975, that is, during a period of twenty years. I have taken a special interest in the contributions made by *both* Mary Evans and Donald Richie, and the overt introductory quality of their reviews. Were Evans and Richie in fact 'marketing' the product of the Japanese film industry to their readers? The question is directly related to Richie's secondary role as member of the board of UniJapan Film, which was headed by the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Films Abroad, Inc., - an organisation established under the patronage of the Japanese motion

picture industry for the purpose of promoting the export of Japanese films (see Chapter Two).

My reading of the material referring to the critical reception of Japanese film in the three countries involved in this study is substantially filtered through auteur-theoretical criteria, since the adherence to or disagreement with auteurism was a common denominator among especially the French and Anglo-Saxon periodicals. I shall therefore be dealing extensively with the influence of auteurism and the *politique des auteurs* on the Western image of Japanese film, trying to address its roots, but also indicating that an alternative image was once at hand. I have also focussed especially on the apparent discrepancies in critical reception of Japanese film between the American East and West coast, as well as on the particular quality of the film reviews in trade journals like *Variety*. The case study in Chapter Four is composed of a comparative study of the critical reception of some key Japanese films.

Chapter Five offers a different aspect of Western reception of Japanese cinema in terms of the national identity presented in film posters for Japanese films and the publicity material presented in connection with its exhibition. The research questions relevant for this chapter involve issues such as how the West positioned itself in relation to a post-war image of 'Japaneseness' with reference to other socio-cultural notions such as *Japonisme* and a still prevailing Orientalist discourse. I shall show how these notions come to impact upon the iconography of Western film posters during the time frame of this study.

Barbara Klinger has argued that Rudolf Valentino's films, 'strongly amplified his ethnic 'Otherness' and 'Exoticism', and that '[S]ocial attitudes toward race and ethnicity, as well as the perspectives of the racial or ethnic group itself, penetrate films and their discursive surrounds, helping to negotiate their terms of reception.'[11] I have therefore focused on the Western film posters that were designed for Japanese films in order to negotiate how this 'discursive surround' may have effected its overseas' reception, and appropriated Mary Beth Haralovich's model of poster interpretation in order to see if the Western posters for Japanese films display a similar iconographical set-up as a typical Western film poster for a typical Western fiction film. I also demonstrate how most of the Western posters for Japanese films discussed in this chapter were based on certain iconographical stereotypes related to *Japonisme* (aka Japanese Taste) and further developed within the Orientalist discourse. These should be seen as the direct opposite to the publicity stills discussed in Chapter Two which reflect an iconography wholly focused on Western role models.

The origins of the posters in Chapter Five are not restricted to France, Great Britain and the United States, but also include other countries in Europe, as well as Cuba. My reason for comparing Western film posters with those from Cuba and former Soviet countries is explained by their underlying difference in iconographical ideology. From a general point of view, my analysis has been focused on the iconographical exponents connoting the Otherness of Japanese film beyond the contents of the films themselves and non-existent in the original Japanese posters. The models I have used in this chapter are based on the general assumption above, that Mary Beth Haralovich's iconographical methods are applicable also to posters originating from a different context; in this case Western posters relating to Japanese films. I shall therefore argue that one of the central aspects to be considered, is that these posters in fact mediated just a particular film, but to a certain degree, also implicated an image of a national identity, although the issue of identifying Japanese national cinema as such is not addressed not in this text. The focus is instead to establish how the particular iconographical element of Otherness, as in *another* national cinema, has been displayed by comparing it to certain well-known ethnic stereotypes.

The case study of Chapter Five revolves around the publicity material presented in connection with the introduction of Imamura Shohei's *Insect Woman*/*Nippon konchuki* (1963) at the Berlin film festival the same year, and the consequences of the 'emblematization' of one particular publicity still over the years in relation to the film itself. I also discuss the influence of two German posters for the film on the its Western image.

Chapter Six unites the topics addressed in the previous chapters in terms of canonicity. In her 1985 essay 'The Politics of Film Canons', Janet Staiger confirms, 'that canon formation is involved with the political sphere is evident'.[12] It evolves however that Staiger's interest in this matter is primarily focused on the 'shifting politics, past and present, of the factors contributing to canon formation'.[13] Still, my study shows that Staiger's classification of the critics as either Romantic auteur critics or ideological critics has been crucial to the aesthetical formation of Western critical reception of Japanese film, since especially the former have had a definite influence on the canon formation related to Japanese cinema.

I base my presentation of its canon formation on Janet Staiger's assumption that auteurism was also a matter 'of being for some directors and against others. Not just a method of classification and analysis, auteurism was practiced as a politics of evaluation.'[14] This study shows that the initial, official canon formation related to Japanese film was strongly related to these apparent laws of auteurism as well. We shall also see that this

official canon formation took a specific direction already from the beginning, by which I mean the mid-1950s. It would furthermore seem that this Western canon formation was initially determined by certain Japanese film producers, as well as the juries at the European film festivals. The most interesting result of my research is however the fact that my findings allow me to present up to three competing film canons related to Japanese film in the West. These alternative canons refer immediately to the genre and popularity of the Japanese films that were in fact exhibited in the West during the time frame of this study, whether at film clubs, film festivals or through commercial release. It would thus seem that the official canon attributed to Japanese film in the West indicates only one of the various images of this national cinema.

Chapter Seven offers the most important conclusions which may be drawn from the material I have researched.

### **1.2** METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

To respond to the above research questions, which all relate primarily to the field of national cinema studies, I have deliberately chosen a methodology which allows me to ignore the individual films per se and focus on the contextual circumstances which contributed to the Western post-war image of Japanese film.

From a theoretical point of view, my research falls within the framework of a reception study, as presented in key works by Barbara Klinger and Janet Staiger.[15] The choice of this method was also prompted by the fact that I wanted to make a comparative study between three different countries, and due also to its the chronological aspect; this study covers 30 years of Western reception of Japanese film. Such a manifold plan of action helps avoid a 'single discourse'[16] which would have pertained if I had employed only one single external discourse, such as French newspaper reviews. In order to obtain a more appropriate 'totalized view'[17] I have thus researched the reception of this particular national cinema from a larger perspective. My aim is to provide a 'diachronic dimension'[18] of the image of Japanese film in the West, inspired by Klinger's claim that 'Diachronic research is especially important to reception studies, […] because if forces consideration of a film's fluid, changeable and volatile relation to history.'[19] In view of this reference to a film's 'fluidity', I have applied a diversified approach to the subject matter, in that I have analysed and compared a body of material which includes several discourses and aspects of film reception (exhibition and critical reception and publicity), emanating from three differing countries, dating from the same period (between 1950 and 1975). An additional dimension

of the diachronic perspective was added by the fact that my analysis of the time period above has taken place at a later date, more than thirty years later.

The 'diachronic' character of this study is further enhanced by Klinger's assumption that a study takes on a 'diachronic' dimension when advancing 'the film/culture relation well beyond even the massive data of its origins, addressing how that relation is remade continuously through diverse institutions and historical circumstances over the decades subsequent to initial release dates'.[20] Klinger's suggested 'synchronic areas of study' comprise 'Cinematic practices' such as those mentioned above, 'Intertextual zones' where the film can be said to have had an influence on other media and art forms, and 'Social and historical contexts' including the economy of the cinematic institution, legal rulings, religion, politics, etc.[21] I have approached the 'Intertextual zones' through the study of review journalism, which is central to my research in that it deals with written statements testifying to the critic's appraisal of the character of this 'Other cinema'. In agreement with Jackie Stacey, I therefore argue that one of the key tools for this type of study is knowledge based on different approaches to quotations, such as using them illustratively, or using them to reflect upon existing theoretical debates, or treated simply as texts.[22] The quotations in this text therefore play a significant role when it comes to reflecting a certain narrative code, a tone of voice, a certain vocabulary, or a certain attitude. Moreover, they have been chosen for their capacity to illustrate different attitudes over time to, for example, review journalism. We shall also see that the character of the critical writings from France, Great Britain and the United States, to a large extent coincided with discourses set forth by the four major intertextual discourses of the 1950s, as put forward by Janet Staiger; psychoanalysis, authorship, generic conventions of [Western] filmmaking and current social issues.[23] When it comes to the areas mentioned under 'Social and historical contexts', I shall mainly be referring to the areas of race and ethnicity since concepts like *Japonisme* and Orientalism form the parameters through which I have approached subjects of cultural ideology and cross-cultural reception, in relation to the overseas' introduction of Japanese cinema.

### **1.3** BASIC CONCEPTS

In order to reflect the particular character of the image of Japanese film in the West, it has been necessary to work within specific 'Social and historical contexts', as mentioned by Klinger. I have therefore based this study on certain basic concepts corresponding to cinematic, race and ethnicity driven prerequisites, and I wish to point out my understanding

and employment of these concepts separately since they form the conceptual basis for my work.

*Art Film*

Most of the exported Japanese cinema was exhibited on the art house circuit in Europe and the United States. As a result, it was received according to the Western notion of art film without ever being markedly included in the ongoing debate about its character and/or position in the West during the 1960s and 1970s. The reason for the heated debate during these decades was in part ideological, since according to Steve Neale,[24] a national production of art film was the only option to counter the domination of American film anywhere in the world at that time. One way of impeding the American domination on the world's film screens, was 'to turn to high art and to the cultural traditions specific to the country involved'[25] and make an interesting counter-product, regardless of the fact that the resultant art films were not going to be screened at the same cinemas as the American films anyway.

By characterising art cinema as 'high art', Neale has argued that this type of film was generally based on literature, a source which vouched for higher quality, compared to the Hollywood film product which was mainly based on popular fiction.[26] Apart from being foreign and screened in a different language, the above requisites for art film apply to the most frequently exhibited Japanese film genres in the West and thus fittingly describe the bottom line of Western critical reception of Japanese cinema during the time frame of this study. Although Neale has written that 'Art Cinema itself was rarely defined' during the 1960s and 1970s, he has sketched a definition of its character which applies to the Japanese cinema as well:

> Art films tend to be marked by a stress on visual style (an engagement of the look in terms of marked individual point of view rather than in terms of institutionalised spectacle), by a suppression of action in the Hollywood sense, by a consequent stress on character rather than plot and by an interiorisation of dramatic conflict.[27]

As we can see, there is an inherent clash in Neale's definition of art film since the *politique des auteurs* had already made it impossible to argue that a film style could be both based on literary references *and* reflect an auteur's visual style, a fact which was confirmed by for example Barbara Klinger: '*Cahiers [du cinéma]* had substantial consequences for academic criticism by valorising Hollywood's cinema and making the practice of analyzing films through their auteur's world view the dominant concern for many years.'[28] The 'auteur's world view' thus resulted in the literary qualities of the film script being reduced to a secondary position to the advantage of the film's graphic qualities, but this apparent

paradox within the concept of art film was still accepted and may even explain why it has become relevant as a parameter when negotiating the critical reception of Japanese cinema in the West. Its ambiguous character, oscillating between that of a director's cinema, festival vehicle and '[Japanese] western film' in the case of Japanese cinema, also led Neale to conclude that the 1960s and 1970s film criticism had made a 'false distinction between commerce and culture [which tended] to ghettoise the work of film-makers whose films circulate in the Art house nexus'.[29] Indeed, this seems to have been the central problem for Japanese cinema in the West, and explains why the Toho film company wanted to keep its own film theatres in the United States during the 1960s in order to promote a more diverse selection of Japanese films.

In consequence with his argument on art cinema's directness, Neale has also touched upon the 'extent to which, historically, censorship and sexuality have figured as crucial elements in the emergence and consolidation of Art Cinema.'[30] An important parameter in this process of developing a cinema of differentiation was the 'explicit representation of sexuality and sexual activity in general and the female body in particular', according to Neale, who has viewed these efforts by other countries as a 'very specific regime of sexual representation'.[31] We shall see that this observation also had a direct bearing on Donald Richie's reviews of Japanese new wave films in *The Japan Times* during the late 1960s, when he frequently criticized the Japanese film industry's abandonment of the literary modes of cinematic narration in preference for a more 'explicit' representation.[32] Steve Neale's double entendre between high art and an explicit representation of sexuality eventually shares common ground with that of Mark Betz's presented in the case study in Chapter Five, and especially Betz's concept of so called 'shared discourses'.

Finally, Neale has also pointed out the importance of the international dimension of art cinema when he writes that these films were produced mainly 'for international distribution and exhibition' and therefore 'relies heavily upon an appeal to the 'universal' values of culture and art […] much reflected in the existence of international film festivals'.[33] This argument is also central to the critical reception of Japanese film product, in that several critics found it to be too reliant on festival exhibition (and therefore not commercial enough) to find an audience, while others argued that claims to a 'universal' character worked against the ambition to present a national cinema.

Whether or not this called for art cinema to be seen as a 'mechanism of discrimination' which sustained a division between people's attitude to the film medium in terms of economy, ideology and aesthetics,[34] as Neale claims, remains to be seen. I however believe that the different notions of art cinema presented by Steve Neale, in

combination with the art house cinema as the most common locale for the exhibition of Japanese film product as well as the cinephilia that developed around this milieu, were crucial parameters in relation to its Western reception on the whole.

*Japaneseness*

In this text, Japaneseness refers to a Western notion of this concept. It is thus based on different exotic characteristics presented in terms of stereotypes such as the kimono-clad geisha, a samurai with a large sword and cherry blossom flowers, which have been represented in Western culture for many centuries. The Western art historical term equivalent to this notion is *Japonisme* (see below). My implementation of 'Japaneseness' in this study, therefore shares no immediate common ground with the nationalist ideology of 'Japanism' or *kokutai* ideology in Japan during the first half of the 20th century.[35] On the contrary, the American occupational forces in Japan between 1945 and 1952 were adamant in their effort to reduce this side of the national Japanese identity to the advantage of a 'modern' approach to democracy and society.[36]

Darrell William Davis has however argued that this pre-war notion of 'Japaneseness', which imparted a particular nationalistic aura on Japanese films at this time, persisted well into the 1980s, and mentioned Kinugasa Teinosuke's films from the early 1950s as exponents of 'his own monumental work for presentation to the post-war American and European art cinema audiences'.[37] Among them, Davis designated Kinugasa's *Gate of Hell/Jigoku mon* (1953) as the first and attributed its success 'largely to the use of techniques pioneered in the pre-war period film, especially in films of the monumental style'[38] and claimed that 'the film is a repackaging of jidai geki [sic] to suit art houses tastes for exotica'.[39]

There is, however, nothing in its Western reception genealogy in the three countries involved in this study, which would confirm Davis' assumption. Instead, we shall see that the overall inference made by Davis is per se representative of the contextually driven film studies that have been undertaken by Western film scholars in relation to Japanese cinema during the past fifteen years. Since his study is based on textual presumptions which were unknown to the Western film community during the time frame of this study, and without consequence for the film's overall Western reception, I will not address the matter of 'Japanism' and Japan's nationalistic film policy further in this study.

*Japonisme* aka *Japanese Taste*

At the end of the 19th century, the collecting of Japanese fine arts was at its peak in Europe. This was also the time when European designers began to consciously copy elements in Japanese and Chinese furniture and costume aesthetics for commercial reasons. The German art historian Lionel Lembourne pinpoints the notion of *Japonisme* as follows:

> The European taste for things Japanese was at its height in the 1880s. […] The word 'Japonisme' was coined in 1872 by the French author and collector, Philippe Buty, 'to designate a new field of study of artistic, historic and ethnographic borrowings from the arts of Japan'. […] While in France it gained its widest acceptance by intellectuals, artists and writers, and became a fashionable craze, it also flourished outside of France in the Netherlands, Great Britain, America, Germany (as Japanismus) and many other countries. Indeed, Japanese works of art became potent catalysts for new designs in many disciplines […][40]

Daisuke Miayo recently used the notion of *Japonisme* aka Japanese Taste as one of his critical assumptions based on the argument that '[T]he embodiment of *Japonisme*, with its "civilized" high-art connotations, was considered valuable for product differentiation …' of transnational film product.[41]

I have used the connotations connected to this particular concept and Japanese design aesthetics in general for my study of the iconographical elements that make up the image of Japanese film in PR-material because of its clear aesthetical demarcation of a specific geographical area, which coincides with my area of research.

*National Cinema*

> A national cinema, in the full sense of the term, is not just the national production registered in a particular country but a cinema which in some way signifies itself to its audiences as the cinema through which that country speaks.'[42]

Andrew Higson has also pointed out that the notion of national cinema has in many ways been important at the level of state policy, where it has been assumed that 'a strong national cinema can offer coherent images of the nation, sustaining the nation at an ideological level [… as well as] promoting the nation as a tourist destination …'.[43] Consequently, I discuss the implications of how this affected the Japanese export policy during the 1950s, although this text does not debate the rightful identity of the Japanese cinema, in terms of a national cinema. Instead, I find it important that certain 'national' aspects of Japanese film product were treated primarily as exponents of art cinema in relation to its overseas reception from the 1950s until the 1970s.

Stephen Crofts has negotiated the intertwined genealogy of national cinema and art cinema by arguing that:

> National pride and the assertion at home and abroad of national cultural identity have been vital in arguing for art cinemas. Central, too, have been arguments about national cultural and literary traditions and quality as well as their consolidation and extension through a national cinema; hence the frequent literary sources and tendencies in this European model of national cinema.[44]

When it came to the export of national cinemas, Crofts has argued that this was done according to three different modes: by branding the product with a (Japanese) identity, by branding it through a certain director, or by branding it through 'less censored representations' of certain exponents, which I take to imply an explicit textual narration of sexuality and violence.[45] All three criteria will be addressed in this text in terms of their relation to Orientalism, auteurism and exhibition policy respectively.

These parameters also happen to be more or less identical with those linked to the characteristics of art cinema, which were easily transposed to include the Japanese cinema as well during the time frame of this study. Stephen Crofts' point is, that Japanese cinema's identity as a national cinema, limited its exhibition to specialist venues such as art house cinemas, which resulted in the Western reception of Japanese film product becoming based on notions of art cinema.[46] I thus assume that the two concepts are more or less interchangeable from the point of view of the issues debated in this thesis.

*Orientalism*

This study is based on the idea that both Orientalism and Self-Orientalization tacitly continued to inform the post-war image of Japanese cinema in the West, in part determining the historiography of the above practices.

Since Edward Said introduced Orientalism as a discursive concept in the late 1970s, it has been applied mainly to prewar Western film history and its notion of the Other or the exotic,[47] but current research in film studies shows that concepts like 'Oriental aesthetics' and *Japonisme* are fully applicable to the early history of Japanese cinema as well,[48] thus indicating a notion of deliberate self-Orientalization. The application of Orientalism on the overseas post-war historiography of Japanese cinema may not seem evident at first, but we shall see from this study that the Western image of this cinema in fact remained deeply rooted in the European and American colonialist discourse upon which the concept is based, thus allowing it to continue to provide the Western nations with 'a distinctive means of representing race, nationality, and Otherness'.[49] Even though none of the pivotal works on Japanese cinema published within the time frame of my study[50] could have presented their work within an Orientalist discourse, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto confirmed its existence in post-

war discourse in connection with Noël Burch's formalist approach to the subject, writing that

> Theory in Burch's work is not a set of critical premises free of ideology or a neutral tool of analysis, and its Orientalist tendency is not mere baggage that can be discarded at will. In fact, it is precisely because of Burch's Orientalist biases that his theoretically informed work on the Japanese film history is in its own way exciting and thought provoking.[51]

This proof of its existence obviously begs the question of Orientalism's locus during the immediate post-war era, when the Americans colonized Japan, beginning with the occupation of the country between 1945 and 1952. We know from several accounts that the SCAP-authorities worked hard to Westernize Japan through different educational programmes. According to Kyoko Hirano, the Americans had started preparing for the Occupation of Japan already in 1943[52] and she also stated that 'the Department of War thoroughly studied Japanese films in order to collect intelligence and to understand the Japanese culture'.[53] This effort at preparation apparently resulted in Ruth Benedict's classic study of Japanese culture, and we may thus presume that both actions resulted in an ideology biased by Orientalism, and that this concept dictated the general American view of the Japanese people's Otherness. [54] Nevertheless, the recommended subjects presented to the Japanese film industry by the occupational forces indicate a definite step away from Orientalism in that these subjects were clearly based on Western concepts of democracy, individuality and equal opportunities between men and women. We also know from Japanese film studies that these recommendations were indeed taken seriously by the industry, although with limited success.

It was during this period of American control over the Japanese film industry that the West was introduced to Japanese cinema and we shall see that, despite this direct influence, all levels of the image of Japanese film in the West between 1950 and 1975 remained under the influence of a continued presence of an Orientalist discourse. I shall also show that West's bias towards Orientalism partly resulted in consenting efforts at manufactured self-Orientalization on behalf of the Japanese, which emphasized the characteristics of the Western image even further. Reception theory would suggest, that this pattern of development indicates both the inconsistency of its nature and its diachronic character.

*Yellow peril*

The notion of yellow peril was coined by Kaiser Wilhelm in Germany in the 1890s and refers to the theme of a particular painting from the time. Yellow peril was presented as the threat of barbarism against democracy, and became equal to that of the red peril, that is, the threat of communism against capitalism, during the interwar years. Considering its impact

on Western nations' view of Asia, and Japan's alignment with Nazi-Germany during World War Two, it is most likely that this notion still remained in the minds of cineastes watching and reviewing Japanese film.

Yellow peril may be said to represent the opposite of 'Orientalism' in many ways and should be understood as such an opposing view in this study.

### **1.4** ARCHIVAL SOURCES

I have found that no cross-cultural study of post-war Japanese film reception in the West has been undertaken before, in any Western country. This has severely limited any access to reference literature and my analysis has therefore largely been based on comparative analysis of material of both academic and journalistic nature assembled by me.

Details referring to the exhibition of Japanese film are based on several different components. Firstly, I have examined the records of the programming at each of the studied institutions, that is, the Cinémathèque Française in Paris, the National Film Theatre in London and the film programming at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.[55] The information regarding the commercial programming of Japanese film in the three countries involved, is based on national film indexes such as *Monthly Film Bulletin* published by the British Film Institute (BFI), whereas the information on whether a particular Japanese film was screened at a certain Western film festival has been confirmed through the individual web-sites of the film festivals. All the Japanese films that were either mentioned or programmed in France, Great Britain and/or the United States according to the above material, have been continuously listed by me during this study. This film list is hardly complete, but now amounts to more than 500 titles, and the logistics of it allows me to see for example when a particular film was commercially released in the countries relevant to this study, or the minimum amount of screenings it had at the French Cinémathèque between 1950 and 1975.

The material involved in the second area of research, the critical reception of the Japanese films, comprises mainly critical essays and film reviews which are located at different referential libraries and archives, such as the New York Public Library, and the libraries at the British Film Institute and Swedish Film Institute.

The primary sources concerning the Western film publicity for Japanese films have been the film posters and publicity material at the Film Library in Paris, and at the British Film Institute in London.

**1.5** LIMITATIONS

This study relates only to the Western image of Japanese traditional fiction film between 1950 and 1975, and so does not include documentaries, *animé*, or children's films.

This study shows how 'historical and intertextual environments shape meanings that circulate during the time of reception'[56] of this particular national cinema and I have thus refrained from contextualising my work in relation to audience reception, which means that issues bearing directly on cinephilia and/or audience reception have not been researched in connection with this text. The reason for this limitation is that almost no studies or consistent documents exist of box-office receipts or audience surveys from the art house circuit's exhibition of Japanese films, thus preventing a comparative analysis including all three countries involved in this study. Implications that have been made about the relation between cinephilia and Japanese film as a sign of its 'limited' audience reception between 1950 and 1975, shall therefore have to remain unresolved in this study, although I agree with Barbara Klinger's theory that no reception study is complete without an account of the audience reception.[57]

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[1] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, 'The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Postcolonial World Order', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 338-353, p. 339.

[2] Noël Burch, *To a Distant Observer* (London: Scholar Press, 1979). See also David Bordwell, 'Our Dream Cinema: Western Historiography and the Japanese Film', *Film-Reader* 4 (1979), 45-62.

[3] Cf Robert Cohen, 'Toward a Theory of Japanese Narrative', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 6.2 (Spring 1981), 181-200.

[4] David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (London: BFI, 1988).

[5] Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness; Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[6] Cf Yoshimoto, 'The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Postcolonial World Order'.

[7] Cf. Peter Lehman, 'The Mysterious Orient, the Christal clear Orient, the Non-Existent Orient: Dilemmas of Western Scholars of Japanese Film', *Journal of Film and Video*, 39.1 (Winter 1987), 5 -15.

[8] Cf. Isolde Standish, *The New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York and London: Continuum, 2005).

[9]See for example Ian Jarvie, 'The Postwar Economic Foreign Policy of the American Film Industry: Europe 1945-1950', in *Hollywood in Europe*, ed. by David W Ellwood and Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994).

[10] The Internet Movie Database sometimes provides information regarding the length of a particular film as screened in different countries. It would seem that the length of such a film might vary considerably, which may then theoretically allow for the question whether the audiences in the different countries have in fact seen the same film. This is ultimately a question of censorship, and it will not be addressed in this text.

[11] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies', *Screen,* 38.2 (Summer 1997), 107-128, p. 112.

[12] Staiger, 'The Politics Of Film Canons', *Cinema Journal*, 24.3 (Spring 1985), 4-23, p. 4.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

[14] Ibid., p. 12.

[15]Barbara Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable'; Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in *Modernism and Mass Culture*, ed. by James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 117-134.

[16] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p. 109.

[17] Cf Klinger's discussion of Fernand Braudel's concept of 'histoire totale' and David Bordwell's reference to 'a totalized view', ibid., pp. 108-109.
[18] This study does however *not* include the notion of 'biographical legend' as used by for example David Bordwell in his book on Ozu Yasujiro, Bordwell, pp. 5-6, other than in connection with Ishihara Yujiro, see Chapter Two.
[19] Klinger, 'Film History Terminable and Interminable', p. 111.
[20] Ibid., p. 112.
[21] Ibid., pp. 115-123.
[22] Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing, Hollywood cinema and female spectatorship* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 79.
[23] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 89-95. In the original text, Staiger uses the criterion 'the generic conventions of Hollywood filmmaking', ibid., p. 89.
[24] Steve Neale, 'Art Cinema as Institution', *Screen*, 22.1 (1981), 11-39.
[25] Neale p 15.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., p. 13.
[28] Barbara Klinger; *Melodrama and Meaning; History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk*, Indiana University Press (Bloomingdale and New York, 1994), p. 3.
[29] Neale, p. 20.
[30] Ibid., p. 30.
[31] Ibid., p. 32.
[32] Cf Neale, p. 31.
[33] Ibid., p. 35.
[34] Ibid., p. 37.
[35] Cf Davis, Chapter 5.
[36] Cf Harry D. Harootunian, 'America's Japan/Japan's Japan', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221.
[37] Davis, p. 9.
[38] Ibid., p. 220.
[39] Ibid., p. 221.
[40] Lionel Lembourne, *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West* (London: Phaidon, 2005), p. 6.
[41] Daisuke Miayo, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 12
[42] *Cinema Book,* ed. by Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink (London: bfi Publishing, 1999), p. 76.
[43] Andrew Higson, 'The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema' in *Cinema and Nation,* ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 69.
[44] Stephen Crofts, 'Reconceptualising National Cinema/s' in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. by Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: bfi Publishing, 2006) 45.
[45] Crofts, p. 52.
[46] Ibid
[47] Cf *Visions of the East, Orientalism in Film*, ed. by Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997).
[48] Thomas LaMarre, *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun'ichiro on Cinema and "Oriental" Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2005); and Miayo.
[49] Mathew Bernstein, 'Introduction', in *Visions of the East*, p. 2.
[50] Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris, *Le Cinéma Japonis*, '7e Art Series' (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1956) ; and Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* [1959] (New York: Grove Press,1960).
[51] Mitshuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, p. 22.
[52] Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo, Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952* (Washington and London: The Smithsonian Institution Press 1992), p. 24.
[53] Ibid., p. 25.
[54] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Pattern of Japanese Culture* (New York: Meridian, 1946).
[55] It should be noted that these records were not always complete, meaning that at times several months of screening records were not available for study.
[56] Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning*, p. 160.
[57] Ibid.

# CHAPTER TWO

# MARKETING JAPANESE FILM IN THE WEST AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

[…B]ear in mind the importance of the film industry for the economic, intellectual and advertising welfare of the [state].[1]

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The above quotation is related to a circular letter which, according to Ian Jarvie, was sent out to all diplomatic officers from the American government bureaucracy as early as in 1944, thus forgoing its close collaboration with the American motion picture industry in its forthcoming post-war export campaign.

In this chapter I shall examine the Japanese film industry's effort to market its own cinema in Western countries after the war, in order to verify the character and success of its marketing strategies. There were no marketing activities at all carried out before 1950, since the American occupation authorities did not permit the Japanese film industry to export its product until 1947, and at this time exportation was allowed only to the United States including Hawaii. It took until 1951 before the Japanese could export their product freely to the Western countries, whereas exportation to countries like India and Burma was not allowed until 1953.[2] We must therefore presume that the early post-war Japanese films were produced for national consumption only. Once the Japanese film industry began marketing its product, there is still no data suggesting that the Japanese came anywhere near Hollywood's post-war marketing strategies in Europe as related by Jarvie.[3] All we know is that it took until the end of the 1950s before the Japanese film industry seriously engaged in the overseas export of its product by means of governmental support. The overseas activities during the years in-between were marked by individual efforts on behalf of certain film industry executives which nevertheless proved to be crucial for the overseas formation of the image of Japanese post-war film.

When researching this particular phase of the history of Japanese cinema in the West, I have dealt with two different parameters; the first based on the physical exhibition of Japanese film at different locale in the West, the other based on introductory writings on the Japanese cinema for a Western readership. The initial diffusion of Japanese film in the West was essentially based on the Japanese offerings at the European film festivals (beginning in 1951), whereas the exhibition of Japanese film at Western film clubs, retrospectives and

cinémathèques represent the second phase of physical overseas diffusion, and followed a couple of years later (see Chapter Three). The Japanese film industry also organized two film festivals at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the late 1950s and these festivals represent a second visual effort to further market Japanese film product in the West.

As for the second parameter examined in this chapter, the earliest post-war historiographies of Japanese cinema were published in the mid- and late 1950s, and were thus intertwined with physical exhibition on both Western continents. An important premise regarding these written works on Japanese film is that they were compiled *in Japan*, by Japanese and/or Western authors. The third source connected to the marketing of Japanese film is *UniJapan Film Quarterly* published by the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Films Abroad Inc, in Tokyo, between 1958 and 1972. This trade journal is pivotal for the understanding of the findings presented in this study, in that it actually represents a Japanese historiography of Japanese film in the West but also because the wide selection of films introduced in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* reflect on the diversity and development of contemporary themes in Japanese film during its years of publication. Some of the socio-political post-war issues were in fact not introduced through Western academic discourse until they were pointed out by John W Dower[4] in his presentation of the Japanese society during the first few postwar decades. In addition to these sources, I have also looked at the reports on the Japanese film industry that were published in the *Oriental Economist* between 1958 and 1966 in the hope that they would further clarify the production targets and export policy of the Japanese film industry during this crucial period.

## 2.2 *RASHOMON* AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The first effort to market Japanese film was thus of a pragmatic nature and seems to have been initiated by Giuliana Stramigioli, the representative of Italfilm in Japan[5] at the time. She managed to get Kurosawa Akira's period drama *Rashomon* (1950) screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, where it was awarded the Golden Lion.

Considering all aspects of the effect of this success, I suggest that *Rashomon* and the production history of this hybrid *jidai-geki* film is at the heart of the continued influence of Orientalism as well as staged Self-Orientalization on the post-war image of Japanese film in the West, and that the choice to continue screening mainly *jidai-geki* films at European film festivals during the 1950s in fact determined its overseas historiography in France, Great Britain and the United States until well after 1975. I shall therefore begin by trying to

unpick *Rashomon*'s production history in order to map its consequences on the future marketing as well as the exhibition of Japanese film in the West after World War Two.

The most detailed account of the American occupation and its bearings on Japan's film industry between 1945 and 1952 was not published until in the 1990s, but Kyoko Hirano's account does not include any information at all on the development of an export policy of the Japanese film industry during this period, which must be understood as a consequence of the above information on the ban on exportation that prevailed basically until 1951. Hirano does however record the complicated procedure by which the Japanese film writers and directors had their scripts approved for production by the occupational forces. *Rashomon* was both prepared and produced during the years of occupation, shortly after the Americans had acknowledged a change of heart regarding the exhibition of *jidai-geki* films, and allowed the Motion Picture Association of Japan to establish a limited exhibition of period films equal to twelve films per year, with no more than two per month, as from November 1949. Hirano adds that this 'number of period films […] represented roughly one-quarter of the total number of films produced.'[6] Instead of producing historical films, the Japanese film directors had been busy directing contemporary dramas, which is indirectly confirmed by Kurosawa's own reaction when *Rashomon* was awarded the Golden Lion in Venice: 'Receiving the prize was entirely unexpected […I]f I'd made something reflecting more of present-day Japan, such a film as *Bicycle Thieves*, and then received a prize, there would be more meaning to it and I'd probably be happier.'[7] This quotation is in many ways mystifying since Kurosawa had in fact directed several contemporary dramas between 1946 and 1950. By mentioning *Bicycle Thieves,* he not only pointed out a well-known film for Western audiences, but he also indicated a certain film tradition; that of Italian neo-realism, which in its turn implicitly indicated his own interest within film direction. The average Western moviegoer would however not have been acquainted with for example *Drunken Angel/Yoidore tenshi* (1948) or *The Silent Duel* aka *The Quiet Duel/Shizukanaru ketto* (1949) at the time. Whatever Kurosawa's reasons, the most logical thing to do, if one wanted to open the eyes of the Latin public to Japanese film, would have been to send either *Drunken Angel* or *The Silent Duel* to Venice. This chapter is all about why this was not done, considering that the interest from the Japanese film directors in the production of *jidai-geki* film was very limited and the film export aspirations on behalf of the Japanese film companies remained low at the time. This limited interest in period drama had in part been induced by the Allied Powers' list of 'Recommended Subjects' which had totally dominated the Japanese film industry between 1945 and 1949,[8] until the SCAP authorities suddenly launched their reverse-course politics[9]

and departed 'from many of the ideals proclaimed at the beginning of the U.S occupation' 'in the name of protecting Asia and the world from communism'.[10]

Hirano still does not mention anything about the production history of *Rashomon*, except that it was produced at Daiei, a film production company which specialized in period films.[11] The exact procedure leading to the approval of the script by the occupational authorities shall not be finally known until the production documents (including the script) have been thoroughly researched, but I suggest that it was the clearly visible Orientalist framing of *Rashomon*'s history in combination with its Western dramatic elements which made the script passable, and later turned the film into a perfect vehicle for Western exhibition in the eyes of Italfilm's representative.[12] The Orientalist tropes confirming the Otherness of *Rashomon*, can be identified as the exoticism indicated by the film photography of the forest scenes, the main characters being a samurai and his exceedingly feminine and sensual wife, the uncivilized bandit, Japanese architectural elements such as the gate (*mon*) and the outdoors 'court room' in the garden. The drama itself is however based on elements commonly found in modern Western 20th century psychological drama, such as blatant murder, rape, wild kissing,[13] female sexuality as well as inconclusive, personal histories; dramatic elements which in turn also heavily inspired the Japanese *shingeki* or modern drama and literary tradition during the same period and of which Akutagawa Ryonusuke is a representative.[14] The quintessential sign of the central importance of these Orientalist tropes is reflected in the publicity stills for the film, of which Hirano publishes the one of the bandit unabashedly kissing the samurai's wife.[15] The opposing effect of such a publicity still on the Japanese and Western cinema audiences respectively reflects their cultural distance in that the Japanese audience had not been allowed to see open kissing on the film screen until the arrival of the American occupation, and hence found *Rashomon* attractive for such a reason, whereas the bandit's barefaced kissing of a fine lady mainly confirmed the Oriental's lack of civilization and thus favoured a continued Orientalist discourse in the eyes of the Western audience.

*Rashomon*'s relevance for this text therefore lays in its Orientalist display of 'Japaneseness' and how this notion continued to initiate the overseas exhibition of Japanese film also after the war. It also explains why the SCAP authorities in view of its marketing potential, did not oppose to the screening of *Rashonom* in Venice in 1951 to the advantage of a contemporary film displaying the ideals of the 'New' and democratic Japan. In line with my argument, Daiei's producer Nagata Masaichi (1906-1985) becomes central to this history in that he too openly continued to draw on West's notion of Orientalism as it had manifested itself within the film industry before the war. The exact nature of Nagata's

involvement with the production history of *Rashomon* has become muddled when later passed down in English accounts, but the following statement by him was published in the Giuglaris' book on Japanese film in 1956, and actually fully explains Nagata's train of thought as to the overseas introduction of Japanese film through *Rashomon*:

> The ideal solution for the Japanese cinema was to conquer the American market. But that seemed to be a difficult task. One had to consider that the European film had never managed to make a large impact on the North-American market.
>
> We therefore undertook a very thorough investigation of the international market and it emerged that the susceptible point was the European countries and especially the Latin ones. We then decided it was best to try with costume drama – historical – exotic and cultural at the European festivals, especially in Venice and Cannes. […]
>
> Profiting from the fact that the Japonist connoisseurs had for a long time appreciated an 'invitation to travel', and the Romantic painters' passion for the Orient, as well as the mania of the collectors of Japanese and Chinese *objets d'art*, we highlighted the colours and Otherness, in fact so much that the Japanese themselves did not recognise it, […]
>
> Well served by a full knowledge of what the European expectations would be, by appropriate technical resources, by first class photography and by directors as yet ignored by the West, Daiei modelled the second phase of Japanese cinema, its new 'tourist attraction', and risking everything on it. And from the very start, Daiei won […] Considering that Daiei was in financial difficulties five years ago, it is now in March of 1955, the biggest grocer in Japan.[16]

For some reason, Joseph L Anderson and Donald Richie were less specific concerning the continued use of en Orientalist set of aesthetics when they wrote of Nagata's work and his personal business concept in connection with the introduction of Japanese film in the West, and merely confirmed that: '[…V]ery often the head of company as is the case with […] Daiei's Nagata, is the active director of policy as to precisely what kind of picture will be made.'[17] According to them, *Rashomon* was directed and produced on the side, and this information was later confirmed by Sato Tadao; 'The president of the […] Daiei, Masaichi Nagata, was not particularly interested in the production of *Rashomon*. However, when he learnt that the production would occupy only one studio, he thought it was worth the expense.'[18] Whether correct or not, Donald Richie continued to tell the same story by writing that it was not until *Rashomon* began to win prizes abroad, that Nagata took an interest in the film, and finally woke to the prospects it laid open.[19]

The exact reason for the ambiguity in the Anglo-Saxon history of this pivotal production and its subsequent impact on the West remains to be found out. Nagata's claim that it was the Daiei film production company, under his direction, who modelled the image of Japanese film in the West, is however further confirmed by the Giuglaris who recorded the background of the event, writing that Daiei in the late 1940s tried to find a new market for itself, since compared to its five competitors (Toho, Shintotho, Shochiku, Toei and

Nikkatsu) Daiei was the only company without distribution facilities, or any film theatres of its own.[20]

Daiei's overseas success with their *jidai-geki* films is consequently presented as the natural result of good market research, and indicates that the company had found a new way of making money. It is also very clear that the other Japanese film companies had not yet fully discovered the economical potential in overseas exhibition of their product around 1950 and that Daiei continued to be the only Japanese film company which was successful at the European film festivals during the early years of the 1950s:

> *Tale of Genji/Genji Monogatari* (1951) by Yoshimura Kosaburo
> – Cannes film festival in 1952: awarded 'Best artistic contribution'
>
> *Ugetsu monogatari* (1952) by Mizoguchi Kenji
> – Venice film festival in 1953: awarded 'Silver Lion'
>
> *Gate of Hell/Jigoku-mon* (1953) Kinugasa Teinosuke
> – Cannes film festival in 1954: awarded 'Grand prix'
>
> *Crucified Lovers/Chikamatsu monogatari* (1954) by Mizoguchi Kenji
> – Cannes film festival in 1955: nominated to 'Palme d'Or'
>
> *Sansho the Bayliff/Sansho daiyu* (1954) Mizoguchi Kenji
> – Venice film festival in 1954: awarded 'Silver Lion'

Considering the enormous success of *Rashomon* in Venice, it came as no surprise when Kosaburo's *The Tale of Genji* was feted at the Cannes film festival in 1952. It is however important to note that the film was not awarded any of the Palm prizes or the Grand prix, but the prize for Best Artistic Contribution. Despite the alluring exoticism of the *jidai-geki* theme, this lesser award therefore suggests that the Japanese effort at making exotic black/white films was not enough, and one therefore has to see beyond the genre itself, in order to fully understand why Daiei's *jidai-geki* films continued to impress Western film juries and audiences after 1952. Anderson and Richie were right when they wrote that the short answer to this query seemed to be American Eastmancolor and the introduction of widescreen screen ratio: '[…]Nagata turned to Eastmancolor […] This move was inspired both by his seeing that color was the coming thing and by his announced desire to break even further into the international market.'[21] Daiei subsequently presented its first colour film, *Gate of Hell* at the Cannes film festival in 1954, and it was a huge success with Western audiences because of the visual impact of its exotic subject, as well as its colour and format. Thanks to Eastmancolor widescreen technology, Nagata thus once again amazed Western audiences' with Japanese film product. Considering that these films were all traditional period dramas, we must however assume that what had inspired Nagata from *Rashomon*'s success was not Kurosawa's attempt at modernizing the *jidai-geki* film genre,

but its historical setting of samurai and fine ladies. It therefore seems clear that Nagata Masaichi's overseas contribution to the image of Japanese film depends on a conscious act of self-Orientalization, based on Nagata's apparent obvious awareness of the persistent presence of an Orientalist discourse in Western post-war culture, and the opportunity to make money from it.

### **2.3** ONE FRENCH AND THEN ONE AMERICAN BOOK

There was no precursory literary form in the West for the introduction of a new national cinema in the 1950s, given that the event had no precedent.[22] The above mentioned books on the history of the Japanese cinema by Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris and Joseph L Anderson and Donald Richie therefore represent important sources of information for my study in terms of both content and contextualisation. When reading the Giuglaris' book it is immediately clear that they had access to major archival sources and information from within the executive levels of the Japanese film industry, by which they implied that its artistic merits were only the second reason for the introduction of this cinema in book form. Anderson and Richie's book, on the other side, engages more directly with the film studios and the film directors, which accounts for their focus on cinematographic parameters. It still remains to be confirmed however, whether the openly transnational character of the latter may have played a part in an outreaching strategy on behalf of the Japanese themselves, a possibility which is suggested by the fact that Donald Richie's subsequent book, *Japanese Movies*, was offered as 'Volume 27' in the 'Tourist Library Series' published by the Japan Travel Bureau in 1961.[23] Another point of general interest is that both the Giuglaris' and Anderson and Richie's books convey a journalistic approach to their subject, which gave them a quality of presentation or introduction rather than academic reflection.

In view of the above general inclinations of their books, I must therefore disagree with David Bordwell,[24] and suggest that there exist important ideological differences in the presentations of the material between them, some of which are crucial to my study of the immediate post-war era. The same objection also applies to Eric Cazdyn's formula regarding the general characteristics of a historiography which I don't find fully applicable to the Giuglaris' book:

> The detailed and additive chronological forms that these authors employ, […], seek to transcend the contradiction between the individual (the director) and the collective (the film industry) by positing a third term ([…]'the genius') that breaks out of the rigid structure and trumps the other two terms.[25]

The position taken by both scholars in fact reveal an academic hierarchy which endorses Anderson and Richie's auteurism as the given matrix for this type of work, but we have

already seen how the contribution of unique information on the overseas marketing strategies by the Giuglaris' has made their book central to our understanding of this particular area of the Japanese film history, regardless of auteurism and its structural principles.

In the case of the Giuglaris' book, the preface by Jean d'Yvoire however radiated more or less the same expression of superiority and prejudice towards the Japanese as did Anderson and Richie's. This tendency towards a biased discourse was for example reflected in their respective use of belittling phrases like 'little band of men'[26] (Anderson and Richie), and/or reductive phrases, like d'Yvoire's explanation of why Japanese cinema is important:

> What is important, is the imprint of a national temperament which is much freer than ours in relation to the universe as well as in its artistic expression, since it is more spiritual. The reason herefore would be their strong bond to the terrestrial.[27]

These opinions on the character of Japanese cinema in fact reveal a persisting bias towards Orientalism on behalf of both the Americans and the French, and I suggest that d'Yvoire's dismissive statements may also have contributed to Japanese film being mainly categorized as art film in the West:

> The very spirit of the Japanese films is altogether too different from ours to be screened at our primary cinema theatres, given a few exceptions. The vast majority of the public, in confusion, shall not be able to perform the interior exercise necessary to understand them. This applies, however, not only to the Japanese productions, but all those from countries situated to the East of ours.[28]

He later mentions the events at the Venice Film festival in 1951 in terms that reveal that he too had understood Nagata Masaichi's and Daiei's strategy of self-Orientalization very early, writing that '*Rashomon* […was] a work made with the intention to amaze us and open the Western markets to the Daiei productions, a Japanese film company then in [financial] difficulty.'[29] I therefore argue that the Giuglaris' book not only provided hardcore information on the development of overseas marketing strategies within the Japanese film industry at a very crucial and early stage, but that their presentation of the historiography of Japanese cinema also constituted a meta-text which mirrored the confusion over the true identity of Japanese national cinema already established among French film critics at the time.[30] Whereas the Giuglaris' approach to the matter of a Japanese national cinema was both pragmatic and pertinent, although basically non-judgemental, d'Yvoire's comment below reflected that of several French critics at the time:

> […] this duality regarding the cinematographic intentions which one finds in the Japanese production; the existence of films for film festivals and those for the home market, makes any study of the Japanese cinema very difficult, especially since we address ourselves to a public which does not live in Japan and we are therefore either restricted to mention only the films which have been screened abroad – 8 Japanese

> films have been screened in France since 1950 – or films which have not been screened abroad – Japan has produced 1800 feature films between 1946 and 1954, and will be presenting no less than 400 during this year, 1955 […][31]

D'Yvoire thus described the Japanese film export as an attempt at 'dupery of the Europeans'[32] by this industry and his exclusion of the Americans in this case is explained by the fact that the Giuglaris' book was published three years earlier than Anderson and Richie's. In acknowledgement of the French critics' early misgivings in relation to the representative quality of Japanese *jidai-geki* film, scholars like Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto have later studied the implementation of this particular film genre in the West in detail.[33]

The most central ideological divergence between the French and American account of Japanese film history is their approach to auteurism and how they used this doctrine to organize their historiography. Anderson and Richie were completely open about the strong position of auteurist theory at this time in that they dedicated their book to '[…] that little band of men who have tried to make the Japanese film industry what every film industry should be: a director's cinema'.[34] This dedication is supplemented by a map of the family-tree of the Japanese director's history as a further indication of the organization of their filmography.[35] When the Giuglaris' finally approached the issue of auteurism they based their presentation on the presumption that there existed a Japanese version of auteurism according to which the modern Japanese film directors had taken over the role of the former *'benshi'*, writing that ['…the Japanese admire the directors even more than the film stars. […] To the public, the directors are the real storytellers, in that they have more or less taken over the role of the old *benshi* […]'.[36] By relating the directors and modern *mise-en-scène* to the tradition of the *benshi*, the case of Japanese auteurism was unexpectedly problematized vis-à-vis the Western perspective, at the same time as it made Japanese film history more autonomous, national and manifold. This view of the director as a modern accomplice of the *benshi* was not endorsed by Anderson and Richie who instead embraced the modernistic impetus which turned the *benshi* into merely an outmoded obstacle, standing in the way of a more industrial, that is Hollywood-style of film making, a stance which have largely remained in place among Western scholars until first Joanne Bernardi[37] and more recently Isolde Standish[38] opposed this simplification of the *benshi*'s impetus, in support of a more nuanced historiography as originally indicated by the Giuglaris'.

It's therefore interesting to note that both the Giuglaris and Anderson and Richie shared a negative attitude to what they termed 'modern' films. In the eyes of the Giuglaris '[…] modern films are made for a young audience, and especially for young city-dwellers.', adding the acute observation that in 1955 Japan had 89 million inhabitants, 65 million under

the age of 35 and 50 million living in urban surroundings.[39] Since their book was published one year later, it was impossible for them to pursue this statement further, and the effect of such a devastating demography has not been further mentioned in the literature on Japanese film history, until Standish directs our attention to the 'fatherless generation' in 2005. Unlike the Giuglaris' situation, time has given Standish the opportunity to develop the matter through a discussion of, for example, the *taiyozoku* or 'sun tribe' films.[40] Anderson and Richie did not make this significant demographical connection between the reality and the emerging of a sub-genre like the *taiyozoku* films in 1959, nor in the later editions of their book. Instead they closed the matter by determining that the *taiyozoku* films were merely a 'fad',[41] although a very annoying one.

Despite common hesitation towards 'modern' films, and divided attitudes to auteurism, the subsequent marketing vehicle for Japanese film reflected none of the above Western writers aspects on Japanese cinema.

Both parties were also fully aware of the films on social corruption that emerged during the immediate post-war era; mentioning Shibuya Minoru's *The Moderns/Gendai-jin* (1952) (screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1953). Unfortunately the other films mentioned by the Giuglaris regarding social corruption lack relevance,[42] whereas Anderson and Richie again displayed their vast experience when referencing to films like Kurosawa Akira's *Scandal/Shubun* (1950) and *Lady from Hell /Jigoku no Kifujin* (1949) by Oda Yotoyoshi.[43]

When it comes to the involvement with the practicalities of film production the introductory character of both books becomes obvious, since this is made in terms of a presentation of the Other, although without any clear references to Orientalist discourse. Still, the Japanese film production was introduced as if it were far different from that in the West:

> The stages are very low, in general, and the lighting and microphone equipment is mounted only 3 metres above the ground. The film camera is almost always positioned very low, it is mounted on wooden rails for the travelling shots. In almost all studios, one piles boxes on top of one another for the birdseye views, although some of the modern studios have a crane facility, but they are very rare. With the exception of a few studios, the first impression from the point of view of material resources, is that of a well equipped amateur film studio with no extras.[44]

When presented by the Giuglaris', this type of information again added to the meta-perspective in their historiography, since it indicated that certain characteristics that Western critics had considered to be signs of artistic merit on behalf of the Japanese directors, and even aspects of film style, actually were the result of practical or technical studio arrangements. Due to the predominance of auteurist doctrine, such elements of practical

nature have been largely overlooked over the years, until Isolde Standish recently wrote for example on Ozu's character presentation, that it is incorrect to present the typical traits of these characters as evidence of Ozu's auteurism, since they were '[…] in fact representative of the in-house style of Shochiku Studios where Ozu spent his working career.'[45]

Another implication of the Giuglaris' socio-economical angle was their documentation of the actual cost of one film and the statistics involved, which thus revealed a very thorough degree of preparation in their writing process.[46] It appears that they must have had more or less full access to the administrative archives of all the major film companies, how else could one publish something like a 'List of salaries in connection with a Shochiku film'?[47] Anderson and Richie's book was not dominated by issues of economical nature, even though it was entitled '[…] *Art and Industry'*. Instead, they based most of their discussion on the auteurs, and in their case the auteurs implied the directors as well as the script writers, that is those who are the literary sources for a film. This approach indicated Anderson and Richie's interest in the craft itself, technically and practically, whereas they do not seem to have been particularly interested in the minute costs, like the salaries for one team of actors. I believe that Anderson and Richie however acknowledged the rationality on the part of the Japanese film industry when they wrote of the introduction of 'a production-line method of film making', that it could be compared to '[…] that of other industries, automobile manufacturing, for example. If a film was successful, it was analyzed and broken down into its component parts; these were rearranged in a new script and a new film was constructed.'[48] It is however symptomatic that they then went on to discuss various films construed in this way, leaving any form of practical assessment behind.

Like Anderson and Richie, the Giuglaris' ended their book with a list of the most important contemporary directors, the most prominent male actors followed by the female actors. Considering this similarity in formal approach, it is interesting to compare Anderson and Richie's assessment of Japanese directors which completely reflected the parameters of auteurism:

> The nine directors to be treated in this chapter obviously did not singlehandedly create the art of the Japanese film, but they have certainly contributed more to it than anyone else. Viewing their work as a whole, one is continually impressed by its originality, its freshness, and its excellence. Each of these men has created a world of his own, one governed by the laws of his own personality. Each is, in his own way, the best that Japan has produced.[49]

The Giuglaris, on the other hand, presented no grounds for the names on their list:

| *Le Cinéma Japonais* | *The Japanese Film* |
|---|---|
| **Gosho Heinosuke** | Kenji Mizoguchi[50] |
| **Imai Tadashi** | Heinosuke Gosho |
| Inagaki Hiroshi | Yasujiro Ozu |
| Ito Daisuke | Mikio Naruse |
| **Kinoshita Keisuke** | Shiro Toyoda |
| Kinugasa Teinosuke | Keisuke Kinoshita |
| **Kurosawa Akira** | Akira Kurosawa |
| **Mizoguchi Kenji** | Kimisaboro Yoshimura |
| **Naruse Mikio** | Tadashi Imai |
| **Ozu Yasujiro** | |
| Shibuya Minoru | |
| Shima Kohji | |
| Shindo Kaneto | |
| Taniguchi Senkichi | |
| Tasaka Tomtaka | |
| **Toyoda Shiro** | |
| Uchida Tomu | |
| **Yoshimura Kimisaboro** | |

The names in bold on the Giuglaris' list makes it clear that they included all the names on Anderson and Richie's list as well as nine more. The inclusion/omission respectively of Inagaki Hiroshi's name is spectacular, since his films made an enormous success in the United States but not in France, during the time frame of this study. In addition to the above names of established directors in 1955, the Giuglaris' added five young directors who seemed promising for the future: Horikawa Jiromichi, Mimura Akira, Kobayashi Masaki, Wasughi Mitsuo and Hieki Mioji.[51]

As for the American book; the manner in which the nine directors were given by Anderson and Richie, indicated that this was a 'Top-nine' list with Mizoguchi Kenji as the winner. The French list therefore represented an important counter image in that it contained double the amount of directors, in alphabetical order. Not only did this give an impression of a neutral listing, it also made room for many more cinematic genres and tendencies. Of course, many of the additional directors on the Giuglaris' list were politically involved, such as Shibuya Minoru, Shima Kohji, Shindo Kaneto and Uchido Tomu, who had been part of the 'progressive' film movement within the Japanese film industry around 1950. These film directors had left the major film companies in order to make less commercial films, produced by their own, independent film companies. Many of them had also been involved with the big strike at the Toho film company in late 1948 and afterwards formed their own production collectives.[52] The events involving the Toho strike and leftist film in general furthermore constitute instances of clear ideological differences between the French and the American authors regarding their historiographies of the Japanese film

industry. These ideological differences seem to have been further emphasized by the Cold War situation and the war in Korea, although these issues shall not be addressed further in this study.

In further reference to ideological differences, the French book also displays a dismissive standpoint against the film policy implemented by the Americans during the occupation of Japan. The Giuglaris' wrote of the films produced between 1946 and 1947 that 'These films were failures that taught democracy through eroticism, thrillers of inferior quality and all variations of vice.',[53] and thereby marginalized a large portion of popular film. On the other hand, the Giuglaris' account of the Japanese film history at this point provides important general information on the development of Japanese film exports, since it would seem that they fully appreciated the consequences of the volte-face performed by the American occupational forces in 1948-49 on this segment of the industry:

> They were now fighting against the communist leaders which they themselves had released from jail. They admitted the return of the same company middle-managers which had been employed during the war [such as Nagata Masaichi], and thereby 'whitewashed' rather than purged. In the production companies, the management started to consider film genres that had been banned shortly before [such as the *jidai-geki* film], and to make plans for the general policy. Among others, Daiei's plans for its concept for export film date from this era.[54]

Unfortunately the Giuglaris' omit any information as to how these plans were negotiated in relation to the exportation ban that had been imposed by the Americans at the beginning of the occupation.

### **2.4** JAPANESE FILM WEEKS IN NEW YORK

All evidence suggest that the success of the Japanese *jidai-geki* films in Europe was followed by their equal success on the commercial screens in the United States (see Chapter Three). Still, the international success of the Japanese *jidai-geki* genre in colour and widescreen formats does not seem to have been what the Japanese film industry primarily wanted and the first signs of a joint marketing strategy appeared in the late 1950s when the Motion Picture Producers Association (MPPA) of Japan arranged two Japanese Film Weeks in New York with financial support by the Japanese Foreign Office.[55]

Both occasions were marked by an acute marketing effort which makes sense from the point of view that they occurred during the planning process and immediately before the launching of UniJapan Film's overseas trade journal *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. The Japanese film industry hoped that the film weeks and the presence of Japanese producers, directors and film stars in New York would arouse American interest in their product, and both events were indeed covered by the photographers of the *New York Times*. In view of

the preparations involved in presenting a film programme overseas, the relative mediocre quality and irrelevance of the chosen films at both festivals however remains incomprehensible. The events have been poorly documented in terms of critical reception so I have used Henry Hart's reviews of both festivals in *Films in Review*[56] to reconstruct a list of the feature films presented:

| | |
|---|---|
| **1957** | |
| *Traitors/*[Japanese title unknown] (prod. year unknown) | Director unknown (Toei) |
| *The Boyhood of Dr Noguchi/Noguchi hideyo no shonen jidai* (1956) | Sekigawa Hideo (Toei) |
| *Bliss on Earth* aka *Tears/Namida* (1956) | Kawazu Yoshiro (Shochiku) |
| *Appeal on the Cross*/*Onryo sakura daisodo* (1956) | Watanabe Kunuyo (Shin Toho) |
| *Girl in the Mist/Kiri no naka no shojo* (1957) | Suzuki Hideo (Toho) |
| *Women in Prison/Joshu to tomo ni* (1956) | Hisamatsu Seiji (Toho) |
| *Undercurrent*/*Yoru no kawa* (1956) | Yoshimura Kozaburo (Daiei) |
| *Harp of Burma/Biruma no tategoto* (1956) | Ichikawa Kon (Nikkatsu) |
| **1958** | |
| *The Lighthouse/Yorokobi no kanashimi no ikutoshitsuki* (1957) | Kinoshita Keisuke (Shochiku) |
| *Downtown*/*Shitamachi* (1957) | Chiba Yasuke (Toho) |
| *Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War/Meiji Tenno to Nichiro Dai Senso* (1957) | Watanabe Kunio (Nikkatsu) |
| *The Lord Takes a Bride*/*Ohtori-jo na Hanyome* (1957) | Matsuda Sadaji (Toei) |
| *The Sleepy Family/Inemuri ikka* (1958) | Tashio Hideji (Toei) |
| *Temptress and the Monk*/*Byakuya no Yojo* (1958) | Takizawa Eisuke (Nikkatsu) |
| *A Story by Chikamatsu*/ *Chikamatsu Monogatari* (1954) | Mizoguchi Kenji (Daiei) |
| *Untamed Woman*/*Arakure* (1957) | Naruse Mikio (Toho) |

Suffice to say that Henry Hart found the above films at the most 'exceptional' and perhaps 'possible for American art houses',[57] but his general impression was that 'none is likely to quicken an interest in Japanese movies in the US […].'[58] Anderson and Richie later claimed that Kido Shiro, as head of the Shochiku film company and president of the MPPA, in connection with the second Japanese Film Week had come to the conclusion that the Japanese film industry should produce more 'modern, exportable films'.[59] Unfortunately, the relative failure of these Film Weeks in New York and the conclusions drawn from this fact, did not have any bearing on the contents of the Japanese film industry's next marketing vehicle, the *UniJapan Film Quarterly*.

**2.5** *UNIJAPAN FILM QUARTERLY* AND *UNIJAPAN BULLETIN*

It was not until in 1957 that the Japanese state, likewise aware of the overseas marketing potential of Japanese cinema and its ability to contribute to the country's 'economic, intellectual and advertising welfare', supplied its film industry with support from the Japanese State Department of Commerce: '[… T]he various companies finally put their heads together and, in late 1957, came up with UniJapan Film, an 'Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad, Incorporated.' [… a] government-supported organization […]'.[60] Shortly after its establishment, UniJapan Film started publishing the trade journal *UniJapan Film Quarterly* in July 1958. Both the organisation and its journal thus appeared at a time when the given success of Japanese *jidai-geki* film had begun to dissipate in Western markets and I therefore assume that *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was initially designed as a vehicle for the purpose of presenting a *wider* selection of different Japanese genre films suitable for the Western film market. It still remains the only publication of its kind, directed firmly from Japan to the West, with hard core information of its film product in English. *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was published until 1972 under the following declaration:

> UniJapan Film (Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad, Inc) was established under the patronage of the Japanese motion picture industry for the purpose of promoting the exports of Japanese films and thereby contributing toward the promotion of international friendship, understanding and cultural exchange.
>
> UniJapan Film publishes the 'Japanese Film Year Book', 'UniJapan Film Quarterly' and also the 'Catalogue of Short Films', in English, all of which are sent to film organisations and institutes, producers, distributors and exhibitors, and to newspapers throughout the world.
>
> UniJapan Film will be most happy to provide information on request, as well as pamphlets and other publications, to all those interested in feature and documentary films as well as other phases of the Japanese motion picture industry.[61]

As indicated by the above policy statement, the underlying business strategy behind the launch of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* thus resembles that which Ian Jarvie has pointed out in his research of the American post-war film industry, since they indicate that some of the promoted films seem to represent excellent advertising vehicles for the economic, intellectual and advertising welfare of the Japanese state. The Japanese did not however copy an American trade journal when designing the printed matter that became *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, instead it seems clear that they basically copied both the graphic form and the frame work for its contents from the Italian forerunner *Unitalia Film*, which was launched in 1950. Already from the start, *Unitalia Film*'s correspondent in Japan was Giuliana Stramiglioli, which indicates that the influence of the Italian film industry over the Japanese counterpart remained strong even after the introduction of *Rashomon* to the film

festival committee in Venice. When *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was launched in 1957, it retained almost all the significant qualities of *Unitalia Film*, except that it was smaller in format, it did not contain any advertisements, and it did not base its front-page allure on pretty young actresses, like the Italians did. The absence of star-quality in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was in fact total, and considering the persistence of an Orientalist discourse within the Western film community, it seems that the Japanese film industry was working mainly to avoid further emphasis on its *jidai-geki* genre. As a result, the non-existence of Japanese filmstars in postwar Western star culture is almost complete, with the possible exception of Mifune Toshiro and Kyo Machiko, who were known to Western audiences mainly through their appearances in period dramas.

Once the graphic design had been fixed, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* became a handsomely edited periodical with covers indicating a graphic design of abstract figures in sophisticated colours. The patterns and choice of colour combinations indicate the different years (volumes) to which they may be referred, while the graphic design of the presentation of its contents, that is, the individual films remained more or less the same during its entire period of publication. Each film was given a double-page spread on which black and white film stills were presented on the right-hand page, considered to be the 'best' or most important page from the point of view of graphic design and readability, whereas the written presentation of the film occupied the left-hand side, and thus the secondary position.

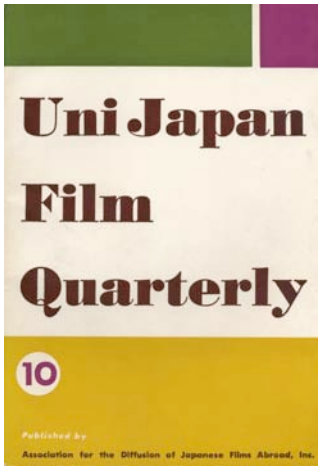

Figure 1

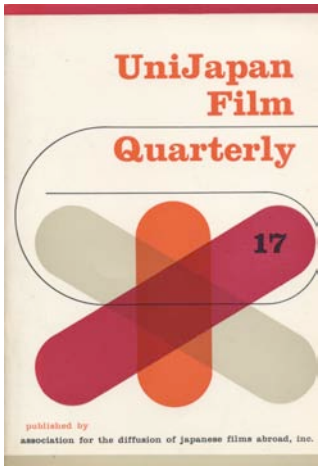

Figure 2

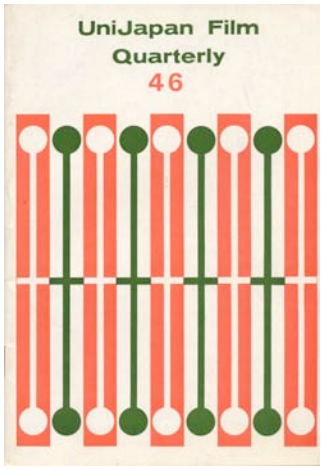

Figure 3

When launched, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was sent out to institutions at all levels in the West; both in Europe and the United States, and this effort on behalf of the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad, Inc may be appreciated in view of my own reference material. I have had access to a collection of film memorabilia deposited with the University of Goteborg by Mr Uno Asplund (1910-1974). Asplund was a Swedish film critic working at Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning and later at Göteborgsposten.

Judging from his personal signature in each issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, he received them in person, the first (collected) issue being that of July 1959 (Serial No 5), and the last (collected) being that of April 1970 (Serial No 48).[62] In view of the fact that Mr Asplund must be considered as a less prominent film critic and the newspapers he worked for were more or less local publications, there is no reason to doubt the persistence behind the effort to disseminate and broaden the information about Japanese cinema on behalf of UniJapan Film. During its entire period of publication, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was managed by Kawakita Nagamasa and Hori Kyusaku, and edited by Kuroda Toyoji and a Japanese staff. There seems to have been only one Westerner on the staff list, one Lewis Bush, who worked as the journal's 'Editorial advisor' between 1960 and 1968. Apart from Mr Bush on the editorial side, no other non-Japanese member of staff was ever credited in the journal.

There was little change among the film production companies represented in the issues of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* over the years. During its entire period of publication, they basically consisted of 'the five majors'; that is Daiei Motion Picture Co Ltd, Nikkatsu Corporation, Shochiku Co Ltd, Toei Motion Picture Co Ltd, Toho Co Ltd, and, for a short while, the Shin Toho Co Ltd. During the 1950s and 1960s, they presented three feature films each per issue, ordered non-alphabetically between the companies according to a rotating schema. The amount was reduced to only two films per company per issue during the last years of publication.

Each of the early issues (between 1958 and 1960) began with a short write up entitled 'UniJapan News', containing current facts and figures related to the production of Japanese film. Among all the 'UniJapan News' entries there is however only one which refers to the export of Japanese film. The issue published in October 1958,[63] contains a list of countries importing Japanese film. Among the 15 countries listed, the 'Top-ten' countries mentioned were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Okinawa Islands | 271 |
| USA | 103 |
| Formosa (now Taiwan) | 48 |
| Hong Kong | 48 |
| Brazil | 36 |
| Thailand | 35 |
| Indonesia | 21 |
| Czechoslovakia | 13 |
| Germany | 8 |
| Sweden | 6 |

As indicated by the list, the majority of films were exported to other Asian countries, with an overwhelming amount destined for the Okinawa Islands on what we may call a pseudo

export basis, since the islands remained under US administration until 1972. It's also worth noticing that no films were exported to China or Korea at this time, as well as the enormously high amount of films exported to the United States compared to other Western countries. The relatively high number of films exported to Czechoslovakia is of interest for my argument in Chapter Five.

The 'UniJapan News' were then followed by a focused presentation of 18 new feature films, including *animé*, which was rounded off by two pages on 'Short films and documentaries', ending with a 'List of Production Companies'. This set up was altered for the first time around 1964 when the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad, Inc launched its second marketing vehicle, *UniJapan Bulletin,* which more or less replaced the 'UniJapan News' section in the periodical. At the same time the amount of features presented in the *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was reduced to 15 films with the disappearance of Shin Toho. Instead, a list of 'Films in the making' was added, as well as a list of 'Feature releases', consisting of already produced films which had not been promoted in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. The first reduction of feature film presentation thus occurred already in 1964, whereas the two lists of new films were not added until in 1967.

The total number of feature films promoted by *UniJapan Film Quarterly* amounts to roughly 860 films between 1958 and 1972; equal to circa 166 films per company among the majors. When compared to the films on my list of Japanese films screened in France, Great Britain and/or the United States during the same time period, together with the list of films reviewed by Western critics, the result is a surprisingly low amount of film matches; approximately 172 films, of which most were screened commercially in the United States. Given the early dissolution of Shin Toho, I base my discussion on the premise that each of the remaining five film companies account for 20% of the films promoted by the Japanese film industry throughout the entire publication period of *UniJapan Film Quarterly.* On closer inspection, no less than 41% of the films produced by Toho attracted Western distributors and exhibitors. The second largest grocer was Shochiku, who exported 27% of its films to France, the United Kingdom and/or the United States between 1945 and 1975. The remaining three players were Daiei (13%), Toei (10%) and Nikkatsu (9%). Shin Toho, in operation only for a few years of the time frame concerned in this study, did not account for more than 2% of the films screened in the West.

These new conditions affected the presentation of Japanese feature films in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* as well. An instance in case would be the October issue 1965, which presented two independent film productions; one produced by Tokyo Eiga Co Ltd; *Illusion of Blood/Yotsuya Kaidan* (1965), and one by Shin Riken Eiga Company; *Vietnam in*

*Turmoil/Doran no Betonamu* (1965), a documentary. This type of independently produced films were however generally distributed by the established film companies, as indicated by the fact that *Illusion of Blood* was distributed by Toho, whereas *Vietnam in Turmoil* was distributed by Daiei.[64]

Three years earlier, the October issue of 1962[65] had already hinted at a certain distress over the situation on the market, in that some important changes had been made regarding the graphical presentation of the films. The most obvious change appeared in the headline where the titles of the films were now being presented in English at the top of the page, then transcribed from the Japanese into our alphabet, followed by the Japanese title in *kanji*. This change was obviously made so that the film titles would catch the eye of Western distributors more quickly. The second change was related to the written presentation of the films, which was considerably shortened, and now consisted of mere 'punch lines'. I again assume that this change was meant to improve the marketing potential of each individual film, while at the same time the journal's entire film presentation came to rely even more on publicity stills, that is the graphic presentation of the films. The amount of feature films on offer was still normally 15[66] at this time, although the first pages were now devoted to 'Films in the making', a presentation of five to six coming feature films. During its last years of publication, *UniJapan Film Quarterly* offered no more than twelve new feature films per issue to the Western market place, following the disbandment of Daiei. Due to the economical constraints in play at the time, the promoted films were often joint-ventures, involving both the traditional film production companies mentioned above, as well as independent producers.

In order to further boost the marketing of its product in the West, UniJapan Film hence initiated the above mentioned *UniJapan Bulletin* which was published between 1964 and 1968. The overall reason for such an action at this point was the generally diminishing interest in cinema-going to the advantage of television's increasing popularity. Locally speaking, the dominant position of Japan's five largest film production companies had also been weakened further by the emergence of strong local independent film production companies. In view of my findings, I however suggest that the main reason for the launching of *UniJapan Bulletin* was the modest success in the West of the films marketed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* between 1958 and 1964. It seems clear that by this time, the *Quarterly* had done very little to *broaden* the Western distribution of Japanese film to important export countries like the United States, even though the amount of films exported had remained considerable.

This highly interesting publication was printed in a tabloid format displaying the looks of a quickly and cheaply printed matter announcing the latest news (no images attached) and was eagerly promoted as 'free of copyright and may therefore be freely published or republished in any other publication'.[67] It seems fair to suggest that the *Bulletin* had the same addressees as the *Quarterly*. A quick scan of the holdings of various media archives nevertheless indicate that the Swedish Film Institute is among the very few that actually collected this bulletin, compared to the *Quarterly* which is now in the holdings of several film libraries. *UniJapan Bulletin* was officially edited by Kuroda Toyoji, but judging by its looks and contents I would claim that Donald Richie, as Kuroda's co-editor, was actually the man behind it.

As a rule, the *Bulletin* was published monthly and both its design and contents display an unbiased focus towards Western media and marketing, and in retrospect seem to represent a crash course in Japanese cinema. Disregarding such obvious market related headlines as 'New Products', the *Bulletin* over the years addressed topics like 'Classic Japanese Films', 'Introducing the Younger Japanese Directors', 'A Filmography of Toshiro Mifune' and 'Introducing Japanese Screen Writers'. Stowed away among the *Bulletin*'s market driven matter one also finds 'A Short Guide to the Aesthetics of Japanese Film', which unexpectedly shines with some of Richie's most dedicated writing:

> Things Western do not often have [the] quality [of] *furyu* (the music of Satie, the basic black suit of Chanel might be exceptions) but things Japanese often do. A recent example is Kurosawa's *Red Beard*. The film is made of the most common of materials (so common that New York critics completely misunderstood the picture because they didn't know what the director was doing with materials that they themselves found banal) and yet at the same time perfectly suggests the ideal to which Kurosawa pictures commonly aspire. Shown with the greatest economy, the surest, most certain and least flashy of techniques, the 'moral elegance' of this picture lay precisely in its transcendence over its materials. The film has another attribute of *furyu* – it has *sabi*, that quality suggesting both age and care. The images of *Red Beard* shine like the body of an old cello, they look like Brahms sounds. (Kurosawa, incidentally, disagrees with this. He will admit to *furyu* but insists that there is no *sabi* in the film – but the difference is semantic: *sabi* suggests 'patina' or even 'rust', but in Japanese there is also the nuance of 'tarnished', a quality few find attractive.)[68]

In addition to basic information on the connotations of Japanese film, every second or third issue of the *Bulletin* was dedicated to reviews of recent Japanese films in the shape of reprints of Donald Richie's own reviews from *The Japan Times*. This is a vital piece of information considering the important but geographically limited pedagogical achievement performed by Donald Richie and Mary Evans as film critics for *The Japan Times*. The reprinting of some of Richie's reviews in the *Bulletin* as well as in *Variety* makes it clear that at least some of them were indeed commonly available in the West (see Chapter

Four).The recurring news on the Japanese film industry obviously made the *Bulletin* a unique source of information at the time, but it was never copied as background information in any Western media during its time of publication.

When compared to the 'UniJapan News' section of the quarterly publication, it would seem that this section had simply been transposed to the *Bulletin* on its first instance of publication in September 1964.[69] This particular subject was however allowed more space over time and in November 1965 the *Bulletin* printed a translation of a report which was originally compiled and written for the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs,[70] a fact which also confirms my assumption that close ties existed between the Japanese film industry and the country's State Departments. The ongoing recession within film production is further reflected in the 'New Statistics' presented in May 1967,[71] and remains a recurrent issue until the last issue is published in early 1969.[72] In my view, the disruption of the publication of *UniJapan Bulletin* at this particular point in time was due mainly to Donald Richie's leaving Japan early in 1969, in order to take up a position as film curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a fact which confirms Richie's crucial involvement with it.

In spite of both these marketing efforts on behalf of UniJapan Film, the films marketed in the *UniJapan Film Quarterly* remained largely undiscovered. What may have been the reason why only 20 per cent (172 films) of its 860 films on offer, emerged on the Western market place? By employing the same taxonomy as the Japanese normally do, that is by dividing Japanese film into the two basic genres of *jidai*-geki and *gendai-geki*, the former representing period drama including *chambara* or sword fighting films, and the latter representing all other film genres, we find that none of the issues of the periodical ever contained more than one third *jidai-geki* films. One is tempted to believe that this is in fact the simple explanation for the relative failure of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* in the Western market place. Furthermore, the films that did fall into the *jidai-geki* category and were promoted in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, were either also screened at film festivals in the West, or considered to be of inferior artistic quality compared to other contemporary auteur productions. It is however important to acknowledge that there was never only one type of *jidai-geki* film presented in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. This variation on a theme was however lost on the Western recipients of the journal, since most of the Westerners involved with Japanese film at this time never took the opportunity to penetrate far enough into any of the Japanese film genres, much less learn about its varieties. It is not until more recent film scholars like Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto[73] and Isolde Standish[74] published their work that we can see that some of the films promoted in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* indeed represented sub-genres within the traditional *jidai-geki* genre which would certainly have

been selected by the Western distributors, had they had this knowledge. This was however not a one-sided mistake in the communication, since the editors of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* seem to have been equally unaware of the general lack of knowledge of the Japanese genre system among Western distributors and critics.

I furthermore argue, that as far as the limited success of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* is concerned, it is the same type of lack of knowledge that made the remaining two thirds of the promoted films seem equally uninteresting to the Western market place. A detailed study of the Japanese films on offer through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* indicates that this publication often promoted contemporary films known as light entertainment films, or B-films, such as thrillers, adventure films, *yakuza* films, youth films, *animé*, melodrama and comedies. The established image of 'Japaneseness' at the time probably made it seem incomprehensible to Westerners, how such films could be promoted together with some of the really famous Japanese directors in the West, which were continually listed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*[75] as well. The main themes of Chapter 4 of John W Dower's abovementioned book, display a close resemblance to the issues focused upon in many of the films marketed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. One of the recurrent themes deals with female prostitutes, so called 'panpans', which Dower describes as the '[…] tough, vulnerable figures remembered for their bright lipstick, nail polish, sharp clothes, and sometimes enviable possessions'.[76] Anyone reading these paragraphs today immediately connects the information to the story in Mizoguchi Kenji's *Street of Shame/Akasen chitai* (1956) which is perfectly correct, except that the West knew next to nothing about these 'butterflies', or 'women of the night', or 'women of the dark', at the time. Had it been known, the Western exhibitors would perhaps have realized that these were indeed the new geisha, and therefore of interest, but the West stuck to the Japonist image of the geisha as seen in the *jidai-geki* films. Dower labelled another theme 'black-market entrepreneurship',[77] which again pinpoints one of the crucial exponents for the social ambivalence in Japan during the post-war era. The obvious film genre that reflected this necessary 'organizational rationalization'[78] of the 'black-market entrepreneurship' was the *yakuza* or gangster film. Again, this type of social factors were clearly reflected by the contemporary films on offer in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, and had the West only known, it would have realized that the *yakuza* in many ways represented the Japanese post-war samurai.

## **2.6** THE *ORIENTAL ECONOMIST*

The *Oriental Economist* originally began publishing in 1934 according to the following statement:

> This Journal is independent. It receives no subsidy. It is in no sense propaganda. It is unbiased by any racial, national, or other slant except toward liberalism. Politically it represents the consistent liberal thought of Japan.[79]

The newsletter was published continuously during World War Two, and remained a Japanese publication in English under its original name, adhering to the above standard, until 1985.[80]

At least eight articles on the Japanese film industry by two Japanese and two American writers were published in the newsletter between 1958 and 1966, under the heading of 'Glimpses of Japanese Culture'. They are, however, generally disappointing on the subject of exportation of Japanese film and its development during the above years, withholding all detailed information of the individual Japanese film production companies' export policies.

The first two articles were written by Mori Iwao, then executive producer in charge of productions at Toho, in 1958 and 1959. Mori's articles mainly discuss the current situation for the Japanese film industry, including its competition with the foreign film market and the emerging interest in television among Japanese households. Regarding the export of Japanese film, Mori wrote that the pre-war exportation of Japanese film '[…] was confined to such areas as Hawaii and the California Coast where there was heavy concentration of people of Japanese ancestry.'[81] I would like to add that the post-war Japanese film exports were equally focused on these locations for the same reason, the large immigrant collectives. As can be seen from Chapter Three, trade journals such as *Variety* and newspapers such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, are completely aware of these communities in both Los Angeles and San Francisco, but for some reason did not cover their film exhibition. It should also be noted that both Daiei and Nikkatsu had offices in Hawaii, whereas Shochiku and Toho had offices in Los Angeles.[82] I therefore suggest that Mori's above comment reflected regret, since the aim of the Japanese film industry obviously was to reach the entire Western world. By 1953, the Japanese film export had however reached earnings of over a million dollars and Japanese film product was spread internationally. Despite all their efforts, the European countries still presented a problem, and Mori remarked that 'Europe is the most difficult spot for Japanese pictures to propagate. However, since the success there of 'Rashomon' […] the Japanese movie industry has frequently sent its representatives, including actors and actresses […].'[83] In his

1959 article,[84] Mori commented that the Japanese film companies are not happy with the exportation rate of Japanese film, even though it reached over 3,3 million dollars. In order to increase it, '[…] Japan's movie industry has decided to step up its overseas public relations activities.'[85]

This effort had obviously started already in 1957, with the establishment of UniJapan, 'an exclusive organization to promote the export of Japanese pictures'.[86] This organization was apparently at the core of these activities, although Mori does not mention the publication of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* among them despite the fact that the journal was a conscious effort at advancing the country's exportation of feature film. In 1958, an additional organisation, called the Federation of Japan's Movie Enterprises, was established, to increase Japan's film exports to five million dollars a year. The Japanese government appears to have promised to help with the execution of this plan.[87]

The fact remains that these efforts on behalf of the Japanese film industry and its sponsors, were more or less ignored by the European film community. As far as I have seen, the media reporting on global film industries remained confined to those related to the European countries, and especially to the Hollywood film industry during the entire time frame of this study. Unfortunately this situation also applies in relation to the Japanese effort at sending representatives such as actors and actresses from the Japanese film industry to the European film festivals. I have not yet come across any serious news coverage in terms of interviews or essays, relating to these Japanese representatives among the European or American material.

The arguments as to the nature of Japanese cinema presented by the Japanese writers of the film articles in *The Oriental Economist*, are interesting in view of the discussions among film scholars regarding Japanese film after World War Two, and its disputed lack of identity. The last paragraph of Mori's article indicates that this discussion had been initiated as early as in the mid-1950s and the Western tendencies of this discussion are clearly reflected in the Giuglaris' book on Japanese cinema, as mentioned above. Contrary to the views held by Japanese film critics like Hashimoto Osamu and Tsutsui Kiyotada,[88] Mori Iwao remarked fiercely that 'Japanese movie producers have never produced a motion picture just for favorable foreign acceptance.'[89] Mori's comment seems paradoxical, since various film company executives, including Nagata Masaichi above, have testified to the opposite.

The identity of Japan's national cinema was again debated in *The Oriental Economist* by Iijima Tadashi in his article on 'Recent movements in Japanese movies'[90] from 1962, whereas Donald Richie had already begun to discuss the same subject already in 1960;

writing that the Japanese film industry '[was] one of the last to attain an individuality […]'.[91] Iijima, however, maintained that the award winning *jidai-geki* films that were screened in the West, were not '[…] rarities specially planned and designed for overseas audiences as a means for Japanese film makers to blaze new markets in foreign countries.'[92] Instead, Iijima points to Ito Daisuke's *The Conspirator/Hangyakuji* (1961) as '[…] one of the most spectacularly successful period pieces in recent years […]'.[93] *The Conspirator* was not commercially released in the countries involved in this study, but was screened at both the French Cinémathèque and the National Film Theatre, in 1975. The debate is still ongoing, though, since contemporary film scholars like Standish and Yoshimoto have continued to support the idea of a conscious 'bastardization' of especially the *jidai-geki* genre, in favour of *foreign* audiences.[94] I would argue however that the development of the *jidai-geki* genre during the late 1950s and 1960s may just as well be linked to the demands of the *domestic* audiences, based on the transgression of the traditional *jidai-geki* films to fit the developing television formats.[95]

Mary Evans' first article for *The Oriental Economist* also revolved around the above discussion, while focusing on post-war applications of the Japanese *jidai-geki* genre in the hands of Kurosawa Akira.[96] In her second article for *The Oriental Economist*, Evans however expanded around the major film exhibition problem in Japan during the 1960s; that of the double bill. This convention is an overlooked reason for the economical problems that plagued the five major Japanese film production companies at this point in time, an argument which was confirmed by Evans:

> It is still the custom to show everything on a double bill, an arrangement which means that the studios are constantly pushed to fill up their quotas, and, being pushed, can seldom afford to allow the time and facilities for a careful, imaginative production.[97]

The accuracy and acute character of her observation on this matter is noteworthy. Unfortunately, however, Evans did not analyze the matter further, and so gives us no clue as to the reaction among the executives within the industry. Mori Iwao had raised the problem already four years earlier in his article for *The Oriental Economist,* firmly pointing the finger at the movie theatre's exhibition policy. According to Mori, the voluminous production increase was due to Toei's successful tradition of double billing, which was suddenly located as the best way of securing the bookings at the local theatres. 'Consequently, the producers have to continue supplying two new pictures every week in order to keep the theatres firmly in their hold. This is the first and by far the most important reason why Japan's movie industry has to keep on producing more and more pictures at present.'[98]

According to Iijima Tadashi in his 1962 article, a tendency towards longer running periods was established among the Japanese movie theatres after the unexpected success of Kurosawa Akira's *Yojimbo* in 1961.[99] He does not mention its effect on the tradition of double-billing, however. Mary Evans' article of 1966[100] adds no more information on the primary issues above; the exportation, the identity issue, or the tradition of double-billing. Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace her 1964 article: 'The Walled Island; Japanese film'.[101]

I had expected the articles in *The Oriental Economist* to be of a more pronounced financial character, negotiating the economical strategies and aspirations of the Japanese film industry in a more detailed manner. Had that been the case, these articles would have complimented the material I have presented here on the aesthetic principles which determined the marketing strategy abroad of a film company like Daiei, as well as Nikkatsu. This is not to say that their addressing the issue of the identity of the Japanese cinema, or the system of double-billing at Japanese cinemas is of no interest, but the fact remains that these articles confirm an ongoing local debate, instead of publishing texts that present new material of international interest. In summing up my impression of slight disappointment in the articles in *The Oriental Economist*, this impact is probably due to its shallow debate of these important topics, and their apparent negligence of others. To my regret, issues related to the economical strategies of the early post-war Japanese film industry have not yet fully appeared in the Western academic discourse related to Japanese film studies.

### **2.7** *CASE STUDY:* TOHO CHAMBARA VS NIKKATSU AKUSHON

The divergence in popularity in the West between the feature films from Toho and Nikkatsu, as presented through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* between 1958 and 1972, constitute a case in point. Both film companies presented 166 features each, but only 21 of Nikkatsu's films were screened in the three countries involved in this study, whereas the number of Toho features which were successful in the West amounts to 68 films, during the same time period. In the following discussion, I shall present a few facts which may explain this discrepancy between the Nikkatsu and Toho films screened in France, Great Britain and/or the United States.

It is of interest to see which countries the two film companies focused their marketing efforts on, since one may assume that these countries responded well to their films. The 'Business Directory' at the back of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* includes a list of the film companies' office branches as from April 1967[102] and we can see that Toho at that point lists branch offices in New York, Sao Paulo, Lima, Paris, Rome, Hong Kong and Bangkok.

Nikkatsu lists branch offices in Hawaii, Sao Paolo and New York. In the last issue of the periodical, five years later, Toho lists branch offices in Los Angeles, New York, Sao Paulo, Rome and Hong Kong, whereas Nikkatsu lists only Hawaii and New York.[103] It seems that Nikkatsu did not find Europe to be one of their really important marketing areas, whereas Toho had an interest in marketing its films in both Paris and Rome. Both companies however had branch offices in New York. An additional, but maybe even more important fact as to how come Toho was able to screen most of its films in the United States is that the film company operated its own cinemas in both Los Angeles and New York.[104] Nikkatsu never had the same advantage. A third external factor that certainly had an effect on the business success of Toho's films is the company's extensive representation at the most well-known European film festivals. The company presented no less than 20 fiction films related to the selection presented in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* at a festival, most often those of Berlin, Cannes, Locarno or Venice. Out of those 20, half the amount relates to the genre of *jidai-geki* films, nine are contemporary dramas and one is a science-fiction film. The genre most often represented among the films in a contemporary setting was melodrama, such as *Happiness of Us Alone/Namonaku mazushiku utsukushiku* (1961) by Matsuyama Zenzo, screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1961, and *Yearning/Midareru* (1964) by Naruse Mikio, screened at the Locarno Film Festival the same year. In comparison, Nikkatsu presented only six features related to the selection presented in *UniJapan Film Quarterly,* at the festivals in Cannes (1), Melbourne (1), Moscow (2) and Venice (2) during the same period of time. Four of these films are modern melodramas, the other two are youth films. However, not all Toho or Nikkatsu films which had already had an international screening, automatically appeared in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. An instance in case would be Shinoda Masahiro's *Double Suicide at Amijima/Shinji ten no Amijima* (1969) which even though it was screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1969, was never introduced to a larger segment of distributors and exhibitors through *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. The same applies to Kuruhara Izen's *Thirst for Love/Ai no kawaki* (1966), a Nikkatsu production screened at the Locarno Film festival in 1966.

The generic nature of the Nikkatsu and Toho productions mentioned above, brings us to the internal conditions which may have contributed to the dominance of Toho films. Both companies were strongly focused on male acting and worked hard to enhance the popularity of its male actors; mainly Mifune Toshiro at Toho, and Ishihara Yujiro at Nikkatsu, but only the former was ever known to the Western public. There are many reasons for this diversion in Mifune's and Ishihara's popularity, but I presume that Mifune's relative familiarity in the West is primarily connected to his starring in period dramas, whereas Ishihara starred

mainly in youth films and thrillers, genres that were never really endorsed by the Western distributors. My main argument is therefore that the reason for the discrepancy in market shares between the companies is based on each company's individual choice of film production style, and this issue is per se partly linked to the re-emergence of the Nikkatsu film company in 1954. After having disbanded its production line shortly before the Japanese entered World War Two, Nikkatsu again went into business in 1954, to the obvious dismay of the other 'majors'. They promptly initiated a boycott called the 'five-company agreement against Nikkatsu'[105] which made it very difficult for Nikkatsu to find people that would work with the new company. Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris however in 1955 determined that '[…] since Nikkatsu works with only a few well-known actors and a few inherited senior independents, it makes good films'[106], whereas Anderson and Richie a few years later argued that:

> Despite box-office appeal, the early Nikkatsu product achieved little critical success […] One of the reasons was that the Nikkatsu product had, and still has, no especial flavor. Most Japanese film companies like to create and push their own particular kind of film, for example, […] Toho's pictures appealing to the urbanities. Nikkatsu, however, in aiming its films to appeal to every taste, scattered its shots too wide. […] But Nikkatsu had its reasons: it was looking for a place in the market and for that reason it shopped around and purposely avoided specializing.[107]

In addition to the effects of choice of genre, or lack of a conventional genre direction in Nikkatsu's case, I suggest that Nikkatsu's misunderstanding of the Western audience is another factor of central importance, when considering the divergence in popularity between Toho's and Nikkatsu's films in the West. Interestingly, Standish also writes that Nikkatsu was known as the 'kingdom of period drama'[108] before World War Two, explaining that its interpretation of the *chambara* film genre primarily invested in 'the display of the male hero's body'.[109] A seemingly overlooked tie between *chambara* (sword fighting) and Nikkatsu's post-1954 *akushon* (Japanese transliteration of the English word 'action') film is thus revealed, since, in fact, both genres are aimed at a male audience, and both are involved with 'the display of the male hero's body'.

In fact, the films proposed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* provide ample evidence of the preferred genre types of each of the companies represented therein. Nikkatsu's choice to adhere to the action and youth film is of particular interest, since the choice of these particular genres is arguably the main reason for the relative lack of success of its films with the Western distributors. It was not until 2005 when the Far East Film Festival in Udine, Italy, initiated a retrospective of 'Nikkatsu akushon' cinema that this film genre was properly introduced in the West. The programme consisted of 16 features dating from 1958 until 1970, in tandem with the first Western presentation of this particular genre and its stars

in book form by Mark Shilling. In his brief history of Nikkatsu, Shilling eventually comes to the year 1958 and '[…] the action films that were to define […] Nikkatsu's image for the next decade and a half […]' and goes on to state that in the following year, 1959, '[…] Nikkatsu made more action product, fewer films in other genres […]'.[110] The company chose to label these films 'borderless action' *(mukokuseki akushon*),[111] and thus introduced a sub-genre which actually defined a completely new concept in Japanese film production.

When comparing the films on offer through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* further, there can be no doubt that Nikkatsu was clearly promoting these new borderless action films to the West, alongside their release in Japan. Unfortunately, but more importantly, Nikkatsu apparently did so without any preparatory market research. Yet Shilling's references to its most popular films, including all genres, between 1959 and 1962, is generally matched by the film titles listed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. However, among the eight matches that can be made, only two seem to be connected to films screened in the countries involved in this study, the first being a youth film entitled *Friendship of Jazz/Arashi o yobu yujo* (1959) by Inoue Umeji. This film was in fact the sequel of an earlier youth film by Inoue, entitled *The Stormy Man/Arashi o yobu otoko* (1957), which was rated as 'Poor' by *Monthly Film Bulletin* in connection with its release in the United Kingdom in 1960. John Gillett, a senior film scholar and critic, working at the British Film Institute, wrote of it:

> Usually the West is denied the worst excesses of the Japanese commercial film, but when one does slip through like *The Stormy Man*, one realizes how easily the Japanese have imbibed the ugliest characteristics of the American cinema adding, for good measure, some of the least likable aspects of their own. Played against garish and extremely elaborate décor, its cliché-riddled plot takes in mother love, gang violence and a deafening pastiche of Western jazz. The result is a tedious melodrama, redeemed by a few sequences of agile, atmospheric camerawork. […][112]

The second film mentioned by Shilling during the first period of Nikkatsu's borderless action film, which was also presented in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, is *Cupola, Where the Furnaces Glow/Kyopora no aru machi* (1962) by Urayama Kiriro. Shilling refers to this film as 'Nikkatsu's big prestige film of the year [1962] […]'[113] and it was also screened at the Cannes Film Festival the same year. *Cupola, Where the Furnaces Glow* is in fact not a borderless action film, but a family melodrama, based on a script by Shohei Imamura.[114] Because of its genre, *Cupola, Where the Furnaces Glow* is therefore not really relevant in connection with the issue of Nikkatsu's borderless action films, but because it is a family/youth melodrama it is an excellent representative of the importance of film genre vis-à-vis success with the Western film distributors. It also gives us an idea of the types of films which the Japanese film companies elected to send to the European film festivals.

Taken together, however, Nikkatsu's new concept, focusing on young people and the borderless action film, did not become popular in the West. The general problem seems to have been embedded in the film genres themselves, whereas the particular problem laid in the concept, that is, the fact that Nikkatsu's borderless action films and youth films basically introduced contemporary Western aesthetics to young Japanese people, and the obvious fact that the films were primarily intended for this audience.

Nikkatsu went on to steadily produce its *akushon* film starring the immensely popular Ishihara Yujiro during the entire period of publication of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. As from the mid-1960s Ishihara's film characters were increasingly paired off with, and later replaced by, those of Watari Tetsuya. Watari's film characters were introduced to the readers of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* as from early 1967, starting with Masuda Toshio's film *Man of Victory/Shori to Otoko* (1967). As from 1968, Watari was the leading male star of Nikkatsu's 'New Action' films, which:

> […] tended to be cruder and ruder, trending, in the end to outright exploitation. The films centered on […] dirty heroes fighting desperately for survival or gangs of thrill-seeking, turf-battling punks. […] Watari's career was on an upward trajectory, starting with the *Burai* series (1968-1969) that defined the early New Action style. In 1970 and 1971 he was New Action's most familiar face, though his stoic loner persona did not always fit well with the Age of Aquarius group ethos of the sub-genre's latter films.[115]

In comparison to the star persona of Ishihara Yujiro, Watari Tetsuya seems to above all have portrayed tragic heroes and/or anti-heroes; visibly reflecting and unhappy delinquent characters which have nothing to do with promoting a Western lifestyle or any of the aesthetics connected with male heroism. Instead, Watari's characters rather reflect those poor unfortunates who are unjustly sacrificed to the underworld, and the *Burai* series[116] was indeed based on a story from real life; that of the gangster Fujita Goro. 'Playing a street tough whose favourite weapon was a short sword, Watari was nonetheless a sympathetic sort, who may have been a lone wolf, but was not […] crazed with rage, greed or some other combination thereof.'[117]

It would be wrong to say that Nikkatsu is unique in its choice of Western-styled feature films for *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, compared to the other major Japanese film companies presenting their films to the Western countries in the same periodical. These companies also sometimes promoted Western-styled contemporary films, but with less persistence. Nikkatsu's approach remains the most consistent and uniform, indeed emanating from a custom-made concept regarding action films, whereas the other film companies nurtured a constant tendency to present both *jidai-geki* and *gendai-geki* (contemporary drama) features to the non-Japanese distributors and exhibitors.

*Borderless iconography*

From a certain point of view, one could argue that Nikkatsu actually endorsed the young and often fatherless Japanese post-war generation's need for new role-models through consciously focusing on a small number of especially young male Japanese film stars with Ishihara Yujiro at the top, followed briefly by Akagi Keiichiro (d. 1961), but mainly by Kobayashi Akira and, later on, Watari Tetsuya; all of whom were constantly coupled with female actresses like Asaoka Ruriko or Kitahara Mie. These young Japanese film stars were subject to the same star cult as were their Western contemporaries Marlon Brando, James Dean, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Audrey Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe and Jean Seberg among Japanese youth.

The promotional images accompanying the written presentation of Nikkatsu's youth films in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, therefore, stand out in comparison to those promoting films of the other companies. The ichnographically traditional type of film stills were mainly represented by the other film companies in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, even though Nikkatsu also used its promotional images as traditional film stills regardless of their specific iconography. I shall use the term 'borderless iconography' for Nikkatsu's publicity images, since they plainly indicate an iconography of Western ideals, focusing on the promotion of a certain lifestyle through the physical presentation of certain actors' star persona, as well as Western materiality through popular gadgets intended for youngsters, such as the Italian Vespa and basket balls. The overall negative outcome for Nikkatsu's films in France, Great Britain and the United States, however, seems to indicate that this choice of borderless iconography had no enhancing effect on the popularity of its films among the exhibitors and distributors in these countries. Seen in a meta-perspective, Nikkatsu's failure in reaching a Western audience through its consciously construed borderless iconography is of utmost importance to our understanding of the image of Japanese film in the West.

The iconography of the images promoting Nikkatsu's films reveals that they were of a highly interesting and unique character. From the point of view of Nikkatu's 'borderless' concept, the iconography of these promotional images seem to have expressed an additional dimension of double-ended borderlessness, indicating that their lack of 'Japaneseness' was meant to add value to the films in relation to both national and international film circles. They therefore seemed to represent the Japanese film stars from a traditional, *Western* point of view, which in this case implies that the images lacked all traces of conventional exoticism and/or 'Japaneseness'. The transnational character of these publicity stills may thus have been intended as objects of reverence for fans within any given star cult. A closer

look at some of the stills published in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* allows us to better comprehend the iconographical elements used to enhance this sought-for borderlessness. I have also copied excerpts of the written presentations to give the reader an idea of the buzz-words used to catch the attention of the Western readership.

*Showdown in the Storm/Arashi no nakao tsuppashire* (1959)

Two images of the film's main characters, Ishihara Yujiro and Kitahara Mie, of which one is a close-up focusing on Ishihara's face leaning over the handlebars of a motorcycle, with Kitahara's face in the background. Ishihara Yujiro is immediately recognisable as the main attraction for both sexes; a role model for the male viewer and a case of infatuation for the female.

On the larger image, Ishihara and Kitahara are surrounded by items clearly connected to Western youth culture; they pose sitting on the motorcycle, and Ishihara is wearing trainers and light chinos, Kitahara is holding a basket ball.

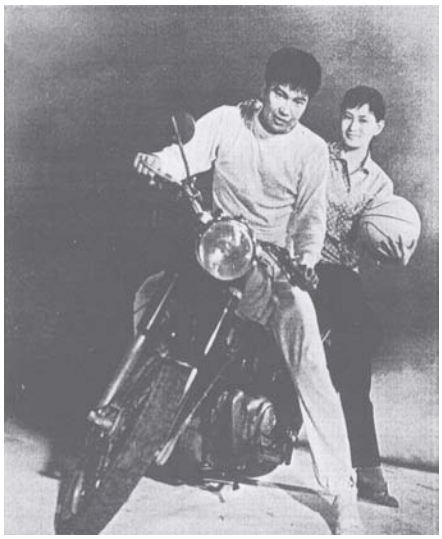

Figure 4

None of them look particularly Japanese, and every iconographical element (motorbike, basket ball, trainers, Kitahara's pony-tail, etc) indicate an American sports and outdoors ideal. This flirtation with Western aesthetics is further mirrored in their film characters, as well as in the film's plot:

> It is when assisting his friend Nakagawa by riding for his team in a horsemanship contest that Senkichi Kira [Ishihara Yujiro], a physical culture instructor meets beautiful Setsuko [Kitahara Mie], […]. [118]

*Love and Death/Sekai o kakeru koi* (1959)

In this film, '[…]Yuji Muraoka [Ishihara Yujiro], an assistant professor, falls in love with the beautiful Hatsuko Nonomura [Asaoka Ruriko]. Just after they become engaged Yuji

learns that he has won first prize in a contest and that he is to go to Rome to receive the award. […]' [119]

The entire right-hand page in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* is covered by a large star image of the film's main characters; Ishihara Yujiro and Asaoka Ruriko, in which she is sitting, almost huddling, on the sand in the forefront, thus leaving most of the picture space to Ishihara. Both are dressed according to Western middle-class fashion; Asaoka is wearing a white suit, with matching handbag, straw hat and high heels, Ishihara is wearing a dark suit and tie.

Figure 5

They thus wear the colours of a Western wedding couple, which seems fitting since they are engaged to be married. The image is a prime example of Ishihara's media exposure at the time; all camera angels, film stills and promotion stills showed off his long legs. Ishihara's long legs were indeed borderless – and certainly not Japanese. *Love and Death* was shot on location in Europe and the couple was photographed on the sea shore in front of a local sailing boat. There really isn't anything in the image which immediately connects the scene to a Japanese film, nor with Japanese actors.

*Blossoms of Love/Ajisai no uta* (1960)

A single star image promotes this film in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*; Ishihara Yujiro and Kitahara Mie by the tennis net, with rackets in their hands. This is another example of a borderless Nikkatsu film still, where the couple is emerged in a Western life-style of sports and leisure outdoors:

> Tosuke [Ishihara], a commercial artist, assists an old man named Genjuro when he falls and breaks his leg. This leads to Tosuke meeting Keiko [Kitahara], the old man's daughter[…][120]

Figure 6

*Love Story of Ginza/Ginza no koi no monogatari* (1962)

> Jiro, a painter, is in love with Hisako, who works at the Ginza-ya, in a dressmaking store. His friend is Miyamoto, a pianist, with whom he shares a room. Both are striving to get ahead in their professions, […][121]

Figure 7

The written presentation of this film is accompanied with a single idol image of the film's stars, covering the entire right-hand page. This image expresses an interesting iconography regarding the presentation of the film's three principal actors, Ishihara Yujiro, Asaoka Ruriko and Jerry Fujio, in that the observer's gaze is cleverly directed to its centre (that is to Ishihara Yujiro) through the admiring gazes of the three other characters in the image. All three of them are looking at him, standing in the forefront, looking out of the picture frame. He is wearing dark chinos and his long legs are clearly displayed as he leans against his Western sports car. Opposite him, but a little further back in the picture plane, we see his tweed-suited friend leaning against his sports car. The friend is played by Jerry Fujio, who

was half-American. At the centre of the composition but even further back in the picture plane, two young women are standing in admiration, one of them being Asaoka Ruriko. She is wearing a navy-striped t-shirt and a sleeveless dress, whereas her friend is wearing glasses, a white dress with narrow waist and white socks in her loafers. According to Mark Shilling this particular film '[…] marked the start of yet another Nikkatsu sub-genre – ''mood action'' or melodramas with action elements, usually pairing Ishihara and Asaoka as starcrossed lovers.'[122]

*When a Man Risks His Life/Otoko ga inochi o kekeru toki* (1960)

When it comes to his action films, Nikkatsu was again unable to refrain from promoting Ishihara Yujiro through his legs. The promotional images for *When a Man Risks His Life* would be a case in point. Ishihara's character and the complicated yarn he gets involved in, is presented thus:

> Komuro, a ship's doctor, says goodbye to the sea as he has now enough money to start a small hospital of his own. On his way to Tokyo, in Uzu a local doctor's body is found riddled with shots and, as Komuro is carrying his shotgun, the dead man's daughter Keiko, and son Masao, are convinced he killed their father.
> After becoming involved in another murder case when the husband of Yuko, through love of whom Komuro had gone to sea is killed, he returns to Tokyo with Masao, now convinced that he had nothing to do with the death of his father. At Tokyo he is surprised to meet Teno, whom he supposed dead, but who reveals that he killed a man in self-defence and is now being sought by an enemy. […].[123]

The written presentation of the film is accompanied by two promotion stills of different sizes in black/white. In the case of varying picture size, graphical convention would place the smaller image on top of the larger on the page spread, but in this case, the larger image of Ishihara alone takes precedence and is placed at the top, above the smaller image with him and his friend. The page is thus dominated by the larger publicity still of Ishihara's character in the film, which primarily shows him off as a man with a shotgun wearing a cartridge belt round his waist, standing with his long legs broadly spread on a mound in the middle of a construction site. The placing of the cartridge belt on top of his jacket and round the waist instead of diagonally across his chest, in effect further emphasizes the length of Ishihara's legs. It's clear that none of the images focus on the 'Doctor' in Ishihara's character, but on the film's element of action.

Even though most male actors playing main characters in Nikkatsu's action films were promoted through more conventional/neutral publicity stills, Nikkatsu made an attempt to promote yet another of its coveted young actors as a star persona for the West; Akagi Keiichiro.

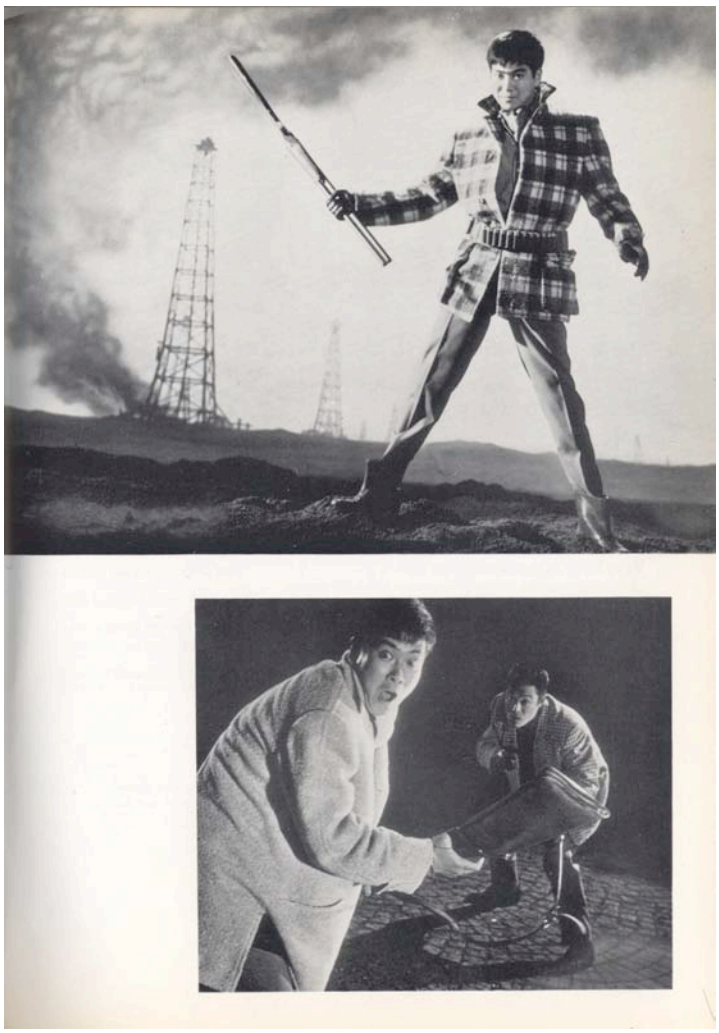

Figure 8

Mark Shilling writes that he was nicknamed 'Tony' because of his likeness to Tony Curtis,[124] but this artist name does not seem to have been known to the readers of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. All the same, it can be argued that as was the case with Ishihara Yujiro, the relative fame and popularity of Akagi Keiichiro is based on his non-Japanese features. Akagi was therefore most likely nick-named 'Tony' as a promotional manœuvre intended to trigger a double-ended popularity on both the domestic and international arena. Nikkatsu was subsequently quick to introduce Akagi internationally through *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, which promoted at least two of the four films in Noguchi Hiroshi's *Kenju Buraicho*-series in which Akagi played a gunslinger.

*Ryuji, the Gunslinger/Nikuuchi no Ryu* (1960)

The first film in this series featuring the Japanese *yakuza* was presented to the Western public in the July 1960 issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, entitled *Ryuji, the Gunslinger*: 'When Ryuji – the Gun Slinger (sic), a drug addict, leaves the hospital to which he was taken after a gunfight with a notorious killer named Gin of the Colt,[125] he is employed as a bodyguard by Sangen Yo, chief of a narcotics smuggling ring. […]'[126]

The two black and white promotion images for the film are arranged in much the same way as those for *When a Man Risks His Life,* above, in that a large image of the film's main character is presented on top of a smaller image including a larger number of the film's characters.

Figure 9

In *Ryuji, the Gunslinger*, the larger image focuses on the film's male star, and thus has Akagi Keiichiro looking more or less straight into the camera, sitting at a gambling table dressed in a dark suit with tie, playing dice and smoking. Beside him at the table sits a man dressed in a Western coat and wearing a hat, drinking either whiskey or beer. The image does not disclose the friend's facial features, since he is seen in profile. There are thus no iconographical elements in the image which necessarily connect it to Japan, or to Japanese men.

*The Gun Like Lightning/Denkosekka no Otoko* (1960)

The second film from the *Kenju Buraicho*-series was introduced in the October 1960 issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, entitled *The Gun Like Lightning*:

> Sadao, is saved from death at the hand of Goro, a killer belonging to a rival gang, by Joji just released from prison who has resolved to turn over a new leaf. He has returned, however, because of Keiko, his sweetheart, whom he now finds is engaged to Noboru, a detective and son of Jinsaku, boss of the Otsu gang. […].[127]

The promotional images for *The Gun Like Lightning* are set up much the same way as in the other two cases, even if the composition of the images for the latter is focused on the couple rather than the thugs. The composition of the larger image resembles that for the previous film in composition in that it again focuses on the star persona of Akagi Keiichiro, catching him almost *en face* looking slightly up and out of the image with a pistol close to his face, whereas 'Keiko' (played be Asaoka Ruriko) is seen in reversed profile, turned away from him and looking out of the picture frame.

Figure 10

Again, there is little in the presentation of Akagi which indicates that he is indeed a Japanese man and this effect is enhanced by the angle of his face and direction of his gaze, which minimizes the Asian character of his facial features even further. As for Asaoka, she is a picture of Western fashion; dressed in an elegantly hand embroidered coat with a goblin-like pattern, wearing a typical Western make-up of the early 1960's, including pale pink lipstick and eye-liner, as well as a typical Western ladies' hair-do. There is nothing obviously 'Japanese' about her iconographical appearance either.

*A Torrent of Life/Gekiryu ni ikiru otoko* (1962)

According to Shilling, the genre referred to as 'Nikkatsu borderless action' films began to decline around 1963 due to the emerging success of Toei's new period action genre, termed *ninkyo eiga* (chivalry films). He also claims that Nikkatsu had to follow suit[128] and the first kimono to appear among the promotional images for a Nikkatsu feature film, appeared in the July 1962 issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, in connection with Nomura Takashi's film *A Torrent of Life*, which was presented in the same issue as the above mentioned *Love Story of Ginza*:

> Ryutaro Kurosu, once a welter-weight boxer, inadvertently kills a young hoodlum in a street brawl. It was in self-defence, but sick at heart, he decides to sign on the S.S. Brazil Maru.
> However, sailing is delayed for 10 days and Kyutaro finds himself at a loose end. When he saves a boy from being run over by a car the lad's sister Sakae offers him a room until his ship sails.
> In the ensuing 10 days, things happen thick and fast, initiating Ryutaro into the ways of a tough harbour city, teeming with men dealing in shady business, including extortion from the weak like Sakae, who operates a bar to support herself and her brother.
> But Ryutaro settles everything for his two friends before he sails away to begin a new life.[129]


Figure 11

The larger of the promotional images (now at the bottom of the right-hand page, in due accordance with customs of graphical form) accompanying this text, represents a double hybrid form, in that both the film plot and this image include a bar scenario, instead of its Western counterpart, the night club, which had been the appropriate locale in Nikkatsu's past 'borderless action' films. In choosing a traditional Japanese bar scenario, the plot automatically requires a kimono-clad Japanese woman. In this case, the kimono-clad Japanese woman ('Sakae') in *A Torrent of Life* may be said to represent another hybrid, since she is young and unspoilt, and deliberately wears the kimono as a 'work uniform', a fact which is underlined by her gestures (acting style) and her unpainted face and contemporary, that is 1960s, hair-do. In the promotional image, she is sitting face to face with the young man ('Ryutaro') who is dressed like any young man with a notion of the latest Western fashion trends in the early 1960s. The location is supposedly the bar, but it is nevertheless identified mainly through the Western beverage posters on the wall behind/between them, which would seem to propose a Martini drinking tradition, rather than that of Japanese saké.

*Fresh Leaves/Wakaihito* (1962)

In the January 1963 issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly,* Asaoka Ruriko appears in a kimono on the promotion images for Nishikawa Katsumi's film *Fresh Leaves*[130], although her counterpart, Ishihara Yujiro remained dressed in Western style. Compared to the previous film still, the difference in iconography of the female characters indicates yet a step towards a certain support for traditional values, as yet unseen in the selection of films presented by Nikkatsu through *UniJapan Film Quarterly*.

The period dramas that subsequently emerged among Nikkatsu's films represented through promotional images of historical dress and locale in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* were still relatively few and it was not until the October issue of 1968 that Nikkatsu seemed to make a serious attempt to promote its period films.[131]

Figure 12

There does not however seem to have been an obvious connection between Lewis Bush's resignation in early 1968 and the presentation of no less than three period dramas in the October issue of that year. Such a large number of period films is however unique when it comes to the overall selections of films presented by the Nikkatsu Corporation in the periodical. It is also interesting to note that this particular issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* probably contains the largest amount of films exported to the West during its publication period, with the exception of the proffered Nikkatsu period films, of which, again, none were exported.

Instead, the explanation of the discrepancy between the relative failure of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* and furthermore of Nikkatsu, and the Japanese films chosen for exhibition in the West, was in fact clearly pointed out in *UniJapan Bulletin* on several occasions. The abovementioned report compiled for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1965, held the following paragraph:

> It is frequently said that most of the Japanese movies winning favorable reaction abroad have been period films. Do such films then occupy the larger parts of production in Japan? […] As will be seen, the number of period films produced in Japan has been surprisingly small, and the total number has been decreasing year by year. In 1964, period films totalled 53, only 15.5 per cent of the total output.[132]

The failure of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* is thus explained not only by its choice of promoted Japanese film product, but lies actually in a difference in the mind sets between the Western distributors and the Japanese senders.

## **2.8** SUMMARY

I have mapped the marketing efforts performed by the Japanese film industry in connection with the introduction of their film product on the Western market more or less chronologically in this chapter. In doing so, I have been able to establish that one of the most important characteristics of these efforts is that they were designed and prepared in Japan, as a result of close monitoring of Western film festivals and general cultural attitudes

towards Asia, which may be connected to Orientalism. The professional approach by a producer like Nagata Masaichi of Daiei is obviously central to the understanding of these strategies. His explanation to the Giuglaris' is interesting since one has to read between the lines in order to understand that it was actually the notion of the West's appreciation of Orientalism, which made way for the decision on a certain aesthetic framework in connection with the introduction of Japanese film in the West. Hence the primary choice of *jidai-geki* films, which represent a genre that was not immediately endorsed by the Giuglaris' in their book. Disregarding the evasions vis-à-vis the United States, as professed by Nagata, Europe seems to have been the obvious place to start the marketing of Japanese film, in view of the cultivated clientele it was aimed at. The technical developments in the early 1950s, giving access to both colour and widescreen, made the picture complete: Japanese *jidai-geki* film now almost perfectly resembled the late 19th century wood-cut prints by a Hiroshige! This was indeed a very shrewd marketing strategy, although its reducing character has actually hampered the development of the cinematic experience of Japanese film in the West over time.

The books by the Giuglaris' and Anderson and Richie remain the first important texts that were published in the West on a non-Occidental national cinema. The extent to which they were commissioned by the Japanese film industry remains to be determined, suffice to say that there are indications of a close collaboration between the authors and people at different levels of the Japanese film industry. It stands to reason that the Japanese certainly did not prevent the publications, what matters here are the premises for the individual arguments presented by these Western writers. The Giuglaris' book can be read as a meta-text which actually unravels a lot of the false picture elements surrounding the Western image of 'Japaneseness', and the alleged identity of the Japanese national cinema. The possibility of such a reading seems to be connected to the Giuglaris' relative lack of profound knowledge of the film medium per se, which makes them refrain from comparing Japanese cinema to that of the West. Their approach leaves the Japanese cinema standing on its own, thus allowing for a less biased exposition. An instance in case would be when the Giuglaris discuss economical determinants by asking 'Why does it cost so little to produce a Japanese film?'[133] and giving, as one of the reasons, 'By using the long take technique with a fixed camera as a rule, the amount of shots is considerably reduced'.[134]

When read today, the above statement typically reveals information which has been systematically misunderstood or neglected in the West through decades of conscious myth-making based on the West's dependence on Orientalism and auteur aesthetics. Another instance in case would be the use of the panorama shot among Japanese directors, which

has been compared to the Japanese aesthetics of images on lacquered screens, by many Western admirers of *jidai-geki* film, such as Andrew Sarris and Max Tessier. By turning these shots into economical parameters instead of aesthetic implications, the reader is inclined to again ask whether there has been a misunderstanding in the transmission of the aesthetics of Japanese film to the West.

As for my differentiation of the character of the Giuglaris' and Anderson and Richie's books, I find that Anderson and Richie's work was in fact basically determined by a pre-constituated model of Anglo-Saxon film history, and that they '[…] use[d Western] films to organize their narrative' much like Cazdyn claims that Tanaka was doing.[135] The Giuglaris' were less observant of the events of cinematographic history, since their work (on post-war film production) was more often than not based on socio-economical and demographical factors. Both Anderson and Richie's and the Giuglaris' respective approaches were tailored to the expected Western readership of their books on Japanese film history and I suggest that this awareness was crucial to their choice of literary forms. As far as I can see, both forms are adequate when introducing a new national cinema to an audience which still knows very little about it, although the auteurist apparatus chosen by Anderson and Richie clearly previews the coming, and lingering, academic approach.

In tandem with the efforts by Western writers and critics to market Japanese film, the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad, Inc, introduced the periodical *UniJapan Film Quarterly* as a main Japanese marketing vehicle, in 1958. The reason for its relative failure to diffuse Japanese film in the West was basically that this periodical promoted the wrong film genres. The general opinion of the films promoted by *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, would therefore have been that these could not be categorized as 'art films' according to Western cinematic criteria at the time, nor could these films have been screened at the art house cinemas, which were the preferred location for Japanese film in the West between 1950 and 1975. The dependence of Western distributors of Japanese film on Western auteurism thus become apparent and is further discussed in Chapter Three.

One is tempted to conclude that the films promoted by the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad, Inc, through *UniJapan Film Quarterly,* were indeed chosen in order to initiate a better 'understanding' and additional 'cultural exchange' for any film loving Western audience in relation to Japanese film, irrespective of the business aspect of the project - an assumption which implies a huge miscalculation on behalf of the Japanese, not only as to the business strategies represented by the Western film distributors and their relation to Japanese film, but, indeed, in relation to the entire Western reception of Japanese film. It is this unsuccessful attempt by the Japanese Film Association to increase

the selection of Japanese film in the West, together with the Western nations' reluctance to widen its experience of the Japanese film production that makes for an interesting enigma here.

Another instance of huge miscalculation on behalf of the Japanese was Nikkatsu's 'borderless' action films and the 'borderless iconography' I have traced from the publicity stills representing this particular sub-genre. None of the other Japanese film companies made such a bold effort at Westernisation in their presentations of their films in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. Shilling's term 'borderless action film', as used in connection with the Nikkatsu film genre most prominently displayed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, actually denotes the main reason for the company's failure on the Western film market during the years 1958 until 1972. The 'borderless' Japanese films were of no interest to the Western distributors and exhibitors since it was not claiming or displaying 'Japaneseness'.

Furthermore, Shilling's references to Nikkatsu's most popular films, perfectly echo the films proposed through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* and we may thus presume that Nikkatu's view on the selection of films to be presented to a non-Japanese audience, was indeed one that emphasized lack of limits and borders. Nikkatsu may thereby be said to have promoted a new type of 'transnational' film genre, by which I mean a genre devoid of any trace of Otherness and/or exoticism. Did Nikkatsu then comply with demands made by Western critics? This may well have been the case, but I have been able to find only one occasion on which the matter of Westernisation has been openly demanded. Whether the American film critic Henry Hart's reviews of the above mentioned Japanese Film Weeks in New York in 1957 and 1958 reflected a typical American approach to Japanese film at the time, is difficult to ascertain, but his general attitude to the Japanese dramatic film was openly condescending: '*Downtown/Shitamachi* (1957) by Chiba Yasuke] is an excellent example of the sad fact that a Japanese program picture with a contemporary story is almost as unsuited for the West as is a Japanese programmer with a medieval theme.' Hart finishes his 1958 review with the remark that 'Mr Kido and his fellow producers should ponder the use of Western subject matter and Western players.'[136]

As for *The Oriental Economist,* it is disappointing that the newspaper's articles on the Japanese film industry convey very little information regarding the economical strategies and policies employed by the industry. The writers of these articles, as well as the heading 'Glimpses of Japanese Culture', on the other hand indicate that the newspaper never intended to publish any hard core information on the economical development of this particular industry, in this context.

To conclude, the facts presented in this chapter complicate the history of post-war Japanese film in the West, in that we can see that the marketing efforts made by the Japanese film industry were clearly based on attitudes represented in Western culture. It is also clear that the marketing efforts later made by the Japanese film industry to enter the Western film market on a large scale were still rather unsuccessful, in spite of a continued careful mapping of the Western film community. Instead, we shall see that the post-war introduction of Japanese film was not reliant on Japanese marketing efforts, but in reality depended entirely on critics of the Western film community (see Chapter Three).

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1 Ian Jarvie, 'Free Trade as Cultural Threat: American film and TV exports in the post-war period' in *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity: 1945-95*, ed. by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Steven Ricci (London: Bfi publishing 1998), p. 37.

[2] Iwao Mori, 'Japan's Movie Industry Today', *The Oriental Economist*, Vol 26, February 1958, pp. 92-93.

[3] See also Ian Jarvie, 'The Postwar Economic Foreign Policy of the American Film Industry'.

[4] John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat, Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton & Co, 1999).

[5] Max Tessier, *Le Cinéma Japonais, Une introduction* (Paris: Éditions Nathan, 1997), p. 39.

[6] Hirano, p. 98.

[7] Anderson and Richie, pp. 224-225.

[8] See Hirano, Chapter 4, pp. 147-177.

[9] See Eric Cazdyn, *The Flash of Capital, Film and Geopolitics in Japan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), Chapter Six, pp. 204-254.

[10] Ibid., p. 228.

[11] Hirano, p. 170.

[12] My reading of a pivotal film like *Rashomon* thus differs completely from other recent readings, such as Eric Cazdyn's initiated assumption that *Rashomon* is about 'subjectivity and representation' and should be seen as a result of the Japanese subjectivity (*shutaisei*) debate in the late 1940s, see Cazdyn, pp. 236-242. The focus of my study is to try and see how *Rashomon* persuaded a foreigner to have the film screened overseas.

[13] See Hirano on 'Kissing and Sexual Expression', pp. 154-165.

[14] The script for *Rashomon* is based on two short-stories by Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927) one of which is the psychologically experimental *In a Grove* (Yabu no naka) from 1917. The other one, called *Rashomon*, was written in 1919.

[15] Hirano, p. 260.

[16] 'La solution idéale pour le cinéma japonais eut été de conquérir le marché américain. Mas cela s'avérait difficile. L'expérience des films européens que ne sont jamais arrivés à s'imposer sur le marché nord-américain devait être méditée.
On procedera alors à une étude très soignée des marchés internationaux et il s'avéra que le point faible était constitué par les pays européens et plus encore par les pays latins. Il fut alors décidé que l'on se lancerait dans des films à costumes – historiques – exotiques et culturels pour affronter les festivals européens: Venise et Cannes surtout. […]
Profitant des enseignements qu'ont depuis longtemps apportés les exégètes japonais de 'l'invitation au voyage', des passions orientales des peintres romantiques et des manies des collectionneurs de japonaiseries et de chinoiseries, on monta très haut en couleurs l'exotisme et l'étrangeté; tellement d'ailleurs que les Japonais ne s'y retrouvent pas, […].
Servi par une admirable connaissance de ce que les Européens attendaient, par une technique entièrement mise à son service, par des photographies de première classe et par des metteurs en scène dont l'Occident avait surtout le tort de tout ignorer, Daiei a modelé la deuxième ''face'' du cinéma japonais, organisé son ''Intourist'' et sur lui, il a a risqué sa politique.
Et du premier coup Daiei a gagné; […]
Et Daiei que, il y a cinq ans, était en difficultés financières, a été en mars 1955 le plus gros contribuable japonais.' Giuglaris, pp. 25-26.

[17] Anderson and Richie, p. 347.

[18] 'Le président de la *major* Daiei, Masaichi Nagata, n'a pas manifesté d'intérêt particulier pour la production de *Rashomon*. Simplement, en apprenant qu'il n'y aura qu'un seul plateau, il pense que cette

production ne lui coûtera pas cher.' Tadao Sato, *Le Cinéma Japonais*, *Tome II* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1997), pp. 42-43.
[19] Donald Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press 1965), p. 70.
[20] Giuglaris, p. 23.
[21] Anderson and Richie, *The Japanese Film*, p. 228.
[22] Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* is not included in my study. According to Kyoko Hirano the American Department of War 'thoroughly studied Japanese films in order to collect intelligence and to understand the Japanese culture' while preparing for the American occupation of Japan. This effort at preparation apparently resulted in Benedict's abovementioned classic study of Japanese culture. See Hirano, p. 25n39.
[23] Donald Richie, *Japanese Movies* (Tokyo: Japan Travel Bureau, 1961).
[24] David Bordwell, 'Our Dream Cinema', p. 48.
[25] Cazdyn, pp. 54-55.
[26] Anderson and Richie, unmarked page [5].
[27] 'Ce qui importe, c'est le témoignage d'un tempérament national beaucoup plus libre que nous devant l'univers comme devant les formes expressives de l'art, parce que beaucoup plus spiritualisé. Et ceci grâce à son très fort enracinement dans le terrestre.' Giuglaris, p. 16.
[28] 'L'esprit même des film japonais est trop profondément différent du nôtre pour dépasser, à quelques exceptions près, l'exploitation dans les salles d'exclusivité. Le grand public, dérouté, n'est guère capable d'opérer la gymnastique intérieure qu'exige leur comprehension. Ceci, d'ailleurs ne vaut pas que pour la production nippone, mais pour celle de tous les pays situés à l'est du nôtre.' Ibid., p. 9.
[29] 'Rashomon […] une œuvre bâtie tout exprès pour nous étonner et ouvrir les marchés occidentaux aux productions de la Daiei, firme japonaise alors en difficultés.' Ibid, p. 7.
[30] See for example George Sadoul, 'Existe-t-il un néoréalisme japonais?', *Cahiers de cinema*, Vol 5, No 18 (Novembre 1953), 7-19.
[31] '[…] cette dualité de fins cinématographiques que l'on trouve dans la production japonaise: l'existence de films pour festivals et celle de films pour le marché intérieur, rend tout étude sur le cinéma nippon très difficile, surtout lorsque l'on s'adresse à un public n'habitant pas le Japon, car, ou bien on est contraint de ne parler que de films que l'on a pu voir à l'étranger – on en a projeté 8 en France depuis 1950 – ou bien des films que l'on n'y voit pas – le Japon a produit 1800 longs métrages de 1946 à 1954, et en sortira environ 400 rien que pour cette année 1955 […]' Ibid., p. 27.
[32] 'Une duperie pour Européens', Giuglaris, unmarked [p 1].
[33] Cf Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, pp. 212-245.
[34] Anderson and Richie, unmarked page [5].
[35] Ibid., 'Chart 1' unmarked pages [431-433].
[36] '[…] plus peut-être que les vedettes, les japonais admirent les metteurs en scène […]. Les metteurs en scène sont pour la foule les véritables conteurs, ils ont repris un peu le rôle des anciens "benshi" […].' Giuglaris, p. 55.
[37] Joanne Bernardi, *Writing in Light* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001) for example pp. 33-37.
[38] Standish, pp. 22-24.
[39] '[…] les films modernes sont faits pour un public de jeunes et plus spécialement de jeunes citadins." Giuglaris, p. 168.
[40] Standish, pp. 230-237.
[41] Anderson and Richie, *The Japanese Film*, p. 264.
[42] Ibid., p. 181.
[43] Ibid., p. 187.
[44] Giuglaris, p. 42. 'Géneralement les plafonds sont bas; les cintres sur lesquels sont fixés les éclairages et les micros ne sont guère à plus de 3 mètres du sol. La caméra est presque toujours à ras de terre, elle est montée sur des rails de bois pour les travellings. Dans presque tous les studios, pour les prises de vues avec caméras placées haut, on se débrouille, c'est-a-dire que l'on empile des caisses au-dessous, bien que dans certains studios plus modernes on dispose d'appareils de levage, mais c'est l'exception. Du point de vue matériel, à quelques studios près, la première impression est que l'on se trouve devant un cinéma amateur bien équipé, mais sans plus.'
[45] Standish, p. 63.
[46] Giuglaris, p. 46.
[47] Ibid., p. 49. 'Détail des salaires dans un film Shochiku'.
[48] Anderson and Richie, *The Japanese Film*, p. 259.
[49] Ibid., pp. 350-351. The prerequisites referred to by Anderson and Richie are more or less completely in tune with those Janet Staiger uses to define the 'Politics of Selection', in her essay on canon formation, 'The Politics of Film Canons', see Chapter Six.

[50] This is the original order of surname and first name, in each of the books. Note that Anderson and Richie give the names in Western style, whereas the Giuglaris start with the surname, in accordance with the Japanese tradition.
[51] Giuglaris, pp. 211-220.
[52] Kurosawa Akira's films *Drunken Angel*, *The Silent Duel*, *Stray Dog/Nora inu* (1949), and *Scandal/Shubun* (1950) are all considered to be 'progressive' films. See e.g. Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, pp. 138-181.
[53] 'Ce furent des films bâclés que enseignaient la démocratie par l'érotisme, les romans policiers de basse classe et toutes sortes de licences.' Giuglaris, p. 125.
[54] 'Ils luttaient maintenant contre les chefs communistes qu'ils avaient exu-mêmes sortis de prison. Ils avaient admis le retour dans les compagnies des sous-directeurs du temps de guerre, on ''reblanchissait'' plus aisément qu'on 'epurait. Dans les firmes on commença à repenser aux films que l'on avait interdit peu avant, et à faire des plans de politique générale. C'est de cette époque que date entre autres le programme de production pour l'exportation conçu et ensuite réalisé par la Daiei.' Ibid., p. 131.
[55] Henry Hart, 'The 2nd Japanese Film Festival' in *Films in Review*, 9.3 (March 1958) p. 126.
[56] *Films in Review*, 8.3 (March 1957), pp. 97-101 and *Films in Review*, 9.3 (March 1958), pp. 125-129, respectively.
[57] Henry Hart, 'New York's Japanese Film Festival', in *Films in Review*, 8.3 (March 1957), p. 97.
[58] Hart, 'The 2nd Japanese Film Festival', p. 129.
[59] Anderson and Richie, p. 246.
[60] Ibid., p. 228.
[61] *UniJapan Film Quarterly,* 2.3 (October 1958), p. 42.
[62] I have researched the remaining issues at the British Film Library in London, and at the Swedish Film Institute in Stockholm (Serial No 1).
[63] *UniJapan Film Quarterly,* 2.3 (October 1958).
[64] *UniJapan Film Quarterly,* 8.4 [Serial number 30] (October 1965), pp. 24 and 34.
[65] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 5.4 [Serial number 18].
[66] *Vietnam in Turmoil/Doran no Betanomu* (1965) (Daiei Distr) by Akasa Masaharu is the fifteenth film on offer from *UniJapan Film Quarterly* in this issue and I am leaving it out since it is presented as a documentary: cf *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 8.4 [Serial number 30] (October 1965), p. 34.
[67] This information was printed at the bottom of each front page of each issue of *UniJapan Bulletin*.
[68] *UniJapan Bulletin*, 2.11-12 (December 1965).
[69] *UniJapan Bulletin*, 1.2 (September 1964).
[70] *UniJapan Bulletin*, 2.10 (November 1965).
[71] *UniJapan Bulletin*, 4.24 (May 1967).
[72] *UniJapan Bulletin*, 6.34 (January-February 1969).
[73] Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, pp. 212-245.
[74] Cf Standish, Chapter 6.
[75] For example *Late Automn/Akibiyori* (1960) by Ozu Yasujiro, in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 4.1 (January 1961); *Yojimbo/Yojinbo* (19601) by Kurosawa Akira, in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 4.3 (July 1961); *Harakiri/Seppuku* (1962) by Kobayashi, Masaki, in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 5.4 (October 1962); *High and Low/Tengoku to Jigoku* (1963) by Kurosawa Akira, in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 6.3 (July 1963); *Insect Woman/Nippon Konchuki* (1963) by Imamura Shohei, in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 7.1 (January 1964); *Kwaidan/Kaidan* (1965) by Kobayashi Masaki, in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 8.2 (April 1965); etc.
[76] Dower, p. 132.
[77] Dower, p. 139.
[78] Dower, p. 141.
[79] Cf www.orientaleconomist.com.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Mori Iwao, 'Japan's Movie Industry today', pp. 92-93.
[82] Business Directory, *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 10.3 (July 1967), p. 40.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Mori Iwao, 'Five Problems of Japan's Movie Industry', *Oriental Economist*, 27 (February 1959), pp. 88-89.
[85] Ibid., p. 89.
[86] Mori, 'Japan's Movie Industry Today', p. 93.
[87] Mori, 'Five Problems', p. 89.
[88] See Standish, Chapter 6.
[89] Mori, 'Japan's Movie Industry Today', p. 89.
[90] Ijima Tadashi, 'Recent movements in Japanese movies', *The Oriental Economist*, 30 (February 1962), pp. 96-97.
[91] Donald Richie, 'The State of Japanese Film', *The Oriental Economist*, 28 (February 1960), pp. 86-87.

[92] Ibid., p. 97.
[93] Ibid., p. 97.
[94] Standish, Chapter 6, and Yoshimoto. *Kurosawa*.
[95] See Standish, Chapter 6.
[96] Mary Evans, 'Period films as protest', *The Oriental Economist*, 30 (May 1962), pp. 290-91.
[97] Mary Evans, 'The Limitations of the Japanese film', *The Oriental Economist*, 31 (March 1963), pp. 158-59.
[98] Mori, 'Five Problems', p. 88.
[99] Ijima, p. 96.
[100] Mary Evans, 'Recent Japanese films; How to succeed in business by really trying, 1', *The Oriental Economist*, 34 (February 1966), pp. 116-17, and, Mary Evans, 'Recent Japanese films; How to succeed in business by really trying, 2', *The Oriental Economist*, 34 (March 1966), pp. 166-67.
[101] Mary Evans, 'The Walled island; Japanese film 1963', *The Oriental Economist*, 32 (February 1964), pp. 102-03.
[102] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 10.2 (April 1967), p. 40.
[103] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 15.3 (July 1972), p. 32.
[104] The addresses of these cinemas are clearly stated in the reviews of Toho's films in both *Variety* and the *New York Times*.
[105] Anderson and Richie, p. 242.
[106] '[…] comme Nikkatsu travaille avec seulement très peu d'acteurs connus et qu'elle a hérité d'une partie des anciens indépendents, elle fait de bons films.' Giuglaris, p. 204.
[107] Anderson and Richie, p. 244.
[108] Standish, p. 83.
[109] Ibid, p. 100.
[110] Mark Shilling, *No Borders, No Limits: The World of Nikkatsu Action* (Udine: Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche, 2005), p. 25.
[111] Ibid, p. 25.
[112] John Gillett, 'The Stormy Man', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 27 (November 1960), p. 153.
[113] Shilling, p. 29.
[114] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 5.2 (April 1962), p. 34.
[115] Shilling, pp. 43-45.
[116] The genre is called 'true record'/*jitsuroku yakuza* films, see Standish Chapter 6.
[117] Shilling, p. 41.
[118] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 2.1 (January 1959), p. 36.
[119] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 2.4 (October 1959), p. 38.
[120] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 3.3 (July 1960), p. 34.
[121] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 5.3 (July 1962), p. 34.
[122] Shilling, p. 29.
[123] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 3.2 (April 1960), pp. 38-39.
[124] Shilling, p. 27.
[125] The Japanese actor Chichido Jo, famous in his role as 'Gin of the Colt' above, is also best known for his fierce attempt at removing all his Japanese features. The round cheeks he applied, became his main 'Western' faical feature. Cf interview in Shilling, pp. 177-205.
[126] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 3.3 (July 1960), pp.38-39.
[127] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 3.4 (October 1960), pp.36-37.
[128] Shilling, p. 29.
[129] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 5.3 (July 1962), pp. 32-33.
[130] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 6.1 (January 1963), pp. 14-15.
[131] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 11.4 (October 1968), pp. 30-31.
[132] *UniJapan Bulletin*, 2.10 (November 1965) pp. 2-3.
[133] 'Pourquoi les films japonais coûtent-ils si peu?' Giuglaris, p. 50.
[134] 'La technique des longues prises de vues avec caméra fixe qui est généralement employée réduit sérieusement le nombre de plans.' Ibid., p. 50.
[135] Cazdyn, p. 69.
[136] Cazdyn, p. 126.

# CHAPTER THREE

# EXHIBITION

# FILM FESTIVALS, CINÉMATHÈQUES, RETROSPECTIVES AND COMMERCIAL SCREENING

> In order to establish a national identity for a particular film culture, features which transcend or contradict these identity formations have been either neglected or marginalised, but also viewed as threatening.[1]

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the exhibition of Japanese film in France, Great Britain and the United States between 1950 and 1975, taking into account the Japanese marketing efforts presented in Chapter Two and the fact that these efforts and overseas exhibition operations were in fact intertwined practices. The Japanese marketing strategies were planned and performed with perfect access to overseas information on current exhibition of Japanese film product in any chosen country from sources such as branch offices and cultural ambassadors. I therefore assume that all necessary information regarding ongoing activities and current status of film production and exhibition was available to both sides through marketing vehicles like *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, the Japanese entries to different film festivals, collaborations on major screening programmes such as the French 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' at the French Cinémathèque and commercial exhibition data. Despite all opportunities, the factual overseas exhibition of Japanese film in the countries involved corresponded to less than one and a half percent, equal to approximately 550 films, of Japan's overall film production between 1950 and 1975. Tracing the history of Western exhibition of Japanese film product in the above mentioned countries provides information on which image of this cinema was coveted or projected by different Western exhibition practices.

The working material relevant for this chapter is based on obtainable information from documents related to national programming schedules, film festivals, press releases, program notes, and newspaper material, such as film adds in local newspapers. I have thus been able to compare the commercial screening of Japanese film in London, Paris and New York, as well as that on the American West coast, with the non-commercial screenings at one major museum (the Museum of Modern Art in New York), film festivals, film institutes and Cinémathèques, located in the same places. Taken together, this documentation allows me to make a rough map over the exhibition of Japanese film in each of the three countries

during the particular time frame of my study, bearing in mind that Japanese film was only very rarely screened outside the larger cities.

In order to compare and analyze the material, I have decided on a thematic presentation, based on mode of exhibition and comparison of, for example, the material concerning commercial screening between the three countries, in order to achieve a synchronic study which may indicate how the Japanese film was exhibited within one particular type of exhibition practice. In order to paint the larger picture, and trace the character of the exhibition policy and whether it changed in any of the countries involved during the twenty-five years covered in this study, I have then compiled the outcoming information of the different locale in order to see how the image varied between the three countries, looking for signs of diachronic change over the years. Given the hybrid identity of art house cinema and its decisive influence on the exhibition of Japanese cinema in the West, this particular locale is the focus of my case study in this chapter.

## **3.2** EXHIBITION LOCALE

### *Film Festivals*

The appearance of Japanese film product at international European film festivals around 1950 is difficult to assess due to the ambiguous character of the festival medium itself. The information in Chapter Two on the Japanese film industry's serious intentions of using the European film festivals as a means of marketing their film product in the West, still does not confirm whether the structure of the festival medium itself turned the screening of *Rashomon* into a matter of mere showcasing, or if this event should be seen as part of an overall marketing strategy. I have included the section on film festivals in this chapter instead of in Chapter Two because the screening of a Japanese film at an overseas European locale had an immediate impact on the image of Japanese film among distributors, exhibitors and critics, who in turn diffused their judgement on the product to other Westerners. I also argue that the prestige epitomized by the locale per se gave a special aura to the successful films, which also contributed to the Western image of Japanese film.

### *Festival International du Film de Cannes*

The activities of the Cannes film festival started in 1946 on a limited scale. It took five years before it screened its first Japanese film. Where the Venice film festival introduced post-war Japanese cinema through *Rashomon* in 1951, the festival organisers in Cannes in May of the same year, had instead screened a short entitled *La Vie du Riz/Life of Rice (no Japanese title given)* (no year) by Ota Jinkichi. It gained little or no attention, but the title is

reminiscent of early 20th century travelogues, a genre which often represented films produced outside the West and should thus be seen as informed by an Orientalist discourse.[2] I suggest that the appearance of such a travelogue at the film festival in Cannes in 1951, reveals that the notion of Japanese film as a national cinema was as yet mentally unsavoury to the Western public. We must however once again ask ourselves whose notion of the image of Japanese film came to the fore, since Anderson and Richie later claimed that the Motion Picture Association of Japan had originally decided to send Imai Tadashi's *Until the Day We Meet Again/Mata au hi made* (1950) to the festival in Cannes, but could not afford to make a print with French subtitles. They thereby seemed to suggest that the shortage of money was the main reason why Ota Jinkichi's *Life of rice* was screened instead.[3] The truth is, however, that the American occupational forces were still in Japan at the time and had the last word on Japanese film policy. I therefore suggest that they vetoed the screening of *Until the Day We Meet Again* in favour of the travelogues. Interestingly, Kawakita Nagamasa, then head of Towa, the largest Japanese film-import company, had previously suggested that '[…] the first exported Japanese films should be travelogues and that subsequent non-travelogue features should insist upon an amount of scenery.'[4] Not only was this a case of clear self-Orientalization on behalf of the Japanese, but it would also seem that his recommendation may partly explain the appearance of the travelogues at the Cannes Film Festival in 1951 and 1952. Perhaps the unexpected success of *Rashomon* in Venice caused intense activity on behalf of the working team at the Cannes film festival and led them to present a wider selection of Japanese films in 1952. Two of them were again shorts, and represented the same travelogue genre as the one in 1951; *Old Temples, Old Statues/Jodai chokoku (Vieux temples, Vieilles statues)* (no year) by Mizuki Soya, and *The Great Buddha/Taisei shakuson (Le Grand Boudha)* (no year) by Ojaji Naburo. The other three were however feature films representing one Japanese film genre each; Yoshimura Kosaburo's version of the *jidai-geki* classic *The Tale of Genji* from 1951, the melodrama *[Waves]/Nami* (1951) by Nakamura Naburo, and *Man in the Storm/Arashi no naka no hara* (1950) by Kozo Saeki, a youth film. *The Tale Of Genji* received the festival prize for photography and 'plastic composition', indicating praise for its *mise-en-scène* and *Man in the Storm* was nominated for the Grand Prix of the Jury. The following year, 1953, saw the last entry of a Japanese short of travelogue character; *[Japanese Art In The Momoyama Era]/Momoyama bidsutsu* (no year) by Mizuki Soya. The remaining entries were feature films: Shindo Kaneto's *Children of Hiroshima* (1952), *Modern People* aka *The Moderns/Gendaijin* (1952) by Shibuya Minoru, and *Saga of The Great Buddha/Daibatsu kaigen* (1952) by Kinugasa Teinosuke. The Japanese entries received no awards that year,

but the participating contemporary drama *The Moderns* was nominated for the Grand Prix of the Jury.

The following Japanese entries were hence screened in Cannes between 1954 and 1975:

1954 *Gate of Hell/Jigokumon* (1953) by Kinugasa Teinosuke - Awarded the 'Grand Prix'
*Dark Waters/Nigorie* (1953) by Imai Tadashi
*[Love Letter]/Koibumi* (1953) by Tanaka Kinuyo[5]

1955 *[Women's Calendar]/Onna no koyomi* (1954) by Hisamatsu Seiji
*Crucified Lovers/Chikamatsu monogatari* (1954) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Senhime/Senhime* (1954) by Kimura Keige

1956 *I Live in Fear* aka *Record of a Living Being/Ikimono no kiroku* (1955) by Kurosawa Akira
*[Christ in Bronze]/Seido no Kirisuto* (1956) by Shibuya Minoru
*Phantom Horse/Maboroshi no uma* (1955) by Shima Koji

1957 *Rice People/Kome* (1957) by Imai Tadashi
*[Roof of Japan]/Shiroi sanmyaka* (1957) by Imamura Shohei

1958 *Snow Country/Yukigumi* (1957) by Toyoda Shiro

1959 *White Heron/Shirasagi* (1958) by Kinugasa Teinosuke
'Special mention' by the jury for 'its quality of style and its perfect photography'[6]

1960 *Odd Obsession/Kagi* (1959) by Ichikawa Kon –
'Prix' for '[…] the audacity of its plot, and for the quality of its *mise-en-scène*.'[7]

1961 *Younger Brother* aka *Her Brother/Ototo* (1960) by Ichikawa Kon

1962 *Foundry Town/Kyupora no aru machi* (1962) by Urayama Kiriro

1963 *Harakiri/Seppuku* (1962) by Kobayashi Masaki – Awarded Le Prix Spécial du Jury

1964 *Alone on the Pacific/Taiheiyo hitori-botchi* (1964) by Ichikawa Kon
*Woman of the Dunes/Suna no onna* (1964) by Teshigahara Hiroshi - Awarded Le Prix Spécial du Jury

1965 *Kwaidan/Kaidan* (1964) by Kobayashi Masaki - Awarded Le Prix Spécial du Jury

1968 *Black Cat/Yabu no naka no kuroneko* (1968) by Shindo Kaneto[8]

1969 *Hymn to a Tired Man/Nihon no seishun* (1968) by Kobayashi Masaki

1971 *A Soul to the Devils/Yami no naka no chimimoryo* (1971) by Nakahira Ko

1972 *Silence/Chinmoku* (1971) by Shinoda Masahiro

1973 *Coup d'État/Kaigenre* (1972) by Yoshida Yoshishige

1974 *[Himiko]/Himiko* (1974) by Shinoda Masahiro

1975 *Pastoral Hide And Seek/Denen no shisu* (1974) by Terayama Shuji

*London Film Festival*

When the London Film Festival was founded in 1957, Japanese film product was already established at the most important cinema locale in the West. Given the limited output of Japanese film through the ordinary programmes of the British Film Institute and the National Film Theatre, it would seem fair to suggest that the London Film Festival could

have made a difference. The London Film Festival screened the following 36 Japanese feature films between 1957 and 1975:

1957 *Throne of Blood/Kumonosu-jô* (1957) by Kurosawa Akira

1958 *Life of Oharu/Saikaku ichidai onna* (1951) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Ballad of Narayama/Narayama bushido* (1958) by Kinoshita Keisuke
*Mohumatsu, the Rickshaw Man/Mohumatsu no issho* (1958) by Inagaki Hiroshi

1959 *Hidden Fortress/Kakushitoride no sanakunin* (1958) by Kurosawa Akira
*Conflagration/Enjo* (1958) by Ichikawa Kon

1960 *No Greater Love* aka *The Human Condition/Ningen no joken* (1959) by Kobayashi Masaki
*Bad Boys/Furyo Shonen* (1960) by Hani Susumi

1961 *The Bad Sleep Well/Warui yatsu hodo yoku nemuru* (1960) by Kurosawa Akira
*The Island/Hadaka no shima* (1961) by Shindo Kaneto

1962 *Early Autumn/Kohayagawa-ke no aki* (1961) by Ozu Yatsujiro
*Sanjuro/Tsubaki sanjuro* (1962) by Kurosawa Akira

1963 *Autumn Afternoon/Samma no aji* (1962) by Ozu Yasujiro

1964 *Alone on the Pacific/Taiheiyo hitoribotchi* (1963) by Ichikawa Kon
*Woman of the Dunes/Suna no onna* (1963) by Teshigahara Hiroshi
*She and He/Kanjo to kare* (1964) by Hani Susumi

1965 *Red Beard/Akahige* (1965) by Akira Kurosawa

1966 *Bwana Toshi/Bwana toshi no uta* (1965) by Hani Susumi

1967 *Rebellion/Joi-uchi: hairyo tsuma shimatsu* (1967) by Kobayashi Masaki

1969 *Autumn Afternoon/Samma no aji* (1962) by Ozu Yasujiro
*Boy/Shonen* (1969) by Oshima Nagisa
*Death by Hanging/Koshikei* (1968) by Oshima Nagisa
*Double Suicide/Shinju ten no Amijima* (1969) by Shinoda Masahiro

1970 *Eros+Masacre/Erosu purasu Gyakusatsu* (1969) by Yoshishige Yoshida
*Dodesukaden* (1970) by Kurosawa Akira

1971 *The Ceremony/Gishiki* (1971) by Oshima Nagisa

1972 *Dear Summer Sister/Natsu no Imoto* (1972) by Oshima Nagisa
*Summer Soldiers* (1971) by Teshigahara Hiroshi
*Pandemonium/Shura* (1971) by Matsumoto Toshio

1973 *Coup d'Etat/Kaigenrei* (1973) by Yoshishige Yoshida
*The Wanderers/Matatabi* (1973) by Ichikawa Kon
*Time within Memory/Seigenki* (1972) by Narushima Toichiro

1974 *Fossil/Kaseki* (1974) by Kobayashi Masaki

1975 *The Bullet Train/Shinkansen daibakuha* (1975) by Sato Junya
*Pastoral Hide-and-seek/Denen ni shisu* (1974) by Terayama Shuji

As we can see, most of these films became well-known works within the Western film community within a few years time and several won awards at other European film festivals. From what I have seen, only Kobayashi Masaki's *Rebellion* was however a British Film Institute Awards winner during the time frame of this study. I therefore cannot see that the Japanese feature films screened at the London Film Festival made a crucial impact on either the programming at the National Film Theatre, or the commercial film

theatres at the time. Similar to the average trend at the Western cinema locale presented in this study, the almost balance between period film and contemporary drama is evident in the festival's programming, with an increasing number of films evolving around 20th century, contemporary issues as from 1960.

*New York Film Festival*

The New York Film Festival was launched in 1963, and is still an annual event of cinematographic importance on the American East coast. The following Japanese feature films were screened at this festival between 1963 and 1975:

1963 *An Autumn Afternoon/Samma no aji* (1962) by Ozu Yasujiro
1963 *Harakiri/Seppuku* (1963) by Kobayashi Masaki
1964 *Alone on the Pacific/Taiheiyo hitoribotchi* (1963) by Ichikawa Kon
1964 *Conflagration/Enjo* (1959) by Ichikawa Kon
1964 *She and He/Kanjo to kare* (1963) by Hani Susumi
1964 *Tales of the Taira Clan/Shin Heike Monogatari* (1955) by Mizoguchi Kenji
1964 *Woman in the Dunes/Suna no onna* (1964) by Teshigahara Hiroshi
1965 *Red Beard/Akahige* (1965) by Kurosawa Akira
1966 *The Burmese Harp/Biruma no tategoto* (1956) by Ichikawa Kon
1967 *Rebellion/Joiuchi* (1967) by Kobayashi Masaki
1969 *Boy/Shonen* (1969) by Oshima Nagisa

All in all 14 Japanese feature films were thus screened by the New York Film Festival during the twelve year period involved in my study, according to their web-site.[9] Some of the films were produced before the New York Film Festival started, such as Mizoguchi Kenji's *A Story from Chikamatsu*, which seem to suggest that they were screened in New York both because of their auteur status and beause the films themselves had become part of the Western canon of Japanese cinema (see Chapter Six). This detail in relation to the programming of the New York Film Festival, indicates a different selection policy than that of most European film festivals which normally require the exhibited films to be no older than 18 months. It would seem that the New York Film Festival in fact indiscriminately focused on auteur films between 1963 and 1975 and thus primarily functioned as a cinémathèque or a retrospective festival in relation to Japanese film product. I also conclude that the New York Film Festival as such was never involved with the Japanese film programs screened at MOMA, nor was it meant to have any crucial bearing on the commercial screening of Japanese film in the United States.

## **3.3** NON-COMMERCIAL SCREENING

The non-commercial exhibition locale researched in this study comprise the French Cinémathèque in Paris, the National Film Theatre in London, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition policy of this type of locale may be based on membership, programme format and cinematographic specifities, such as adherence to a particular genre.

### *La Cinémathèque Française*

La Cinémathèque Française was theoretically established in 1936 by Henri Langlois, Georges Franju and Jean Mitry, but, as Patrick Olmeta writes:

> It was however only Henri Langlois who had enough time and money at his disposal […] to actually realize the establishment of the organisation.[10]

According to Langlois' own chronology for the Cinémathèque, the exchange of films with the Middle and Far East (mainly Japan) did not begin until 1953, inspired by the success of Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon* in Venice in 1951.[11]

On reviewing the programming at the French Cinémathèque from 1936 until 1975, it appears that the first screening of a Japanese film took place on January 27, 28 and 30, 1948 under the rubric of 'Le cinéma en Orient et Extrême Orient'.[12] The Japanese film screened was given as *Nippon* and was presented without any further information. When it was screened again on September 23, 1950, the title was again given as *Nippon*, but it was now presented as an avant-garde film directed by 'Japon'.[13] I should like to think that the screening of '*Nippon'* at this particular time, was prompted by Kurosawa Akira's just having won the Golden Palm in Venice, while also indicating that *'Nippon'* was in fact the only Japanese film in the collection of the Cinémathèque at that moment. The film is not again mentioned in the programming until in 1963, in connection with the film programme entitled 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais'. In his Introduction in the book published in connection with this festival, Henri Langlois wrote that the programme established by the Japanese Cinémathèque was amplified by for example *Nippon* from the archives of the Cinémathèque Française since '[…] there is no existing copy in Japan.'[14] From this scarce, and partly incorrect information on the film, we may deduct that *Nippon* was most probably a travelogue. Two other Japanese films occurred in the spring programme of 1953, under the rubric of 'Les maîtres de courts métrages' ('The Masters of Shorts'). On April 23 was screened *La Princesse Kaguya* by 'Tanaka, Japon, 1936' which is described as showing 'the delicate refinement of Japanese *kakemonos*'[15]. The second film screened on May 14 was entitled *Les Poupées Japonaises* with no mention of director, and, as to its origin, 'Japon, 1952'. According to additional information provided, the programmers wished to

make clear that 'It is Japanese dolls which allow us to penetrate the Japanese theogeny'[16]. I presume this film contains a filmed *bunraku* performance, which suggest that both films were, again, travelogues.

As a result of the exchange of films with Asia (mainly Japan) initiated in 1953, the first Japanese fictional films then appeared at the Cinémathèque Française during the fourth trimester of that year, two years after the breakthrough of *Rashomon*. They were screened among other films under the rubric 'Chefs-d'Œuvre du Cinéma' ('Masterpieces of Cinema') and comprised three Japanese fiction films. First to be screened was Mizoguchi Kenji's *Life of Oharu/Saikaku ichidai onna* (aka *Lady Oharu, Femme Galante*, 1951), on October 27, 1953. Second was *Ugetsu Monogatari* by the same director on October 31, 1953, starring 'Matsu Ko-Kye' (Machiko Kyo). The third 'masterpiece' was 'INAGAKA …' [sic] *Where Chimneys are Seen/Inagaku Entotsu no mieru basho* (aka *Là où se dressent les chéminées*, 1953) by Gosho Heinosuke, without any mention of director or production year but with the names 'Uhara, Kanaka, Hiroshi' added.[17] The film programme included no further comment to these three films, but on January 15, 1954, the Cinémathèque again screened *Ugetsu Monogatari.*[18] When considering these first three Japanese films screened at the French Cinémathèque from a genre perspective, it becomes clear that two were *jidai-geki* or period dramas, whereas Gosho Heinosuke's film depicted the lives of common people in post-war Japan, those belonging to the middle-class, or working-class societies. These films are known as *shomin-geki* (home/family dramas), a sub-genre of the Japanese *gendai-geki* genre (contemporary drama). During the years to come, and until 1975, the two period dramas mentioned above were to be screened at least 24 (*Life of Oharu*) and 27 (*Ugetsu Monogatari*) times respectively, whereas Gosho's contemporary drama was screened only three times - a small but relevant detail as to the general preference of the *jidai-geki* genre over contemporary drama in the overseas exhibition of Japanese film product, and arguably reflecting an Orientalist discourse still in play.[19]

The 'Otherness' of Japanese cinema may also have been implied when the French Cinémathèque celebrated '300 Années de Cinématographie' ('300 Years of cinematography'), as well as '60 Ans de Cinéma' ('60 Years of Cinema') at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, in 1955, since none of the programmes included any films produced outside Europe and the United States.[20] Both 1954 and 1955 were quiet years when it came to Japanese films. In fact, Japanese films were not screened again at the French Cinémathèque until in the autumn of 1956, in connection with the '20e Anniversaire de la Cinémathèque Française' ('20th Anniversary of the French Cinémathèque') starting in October, and continuing until January 24, 1957. During this period, both Gosho

Heinosuke's *Where Chimneys are Seen* as well as *Life of Oharu* - as it was now called - by Mizoguchi Kenji were screened again, with the addition of a new film; *The Crab-canning Ship/Kanikosen* (1953) by Yamamura So. The programming details also show that for the first time all the names were correctly spelled and Mifune Toshiro's name had been added to the list of actors in *Life of Oharu*.[21]

In January 1957, Henri Langlois presented the first 'Hommage' to a Japanese film director, as an event within the 20-years celebrations, and for this occasion Langlois had chosen Kurosawa Akira. The choice of Kurosawa is interesting in itself, since it indicates that the *politique des auteurs* was in full play, and that Kurosawa had been chosen over Mizoguchi. Eight films by Kurosawa were screened; half of them *jidai-geki* and the other half *gendai-geki* films; *Sugata Sanjiro* (1943)*, Men Who Step on the Tiger's Tail//Tora no o o fumu otokotachi* (1946)*, No Regrets for Our Youth/Waga seishun ni kuinashi* (1946)*, Drunken Angel*, *Rashomon, Living/Ikiru* (1952)*, The Idiot/Hakuchi* (1951), which was screened twice, and finally *The Seven Samurai*/*Shichinin no samurai (*1954). On the cover of the special leaflet that had been produced for this first 'Hommage' of a Japanese director, is a film still taken from *Sugata Sanjiro*, showing a wildly grimacing samurai (Mifune Toshiro) violently strangling his enemy, which again connotes an Orientalist discourse in play.[22] Luc Moullet's response to the event in *Cahiers du cinéma* further indicates such a connotation. He found the initiative commendable since the French had as yet only seen *Rashomon*, *The Seven Samurai* and *Record of a Living Being* by Kurosawa.[23] His expectations of *Living* and *Drunken Angel* were however not fulfilled:

> It's actually a complete disaster, which one has a certain difficulty in understanding. *Drunken Angel* remains constantly on a level of mediocrity, and is completely uninteresting; the aesthetic probing, especially in the dream sequences and the death of the hero, are grotesquely unknown even for European cinema. And yet, *Living* beats the record of ridicule.[24]

Moullet's refusal to take Kurosawa's contemporary dramas under serious consideration was in fact discussed at length by André Bazin in the very next issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*, and lead to Bazin's text seemingly taking precedence over Moullet's.[25] For how long and to what extent Bazin's attitude also constituted the basic stance of the journal vis-à-vis Japanese film, is hard to say. To begin with, it seems clear that Bazin did not endorse the *politique des auteurs*, which was by then fully evolved among the younger critics at *Cahiers du cinéma* (see Chapter Four).[26] Bazin's ambivalent standpoint on the matter of Japanese film, as well as his thoughts on Orientalism and *jidai-geki* film, are implicitly indicated in his answer to Moullet's negative response to Kurosawa's contemporary dramas above, when he admitted that reason should take precedence over cultural inheritance:

> Personally, I rather prefer Mizoguchi's style and the pure Japanese music of his inspiration, but I'm ready to surrender for the richness of intellectual, moralistic and aesthetic perspectives laid open by a film like *Living*, which deals with values incomparably more important in its narration as well as in its form.[27]

All in all, I would argue that these first few years of screenings of Japanese films, between 1953 and 1957, displayed an initially pluralistic interest in Japanese film product, although we shall see that over time the Cinémathèque Française proceeded to screen mainly *jidai-geki* films and primarily focused on auteurship. Whatever the sage clarifications by Bazin, Kurosawa Akira's period films would come to outnumber the amount of screenings of any other Japanese director's films at the Cinémathèque. It would seem that *Rashomon* was probably the most often screened Japanese film at the French Cinémathèque between 1955 and 1975 - it was screened 39 times; that is more than once a year on average. *Seven Samurai* and *Throne Of Blood* were both screened 32 times, again more than once a year on average. Among the contemporary dramas *Drunken Angel* and *The Idiot* were screened 17 times respectively during the same period, which is half as often as the period dramas.

The following year, 1958, the French Cinémathèque presented an 'Hommage à Mizoguchi' which included only three films, but they were new to the audience; *Woman in the Rumour/Uwasa no Onna* (aka *Une Femme dont on Parle,* 1954)*, The Empress Yang Kwei Fei/Yôkihi (*aka *L'Impératrice Yang Kwei Fei,* 1955) and *Osaka Elegy/Naniwa ereji* (aka *La Femme d'Osaka,* 1936).[28] *Woman in the Rumour* had been screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1957, which may have been the reason why it was screened at the French Cinémathèque a few months later. As far as I can see, it was the first of Mizoguchi's films in the *gendai-geki* genre to be screened at the Cinémathèque, where it was screened 11 times between 1958 and 1975. *Woman in the Rumour* was however never commercially released in France during the time frame of this study, unlike *The Empress Yang Kwei Fei* which was screened commercially as from July, 1959, in addition to which it was screened no less than nine times at the Cinémathèque between 1958 and 1975. *Empress Yang Kwei Fei* is a period drama (*jidai-geki*).

Between 1955 and 1960 the annual amount of Japanese films screened at the French Cinémathèque varied between 3 to 11 screenings per year.[29] Most of the films were Japanese classics, but it should be noted that Hani Susumu's *Bad Boys* was screened twice already at the end of 1960, which is also the film's production year. *Bad Boys*, which mixed documentary and fiction, seems to be the first Japanese youth film screened by the French Cinémathèque and is a good example of the pluralism of its screenings of Japanese cinema, even though this particular film genre remains in the margins of the programming. [30]

In 1961, a considerable increase in the amount of screened Japanese films occured, and no less than 27 screenings took place, including films by Hani Susumi, Nakahira Yasushi and Naruse Mikio, as well as an 'Hommage à Teinosuke Kinugasa'. Interestingly enough, the Cinémathèque this year also screened its first Japanese science-fiction film; *The H-man/Bijo to ekitai-ningen* (1958) by Honda Ishiro.[31] There is however little doubt that 1963 remains the first year of 'total' recognition of Japanese film at the French Cinémathèque, especially in view of its exceptional summer programme, entitled 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais 1898-1961' ('Initiation to the Japanese Cinema 1898-1961') - a programme which screened more than 130 Japanese films. It was divided in two sections: the 'Chefs-d'Œuvre' ('Masterpieces') and the 'Panorama du Cinéma Japonais 1898-1961' ('Panorama of Japanese Cinema 1898-1961'). Apart from this unique effort to present Japanese film to French audiences during the summer 1963, the general programme at the Cinémathèque that year included 53 additional screenings of Japanese films other than those directed by Kurosawa Akira. That year's programming also included France's first 'Hommage à Yasujiro Ozu'. During the month of May no less than ten of Ozu's films were screened, the earliest being *I Was Born, but…/Umarete wa mita karedo* (1932), the latest being *Late Autumn*. Even though fewer than 50 Japanese films had been commercially screened in France by 1966,[32] none of Ozu's were commercially screened in the country until in the 1970s.[33]

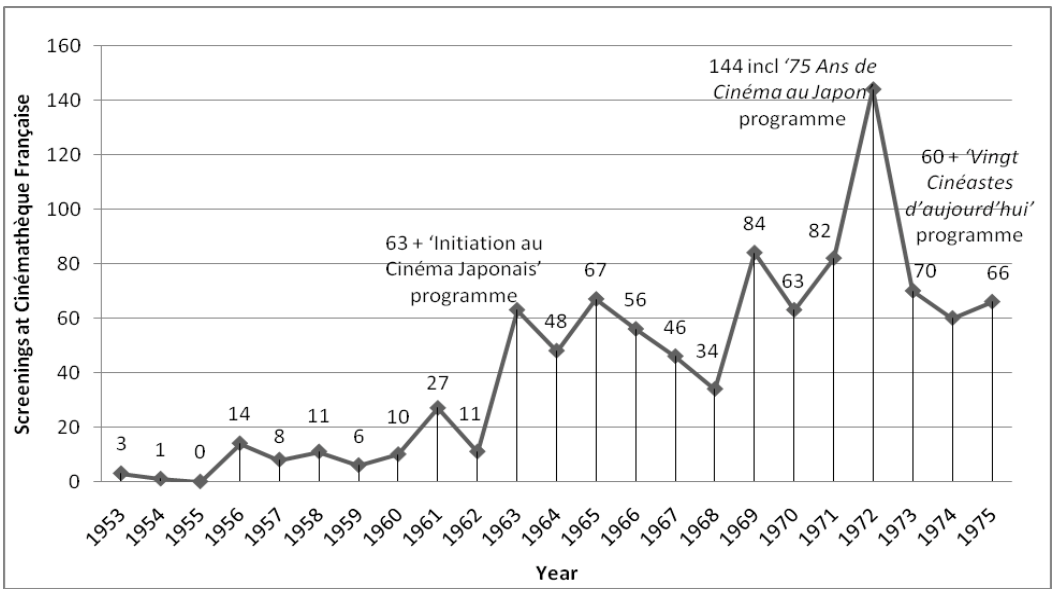
The following year, 1964, the Cinémathèque again confirmed its 'favourites' and among the 48 Japanese feature films that were screened, one third were directed by Mizoguchi Kenji, the second third almost entirely by Kurosawa Akira, with Kinugasa Teinosuke as the third most screened Japanese director. The programme is however still impressive, including a few screenings of less known films by for example Mizoguchi; *The Woman of Osaka* again and his *Women of The Night/Yoru no onnatachi* (1948). During the same year, 1964, the French Cinémathèque also organized a screening of a selection of unpublished Japanese short films, for the first time. A 'non-fictional' initiative which was followed up by a documentary programme in the beginning of 1965, all of which are outside the scope of this study.

During the years between 1965 and 1975, the French Cinémathèque never screened fewer than 50 Japanese films per year, except in 1968 and the disruption of its activities in connection with 'L'Affaire Langlois'.[34] The outstanding year seems to have been 1972, when 144 screenings of Japanese films took place and it should be noted that there had been no increase in scheduled screenings of the individual films since the opening of the second projection hall at the Chaillot Palace in 1963. It only meant that each film was screened

twice; once at the Rue d'Ulm and once at Palais de Chaillot. From a logistic point of view, this fact implies that Western film actually had to give way for Japanese film already by the early 1970s.

The reason for such an exceptional amount of screenings at the French Cinémathèque in 1972 seems to have depended entirely on the efforts of Henri Langlois to find reasons to celebrate or commemorate the Japanese cinema. Since the first 'Hommage to Akira Kurosawa' in 1957, the thematic programmes never stopped coming. The number of 'Hommages' was huge and they were normally inaugurated by the director in person. Apart from the 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' programme and the non-fictional themes mentioned above, Japanese film was also included in generally themed seasons such as 'Hommage à William Shakespeare' (1964), 'Expressionisme et Cinéma' (1965) and 'Japon - Histoire à l'écran' (Japanese History on the screen') (1975), not to mention the different series presenting young directors; 'Le Jeune Cinéma Japonais' in 1967 and again in 1969. As from December 1971 and twelve months ahead, the Cinémathèque started celebrating '75 ans de Cinéma au Japon' ('75 years of cinema in Japan'), including several 'Hommages' and 'Nouvelle visage du cinéma Japonais' ('The new face of Japanese cinema'), which resulted in the above mentioned 144 screenings during 1972. The last special programme relevant to this study was the 'Vingt cinéastes d'aujourd'hui' ('20 contemporary filmmakers') programme, screened between January 10 and February 10 in 1974, and showcasing one film each by the young generation of Japanese film directors. In addition to this programme, the Cinémathèque screened Japanese film on less than 60 occasions during that year.

It would be interesting to find out if any other Western film institution screened more Japanese film than the French Cinémathèque did between 1950 and 1975. The following figures are based on the original programming documents from the Cinémathèque, in the holdings of the French Film library in Paris. These documents are not complete, as already mentioned. The programmes at my disposal have allowed me to compile the following amount of annual screenings of Japanese films. It should be observed that the numbers do not specify the variation of individual films, and therefore refer to *the minimum amount of screenings*:




Graph 1

*'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais 1898-1961'*

The event of 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' was organized as an exchange of films with the national Japanese Cinémathèque in Tokyo, which had started its business of collecting the nation's film treasures only in 1956, chaperoned by the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. The appearance of this unique programme in Paris coincided with the inauguration of the French Cinémathèque's new theatre cinema at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, which was opened on June 5, 1963.[35] The programme itself did not come as a surprise, however, but had been in the rumour for almost 18 months.[36] The working committee included primarily the 'first lady' of Japanese film preservation, Mrs Kawakita Kashiko, and Henri Langlois. Kawakita Nagamasa's Towa Company, founded in 1928, was the largest import and distribution company of foreign films in Japan. The couple also worked hard to introduce Japanese film abroad and Mr Kawakita later published *UniJapan Film Quarterly* between 1958-1972 (see Chapter Two). Mrs Kawakita initiated the Japanese Cinémathèque, and was a member of the Cannes film festival jury in 1963. In addition to the 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' programme in 1963, she also organized the programme including twenty films by young Japanese directors for the French Cinémathèque and the National Film Theatre in London, in 1974.[37] Today the legacy of Mr and Mrs Kawakita is represented by the Kawakita Memorial Film Institute in Tokyo.

But why this grand 'Hommage' to Japanese film in 1963? The 'Golden Era' of Japanese cinema was by many considered to be over by this time - and may well have been one of the reasons for it, in fact. The first page of the programme book published in connection with the event, states that 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' took place under the 'haut patronage de Monsieur André Malraux, Ministre d'État Chargé des Affaires

Culturelles', which obviously made the event very prestigious. The appearance of Malraux as 'haut patron' is hardly surprising considering his effort to elevate the film medium to an art form in receipt of state funding as from the late 1950s and his general support of the ciné-clubs during his aegis as Minister of Culture, not to mention his well documented interest in the Far East as a writer.[38] With the Minister of Culture as the high patron of the 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais', the programme also manifested the importance of the film medium as an international means of cultural exchange, at the time. Among the book's contents can be found a concise history of Japanese cinema ('Brêve histoire du Cinéma Japonais') by Naoki Tokawa. From a neutral point of view and the nature of the text itself, it should be noted that this short text omits two important historical facts; the earthquake in Tokyo in 1923, which destroyed 80 % of early Japanese film heritage, as well as the consequences of the American Occupation for the Japanese film industry during the important years after World War. Both factors have had a considerable bearing on the history and image of Japanese cinema, although they were not mentioned by Naoki Tokawa.

The films from the golden years of the 1950s dominated the programme of 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais', and the mix of genres and directors was extensive.[39] One of the historically interesting films is *Muhomatsu, the Rickshaw Man* by Inagaki Hiroshige, since the film was censured by the nationalist Japanese authorities during the war under the pretext that it was an outrage against good morals. Inagaki directed a remake in 1957 with Mifune Toshiro as the rickshaw-man, and the film was awarded the Grand Prix at the film festival in Venice, in 1958. Another interesting choice was the most recently produced film included in the programme: *Pigs and Battleships/Buta to gunkan* (1961) by Imamura Shohei. At the time of its commercial release in France in 1964 (as *Filles et Gangsters*), *Pigs and Battleships* had already been released in the United States, despite its very pregnant anti-American tone. Interestingly, *Filles et Gangsters* seems to be the only film by Imamura Shohei to have been commercially released in France before 1972, which saw the commercial release of *Insect Woman*. This fact seems to indicate that the choice of *Pigs and Battleships* was completely in line with the French tradition of screening progressive Japanese films such as Gosho Heinosuke's *Where Chimneys are Seen* and Yamamura So's *The Crab-canning Ship*, which had been both screened as early as in 1953 and 1956 respectively, whereas they were never released in the United States.

Apart from the programmed films, the programme book contains a list of the 'Best Japanese films since 1926' established by the management at the Cinémathèque in Tokyo.[40] Each year is represented by a top ten in films, with the exception of 1943 and 1944, which

are excluded. As for the year 1945, only one film is mentioned (*Men Who Step on the Tiger's Tail* by Kurosawa Akira). The year 1946 is represented by only five films. I have compared the amount of films and names/numbers of directors from 1945 until 1955, as given in the French 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' programme, to the 'Japanese Top ten list' put together by the Japanese Cinémathèque with the following result.

| | *'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais'* | *'Japanese Top ten'* |
|---|---|---|
| Amount of films | 62 | 92 |
| Number of directors | 19 | 29 |

As a result of this comparison, the 'Top Five' directors were:

| *'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais'* | | *'Japanese Top ten'* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kurosawa Akira | 11 films | Kurosawa Akira | 11 films |
| Mizoguchi Kenji | 10 films | Kinoshita Keisuke | 10 films |
| Kinoshita Keisuke | 6 films | Mizoguchi Kenji | 6 films |
| Naruse Mikio | 5 films | Ozu Yasujiro | 6 films |
| Imai Tadashi | 4 films | Yoshimura Kimisaburo | 6 films |
| Yamamoto Satsuo | 4 films | | |

I find the differing views on Mizoguchi Kenji's work to be the most interesting deviation between the two institutions, although a closer look at the four films added to the programme of *'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais'*, seems to imply mainly an addition of two period dramas and two contemporary dramas. However, the inclusion of such a high amount of films by Mizoguchi Kenji, compared to the fact that Ozu Yasujiro was represented by only two films in the French programme, indicate Mizoguchi's strong position in France at the time.

I have also compared the films that were actually screened at the French Cinémathèque in connection with the programme, with the films mentioned by the Japanese Cinémathèque in Tokyo. I have found, that the closest concurring year during this ten year period, is 1954:

Screened at *'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais'*

***Twenty-four Eyes****/Nijushi no hitomi (24 Prunelles)* by Kinoshita Keisuke
***Seven Samurai****/Shichinin no samurai (Sept Samurais)* by Kurosawa Akira
***Black Tide****/Kuroi ushio (Marée Noire)* by Yamamura So
***Crucified Lovers****/Chikamatsu Monogatari (Amants Crucifiés)* by Mizoguchi Kenji
***Late Chrysanthemums****/Bungiku (Chrysanthèmes Tardifs)* by Naruse Mikio
***Sansho the Bailif****/Sansho Dayu (L'Intendant Sansho)* by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Woman in the Rumour/Uwasa no onna (Une Femme dont on Parle)* by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Miamoto Musashi (*Samurai) by Inagaki Hiroshi
*Sunless Street/Taiyo no nai machi (Quartier sans Soleil)* by Yamamoto Satsuo
*Tale of the Taira Clan/Shin heike monogatari (Héros Sacrilège)* by Mizoguchi Kenji

*'Top 10'* by the Japanese Cinémathèque:

***Twenty-four Eyes****/Nijushi no hitomi (24 Prunelles)* by Kinoshita Keisuke
*Woman's World/Onna no sono (Jardin des femmes)* by Kinoshita Keisuke
***Seven Samurai****/Shichinin no samurai (Sept Samurais)* by Kurosawa Akira
***Black Tide****/Kueroi ushio (Marée Noire)* by Yamamura So
***Crucified Lovers****/Chikamatsu Monogatari (Amants Crucifiés)* by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Sounds of the Mountain/Yama no oto (La voix de la montagne)* by Naruse Mikio
***Late Chrysanthemums****/Bungiku (Chrysanthèmes Tardifs)* by Naruse Mikio
*English title unknown/Kunsho (La Décoration)* by Shibuya Minoru
***Sansho the Bailif****/Sansho Dayu (L'Intendant Sansho)* by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Inn at Osaka/Osaka no yado (L'Auberge d'Osaka)* by Gosho Heniosuke

The inclusion of *Woman in the Rumour* and *Sunless Street* in the French programme is an important sign on the prevailing French view of the Japanese cinema at the time, in that both films are contemporary dramas, candidly portraying the post-war Japanese society. The omission of such ideologically informed contemporary dramas from the programme organized by the Japanese Cinémathèque was an equally significant signal since it indicates that the Japanese were not interested in complicating the overseas image of Japanese film. It is also worth noticing that no youth films were included by either party. One of the most surprising findings during my research of the French historiography of Japanese film, is that nobody really registered and/or critically responded to this film programme at the French Cinémathèque. The issue of which history of Japanese film was actually initiated to France at this time, was therefore never addressed.

*The National Film Theatre*

From an ideological point of view, the short answer as to why the historiography of Japanese cinema in Great Britain is less extensive than that in France, is its lack of a Henri Langlois and his creation, the French Cinémathèque. Great Britain does however house the British Film Institute and its screening faculty, the National Film Theatre, which has screened several film programmes comparable to the ones created by Henri Langlois for the French Cinémathèque in quality, if not in quantity. This circumstance allowed me to specify only a tentative amount of screenings of Japanese films at the French Cinémathèque above, wheras I can in fact specify the total amount of Japanese films screened at the National Film Theatre in London between 1950 and 1975.[41] Generally speaking I have found that the British organisation preferred Japanese films to be integrated in the different series produced by the National Film Theatre, instead of being especially highlighted in terms of 'Hommages'.[42] I have also discovered that the enclosed reviews of individual films in the *National Film Theatre* programme notes were compiled by leading film critics, instead of

the programmers at the National Film Theatre. An instance in case would be the first relevant programme note for the screening of Japanese films; the April issue of 1952, which held film reviews by Dilys Powell of the *Sunday Times*, Josh Billings of the *Cinematograph Weekly*, Connery Chappell of *Picturegoer*, Paul Dehn of the *Sunday Chronicle*, Jympson Harman of the *Evening News*, Roger Manwell of the British Film Academy, and Richard Winnington of the *News Chronicle*. The Japanese film presented in this issue, *Rashomon*, was however not found among their top five films, but in the section called 'Without Trumpets'.[43] In view of the limited amount of Japanese film screened at the National Film Theatre, the following list is most likely a complete list of the Japanese films screened by this institution:

1952 April + May: 'Critic's Choice, Without Trumpets':
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira[44]

1952 August: 'Critic's Choice, Without Trumpets':
*Men Who Step on the Tiger's Tail* (1945) by Kurosawa Akira[45]

1953 No Japanese films

1954 July: 'Critic's Choice'; and 'National Film Theatre presents film from Asia' series:
*The Imposter* (1952) by Osone Tatsuo[46]
*Men Who Step On The Tiger's Tail* (1945) by Kurosawa Akira[47].

1954 August: 'Critic's Choice, Without Trumpets':
*Gate of Hell* (1953) by Kinugasa Teinosuke[48]
*Children of Hiroshima* (1952) by Shindo Kaneto[49]

1954 August: '50 Years Of Film' series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira

1955 May: 'Critic's Choice, Without Trumpets':
*Children of Hiroshima* (1952) by Shindo Kaneto

1956 January: 'Saturday Open To The Public' series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira

1958 September:
*Life of Oharu* (1951) by Mizoguchi Kenji

1962 February:
*Ugetsu Monogatari* (1952) by Mizoguchi Kenji

July-August: 'Film Theatre Firsts' programme[50]:
*Living* (1952) by Kurosawa Akira[51]

1963 March: 'British Film Awards Short List':
*The Island/Hadaka no shima* (1961) by Shindo Kaneto

1964 March: 'Rich And Strange' series[52]:
*Throne of Blood* (1957) by Kurosawa Akira

July-August: 'Treasures Of The Royal Belgian Film Archive' programme:
*She Was Like a Daisy/Nogiku no gotoki kiminariki* (1956) by Kinoshita Keisuke

November: 'Salute The Distributors' series:
*Fires on the Plain/Nobi* (1959) by Ichikawa Kon
*The Rickshaw Man* (1958) by Inagaki Hiroshi

December; 'Out Of Circulation' series:

*Where Chimneys are Seen* aka *Four Chimneys* (1953) by Gosho Heinosuke

1966 November: 'Fatal Woman'[53] series:
*The Idiot* (1951) by Kurosawa Akira

1967[54] August-September: 'Command Performance' series:
*Seven Samurai* (1954) by Kurosawa Akira

1968 April: 'Man With The Movie Camera' series:
*Yojimbo* (1961) by Kurosawa Akira
*An Actor's Revenge/Yukinojo henge* (1963) by Ichikawa Kon
June; 'Human Rights' series:
*Tokyo Story/Tokyo Monogatari* (1953) by Ozu Yasujiro
June-August: 'World Cinema Review; Cornerstones' series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira
December: 'Pot Purri' series:
*Ugetsu Monogatari* (1952) by Mizoguchi Kenji

1969 April-May; 'Cornerstones' series:
*Early Spring/Soshun* (1956) by Ozu Yasujiro
*Alone on the Pacific/Taiheiyo hitoribotchi* (1963) by Ichikawa Kon
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira
June-July; 'Cornerstones' series:
*Hidden Fortress/Kakushitoride no sanakunin* (1958) by Kurosawa Akira

1970 July-September; 'History Of The Cinema' series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira

1971 August-September; 'Archive Night At The NFT 2' series:
*Living* (1952) by Kurosawa Akira
September-November; 'Explorations Of Fantasy In The Cinema' series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira
December; 'Great Screenwriters' series:
*Yojimbo* (1961) by Kurosawa Akira

1972 June-July; 'Aspects Of Cinema – Horror'[55] series:
*The Black Cat/Kuroneko* (1968) by Shindo Kaneto
June-July: 'Re-view'[56] series:
*Tokyo Story* (1953) Ozu Yasujiro
*Sansho the Bailiff/Sansho Dayu* (1954) Mizoguchi Kenji
*Tales of the Taira Clan/Shin heike monogatari* (1955) Mizoguchi Kenji
*An Autumn Afternoon/Samma no aji* (1962) Ozu Yasujiro[57]
September-November; 'BBC World Cinema' series:
*Tales of the Taira Clan* (1955) by Mizoguchi Kenji

1972 December; 'Great Movie Stars'[58] series:
*Sanjuro/Tsubaki sanjuro* (1962) by Kurosawa Akira

1973 February-March; 'A Selection From The Best World Cinema'[59]:
*Yojimbo* (1961) by Kurosawa Akira
*An Actor's Revenge* (1963) by Ichikawa Kon
February; 'Members' Requests':
*Diary of a Shinjuku Thief/Shinjuku dorobo nikki* (1968) by Oshima Nagisa

April-May; 'Women's Cinema'[60] series:
*Love Under the Crucifix/Oginsama* (1960) by Tanaka Kinuyo

April-May; 'Best of World Cinema/2'[61] series:
*History of Post-War Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess/Nippon sengoshi madamu onboro no Seikatsu* (1970) by Imamura Shohei
*Woman of the Dunes/Suna no onna* (1964) by Teshigahara Hiroshi

April-May; 'Member's Request' series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira

July-September; 'All Night Shows – Mifune':
*Yojimbo* (1961) by Kurosawa Akira

*Throne of Blood* (1957) by Kurosawa Akira
*Sanjuro/Tsubaki sanjuro* (1962) by Kurosawa Akira
*Hidden Fortress* (1958) by Kurosawa Akira

September-November; 'BFI 40th Anniversary'[62] series:
*Sansho the Bailiff/Sansho Dayu* (1954) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Where Chimneys Are Seen* (1953) by Gosho Heinosuke
*Tokyo Story* 1953) by Ozu Yasujiro

October-November: 'Film As Film'[63] series:
*Utamaro and His Five Women/Utamaro omeguru gorain no onna* (1946) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Gion Music/Gion Bayashi* (1953) by Mizoguchi Kenji

1974 January: 'Member's Requests' series:
*Kwaidan/Kaidan* (1964) by Kobayashi Masaki

July-September: 'Aspects Of Censorship – Eroticism In The Cinema'[64] series:
*The Key/Kagi* (1959) by Ichikawa Kon
*Inferno of First Love/Hatsukoi jigokuhen* (1968) by Hani Susumi
*Woman of The Dunes* (1964) by Teshigahara Hiroshi

September-November; 'Cinema As Propaganda; The Anti-war Film'[65] series:
*The Burmese Harp/Biruma no tategoto* (1956) by Ichikawa Kon

December; 'The Re-view'[66] series:
*Boy/Shonen* (1969) by Oshima Nagisa

1975 February-March; 'Special Effects In The Cinema'[67] series:
*The Submersion of Japan/Nippon chimbotsu* (1974) by Moritani Shiro

May-August: 'Re-view'[68] series:
*Seven Samurai* (1954) by Kurosawa Akira
*The Ceremony/Gishiki* (1971) by Oshima Nagisa

August-November; 'Fifty Years Of Film Societies'[69] series:
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira

We may thus establish that the National Film Theatre screened approximately 67 Japanese feature films produced between 1945 and 1975 over a period of 23 years, from 1952 until 1975. The average annual amount of screenings at the NFT during the time frame of this study was 450, and most films were screened at least twice. It would seem that in addition to the 67 screenings documented above, the NFT also screened nine major programmes dealing with the Japanese cinema during these years:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1957 | 'A Light In The Japanese Window' | English curator unknown/Mrs Kawakita |
| 1963 | 'Ozu and Mizoguchi' | John Minchinton, curator |
| 1966 | 'Kon Ichikawa' | John Peter Dyer/Mrs Kawakita, curators |
| 1970 | 'Japanese Popular Cinema' | Ken Wlaschin, curator |
| 1970 | 'Akira Kurosawa', | Ken Wlaschin, curator |
| 1971 | 'Ozu, Mizoguchi And Their Generation' | John Gillett, curator |
| 1972 | 'New Films From Japan'[70] | Brian Baxter and Søren Fischer, curators |
| 1974 | 'Japan – 20 Contemporary Directors', | Ken Wlaschin, curator |
| 1975 | 'Japan – History Through Cinema', | Ken Wlaschin and Claire Kitson, curators |

An introductory interpretation of the above titles indicate a rich variation in content of these programmes, by which we may assume that the programmers at NFT targeted different aspects of Japanese film production. The balance between auteur related and thematic programmes, as well as the mix of primary and secondary film productions is almost perfect, since the introductory series of Japanese films in 1957.

The programmers for the series entitled 'New Films from Japan', screened in 1972, thank among others the 'UniJapan' for its 'invaluable help' in setting up the programme.[71] A comparison with the films presented in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* between 1969 and 1971 confirms that all the films screened at the National Film Theatre in London, had previously been marketed in this journal. It remains to be seen why none of them were commercially released in Great Britain. In view of the limited success of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, it would seem that the 'New Films From Japan' programme at the NFT is the only evidence for a clear connection between the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Film Abroad Inc., in Tokyo, and a Western institution. I therefore suggest that this programme belongs to the most successful launches of Japanese films in the West, as far as *UniJapan Film Quarterly* is concerned.

*'A Light In The Japanese Window'*

In spite of the limited amount of film programmes dedicated to the Japanese cinema, the BFI may well be correct in assuming that ''A Light in the Japanese Window' [was] the first major airing of Japanese cinema in Europe […]' by 1957.[72] At the back of the programme the BFI extend their gratitude to 'the Japanese Producer's Association' as well as 'Mrs Kawakita, of Towa Film Corporation' for their co-operation on the programme.[73] The screenings took place between October 28, 1957 and January 19, 1958 in NFT's new cinema and the event was launched with two screenings of Kurosawa Akira's *Throne Of Blood* (1957), sub-titled in English. The other films that followed were, in chronological order:

*Doomed* aka *Living* (1952) by Kurosawa Akira
*Love Never Fails* aka *The Grass Whistle/Mugibue* (1955) by Toyoda Shiro[74]
*Men of the Rice fields* aka *The Rice people/Kome* (1957) by Imai Tadashi
*Tokyo Story* (1953) by Ozu Yasujiro
*Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Chikamatsu Monogatari* aka *The Crucified Lovers* (1955) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Shadows in the Sunlight* (1956) by Imai Tadashi
*Wild Geese* aka *The Mistress/Gan* (1953) by Toyoda Shiro

*The Boyhood of Dr Noguchi/ Noguchi hideyo no shonen jidai* (1956) by Sekigawa Hideo
*The Burmese Harp* (1956) by Ichikawa Kon
*Four Chimneys* aka *Where Chimneys are Seen* (1953) by Gosho Heinosuke
*Seven Samurai* (1954) by Kurosawa Akira
*She Was Like a Daisy* aka *She Was Like A Wild Chrysanthemum* (1956) by Kinoshita Keisuke
*The Lower Depths*/*Donzoko* (1957) by Kurosawa Akira

In view of the now established canon of Japanese film classics (see Chapter Six), the films selected by the Japanese Producer's Association and Mrs Kawakita for the introduction of this country's national cinema is hardly surprising. Among the 15 films making up the programme, only five were contemporary dramas. The selection of films has thus been made in favour of period drama and the general preference for the *jidai-geki* genre is further confirmed by the lay-out and design of the festival programme, which is aesthetically inspired by very early Japanese woodblock prints, indicating a geisha and other Japonist stereotypes in tune with *Japonisme* aka Japanese Taste (see Chapter Five).

*'Japan – History Through Cinema'*

The above series – or season, as they were called – is of interest since it was screened in both France and Great Britain, and the difference in how each institution profiled the series may serve as an instance of how different mind sets lead to the establishment of differing images of the Japanese national cinema in Western countries.

'Japan – History through Cinema' was first presented at the National Film Theatre in London, in February and March, 1975, in a unique pedagogical form in that the films were selected to mirror a chronological display of Japan's history. Like NFT's curators, Ken Wlaschin and Claire Kitson, I believe that this series remains '[…] the first ever attempt to show Japanese film in this way and to try to give an understanding of the background of the events portrayed.'[75] By doing so, Wlaschin and Kitson in fact confirmed the literary quality of the *jidai-geki* film genre, in that Japanese period drama is generally based on traditional accounts of certain historical events which have since been continously presented in different artistic interpretations during past centuries. The NFT also published a booklet where all the particular historical events displayed in the films, were contextualized not only with reference to Japanese history, but world history, and Tadao Sato had written an essay on '[…] the use of historic events in the Japanese cinema.'[76] The series included the following films, each illustrating a particular point in time or historical event in Japan's history:

3rd century *Himiko* (1974) by Shinoda Masahiro

| | |
|---|---|
| 8th century | *Saga of the Great Buddha/Daibutsu kaigen* (1952) by Kinugasa Teinosuke |
| 11th century | *Tale of Genji* (1951) by Yoshimura Kozaburo |
| 11th century (Heian period) | *Sansho the Bailiff* (1954) by Mizoguchi Kenji |
| 12th century | *Men Who Step on the Tiger's Tail* (1945) by Kurosawa Akira |
| 16th century | *The Conspirator/Hangyaku-ji* (1961) by Ito Daisuke |
| 17th century | *Silence/Chinoku* (1972) by Shinoda Masahiro |
| 1701-1702 | *Loyal 47 Ronin/Chusingura* (1962) by Inagaki Hiroshi |
| 19th century | *Assassination of Ryoma/Ryoma ansatsu (1974) by Kuroki Kazuo* |
| End of Meiji period (1912) | *The Heart/Kokoro (1954) by Ichikawa Kon* |
| 1920s | *Crab-canning Ship (1953) by Yamamura So* |
| 1930s | *The Whole Family Works/Hataraku ikka* (1939) by Naruse Mikio |
| 1936 | *Coup d'Ėtat/Kaigenrei* (1973) by Yoshida Yoshishige |
| 1941-1942 | *War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya/Hawaii Mare oki kaisen* (1942) by Yamamoto Kajiro |
| End of World War II | *Fires on the Plain* (1959) by Ichikawa Kon |
| 1952 | *Children of Hiroshima* (1953) by Shindo Kaneto |
| August 1945 | *The Emperor and the General/Nippon no ichiban nagai hi* (1967) by Okamoto Kihachi |
| 1948 | *A Hen in the Wind/Kaze no naka no mendori* (1948) by Ozu Yasujiro |
| Post-war period | *A Japanese Tragedy/Nihon no higeki* (1953) by Kinoshita Keisuke |
| 1950s | *Kiku and Isamu/Kiku to Isamu* (1959) by Imai Tadashi |
| 1953 | *Mr Poo/Pu-san* (1953) by Ichikawa Kon |
| 1945-1970 | *History of Post-war Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess* (1970) by Imamura Shohei |
| 1960 | *Night and Fog in Japan/Nihon no yoru to kiri* (1960) by Oshima Nagisa |
| 1943-45 | *The Human Condition/Ningen no joken* (1959-1961) by Kobayashi Masaki |
| - | *Rebellion/Joiuchi* (1967) by Kobayashi Masaki |

Apparently, Kobayashi Masaki personally introduced the last two instalments in the series. The non-chronological appearance of these two films may thus have been caused by personal preferences. This individual programme may however serve as a general indicator of a difference in exhibition policy between the French and British, in that Henri Langlois' obvious 'method' may be said to have been characterized by 'quantity' and 'internationality', whereas the programmes for the NFT were characterized by 'quality' and 'nationalism'. It would seem that the multitude and high frequency of Japanese films in the

programmes organized by the French Cinémathèque were meant to integrate the Japanese cinema among the Western national cinemas, and my assumption is corroborated by the fact that the above series of films, when screened at the French Cinémathèque under the rubric 'Japon: Histoire à l'écran',[77] were mixed with other Japanese period films, and screened without any attention paid to chronology or historical events. Nor have I found any written information to have been published in connection with the screenings.

*United States: The Museum of Modern Art*

It is not possible to make a straight comparison between the Japanese films exhibited in Europe and the United States between 1950 and 1975, for the main reason that the latter never managed to establish an American equivalent to institutionalized organisations like the French Cinémathèque or the British Film Institute, nor does the United States have a history of film festivals like those in Venice or Cannes.[78] Instead, the Museum of Modern Art in New York remains at the fore as the major institutionalized organisation involved in the exhibition of Japanese film in the United States, a fact which has enabled me to sketch the American history of exhibition of Japanese film through the museum's film programmes.[79] Unfortunately, the museum has not archived any of its program notes relating to film events or film screenings between 1943 and 1976. I have however been able to establish that the following events or projects of screening Japanese film at the MOMA were arranged by the museum's film department between 1950 and 1975:[80]

| | |
|---|---|
| *Six Films By Yasujiro Ozu* | May 28-June 7, 1964 |
| *The Films Of Susumi Hani* | Sept 27, 1966 |
| *The Films Of Kon Ichikawa* | Feb 12-28, 1967 |
| *Ten Recent Japanese Films* | Nov 2-20, 1967 |
| *The Japanese Film* | April 2-July 22, 1970 |
| *Three Japanese Acquisitions* | April 1, 8 and 15, 1971 |
| *Nagisa Oshima, A Retrospective* | April 20-May 3, 1972 |
| *The Films Of Masahiro Shinoda* | April 26-May 14, 1973 |
| *Kenji Mizoguchi, Birthday Tribute* | May 17, 1973 |
| *Yakuza Films* | Oct 17, 1974 |
| *Cineprobe; Takahiko Iimura* | April 29, 1975 |

According to documents in the Archives at MOMA, American import firms presented film cycles from Japan in the early 1960s in New York, which included for example Kurosawa Akira's *Ikiru.* The Museum of Modern Art was however not involved in these events,[81] nor have I come across the equivalence of this type of promotional event for Japanese film in France, nor in Great Britain. MOMA however arranged the above mentioned eleven film

programmes in relation to Japanese film during the time frame of this study and I suggest that their auteur series actually form the nucleus of its film programmes and that they were more or less copied from the 'Hommages' presented at the French Cinémathèque. Interesetingly, the first series of auteur films presented by the museum was dedicated to Ozu Yasujiro, which should be seen in contrast to the French Cinémathèque which paid tribute to Kurosawa Akira in their first Japanese 'Hommage' in 1957, or the National Film Theatre which included only one film by Ozu in its first Japanese programme 'A Light in the Japanese Window'. According to MOMA's press release, the films had been selected by Donald Richie and the series occured in the spring of 1964, one year after Ozu's demise. (The National Film Theatre had arranged a programme saluting both Ozu and Mizoguchi in 1963.) Richie had selected the following films to be screened; *I Was Born but…/Umarete wa mita keredo* (1932), *Late Spring* (1949), *Tokyo Story* (1953), *Early Spring*(1956), *Good Morning/Ohayo* (1959) and *Late Autumn* (1960).[82] Richie wrote about Ozu that

> [… he] is the director the Japanese themselves call the most Japanese. His films always depict family life; are about two generations, older and younger; they faithfully recreate the tempo of the traditional way. Although it would seem paradoxical, since his pictures concern themselves with traditional Japan, their extreme restraint in both form and content, method and meaning – brings them very close to what the West at present considers its avant-garde. Ozu's immensely circumscribed vision of the world happens to share much with that of Antonioni and Resnais. Ozu's world, its stillness, its nostalgia, its hopelessness, its serenity, its beauty is indeed very Japanese but it is because rather than despite this that his pictures are meaningful to the West.[83]

Among these six films, only *Good Morning* was commercially released in the United States during the 1960s. The remaining films, except *I Was Born but…* (1932) were not released until in the 1970s.[84]

After yet two auteur series, MOMA presented its first mixed programme in November 1967, entitled 'Ten Recent Japanese Films'. This film programme was also compiled by Donald Richie and included Japanese films that had been produced between 1962 and 1967; that is during a five year period. Richie wrote that 'Though there is not a *Rashomon* among them nor, indeed, anything that could be called a masterpiece, these films represent what remains vital in the Japanese cinema.'[85] Interestingly, only two of the films had not previously been screened overseas; *Black Sun/Kuroi taiyo* (1965) by Kurahara Koreyoshi, and *Classroom Renegades/Hiko shonen* (1964) by Kawabe Kazuo. These two youth films were both considered to be troublesome since they were openly critical of then contemporary social and political issues in Japan. As for the others, they had already been presented to the Western public, mainly by Mary Evans or Donald Richie through their

reviews in *The Japan Times*, or through the marketing of them in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* – more often than not in both publications.

The story behind the compilation of this series of Japanese films as well as his other commitments, clearly reveal how hard Richie worked to introduce Japanese film product to the United States. According to relevant documents in MOMA's archives,[86] the above programme was originally scheduled for the autumn of 1966, but had to be postponed 12 months, because Donald Richie was indisposed and could not go through with the preparations of the 'monograph'.[87] The initial outline of the program is also indicated in Richie's 'reports' to the museum, in which he accounted for the contacts he had made with the different film production companies in Tokyo.[88] This letter thus accounts for Donald Richie's original plan for the films he wanted to screen in MOMA's Japanese film programme. The addressee of the letter is not clear, but other documents from the time suggest that Richie was in personal contact with MOMA's director, Mr Willard van Dyke, about the preparations of the program. It would therefore seem likely that he had been given the assignment by Mr van Dyke, rather than Iris Barry, the director of the museum's Film Department at the time.

We thus know that Donald Richie had contacted Toho, and the director of its Foreign Section, Mr Kanda; writing that '(…) we will need in particular a Naruse film and I was wondering if you could loan a subtitled print of any of the following: *Nagareru*, *Onna ga Kaidan o Agaru toki*, *Midareru*. (…) Also I would like to show Toyoda's *A Cat and Two Women*. (…) In addition we should also like the full version of Shintoho's *Takekurabe* (*Growing Up*)(…) Finally, we should like to show *The Hidden Fortress*. This is the single Kurosawa film not widely shown in America.'[89] From Daiei's Mr Morita, Donald Richie wanted Mizoguchi Kenji's *The Crucified Lovers* (1954), Ozu Yasujiro's remake of his 1934 film *Floating Weeds/Ukigusa* (1959), Masumura Yasuzo's *Hoodlum Soldier/Heitai Yakuza* (1965) and Ichikawa Kon's *Conflagration* (1958). From Nikkatsu Film, he requested Kawabe Kazuo's *Classroom Renegades* (1964) as well as Imamura Shohei's *The Pornographer/Jinrui Gaku Nyumon* (1966). From Shochiku's Mr Okuyama, Richie requested Hani Susumi's *A Full Life/Mitasareta Seikatsu* (1962), Imai Tadashi's *Adultress* aka *Night Drum/Yoru no Tsutsumi* (1958), plus something by Kinoshita Keisuke (*Koge*,[90] he suggested), plus something by Kobayashi Masaki (Richie here suggested *The Thick-walled Room/Kabe Atsuki Heya* (1953)). From Toei's Mr Suzuki, Donald Richie requested Imai Tadashi's *Echigo Tsutsuishi Oyashirazu*[91] (1964) which Richie translated as 'A Story From Echigo' and Uchida Tomu's *Fugitive from the Past/Kiga kaigyo* (1964).

Richie's initial program suggestion is particularly interesting in view of the character and genre of films that were finally included in the program of 'Ten Recent Japanese Films':

*With Beauty and Sorrow/Utsukushisa to Kanashimi to* (1965) by Shinoda Masahiro
*Classroom Renegades* as mentioned above
*The Pornographer/Jinrui Gaku Nyumon* (1966) by Imamura Shohei
*Lost Sex/Honno* (1966) by Shindo Kaneto
*The Burglar Story/Nippon Dorobo Monogatari* (1965) by Yamamoto Satsuo
*Passion* aka *All Mixed Up/Manji* (1964) by Masumura Yasuzo
*The Black Sun* as mentioned above
*The Affair/Joen* (1967) by Yoshida Yoshishige
*The Face of Another/Tanin no Kao* (1966) by Teshigahara Hiroshi
*A Full Life/Mitasareta Seikatsu* (1962) by Hani Susumi

Among these films, only *With Beauty and Sorrow* may be said to present in a period setting, and selected publicity stills of women in kimono from this film were used on the cover and back of the leaflet presenting the programme at MOMA. The audience was perhaps surprised by the fact that the remaining nine films were in fact contemporary dramas focusing on issues related to youth delinquency, sexuality and identity. This film programme thus took an unexpected turn towards a contemporary agenda and the first question is obviously who may have been behind this change of direction. Unfortunately, the documentation related to this particular film programme, in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art, gives no clue to this person's identity but in view of the fact that the final selection of films radically differ from the ones initially sketched by Donald Richie, it seems fair to ask to what extent the resulting program actually reflects Richie's personal choices. When comparing the two lists, only three of his originally suggested films were finally screened in the film program at MOMA. Omitted were all the films by the 'older' generation of Japanese film makers, such as Naruse Mikio, Kinoshita Keisuke and Kurosawa Akira, traditional Japanese filmmakers highly esteemed by Richie. I have also noticed that, unlike the films initially suggested by him, most of the films that were subsequently screened in New York have also been marketed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* (see Chapter Two). I therefore suggest that the film programme was actually put together by this association in collaboration with MOMA and given the title 'Ten Recent Japanese Films', in order to make the most of the opportunity at the Museum Of Modern Art.

Very shortly after he had been appointed Director of the Film Department at the museum in 1969, Donald Richie launched his pet project, a film programme which had

been on his mind for at least ten years, and had been foregone by several proposals by him to the museum, the first dating from 1960.[92] A couple of years later, Richie had again proposed a programme he wanted to entitle ”Japanese Film 1928-1962”, in a letter to Richard Griffith, curator at MOMA.[93] Richie's persistence on the matter is obvious from Griffith's answer; 'Thanks for yours. You do indeed never give up. (…)' [94] Richie's panorama of the Japanese film history was eventually presented during the spring season in 1970, under the title 'The Japanese Film', and it remains the museum's most ambitious Japanese film programme to date. The series comprised 90 feature films produced by 32 directors between 1920 and 1970, which implies that the program was meant to cover several aspects of Japanese film production. The focus seems to have been set on the 'Golden Age' of films during the late 1940s and the 1950s. Interestingly, the opening film was Kurosawa's 1943 production of *Sugata Sanjiro*.[95]

Unfortunately, the Museum of Modern Art does not have any documentation related to its most original film program within the time frame of my study; the Japanese *yakuza* film. This particular program was presented in October 1974, a couple of years after Donald Richie had left the museum. The originality of such a programme lies in its choice of genre, since the *yakuza* film was commonly perceived as representing a less important and trivial genre, quite separate from the prestige of the art film. In my opinion, the choice of an entertainement genre may well imply a growing awareness of Japanese film among the American public, as well as a pregnant break with the dominance of the *jidai-geki* film which had been manifested by Richie as late as in his last programme for the Museum of Modern Art, 'The Films Of Masahiro Shinoda' programme in April-May 1973.

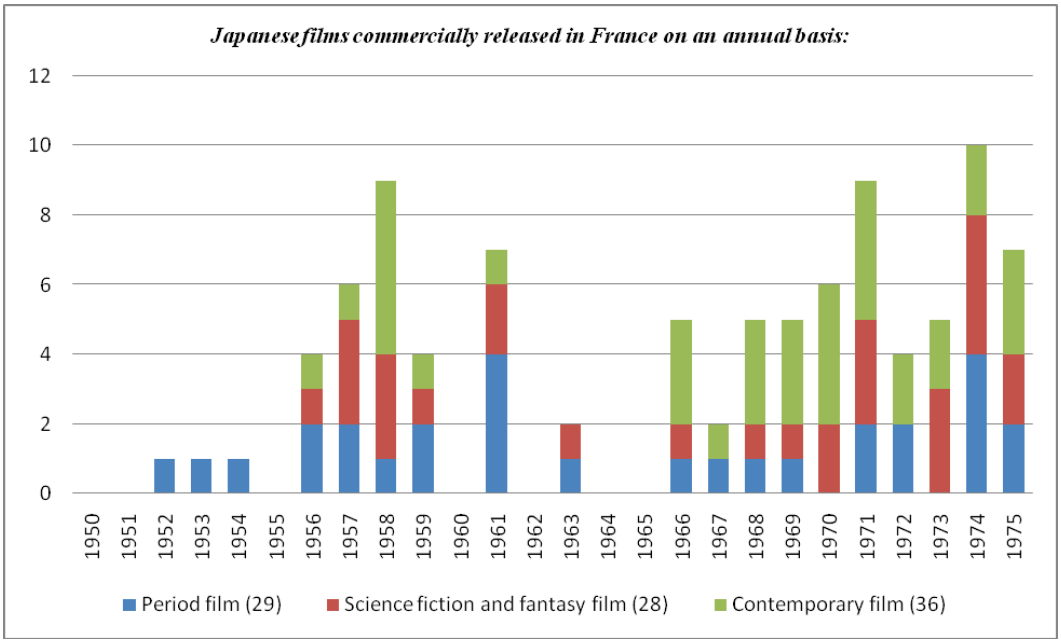
### **3.4** COMMERCIAL SCREENING

*France*

Commercial screening of Japanese film in France mainly took place in Paris, like most screenings of foreign language films, at the time. According to Michel Ciment in the French film review *Positif*,[96] less than 50 Japanese films had been subject to commercial screening in Paris by 1966, a statement which is confirmed by the figures in my table below. According to my sources[97] at least 93 Japanese films were commercially screened in France between 1950 and 1975, which is an almost identical amount compared to Great Britain, but less than in the United States. In order to maximize the information in the table, I have taken three film genres into consideration; 'period film', 'contemporary film' and 'science-fiction and fantasy film'. The genre 'youth film', in this case a film directed or based on screen-plays by the younger Japanese generation, has been included in the column for

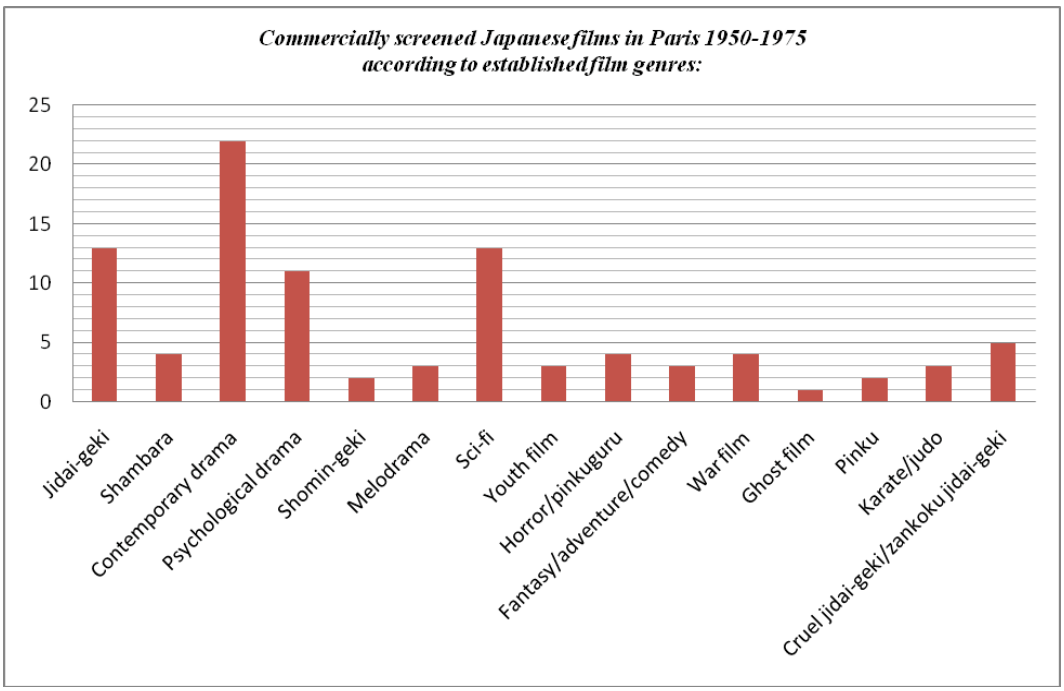
'contemporary film' in the table below, since the French censors allowed the release of only one such Japanese film during the time frame of my study; *Juvenile Passion/Kurutta Kajitsu* (1957) by Nakahira Ko, released in 1958 under the title *Passions Juveniles*.

In view of the critical reception of the Japanese film in France, at the time (see Chapter Four), it is quite obvious that the genres applied to Japanese fiction films were made up of these categories; although the Japanese also used sub-genres, such as *chambara, haha-mono* (mother-film, that is films about mothers)*, tsuma-mono* (wife-film, that is films about wives) and *shomin-geki*.[98] My study indicates that these sub-genres were never really established in the Western discourse at the time, except maybe for the *chambara* sub-genre. The remaining genres were in fact left unscrutinized until the appearance of genre studies in the 1980s.[99] Since the 1990s, several important studies have been published which relate either to the treatment of Japanese cinema within film studies,[100] as well as within genre studies.[101] In view of the light shed on for example genre formation by contemporary scholars, the application of only three genres in the table below is unsatisfying, but I consider it to be the most appropriate approach in view of the time period it represents.




Graph 2

The result suggests a steady output of Japanese films on the French film market, and a noticeable increase after 1966. There is an unexpected resemblance in total amounts between films representing the main Japanese film genres at the time, which were period film (29), sci-fi and fantasy films (28) and contemporary film (36).




Graph 3

The second graph provides more details in that it indicates the commercially released Japanese films in Paris according to modern genre taxonomy. The genre entitled 'Psychological drama' is here devided between films that are set in the past and thus formerly belonged to the period film category, and those set in the present world which belonged to the contemporary film category.

Documents regarding the programming at the French Cinémathèque furthermore indicate that the activities at the Cinémathèque were not connected to the commercial side of film screening in Paris, or elsewhere in the country. The only non-archival connections maintained by the Cinémathèque were those with the film festivals, primarily that in Cannes, but also those in Venice and Poitiers. As from 1965 the programming at the French Cinémathèque in late May or June generally held one or two films from the film festival in Cannes.[102] As far as I can see, there is only one film that was screened both in Cannes and at the French Cinémathèque (in May 1973) and then went on to commercial screening in June 1974, and that is Yoshida Yoshishige's *Coup d'etat/Kaigen-rei* (1972).

A comparison between the first Japanese films screened at the French Cinémathèque and those screened commercially in Paris between 1950 and 1957 indicate the following:

| | French Cinémathèque | Commercial screenings |
|---|---|---|
| 1952 | *Ugetsu Monogatari* by Mizoguchi Kenji<br>*Life of Oharu/Saikaku ichidai onna* by Mizoguchi Kenji | *The Bandit Samurai* by Takizawa Eisuke[103] |
| 1953 | *Where Chimneys are Seen/Inagaku Entotsu no mieru basho* by Gosho Heinosuke | *Rashomon* by Kurosawa Akira |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1954 | | *Children of Hiroshima/Gembaku no ko* by Shindo Kaneto<br>*Life of Oharu* by Mizoguchi Kenji |
| 1955 | | *Beauty and the Thieves/Bijo to Tozuko* [104] *(*aka *La Belle et le Voleur)* by Kimura Keigo<br>*Golden Demon/Konjiki Yasha* by Shima Koji<br>*Mother/Okasan* by Naruse Mikio<br>*Gate of Hell/Jigoku-mon* by Kinugasa Teinosuke |
| 1956 | *The Crab-canning Ship/Kanikosen* by Yamamura So | |
| 1957 | 'Hommage à Akira Kurosawa':<br>including four period dramas:<br>*Rashomon*,<br>*Sugata Sanjiro*<br>*Men Who Step on the Tiger's Tale*<br>*Seven Samurai*<br>and four contemporary dramas:<br>*No Regret for Our Youth*<br>*Drunken Angel*<br>*Living*<br>*The Idiot* | |

It should also be noted that the Japanese films in the collection of the Cinémathèque were screened several times over the five years between 1950-1957, whereas the commercially screened films normally had only a two-week run. The dominating position of Japanese period film in both categories, is also worth noticing. The commercially screened films however indicate a greater diversion of both directors and sub-genres with Naruse Mikio's *Mother* being one of the foremost representatives of a *haha-mono* or mother-film. It would thus seem that, from a generic point of view, the Japanese films screened in Paris mainly belonged to the *jidai-geki* genre whether they were screened at the Cinémathèque or on the commercial screen.

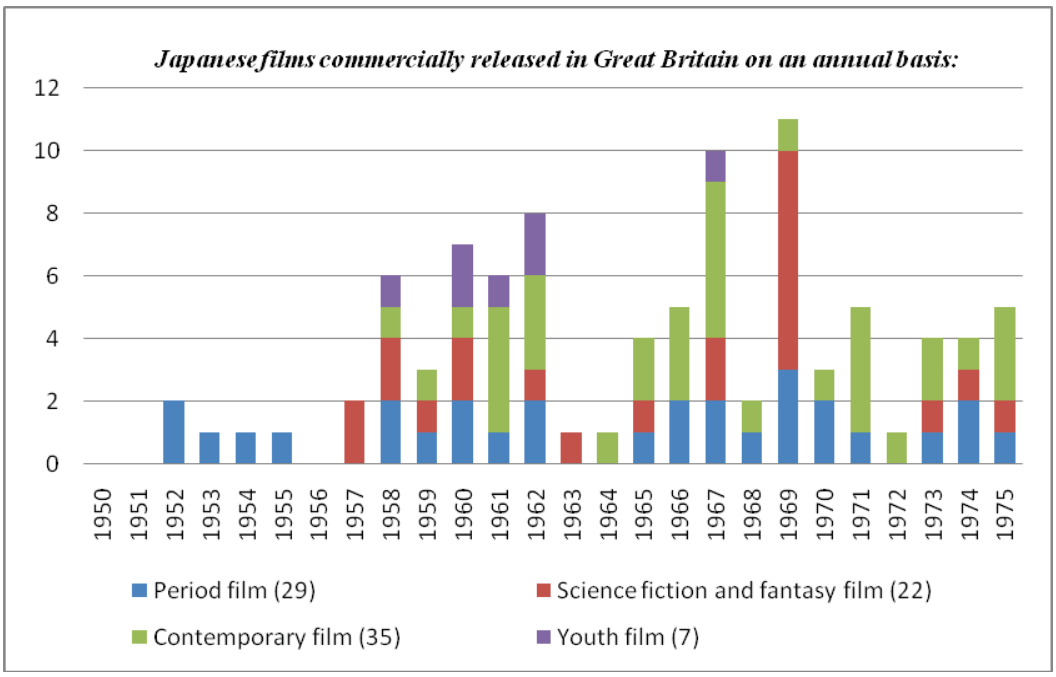
At the same time, these exhibition locale differ in their programming from the point of view of the more pregnant mix of directors and quality of films presented at the commercial film circuits. The precise reason for this variation is difficult to pinpoint, but I would suggest that it may be linked to the emergence of auteurism among French critics (see Chapter Four), which resulted in the 'Hommage à Kurosawa', in 1957. On closer inspection, I have also found that Shindo Kaneto's *Children of Hiroshima* was screened only once at the French Cinémathèque, in 1963, in connection with the 'Initiation to Japanese film' programme. Kimura Keigo's *Beauty and the Thieves* was never screened at the Cinémathèque, and the *Golden Demon* by Shima Koji was screened only twice, in 1966 and 1967, more than ten years after their commercial release. Naruse's *Mother* and

Kinugasa Teinosuke's *Gate of Hell* both became Cinémathèque classics a few years after their commercial release and were screened 13 and 15 times respectively at the Cinémathèque between 1958/1957 and 1975. From a chronological point of view, it also seems to have been of little or no consequence when the films were originally released in relation to their release in France, the most poignant example being the rediscovery and subsequent commercial release in 1975 of Kinugasa Teinosuke's *A Page of Madness/Kurutta ippeiji* from 1927.

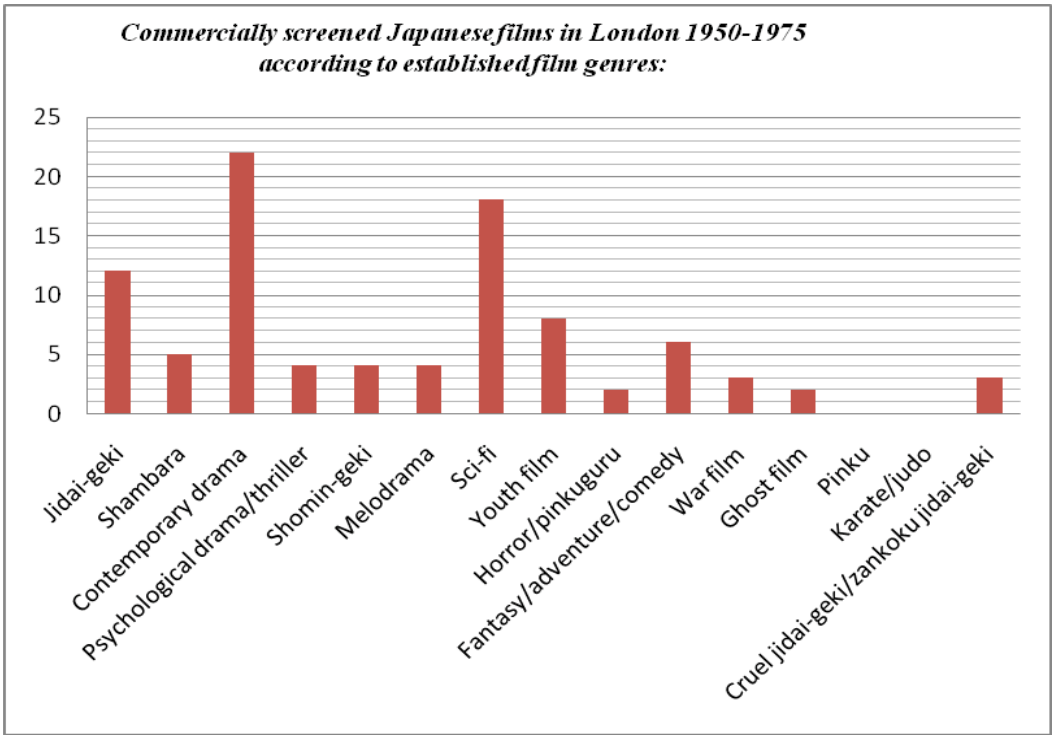
There is no particularly outstanding year for commercially screened Japanese films in France (i.e. Paris) but the clear increase in commercially released films after 1966 is interesting and worth a closer look. Even if these commercially screened films were not linked to the French Cinémathèque, their releases were closely followed by the film magazines and the daily newspapers. These may be said to have had a highly differing attitude towards the Japanese films, an attitude which is reflected both among the critics themselves and the films they reviewed (see Chapter Four).

*Great Britain*

According to my findings in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, at least 92 post-war Japanese feature productions were commercially screened in Great Britain between 1950 and 1975.[105] These films may be categorized into four distinct groups; 29 were period films, 34 were contemporary films, 22 were science-fiction and/or fantasy films and seven were youth films.[106] This means that Great Britain exhibited the highest amount of Japanese youth films among the countries involved in this study; even though France set the standard by screening Nakahira Ko's *Juvenile Passion* in 1957. (This film was screened no less than eleven times at the French Cinémathèque during the time frame of this study, in addition to its commercial exhibition.) The other six films screened in Great Britain were *The Stormy Man* (1959) by Inoue Umeji ; *Black Nets/Kindan no suna*[107] (1958) by Horiuchi Manao; *The Cola Game/Watashi wa shobusuru* (1959) Itaya Noriyuki; *Girls Behind Bars/Oinaru ai no kanatani* (1960) by Ohno Tetsuro; *Youth in Fury/Shikamo karerawa yuku* (1960) by Ohno Tetsuro; and *The Beautiful People/Yoru no henrin* (1965) by Nakamura Noboru. The annual spread of Japanese films released in Great Britian is indicated in the tables below.




Graph 4




Graph 5

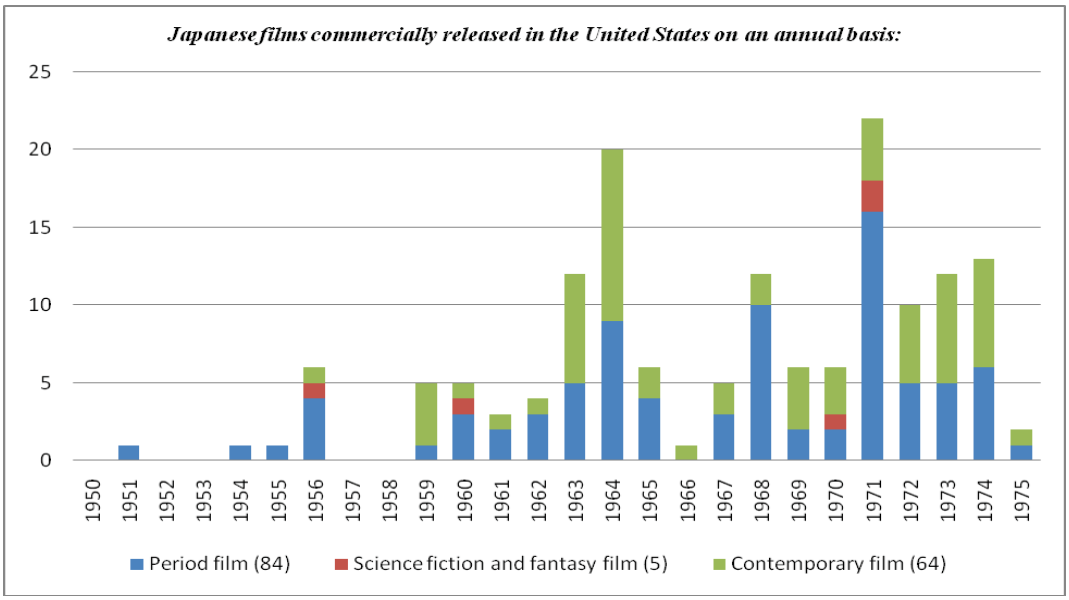
We can see from the table that the 1960s were successful years for Japanese film in Great Britain with no less than 55 Japanese films released. The early 1960s proved especially successful, and in addition to the first three years, there were ten releases in 1967 and another eleven in 1969. In view of the relatively large amount of Japanese youth films released, this genre was given a separate column. Among the more interesting data is also the variation in distribution of film genres over the decade, and especially the dominance of contemporary drama and youth film during the first three years of the 1960s, compared to

the visible increase of science-fiction/fantasy films and period film to the disadvantage of especially youth film, at the end of the decade. The strong increase in released science-fiction/fantasy films in 1969 is also most interesting. The most pregnant general fact is however the relative dominance of contemporary drama and youth film over period drama during the 1960s, implying that the British distribution of Japanese film during this particular decade, certainly warrants further research.

*United States*

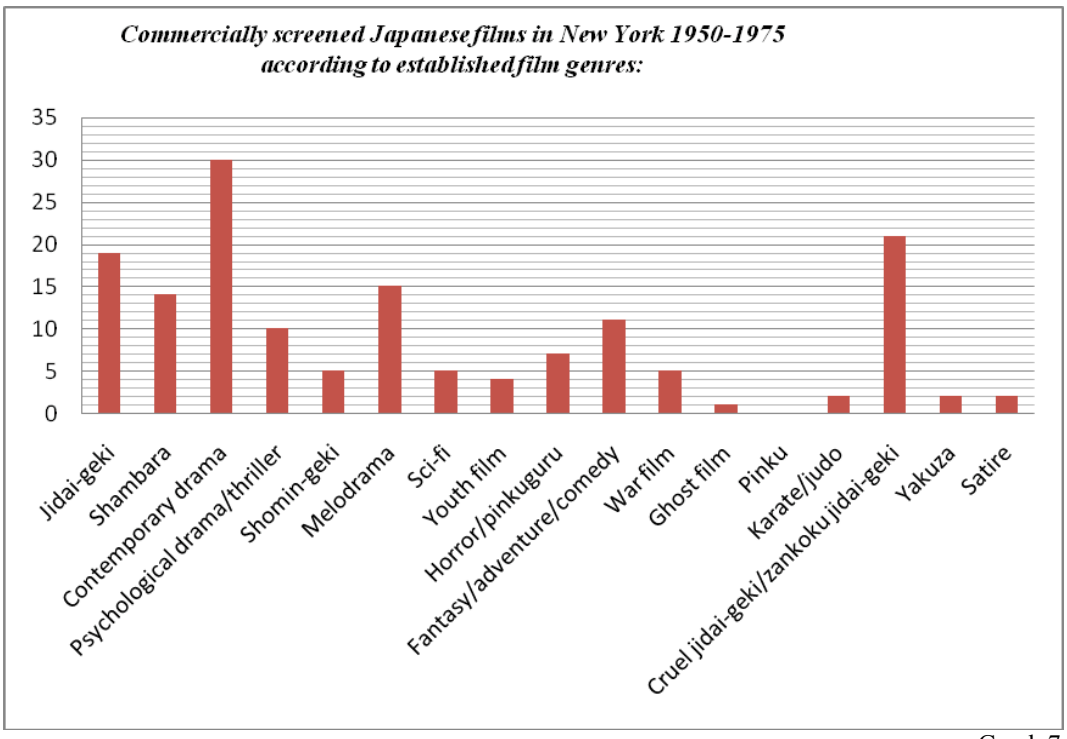
According to my findings in the *New York Times Film Review*, at least 153 postwar Japanese feature films were commercially released in New York between 1950 and 1975, a figure which is approximately 50% higher than those above mentioned for Paris and London.

The Japanese films screened in New York may be categorized in accordance with three genres; 84 were period films, 63 were contemporary films, and six were science-fiction and/or fantasy films:




Graph 6

There does not seem to have been the same interest in youth films as in Great Britain, among the American distributors. Nor does there seem to have been a great interest in other popular cinema genres. When comparing the amount of films distributed during the three decades in question, it would also seem that there was generally a very scarce interest in Japanese films in the United States during the 1950s; only 14 features were commercially released. The interest increased considerably in the 1960s, amounting to 74 released Japanese features, and during the years between 1970 and 1975 no less than 65 films were released.




Graph 7

One of the major reasons for the increase of film releases during the 1960s and '70s is most likely due to the fact that the Toho Film Production Co Ltd owned two cinemas in the United States at the time; one in Los Angeles, the other in New York. Most of the Japanese features were however screened at the following five art house theatres in New York between 1950 and 1975:

> **Bijou Cinema** aka **Toho Cinema**, at 215 West 45th Str, screened 55 features, of which 35 were period films and 11 were contemporary films.
> **New Yorker Theatre**, at Broadway and 89th Street, screened 16 features, of which eight were period films and eight were contemporary dramas.
> **55th Street Playhouse Theatre**[108], at 7th Avenue, screened 16 films, of which no less than 14 were period films.
> **Little Carnegie Theatre**, 57th Str East of 7th Avenue, screened nine Japanese features within the time frame of my study; four period films and five contemporary dramas.

The Bijou Theatre was acquired by Toho International in late 1962, then reverted back to 'Bijou Cinema' in the early 1970s (but was still owned by the Toho International?), which makes it the leading showcase for Japanese film in New York, during the time frame of my study. Toho opened their regime with Kurosawa Akira's *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960).[109] The diligence on part of the Toho/Bijou Cinema is not unseemly, and it should be noted that the cinema screened 55 features during a 12-year period; between 1963 and 1972. It should also be noted that Toho screened Japanese features produced by various film companies, apart from their own. I also find it interesting that the Toho/Bijou Cinema screened almost as many contemporary dramas as they did period films, compared to for example the 55th Street Playhouse Theatre, which screened mainly *jidai-geki* films. The figures in the table above seem to indicate that the exhibitors at the other cinemas better mirrored the general

interest in Japanese period film, than the Toho/Bijou Cinema's executives, which might suggest that the Toho worked according to an other agenda, that of showcasing Japanese film in general.

### **3.5** *CASE STUDY:* THE ISSUE OF LOCALE

According to Barbara Willinsky's description of which types of films were screened at the American art house cinemas during the time frame of this study, we must assume that Japanese cinema, whether it was screened commercially or non-commercially, was always dependent on a certain type of locale – be it that of the Cinémathèque, or the museum cinema or the art house cinema.

Identifying the locale for Japanese cinema between 1950 and 1975 is one way of relating to its identity and status at the time. The close vicinity between such non-commercial locale as the cinémathèque and the art house cinema at the same time makes it more difficult to inscribe the Japanese cinema into one particular exhibition locale during the time frame of this study, while simultanously signalling its ambiguous reception. I also want to stress the important role played by the so called ethnic theatres in the United States. In spite of its exhibition at various locale, Japanese cinema seems to have cultivated its own audience of aficionados during its early years of introduction to the West; cinemagoers that were and remained particularly fond of this national cinema. I would even go as far as to call them cinephiles of Japanese cinema, and, as I have argued in Chapter One, Japanese cinema was considered as an exponent of art cinema due to its involvement with 'certain films by certain directors that display certain qualities', whereas others referred to it as art film simply because of its 'ambiguous and flexible' character.[110]

When engaging with the issue of cinephilia, one finds that the significance of this phenomenon did indeed include the notion of locale during the 1950s and 1960s, even though this particular characteristic seems to have been omitted from present day discourse on cinephilia.[111] In her essay on 'the contemporary cinephile', Barbara Klinger relates to the previous understanding of cinephilia as 'essentially and exclusively a big-screen experience, absolutely dependent on the projection of celluloid within the public space of the motion picture theatre'.[112] This case study therefore focuses on whether the locale where the Japanese films were exhibited per se add to our understanding of its image in the West, at the time.

In view of fact that my list of Japanese films exhibited in the three countries researched in this study comprises approximately 550 titles and the frequent reoccurances of some of them, the overall amount of Japanese films exhibited in these countries was very

small, compared to the several hundreds of films that were produced by the Japanese film industry each year during this period. Especially since we know that, from a geographical point of view, the distribution of Japanese films diminished severely outside Paris, London, and New York, which implies that they were rarely exhibited at the commercial cinema circuits of smaller cities. The American West coast represents an important exception to this case, since its large Japanese population has provided it with a history of exhibition which is far more extensive than those in New York and in Europe. A review of the exhibition of Japanese films in San Francisco in 1964 and 1971, based on the advertisements in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, seem to suggest that no fewer than 20 films per annum were exhibited in that city alone and that most of them (2/3) were *jidai-geki* films.[113] The major exhibitor seems to have been Toho's own screening theatre in San Francisco which presented 50% of the films exhibited each year, and often gave them a two-week running period. Closing in, the importance of locale within the city of exhibition instead becomes an interesting field of research, although it has as yet been more or less overlooked in connection with studies of Western exhibition and reception of Japanese film.

Judging from the identity of the distributors, it seems clear that Japanese films were only very rarely distributed by the larger, strictly commercial film distributors with the exception of Japanese science-fiction and fantasy films, which were often produced as joint ventures between Japan and the United States. Some of these films were produced in two versions; one (in Japanese) for the Japanese home market, and an English version for overseas distribution. Because of their market potential, these Japanese hybrids were indeed distributed by the large film chains in the United States, and thus advertised accordingly. Due to their particular characteristics, science-fiction and fantasy films are however excluded from my present discussion of locale. It would seem that the other genres of Japanese film were rarely picked up by the established cinema chains in either of the countries involved in this study. Instead, studies of the American art house cinema of the 1950s and 1960s seem to indicate that most foreign films were screened in such a context, and that is obviously where we would find most of the Japanese films that were commercially screened, not only in the United States, but also in France and Great Britain.

Wilinsky's discussion of the American scene confirms this fact by establishing that art house cinemas featured 'foreign films, documentaries, independent (not Hollywood studio) productions and classic (Hollywood) re-releases'.[114] This identification of locale (art house cinemas) must be taken into consideration in order to fully understand the different aspects surrounding the exhibition of Japanese film in the West.

Such a statement however opens up for further questions, among which the most obvious may be, whether or not we should then consider all Japanese films exhibited overseas as 'art film'. There can be little doubt that, from the point of view of the average film critic and contrary to the cinephile, such a classification, in tandem with the choice of exhibition locale, immediately placed the Japanese films outside the 'normal Western film fare' and added to its identity as Other. The consequence of such a marginal place of exhibition may have been one of the reasons why Toho ran three cinemas in the United States during the time frame of my study in order to further the marketing of Japanese film product in the West. As previously discussed, its impact on the exhibition of Japanese film in the United States is considerable, since it seems to have doubled the amount of exhibited films. A typically European locale for the exhibition of Japanese cinema were institutions like the French Cinémathèque in Paris, or the National Film Theatre in London.

These locale must however at the same time be considered to be of marginal interest to the larger Western public. Like its American equivalent, the European art house cinema had some kind of pedagogical agenda attached to its exhibition of foreign films during the 1950s and early 1960s, even though the art cinema industry as such had been under attack from the mainstream Hollywood movie industry as well as pro-censorship groups in America, since the late 1940s.[115] Whereas both the French Cinémathèque and the National Film Theatre seems to have fared better in relation to the amount and scope of Japanese film, many art house cinemas fared worse and initiated a vicious circle of inferior film screening during the 1960s. In her study, Wilinsky confirms that the advertising of art house films sometimes admitted to a blunt connection between art film, foreign films, and sex.[116] Further research needs to be carried out in order to establish the level of sexploitation referring to Japanese film and the art house cinemas, and how this type of connotation influenced the general view of this national cinema as Other. A revealing point of investigation would be whether or not Japanese film was presented within a more pornographic framework than its Western counterparts, at the time, and if so, in what terms (see case study in Chapter Five).

Until more detailed research into these specifities of the overseas exhibition of Japanese film has been carried out, I can only confirm that all four of the above mentioned New York cinemas were considered to be art house cinemas during the time frame of this study. The status of the Bijou Cinema was slightly altered during the tenure of Toho, when it seems to have become more commercial and focused on *jidai-geki* films.

## **4.6** SUMMARY

My detailed mapping of the national exhibition of Japanese cinema in three Western countries above, revealed both discrepancies and similarities regarding their view of Japanese film product. So far, my research into the history of exhibition of Japanese film clearly indicates that France was the foremost introducer of Japanese cinema between 1950 and 1975 among the countries involved in this study, with the Cinémathèque Française as its most crucial representative. France thus stands out as the prime image maker of Japanese film in the West during this period. The dedication and pedagogical mission at heart of the introduction of this non-Western national cinema on behalf of Henri Langlois and his colleagues is indeed remarkable.

Among the issues at hand, is the necissity to find out more about why France was so dedicated in its effort to represent the Japanese national cinema. And why this predilection for Mizoguchi Kenji's films and reverence of his person? Did it have anything to do with Mizoguchi being a Catholic? The writings on his person and his work published by *Cahiers du cinéma* certainly has no equivalence in any other country in terms of idolatry. The material collected for this study indicates that the French critics knew more about Mizoguchi than any other Japanese director, with the exception of Kurosawa Akira, during the time frame of this study. As Mark Le Fanu has argued, the reverence of Mizoguchi and Kurosawa in terms of film exhibition is closely linked to the critical reception of these two directors. Le Fanu also declared that 'Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer [were] Mizoguchians to a man',[117] which could imply a possible link between Mizoguchi and the professed Catholic roots of auteurism, further discussed in Chapter Four.

It seems clear that the release of Japanese films in Great Britain was not linked to important reception parameters like increasing popularity, demands from the audiences or a battle for British market share among Japanese film companies. Instead, the exhibition of Japanese film in Great Britain was a completely British affair and one is inclined to think of it as a pedagogical venture, along the lines of education, equality and suitability, in the hands of the British Film Institute. This attitude on behalf of the BFI seems to have resulted in an unexpectedly unprejudiced exhibition of Japanese film. The BFI was also unique in its pragmatic, hands-on application of the material, leading to film programmes such as 'Japan – History through Cinema' at the National Film Theatre. The total amount of screenings of Japanese film however remains limited, and the material clearly indicates that the films were screened as seen fit by the programmers at the NFT. Unlike the French Cinémathèque, the National Film Theatre never displayed a pronounced interest in involving Japanese cinema in its general programming which seemed to have remained primarily focused on

American and European productions during the time frame of this study. The NFT did however reprise its most loved Japanese films, and the three most often screened films were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Rashomon* | 10 | screenings between 1952 and 1975 |
| *Yojimbo* | 4 | screenings between 1968 and 1975 |
| *Tokyo Story/Tokyo Monogatari* | 3 | screenings between 1968 and 1975 |

It is important to re-address the National Film Theatre's programming of the series entitled *Japan – History through Film* in relation to Orientalism since Wlaschin and Kitson's confirmation of the literary quality of the *jidai-geki* film genre clearly displayed an awareness of Orientalist discourse. By using film genre as a point of departure, they not only explained its generic characteristics, they also used it for a pedagogical purpose much as the Japanese themselves have done over the years and not to manifest or confirm a Western view on the cultures of the Far East. The screening of *jidai-geki* films was thus provoked by a reasoned pegagoical decision, which is plain to see when compared to the French programming of the same film series.

The high amount of Japanese youth films that were commercially exhibited in Great Britain during the late 1950s, until 1968, reflects a unique opportunity for Japanese film in the three countries involved in this study. Considering the fact that neither France, nor the United States exhibited Japanese youth film, bar one, contrary to the rather high amount exhibited in Great Britain and the cultural climate in which they were released around 1960, it would be reasonable to assume that an opposing view on youth culture in the three countries is at the core of this divergence. I will also make the connection to British popular culture in Chapter Five, and the possibility of David Bailey's influence on the format of the British Academy's poster for *Ugetsu Monogatari*. In terms of education, it would seem that the total amount of released contemporary dramas is unexpectedly much higher than that of the period film in Great Britain, during the 1960s. In terms of equality the thought behind the commercial release of Japanese films is less successful, since there are hardly any popular genre films present, that is *yakuza*, melodramas, or thrillers.

As for the exhibition of Japanese films in the United States between 1950 and 1975, it seems to differ from that of the two European countries involved in this study. There are obviously various reasons for this difference in exhibition policy, some of which would seem to have a bearing on my study. One of the main reasons for the different programming is related to the absence of European-like Cinémathèque activities in the United States, as well as the absence of federal film archives, which delayed the release of for example Kurosawa Akira's film *Stray Dog* (1949) on a commercial screen in New York, until 1964.

Some of Ozu Yasujiro's most well-known films from the late 1940s and 1950s did not become known to the Americans until in the 1970s, for example *The Flavour of Green Tea over Rice/Ochazuke no aji* (1952) in 1973, and *Early Spring* (1956) in 1974, although his major works hade been screened on several occasions at the New York Film Festival already during the 1960s. Contrary to the American situation, the Cinémathèque organisations allowed for much earlier knowledge of these film classics, and were always open for new members, but their non-existence in the United States led to the appearance of a series of *ersatz* institutions, such as the MOMA, the universities and the Japanese cultural organisations. I believe that an institution like the MOMA would not have screened as many film programmes related to Japanese film, hade it not been for Donald Richie's insisting on them although they mainly resulted in the promotion of Japanese auteur cinema, with a few important exceptions. The commercial cinema scene in the United States was also affected by this fact, in that these cinemas chose to screen a large number of Japanese film classics dating back to the 1950s and 1960s, thus avoiding the more recent and less 'safe' productions.

Unlike the situation in France or Great Britain, there also seems to be a very interesting connection between the suggested films in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, and those that finally appeared on the American commercial screen. It would be interesting to know if this is in any way connected to a reduced impact of Japanese Taste on American postwar culture, and thus an openness to a larger element of contemporary Japanese films. An alternative explanation could be based on my assumption that exhibition of Japanese film in the United States actually embraced one or two elements of star gazing, embodied primarily by the film persona of Mifune Toshiro. I consider Mifune's close collaboration with Inagaki Hiroshi on his *jidai-geki* or *chambara* (samurai) films, and the existence of no less than 20 of Inagaki's film on my film list, together with the fact that these films were exhibited almost exclusively in the United States, to be an indication of this. A third, possible explanation would be that the films presented in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* were consciously promoted at the cinemas run by the Japanese film companies (read Toho) in the United States, in both Los Angeles and New York.

Whatever the reason, I have found that that almost twothirds of the eligible films that were screened in the United States between 1950 and 1975 were also marketed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, a fact which again indicates the close link between Japan and the United States after the war.[118] The films were sometimes screened in the United States within six months from their appearance in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. A prominent example would be Kurosawa Akira's *High and Low* (1963) which was first reviewed by Mary Evans in *The*

*Japan Times* in March 1963, then promoted in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* July issue, later by *Variety* in connection with the Venice film festival in September, and finally reviewed by the *New York Times* in November, 1963, all within one year. Another point in case would be Imamura Shohei's *Intentions of Murder* aka *Unholy Desire/Akai satsui* (1964) which was reviewed by Mary Evans in *The Japan Times* in July of 1964, then promoted in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* October issue, and reviewed one month later in both *Variety* and the *New York Times*, in November, 1964, in connection with its commercial release in New York. I maintain, however, that this is a fast lane which was accessible only for the Japanese auteur filmmakers, and only applied to some of their films. Thus Kurosawa Akira's film *Red Beard* (1965) was reviewed by Donald Richie in *The Japan Times* in April 1965 and presented in the July issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* before *Variety* reviewed it in connection with the Venice film festival in September, the same year. The commercial release did however not take place in the United States until late in 1968, and Howard Thompson's review of it was published in the *New York Times* on December 20, 1968. This would seem to be the normal time span of the procedure, after all.

According to my film list, the following 24 films were commercially screened in all three countries during the time frame of this study. Most of them were also non-commercially screened at some point:

*The Black Cat* (1968) by Shindo Kaneto
*Dodesukaden* (1970) by Kurosawa Akira
*Fires on the Plain* (1959) by Ichikawa Kon
*Gate of Hell* (1953) by Kinugasa Teinosuke
*The H-Man* (1958) by Honda Inoshiro
*Harakiri* (1962) by Kobayashi Masaki
*The Harp of Burma* (1956) by Ichikawa Kon
*Hidden Fortress* (1958) by Kurosawa Akira
*High and Low* (1963) by Kurosawa Akira
*The Human Condition* (1959-1961) by Kobayashi Masaki
*Latitude Zero/Ido zero daisakusen* (1969) by Honda Inoshiro
*Life of Oharu* (1951) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Living* (1952) by Kurosawa Akira
*Onibaba* (1968) by Shindo Kaneto
*Rashomon* (1950) by Kurosawa Akira
*Red Beard* (1965) by Kurosawa Akira
*The Rickshaw Man* (1958) by Inagaki Hiroshi
*Sanjuro* (1962) by Kurosawa Akira

*Seven Samurai* (1954) by Kurosawa Akira
*Street of Shame* (1956) by Mizoguchi Kenji
*Tales of the Taira Clani* (1955) Mizoguchi Kenji
*Throne of Blood* (1957) by Kurosawa Akira
*Tokyo Story* (1953) by Ozu Yasujiro
*Ugetsu Monogatari* (1952) by Mizoguchi Kenji

No fewer than sixteen of these films are period dramas representing film genres such as ghost stories, sword films or *shomin-geki* ( films set in the late 19th century), both Honda's films are science-fiction films, and the remaining six films are contemporary dramas concerned with modern issues at a more or less realistic level of reality.

Since many Japanese films were screened at more than one film festival over the world, I have also compared the entries to the three above mentioned film festivals. We already know that the Cannes Film Festival screened its first Japanese feature film entries in 1953, which is six months before the Cinémathèque Française screened its first Japanese features. We have also seen that the London Film Festival screened its first Japanese entries in 1957 and then kept on screening at least one Japanese entry every years, except in 1968. The New York Film Festival is the youngest among them, and has not screened Japanese features on a regular basis, since it was started in 1963. It would seem that there were no Japanese entries in 1968, nor between 1972 and 1975 to that partiuclar festival. These are the films they have in common:

| Year | London | Cannes | New York |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1964 | *Alone on the Pacific* (1963) by Ichikawa Kon | X | X |
| 1964 | *Woman of the Dunes* (1964) by Teshigahara Hiroshi | X | X |
| 1964 | *She and He* (1964) by Hani Susumi | | X |
| 1965 | *Red Beard* (1965) by Kurosawa Akira | | X |
| 1967 | *Rebellion* (1967) by Kobayashi Masaki | | X |
| 1969 | *Boy* (1969) by Oshima Nagisa | | X |
| 1970 | *Dodesukaden* (1970) by Kurosawa Akira | | X |
| 1973 | *Coup d'Etat* (1973) by Yoshida Yoshishige | X | |
| 1975 | *Pastoral Hide-and-seek* (1974) by Terayama Shuji | X | |

Seeing that there are only two *jidai-geki* films among the nine listed festivals entries, would seem to indicate that the circumstances are reversed in relation to the amount of listed period dramas among the commecially screened films above, although none of the quantities quite mirror the overall distribution of Japanese film product in the West at this time. It seems clear however, that the contemprary dramas in fact dominated both the

European film festivals, which have held two thirds contemporary dramas among the Japanese entries on average, whereas the New York Film Festival had an almost equal amount of entries from either genre (six period films and eight contemporary dramas). The predilection for screening older Japanese features however remains the most unusual feature of the New York Film Festival in this study, since this programming no doubt gave the festival a character of retrospective, irrespective of the high amount of films screened at both the London and New York film festivals. It would seem that they were screened in tandem, except during 1973 and 1975, when the jury of the New York Film Festival abstained from screening Japanese films. In summing up, my data seems to indicate that the three film festivals in question constituted dissimilar entities in comparison to other exhibition locale of Japanese film, at the time. I therefore argue that the most important show cases for the image of Japanese film in the West, remained the art film cinemas and the Cinémathèques (or equivalent) during the entire time frame of this study.

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[1] Tim Bergfelder, 'The Nation Vanishes, European co-productions and popular genre formula in the 1950s and 1960s', in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) p 139

[2] Cf Introduction in Bernstein and Studlar, p. 1-18.

[3] Anderson and Richie, pp. 230-231.

[4] Ibid., p. 230.

[5] Tanaka Kinuyo is the only female director involved in the history of exhibition of Japanese film in the West. According to the Western historiography of Japanese cinema, her activities as a filmmaker and the film *Lettre d'amour* never went beyond the screening in Cannes in 1954, and she continues to be known as an actress only.

[6] http://www.festival-cannes.fr/archives/index. '[…] pour la qualité de son style et la perfection de ses images'.

[7] Ibid. '[…] pour l'audace de son sujet, pour ses qualités plastiques'.

[8] The Cannes Film Festival was scheduled to take place between May 10 and 24, 1968. However, it had to close already on May 19 due to striking personnel. I have not been able to confirm if *Black Cat* was actually screened before the closure of the film festival.

[9] See http://www.filmlinc.com/arhive/nyff/nyfffestlist.htm.

[10] Patrick Olmeta, *La Cinémathèque Française de 1936 à nos jours* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2000), p. 47. 'Mais seul Henri Langlois disposait de suffisament de temps et d'argent […] pour véritablement prendre en charge la mise en route de cet organisme'.

[11] Henri Langlois, 'Vingt-cinq ans de Cinémathèque', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 200-201 (April/May 1968), pp. 9-15.

[12] Reference no CF 010/1948, Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque de Film, Paris

[13] Reference no CF 012/1950, Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque de Film, Paris

[14] '[…] il n'existe plus de copie au Japon', *Chefs-d'œuvre et Panorama du Cinéma Japonais 1898-1961* (Paris: Cinémathèque Française, n.d. [1963]) , unmarked page [3]. Langlois' comment suggests that *Nippon* may date from the early 20th century, and was lost in the 1923 Tokyo earthquake. I have not pursued the matter further since the film clearly does not belong within the time frame, nor the film genre, feature film, of this study.

[15] Reference no CF 015/1953, Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque du Film, Paris. '[…] le raffinement subtil des Kakemonos japonais…'.

[16] Ibid. 'Ce sont les poupées japonaises qui nous font pénétrer dans la théogénie du Japon'. The word theogeny refers to the genealogy of a group or system of gods.

[17] Ref no CF 015/1953. I have not been able to determine what 'INAGAKA' means. It is possibly referring to Inagaki Hiroshi, but on the other hand his films had not yet been introduced to the West at the time. I have not been able to find a connection between that particular name and Gosho Heinosuke's film *Where Chimneys Are Seen*.

[18] Ref no CF 016/1954
[19] Figures based on the hand typed - i.e. original - programming material by the French Cinémathèque, deposited at the Bibliothèque de Film, Paris. This material is incomplete and contain a few substantial gaps, especially during the turbulent year of 1968.
[20] Ref no CF 017/1955
[21] Ref no CF 018/1956
[22] Ref no CF 018/1956
[23] Luc Moullet, 'Cinémathèque', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 68 (February, 1957), p. 39.
[24] 'Or, c'est un véritable désastre, dont on a une certaine peine à rendre compte. *L'Ange Ivre* reste constamment au niveau de la médiocrité et n'a aucun intérêt; les recherches esthétiques, notamment dans les séquences du rêve et de la mort du héros, sont d'un grotesque inconnu même au cinéma européen. Mais *Vivre* bat les records du ridicule.'
[25] André Bazin, 'Vivre', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 69 (March 1957), pp. 36-37.
[26] Cf Christian Keathley; *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) Chapters 3 and 4.
[27] Bazin, pp. 36-37. 'Par goût personel, je préfère peut-être encore le style de Mizoguchi, comme la pure musique japonaise de son inspiration, mais déjà je rends les armes devant l'ampleur des perspectives intellectuelles, morales et esthétiques ouvertes par un film comme *Vivre* qui brasse des valeurs incomparablement plus importantes, aussi bien dans le scénario que dans la forme'.
[28] Ref no CF 020/1958.
[29] The screenings at the cinema in Rue d'Ulm, were basically programmed as follows from 1955: three screenings per evening (at 6.30, 8.30 and 10.30 pm) seven days a week. As from 1963, an identical set-up was made for the projection-room at Palais de Chaillot. See Olmeta, pp. 98 and 113.
[30] Mary Evans, 'Bad Boys', *The Japan Times*, 13 April 1961. In her review of the film in *The Japan Times*, she wrote: 'For his actors Mr. Hani used boys who had either been to reform schools at some time or whose experiences had brought them close to delinquency. About a month was spent in rehearsal, the boys being told a rough outline of the story and being encouraged to work out the details of action and speech as seemed natural to them. No sets were used and most shots were made under natural light. Some scenes […] were made secretly, the boys not being aware where the camera was or when it was being used. Sound was dubbed in later, from rehearsal tapes, so that greater spontaneity of acting was possible'.
[31] Ref no CF 023/1961
[32] *Positif*, no. 73 (February 1966), p. 69.
[33] However, in general, I disagree with Max Tessier's presentation of Japanese film history in the West, when he writes that '[...] [Ozu] remained unknown to the West, except for some Anglo-Saxon critics living in Japan, like Donald Richie and Joseph L Anderson […],' and '[…] Yasujiro Ozu […] remained unknown to the French audience […] for 25 years after his death […]'. As the records show, Ozu was introduced to the audience of the French Cinémathèque in the early 1960s and one therefore cannot say that he was 'unknown'. Nor were Ozu's films unknown to the West. A good case in point would be *Autumn Afternoon/Samma no aji* (1962) which was commercially released in the United States in 1964, and in Great Britain in 1966. See Tessier, pp. 10 and 49.
[34] In general terms 'L'Affaire Langlois' occured in 1968, when the French Department of Culture implied that it wanted a 'double' leadership at the Cinémathèque Française, in order to straighten out its financial situation. Henri Langlois' position was thus compromised which brought on strong reactions from people within the whole French film industry and other cultural institutions. The incident was settled in the end and Langlois remained at the Cinémathèque, even though the exact source of its underlying lack of confidence continued to be debated for many years – was it in fact André Malraux, the minister of Culture, himself who had wanted to get rid of Langlois?
[35] Olmeta, p. 113. As a curiosity, Olmeta does not include any of the Japanese directors when mentioning the 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais'-programme among the Cinémathèque's special programmes.
[36] See e.g. *Cinéma*, no. 63 (February, 1962), p. 41.
[37] 'Vingt Cinéastes d'aujourd'hui' at the French Cinémathèque, 10 January until 10 February 1974 and '20 Contemporary Directors', at the National Film Theatre. 4 February until 4 March 1974.
[38] Cf Steve Neale; 'Art Cinema as Institution', p. 20.
[39] '[…] the golden years of Japanese cinema […] The situation again changed in 1957. Encouraged by the success, the production increased with every year and reached 500 fiction films per year: a figure which placed Japan at the top of the world's film production, before the United States.'
'[…] l'age d'or du cinéma japonais […] A partir de 1957, la situation devait à nouveau changer. Encouragée par le succès, la production s'accrut d'année en année pour atteindre 500 long métrages par an: le chiffre classait le Japon en tête dans le monde, devant les États-Unis', Naoki Tokawa, 'Brève Histoire du Cinéma Japonais', in *Initiation au Cinéma Japonais* (Paris: Éditions Cinémathèque Française, 1963) unmarked [pp 9-10].
[40] *Initiation au Cinéma Japonais*, unmarked [pp 11-22].

[41] I refer here only to feature films produced with the time frame of my study, i.e. between 1945 and 1975.
[42] Although a programme like the NFT's 'Aspects of Film History' in the spring season of 1959, did not contain any films produced outside of the Western world.
[43] 'At the specialist cinema, or slipped into the popular programme by a venturesome manager, you may come across the films on this page. They go on release without drum-banging and fanfares, but are films that the discriminating filmgoer will want to see. Each month the critics make their choice of films of limited release.' *National Film Theatre*, programme of April 1952, p. 12.
[44] 'Winner of last year's Grand Prize at the Venice Festival, *Rashomon* is a Japanese film of extraordinary fascination. It tells a story of rape and murder yet is charged with pity and sorrow for human frailty. Made with unusual skill and acted in an impressive, if unfamiliar style, *Rashomon* triumphs over American sub-titles, an irritating musical accompaniment and its own mawkish ending.' National Film Theatre programme, April 1952, p. 10.
[45] 'Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's successor to *Rashomon*. Lighter in theme and treatment, it remains impressive.' National Film Theatre programme, August 1952, p. 12.
[46] Unfortunately I have not been able to match this film with the given director, nor find the Japanese title of it.
[47] The series contained four films, of which two were Japanese. National Film Theatre programme, July 1954, pp. 71 and 76.
[48] National Film Theatre programme, August 1954, p. 92.
[49] National Film Theatre programme, May 1955, p. 22.
[50] National Film Theatre programme 10th Anniversary, July-August 1962, p. 6.
[51] So far, by 1962, no Japanese films had been screened in the 'Films From The Archives' series.
[52] This series contained foreign adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, or stories influenced by Shakespeare.
[53] National Film Theatre programme, October-November 1965, p. 12.
[54] There were no Japanese actors represented in the 'Screen Acting' series 1965-1967.
[55] National Film Theatre programme June-July, 1972, p. 50.
[56] National Film Theatre programme June-July, 1972, p. 25.
[57] The four films were screened in the 'Re-view' series as a result of the 'lively atmosphere of discussion and growing appreciation' in connection with the 'recent programme devoted mainly to Ozu and Mizoguchi [which] confirmed once and for all, the greatness of these two intriguingly dissimilar artist in the context of World Cinema.' Please note that the films were not included in a World Cinema context, but screened separately.
[58] 'Mifune is virtually the only contemporary Japanese actor familiar to Western audiences […] Theirs [Mifune's and Kurosawa's] is probably the most rewarding partnership in screen history.' Not signed.
[59] This series contained a total of 42 films.
[60] The series comprised a total of 44 films
[61] This series contained a total of 30 films.
[62] The series comprised a total of 40 films
[63]During the autumn season 1973, the NFT screened a series entitled 'Film as Film', based on the book by V.F. Perkins, with the same title, which Perkins described as '[…] an attempt to replace traditional theories of film, and to reverse their unhelpful emphasis on what is Cinematic, rather than on what is valuable, in the movies. My claim is that we learn little about films by concentration on the "elements" of the art, and even less by vetting them for their obedience to the "demands" of the medium.' V F Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and judging movies* (London: Penguin books, 1972). The series comprised a total of 21 films
[64] This series comprised a total of 37 films, NFT programme July-September 1974, p. 33.
[65] The series comprised a total of 27 films, NFT programme September-November 1974, p 46
[66] NFT programme December 1974-January 1975, p 46
[67] NFT programme February-March 1975, p 29
[68] The series comprised a total of 51 films, NFT programme May-August 1975, p 26
[69] The series comprised a total of 22 films, NFT programme August-November 1975, p 38
[70] This is the only programme of Japanese films which is not mentioned in *NFT 50 A Celebration Of Fifty Years Of The National Film Theatre 1952-2002*, British Film Institute, ed (London 2002) I presume it's just an error, since the other eight are mentioned.
[71] National Film Theatre, September-November programme, 1972, p. 34.
[72] *NFT 50: A Celebration Of Fifty Years Of The National Film Theatre 1952-2002*, ed. by British Film Institute (London: British Film Institute, 2002), p. 29. The French Cinémathèque had screened its first 'Hommage' to a Japanese film director in 1956, dedicated to Kurosawa Akira and comprising eight of his most popular films. See Ref doc CF 018/1956, Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque du Film, Paris
[73] Ibid.
[74] The Japanese titles were not given in the program, but have been added by me when required.

[75] 'Japan – History through Cinema', National Film Theatre programme, February-March, 1975, p. 12.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ref Document CF 037/1975, Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque du Film, Paris.
[78] Cf Richard Roud, *A Passion For Films: Henri Langlois And The French Cinémathèque* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983), pp. 187-192.
[79] I am however aware of the fact that the American universities, especially the UCLA, also have a strong tradition in screening other national cinemas. Researching the film programmes at the universities during the same time frame as I have used for this study, would add valuable information to the map I am drawing.
[80] The programme entitled *Experimental films from Japan*, screened on June 30-July 2 1966, is not included in this study, since the films were shorts.
[81] EXH 231, 'Ten Recent Japanese Films', file 2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY
[82] Press release No 19; 'Press Releases: 1964 Reopening', Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY, p 2
[83] Ibid.
[84] *An Autumn Afternoon* (1962) US commercial release in May 1973; *Tokyo Story* (1953) US commercial release in March 1972; *Early Spring* (1956) US commercial release in September 1974. Ozu's film *Flavour of Green Tea over Rice/Ochazuke no aji* (1952) was commercially released in January 1973. Ref *New York Times Film Reviews*.
[85] Films include *The Affair*/Joen (1967) by Yoshida Yoshishige, *All Mixed Up/Manji* (1964) by Masumura Yasuzo, *Black Sun/Kuroi taiyo* (1965 by Kurahara Koreyoshi, *Burglar Story/Nippon dorobo* monogatari (1965) by Yamamoto Satsuo, *Classroom Renegades/Hiko Shonen* (1964) by Kawabe Kazuo, *Face of Another/Tanin no kao* (1966) by Teshigahara Hiroshi, *A Full Life/Mitasareta sekatsu* (1962) by Hani Susumu, *Lost Sex/Honno* (1966) by Shindo Kaneto, *Pornographer/Jinruigaku Nyumon* (1966) by Imamura Shohei, *With Beauty and Sorrow/Utsukushisa to kanashimi to* (1965) by Shinoda Masahiro. Documented in 'Film Exhibitions 230', Museum of Modern Art's Archives, NY
[86] Ref MOMA EXH 231, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
[87] I have not been able to determine which 'monograph' Donald Richie is referring to, but assume that he meant to document the film program in a catalogue.
[88] Letter dated 29 March 1966, filed in EXH 231/2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
[89] Ref MOMA EXH 231, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY. The films mentioned by Richie are the following; *Flowing/Nagareru* (1956) by Naruse Mikio, *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs/Onna ga kaidan o agaru toki* (1960) by Naruse Mikio, *Yearning/Midareru* (1964) by Naruse Mikio, *A Cat And Two Women/Inekoto Shozo to Futari no* (1956) by Toyoda Shiro, *Growing Up Twice* aka *Adolescence/Takekurabe* (1955) by Gosho Heinosuke, and *Hidden Fortress/Kakushi toride no sanakunin* (1958) by Kurosawa Akira.
[90] Kinoshita Keisuke's *Koge* (1964) has no given English title, but in her review of the film in *The Japan Times*, Mary Evans translated the title into 'The Scent of Incense', *The Japan Times*, 29 May 1964.
[91] According to the Imdb (Internet movie database) Imai's *Echigo Tsutsuichi Oyashirazu* is a crime drama. Mary Evans review of the film in *The Japan Times*, however describes it as '[…] so handsome, so detailed a reconstruction in black and white of life in the mountainous back country of prewar northern Japan, where the old country ways of Japan could be seen longest in their most extreme forms […]', *The Japan Times*, 15 May 1964.
[92] This is also the official year of his resignation as film critic at *The Japan Times*. Donald Richie remained Director of the Film Department at MOMA until 1972.
[93] Letter to Richard Griffith, dated 8 March 1962, in EXH 231/2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
[94] Letter from Richard Griffith, MOMA to Donald Richie, dated March 13, 1962, in EXH 231/2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
[95] Ref 'FILM 305/307', Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
[96] Michel Ciment, 'Approches du Cinéma Japonais', *Positif*, no.73 (February 1966) 69.
[97] *Repertoire Général des Film* (Paris: Éditions 'Pensée Vraie', Centrale Catholigque du Cinéma, 1952-1958); later *La Saison Cinématographique* (Paris: Citevox Editeur, 1958-1970); later *La Revue du Cinéma* (Paris: Image et Son, 1970-1975).
[98] Cf Anderson and Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, and Giuglaris, *Le Cinéma Japonais*.
[99] Cf David Desser, *Eros plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).
[100] Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, is one of the most important.
[101] Cf Standish, *A New History of Japanese Film: A Century of Narrative Film*.
[102] For example *Kwaidan/Kaidan* (1964) by Kobayashi Masaki, at the Cinémathèque on 6 June 1965; *A Soul to the Devils/Yami no naka no chimimoryo* (*Une âme au diables,* 1970) by Nakahira Ko at the Cinémathèque on 25 June 1971.
[103] Unfortunately I have not been able to identify this film properly, since I cannot match the Western film title with the named director.

[104]*Beauty And The Thieves* (1952), starring Kyo Machiko. Never screened in Great Britain nor in the United States within the time frame of this study.
[105] *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Volumes no:s 17 to 42, i.e. 1950 until 1975.
[106] For discussion of Japanese film genres, see Chapter Two.
[107] *Black Nets* was actually one of the installments in the successful Japanese *Underwater*-series, produced by the Shochiku film company during the late 1950s.
[108] According to Howard Thompson at the *New York Times,* the 55th Street Playhouse Theatre, did not screen Japanese films until in 1967. Ref: Film review of *The Sword of Doom/Daibosatsutoge* (1967) in the *New York Times*, 15 April 1967, p. 35.
[109] Ref: Information taken from the review of the above film, by Bosley Crowther, in *New York Times*, 23 January 1963, p. 5.
[110] Cf Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 12.
[111] Cf Paul Willemen, 'Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered' in *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (London: bfi Publishing, 1994), pp 223-257; Barbara Klinger, 'The Contemporary Cinephile: Film Collecting in the Post-video Era', in *Hollywood Spectatorship, Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, ed. by Melvyn Stokes and Richard Matlby (London: bfi Publishing, 2001), pp 132-151; Keathley.
[112] Klinger, 'The Contemporary Cinephile', p. 132.
[113]This figure does not include exhibition at so called ethnic cinemas.
[114] Barbara Wilinsky, 'Discourses on Art Houses in the 1950s', in *Exhibition: The Film Reader*; ed. by Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 2002), 67-75 (p. 68).
[115] Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters*, pp. 99-103.
[116] Ibid., pp. 122-127.
[117] Mark Le Fanu, *Mizoguchi and Japan* (London: bfi Publishing, 2005), p. 169.
[118] By 'eligible films' I mean films that were presented in the *UniJapan Film Quarterly* during its period of publication; between 1958 and 1972. Most of the films in that particular journal were presented to the Western audience within weeks after their completion.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# CRITICAL RECEPTION:

## PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPER REVIEWS

At last, an erotic Japanese film! We see a vamp with tender breasts steal from a samurai. Bottoms, private parts and revealing robes. Readers, bring your girlfriends to see these Japanese prints.[1]
Unsigned note, *Cahiers du cinéma*, November 1954

I don't passionately care, either for the cinema, or the two celebrated Japanese directors, Ozu and Mizoguchi. But I respect it, and in duty I set down that a remarkable and probably unrepeatable season of their work opens on Tuesday at the National Film Theatre.
Dillys Powell, *Sunday Times*, 25 August 1963

The trouble is that, unlike the French and the Italians, the Japanese have evolved a screen style that is uniquely their own, representing a reflection of their own culture. On this, Western – and particularly American – influence has been superimposed. […] The stories are comparatively simple ones, the technique of telling them old-fashioned. There is a good deal of overacting. Lack of continuity and pace makes them difficult to follow. Being prepared for only a single print, the titles on the films were hard to make out visually and represented very poor translations otherwise.
'Holl, *Variety*, January 1957

## **4.1** INTRODUCTION

This chapter negotiates the early postwar history of Japanese film in the West through its critical reception, based on the media coverage in French, British and American publications, as well as in Japan. By conducting a diachronic, comparative study between film reviews and essays published in Japan and those published in the West, I have been able to identify the critics' diverging prerequisites in terms of knowledge and ideology over time. A common denominator seems to have been that the Western reception of Japanese post-war film did not become a serious critical issue until Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon* won laurels in Venice in 1951. Given that the notion of national cinema did not yet exist, the meta-textual discourses at play in Western review journalism between 1951 and 1975 show that the Japanese cinema was mainly considered from an art film perspective and was therefore never considered to be completely on a par with average Western film product. This chapter partly focuses on the consequences of this definition on the critical reception of the Japanese cinema.

I begin the presentation of my empirical data with the domestic critical reception, consisting of the film reviews that were published in *The Japan Times* between 1956 and 1975. I then proceed to present the different ideological aspects that characterized the overseas' critical reception in French and British newspapers and film journals, thereafter

presenting the American publications, in an attempt to point out both similarities and discrepancies between the two continents. We shall see that the most diverging critical material was of American origin, oscillating between Andrew Sarris' vision of auteurism, the sometimes patronizing criticism from the intellectual highbrows at the *New York Times*, to the product placement in trade journals like *Variety*, to the consistent critical negligence of Japanese films in *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

An other dominating theme in this chapter is centered around the consequences of the *politique des auteurs*/auteurism for the critical reception of Japanese film in the West. I trace its development through the editing policy of various film journals from the mid-1950s France, over to Great Britain and the United States, trying to establish whether there was ever an alternative critical approach on offer.

Finally, the case study presents some of Japan's film genres through a comparative study of the critical reception of five individual films in Japan as well as in the three Western countries involved in this study. We shall then see that a detailed, comparative study enhances a certain tone or attitude among the critics, which per se may reflect a typical style in which Japanese films were being referred to by both domestic and overseas' critics. Certain quotations also inevitably testify to the level of knowledge and experience of Japanese film among the critics and writers involved. By looking at the material from its stylistic and factual point of view, I also want to establish whether the pattern concerned with Western review journalism of Japanese films changed at all over the decades covered in this study.

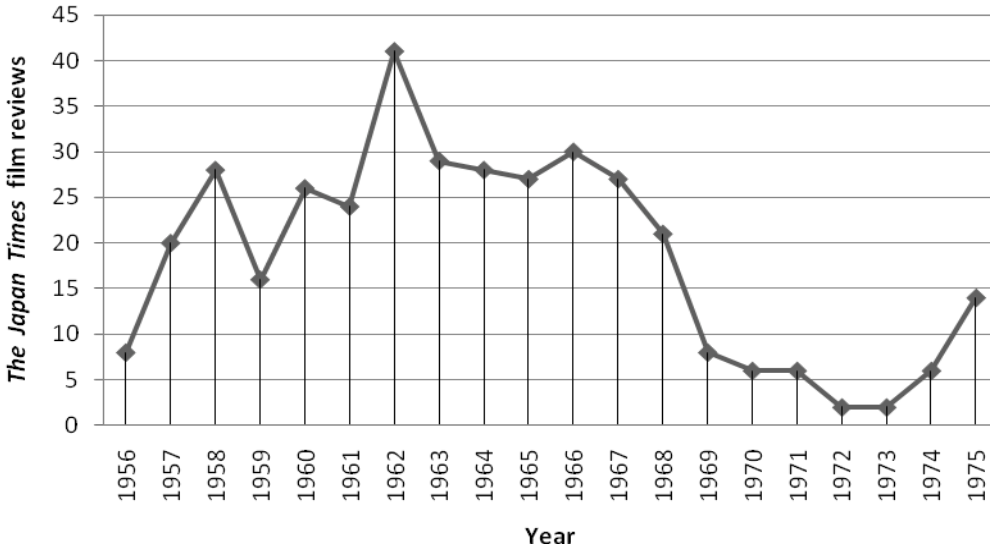
## **4.2** DOMESTIC CRITICAL RECEPTION

*The Japan Times* was first published on March 22, 1897, then changed its name a few times over the years, until the newspaper again appeared as *The Japan Times* as from July 1, 1956.[2]

On March 22, 1962, the newspaper published the results of a survey among its readership, based on a questionnaire sent out to 882 of its readers in December 1960. It showed among other things that the nationality of the readership was divided between 52,6 % Japanese and 47,4% foreign consumers. This relative balance between Japanese citizens and foreigners in the readership may explain why *The Japan Times* habitually had Japanese journalists review all foreign films screened in Tokyo, whereas the Japanese films were reviewed by non-Japanese journalists. The arrangement permits me to consider these reviews as a domestic instance of Western critical reception of the Japanese film product, since it is obvious that they were written by Western journalists of mainly American

nationality, with the intention to encourage primarily non-Japanese speaking foreigners to go and watch Japanese film.

*The Japan Times* did not publish film reviews of Japanese films on a regular basis between 1956 and 1975, but dispersed over time, the pattern of publication still indicates an interesting variation:




According to the above table, the twelve-year period between 1957 and 1968 seems to have been the most productive and is represented by 316 reviews, equalling 86% of the total amount of 369 reviews in my records. This time period is consistent with the period when Mary Evans and Donald Richie worked as film critics for *The Japan Times.*

The American journalist and writer Donald Richie is generally acknowledged as the American journalist who reviewed Japanese films for the newspaper between 1954 and 1969. My research however shows that the bulk of these reviews were written by two journalists; Mary Evans and Donald Richie. The signatures further reveal that Mary Evans was engaged as film critic at *The Japan Times* from 1960 until January 1965; a period during which she wrote 138 reviews, equal to approximately 44% of the total amount of reviews published between 1957 and 1968. Donald Richie thus wrote approximately 56% of the reviews during the same period and the remaining material in my records, approximately 14%, correspond to reviews written by Richie and eight other journalists[3] between 1969 and 1975. This unambiguous outcome, and the frequency of their reviews between 1957 and 1968, explains my focus on the writings of both Evans and Richie. I have also wanted to know if the publication their reviews together with the international marketing of Japanese film product through of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* as from the late 1950s had any influence at all on the already existing Western review journalism and programming of Japanese films in cities like London, New York and Paris. I have assumed

that the impact of their reviews of Japanese film on the Western critical community was emphasized by the fact that Donald Richie published some of his work simultaneously in both *The Japan Times* and the American trade journal *Variety*. Whether Evans' and Richie's reviews in *The Japan Times* should thus be considered as exponents of diffusion or reception of Japanese film vis-à-vis the West remains to be settled and I therefore look upon them as representing a hybrid form of review journalism.

Judging by their contents, it seems clear that both journalists were unbiased in their selection of films, even though they had their preferences. Mary Evans was keen on a modern, proto-feminist, perspective represented by for example the *haha-mono* or *tsuma-mono*[4] genres, whereas Donald Richie eagerly reviewed science-fiction and fantasy films.[5] Generally speaking, however, Richie's reviews of Japanese auteurs such as Ozu Yasujiro or Kurosawa Akira, remain his longest while working as a film critic for *The Japan Times*, whereas Mary Evans' reviews of either of the two directors' films were generally rather short. My material also indicates that neither Evans, nor Richie, seem to have ever reviewed or written about Mizoguchi Kenji's films, except once. An obvious reason for not doing so, was that Mizoguchi had died in 1956, but considering that Mary Evans occasionally reviewed revived films,[6] she still only once reviewed one of Mizoguchi's; *Ugetsu Monogatari* on February 15, 1962. As for Donald Richie, who already in the mid-1950s initiated the column of 'Recommended Revivals'; he does not seem to have included any Mizoguchi works among the films he reviewed during their revivals. This fact is all the more pertinent since the film critics themselves chose the films for the list of 'Recommended Revivals'. It could therefore be argued that Evans' and Richie's reviews implicate a canon since there were indeed genres and styles of film making, as well as directors and actors, which were less often endorsed than others among the 'Recommended Revivals' (see Chapter Six).

Mary Evans and Donald Richie still remain remarkable in their professionalism since certain films naturally required a finer touch in order to attract the more conservative movie-goer, at the same time as neither of the two relented from being fiercely critical towards a film they found wanting. Together with the 'Recommended Revivals' there can therefore be no doubt as to the pedagogical mission of their critical writing, which per se may be explained by the simple fact that the Japanese films obviously were not subtitled in connection with national exhibition. A close reading of the reviews in *The Japan Times* therefore seems to indicate that Richie generally grasped the film medium as if it were primarily a matter of illustrated text, which resulted in literary criticism. This view is obvious also from the amount of edited and commented so called 'books' he has published,

referring to the screenplays of Japanese films, including *Rashomon*.[7] The majority of Richie's reviews tended to introduce the writer of the story or screenplay on which the film was based within the first paragraph, and then the director; '[…] 'Daraku suru Onna' (A Fallen Woman), based on a Junichiro Tanizaki short novel and directed by veteran Kimisaburo Yoshimura, the last of the Mizoguchi disciples. […] This picture (scripted by Kaneto Shindo) […]'.[8] It would seem from this pattern, that Richie encouraged his readers not only to go see the film, but – if available in translation – to read the novel the film was based on, as well; 'Were one to read the novel, and then see the film, one would gain considerable enjoyment and pleasure and, more important, would learn something about the real Japanese character.'[9] This deep knowledge of literary traditions including that of Japan's is strongly reflected in the agenda that make up the main pattern of Richie's reviews and hence explains the high literary quality of his work. The second important parameter in relation to Richie's film reviews is evidently his intense contacts with the Japanese film industry, as well as his knowledge of Japanese film history.

As already mentioned, Mary Evans was acting film critic during Richie's five year absence from *The Japan Times*. Evans' critical style was less literary and favoured a more media focused approach to film criticism. Not much is known of her personal attitude to the film medium and it is impossible to tell from the reviews if she was completely independent of Donald Richie's views on matters like film production and editing during these years. We have already seen that Evans simultaneously commented on economical issues related to the Japanese film industry in the *Oriental Economist*, but it remains difficult to fully assess her work as a film critic until we know more about how she worked. Regrettably, she did not continue as film critic after 1965.

The ability to be so diverse and yet so well informed and pedagogical is characteristic of the extraordinary contribution to film journalism by both Evans and Richie, even though their reviews are stylistically different from one another.

### **4.3** OVERSEAS' CRITICAL RECEPTION

My survey of the critical reception of Japanese film in the West is divided between periodicals and newspaper reviews. I have found approximately 250 magazine articles based on the information in McCann&Perry's *The New Film Index*;[10] and approximately 2000 newspapers reviews. There is still more material to be compiled and analysed in order to obtain full knowledge of how different Western media appreciated the Japanese cinema during the first few decades after 1950.

*France*

Given that critical reception of Japanese film in the West was completely lacking in the type of local knowledge that Mary Evans' and Donald Richie's work displayed, allowed the French *politique des auteurs* to take complete command over the Western critical parameters related to Japanese cinema. The importance of *Cahiers du cinéma* can therefore not be overestimated in relation to the Western reception of Japanese cinema, although the Japanese auteurs designated by the French critics (primarily Mizoguchi Kenji, Kurosawa Akira and Oshima Nagisa) have never been included in any subsequent Western meta-texts referring to auteurism, except in Jim Hillier's *Cahiers du cinéma, The 1950s, Neo-realism, Hollywood, New Wave*.[11] In this book, Hillier provided an English translation of an exchange of opinions between Luc Moullet, André Bazin and Jacques Rivette on the works of Kurosawa and Mizoguchi.[12]

A closer look at the early critical reception of Japanese film in France reveals interesting national irregularities. With the exception of Lo Duca's initial review of the Venice Film Festival in 1951,[13] the first essay on Japanese film in *Cahiers du cinéma* was in fact written by the American journalist Curtis Harrington and hence translated for publication in the French film periodical. I have not been able to obtain an explanation for the choice of Curtis Harrington's particular essay, but it was published in *Cahiers* in May 1952, under the title '*Rashomon* and the Japanese cinema',[14] and tells of the success of *Rashomon* in the United States, as well as in Great Britain… For obvious reasons, neither Harrington nor the editors of *Cahiers* were able to mention anything about the exhibition of *Rashomon* in France, since the film was not commercially released there until in the spring of 1953. As far as I know, the publication of the essay appeared well before any Japanese films at all had been screened in Paris, either at the French Cinémathèque, or commercially. The publication of Harrington's essay in *Cahiers* is therefore interesting mainly from an editorial point of view, since it reveals that the personal lack of experience of Japanese film among the French journalists themselves obviously did not stop them from realizing the importance of publishing a text on this national cinema. The same presumptuousness was repeated when Mizoguchi Kenji's film *Life of Oharu* won the international prize in Venice in 1952, and the French critic wrote that 'The scene where the dispirited Oharu is passed by her son, the prince, who does not even look her way, is the best in postwar Japanese cinema (including *Rashomon)'*.[15] This type of comment is absurd since no Japanese films had yet been screened in Paris at the time, but it makes sense when considered as an act of pure self-confidence. As it happens, *Life of Oharu* was the first Japanese feature film to be

screened in France. It was shown at the French Cinémathèque in October 1952;[16] a few months before *Rashomon* were commercially released at the Paris cinemas.

A good year later the first discussion on the aesthetics of Japanese cinema appeared in the 1953 November issue of *Cahiers du cinéma,* when Georges Sadoul wrote about a film tradition he termed 'Japanese neo-realism'.[17] Ten months later he testified to West's limited knowledge of Japanese cinema when he wrote about the 'progressive Japanese cinema' in *La Nouvelle Critique, Revue de Marxisme*, and based his argument regarding progressive Japanese film production on the very same films.[18] The point I want to make is however that these early essays on Japanese cinema were in fact not dictated by the *politique des auteurs*, but on political and existentialist criteria, founded on impressions from *contemporary* Japanese film dramas. These 'political and existentialist' films were furthermore screened side by side with *jidai-geki* film at the French Cinémathèque; the first group comprising *Life of Oharu, Ugetsu Monogatari* and Gosho Heinosuke's *Where Chimneys are Seen*, screened in the 'Chefs-d'Œuvre' series of the Autumn 1953 season (see Chapter Three). The inclusion of a postwar realist drama like Gosho's clearly indicates Henri Langlois' pluralistic view on the exhibition of Japanese film, but more than that, both Sadoul's and Langlois' initiatives indicate an alternative direction which the French critical reception of Japanese film could have taken.

Then came François Truffaut's pivotal article in the January 1954 issue[19] of *Cahiers du cinéma*. According to Jim Hillier, this article 'consciously marked a definitive new departure for the journal'.[20] Paul Willemen identified this 'new departure' as 'a rationalisation of a highly Catholic, somewhat right-wing *politique* in France at that time, which came to be known as the *politique des auteurs*'[21] in the hands of Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut. Further according to Willemen, this new *politique*, or auteurism, was based on a semi-religious 'discourse of revelation, the revelation of the soul'.[22] Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, one of *Cahiers'* senior critics, later defined it as follows: 'From then on, it was known that we were *for* Renoir, Rossellini, Hitchcock, Cocteau, Bresson … and *against* X, Y and Z. From then on there was a doctrine, the *politique des auteurs*, even if it lacked flexibility.'[23]

The dossiers on Mizoguchi Kenji[24] and Oshima Nagisa,[25] as well as the many reviews and essays on Japanese film, may serve as proof that certain Japanese also became highly esteemed by the critics at *Cahiers du cinéma*, and confirm that the 'discourse of revelation' included Japanese film as well.

Truffaut's 1954 article thus introduced the concept of auteurism in tandem with its main critical parameter, the deployment of *mise-en-scène*, and named the (Western) film

directors representing this concept. By 1957 it included Mizoguchi as well. He was seemingly habitually designated as a 'genius'[26] among the critics at *Cahiers*, and in 1959 Alexandre Astruc elaborated on the subject of *mise-en-scène*, with Mizoguchi Kenji's film *Ugetsu Monogatari* as his focal point:

> After five minutes' screening, *Ugetsu Monogatari* makes plain the meaning of *mise-en-scène,* at least to some: it's a special way of prolonging the rays from the soul through the movement of the body. […] I imagine that what interests [Mizoguchi] after so many films, is not the film itself, but the effect of not being able to look away from it.[27]

It seems to me that Astruc's above description of his impression of *Ugetsu Monogatari* is best described as an instance of 'revelation' where the image supersedes the literary aspect of the film work. The consequence of *la politique des* auteurs for Japanese cinema was that this dogma was applied to certain aspects of this cinema, that is *jidai-geki* film, which resulted in a misconception of all Japanese film product. By endorsing this image of Japanese cinema, the critics at the *Cahiers du cinema* at the same time equalled Japanese product to that of any of the Western film industries representing the same critical criteria.

What remains to be clarified is to what degree the image of Japanese film represented by the critics at the *Cahiers du cinéma* was actually based on individual cinephilia, thus involving individual 'epiphanic moments' or 'revelatory fragments'.[28] In his essay, Willemen identifies cinephilia as '[operating] particularly strongly in relation to a form of cinema that is perceived as being highly coded, highly commercial, formalised and ritualised.'[29] In my opinion, these parameters can easily be identified as fundamental critical parameters in the essays and reviews of Japanese film by the critics at *Cahiers du cinéma* as well, although it's difficult to ascertain to which extent the Otherness of the Japanese culture itself actually contributed to this effect.

The other independent film magazine to emerge in France in the early 1950s was *Positif* which was initiated by a group of students in Lyon in 1952, and 'consistently Leftist',[30] according to Hillier. The magazine moved to Paris in 1955 and was for a long time edited on a freelance basis, which meant that the direction contacted different writers for each issue. It quickly became clear that *Positif* was professing a different attitude to film than did *Cahiers du cinéma*, while still adhering to the principles of auteurism.[31] Jim Hillier complained that 'neither *Cahiers* nor *Positif* was being particularly radical or original in its interest'[32] and this may be said to include their interest in the national Japanese cinema as well.

Finally, *Cinéma* emerged in 1955, published by the French federation of film-clubs, it aimed at being 'a guide du Spectateur', or 'the viewer's guide'. Their readers were ideally

the 'amateurs éclairés' or 'enlightened film lovers' and it showed little or no predilection for any special genre or nationality of cinema.[33] *Cinéma* thus represented the European art house cinema circuit and in view of the common exhibition practices for Japanese cinema at this type of locale, I therefore, like Hillier, suggest that *Cinéma* was the most original French film journal during the time period of this study. *Cinéma* published in depth analyses and advocated cinematic pluralism early on in their magazine, and its sixth issue was uniquely dedicated to Japanese film[34] which makes it the first in depth publication on Japanese national cinema ever in France.


Figure 13

The table of contents of this special issue read as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | |
| History | [written by Iwasaki Akira] |
| 1896-1935 | |
| 1935-1955 | |
| Akira Kurosawa | |
| Ten directors | [including Gosho Heinosuke, Imai Tadashi, Kinoshita Keisuke, Kinugasa Teinosuke, Mizoguchi Kenji, Naruse Mikio, Shibuya Minoru, Shindo Kaneto, Yoshimura Jitsuko, and Yamamoto Satsuo] |
| Faces in Japanese cinema | [introducing ten film stars, including Kyo Machiko and Mifune Toshiro, but also less well-known ones like Okada Mariko and Otawa Nobuko - seven women and three men, in all] |
| The films | [*Rashomon*, *The Crab-canning Ship*, *Dark Waters*, *The Love Letter* and *Mother*] |
| Debates | |
| Documentation | [that is Production, Import of films, Audience Attendance, Genres and Principal Directors] |

As can be seen, the effort on behalf of *Cinéma* is considerable, while simultaneously also making an important statement by publishing Iwasaki Akira's 'leftist' presentation of the history of Japanese film. There is no doubt that the magazine also introduced new factors to

be considered in connection with Japanese cinema at the time. Among the most impressive was the attempt at classification by means of an active use of genre definition based on factual knowledge as a means of describing the different films, instead of just referring to *jidai-geki* and *gendai-gek* film.[35] Although dated by today's standards, *Cinéma* thus appears to have been the first French film journal which made an effort to present a wider picture of the Japanese national cinema through its proposed taxonomy. This assumption is confirmed by the fact that the editors also published a study of Tanaka Kinuyo's *The Love Letter*, which makes *Cinéma* the only French source of written or diffused information on Japanese cinema to have mentioned the only active Japanese female film director at this time.[36] It would seem that Tanaka's film was screened only once in any of the countries involved in this study; at the film festival in Cannes in 1954. This is all the more striking since Tanaka Kinuyo was already known to the West through her performances in for example *Life of Oharu* and *Mother*.

Lastly, among *Cinéma 55*'s most valuable merits is its 'Bibliography'[37] ('Eléments de bibliographie') which seems to include the most important general writings on Japanese film by 1955. In addition to the French material, the second part of the list is comprised of works in English. This bibliography thus serves as a map over the postwar intellectual Western landscape of Japanese film, and we may notice the absence of a proper book on the subject of this cinema at the time. Another important piece of information is the mentioning of Joseph L Anderson, as well as the absence of Donald Richie among the English contributors.

With reference to the line of inquiry in this chapter, the appearance of this special issue of *Cinéma* does not seem to have changed anything in the general attitude towards Japanese cinema by way of instigating a more academic interest in its particulars. On the other hand, we may well ask which image of Japanese film such an interest would have been based on? Already in 1955, Georges Sadoul had aired his resignation at the fact that no contemporary Japanese dramas had been screened at the Venice film festival that year.[38] He instead directed the reader to the 'admirable group of three post-samurai films' that were screened out of competition at the festival. Unfortuantely, this recommendation again points to the grave limitation of the image of Japanese film already in place in France at this time since this group of 'post-samurai films' consisted of Kinoshita Keisuke's *Twenty-four Eyes,* Toyoda Shiro's *Wild Gees* and Gosho Heinosuke's *Adolescence*, aka *Growing Up Twice*; all *kindai-geki*[39] films. Contemporary Japanese films were yet to be seriously reviewed by the French critics.[40]

*Great Britain*

British film journals were in fact loath to respond to Japanese cinema, due to the scarcity of available films. This situation obviously had considerable consequences for the knowledge of Japanese film history as well as a formative impact on the British critics since it gave the impression that many national film journals indescrimintaley shared the French ideas on auturism.[41] An instance in case would be Julian Stringer's essay on the subject of 'reception of Japanese cinema at international film festivals'[42] between 1951 and 1970, where Stringer has provided several instances which indicate that *Sight and Sound*'s 'auteurism' regarding Japanese cinema primarily concerned Kurosawa Akira, Mizoguchi Kenji, Ozu Yasujiro, and Ichikawa Kon.[43] My research shows that these directors were in fact featured in most British film journals and thus seem to have constituted the common image of 'Japanese cinema'. Instead of being a British affair, my study indicates that several of the conclusions in Stringer's essay on the development of the coverage of Japanese cinema in the critical platform of *Sight and Sound* are generally applicable to a number of the British, French and American film periodicals, as well. The above genealogy of the attitude at *Cahiers du cinéma* is an instance in case. Stringer wrote:

> As years passed, […] the emphasis shifted from the desire to discover and reveal the meaning of films to the perceived need to reframe what was interesting about Japanese cinema […which] quickly went from being an unknown to being a 'known' cinema. Instant experts crawled out of the woodwork.[44]

I therefore suggest that given the limited possibilities for Western critics to acquire all necessary information, and considering the consistent effort at self-Orientalization on behalf of the Japanese, it was not possible to finally determine the characteristics of this national cinema. Nagata Masaichi's above announcement that the European film festivals were closely canvassed by the Japanese film industry, in order that it should produce and exhibit the 'right' Japanese films obviously points in this direction. The matter of whether or not the Japanese films screened in the West in the early 1950s actually introduced the Japanese national cinema, or not, had also been pointed out by French film critics immediately after *Rashomon*'s success in Venice, and is still being debated.

Whereas the publication of the Giuglaris' and Anderson and Richie's book apparently did not advance Western critics' knowledge of the Japanese film industry and its product, factors like the above described Japanese marketing strategy, which would seem to suggest that the dilemma of the true identity of Japanese cinema in fact oscillated between the sender's intention and the receiver's comprehension of the product in question. My point is that in the case of British film journals, both the initial active branding of Japanese film by its own industry *and* the relative lack of regular and retrospective screenings of Japanese

film in London are circumstances explaining why the British critics could hardly have done better than they did.[45] Both France and the United States exhibited Japanese films more frequently, not least thanks to Henri Langlois at the French Cinémathèque, and the Toho cinemas and art house cinemas in New York, which resulted in a vast amount of experience of Japanese film to draw from on behalf of the critics in these two countries. Stringer explains the limited access to Japanese film in London by the fact that London Film Festival was only a 'round-up festival',[46] due to the power of attraction of the European film festivals. According to him, the European film festivals formed the basis for all 'dissemination of [Japanese film] throughout the other related institutions of official British film culture' by providing a three-step strategy: 'First, a film from Japan will be targeted in a *Sight and Sound* festival report from Berlin, Cannes or Venice […] Then, a few months down the road, the movie will be shown at the London Film Festival. […]. Finally, […] a *Sight and Sound* review appears to help launch the film's UK distribution life.'[47]

Stringer thus makes a good case of the role of *Sight and Sound* in connection with the exhibition of Japanese film in Great Britain, but with regard to my own observations in Chapter Three, we can see that this situation applied in other countries as well. I therefore suggest that an addition of a few more parameters is essential in order to complete the general picture of the overall mediatisation of Japanese film in Great Britain at the time. Although Stringer acknowledges that the British Film Institute was the organization responsible for the London Film Festival, the National Film Theatre and *Sight and Sound*, he does not, for example, include the Japanese film programmes screened at the National Film Theatre in his equation. His argument is therefore based on the presupposition that the critics at *Sight and Sound* depended solely on the European film festivals for their information on Japanese film, even though, as I have already suggested, they had access to this national film product through other sources, such as the seasons at the NFT (see Chapter Three). Given the above circumstances, the situation for the British critics at *Sight and Sound* does not appear to have been unique.

The first issue of the British film journal *Films and Filming* appeared in October 1954, and thus matched the appearance of many of the more prominent European film journals at the time. It did not hesitate to boast about having the 'World's largest sale amongst critical filmgoers', and was far more leftist than for example *Sight and Sound*. *Films and Filming* was edited by Peter Brinson until in November 1955, when Peter G Baker took over.

In my opinion, *Films and Filming*'s critical reception of Japanese film seems to have been the most level-headed in Great Britain at this time, since it chose to involve local

correspondents as reporters on foreign cinema from the very first issue of the magazine. This section was headed 'Film Abroad' and involved reports from all over the world, including Eastern Europe and Japan. The first correspondent in Tokyo was the journalist Frank Archer, then came Iwabuchi Masayoshi in 1955 and he remained with the journal during the 1950s. It is an unexpected surprise to read Frank Archer praise of the Japanese independent film companies for their interest in contemporary issues already in the very first issue of *Films and Filming* in 1954, considering the overwhelming favorism of Japanese period drama in the West at the time;

> Independent production still provides the main source of interest from Japan. The wide range of subjects coupled with a technical brilliance show clearly that the films made by the independent producers have a wonderful future. The importance of the independent producers is that they have no hesitation in presenting contemporary problems. The major production companies on the other hand are still largely taken up with historical themes, light comedies and the like.[48]

The five major film production companies however remained in full control of the Japanese film industry for at least another five years and the amount of contemporary dramas exhibited in the West remained limited. An interesting development then followed in that Archer insisted on presenting different film issues that all mirrored the contemporary state of the Japanese society in the ensuing two issues of *Films and Filming* (November and December 1954). Two films were especially mentioned; Yamamura So's *The Crab-canning Ship* and *Children of Hiroshima* by Shindo Kaneto, screened at the film festival in Cannes in 1953. In connection with his articles, Archer contested that 'Steps are now being taken to introduce some of these Japanese films to Britain.'[49] The ensuing critical reception of Shindo Kaneto's *Children of Hiroshima* in *Films and Filming* is unique. The film was commercially released in Great Britain in the late spring of 1955, and *Films and Filming* presented it as their 'Film of the Month' in the April issue.[50] These monthly films were presented through publicity stills on a double spread, where the film's plot was told through 12 to 16 stills. Shindo's film was given the headline 'Children of Hiroshima – A Warning for the World', and it shows that one of the film stills was later used as copy for the British poster for the film (see Chapter Five). *Children of Hiroshima* was however not included among the reviews of new films in this issue of *Films and Filming*, since it was not commercially released until one month later. It is interesting to note that the review of Kurosawa Akira's period film *Seven Samurai* was illustrated by a completely non-descript publicity still of the young lovers in the film, taken in a studio.[51]

The ensuing issue of *Films and Filming* again published material referring to Shindo's *Children of Hiroshima*. In what seems to have been the very first essay on a non-

auteurist film, Frank Bamping wrote about Shindo Kaneto's work on the screenplay for *Children of Hiroshima*.[52] It is not possible to know if Bamping was aware of the delicacy of his subject or if *Films and Filming* was indeed aware of what it was actually publishing, but the article on Shindo Kaneto and *Children of Hiroshima* was certainly highly disputable in many quarters at the time of its publication. The main reason for such hesitation would have been its pacifist ergo leftist message, with additional hesitation brought on by the open co-operation on the film's production between the Japanese trade unions and the citizens of Hiroshima itself. The film was certainly regarded as an anti-American production, and the publication of Bamping's article by the editor of *Films and Filming* would have been viewed as a similar action. On the other hand, it remains to be seen if it was the same political agenda that prevented the Japanese contribution to British exhibition of youth film from being properly reviewed in *Films and Filming*, despite the journal's otherwise essential effort to map this new film genre between 1957 and 1960.

I have also found that *Films and Filming* never involved Japanese cinema in connection with their standing themes, like the large series 'Patterns of Cinema' which introduced the term 'world film' when it was started in December 1957, nor were any Japanese personalities mentioned in connection with the preview catch-phrase 'Next month look for …', or 'Person of Promise' which introduced up and coming new talents within the film industry. As far as I know, only two exceptions occured; Japanese cinema contributed with a 'Personality of the Month' which introduced Kurosawa Akira in 1957,[53] and 'Great Films of the Century' included Kinugasa Teinosuke's film 'Crossways' aka *Crossroads/Jujiro* (1928) as its second feature film,[54] in 1960. Apart from these two cases, it would seem that the critical topics and themes in *Films and Filming* in fact never involved Japanese film product but remained reserved for Western film.

In terms of auteurs, it should be noted that *Films and Filming* did not publish any essays on either Mizoguchi Kenji or Ozu Yasujiro. The first essay on Kurosawa Akira was not published until in 1961.[55] Interestingly, the first Japanese actor/actress to be given the front cover as well as serious journalistic coverage inside *Films and Filming* seems to have been Kyo Machiko. Symptomatically, however, Kyo was not noticed in connection with a Japanese film, but for her appearance in Daniel Mann's American comedy *Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956) opposite Marlon Brando. The two stars appear in their roles as geisha and translator respectively on the front cover of the issue. The film is also a focus of the 'Cover Story' written by John Rothwell who watched both artists at work in Hollywood.[56] A third instance of interesting journalism related to Japanese cinema and published by *Films and Filming,* was provided by its longstanding Japanese correspondent, Iwabuchi

Masayoshi, whose report on the new trend of war films was published early in 1960.[57] I have not been able to locate any other material focussing on the reappearance of the Japanese war film genre in the late 1950s in any other Western media during the time frame of this study. Its re-emergency was obviously visible from the films on offer through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* at the time, but they don't appear to have constituted a serious film choice in the hands of Western distributors. It seems to me, that drawing attention to a re-appearing film genre therefore must have been a most inopportune action, especially since Great Britain already had a very selective exhibition policy in relation to Japanese cinema.

In view of the highly ambitious introduction of the Japanese national cinema by *Films and Filming*, the British film journal *Movie* may be said to have represented its national opposite and its contribution to the overall image of Japanese film remains marginal. The first essay concerned with Japanese film, was published in December 1962,[58] but did not involve the exhibition of Japanese film in Great Britain. Instead Ian Cameron writes of two of Mizoguchi Kenji's *gendai-geki* films which were screened in Spain on the occasion of a congress that year, well knowing that none of them had been screened in Great Britain, which had so far only seen *Ugetsu Monogatari* and *Street of Shame*. The films Cameron so ardently described (without adding any new information on either them or Mizoguchi himself) were *The Empress Yang Fei Kwei* (1955) and *Tales of the Taira Clan* (1955), claiming that 'The parallel between the historical action and the personal story gives *Shin Heike Monogatari* [aka *Tales of the Taira Clan*] its particular beauty. Mizoguchi is arguably the greatest of directors. This is arguably his best film and the best of all films.'[59] Cameron's canonising of Mizoguchi must have come unexpected to British readers since it seems that no idolizing article on Mizoguchi's film aesthetics had been previously published by the journal. Cameron's canonising of the Japanese director was however consistent with French auteurist aesthetics, given that 'the connotations of 'mise-en-scène' in *Movie* have a good deal in common with Cahier's usage.'[60] We may therefore conclude that by canonising Mizoguchi, Cameron joined forces with both the Parisian journalists at *Cahiers du cinéma* and Andrew Sarris in New York who all preferred Mizoguchi to other Japanese directors at the time.[61] *Movie*'s presentation of one single Japanese film thus both confirmed their general attitude towards Japanese cinema per se, and Clarie Johnston's general observation that '*Movie* concentrated on discussing 'mise-en-scène' rather than delineating the thematic structure of the auteur's work.'[62]

*Movie* displayed no further interest in Japanese film until in its seventh issue, where a film still from Mizoguchi Kenji's *Sancho the Bailiff* suddenly appeared among its

presentation of 'Other films'.[63] There was however no written information related either to the still or the screening of the film in question in the ensuing issue. According to my film list, *Sansho the Bailiff* was never commercially screened in Great Britain during the time frame of this study, and the NFT did not screen it until in 1972, when it was included in the 'Ozu, Mizoguchi & Their Generation' series. I can thus only conclude that this particular film still from *Sansho the Bailiff* (a period drama) was included in *Movie* because of the exoticism it advertised, an action which per se reflected *Movie*'s adherence to an Orientalist discourse regarding its views on Japanese cinema.

The next reference to Japanese film in *Movie* appeared in the summer issue 1963, when Mark Shivas reported from the films screened at the film festival in Cannes.[64] Shivas confirmed *Movie*'s Orientalist bias by introducing Kobayashi Masaki's film *Harakiri* thus:

> Masaki Kobayashi (*No Greater Love*, etc) tells story of samurai code of honour, exposing its barbarities and its hypocrisy. Includes ritual suicides with two examples, one performed on unwilling victim's stomach with bamboo sword substitute because he'd hocked his good one. When he bit his tongue off, Cannes audience gave audible signs of distress. Otherwise, posturing and grunting in the Kurosawa manner, which used to be accepted as the norm of Jap cinematic behaviour before we saw Mizoguchi films. Now it seems even more absurd.[65]

After Shivas' Cannes report only two more entries in *Movie* referred to Japanese film. Firstly, there was Robin Wood's admiring, auteurist-driven introduction to Ozu Yasujiro through *Tokyo Story*[66] which had been commercially released in Great Britain in May 1965, although the film had been screened at the NFT as early as 1957, in connection with the 'A Light in the Japanese Window'[67] retrospective. The second entry covered the introduction (including a filmography) of yet a Japanese auteur; Oshima Nagisa, in two steps. A still from his film *Death by Hanging* had been published as a preview at the back of the previous issue before the entire dossier was published in the last issue of *Movie*[68] in the winter 1969-1970. The manner of introduction of both Japanese directors closely resembled the dossiers that had previously been published by *Cahiers du cinema*. The French dossier on Oshima was published as late as in November 1969, that is, within weeks before *Movie* published theirs.[69] Cameron's dossier contained an interview with Oshima Nagisa, in which he commented on his films. Contrary to his later adamant disavowal of any influence from the French New Wave films, Oshima in this interview admitted that he was 'unconsciously influenced by the Nouvelle Vague' when he made his first films.[70] Interestingly, only two of Oshima's films had previously been screened in Great Britain at the time of this dossier; *The Catch* had been screened in the 'Japanese Cinema' series at the NFT in the spring 1969, whereas *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* had been commercially released in November 1969. This dossier on Oshima Nagisa must therefore be regarded as yet another case of auteurism, with

the British copying the tradition of their French colleagues at *Cahiers du cinéma*, but in this case it also had an additional effect in that Oshima's films from the late 1960s were indeed screened in Great Britain during the next few years.

The excellent and inclusive coverage of Japanese cinema in *Films and Filming* brings one to the conclusion that it is not possible to argue that British film institutions never had the opportunity to form their own opinion on Japanese film, due to the heavy influence of European film festivals and critical dogmas. The inaptitude of such an argument is also supported by the wide range of film programmes made available by the National Film Theatre. At the same time, it should be noticed, that the relatively scarce British newspaper coverage of commercially screened Japanese films during the time frame of this study, represented a drawback in the general discourse surrounding Japanese film in Great Britain. It seems that the crude sensationalism which characterized the newspapers' coverage of these films during the 1950s was unique among the countries involved in this study, and it may well have added to the generally sarcastic attitude towards this particular national cinema. As an example, in 1958, four daily newspapers wrote of Mizoguchi Kenji's last completed film *Street of Shame*, *in full*, that

> In the same programme is a doom-laden Japanese piece called STREET OF SHAME [CAPITALS in the original]. This is about the red-light district of Tokyo, and deals terrifyingly with disease and corruption. Recommended only to those who like a good wallop.[71] [37 words]
>
> If, like me, you have visited Tokyo without inspecting the Yoshiwara, **Street of Shame** [**bold** in the original] (Cinephone, 'X') should be consoling. Kenji Mizoguchi's film shatters the legend of exquisite courtesans in beautiful tea houses. It offers instead a horrible little world of greed, cruelty and heartbreak, where a passing man must be prepared at every step to go a fast round of jiu-jitsu with x x women trying desperately to drag him indoors and fleece him.[72] [74 words]
>
> Two Japanese movies worthy of report: '**Street of Shame'** [**bold** in the original], which explores conditions in Tokyo's red-light district, the Yoshiwara, and '**The Rikisha-Man**' [**bold** in the original], which chronicles the life of a lowly fellow with a rough exterior and a heart of proverbial gold. Of the two, 'Street of Shame', with Machiko Kyo as one of the girls, is considerably more realistic, and it represents, also, the last work of Kenji Mizoguchi, who directed the classic 'Ugetsu'. 'Street of Shame' makes out a somewhat less than heart-rending case against legalized prostitution (although it is said to have some effect in influencing recent legislation in Japan against it) and fails to add much stature to the Japanese cinema. […].[73]
> [114 words]

The fourth entry on Mizoguchi Kenji's *Street of Shame*, on the other hand, shared that unexpected piece of unique information which proves that some critics were better equipped (knowledgeable) for their profession than others. The review is written by Derek Hill, who apparently understood Japanese, since he reveals information about a key element

in Mizoguchi Kenji's *Street of Shame*, which I have not seen mentioned anywhere else. The one sentence it involves is copied here in upper case:

> The last film of Mizoguchi, one of Japan's greatest directors, is showing at the Cinephone under the title ***'Street of Shame'*** [*italicized* and **bold** in the original]**.** 'Vice of the Orient x' scream the posters, which is a pity. For the film is an unsensational, intensely sympathetic account of the lives of prostitutes, with a splendid, strutting performance by an unrecognisably strident Machiko Kyo.
> THROUGHOUT THE FILM THE RADIO COMMENTS ON THE PROGRESS OF A BILL TO BAN BROTHELS. But the brothel proprietor insists that without his establishment the girls and their families would starve.
> 'I'm your welfare state', he tells them. The Government has no programme to solve your problems. I'm really a social worker.
> *Street of Shame* was cut by the censor here and there before he gave it an 'X'. One cut was the silhouette of a nude. But the supporting film, *Isle of Levant* [*italicized* in the original], a tedious travelogue of imbecilic stupidity written, directed and photographed with paralysing incompetence, features G-string nudes for its last half-hour or so. Banned by the censor, of course, but given an LCC 'A' certificate. Meanwhile Mizoguchi's work has to be cut to get an 'X'.[74] [187 words]

The general quality of this type of British review journalism should be compared to that of the French press, which published twelve reviews of Kurosawa Akira's *Stray Dog* when it was screened in Paris three years later, in 1961. The shortest of these comprised 92 words and was published in an evening tabloid.[75] Although considerably longer and of higher quality, the French film community nevertheless displayed a similar lack of acceptance of the wider range of genres represented by Japanese film product. This fact is highlighted by a case like this, when the commercial screening of the postwar detective story *Stray Dog* took place in Paris no less than twelve years after its release in Japan. Considering the time delay, one would have expected the French critics to be more knowledgeable than around 1950, especially someone like Georges Sadoul who most probably attended the earlier screenings of *Stray Dog* at the French Cinémathèque.[76] Instead, the most unexpected misunderstandings occurred in relation to the critical reception of this vintage film, such as when Sadoul, in his long review in *Les Lettres Françaises*, referred to the young police officer as being played by 'Takashi Shimura', and his older colleague by 'Toshiro Mifune': '[…] The elderly policeman is played by Toshiro Mifune, and those who have had a chance to see Ikiru, have not forgotten the skills of this great actor […]'.[77] Other critics produced uncalled-for onslaughts in less than professional terms, like the signature 'A.S.L.' aka André S Labarthe:

> [This type of film…] is based entirely on the principal of montage which was developed to perfection by the silent cinema. Kurosawa is nostalgic for this golden era like others for Balzac's novels. […] This archaic technique, this art of gunning shots intended less for visuality than for sensitivity, ends up thwarting every effort at

> directing the actors. […] I know of few films where the actors are more detestable than in *Stray Dog*.[78]

Among the eleven comprehensive reviews, with several critics eagerly focussing on the 'suspense' theme among them, no one mentioned that for instance the thriller genre was unknown in Japanese film production before the American occupation. Nor was it mentioned that *Stray Dog* was the result of the American SCAP authorities (under which supervision *Stray Dog* was made) having enforced a replacement of the Japanese *chambara*-genre by the American 'whodunit' genre (see Chapter Two). This type of new and relevant information, related directly to the Japanese film industry and its conditions of production, was seemingly left aside to the advantage of the auteurists' word of the day, 'suspense', even though the French journalists and critics easily would have had access to the other information.

In addition to reviews in newspapers and periodicals, both France and Great Britain also published neutral evaluations of all films screened in the country, through specially designated institutions. In France, the *Centrale Catholique du Cinéma* published a work entitled *Répertoire Général des Films* annually, until it was taken over by 'Citévox Éditeur' in the late 1950s, which subsequently published *La Saison Cinématographique* edited by François Chevassu. The task of supervising national film exhibition was then transferred to the film periodical *Image et Son*, which published annual reports on the commercial film releases in France, during the remaining years of this study. The same task was performed by BFI's periodical, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, in Great Britain during the entire time frame of this study. These publications thus chronicled the programming of Japanese film in the country concerned, thereby representing a neutral platform for information and evaluation regarding the overseas, commercial film screening of Japanese cinema. According to the film references in these publications, roughly 108 Japanese feature films were screened commercially in France between 1950 and 1975, whereas the corresponding figure for Great Britain was 86 films. Over a period of 30 years, this translates into three to four Japanese films screened commercially in France per annum, and between two and three in Great Britain. Unlike the European countries involved in this study, there is no American institution responsible for the listing of commercial films screened at American cinemas. It is therefore impossible to find out exactly how many Japanese feature films were indeed screened in the United States between during this time period.

*United States*

In terms of review journalism in the United States, Andrew Sarris stands out as a central figure among American film auteurists through his columns in above all *Village Voice* and *Film Culture*. Following closely in the steps of his colleagues at *Cahiers du cinéma*, Sarris also contributed to *Movie*'s auteurist identity by his columns on the situation in New York, which were published in *Movie*, during its first two years of publication.[79] Although Sarris' played no evident role in the formation of a critical canon on the reception of Japanese film in the United States, he ideologically joined in with the French critics in their hailing of Mizoguchi's capacity at *mise-en-scène*.[80] Christian Keathley places Sarris in 'a middle position between the academics of *Movie* and the journalists (and future filmmakers) of *Cahiers*', explaining that '[Sarris] academic role was secondary, and he did not have the same commitment to (or bear the same weight of) a literary critical tradition in the way that *Movie* did.' [81] Keathley bases his argument partly on Sarris' own assertion of what he meant by *mise-en-scène*:

> For me, *mise-en-scène* is not merely the gap between what we see and feel on the screen and what we can express in words, but it is also the gap between the intention of the director and his effect upon the spectator. […] the magical powers of *mise-en-scène* [is] to get more out of a picture than is put in by a director.[82]

My understanding of both Keathley's and Sarris' statements seem to place Sarris' experience of *mise-en-scène* in the realm of the epiphany, equalling it with the 'discourse of revelation' mentioned above. An instance of revelation referring to Japanese film would be Sarris' somewhat limp review of Mizoguchi Kenji's *Life of Oharu*, in 1964, in which he wrote that 'From the first frame of ''Oharu'' to the last, one is aware of sublime directorial purpose.'[83]

Among several American periodicals which continuously published essays and criticism referring to Japanese cinema, I have researched *Quarterly Review Of Film, Radio and Television* which later became *Film Quarterly* (Berkeley, 1952-), *Films in Review* (New York, 1952-) and *Film Comment* (New York 1962-) for this study. Especially the two former have been of interest since they were started at about the same time as *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Cinéma* and *Films and Filming*. As far as I have seen, both these periodicals and *Film Quarterly* in particular, published several essays by Joseph L Anderson and especially Donald Richie during the 1950s and in view of the pedagogical disposition and chosen topics of their essays, I suggest that Anderson and Richie in fact supplied the main information on Japanese film (history) to the West during this period. The thematic character of Anderson's essays make them both unique and revelatory. He published an essay on Japanese cinema from the point of view of its Otherness as early as in 1952, and

few years later he initiated a Western readership to Japanese film periodicals such as *Kinema Jumpo*, and their significant influence on Japanese moviegoers. Anderson also had deep knowledge of Japanese film history in general, as well as an interest in prewar Japanese cinema. Together with Richie he also published an essay on the intimate relationship between traditional Japanese theatre and Japanese film.

Donald Richie displayed a keen eye for marginal topics such as 'unexceptional Japanese films' at the same time as he showed a clear interest in directors like Ozu Yasujiro, Mizoguchi Kenji, Kurosawa Akira, Gosho Heinosuke and Ichikawa Kon. It seems possible that these early essays, which appeared before the publication of *Japanese Film*, should be understood as promoting the films by these directors. Whether this was done on his own initiative I cannot say. Given his close contacts with the Japanese film industry, Richie had plenty of opportunity to write of its operations. He thus wrote both of his own relationship with it, as well as of its terms of production and economic parameters.

It could be argued that Richie's persistent revolving around a very small group of Japanese film directors indicated a tendency towards auteurism without explicitly adhering to it. This may well be true, but it should be said that both his writing style and critical parameters definitely indicate his affiliation to the literary critical tradition mentioned above. There is nothing in Joseph L Anderson's essays to indicate that he favoured auteurism, nor that he was affiliated with the literary critical tradition. It would seem that Anderson looked upon himself mainly as a historian with an interest in Japanese film.[84]

It could be argued that Richie hereby displayed a tendency towards auteurism without explicitly adhering to it, but it should be said that both his writing style and critical parameters definitely indicate his affiliation to the literary critical tradition mentioned above. Regardless of Richie's auteurist-driven critical style, his persistent elevation of particular Japanese directors may simply have been a case of focused film product placement.

The additional American printed media material that I have studied is composed mainly of newspaper reviews of Japanese films from the *New York Times*, *Variety* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Similar to *Movie* above, the material collected from the *San Francisco Chronicle* is also characterized by a strong sense of underdevelopment and negligence, considering that the San Francisco film festival was an annual event in the city during the entire time frame of this study. As for the commercially screened Japanese film in the city, one cannot label the newspaper's material covering these screenings 'reviews' except in very few cases. Most of it can only be referred to as small news items, announcing a two-night screening of a certain film at a certain locale in the city, which was often not a

cinema. The poor quality of this material is highly frustrating, since the American West coast represents a unique exhibition locale in view of the scope of this study, given that its larger cities (mainly Los Angeles, San Francisco) housed the majority of Japanese immigrants to the United States at the time. The reason for the poor critical reception of Japanese cinema in this area may however be explained by the sometimes open hostility between the Japanese-American community and the local Californian inhabitants during the 20th century. These disagreements resulted in the first Anti-Japanese Movement being formed in the 1910s, and it would seem that the *San Fransisco Chronicle* played an active role in this Movement by publishing 'a series of articles that regarded Japanese immigration as the 'problem of the day'' already in 1905[85] and again after World War One.[86] I suggest that this may be the reason for the newspaper's limited interest in Japanese cinema during the time period of this study as well. More is the pity, since the West coast cities had local, so called ethnic cinemas which focused exclusively on Japanese film,[87] and therefore had a unique opportunity to critically review this particular national cinema. Because these screenings were aimed at an ethnically specific audience, they were however generally not recorded by local media. Toho's overseas cinemas on the American West were not included among the ethnic cinemas focusing on the Japanese community on this coast since the the company expected an ethnically mixed audience to see the films programmed at their cinemas in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Judging by the small amount of serious reviews in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, one may well ask if Toho achieved its goal of a successful exportation business to the United States. A closer examination of the film advertisement in the *Chronicle* for example indicates that Kawashima Yuzo's *This Maddening Crowd/Aboeka monogatari* (1962) was screened at the Toho-Rio in San Francisco in October 1964, but the film was never reviewed in the paper.[88] In contrast to the Japanese dramas, including the seminal *Life of Oharu* which was announced by a short news item stating that ''Life Of Oharu', directed by Kenji Mizoguchi, and starring Kinuyo Tanaka and Toshiro Mifune, opens tonight at the Toho-Rio. It is the story of an aristocratic woman who falls in love with a Samurai.'[89] the Japanese sword-fighting films were almost always properly reviewed.[90] More is the pity since we also learn from other news-items in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, that the Toho-Rio cinema was screening films like Naruse Mikio's *The Wiser Age*/*Onna no za* (1962) and a film cited as 'Three Gents in Hawaii' which may well be Fukuda Jun's youth comedy in the 'Young guy'-series, entitled *Young Guy in Hawaii/Hawaii no wakadaisho* (1963).[91] Critical reviews of these contemporary films would have been a valuable addition to our knowledge of the general image of Japanese film among American critics. The non-existence of such reviews could of course testify to a

dismissal of this type of Japanese films, but it still leaves us with a gap since we cannot verify exactly what was considered to be wrong with them.

The conditions for New York-based film critics were different, in that the programming of Japanese films was more diverse, and divided between both local and first-run cinemas, as well as institutions like the Museum of Modern Art. My main source for research into the programming of Japanese film in New York has been the film reviews published in the *New York Times* between 1950 and 1975, which took off with Bosley Crowther's review of *Rashomon* in December 1951.[92] The reviews of Japanese films from this newspaper indicate an almost perfect balance between *jidai-geki* and *gendai-geki* films: 72 of the former and 73 of the latter genre, leaving out seven science-fiction films, and amounting to 152 reviews in all. I have also found an explicit variation in their publication, a fact which reflects a cyclical pattern in the exhibition of Japanese films in the city. The following years display the highest amounts of reviews of Japanese films:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1971 | 22 films |
| 1964 | 20 films |
| 1963 + 1974 | 12 films annually |
| 1968 + 1972 + 1973 | 11 films annually |

Several years are represented by only one Japanese film; 1951, 1954, 1955, and 1966; whereas 1975 saw the exhibition of only two Japanese films in New York. Unlike the situation in France, there is thus no consecutive time line reflecting an increasing interest in Japanese film among the exhibitors, and consequently no mounting number of critical assessments of this national cinema by the New York critics. A closer look at the individuals behind the reviews in the *New York Times* reveals that they were eight in total, but only two of them worked during the entire period, between 1951 and 1975. Vincent Canby was not among the most prolific critics of Japanese cinema, but he published 16 reviews within the time frame of this study, of which 12 were written in the 1970s. The signature 'A H Weiler' was also working during the three decades in question and published 21 reviews of Japanese films, of which the lion part was written in the 1960s (12) and 1970s (seven). Although Canby and Weiler both covered the three decades in question, three other persons stand out as the most industrious critics of Japanese film in the *New York Times*, although they covered only two decades each; Howard Thompson published 38 reviews, of which two thirds were written in the 1960s; Bosley Crowther published 34 reviews in the 1950s (one third) and 1960s (two thirds); and Roger Greenspun published 26 reviews, all bar one during the 1970s.[93] The genre preferences of these four critics (Thompson, Crowther, Greenspun and Weiler) furthermore reveal that they reviewed almost equal shares of *jidai-geki* and *gendai-geki* films, with the exception of Bosley

Crowther who reviewed only 12 contemporary dramas, but 21 period dramas (and one science-fiction film) during his active years.

Contrary to the reviews in the *New York Times*, the reviews in *Variety* cannot be said to reflect the American scene for Japanese film at all during the 1950s, until 1975, even though the periodical published no less than 219 relevant reviews during this time period. The reason for their near invalidity within the frames of this study is that *Variety*'s two main contributors did not work in the United States, wich means that their reviews in the journal did not reflect on the factual screening of Japanese film in the country, but on Japanese film product as such. The most prolific contributor was Gene 'Mosk' Moskowitz, who lived and worked in Paris. He wrote a steady stream of at least 73 reviews of Japanese films between 1951 (one) and 1975 (two) – nine at the most, in 1974. The other main contributor, using the signature 'Chie', is identical with Donald Richie who published at least 43 reviews in *Variety* between 1966 and 1969(!). These reviews appeared with an almost perfect monthly coherence with those published in *The Japan Times* during these years. Below is an excerpt of Donald Richie's review of *Operation Negligée/Tsuyomushi onna no yowamushi otoko* (1968) by Shindo Kaneto as it appeared in *The Japan Times* on July 7, 1968*:*

> Director Kaneto Shindo, best known abroad for 'The Island', has made an untypical comedy. […] [A mother and daughter] strike gold. They find a farmer (Hideo Kanze) simple beyond the dreams of avarice, and the two proceed to fleece him. They almost succeed, but the farmer has friends and a strong mama and our heroines barely escape – lying, cheating, false to the core, but somehow loveable. […] They are pretty funny though, sometimes, and Shindo has a very sharp eye for foibles; the hideously pretentious cabaret, the tired and sweating hostesses, the fierce obtuseness of the customers, the pathetic ritual of people trying to buy a good time – all of this makes the film worth seeing.[94]

An identical review of *Operation Negligee*, signed '*Chie.*', appeared in *Variety* on July 24, 1968. [95] I have been able to match reviews by 'Donald Richie' and *'Chie'* on at least 24 additional occasions, and I therefore claim that the signature '*Chie.*' and Donald Richie are the same person, although my assumption has yet to be finally confirmed. [96]

Apart from the dominant participation of Moskowitz and Richie, I have found 33 other signatures among the reviewers of Japanese film for *Variety*. That is far more than in any other newspaper or journal referred to in this text, and says a little about the lack of continuity among all bar two of the contributors. Among the more active were 'Hawk' who signed eleven reviews, and 'Robe' with nine and 'Lars' with seven. Fourteen of the signatures reviewed only one film each, eight reviewed only two films, and so on. The question is if such a multitude of 'reviewers' can be said to also reflect a certain attitude towards Japanese film on behalf of *Variety* itself. With reference to the type of magazine

that *Variety* represents (a trade journal), and considering the high amount of anonymous critics writing only one 'review', a critical evaluation of these so called reviews seems to place them in the vicinity of product placement, rather than critical reception. I also suggest that the reviews unveil various general assumptions surrounding the American exhibition and distribution of Japanese film at this time. My argument is based on two parameters; the first being the average length of each 'review', the second referring to its general tone, and use of vocabulary. My calculation of the average length of the 'reviews' in *Variety* is based on line count, which is possible since nearly all the reviews are set within the same column width and use the same size of typeface. An examination of the 219 reviews I have collected suggested that roughly 63.5 % of these take up between 20 and 60 lines. Only 13%, or 29 'reviews' take up more than 80 lines, out of which four (4) took up more than 120 lines. Most of the long 'reviews' were written by 'Chie' (15) and 'Mosk' (9), which have already been disqualified for reasons mentioned above. I therefore propose that the remaining two thirds of the 'reviews' represent the general tone and use of vocabulary in *Variety* at the time. They also give the reader an idea of *Variety*'s attitude towards the film medium in general, which seems to be more concerned with the film product as such, than anything else:

> A sudsy star-crossed lovers' effort, partly redeemed by expert *widescreen color lensing* of Tokyo, Kyoto, Taiwan and Bangkok. Story has young medical student (Yuzo Kayama, co-star of Kurosawa's 'Red Beard') meet up with Thai girl (Hong Kong actress Chang Mei-yoo), with love-affair complication ensuing from Japanese girl-he-left behind and Thai starlet Praprapon Pureem.
> *Story is transparent, with plot lines leading nowhere* and Bangkok does not come on the screen at all until after an hour of viewing time. *No art-house bids* here, and *nothing for the neighbourhood houses*, *ethnic theatres* seem the only bet. One more in the long and sad decline of Yasuki Chiba, once one of Japan's most promising directors, whose excellent 1957 'Shitamachi' (Downtown) has had numerous American and European showings. 'Nald.'[97]

The signature 'Nald''s product placement of Chiba Yasuki's film *Night in Bankok* consisted mainly of its possible screening venues. 'Nald's' remark that only the 'ethnic theatres' seem probable, seems to confirm my above assumptions in connection with the exhibition of Japanese film on the American West coast.

> Exquisitely mounted pic looks *too Oriental in style and unfoldment to make for U.S. chances* except in *special situations. With the interest in Jap films now prevailing in arty circles, this might be worth a try. A cool, classical style* depicts the fatal love of worker and the wife of his employer in a *strictly codified and feudal* 17th century Japan. The illicit love affair leads to their deaths, but not before they realize that it is better to die for love than live without it. Director Kenji Mizoguchi has given this an eyefilling mounting and achieved the willing suspension of disbelief and *unfamiliarity with strange customs* in his careful workmanship. *Black and white lensing is superb in graduations and emphasis. Thesping is topflight.* An *offbeater*

> which would need extremely *subtle handling* because of its *inflexible Eastern approach* and lack of concession. This would seem *too slow* to most Western audiences. 'Mosk.'[98]

Undoubtedly 'Mosk's' allusion to 'special situations' above also referred to screenings in ethnic theatres. On the other hand, his recommendation on art house screening should be seen in the light of the film's genre and its director, *Tale of Chikamatsu* is a period drama by Mizoguchi Kenji.

> Toho's 'The Night of the Seagull' doesn't quite make it as U.S. emerges from the Universal-Youth. A *slow brooding pace that is traditional for Oriental drama* but *boring for Western audiences* and *unsatisfying story irresolution* will severely limit 'Seagull' for the U.S. play-off. However, the film offers a fascinating view of the modern seaside youth of Japan, caught between the old tradition and a frenetic style of mod-rock, a sort of 'Kabuki Beach Party'. *Equally fascinating*, and more *exploitable*, are the nude swimming and love making sequences starring Mie Hama. [Plot description]
> *The Eastmancolor process used has a dull greenish cast that should be corrected.* 'Rick.'[99]

The effort at product placement is rather obvious in the penultimate sentence of 'Rick's' contribution to *Variety*'s film coverage. So is obviously also his lack of knowledge of Japanese film history in the shape of youth films of the late 1950s. Judging from the fact that *The Night of the Seagull* does not seem to have been screened in either of the three countries involved in this study, the 'nude swimming and love making sequences' were apparently not teasing enough for the distributors to bite. 'Rick's' biased remarks on the film's 'slow brooding pace that is traditional for Oriental drama but boring for Western audiences and unsatisfying story irresolution' recurred in most reviews of Japanese film product in *Variety* and testifies to a prevailing Orientalist discourse among its 'critics'.

The professed critical opinions expressed in these 'reviews' are thus limited to explicit marketing placement by way of the habitual branding vocabulary, which basically matches *Variety*'s readership. This assumption is further confirmed by Donald Richie's reviews for *The Japan Times*, which together with those by Mary Evans were normally written in a literary style which make them outstanding among Westerners' reviews of Japanese films. All references to literary and/or cultural Japanese specifics were subsequently cut from Richie's reviews, when published in *Variety*:

> A kimonoed lady gets felt-up on a crowded train and the offender follows her to a deserted spot. Surrendering to his importunities, she turns, removes her eye patch and –wham! – one dead sex offender.
> In another part of the city mad scientist Hideo Amamoto, secure in his l'art nouveau private asylum, is spouting away in German, remembering the good old days when Hitler was in power and the world's largest diamond was sewn into the body of an 8

> year-old Japanese boy in order to smuggle it out of the country. He now has one of the German guards in his power and is torturing him. Slash, slash, sizzle, sizzle!
> In Shinjuku, a near-sighted professor with a bad case of athlete's foot (Tatsuya Nakadai) is approached by an agent for the Committee for Population Control, a group which has a sound and simple solution in mind; kill more people. Done in by the toppling bust of the professor's dead but revered mother, the agent's place is promptly filled by another, curvy Reiko Dan, whose idea of proselytization is to climb naked into the professor's bed and invite him to inspect the documents. 'Where do I, ah, sign?' asks the man of letters, lowering himself.
> All of this and more, much more, make up one of Japan's furthest out comedies, an occasionally wild and usually amusing spoof-piece the title of which, 'Satsujinkyo Jidai', might be rendered 'The Age of Assassins', and which you will now find playing at your neighbourhood Toho theater.
> Based on the novel 'Uetaisan' by Michio Tsuzuku, the script is a hokey mixture concocted by Ei Ogawa, Tadaki Yamazaki, and director Kihachi Okamoto (known heretofore as a maker of actions pix, 'Samurai Assassin' among them), which camps up the whole Japanese adventure-genre and which, at its best, is a wildly improbably collision between 'The Manchurian Candidate' and 'The Suicide Club'.[100]
> The idea is that the mad professor, though interested in solving the overpopulation problems, is really hot for the diamond and that the dim-witted professor is really the little Japanische Jugend that went to Hitler's Berlin at the age of 8.
> This leads to a wild chase around Mount Fuji, in which the Self-Defence Corps plays a thorough confusing role, a wholesale bombardment.[101]

The original review in *The Japan Times* however also held the three following paragraphs:

> The unmasking of all the villains and the abnegation of the hero follows.
> At its satiric best, this picture is almost the equal of those marvellous early comedies of Kon Ichikawa where problems were punctured and sacred cows slaughtered. The kind of people that ought to be killed are shown. For example, in a sustained bar scene which manages to collect all of the useless and unlovely types that clutter all countries.
> Actors (particularly of the mannered Tatsuya Nakadai variety) are sent up by such contrivances as having them play directly into the camera. And there is a wonderfully funny bit in the old cheap Shintoho style where the femme fatale, all high-heeled boots, black-leather, bangs and whips, unintentionally hurtles to her death because, trying to stomp on the knuckles of the professor's side-kick (Hideo Tsunazuka) while he is hanging from a 10-story high window, she forgets that he can see up her skirt. Remembering, she makes one gesture of modesty, and this is enough to topple her right down and into the Ginza.
> There are things the matter with the film: an ending that is far too ambivalent; Nakadai, who is never with it, and a tendency to let plot take over from time to time. Nonetheless this widescreen black and white, hour and 39 minutes picture is one of the funniest comedies to come out of Japan in recent years.[102]

It could well be argued that the last paragraphs actually held the main critical evaluation of the film, by identifying its genre (satire), an unsatisfactory ending, directorial whims (so called 'contrivances'), comparison to the contemporary Japanese film scene (Ichikawa Kon's films), etc. In coherence with its marketing profile, *Variety* however cut these paragraphs, and left only the plot summary for the reader. It is therefore clear that the large

number of 'strategic' reviews of Japanese film in *Variety*, reduces it to a less important contributor to this study's reflections on the critical reception of Japanese film in the West. Instead, *Variety*'s impact should be coupled more generally with the marketing of Japanese film product, targeted at Western countries.

### **4.4** *CASE STUDY:* THE WESTERN CRITICAL RECEPTION OF FIVE JAPANESE FILMS

This case study explores the difference in Western critical reception of Japanese films. In order to display the multitude of aspects that prevailed I have picked out five films which display interesting divergences in terms of for example genre adaptation. They were exhibited in all countries involved in this study, and reviewed accordingly, which make them allegible for this case study.

Among the film genres scrutinized by Isolde Standish[103] is the *chambara* film, of which she writes that it developed a sub-genre which the Japanese called *zankoku jidai-geki* or cruel *jidai-geki* in the early 1960s. She mentions Kurosawa Akira's films *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro* as principal forerunners of this new sub-genre, which was presently copied by both Japanese and Western directors. According to Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, the unique individuality of the protagonists as well as the charicatured presentation of other plot characters were absent in the ensuing cruel *jidai-geki* film,[104] which is why Kurosawa's two films are now mainly considered as the forerunners of this sub-genre.

I have looked at the critical reception as well as the Japanese promotion of *Sanjuro* to see if this initial change of the existing genre's prerequisites was at all acknowledged by the film critics at the time of its release, and whether or not it had become acknowledged by the time of *Sanjuro*'s release in France and Great Britain nearly ten years later.

Kurosawa's film was nationally reviewed by Mary Evans,[105] after having been released in Japan on New Year's Day 1961. Evans recognized its new approach to the *chambara* genre already in the first paragraph by describing the film as 'a period adventure film, extremely entertaining on its own level but particularly clever as a comment on the ordinary chambara film and an essay into the possibilities of this highly conventionalized and usually very dull form.' The rest of her review is then based on this notion of a new approach to the film genre, and Evans informed the reader how she read the film as well as how she evaluated the actors' performances, script and make-up. Kurosawa's redesigning of the chambara film genre was thus fully acknowledged by Mary Evans.

Toho went on to market *Sanjuro* internationally in the April issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly*,[106] by presenting a completely neutral plot description without any information at all as to the director's new approach to the film genre itself. The publicity stills that were

published are of a conventional character and do not convey any information of the film's form, such as it having been filmed in black and white.

The technical information given in *Variety*'s 'review' of the film stated that Toho released *Sanjuro*'s at one of its own cinemas in Los Angeles in June 1962 and described Mifune Toshiro's character as 'compellingly human though absolutely heroic'. In his next sentence, 'Tube' however promptly labelled *Sanjuro* as an art film of primarily ethnical interest, whereby he severely limited the film's prospects on the American screens; 'The film appears certain to be a big favorite with Japanese audiences, and is exciting and entertaining enough to please most art house browsers.' Having thus curtailed the Japanese film, did not prevent 'Tube' from opining that 'It is not inconceivable that, just as 'Seven Samurai' led to 'The Magnificent 7', 'Sanjuro' would also lend itself to translation into the Yankee western idiom. At any rate, it is certainly worth the attention of entertaining Hollywood screen producers on the prowl for likely action material.'[107]

S*anjuro* was not screened in New York until in May 1963, again at Toho's own cinema on Broadway. Bosley Crowther began the first sentence of his review with a warning that the audience was 'due for an interesting surprise' and so informed the reader that he had seen something different.[108] Crowther was however not capable of pinpointing Kurosawa's new form of the *chambara* film genre in detail, but concluded that 'This is a new thing for Kurosawa, this making almost a joke of the heroic personality and the conventional conflicts in a samurai film.'

When *Sanjuro* opened in Europe a good ten years after its release in Japan, the British film scholar Nigel Andrews largely confined himself to writing a plot description and commenting on the film's form, such as it being enacted in a very restricted setting, Kurosawa's use of the wipe as narrative punctuation, etc. He did however note 'a hint of abdication in [the samurai's] world-weary walk, as he shambles off up the road with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders, [which] suggests Kurosawa's intention of wrapping up both this film and its predecessor *Yojimbo* on a note of mellow downbeat finality'. This is all Andrews had to say about Kurosawa's new approach to the *chambara* film genre in *Sanjuro*. In view of the already existing reviews of the film, and considering the fact that Donald Richie's monograph on Kurosawa Akira's films had appeared in 1965, in which he referred to *Sanjuro* as a satire and a film of '*chambara*-corrupted form',[109] it would seem that Andrews still did not take this opportunity to address the interesting issue of the film's genre in his text for the *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

When released in France in June, 1972, *Sanjuro* was described by Dominique Maillet as being 'innovative from the point of view of its Japanese context'[110] by which he meant

that Kurosawa 'told his story with humour, which he has never done before'.[111] Maillet also wrote that:

> In fact, Sanjuro, is not altogether identical with his famous predecessors despite their similar professions. Although he is respectful of the elderly, he seems more detached from worldly goods, more of a vagabond one could say, often preoccupied with his need to sleep or displaying a non-existing need to concentrate and think, […].[112]

It is impossible to say whether or not Maillet was aware of *Sanjuro* as an anti-hero, since he did not approach the issue of film genre in his review of the film.

Kurosawa Akira's *High And Low* is a forthright thriller which was reviewed by Mary Evans in *The Japan Times* on the day of its release in Japan. Defining it as a 'superb cops-and-robbers film' provided it had been directed by someone else in the very first sentence of the review, Evans came to the conclusion that it was a 'curiously unsatisfying film [where] 'the predominant message is one of comprising excitement and suspense'.[113] One of the main reasons for her lack of enthusiasm was Kurosawa's disposition of the film in two halves, which manifested itself through the almost total absence of Mifune Toshiro in the latter. Continuously making correct and interesting remarks on the film's plot, the most fascinating fact about Evans' review remains her exclusion of the fact that Kurosawa's film was based on an American crime thriller entitled 'King's Ransom' by Ed McBain, a fact which Kurosawa had made public by naming the protagonist (Mifune Toshiro's character) Kingo Gondo. Had Evans acknowledged this fact, and read the book, she may have commented on Kurosawa's transposition of this American crime story on to a modernistic, Westernized Japanese setting, and the consequences of such a transposition. Forty years later, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto addressed the issue of nation and sentiment in relation to *High and Low*, but he unfortunately repeated Evans' mistake of not including the influence that Ed McBain's book had imposed on the film's script.[114]

*High and Low* was marketed in the West through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* and the plot summation was factual and straight forward, although it also refrained from mentioning the American influence on the film. Like Evans' review, the presentation in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* ends when Mifune leaves the picture.[115] On the other hand, when the 'review' in the American trade journal *Variety* appeared in connection with the film's screening at the Venice film festival in September 1963, it stated the film's origin in the very first sentence: 'Kurosawa has taken Ed McBain's 'King's Ransom' and adapted it to a Japanese setting, with the probable addition of a social angle […]'.[116] The signature 'Hawk' did not believe it had any prospects on the American market, writing that 'A tighter film, concentrating and

balancing police activity and human conflicts would have given this added distinction in arty circles. As is, it's a finely tooled item, made by a master craftsman.'[117]

Toho went on to release *High and Low* at its own theatre in New York in November 1963 and Howard Thompson included the information on Ed McBain in his review, which began:

> Let's give fervent thanks for 'High and Low', one of the best detective thrillers ever filmed, arriving yesterday at the Toho Cinema. Where from? Japan, of all places, and from the devastating hand of that great director, Akira Kurosawa. Here is one import – for suspense fans and students of moviecraft – that simply must be seen.[118]

With Harold Hart's advice in mind regarding the necessity for the Japanese film industry to use Western film scripts and actors if they really wanted to succeed in the West (see Chapter Two), it is not hard to guess the reason why Thompson's review stands out as the most positive ever of a Japanese film in American media. Interestingly, Thompson praises both film halves, calling Kurosawa's scope of 'a crackling newspaper, the stillness of a coastal villa, a small boy's drawing and Yokohama's lower depths 'a brilliantly spangled kaleidoscope', and surprisingly ends up with; 'As the suave chief inspector, Mr. Nakadai almost steals the show. Almost. It belongs, of course, to the man who made it [Kurosawa].'[119]

*High and Low* was not released in Great Britain until in 1967 and gave 'D.W.' reason to put Kurosawa down as an eclectic, most of all inspired by Dostoyevsky. According to D.W:

> […] the best and most absorbing part of the film is the central section, tracing with an engaging thoroughness the intricate mechanics of the search and destroy operation launched by the police. The long scene at the police headquarters, as pairs of detectives leap up to deliver their progress reports, mopping their brows in the heat, is both funny and enthralling. Here, and in the scene on the train with the detectives scuttling along the corridors and squatting at the windows to take their photographs, Kurosawa is in full control, keeping his actors on the move with a cunning variation of pace.' [120]

Unfortunately Kurosawa's *Stray Dog* was not released in Great Britain during the time frame of this study, or DW would have been able to connect the above scenes to the search for the lost gun in the earlier film. *Stray Dog* was not screened at the National Film Theatre until in 1970, in connection with its Kurosawa series.

As for the French release of *High and Low*, I have found that it was in fact reviewed twice in *La Saison Cinématographique*; once in connection with its very first screening in France, at the film festival in Poitiers in 1969, and then again in connection with its commercial release in 1975. During this time, *La Saison Cinématographique* had replaced the term 'Evaluation' ('Valeur') with the less judgemental term 'Analysis' ('Analyse') in

their film reviews, although this had little impact on the fate of *High and Low* in France. In the first review, the unidentified signature 'J.P.B.' considered the complementary image of the protagonists as the most important feature of the film, since they were both 'driven by power'[121]. 'J.P.B.' went on to explain that:

> Although Takeuchi's hatred and contempt for others lead to his condemnation, while Gondo, a superhero in line with all Kurosawa's protagonists of late, gains his superiority not from his fortune or professional success, but from a moral power which allows him to conquer his losses as well, at the same time as it condemns him to remain solitary and intolerable to others.[122]

This analysis did however not prevent 'J.P.B.' from concluding that Kurosawa's films at the time were all focused on the same subject, that of 'the conceited ethics of a superhero'.[123]

When *High and Low* was re-released for commercial exhibition in 1975, Catherine Sumani concluded that:

> *High and Low* is certainly not among Akira Kurosawa's more important films, but it's an interesting work recognizing the originality of a style which mixes the theatrical and the cinematographic techniques; going from the lengthy moral drama set in Gondo's own flat, to the quickly paced and suspenseful police inquiry, or the fresco of the lower depths of Yokohama.[124]

Sumani evidently chose to focus on the overall impression of *High and Low* by relating it to Kurosawa's style and works in general in her conclusion, and thus made it quite clear that she was not all that impressed with it. Nevertheless, Sumani remains the only critic who actually commented on Gondo's new life style after the drama was over, when she wrote; 'Between the heaven of riches and the hell of poverty, the film uncovers and brings forth a third way, which Gondo's discovers little by little. […] he enters the middle road of small businesses, in full respect of traditional values.'[125] Without going into further details, Sumani thus implicitly acknowledged the political and socio-cultural implications at the heart of Kurosawa's film, although it's hard to say if she was fully aware of it.

Another traditional Japanese film genre is the horror film (*kaidan eiga*) among which David Desser later included those that had innovated the genre in his book on the Japanese new wave film. He thus specified Shindo Kaneto's *The Hole* aka *Devil Woman/Onibaba* (1964) as an 'atmospheric horror film', set in the 17th century, focusing on 'the innocent victims of the war, especially women' with a 'supernatural element' involved.[126] The innovative take on the genre in this case sprang from Shindo's consistent 'feminisuto' (feminist) rendering of the female protagonists which, according to Desser, indicated that 'women cling to life and survive by asserting their sexual essences that women, more than men, can cope with times of terror'.[127] These characteristics, on the other hand, turned the woman into a horrific

figure 'best expressed as a 'spider woman', according to Desser, who described this figure as a mix of feminine psychology and eroticism.[128]

In her review of *Onibaba* at the time, Mary Evans labelled the film 'a moralistic fable' in the first paragraph, but continued 'as fable it is bizarre and all too unforgettable; as moral it leaves one a little confused'.[129] After a short plot description, Evans concludes her review with a comment on the

> general, moralistic weeding out of the characters at the end – not that one had expected anything else. […] Yet one cares very much about the film, because it is stunningly photographed, and because it creates so consistent and horrifying a world.[130]

It would thus seem that she could not or would not refer to *Onibaba* as a horror film, nor did she refer to Shindo Kaneto as a new wave director. Instead she called him an 'independent' director with 'his own mentality and a cinematically strong way of speaking his mind', without any further comment as to how this might affect the film's structure.[131]

*Onibaba* was marketed in the West through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* a few months later. Described in few words, the short text was instead accompanied by two publicity stills which perfectly reflected the evil character of the young girl's (the spider woman's) mother-in-law.[132] I therefore suggest that this marketing effort made the film's genre (horror film) perfectly explicit to the reader for the first time. Distributed by Toho, *Onibaba* then opened at Toho's New York cinema one month later according to A.H. Weiler's review. Weiler found that although Shindo's 'artistic integrity remains untarnished, his driven rustic principals are exotic, sometimes grotesque figures out of medieval Japan, to whom a Westerner finds it hard to relate'.[133] This critique was repeated a few paragraphs later, explaining that 'Mr. Shindo's symbolism, which undoubtedly is more of a treat to the Oriental than the Occidental eye and ear, may be oblique, but his approach to amour is direct.'[134] There is no mention of film genre, or Shindo Kaneto's new wave approach to film making. While Weiler's Orientalist attitude to Japanese cinema is not completely unexpected, the tendency towards self-Orientalization on behalf of the Japanese revealed by the information conveyed in the last sentence of Weiler's review, is all the more telling; 'Also on the program is 'The Ceramic Art of Japan', a 19-minute short subject in color narrated in English, that photographically and artistically lives up to its title.'[135]

It was almost a year before *Onibaba* was released in France in October 1965, under the French title *Les Tueuses* aka *The Killers*. Refusing an Orientalist approach similar to that of Weiler above, Guy Gauthier instead dispassionately uncloaked the self-Orientalizing quality of Shindo's film in one sentence:

> Kaneto Shindo tells a simple tale through a number of luxurious narrative devices which are sometimes too distracting, but the work remains constantly fascinating through its noise and passion, in spite of its allure, all too beautifully fabricated for our Western eyes.[136]

Gauthier was also quick to place the film generically by referring to it as 'a surprising story where eroticism is blended with horror'.[137]

This particular critical standpoint remains in focus in the newspaper reviews published during the exhibition of *Onibaba* in Paris. Gauthier's main argument was shared in part by the signature 'J.B.', who began his review by airing a similar suspicion towards Japanese self-Orientalization, writing that 'There exists a false Japanese exoticism, a false Japanese eroticism, a false Japanese brutality, which the Japanese film industry in Tokyo has begun to make massive use of.'[138] It goes without saying that 'J.B''s critical approach to the Japanese film industry in general, resulted in a particularly critical review of Shindo's film; 'Honestly speaking, I don't think one can spend a lot of time on the artistic gratifications or tarnished audacity which make up Kaneto Shindo's film.'[139] 'J.B.'s slating criticism did however not prevent him from a closing chauvinistic remark to the effect that 'A marvellous actrice plays the role of the little silly savage thirsting for love. She will be remembered.'[140] 'J.B.''s comment was in many ways typical of its time and place, but it certainly differed significantly from the feminist aspect which Desser claimed that Shindo wanted to enforce through his female protagonists.

Like the other two French critics, Samuel Lachize expressed similar thoughts on why *Onibaba* had been exported to France; 'The falsely 'scandalizing' quality of *Onibaba* is certainly what seduced the French distributors. It's true that the sensuality is expressed with such brutality and frankness in the film, that it effaces all eroticism.'[141]

Among the more interesting reviews was one published by the signature 'G. Charensol' where the critic not only made the reader aware of the fact that Shindo was a disciple of Mizoguchi Kenji, more importantly Charensol applied the Japanese genre division in an attempt to place Shindo's film:

> The panoramas where nature seem to become part of the human passion imposes a rhythm which augments the beauty of a film situated by its theme among the *jidai-geki* – those that recall the old legends – but which belongs to the *gend[a]i-geki* genre through its mood.[142]

Ignoring the spelling mistake made by Charensol, his (?) review clearly attests to a critical reflection based on factual knowledge as well as an intuitive attempt to characterize something new.

It was another ten months before *Onibaba* was finally released in Great Britain and Tom Milne's dismissive review of it was based on his assumption that Shindo Kaneto's films had 'a tendency to fall apart if examined too closely'.[143] In the next sentence he graciously acknowledged that even so, '*Onibaba* is at least amusing in its extravagance […] and Kiyomi Kuroda's fine photography makes the most of the bizarre setting […]'.[144] Milne's text does not go beyond the film plot itself, and his refusal to take the film seriously hindered a proper contextualisation of its genre, as well as the actual purpose of its protagonists. From this point of view, Tom Milne appears less familiar with the Japanese cinema than his French colleagues, especially since their dismissal of Shindo's film was based on a general lack of confidence for the Japanese film industry, due to its persistent effort at self-Orientalization vis-à-vis the West. The contents of my thesis finally support their stance. From this point of view, we can now see that Milne's dismissive attitude towards Shindo's film backfires onto his own credibility as a film critic.

Further according to David Desser both Hani Susumi's *Inferno of First Love* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* by Oshima Nagisa should be placed among the Japanese new wave films,[145] and although Donald Richie never mentioned the genre in his reviews of the films in *The Japan Times*, the formal characteristics he gave for *Inferno of First Love* partly mirrored those of the new wave:

> […]much freer, more spontaneous-appearing […] it cuts freely between past and present, unconcerned with the artificialities of motivation and characterization, attempting to show in its purest form the theme […] of innocence encountering experience.[146]

A slightly censured version of the same review was published in *Variety* a few days later, now signed *'Chie.'*.[147] The cut paragraphs seem to have been consistent with the film sequences that were later censured in the version of the film which should have been screened at the Cannes film festival in May 1968, and we can see from the technical information that the film was originally 108 minutes long.[148] In his review of *Inferno of First Love* well over a year later, Roger Greenspun explained that the reason why this 'simple story' didn't become an 'erotic success story' was that the film had 'lost some of its plot when 20 minutes were cut from the running time of the American version', which was confirmed by the technical information, giving the running time of *Inferno of First Love* to 87 minutes.[149] I thus assume that the version screened in the United States was identical with the version that was to have been screened at the Cannes film festival, which indicates that Greenspun may have had access to Richie's original review of the film, given his explanation of its lack of success in the West. In terms of locale, Greenspun also informed

us that the film was screened at a 'very special kind of exploitation theater' in New York, lamenting the fact that Hani's film was 'another good movie all decked out to look wicked' in connection with its commercial screening in the city.[150] This particular comment confirms the assumptions I have made in adjacent case studies in this text, where I argue that the diverse impacts of the so called 'shared discourses' in play regarding the promotion of Japanese cinema in the West, in fact caused a limited interest in the films per se (Chapter Five), as did the additional impact of the exhibition locale (Chapter Four).

If Roger Greenspun found *Inferno of First Love* interesting but frustrating, the French film censure found it a more than wanting new wave film:

> 'Inferno of First Love' surprises with its swarming character, a non-linear narrative, [and] a very conscious use of a thousand different ways of framing and montage, in the manner of Eisenstein. All in service of an obsession which remains in focus of this singular film: how far can you get by lying to yourself?[151]

Most of the French newspapers found Hani's film equally wanting and some of the reviews contained chosen paragraphs from the statements from the French censors, such as Louis Marcorelles' for *Le Monde* which ended with the above paragraph.[152] We must thus contend that the French critical reception of Hani Susumi's *Inferno of First Love* was quite unsatisfactory and remained unaffected by the fact that the film was a prestigious production by the Japanese Art Theatre Guild and had been nominated for the Golden Bear in Berlin in 1968. I have also noted that Donald Richie's published reviews did not have any impact at all on the film's exhibition outside Japan.

Nagisa Oshima's film *The Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* tells the reverse story of critical reception in that it was seriously *mocked* by Donald Richie in his review of it:

> Swinging Shinjuku is the place, man, like where it's happening, like right now. There's this Juro Kara acting-cat who's running crazy, and there's this artist character, Tadanori Yoko who's heisting books from Kinokuniya, and this very cool chick, Rie Yokoyama, who wears no panties, catches him and takes him up to President Shigekazu Tanabe who may be over 30 but who's no square, and Yoko and Rie make out all right but he's using this crazy dildo effect that he swiped from sex-sensei Tetsu Takahashi, and then at the end they all sort of mess it around and there's this gorgeous action stuff on the Shinjuku student riot, man, like it's for real, like it's really happening right now.
>
> It's a real gas because this director cat, Nagisa Oshima, doesn't fuss around with plot or story, or even focus, half the time, but tells it real, like it is, with long, long, long crazy stuff all hand-held so you can't even tell what you're looking at and it's real cool. And he's got this crazy sex scene, all of his actors just sitting around talking about sex for about half an hour, and it's real cool, just a bunch of actors digging each other and not finishing their sentences, all in the dark so you don't have to look at anything, and it's the greatest.[153]

Richie's certainly is a masterful review, but it also begs many questions, especially since it does contain a few poignant instances of criticism against not only both the director and the film within its mood-creating jargon, but more importantly, against the Japanese new wave film genre itself. In addition to these points of criticism, Richie thus based the textual character of his review on imitation of a certain style, which could be related to both the anti-literary attitude and film style of the younger generation in the late 1960s. *'Mosk'*s review of *The Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* in *Variety* was more neutral but he estimated that it had rather limited possibilities in the West:

> Difficult to describe, and full of symbols, pic still exerts a fascination in its outspokenness and iconoclasm. Too expletive and sphinxlike, in all the questions it poses about individual and sexual liberty, for more general or art situations abroad but it is worthy for specialized, cinematheque and university outlets.[154]

Like 'Mosk', none of the Western critics seem to have related *The Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* to the Japanese new wave film genre. *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* was released in Great Britain already in November 1969 but Tom Milne's exposé went no further than the film text itself, giving an account of its contents through comparative analysis with certain Western films or film makers. Contrary to Richie, however, Milne took Oshima seriously, and was susceptible to the possible irony involved in his films:

> […] *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* ultimately leaves one with a tantalizing question-mark as to whether Oshima takes the modern revolutionary movement seriously, or whether he finds it a source of delicious irony.[155]

His final judgement of the film still indicates a certain resignation towards it:

> […] *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* is often quite simply stunning to look at. In particular in the bookshop scenes – Kafka through Bressonian eyes – and the nocturnal shots of the Tokyo streets culminating in the hauntingly surrealist vision of the hero and heroine, each holding an end of the waist-band of an artificial penis, wandering along the tramlines in a city décor which echoes Cocteau's *zone*, 'a no man's land between life and death'.[156]

Although *The Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* was screened at the San Francisco Film Festival in 1969, it took until 1973 before the film was commercially released (although unclassified) in New York. Roger Greenspun began his review in the *New York Times* by placing Oshima in the Japanese cinematic landscape, referring to his reputation in 'film histories' as 'among the most important younger Japanese directors, regularly compared to Jean-Luc Godard, his near contemporary and an obvious influence on his style.'[157] As far as Greenspun was concerned, he, however, found Oshima 'firmly and not too appealingly himself', offering the following explanation:

> Like the more recent Godard, Oshima's is a highly didactic cinema. But unlike Godard, it seems imprecise – and possibly less concerned with the quality of its

> thought than the momentary effectiveness of its images. The result is a high-powered sterility in the midst of much energetic busyness.[158]

*The Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* was not released in France within the time frame of this study. From a more general point of view, it may be worth considering why almost no films belonging to the Japanese new wave film genre were released in France at this time.

This is a limited case study in that it concerns the Western reception of only five Japanese films between 1961 and 1973. On the other hand, these five films now belong to the Western canon of Japanese cinema and thus belong among its 'key' films. A look at their provenance before commercial exhibition in Western countries informs us that *High and Low* was screened at the Venice film festival in 1963 and *Diary of Shinjuku Thief* at the San Francisco film festival in 1969. *Inferno of First Love* had been selected for screening at Cannes film festival in 1968, but the effect of such a screening was never given the opportunity to 'boost' the film's breakthrough in the West, since the festival was closed after only one day and the screening never took place. *Sanjuro*'s and *Onibaba*'s trajectories in the West were surprisingly smooth considering that they were not given this type of kick start. A simple explanation for the success of the former is its well-known director, and *Onibaba*'s exotic rawness probably explains why this film was so quickly picked up by Western distributors. These varying generic credentials resulted in the same type of Western reception in that they were all received as art films. This tradition had already been established concerning film festival offerings and given the auteur status of Kurosawa Akira *Sanjuro* would still be an interesting item for the West. The case study on locale in the previous chapter indicates that the combination of exoticism and explicit nudity and/or sexuality represented strong impetus for art house cinemas, an assumption which is confirmed by the case study in the next chapter. These circumstances allow us to presume that the eligibility and exhibition terms for the Japanese films above followed the traditional pattern regarding foreign films. So far so good.

The weak point seems to have been the Western reception, which was evidently hampered by limited knowledge, persisting critical patterns and unfinished debates. I have not found any indications that genre issues related to Japanese film were generally debated among Western critics within the time frame of my study, although there is frequent evidence of French mistrust of the product as such. This would seem to be a natural reaction considering the fact that early French critical reception clearly offered differing views on a still non-auteurist product. French critics also had an outstanding university in the French Cinémathèque which gave them ample opportunity to learn about the various expressions of Japanese cinema. Very few of the French critics thus put their dismay over Japanese film

product down to the nature of the (*jidai-geki*) genre as such, although it is clear from their criticism that they were keen to see a more varied selection of Japanese film product. For some reason, none of these indications however resulted in a debate targeted especially at genre issues in France, nor in the other two countries. We already know that the British critics were aware that their knowledge of Japanese cinema remained limited for various reasons, and this fact may have resulted in a marginal interest in genre issues related to Japanese film.

My reading of the critical substance of the material in this case study however shows that the persistence of certain critical patterns still remained the paramount explanation for the non-existence of genre debate at the time. Most Western patterns of film criticism were obviously based on auteurism from the mid-50s until the late 1960s, which allowed for a focus on the film's visual elements before its narrative. Japanese film product was reviewed according to the same parameters as Western film product already from the beginning of its postwar exhibition in the West. The question is if it would have advanced our knowledge of this film product, had it been reviewed differently.

The nature of traditional review journalism has in fact seldom found any reason to debate genre issues. These debates have habitually been confined to essays related to Western film product, and published in film periodicals. This assumption would seem to be confirmed by this case study since it concerns five Japanese film which all presented variations on already existing Japanese film genres, a fact which was generally ignored by the overseas critics. It also seems clear that since it was the external production and/or exhibition credentials which secured their exhibition in art house cinemas in the West, which subsequently prompted their Western link to art film. I therefore conclude that the 'art film' label put a stop to any other genre definition, as well as precluded any debate on the film's generic contents.

### **4.5** SUMMARY

It appears that the critical discourses in the three different Western countries above towards Japanese cinema were in fact largely determined by a critical stance for or against certain Orientalist driven parameters. This is made plain when considering which aesthetic approaches were generally represented by the periodicals in question, such as the vastly different opinions on auteurism represented by *Movie* and *Films and Filming*. We have also seen that certain dossiers published by *Cahiers du cinéma* reappeared in almost identical form in other auteur driven periodicals shortly after. There is also the interesting case of *Variety*, which was so clearly directed towards the marketing of a product by way of an

Orientalist discourse, rather than taking a serious interest in a national cinema. The key evidence rests in the fact that no one ever discussed any other Japanese directors, film genres or film works than those already introduced by Anderson and Richie. It thus remains remarkable that from a general point of view, the majority of Western journalists/critics that reviewed Japanese cinema between 1950 and 1975 displayed little or no specialist knowledge of the Japanese film industry or its history in their reviews. It seems clear that, contrary to Donald Richie and Mary Evans, they did not feel that they had a responsibility to encourage the readers to go see Japanese film.

In summing up the quality of the Western critical reception of Japanese film as it has emerged from the material in this chapter, I find that the aesthetic approach taken by the Western critics remains one of its most decisive parameters. It seems clear that this approach had generally remained in a prewar phase, and was thus based on the fierce nationalistic symbols that are connected to Japanese fiction films of the 1930s and early 1940s. *Rashomon* being awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, seems to have only confirmed this aesthetic approach and allowed Western critics to maintain a mental landscape which belonged to historical times, reflected in the Japanese *jidai-geki* film genre. The Western critics thus remained unconnected to new developments within postwar Japanese society and judging from their overall aesthetic approach were never concerned with the possibility that the presentation of a new national cinema also implied a need for specialist knowledge, or may involve a pedagogical mission. The most interesting consequence of their stale critical approach however revolves around the Western review form itself. The material in this chapter clearly indicates that the Western critics treated Japanese film product as if it were produced by a Western film industry and this attitude hardly changed between 1950 and 1975. I have therefore focused on the film reviews by Mary Evans and Donald Richie in *The Japan Times* in order that they create a contrast to the reception performed by Western film critics within the time frame of this study. By contrasting the contents of these film reviews we become aware of the difference in knowledge and pedagogical ambition between the reviews published in Japan and in the West. Whereas both Evans and Richie discuss the films' topics or genres at length, including its director's scripts and photography; Western critical reception never went further than reciting the film plot. This attitude remains in place during the entire time frame of this study, despite changes in personnel and the fact that the books published by writers such as Donald Richie, Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris, or Joan Mellen were reviewed in most of the periodicals and newspapers involved with the critical reception of Japanese film.

My point is that this lack of development within the Western critical reception per se indicates that we must ask whether there was ever a serious critical commitment involved in the particular reception of Japanese cinema. I also suggest that this lack of commitment was based on racism and expressed within an Orientalist discourse through which the critics complained about the films' overly complicated plots, their slow pacing, overacting, and strange customs. Never once have I read any complaint about the technical aspects that informed the films.

We have also seen that auteurism constituted the dominating set of aesthetics in the critical reception of this particular national cinema. Just like the film critics in France or Great Britain, the American journalists wrote the longest texts on Japanese fiction films by auteurs like Kurosawa Akira, Ozu Yasujiro, Mizoguchi Kenji and Ichikawa Kon. It would thus seem that the *politique des auteurs* has dominated the formal approach of critical reception in the West. For this very reason it is important to pay attention to the early (post 1951) French critical essays addressing Japanese film, including those published in *Cahiers du cinéma* itself, in order to disclose the character of the discourse that existed *before* the emergence of auteurism. For the same reason we must also re-evaluate such special editions as *Cinéma 55*, since the editors of this particular review used Japanese sources for their presentation of the Japanese national cinema. Like in other cases of changed paradigms, we must ask ourselves if *Cinéma* edited its special issue on the Japanese national cinema irrespective of François Truffaut's pivotal article as an alternative to the *politique des auteurs*, or if it was the case that Truffaut's article simply had not yet started to influence the film critics. Considering how indescriminatingly Western film critics manifested their adherence to this doctrine, I argue that we must ultimately view *Cinéma 55* and *Films and Filming* as exponents of an alternative discourse on Japanese national cinema.

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[1] 'Enfin un film japonais érotique! On y assiste au viol d'un samourai par une vamp aux sens tendres. Cuisses, entrecuisses, peignoirs entrebaillés. Lecteurs, invitez vos amies à voir ces estampes japonaises.' *Cahiers du Cinéma,* 7.40 (November 1954), p. 59.

[2] Copies of the newspaper dating from July 1, 1956, are held at the Public Library in New York, and this holding, although incomplete, constitutes the source for my research on the newspaper's film reviews from said date, until December 31, 1975.

[3] These journalists were James (Jim) Henry, Don Kenny, Susan Lebovich, Carl Lucas, KM(?), Fumio Saisho, Itaro Shimizu and Sanshiro Toyowake.

[4] Cf for example Evans' reviews of [Women of Osaka]/*Onna no Saka*, *The Japan Times,* 22 June 1960, and *As a Wife, As a Woman/Tsuma to shite onna to shite, The Japan Times*, 8 June 1961; *My Daughter/Nusume to Watakushi*, *The Japan Times*, 5 April 1962; [Women Who are Wives]/*Tsuma toiuna no Onnatachi, The Japan Times*, 24 May 1963, *Mother/Haha, The Japan Times*, 8 November 1963.

[5] Richie's enthousiasm for these films is not to be slighted: '[…] A word about the scientists. These nicely, anxiety-ridden fables contain more men of science than all the major campuses combined. Monster strikes and 'sensei, sensei' – not 'help, help' – is what the populace screams. What, I wonder, does this mean King Kong, father of us all, managed to get along without even a doctor, while panty-

waist Gamera has to be eased into monsterhood by 32 (count 'em) scientists. […]' Donald Richie, 'Dai Kaiju Gamera', *The Japan Times*, 3 December 1965. Cf also '[…] Very large, he behaves with complete dignity, often showing a striking profile; very fierce, he is also capable of the finer sentiments, even sheds a few tears; very ugly, he is also amazingly talented – can walk, swim and fly. […]', Donald Richie, 'Gappa, the Triphibian Monster, Nikkatsu's New Creation Best Japanese Monster', *The Japan Times*, 2 April 1967.

[6] E.g. *Conduct Report on Dr Ishinaka/Ishinaka sensei gyojoki* (1950) by Naruse Mikio was reviewed in *The Japan Times* on 17 May 1963; *Lightning/Inazuma* (1952) by Naruse Mikio was reviewed on 21 June 1962; *Twenty-four Eyes/Niju shi no hitome* (1954) by Kinoshita Keisuke was reviewed on 18 October 1962; *Black River/Kuroi Kawa* (1957) by Kobayashi Masaki was reviewed on 24 May 1963, etc.

[7] Donald Richie, *Rashomon: A Film By Akira Kurosawa* (New York: Grove Press, 1969).

[8] Donald Richie, 'A Fallen Woman/Daraku suru Onna', *The Japan Times* , 2 July 1967.

[9] Donald Richie, 'Snow Country/Yukiguni', *The Japan Times*, 2 May 1957.

[10] Richard Dyer McCann and Edward S. Perry, *The New Film Index: A Bibliography of Magazine Articles in English 1930-1970* (New York: Dutton, 1975).

[11] Jim Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s, Neo-realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

[12] Ibid, 'Part Four; Polemics', p. 260.

[13] Jean-Marie Lo Duca, 'Venise ou le cinéma au fil de l'eau', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 6 (October-November 1951), pp. 33-37.

[14] Curt Harrington, '*Rashomon* et le cinéma Japonais', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 12 (May 1952), pp. 53-57.

[15] 'La scène où O'Haru désésperée voit passer le jeune prince, son fils, que l'ignore est la meilleure du cinéma japonais d'après-guerre (y compris *Rashomon*)', [Anonymous], 'Festival du film à Venice', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 16 (October 1952), p. 5.

[16] Document No CF 15/1953, Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque du Film, Paris.

[17] Georges Sadoul, 'Existe-t-il un néoréalisme Japonais?', *Cahiers*, pp. 7-19.

The whole issue of how (Japanese) neorealism was picked up by cinephilia and the *Cahiers du cinéma* is most fascinating, and as yet not finally penetrated. I have noticed that Paul Willemen relates to 'the dimension of revelation that is obtained by pointing your camera at something that hasn't been staged for the camera', as the 'whole aesthetic of neo-realism', meaning that the 'fact that they shot on location, without much rehearsal, in difficult conditions, meant that something shone through into the film. There again, these are mystical notions of revelation.' One must remember that the notion of neo-realism (whatever it is) appeared before the *politique des auteurs* was in place, as well as consider the importance of *mise-en-scène* for both the cinephiliac (revelatory) moment, and auteurism, while opposing it to the basic aestethics of realism. What if the reason why the neo-realist Japanese films (read Kurosawa's *Stray Dog, Drunken Angel, The Quiet Duel, Scandal*, etc) were never as highly esteemed as his period dramas, is due to the fact that neo-realism, as such, defies the necessary revelatory notion of auteurism, and therefore were never included in the canon formation of Japanese film? Cf Paul Willemen, p. 243.

[18] Georges Sadoul, 'Le Cinéma progressiste Japonais', *La Nouvelle Critique,* no 58 (September/ October 1954), pp. 73-92.

[19] François Truffaut, 'Une Certaine Tendence du cinéma Française', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 31 (January 1954), 15-28.

[20] Hillier, p. 4.

[21] Willemen, p. 235.

[22] Ibid., p. 232.

[23] Cited in Hillier, p. 4.

[24] See for example 'Le Dossier Mizoguchi', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 158 (August-September 1964), pp. 2-36.

[25] Pascal Bonitzer, and others, 'Oshima Nagisa', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 218 (March 1970), pp. 25-37.

[26] Eric Rohmer, 'Universalité du génie', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no 73 (July 1957), pp. 46-48.

[27] Alexandre Astruc, 'Qu'est'ce que la mise en scène?', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no 100 (October 1959), pp. 14-15. '*Les Contes de la lune vague* font clairement comprendre ce qu'est la *mise-en-scène* – du moins pour quelques-uns: un certain moyen de prolonger les élans de l'âme dans les mouvements du corps. […] J'imagine assez que ce que l'intéresse – après tant des films – ce n'est même plus ce spectacle, mais le fait de ne pouvoir détourner les yeux de ce spectacle […]'

[28] Willemen, p. 253.

[29] Ibid., p. 238.

[30] Hillier, p. 6.

[31] '*Positif* and *Cahiers du cinéma* were very opposed to each other but also unified by a notion of cinephilia', Willemen, p. 232.

[32] Hillier, p. 2.

[33] René Prédal, 'Les revues de cinéma dans le monde', *CinémAction*, no. 69 [Numéro special] (1993), pp. 27-31.
[34] *Cinéma*, no. 6 (June-July 1955), 91 pages.
[35] Ibid., p. 43.
[36] Ibid., p. 64. Another of Tanaka's films, *Love Under The Crucifix/Oginsama* (1960) was screened at the National Film Theatre in 1973.
[37] Ibid., p. 88.
[38] Georges Sadoul, 'Le Japon', *Cahiers de cinéma*, no 51 (October 1955), p. 14.
[39] *Kindai-geki* film is a sub-grenre of *Jidai-geki* film, indicating a period drama in a post-1870 setting.
[40] It would seem that nothing had changed by 1957. I'm referring to Luc Moullet's derogatory review of Kurosawa's *Living*, which, according to Moullet, 'beats the record of ridicule' (See Chapter Four). Cf Luc Moullet, 'Cinémathèque', p. 39.
[41] See for example John Gibbs, 'It Was Never All in the Script …': Mise-en-Scène and the Interpretaion of Visual Style in British Film Journals, 1946-1978', unpublished dissertation, University of Reading, 1999.
[42] Julian Stringer, 'Japan 1951-1970: National Cinema as Cultural Currency', reprinted from *Tamkang Review* 33.2 (Winter 2002), 31-53. [Tamkang University Republic of China].
[43] Ibid., p. 48.
[44] Ibid., p. 37.
[45] Gibbs, pp. 97-98.
[46] Ibid., p. 45.
[47] Ibid., p. 47.
[48] Frank Archer, 'Film and Filming … Abroad', *Films and Filming*, 1.1 (October 1954), p. 27.
[49] Frank Archer, 'Film and Filming … Abroad', *Films and Filming*, 1.2 (November 1954), 27
[50] Frank Archer, 'Film of the Month', *Films and Filming*, 1.7 (April 1955), 16-17
[51] *Films and Filming*, 1.7 (April 1955), p. 27.
[52] Frank Bamping, 'Warning to the World', *Films and Filming*, 1.8 (May 1955), p. 7.
[53] 'Personality of the Month', *Films and Filming*, 4.2 (November 1957), p. 5.
[54] 'Great Film of the Century', *Films and Filming*, 7.7 (June 1960), p. 10.
[55] Douglas McVay, 'Rebel in a Kimono', *Films and Filming*, 7.10 (July 1961), pp. 9 ff.
[56] John Rothwell, 'Rashomon Girl Tries Western Comedy', *Films and Filming*, 3.6 (March 1957), p. 6 with additional film still on cover.
[57] Iwabutchi Masayoshi, 'Japan's Idealists', *Films and Filming*, 6.4 (January 1960), p. 31.
[58] Ian Cameron, 'Shin Heike Monogatari' [in kanji], *Movie*, no. 5 (December 1962), pp 36f.
[59] Ibid., p. 36.
[60] Gibbs, p. 110.
[61] Claire Johnston, 'Film Journals: Britain and France', *Screen*, 12.1 (Spring 1971), 39-46.
[62] Ibid p 43.
[63] 'Other Films', *Movie*, no. 7 (February/March 1963), p. 35.
[64] Mark Shivas, 'Cannes', *Movie*, no. 11 (July-August 1963), pp. 23 ff.
[65] Ibid., p. 25.
[66] Robin Wood, 'Tokyo Story', *Movie*, no. 13 (Summer 1965), pp. 32f.
[67] Subsequent screenings of *Tokyo Story* at the NFT took place in 1963 in the 'Two Masters series'; and later in the 'Human rights' series in 1968; as well as the 'Re-view' series in 1972; and the during the BFI's 40th Anniversary celebrations in 1973.
[68] Ian Cameron, 'Nagisa Oshima', *Movie*, no. 17 (Winter 1969-1970), pp. 7 ff., with additional illustration (film still) on p. 1.
[69] Bonitzer and others, 'Oshima Nagisa', *Cahiers du cinéma,* Vol 33 #217 (Nov 1969).
[70] Cameron, 'Nagisa Oshima', p. 8.
[71] [Anonymous], ['Street of Shame'], *Daily Herald*, 7 March 1958.
[72] Campbel Dixon, 'A legend shattered', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 1958.
[73] Hollis Alpert, 'Street of Shame', *Saturday Review*, 13 June 1959.
[74] Derek Hill, 'Street of Shame', *Tribune*, 14 March 1958.
[75] [Anonymous], 'Chien Enragé Film Japonais de Akira Kurosawa', *Candide*, 6 July 1961.
[76] According to the programmation at the French Cinémathèque, the first screening of Kurosawa Akira's *Stray Dog/Nora Inu* aka *Le Chien enragé* took place on January 5 1958 (ref CF 020/1958 in Collection Jaune, Bibliothèque du Film, Paris). The film was screened again in October 1959 (ref CF 021/1959), and in September 1960 (CF 022/1960).
[77] Georges Sadoul, 'Chien Enragé Film de Akira Kurosawa', *Les Lettres Françaises*, 6 February 1961. 'Le vieux policier, c'est Toshiro Mufune, et ceux qui ont la chance de connaître Ikiru, n'oublient pas la création de ce grand acteur; […]'

[78] 'A.S.L., 'Le Chien Enragé: Kurosawa a la nostalgie du cinéma d'autrefois', *France-Observateur*, 6 July 1961. '[Ce cinéma-là …] est tout entier fondé sur une science du montage que le cinéma muet a portée à la perfection. Kurosawa a la nostalgie de cet âge d'or comme d'autres l'ont du roman balzacien. […] Cette technique archaïqe, cet art du plan mitraillé, qui vise moins à montrer qu'à faire sentir, a pour conséquence de briser toute tentative de direction d'acteurs. […] Je connais peu de films où les acteurs soient aussi détestables que ceux de ce *Chien enragé*.'
[79] Sarris' column first appeared in *Movie*, no. 2 (September 1962), p 10, entitled 'Letter from New York = Andrew Sarris'.
[80] Andrew Sarris, '[on Mizoguchi]', *Village Voice*, 11 March 1965 ; and, '[on Mizoguchi]', *Village Voice*, 18 March 1965.
[81] Keathley, p. 91.
[82] Cited in Keathley, p. 92.
[83] Andrew Sarris, 'Life Of Oharu/Saikaku ichidai onna', *Village Voice*, 28 May 1964, p. 25.
[84] I am thinking of for example the following articles:
Joseph L. Anderson, 'The Other Cinema', Sight & Sound, 19 (1952), p. 452.
Joseph L. Anderson, 'The History of Japanese Movies', Films in Review, 4 (June-July 1953), pp. 277-290.
Donald Richie, 'Where the Silver Screen Has Turned to Gold', The Arts, no. 38 (1954), pp. 80-83.
Donald Richie. 'A Personal Record', Film Quarterly, 14.1 (1960), pp 20-30.
Joseph L. Anderson, 'Japanese Film Periodicals', Quarterly Film Radio & TV, 9.4 (1955), pp. 410-423.
Joseph L. Anderson & Donald Richie, 'Kenji Mizoguchi', Sight & Sound, 25.2 (1955), pp. 76-81.
Donald Richie, 'The Unexceptional Japanese Films', Films in Review, 6 (1955), pp. 273-277.
Joseph L Anderson & Donald Richie, 'The Films of Heinosuke Gosho', Sight & Sound, 26 (Autumn 1955), pp. 76-81
Joseph L. Anderson, 'Seven from the Past: Aspects of the Pre-War Cinema', Sight & Sound, 27.2 (1957), pp. 82-87.
Joseph L. Anderson & Donald Richie, 'Traditional Theatre and Film in Japan', Film Quarterly, 12.1 (1958), pp. 2-9.
[85] Daisuke Miayo, p. 33.
[86] Ibid., pp. 214-216.
[87] Such as the Little Tokyo cinema in Los Angeles.
[88] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 October 1964. The *New York Times* however published a reivew during its run in New York, in June of 1964, see *New York Times Film Reviews*, 17 June 1964.
[89] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 July 1964.
[90] For example *Young Swordsman/Hiken* (1963) by Inagaki Hiroshi, reviewed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 September 1964, and *Haunted Samurai/?* (1970) by Ozawa Keichi, reviewed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 September 1971.
[91] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 July 1964. *Young Guy in Hawaii* was reviewed by Mary Evans in *The Japan Times*, 9 August 1963.
[92] Bosley Crowther, 'Rashomon', *New York Times*, 27 December 1951.
[93] Not mentioned: E Archer (eight reivews), L v Gelder (five reviews), and N Sayre (four reviews), the last name representing the only woman in the group.
[94] Donald Richie, 'Operation Negligée/Tsuyomushi onna no yowamushi otoko', *The Japan Times*, 7 July 1968.
[95] Chie [Donald Richie], 'Operation Negligée', *Variety*, 24 July 1968.
[96] I have tried in vain to obtain a list of the identities of all the signatures in *Variety* from the periodical.
[97] *Night in Bangkok/Bangkok no yoru* (1966) by Yasuki Chiba reviewed in *Variety*, 13 April 1966 (cited as printed, my italics).
[98] *Tale of Chikamatsu/Chikamatsu Monogatari* (1955) by Mizoguchi Kenji reviewed in *Variety*, 11 May 1955 (cited as printed, my italics).
[99] *Night of the Seagull/Suna no kaori* (1968) by Iwauchi Katsuki reviewed in *Variety*, 4 February 1970 (cited as printed, my italics).
[100] Incidently, Richie's reference to J Walter Ruben's *Suicide Club* aka *Trouble for Two* (1936), starring Robert Montgomery and Rosalind Russell, was exchanged for Bryan Forbes' *The Wrong Box* (1966), starring i.a. Michael Caine, Dudley Moore and Peter Sellers in a high-society comedy set in Victorian England, in connection with the publication of Richie's review in *Variety*.
[101] Donald Richie, 'Age Of Assassins/Satsujinkyo jidai', *Variety*, 23 March 1967.
[102] Donald Richie, 'Satsujinkuyo Jidai' - Far-Out, Funny Comedy', *The Japan Times*, 2 February 1967.
[103] Isolde Standish, p. 273.
[104] Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, p 291.
[105] Mary Evans, 'Tengoku to jugoku', *The Japan Times*, 4 January 4 1962.
[106] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 5.2, pp. 14-15.

[107] 'Tube' was right, and Sergio Leoni's *For A Few Dollars More/Per un pugno di dollari* was released in 1965, starring Clint Eastwood. Leoni's remake was related to both *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro*.
[108] Bosley Crowther, 'Sanjuro', *New York Times*, 8 May 1963.
[109] Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa*, p. 162.
[110] Dominique Maillet, 'Sanjuro', *La Saison Cinématographique* 1971/1972, (Paris: Image et Son, 1972). '… cependant novateur dans son contexte Japonais',
[111] Ibid. 'Kurosawa a traité son film avec humour, ce à quoi il ne nous avait guère habitué jusqu'à present.'
[112] Ibid. 'Car en effet, Sanjuro n'est plus tout à fait identique à ses prédécesseurs illutres, quoi-que de la même veine. S'il est respectueaux de ses ancêtres, il semble plus détâché des choses de la vie, plus 'vagabond' pourrait-on dire, souvent préoccupé par son besoin de dormir ou n'ayant nul besoin de concentration pour réfléchir, […]'
[113] Mary Evans; 'Tengoku to jigoku'.
[114] Yoshimoto, p 326 ff.
[115] 'High and Low', *UniJapan Film Quarterly* 6.3, July 1963, p 8-9.
[116] 'Hawk', 'Tengoku to jogoku' ('High and Low'), *Variety,* September 11, 1963 (spelling in accordance with original)
[117] Ibid.
[118] Howard Thompson, 'High and Low', *New York Times*, 27 November 1963.
[119] Ibid.
[120] DW, 'Tengoku to jigoku, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol 34, June 1967
[121] J.P.B., 'Entre le Ciel et L'Enfer', *La Saison Cinématographique* 1968/1969, (Paris: Image et Son, 1969). 'dirigés qu'ils sont tous deux par leur volonté de puissance'
[122] Ibid. 'Mais la haine et le mépris des autres de Takeuchi portent en eux-mêmes sa condemnation alors que Gondo, sur-héros dans la lignée de tous les derniers personnages de Kurosawa, tire sa supériorité non de sa fortune ou de son efficacité professionelle, mais d'une force morale qui fait de lui un vainqueur jusque dans ses défaites, en même temps qu'elle le condamne à demeurer solitaire et le rend intolerable aux autres.'
[123] Ibid. 'orgueilleuse éthique du sur-homme'
[124] Catherine Sumani, 'Entre le Ciel et l'Enfer, *La Saison Cinématographique* 1975/1976, (Paris: Image et Son, 1976). '**Entre le Ciel et l'enfer** n'est certes pas un des films les plus importants de Akira Kurosawa, mais c'est une œuvre intéressante où l'on retrouve l'originalité d'un style qui allie les techniques du theatre et du cinéma, passant de la lenteur d'un drame moral dans le décor unique de l'appartement de Gondo, au rythme rapide et au suspense de l'enquète policière ou à la fresque des bas-fonds de Yokohama.'
[125] Ibid. 'Entre le ciel des riches et l'enfer des pauvres, le film fait apparaître et valorise une troisième voie, que va peu à peu découvrir Gondo. […] il entre dans la voie moyenne de la petite entreprise individuelle, respecteuse des valeurs traditionnelles'
[126] Desser, p. 121.
[127] Ibid
[128] Desser, p. 119.
[129] Mary Evans, 'Oni Baba', *The Japan Times,* 20 November 1964.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] *UniJapan Film Quarterly* 8.1 (January 1965) p 18-19.
[133] A.H. Weiler, 'Onibaba', *New York Times*, 10 February 1965.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Guy Gauthier, 'Les Tueuses', *La Saison Cinématographique* 1965/1966, (Paris: Image et Son, 1966). 'Kaneto Shindo conte une histoire simple avec un luxe de moyens qui, parfois, distrait par trop mais l'œuvre est constamment fascinante, avec ses bruits et ses fureurs, malgré sa poésie trop bellement fabriquée à nos yeux d'Occidentaux.'
[137] Ibid.: 'un étonnant poème où l'érotisme et l'horreur se mêlent'
[138] J.B., 'Onibaba', *Le Monde*, 2 February 1966. 'Il existe un faux exotisme japonais, un faux érotique japonais, une fausse brutalité japonaise, don on commence à faire grand usage à Tokyo dans l'industrie cinématographique.'
[139] Ibid. 'A dire vrai je ne pense pas qu'on puisse le laisser prendre longtemps aux gracieusetés artistiques et aux audaces de pacotille qui constituent l'essentiel du film de Kaneto Shindo.'
[140] Ibid. 'Une merveilleuse comedienne incarne la petite bête sauvage assoiffée d'amour. D'elle nous nous souviendrons.'

[141] Samuel Lachize, 'Voyage au bout de l'horrible', *L'Humanité*, 3 February 1966. 'Ce qui a sans doute séduit les distributeurs français, c'est le côté faussement 'scandaleux' d'*Onibaba*. Il est vari que la sensualité s'y exprime brutalement et avec une franchise telle qu'elle efface tout érotisme.'
[142] G Charensol, 'Onibaba', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, February 3, 1966. 'Ces long plans où la nature semble prendre part aux passions des hommes imposent un rythme, que exalte la beauté d'un film situé, par son sujet, parmi les *jidai-geki* – ceux qui évoquent les vieilles légendes – mais que appartient, par son esprit, au genre *gend[a]i-geki*.'
[143] Tom Milne, 'Onibaba' ('The Hole'), *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 33 (December 1966).
[144] Ibid.
[145] Desser, 192.
[146] Donald Richie, 'Hani's Film of Inferno Of First Love Arresting', *The Japan Times*, May 19, 1968.
[147] 'Chie', 'Hatsukoi Jigokuhen', *Variety*, 22 May 1968.
[148] Due to a strike, the Cannes Film Festival 1968 was closed after one day.
[149] Roger Greenspun, ''Nanami', by Susumi Hani Opens At World', *New York Times*, 5 September 1969.
[150] Ibid.
[151] *Répértoire General du Film*, 1971/1972, p. 218. 'Premier amour, version infernale' surprendra par son fourmillement, un mode de récit non linéaire, une utilisaiton très consciente, dans la tradition d'Eisenstein, des mille possibilités du cadrage et du montage. Mais toujours au service d'une obsession qui fait le prix de cet ouvrage singulier: jusq'où peut-on se mentir à soi-même?'
[152] Louis Marcorelles, 'Premier amour, version infernale', *Le Monde*, 9 September 1970.
[153] Donald Richie, 'Swinging Shinjuku Scene Seen in New Oshima Film', *The Japan Times,* 16 February 1969.
[154] 'Mosk', 'Shinjuku Dorobo Nikki', *Variety*, 11 June 1969.
[155] Tom Milne, 'Shinjuku Dorobo Nikki', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 36 (November 1969).
[156] Ibid.
[157] Roger Greenspun, 'Diary of a Shinjuku Burglar', *New York Times*, 6 July 1973.
[158] Ibid.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# PUBLICITY

## NATIONAL IDENTITY IN WESTERN FILM POSTERS FOR JAPANESE FILMS

- Attention to the conditions of production of the [poster] can provide some sense of the historical conditions which affected [its iconographical] representation […].[1]
Mary Beth Haralovich

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an alternative research practice by studying the iconography of Western posters for Japanese films in relation to Western reception of Japanese film product between 1950 and 1975.

Surviving Western film posters for Japanese films can be found in several archives although most of the local posters for films exhibited on a purely commercial basis in France and Great Britain[2] do not seem to have been collected, assuming that they were produced at all. The posters illustrated and discussed in this chapter thus mainly belong to the most widely distributed Japanese films. We shall also see in this chapter that the most artistically elaborate film posters were generally produced in Cuba and Poland; that is, in countries whose poster art was based on a communist ideology and aesthetics. The bulk of the Polish posters were designed by some of Poland's most famous graphic designers, and it is interesting to note that most of them graduated in the late 1940s or early 1950s, during a period of substantial artistic freedom in the country. As for the Cuban posters; most of them date from the 1960s and early 1970s; a natural fact since the development of the ideological aesthetics which have made Cuban posters famous for their graphic quality was not initiated until after the revolution in Cuba in 1959.

My research also indicates that the digressions of Japanese film product into Western society by way of commodification and reception was basically limited to locally produced film posters and newspaper advertisements art films between 1950 and 1975. This is an introductory study of these digressions, focused on the iconography of the film posters, in order to map different aspects and possible avenues of further research in relation to their interplay with Western ideologies and aesthetics, as well as the original publicity material.

On exportation, the Japanese films were normally equipped with a set of original PR-material including publicity stills, translated actor biographies and press-books to be used in connection with film releases in Western countries. Similar to all cases of transnational exhibition, the one publicity item which was hardly ever used in the West was the original Japanese film poster. For reasons of communication the film posters used to present Japanese films outside their country of origin were normally commissioned by the distributor/exhibitor and produced by local poster designers. As for Japanese film product, I argue that these Western posters represented an instance of both interpretation and diffusion in Western societies, and that the posters illustrated in this chapter make visible some of the iconographical stereotypes used by local poster designers to commodify (exploit) this particular national cinema, as well as the ideology informing the commodification (exploitation) as such. On closer inspection, we shall see that this publicity material in fact reveals interesting cases of discrepancy and prejudice, both in relation to individual films, as well as to the image of the national cinema it is supposedly representing.

A Polish poster by Stanislaw Zamecznik for Kurosawa Akira's *Red Beard* dated 1966, may serve to illustrate my argument. In 1965, Kurosawa Akira completed his last film with Mifune Toshiro in the lead; *Red Beard*. The film had an immediate success in the West, commercially as well as at the festivals. It was screened at both the Venice and Moscow film festivals in 1965, and opened in Paris later on the same year with a preview at the French Cinémathèque. The commercial release in the United States occurred in the following year, but had to wait until 1969 in Great Britain. As from 1969, the Cinémathèque in Paris screened *Red Beard* once a year until 1975.

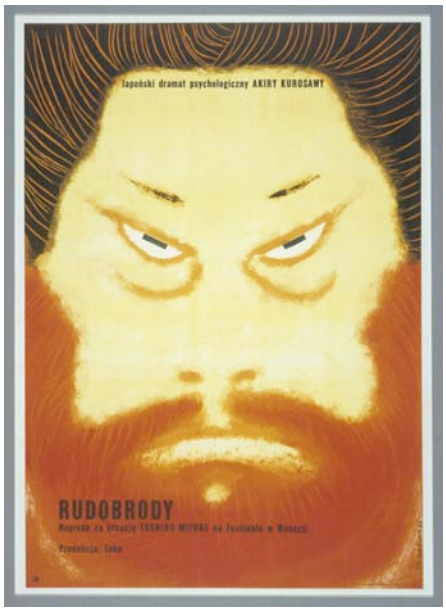


Figure 14

Zamecznik's poster for *Red Beard* is completely dominated by an image of the large and intimidating head of 'Red Beard' himself (*not* the star persona of Mifune Toshiro), consciously reducing the legibility of the typography to a minimum. Apart from depicting an obvious stereotype of a samurai in dangerous close-up, a reading of this poster should focus on how Zamecznik conveyed the national identity of the film through his choice of poster design. In this case, the onlooker initially notices the heavily muted tones of yellow and red, giving a perfectly credible impression of a yellowish face, dangerously slanted black eyes, a very red beard and the hairline of a samurai's hair-knot. One must assume, that it would have come as a great surprise to the cinemagoer that the film plot of *Red Beard* is actually set around a medical doctor and his clinic for the poor in late 19th century urban Osaka. So how do we explain Zamecznik's image of a savage-looking albeit stereotyped samurai, if not with reference to 'fetishizible components' deeply intertwined with Orientalism's stereotyped image of the Japanese identity as Other?[3] What is more, this fetishized stereotype of the samurai was actually used despite the fact that it obviously lied about the film product it was meant to represent, thus advocating a preconceived image of the national identity of Japanese film by reducing it to Orientalist discourse.

Daisuke Miayo's recent study of Sessue Hayakawa's transnational career would seem to give evidence of this implication, in that it emphasizes the importance of *Japonisme* aka Japanese Taste in connection with Hayakawa's favourable reception in the United States and France in the 1910s and early '20s.[4] The influence of Japanese Taste was fetishized in the iconography of the film posters and publicity advertisements produced for his films, and I argue that the influence of this particular cultural art form in Western countries from the late 19th century until the early 1930s in fact established certain Western iconographical stereotypes which re-occurred in the postwar iconography of posters for Japanese films.


Figure 15

The above advertisement for Hayakawa's American film *The Call of the East* (1917) displays some of these stereotypes, such as the geisha playing her samisen, the bamboo, the crane, the cherry tree, and the paraphrase of a Japanese print in the background. In addition to these iconographical elements, the typography used in the design clearly indicates Hayakawa's Japanese nationality by giving his name in a different typeface.

Apart from being a representative of the Western notion of Japanese Taste, the iconographical design of the above publicity advertisement has two additional bearings on my study; firstly, it gives us a very good idea of how the 'fetishizible components' of *Japonisme*/Japanese Taste were commodified in the 20th century, and secondly, the iconographical elements signified a national identity. Given these basic premises, my research has thus been focused on the iconographical exponents connoting the Western commodification (exploitation) of Japanese film beyond the contents of the films themselves, and non-existent in the original Japanese posters.[5] The Western film posters are thus invested with a dual character in that their iconographical elements express both the reception and construction of an image of an Other national identity.

Since most of the research related to the area of film posters and their function in relation to the advertising, publicity and exploitation of the film medium concerns the film product of the Hollywood studio system and often relates to the years before 1950, I have appropriated theories and methods outlined by Mary Beth Haralovich and Barbara Klinger in order to make them applicable to publicity material referring to a non-Western film product exhibited outside its original locale.[6] I have based my assumption on the premise that the local overseas film posters represented an identical instance of commodification as that discussed by Klinger, since the design of these film posters presented a Western view of the product's exploitable elements. In contrast to Klinger's theory, I however argue that the digression of these local posters had a more decisive bearing on the presumptive filmgoer since, unlike the local Western film product, Japanese films exhibited overseas were only rarely introduced by additional promotional campaigns or 'epiphenomena'.[7] It therefore seems reasonable to claim that the Western posters represent our primary material when researching this practice of overseas reception of Japanese film product, and I have also applied Adorno's ideas on a film's 'capitalizable components', among which Klinger mentions 'character; subject matter/genre; and style including mise-en-scène (setting, costumes, etc) and cinematography',[8] for further identification of the particular iconography of Western posters for Japanese films. In addition to these parameters, the history of Western iconography for non-Western subject matter, such as the American publicity

advertisement for Hayakawa's film above, allows me to suggest that the most crucial element which had to be negotiated by the local poster designer, was to let the onlooker know that s/he was looking at a poster advertising a *Japanese* film. My intertextual network thus comprises the additional but necessary element of commodifying 'national identity' within the process of digressive 're-narrativizing' in the local film posters' iconography.[9] We shall also see that original Japanese publicity material in certain cases played a decisive role in this process of re-narrativizing (exploitation) among Western posters designers.

The sought after iconographical features were thus studied from two different but intertwined vantage points; the first based on the 'capitalizable components' and cultural ideology used to represent Japanese films in countries like France, Great Britain and the United States, compared to the typical non-commercial communist posters for the same or a similar Japanese film. Adding the set of aesthetic keystones known from art history as *Japonisme* aka Japanese Taste, has enabled me to identify the central iconographical stereotypes and relate them to Orientalist discourse, since it would seem that Orientalism has indeed remained the dominating parameter reflecting on our image of the non-Christian and uncivilized Otherness of the Japanese, even after World War Two. From this point of view, the issue of commodification (exploitation) unexpectedly emerged as an equally crucial parameter when comparing the iconographical elements in the poster designs made for consumer and communistic societies respectively.

Susan Sontag has defined the poster's role as messenger claiming attention through its scale and decorativeness; as well as 'its mixture of linguistic and pictorial means'.[10] In her argumentation on this subject, Sontag thus emphasized the basic differentiation between the linguistic and pictorial elements of poster iconography. Another basic assumption regarding poster design is related to temporality, in that, contrary to a painting, a poster generally exists for only a few seconds in the eye of the beholder, in addition to which the poster itself remains for only a limited period of time in the public eye. The purely visual elements therefore play the major role when it comes to attracting the attention of the passer-by, the linguistic message being equally important, but still secondary to the image. Sontag claimed that the sociological reason for this was '[the posters'] specific function: to encourage a growing proportion of the population to spend money on soft consumer goods, entertainments, and the arts'.[11] This primary task on behalf of the poster has not changed during its first 100 years of existence, but in her presentation, Sontag simultaneously implied that the specificity of the Cuban/communist film poster should be understood as a hybrid form of poster art, in that it represents both an advertisement for a particular film

product and an art object.[12] In terms of commodification, we shall see that the communist posters partly mediated a different set of aesthetics in relation to this aspect of poster design.

In her analysis, Mary Beth Haralovich has conducted thematic studies of the iconography of a specific type of film posters and film advertising, using for example Roland Barthes' semiotic argument in *Image, Music, Text* as a basis for her method.[13] Haralovich thus applies a second relevant theory to this subject; that of semiotics, which according to Barbara Klinger[14] has also addressed the phenomenon of digression 'as a systematic feature within the text/viewer interaction'. In his book, Barthes applied his rhetoric to a general type of 'advertising image', but I have also found that this term is relevant to both types of posters discussed in this chapter, since the word 'advertise' does not necessarily connote a 'selling' ingredient. I have therefore added Barthes' semiotic identification of an advertising image as an iconography sending 'messages' to Adorno's notion of 'fetishizible components' above.[15] Barthes thus postulated that because in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed *a priori* by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible. If the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are full, formed with a view to the optimum reading; the advertising image is *frank*, or at least emphatic.[16]

In her case study of how Hollywood represented courtship between heterosexual couples in their film posters in the 1930s and 1940s, Haralovich used Barthes' semiotic discourse to compile certain parameters which seem to make up the iconographical normality of a Western film poster on the subject of her essay. Based on her findings, I have compiled the following general parameters with one additional condition as a method for thematic study of the iconography of a general Western poster for a Japanese film:

- 'Attention to the conditions of production of the [poster] can provide some sense of the historical conditions which affected [its iconographical] representation[…].'[17]

- '[Posters] contain similar narrative devices [as the films they represent] but focus on the relationship of characters to narrative.'[18]

- Attention to possible 'diachronic shifts'[19] in the representation of a certain image.

- 'Posters place the characters *within* the narrative of the film, at a point of narrative enigma.'[20]

- 'A [character] is established as protagonist by her position in the poster and by the way the fragments of text and her image are graphically juxtaposed.'[21]

*Additional condition when dealing with transnational posters:*

- Central attention to national identity in the overall iconographical design of the poster.

When transposed to Japanese postwar cinema, we can see that Haralovich's original matrix in fact seems to be perfectly in tune with many of the original Japanese film posters designed under and immediately after the American occupation. The impact of American poster aesthetics on Japanese film posters is also confirmed by Kyoko Hirano's claim that Japanese film poster iconography was censored between 1946 and 1952.[22]


Figure 16

This poster for Gosho Heinosuke's *Where Chimneys are Seen* indicates the strong Americanization of Japanese popular culture after 1945, in that it fits perfectly with the requirements in Harlovich's matrix for film poster design. *Where Chimneys are Seen* is a contemporary drama and was never commercially released in France, Great Britain, or the United States. It was however screened on three different occasions at the French Cinémathèque (the first screening took place as early as in 1953) and in connection with film programmes organized by the National Film Theatre in London in 1957, 1964 and 1975. Set in the grim post-war Japanese society, *Where Chimneys are Seen* is fiercely realistic in telling the story of a young couple's struggle back to a normal life; constantly poor, working in industry, and longing to have a family. The iconography of the poster perfectly mirrored what Haralovich has termed the 'narrative enigma' by placing the characters 'within the narrative of the film'. It also established the film's protagonists through enlarged portraits of them, and confirmed their star persona, in this case Takamine Hideo's, by inserting her *outside* the poster's narrative as well. When applied to Western film posters for Japanese films, we shall see that few posters seem to fit the criterions originally set up by Haralovich.

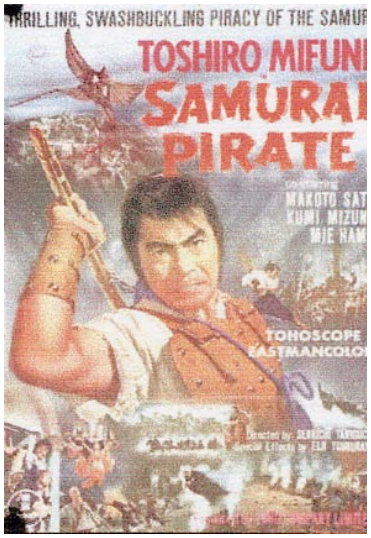


Figure 17

The above poster for *The Samurai Pirate/Daitozoku* (1964) by Taniguchi Senkichi, is therefore in many ways an exception since it was designed for the American market, which explains its close correspondence to Haralovich's matrix above. It has English text and the image, reproduced from a film still, of Mifune Toshiro is enlarged in order to present him as a star persona outside the narrative of the poster design. Mifune's name, as well as the English title of the film is printed in intense red, thus indicating an emotional fervour which is heightened by the dynamic quality of the image of the actor/'Pirate' with his face marked by tension and frenzy, seemingly ready to use his sword. The poster's composition thus echoes traditional Western film poster iconography, and its reference both to the American, as well as the Japanese star system indicates that it should be considered mainly from its commercial and publicity point of view.

As already mentioned, Mifune Toshiro was undoubtedly the most well-known Japanese film star to the Western audience, but neither he nor Kyo Machiko were ever idolised by Western audiences, nor were there generally any write-ups or interviews with Japanese film stars in Western media during the years between 1950 and 1975.[23] I therefore wish to stress the importance of Western film posters as a primary source of both publicity and promotion of Japanese film product, marginally assisted by Japanese publicity stills.

I also suggest that the high number of Japanese *jidai-geki* films exhibited in Western countries, in combination with a persistent Orientalist postwar discourse and unexpected demands on Western poster designers to commodify Japanese film product, quickly made way for the re-emergence of the above mentioned, prewar iconographical stereotypes based on Orientalism.

The Cuban version of a poster for *The Samurai Pirate*, designed by Edoardo Bachs, therefore represented an ideological opposite to Haralovich's matrix above, in that the composition refrains from marketing any 'fetishizible components' by not referring directly to either the Japanese star system or the film's narrative enigma.


Figure 18

Although Bachs' design reflects Oriental stereotypes, he underlined the importance of the artistic process involved by using a technique which emphasized the typical minimalism and burst of colour of the 1960s poster art through what looks like hand painted images. In reference to my above argument that national identity must be added to Haralovich's matrix, I therefore suggest, that the stereotyped symbols represented in this poster; a wild human figure with staring yellow eyes, a red sun pierced by arrows (the Japanese flag?), a mystic and frightening junk boat and two sword fighting figures in the lower right section of the design, indeed represented a type of fetishizible components, given the common familiarity of these symbols.


Figure 19

There can be little doubt as to the origin of *The Samurai Pirate*, despite the fact that Bachs put his message across through iconographical elements reflecting artistic quality, instead of commercial value. The design of the Cuban poster for Kurosawa Akira's film *Hidden Fortress,* given here as *La Fortaleza Escondida,* shares a likeness with Edoardo Bachs' poster for *The Samurai Pirate* above, in both ideology and artistic quality, even though this poster is not signed, nor dated. It exhibits a perfect stereotype of a proud and very masculine Japanese samurai depicted in the heroic mould, recognizable through his sword and facial features. In contrast to the American poster for the same film, there is no reference at all to the film's star persona in this Cuban poster, despite the fact that the hand drawn image of the samurai occupies more or less the whole of the picture plane in this poster, with the explanatory text inserted at the very bottom right hand side. The background is dominated by two erratic colour fields; one in red, the other one blue. The poster's most sophisticated iconographical detail – and singular occurrence among the posters researched for this study - is however the insertion of gold on the samurai sword, together with the splash of gold immersed between the words of the film title. Once again we have here a Cuban poster which comes very close to being primarily a work of art.

In addition to fetishizing certain symbols and stereotyping certain characters, I suggest that when reading posters for national identity iconographical components like colour and typography are as important as the pictorial elements. Like many other posters, local overseas posters related to Japanese films were sometimes more or less dominated by one single colour, be they commercial or non-commercial posters. The traditional colours used to draw attention to a certain poster are the strong colours red, yellow or orange (as in traffic signs). In reference to both the Orientalist and 'yellow peril' discourses, I have looked specifically at colours used to denote non-Caucasian figures, since these also constituted iconographical elements which may or may not have been designed to represent a particular national identity. I have also paid special attention to the typography and typefaces used in the poster designs, again with reference to the American advertisement for Sessue Hayakawa's film above.

### **5.2** FETISHIZED STEREOTYPES

The geisha and samurai characters are the most fetishized stereotypes in Western posters for Japanese *jidai-geki* film. Whereas the Orientalist reading of the geisha is that of a feminized and docile image of both the Far East and its women, the samurai is generally characterized as a figure of heroic and feudal mould whereas his alter ego, the *ronin* or masterless samurai

has been considered as a more or less explicit allusion to a stereotype of a wild and uncivilized man. A thematic study of these stereotypes therefore seems to be particularly apt to both demonstrate the continued influence of Orientalism on our cultural unconscious after World War Two, and how it was consequently used to signify national identity in Western poster design for the Japanese *jidai-geki* film.

Two pivotal postwar exponents of the persistence of these stereotypes and their concurrent Orientalist discourse were recently negotiated in a thesis by Jieun Rhee, who indicated that Asian artists living in the West in the late 1950s and 1960s did not think that the West had done away with either the geisha or the samurai.[24] Rhee presented the Japanese Yoko Ono's performance *Cut Piece* from 1964 as an example of the stereotyped geisha, embodied by the kneeling, passive, kimono-clad Japanese woman with her averted gaze. *Cut Piece*, however also represented a political statement referring to the continued American-Japanese interdependency after the end of the occupation in 1952, in that Ono's female character reflected not just on the tradition of the geisha, but also on the continuous Orientalist notion of the docile submissiveness of the East in relation to the fortitude of the West. Ono encouraged the Western audience to come up on the stage and cut a piece from the geisha's kimono, resulting in considerable mayhem from within the audience, from the media and from political quarters as to the dissident symbolism inherent therein. Rhee used the Korean artist Nam June Paik's work for the corresponding male stereotype embodied by the samurai, and referred to a performance of John Cage's music in the late 1950's where Paik had '[…] presented his Asian body as a threat, 'a yellow peril' to Western music, decorum, and even items of clothing, destroying the aura of refined musical performances with foreign thoughts and sounds'.[25]


Figure 20

The most famous screen geisha to Western audiences is that of Mizoguchi Kenji's traditional 'Oharu' in *Life of Oharu*, notwithstanding the fact that the issue of the geisha tradition, tea houses and public prostitution were fiercely debated in contemporary films like Mizoguchi's *Woman in the Rumour* and subject to radical intervention in Japan during the immediate postwar era.[26] In terms of poster iconography, it is interesting to note that among the original Japanese posters for *The Life of Oharu* at least one savoured the traditional image of the geisha, by presenting 'Oharu' in the shape of a wood cut print in hanging scroll format above. I have not, however, been able to find any Western film posters for *The Life of Oharu*.

It seems to me that the various poster designs for *Ugetsu Monogatari* below are very good exponents of Barthes' assumption about the frankness of an advertising image, in that the man and woman in these posters were arguably perceived by the Western onlooker as representing the Orientalist stereotypes of the geisha and the samurai although they were not. I have found four interesting posters for this film; one French, one German, one American, and one commissioned by the Academy Cinema in 1962, in connection with the British release of *Ugetsu Monogatari*.

The first Western poster for this film was based on Daiei's original Japanese poster, which was only partly translated into English in connection with the American release of the film in 1954. The central importance of its producer, Masaichi Nagata, is easily appreciated between the film title and Kyo Machiko's face. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, it was Nagata who was the mastermind behind the decision to send *jidai-geki* films to the European film festivals. By presenting us with the above image from the film, and considering the fact that the West was little aware of Kyo Machiko's stardom, I suggest that Nagata instead used the stereotyped character of this image for purposes of self-Orientalization, in order to benefit more from its Western commodification.

Based on a film still from the film, the poster had *Ugetsu* written in bright yellow on the diagonal over the whole picture plan. The iconographical design of the title thereby definitely had a very demanding quality to it, catching the attention of the passer-by. It was not, however, the choice of colour alone which had this affect, but rather its combination with the over-sized typography rendered askew and very acute over the pictorial surface.


Figure 21

In addition to its demanding typography, Kyo Machiko's face was displayed *en face*, and her white-painted face – in almost perfect likeness to a Japanese noh-mask – together with the film's title *Ugetsu* in yellow, represented the focus of the poster's design and thus a sophisticated notion of *Japonisme* (Japanese Taste).

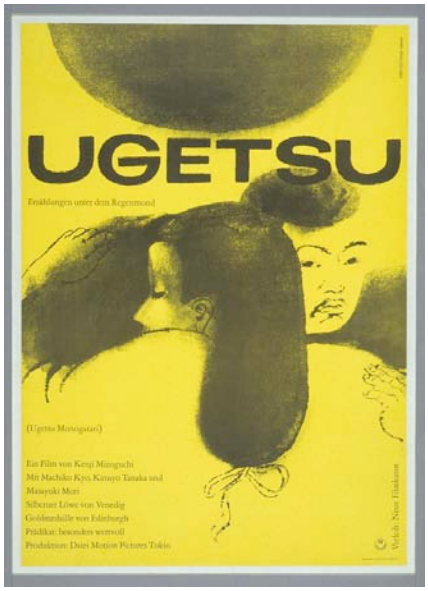


Figure 22

The German poster (no year) above was designed by one of the most renowned German graphic artists during the postwar era; Hans Hillmann. His poster for *Ugetsu Monogatari* lack all traces of a commercial Western film poster or references to Japanese stereotypes like the one above, regardless of the fact that it was also based completely on a yellow tone of colour with an image of the love couple traced in charcoal at the centre. The man has markedly Asian facial features, whereas the Japanese woman is all the more impersonal, with regard to both her un-coiffured hair, and anonymous profile.


Figure 23

The above poster is an example of the French poster designer Alain Perry's predilection for using a select film still as the focal point of the poster design, with the addition of, in this case, both French and Japanese typography. Apart from the added typography, Perry also added the warm hues of red and gold to this poster design (for a black and white film) for purposes of optimal attention. No doubt, the present colour combination gives a fair idea of the passion and fantasy involved, although the composition of the poster's iconographical elements do not meet with any of the criteria set up in Haralovich's matrix, except that of national identity.


Figure 24

The fourth poster for *Ugetsu Monogatari* was designed by Peter Strausfeld in 1962. Its eclectic design mixed British and Japonist pictorial attributes, set off by a muted shade of

blue, known in Great Britain as 'duck's egg', combined with a dominating image of a Japanese woman with her hair let down, based on the film still used in the French poster above. Despite the choice of an iconographical style reminiscent of a Japanese print, the representation of this female character had no relation to the traditional Japanese wood-cuts of geisha; the face with its lurid gaze and the hair hanging down instead indicates the demon-like character of certain Noh-masks representing ghosts. The square picture format Strausfeld used is another element of iconographic eclecticism in his design, since it clearly implied the impact of the British photographer David Bailey's 6x6 Rolleiflex format, instead of the traditional Japanese hanging-scroll format, which may have been more fitting with the national character of the film (see the poster for *Life of Oharu* above). Instead, this square format fits very well with the production date and place of the poster; Great Britain in the early 1960s, in accordance with Haralovich's matrix. A third indication of the poster's immanent eclecticism is its typography, which could be seen in many Western poster designs at this time. As for its commodification of Japanese film product, I would argue that the bogus wood-cut-like image of a geisha-like character was the primary iconographical element to this end, ensuring that the potential cinemagoer did not miss the fact that this was a poster for a Japanese *jidai-geki* film, screened in Great Britain.

The obvious representative of the male Japanese stereotype on the Western screen would is the traditionally wild and uncivilized Japanese samurai or *ronin*, or an iconographical element representing him, such as a sword. Among the most noteworthy posters fetishizing this character can be mentioned the four collected posters for Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* - one French, two German and one Polish poster – which all displayed samurai-like fighters. I have also included two Cuban posters representing the allegory of the samurai; Antonio Perez Gonzalez aka Niko's poster design for Inagaki Hiroshi's film *Rise Against the Sword/Abare Goemon* (1966) which displays samurai swords thrown in a heap on the ground, and Raúl Oliva's poster design for Okamoto Kihachi's film *Samurai Assassin/Samurai* (1964), from 1968.

*The Seven Samurai* was Kurosawa Akira's second most successful film in the countries involved in this study, after *Rashomon*. *Seven Samurai* was screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1954, and later on at least 33 occasions at the French Cinémathèque between 1956 and 1975, sometimes no less than three times per year. The commercial success was also immediate, and the film was distributed in Great Britain already by 1955. Its success is also confirmed by the American remake by John Sturges in 1960, with the resembling title *The Magnificent Seven.*

The four posters collected from the overseas exhibition of *Seven Samurai* hint at a slight variation of the iconographical stereotypes connoting its national identity throughout the West. In the French poster, the samurai stereotype was clearly readable, whereas the iconography in Hans Hillman's German poster indicated an almost complete artistic separation between the poster design and the film's narrative. Only one of the four posters for *Seven Samurai* can be said to have adhered to Haralovich's matrix, in that the French poster below clearly enhanced Mifune Toshiro's star persona. The posters otherwise focused on the stereotype of the samurai, and this image seemingly represented the most 'fetishizible component' in the film in all countries involved. There was at the same time no ambition on behalf of the designers to 'place the characters within the narrative of the film, at a point of narrative enigma', nor did they use 'narrative devices' to relate to 'the relationship of characters to narrative'.[27]

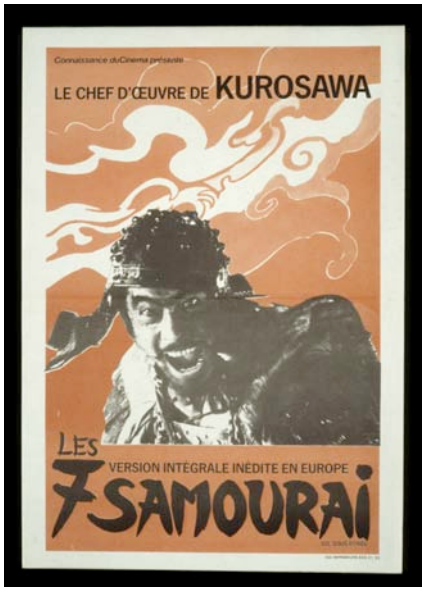


Figure 25

The anonymous French poster above (no year) represents an interesting clash between two Japonist iconographical elements and 20th century movie stardom. In the foreground, and immediately eye-catching, is a Classical Hollywood-type of movie-star film still of Mifune Toshiro as a samurai, exposed below thin white clouds against an orange background; a well-known Japonist pastiche based on iconographical elements seen in traditional Far Eastern ink drawings. The chosen film still is however not very 'star'-like, since it presented Mifune Toshiro as a wild man, a furious and perhaps even insanely excited warrior. In order to maintain the onlooker's focus on Mifune, the designer found himself unable to use red or yellow for the upper section of the poster, and thus used orange for the sky. Together with the unruly cloud formations the entire design is representative of a stereotyped Orientalist

discourse, and the same film still was later used for the frontispiece of the famous 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais' programme at the French Cinémathèque in 1963 (see Chapter Three). This film still of Mifune as stereotyped samurai obviously played a part in the premeditated Japanese strategy of self-Orientalization through the *jidai-geki* film genre.


Figure 26

The Polish poster by Marian Stachurski (no year), giving the title as *Siedmiu Samurajow,* display crudely ink-drawn samurai figures in blue and red against a mild yellow background in a style reminiscent of antique renderings of fighting Greeks, Romans or indeed Vikings. The seven alternatively grinning or cruel-looking figures with clearly almond shaped eyes are seen in all sorts of stances, which give an impression of movement in the overall composition. The men are apparently wearing some kind of helmets and are equipped with enormous swords, at the same time as their clothes are decked out with traditional, decorative kimono patterns.

The obviously stereotyped figures give a slightly ironic slant to the poster, which distances it from any inclination towards commodification.

The German poster by Melvin E Cozlowski (no year) was made up of only one colour; red with the title (*Die Sieben Samurai*) in white in the top right corner. Six shadow-like fighting figures are indicated under a sun, whereas the seventh figure, with a face looking like Mifune Toshiro's, occupies the entire lower section of the poster design. The material and technique used give evidence of a small work effort; the original design was composed of charcoal on white paper.

Cozlowski's design in fact bears a certain resemblance to the original Japanese poster, but in this case the image of Mifune is most probably copied from a film still. The size and position of 'him' and/or his character in the forefront of the German poster design, could thereby be seen as referring either to an instance of Classical Hollywood star promotion

(Mifune himself) or to the promotion of a Japanese film in general through the stereotyped samurai character.


Figure 27

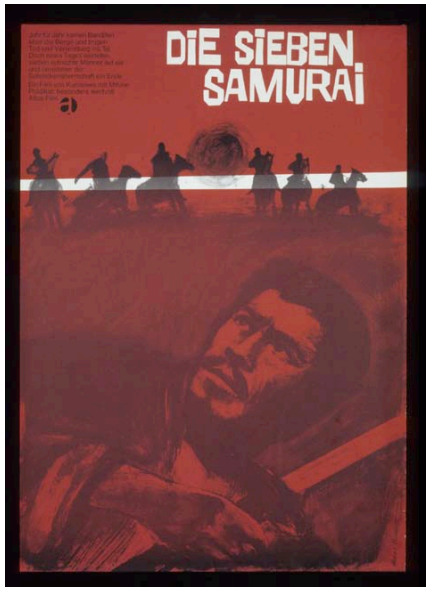


Figure 28

Cozlowski's design would thereby cohere to Haralovich's criterion that 'A [character] is established as protagonist by her position in the poster and by the way the fragments of text and her image are graphically juxtaposed.'[28] However, the lack of both Mifune Toshiro's and Kurosawa Akira's name in readable lettering, prevents a perfect consensus of this reading of the iconography and I am therefore inclined to think that this may be a poster from former East-Germany, DDR. Should this be a correct assumption, Haralovich's dictum that '[the] conditions of production of the [poster] can provide some sense of the historical conditions which affected [its iconographical] representation[…]'[29] come into play indicating a non-serviam stance to the star system.

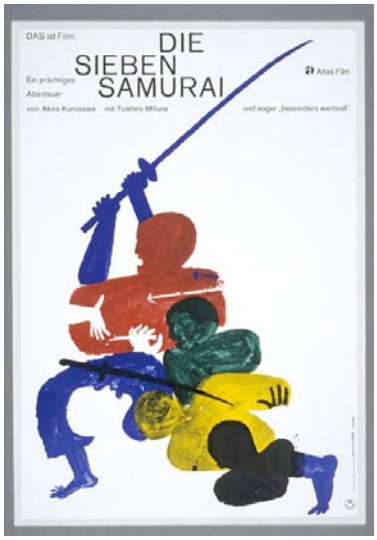


Figure 29

Contrary to the previous examples, the red, blue and yellow colours in the German graphic artist Hans Hillmann's poster above (no year) were used in a completely different way since his use of the three primary colours was based mainly on Bauhaus-modernism, and Hillmann thereby made it clear that his iconography is not connected to fetishized stereotypes. His way of signalling that *Seven Samurai* is a Japanese samurai film was only indicated by the very sparse use of words, in rather small lettering, in the upper half of the poster design, which reads 'THIS is film: The Seven Samurai. A good adventure by Akira Kurosawa with Toshiro Mifune and therefore "especially worthwhile"'.[30] The omission of Mifune as film star in the design is evident, and was replaced by a playful distribution of at least five fighting shadow-play-like figures in red, green, yellow, white and black with accompanying swords, daggers and arrows. Again, the lack of both Mifune Toshiro's and Kurosawa Akira's name in big letters, as well as an iconography disavowing the star system, emasculates a reading in coherence with Haralovich's above matrix.

In the above introduction of this group of posters, I mentioned a second possible instance of a stereotyped discourse whereby the poster artist has used an iconographical element clearly representing the samurai, the most obvious one being a sword.


Figure 30

In his poster for Inagaki Hiroshi's film *Rise Against the Sword* the Cuban poster artist Niko aka Antonio Perez Gonzalez, in 1970, depicted samurai swords thrown in a heap on the ground. Contrary to most posters, the actual image is here in black/white, whereas the title of the film is set in blue and the additional text in red. The notion of 'yellow peril' was not clearly visible in this type of poster design, although I presume the swords may generally

speaking be considered as 'fetishizible components', although their origin would remain unclear.

A similar design is represented by Raúl Oliva in his poster for Okamoto Kihachi's film *Samurai Assassin,* from 1968, with the Cuban title *Samurai asesino*. Oliva's poster design was emblematic, in that it consisted merely of a hand holding a sword.


Figure 31

The onlooker does not even see the whole sword since the composition focuses on the handle and hand holding it. The hand itself was fashioned very much in the same style as hands seen in Japanese woodcuts, and Oliva, apparently familiar with this particular technique, chose to use it to make the connection to the film's country of origin. Looking at the handle of the sword, we see that it bears little resemblance to Japanese aesthetics in ornamentation or colour code, but rather resembles Indian/Cuban folk-art in its style. I would therefore argue that Oliva's poster design actually emblematized an integrated, revolutionary message which has little to do with Okamoto Kihachi's film *Samurai Assassin*, but was perfectly representative of the Cuban film poster aesthetics and its link to Cuban communistic society and ideology at this time. Nevertheless, Oliva's choice of iconography again confirms Haralovich's call that 'Attention to the conditions of production of the [poster] can provide some sense of the historical conditions which affected [its iconographical] representation[…]',[31] confirmed by Barthes' writing that '[…] the advertising image is *frank*, or at least emphatic.'[32]

The third instance of stereotype mentioned above, is related to typography and in this case it is primarily a typography moulded in the form of a Westernized image of what a

Japonist version of our alphabet would look like, had the letter been composed of brush strokes, or bamboo twigs. This type of design element was thus meant to remind the reader of the general aesthetics of an Asian sign, but also carried a reminder that these letters were signs of a more brutal and less civilized approach to writing. Western poster designers have nevertheless based the aesthetics of Japonist lettering on these two matrixes for almost 150 years,[33] thereby signalling that the product the poster is making publicity for, is in fact related to a non-Western culture. Japonist typography was therefore a natural third instance of stereotyped commodification of Japanese film product in Western posters design. I have focused on this type of typography from two different aspects in my study; the first being the design and character of the individual letter, the second being the placement of the lettering within the poster frame.

I illustrate a few cases of such rampant Japonist typography below, among which the most pronounced is a German poster entitled [*The Island of Hard Men]/Insel der harten Männer*[34] representing an as yet unidentified Japanese film. The design of the letters in the word 'insel' are clearly inspired by Japonist aesthetics, displaying letters faintly reminiscent of bamboo limbs which must be understood as signalling to the potential cinemagoer that the poster makes publicity for a Japanese film.


Figure 32

Two additional candidates were found; the posters for Kinoshita Keisuke's film *Carmen Comes Home/Karumen kokyo ni kaeru* (1951), and *Rebellion* by Kobayashi Masaki.


Figure 33

The poster for the first film about 'Carmen' was produced in connection with the film's release in France 1952, designed by Alain Perry. I have inserted the original Japanese film poster for the film, as well as the publicity still used for copy below, in order to put attention to the difference in expression between the French and Japanese posters. *Carmen Comes Home* is a satire about the consequences of Westernization for Japan and there is thus a clear purpose as to why the poster designer chose to present the two women in western clothes on the film's poster. Alain Perry, on the other hand, chose to work with a publicity still which merely displayed a 'woman as spectacle' and thus positioned his illustration outside the film's narrative.

Figure 34


Figure 35

*Carmen Comes Home* was the first colour film made in Japan, and Perry chose to use an original film still from it, in line with his predilection for this type of iconographical design. The film's title was then given in red just above 'Carmen's' head and each letter gives a slight impression of being assembled like a Japanese sign based on brush strokes. The way the title seems to follow 'Carmen's' silhouette, also takes its design from antique Asian ink drawings. *Carmen Comes Home* was also released in the United States, in 1959.

The third poster on the subject of Japonist lettering, is the Italian poster designed for *Rebellion* (no year). *Rebellion* was first screened in Europe at the Venice Film Festival in 1967, and then at both the London and New York film festivals of the same year.

Figure 36

The film doesn't seem to have had a commercial release in France before 1975, but was released in London in the spring of 1968 and six months later in New York. The Italian film poster also relates to its commercial screening, and was dated 1967. It depicts (in lithograph technique, based on a film still) a double image of the film's star persona, Mifune Toshiro. Mifune's name is written in blue and just slightly smaller than the film's Italian title *L'Ultimo Samurai.* The poster designer thus gave us no less than three hints as to the origin of the film when he used a type of lettering for the film title which is a little angular and slightly reminiscent of bamboo, in addition to presenting a double portrait of the star persona involved and by putting his name in the centre, below the images. Contrary to the film posters for *The Seven Samurai*, this poster in many ways responds to the criterions set

up in Haralovich's matrix, as well as those representing 'fetishizible components' according to Klinger.

It would seem that the placement of the letters/words within the poster design rarely took on a Japonist image. One instance occur in the Polish poster for Kurosawa Akira's *Dodesukaden* (1970), designed by Jan Mlodozeniec (no year). The upper section of the poster design includes vertical text set in a manner which alludes to Japanese writing from top to bottom. The onlooker is consequently invited to read the poster in this manner, although the typeface as such is not Japonist in its design.


Figure 37

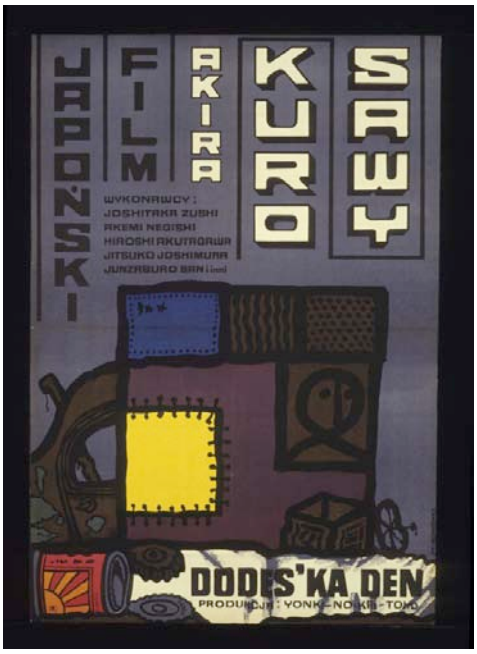


Figure 38

The Japanese poster(s) for *Dodesukaden* are original since they were actually designed by Kurosawa himself. He made no less than four different poster designs for this particular film, and I have chosen to use one of them for a comparative study of Mlodozeniec's Polish poster, seen that Kurosawa's original poster is designed in a hanging scroll format, which emphasizes the vertical line. In terms of colour, we may ask if the yellow colour in Kurosawa's design was used to reflect upon the young man's derangement in the film. Different faces of adults can be seen along the 'railroad' in the Japanese poster, a sun in the upper field of the image and the silhouette of a cityscape at the horizon. Kurosawa's designs were all naïve and slightly reminiscent of the Russian painter Chagall in style. One of the

basic characteristics for naïve art is that the art works give an impression of having been executed by an unskilled person or a child, someone not adhering to conventional rules of image-making. We may thus consider if Kurosawa Akira, who actually was a trained painter, with his naïve poster designs wanted to express a view of the reality as it was perceived by the film's young protagonist. There are thus two different compositional elements pointing in the direction of the unconventional here; the yellow 'railroad' and the general style of the design.

The colour scheme in Mlodozeniec's poster design is entirely based on muted shades, except for a shining yellow patch on the hood of a derelict car, and an orange red sunrise on an empty tin-can, slightly reminiscent of the red and orange sunrise on Alfredo Rostgaard's poster below. The film title, spelled *Dodesukaden,* is given in white at the bottom of the design and is easily visible against the muted background, as is Kurosawa's name at the top. Still, Mlodozeniec's (seemingly) calculated use of only two bright colours - yellow and orange red - makes for a different reading compared to the yellow colour in Kurosawa's design. I therefore argue that the yellow hood of the car in Mlodozeniec's poster should be understood primarily as an iconographical eye catcher, signalling something worth looking at. It is not until we read the orange-red symbol of the sun, and notice the Japonist placement of the lettering at the top of the design together with the film title and director's name, that the national identity of *Dodesukaden* becomes obvious. The combination of the iconographical picture elements would thus seem to reflect a symbolic message in the poster's design, and may be understood to connote a particular national cinema. The outcome of the comparison between Mlodozeniec's and Kurosawa's poster designs thus clearly show that connotations adhering to a particular national identity was clearly unnecessary in the original film posters, but they became the main iconographical element in the Western design.

As we have seen, none of the posters related to Japonist typography above seem to indicate a clear connection between choice of colour and typography. It would thus seem that the actual shape or placement of the letters/words took priority over any inclination towards a particular use of colour. In view of the overall shortage of typographical Japonist aesthetics in Western film posters after World War Two, one must assume that graphic demands on the general readability of a poster have come to the fore on most occasions. An additional reason is, of course, that the pictorial elements were considered to be the main crowd puller.

**5.3** ICONOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS REFUSING COMMODIFICATION

I label the posters from the former Soviet Union and Cuba presented in this chapter as communist posters, since the aesthetic ideology they were based on was inherent in their iconography, as we have already seen. This particular iconography was primarily the result of an ideological agenda in opposition to the capitalist agenda based on consumerism identified in Klinger's above discussion of cinematic digressions, as well as in the criteria defining a typical Western film poster according to Haralovich above. Rather than being produced on demand by the commercial distributor of the film and function primarily as sales promotion for a certain type of goods, the communist posters were created by one single poster studio owned and controlled by the government, who also distributed the Japanese film in question. The central design studios in the former Soviet countries and in Cuba, employed their own designers who solved the creative task of transposing a message informing the by-passers that 'there is a new Japanese film in town' within the ideological frames connoting communist poster iconography. By looking at a few more of the communist posters we shall see that they solved issues of stereotyping and communicating the national identity of the film in question through styles verging on eclecticism.

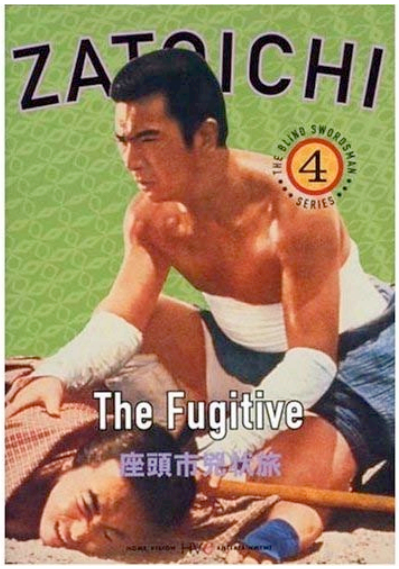


Figure 39

I

ed to the above American poster, the Cuban Alfredo Rostgaard's poster for Tanaka Takuzo's *Masseur Ichi, the Fugitive* aka *Zatoïchi, Crazy Journey/Zatoichi kyojo tabi* (1963) stands out as a excellent example of the eclecticism that began to influence Cuban graphic design within only a few years after the revolution, to the disadvantage of traditional socialist realism. Rostgaard's design, dated 1968, clearly refers to two traditions within the field of Japanese arts and crafts; the wood-cut, as well as to one of the central genres within

this art form; the portrait of a famous kabuki player. This particular matrix has been used as a means of promotion for a particular actor in a particular role in a particular play, for many centuries in Japan. Rostgaard's way of tracing the typical patterns of this technique (and tradition) and transposing them into his own film poster design adheres to both the imitated original technique (and performance tradition) as well as the specific message of this particular Cuban poster, and thus bears a certain resemblance to Peter Strausfeld's poster for *Ugetsu Monogatari*. In this case, the extraordinary artistic quality of the Cuban design is manifested through Rostgaard's reference to the film medium itself, which he signals through the double graphic form of 'Zatoïchi' moving his right arm, and raising his sword. This attempt to depict movement in a still composition can be seen in works by the French Impressionists, who consciously employed a 'sketchy', and thus academically incomplete and hence incorrect painting technique in order to give an impression of movement. A good example from the late 19th century would be Édgar Degas' painting *La Repasseuse*[35] (1869), in which Degas indicates the ironing woman's arms moving over the garment through a double image of them, together reflecting an impression of movement. Considering the fact that the late 19th century European painters were strongly impressed by Japanese wood-cuts, it is difficult to say whether Degas originally had this particular idea from such a work, or if the impression of movement reflected in the above painting is indeed the result of an artistic interpretation of an unsuccessful photo session, that is, a photo of an ironing woman who did not remain still long enough at the moment of photographical exposure.

Whichever the case, this pictorial device appears again in Alfredo Rostgaard's poster design for Tanaka Tokuzo's film, implying that Rostgaard on his part has used his artistic licence (and knowledge of Degas' work) to transpose this particular iconographical element into his own graphic design, to indicate a moving film image.

Simultaneously, the Cuban conveys the national identity of the film in question by incorporating the aesthetics of Japanese wood-cuts in the design of 'Zatoïchi's' mouth, as well as in the design of the contour of his eye; both closely following the traditional design of the typical face of a samurai character in action in a Japanese wood-cut print. In addition to these traditional traits, Rostgaard ingeniously left the visible eye empty, or closed, thus allowing it to reflect 'Zatoïchi's' blindness. Rostgaard's stereotyped design of the samurai implies that he has chosen iconographical elements referring to *Japonisme* above those referring to a notion of Orientalist discourse.


Figure 40

Figure 41

Rostgaard's choice of colours and background – both the pea-green shade of green and the graphic element of the rising pink and orange sun, clearly reflect the connection between different popular cultural fields of aesthetics at this time, and add to the eclectic character of his design by bringing it up to date with the Western graphic and decorative arts of the 1960's.

There were of course other ways of preventing the marketing of obviously fetishizible components in communist poster design aesthetics. One way of doing so was through a non-representational design.

The Cuban poster by Niko aka Antonio Perez Gonzalez, dated 1969, for Naruse Mikio's *The Thin Line* aka *The Stranger Within a Woman/Onna no naka ni irutanin* (1966) is an example of a minimalist poster in black/white with only one colour, red, added to make up the whole composition.


Figure 42

The iconography of the poster has no direct reference to either the film, or its national identity – and the poster may therefore be considered as a separate work of art, putting the poster's commodifying potential completely outside the picture, as it were. Not until we have seen the film, will we know if Niko's choice of messing up the straight white line with a crumbled line in a blood-red shade of colour is in fact a symbol for the film's dramatic plot.


Figure 43


Figure 44

Compared to the cool looking, if hardly sexy but definitely Japanese women portrayed in the original Japanese colour poster for Mizoguchi Kenji's film *Street of Shame*, Waldemar Swierzy's Polish poster from 1959 is a good example of a poster design of high artistic quality, without any iconographical hint to national identity. Instead of six mischievous women in a Westernized poster design, the iconography of the Polish poster depicted an image of one sophisticated dark-haired woman with a partly powdered face, naturally slanted eyes and very red lips, against an indigo blue background. An open robe reveals bare breasts, and although this torso is not only out of proportion with the head in the upper section of the poster, it informed the passer-by of what can be expected of the film, by indicating the lady's profession, if not necessarily her nationality. Compared to the original poster, Swierzy's poster made it very clear that communist poster aesthetics did not encourage any adherence to the Western star system, nor did it necessarily concern itself with obvious iconographical clues indicating the film's national identity, but it obviously did not refrain from exploiting a possible sex angle in its design.


Figure 45


Figure 46

Figure 47

Other examples of communist posters display a more restrained poster design, while at the same time indicating a more complicated interplay between the original Japanese PR-material and the design of the local film poster. I suggest that while the Japanese seem to have accommodated the Western whim for *Japonisme*/Japanese Taste by stereotyping the main characteristics of the *jidai-geki* film in an act of profitable self-Orientalization, the fetishizible components in *gendai-geki* film seem to have been less obvious and harder to stereotype.

Interestingly, the Western attempt to fetishize/commodify the Japanese modern woman (smoking, drinking, wearing modern make-up and hair-styles, and/or Western clothes) seems to have involved reverting her into a more geisha-like character, as indicated in the Polish poster above. It was designed by Wlodzimierz Zakrzewscy in cooperation with his wife Elzbieta Owsepian Zakrzewska for Imai Tadashi's film *Dark Waters* in 1955, in connection with the film's release in Poland. When compared to the original Japanese

poster and publicity still, we can see that the Zakrzewscys actually copied the smoking Japanese woman in the pink kimono from the Japanese poster into their own design, which indicates that the Zakrzewscys must have had access to some of the original Japanese publicity material, in connection with their designing the Polish original. While the Zakrzewscys obviously found it useful for copy, they severely changed the iconographical identity of the modern female character. I believe they did so for cultural and ideological reasons, considering how strongly the woman in the original poster indicated the degree to which the Japanese adhered to Western ideals, both in terms of film plot and poster aesthetics, by using an alluring publicity still to attract an audience for this particular film. The female character displayed in the iconography of the Polish poster on the other hand indicates an artistic effort which resulted in a rather sterile and anonymous woodcut-like 'close-up' of a Japanese woman without both cigarette and pensive gaze, displaying completely neutral Japanese facial features, against a yellow background. It is interesting to note that the Zakrzewscys thus disarmed the women of her sexualized identity in the original poster design in preference of an inclination towards Japonist stereotype, clearly visible in an iconographical element such as the pattern displaying curious looking carp swimming around, which covers both the yellow wallpaper behind the woman, and her kimono. We may thus conclude that this Polish poster design indicates the film's genre without lending itself to (s)exploitation of the Other. *Dark Waters* does not seem to have been screened in Europe during the time frame of my study, except at the French Cinémathèque in 1972, but it was circulated in the United States according to Donald Richie.[36] It was also screened by the famous film club Cinema 16 in New York, in March 1956.[37]

Urayama Kiriro's film *The Girl I Abandoned/Watashi ga suteta onna* (1969), was never screened in France, nor in Great Britain. The film was however released in the United States in 1970 and tells the story of a poor youth who abandons his girlfriend in order to make a better life for himself.

I have studied two posters for the film; one being the original Japanese film poster, composed of three film stills and the film's title in red, whereas the other one is a Cuban poster by Niko aka Antonio Perez Gonzalez, dated 1970. The original Japanese film poster is more or less identical with any Western film poster in its adherence to Haralovich's matrix above, allowing for both the 'place[ment of] the characters *within* the narrative of the film, at a point of narrative enigma'[38] and '[the establishment of a character] as protagonist

by her position in the poster and by the way the fragments of text and her image are graphically juxtaposed'.[39]


Figure 48


Figure 49

The Cuban poster by Niko does not seem to relate to either the original film poster or its PR-material, nor does the thick black ink silhouette of a young girl with green hair and a yellow face, dressed in a red dress against a blue background correspond to either fetishizible components of commodification, or the criterions in Haralovich's matrix. It would however seem that Niko may have addressed the issue of national identity by way of his poster design, depending on whether the choice of yellow colour for the girl's face was a conscious act of depicting nationality, since he could, in fact, have left her face untinted, as he did the girls' arms. My reflection on the poster design's inherent ambivalence is further nourished by the fact that a closer inspection of the girl's face (shown in profile) reveals her visible eye to be clearly slanted. It may furthermore be argued that the (blue) balloon protruding from her mouth with a white question mark in it, from an iconographical point of view, could be read as an additional, self-reflexive symbol of the film itself, referring both to the plot ('Why did he abandon me?'), and/or to the fact that *The Girl I Abandoned* is a *Japanese* film, and thus foreign to the Cuban audience. The Cuban title of the film translates as *Whose Fault?*

Kobayashi Masaki's film *Hymn to a Tired Man* was not commercially released in France, Great Britain or the United States, before 1976. It was, however, screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1969 and then in Poland a couple of years later.

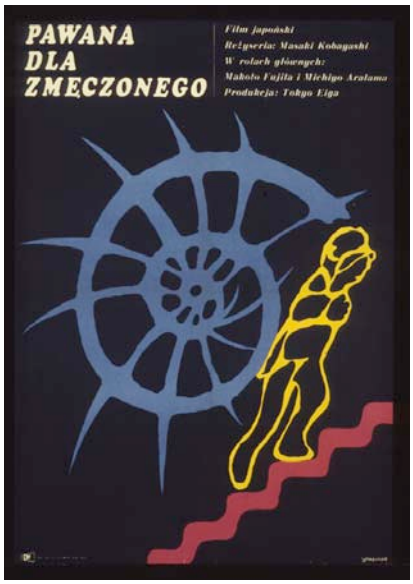


Figure 50

A Polish poster for the film relates to it as *Pawana dla zmeczonego* and was signed by one of Poland's most well-known graphic designers; Jerzy Treutler, in 1971. Treutler used only the three primary colours for the entire design, which may be described as a minimalist composition; a rudimentary image of a man struggling up a flight of stairs, seemingly carrying an enormous load on his back. The figure of the man is depicted in yellow, what looks like a burden on his back is depicted in blue, and the contour of a flight of stairs is traced in red pencil against a black background. The large blue iconographical element in fact symbolizes the man's deafness in the shape of a broken eardrum, the result and burdensome memory of the torture the main character in the film suffered during World War Two. There is obviously no way of knowing for certain why the figure of the man was not drawn in red (for pain) or blue (for sadness), but the fact that he is painted in yellow may be read as a visual clue to the national identity of the film. Still, this iconography does not display a stereotyped character which can be referred to either as a representative of the 'yellow peril' discourse, or as exhibiting any fetishizible components, nor are there any signs of iconographic interplay with any original Japanese PR-material.

My research indicates that the overseas posters refusing commodification for the benefit of eclecticism were not necessarily linked to communist poster aesthetics and ideology. I have as yet come across only one Western poster for a Japanese film which avoided all iconographical references and displayed a design completely based on hand written information.

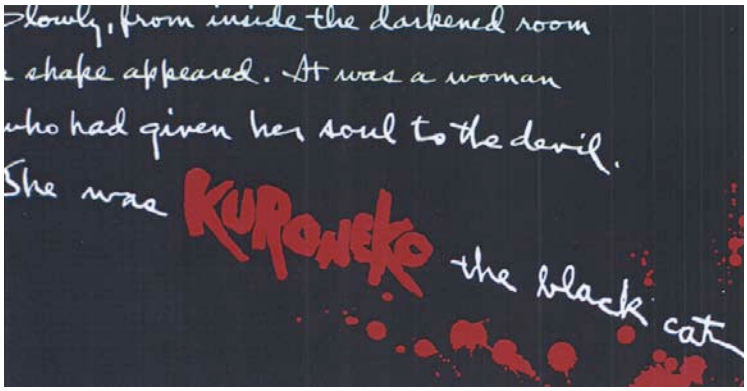


Figure 51

The above poster design for *The Black Cat* by Shindo Kaneto thereby represents a more intellectual approach to poster design, which must be referred to as a variation on conceptual art work, as represented by for example On Kawara and later Jenny Holzer and increasingly more popular during the 1960s.[40] *The Black Cat* was commercially released in Great Britain in 1968 and in the United States the year after. Considering the non-commercial design of the above poster, and the fact that it is held by the British Film Institute, I assume this poster was designed for the British release of the film.

The British film import company Contemporary Films Limited commissioned posters for two Japanese films, which were commercially screened in Great Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s. None of the posters was signed or dated, but they share certain iconographical similarities, which seem to indicate that the same poster designer may have produced both posters. An immediate common characteristic is that neither composition display a Classical Hollywood Cinema-type of poster design as indicated by Haralovich's matrix above, or a commodification of fetishizible components such as a well-known director's name, or the issue of national identity. Instead, these two poster designs must be discussed in terms of eclectic style and chromatic strategies, allowing for their likeness to contemporary book-covers.

Shindo Kaneto's film *Children of Hiroshima* was introduced to the West at Cannes Film Festival in May 1953, and was commercially released in France one year later. Shindo's film was also selected as the 'Critic's Choice' in the 'Without Trumpets Section' of the National Film Theatre programme in May 1955, at the time for its commercial release in Great Britain.

When *Films and Filming* presented *Children of Hiroshima* as its 'Film of the Month' in the April issue of 1955, based on the original publicity stills of the film, it became clear that one of the stills had evidently also been used for the design of the film poster below.[41]


Figure 52

The two figures making up the composition of this British poster for *Children of Hiroshima* are central to its iconography from the point of view that the design almost completely lacks written information. Barthes wrote:

> At the level of the literal message, the text replies […] to the question: what is it? The text helps to identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself; it is a matter of a denoted description of the image (a description which is often incomplete)[…][42]

Barthes' call for text information is thus strangely omitted in the poster design for *Children of Hiroshima*, since it gave no information on the film's director, nor of its genre, nor of its country of origin. The only relevant written message in the design was limited to the film's English title, despite the fact that such shortage of information may well have left the potential cinemagoer in a state of ambivalence. From this point of view of written information, the illustrated image in the poster design thus denoted the total message of the film poster since anyone who saw the image would almost certainly have made the connection between the two Japanese figures, the bomb and Hiroshima/Nagasaki. It would seem that the poster designer chose to let the image say it all by using iconographical elements which were impossible to misread, although it could be argued that such an iconographical strategy hardly makes it unnecessary to print the name of the film's director, its principal actors, and its country of origin. This type of information could well have been more crucial for the decision to go see the film, than the illustrated image we now see.

In addition to the unmistakeable image, the designer however also used two powerful colours for the poster for *Children of Hiroshima*; the yellow field making up the background for the Japanese mother and her son on the left hand side of the poster, whereas the atom bomb they are looking at is displayed against a red background on the right hand side of the poster image. These two colour blocks stand in opposition to each other in that the woman and child on the left hand side represent survival and humanity, and the bomb

on the right hand side represent death and the potential technological destruction of society. Seeing that the yellow colour field on the left hand side is broader than the red one, and because the yellow shade of colour shines brighter than the red, the onlooker directs her/his gaze in that direction first. Yellow thus became the colour of hope and the onlooker perceived a very clear image of the Japanese mother standing on the deck together with her son, holding his hand, as a representative of this hope. The right hand side of the poster is unclear, giving an impression of heat and chaos. Another interesting pictorial device is the way in which the Japanese woman and the little boy lead the onlooker into the iconographical design of the poster through their gaze. Once the onlooker has focused on the figures s/he cannot help but follow their gazes towards the mushroom cloud. The overall design of this poster is furthermore marked by a very elegant and delicate line, slightly reminiscent of the styles of a 1950s book-jacket, an impression which may have been further underlined by the scarce linguistic message in the poster design.

Kurosawa Akira's *Hidden Fortress* was released in the West through the Berlin Film Festival in 1959, where it was also awarded the Silver Bear. *Hidden Fortress* was then screened at the San Francisco Film Festival later on the same year. The film was commercially released in Great Britain during the spring season 1961, in the United States one year later, and in France in 1964. According to the programming documents, *Hidden Fortress* was screened regularly at the French Cinémathèque during the 1960s, reaching its peak in 1972 with three screenings in one year.[43]


Figure 53

The overall design of the British poster for the film has an explicit likeness in configuration and colour treatment to the above poster for *Children of Hiroshima*, both in that the onlooker is invited to read the poster design from left to right, but also in their mirrored disposition of the picture plane. In the poster design for *Children of Hiroshima*, the viewer's gaze was directed by the two Japanese figures' gaze, towards the right hand side of the composition, whereas in the poster for *Hidden Fortress*, the overall design of the poster

image was again split vertically into two iconographic fields; the left one representing an image, the right one containing the written information. The image of the frontally positioned young girl looking straight into the eyes of the onlooker invited her/him to 'read' the poster, introducing her/him first of all to herself, then to the dramatic scene between two (seemingly) anonymous men in the background, before finally allowing the onlooker's gaze to find the answer to the scenic mystery through the written information on the right hand side of the design.

In the above poster for *Children of Hiroshima*, the mirrored disposition of the picture plane allowed the yellow colour field on the left hand side to dominate 3/5 of the picture plane. The disposition of the poster design for *Hidden Fortress,* was based on a dramatic scene occupying 2/5 of the right hand side of the poster, while the title of the film was written with letters so large as to dominate the 3/5 left on the right hand side of the picture plane. These letters were designed in such a way that they seemed to be covered in green foliage, and thus seemed to be almost hidden from sight, at the same time as they dominated the whole poster design. The names of the two main characters, Mifune Toshiro and Uehara Misa, were given in black but rather small letters underneath the film title, and the director's name was given as 'A. Kurosawa', at the very bottom of the picture plane. Even though the right hand section of the poster design comprises 3/5 of the total picture plane, there are no traces of adherence to the American star system in its disposition. Rather the opposite, since the overall impression of the poster design is, again, its near resemblance to a contemporaneous book-jacket. The designer once more made equal use of two colours; green and orange, allowing only the kimono-like top worn by the young girl to imply a connection to Japan, but without any further explanation as to whether this was a result of a fashion craze, or represented the film's national identity. I therefore argue that this is yet another example of an eclectic film poster representing a Japanese film without hardly any clues to the film's origin.

### **5.4** EXPLOITING JAPANESE FILM STILLS

Basing poster designs on publicity stills or other portraits in order to promote the star persona or the film's narrative comes from a very long tradition of promotion. The Japanese tradition of advertising famous kabuki players is at least 300 years old. According to Janet Staiger the American film industry had set up standards for public advertising of its film product already by 1915[44] and the tradition of promoting features such as film genre and film stars through lithographed posters was in place already by 1909.[45]

Western posters for Japanese *gendai-geki* or contemporary films seem to have been increasingly based on film stills for exploitation of their fetishizible components, which in many cases resulted in a closer adherence to Haralovich's matrix regarding poster design than that achieved for *jidai-geki* films.

Figure 54


Figure 55

The designer's name and publishing year for this German poster for Imamura Shohei's *Pigs and Battleships* have not yet been established, but the film was marketed in the April issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* in 1961, along with two publicity stills of which one was the source of the above poster design.[46] The film was later commercially released in the United States in 1963, and in France one year later. The style of the poster indicates that the German release also occurred during this time period. In terms of its iconography, this poster displays several interesting features and I suggest that the design is actually based on certain ideological aspects drawn from the film stills below. One such instance of ideology is of course the exploitation of the young girl's facial features through a reduction of her Asian identity and the emphasizing of her body shape in accordance with Western beauty standards for the benefit of a Western audience. We should also note the American sailor sitting in the foreground, drinking and ogling the girl to let her know that he's willing to pay money for her company. Given the scene depicted in the publicity still below, this eye contact may have been initiated or encouraged by the girl. The Japanese girl in the poster iconography however seem to react differently to the ogling, and she is carried off by her very Japanese looking boyfriend, against a yellow background. The designer of the German poster has also used the stereotyped Japonist typography discussed above for the word 'geisha' in the composition. This poster thus answers to Haralovich's criterion that the

poster design should 'place the characters *within* the narrative of the film, at a point of narrative enigma',[47] but in this case, the designer's interpretation of the enigma may not have fully concurred with the film's narrative, thus leaving us with an ideologically charged poster design.

Figure 56

The Hong Kong version of the poster for Oshima Nagisa's film *Naked Youth* aka *Cruel Story of Youth/Seishun zankoku monogatari* (1960) was also based on a publicity still and may be said to expose a modern case of misogyny. I wish however to address the fact that the same still resulted in an identical film poster for the American release of the film in 1961 and that, in this case, Hong Kong represented a Western lifestyle, since it was a colony belonging to the United Kingdom at the time. The quiet nature of the additional publicity stills for *Naked Youth* indicate that the Western distributor/exhibitor was in fact given a choice of how he wanted to commodify Japanese film product.

Figure 57


Figure 58

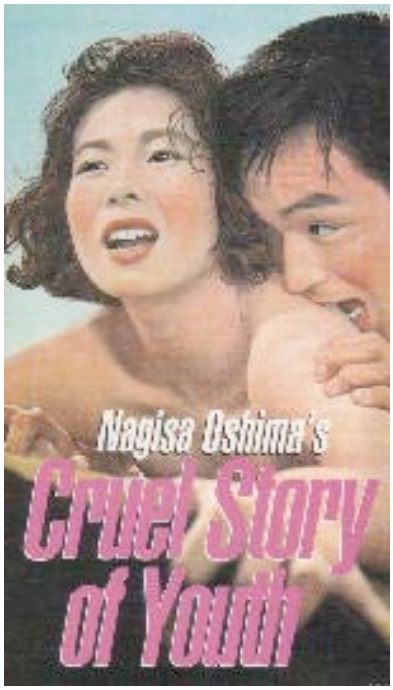


Figure 59

Figure 60

Figure 61

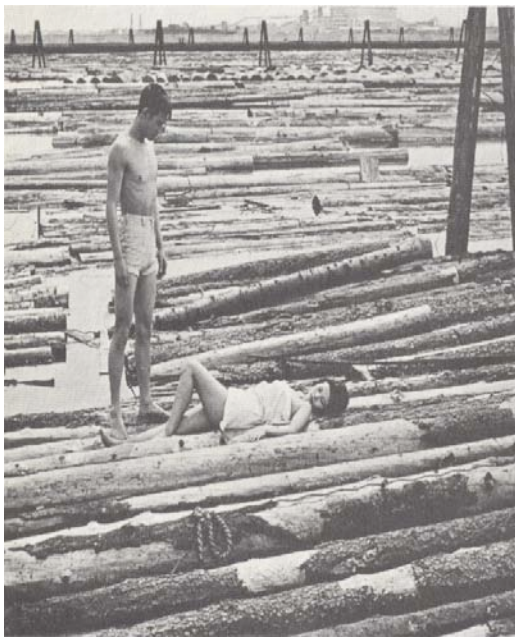

Figure 62

The choice of aggressive exploitation of the Japanese female has nevertheless been a recurring feature in Western publicity material advertising Japanese film product. We must therefore ask why the Western distributors chose to exploit misogyny and violence by selecting these particular production photos for their publicity purposes[48]. It seems to me, however, that misogyny per se was not necessarily the reason why Western distributors and local poster designers went on to indiscriminately use these particular Japanese publicity stills, but rather the fact that they implicitly opened up for a continued Orientalist approach to Japanese film product by representing it as Other.

### **5.5** *CASE STUDY:* THE EROTICISATION OF A JAPANESE FILM

In this case study I shall problematize the complicated interplay between publicity stills and overseas film poster iconography in relation to the (s)exploitation of Imamura Shohei's *Insect Woman* based on Mark Betz's[49] very interesting notion that high (art) and low (grindhouse) cinemas could be said to have shared the same discourses and means of address during the 1960s[50]. Like most Western works referring to art cinema, Betz does not clearly implicate Japanese cinema in his argument, but in view of the fact that he included Teshigahara Hiroshi's *Woman of the Dunes* among the art films mentioned in his essay, I have assumed that his argument may include this particular national cinema as well[51]. I have thus found that his assumption regarding a shared discourse is amply reflected in the media history of the publicity material produced in relation to the introduction of *Insect Woman* and other material referring to its Western reception. Not only does it reveal interesting discrepancies and misunderstandings, both in relation to the film itself and to the image of the national cinema it was supposedly representing, these fractures are explained by Betz' suggested similar means of address.

From a formal point of view, the images presented as publicity material for *Insect Woman*, explored the generic connection between film stills and film plot, based on the photographic work of the unit still photographer. It is common knowledge that in both cases our general understanding presupposes that the film stills should reflect the imagery on the footage shot by the movie camera, thus indicating who is in the movie and what it looks like.[52] We also know that the unit still photographer takes many hundreds of photographs during the shooting of the film whereupon the film company's publicist makes a selection of those which convey the highest 'PV' or production value, for publicity purposes. These stills have then traditionally been used mainly to promote the film in public media, and for

display at local cinemas. It would seem that the Japanese publicity departments at the country's film companies have operated according to the same matrix regarding Western releases of their film product since around 1950.

At first glance, the recurrent reproduction of only one publicity still from *Insect Woman* in Western media may therefore not seem so remarkable and may be considered as merely a strategy of very focused film promotion. A consistent publication of only one particular image/publicity still from a certain film, however undoubtedly results in the still becoming an even stronger emblem for the film it represents, decidedly guiding the impression of the film among the public. In view of the limited amount of Japanese films released in the West, and the persistence of an Orientalist discourse in relation to this film product, one must therefore consider the possibility that such a measure may result in further implications, and may come to not only designate the particular film it represents, but in extreme cases also be seen as primarily confirming and even emphasizing the existing image of a whole national cinema. I argue that the publicity still below for *Insect Woman* has mainly resulted to the latter, since this still is not really representative of the film plot in Imamura's film, which is '[…] focused on strong-willed women battling against their apparently bleak destinies.',[53] according to Nakata Toichi. It is therefore all the more intriguing that this particular publicity still kept on representing *Insect Woman* for years in different media in several Western countries, thus becoming its emblem, regardless of the apparent paradox between the film still's subject and the social realism represented by the film plot.

Figure 63

It is of particular interest to try and understand the consequences of such an ambivalent image of representation (publicity still) in connection with the commodification of Imamura Shohei's films (see the discussion on his film *Pigs and Battleship* above), since Imamura was generally considered to be a 'leftist' filmmaker, who based his films on a social realist approach to his subject matter, and consequently remained critical of the traditional image of 'things Japanese'. My argument that *Insect Woman* was subject to a biased and essentially misleading introduction in the West due to the repetitive reproduction of the above publicity still, is primarily based on the complete contents of the set of publicity stills[54] from the film's release in Europe at the Berlin Film Festival in 1964, as well as the plot description of the film in reviews of various Western media, followed by additional (s)exploitation in the iconography of two Western film posters for the film.

The Western historiography of *Insect Woman* informs us that the film was not commercially released in France until in 1972, and *La Révue du Cinéma* - successor of *Répertoire Géneral des Films* and edited by *Image et Son* - published a matter-of-fact account of the film's plot, followed by an evaluation, written by André Cornand. The evaluation read:

> Through the history of Tome and her daughter, Imamura tells us about the social conditions in Japan. The weak and the poor are being exploited by the rich and mighty, first on the countryside and then in the villages. Even though Tome seems to be moving up on the social ladder as a prostitute, she remains the eternal victim, constantly exploited. The film's ultimate question, whether or not Tome's daughter will meet the same destiny as her mother, seems to be answered in the affirmative; she will follow in the same footsteps as her mother. This conclusion however appears to have less to do with an inexorable destiny, than with social consequence, a political reality, reflecting a class society where everybody exploits one another at all levels.
> This is the story Imamura tells us, and this is also his thesis, which is further revealed by the film's original title; 'Entomological chronicles of Japan' […].'[55]

The above account of *Insect Woman* fitted rather well with the neo-realism attributed to it in *L'Humanité*, in which the film was described as '[…] a kind of neo-realistic chronicle of Japan during and after World War Two.'[56] By presuming that both these accounts represented fair descriptions of this particular film, they allow us to label Imamura Shohei's *Insect Woman* a 'neo-realist drama', as we know the genre in the West, and this choice of genre definition was further confirmed by Donald Richie who described Imamura's style as 'documentary-like realism'.[57] When consulting the remaining publicity stills for the film from a graphic point of view, these also seem to confirm both the cinematographic genre of the film and Imamura's neo-realistic style. The story told in *Insect Woman* thus hardly presents itself as a case of Oriental escapism, but rather of brutal realism, which begs the

question why such a 'neo-realist drama' has been repeatedly illustrated by the naturalistic publicity still above in Western media.

Leaving the accounts of the film in *La Révue du Cinéma* and *L'Humanité* to one side, how is the above image interpreted in iconographical terms? To the Western scholar of Japanese art history, the iconography of this particular publicity still shares certain similarities with Japanese *shunga*; a particular type of erotic woodblock prints. The term *shunga* may be literally translated as 'picture of spring', with spring being an euphemism for sex, although it would perhaps be enough for most Western observers if this type of print was defined as merely a 'Japanese' print. Apart from the obvious fact that we see a representation of a Japanese woman in the above publicity still, and therefore may conclude that this is probably not a publicity still for a Western film, the image may also have reminded us of the conventional tropes of a certain kind of Oriental pastoral scene indicated by the shadow of the trees, the handcrafted baskets, the pattern and line of the woman's short-sleeved traditional rural clothing and the presumably indigo-blue of the jacket of the character kneeling with his back to the camera. Formally speaking, the only jarring factor appears to be the steep camera angle, looking up at the couple and thus elevating them from the ground level. Whether we make the explicit connection to *shunga* or not, the young Japanese woman taking pleasure in the intimacy of the situation reflects a sexploitation trope which Betz has referred to as 'her moment', or the woman's orgasm[58]. Ergo, a slice of exoticism in the form of an effeminate and decorative East, trimmed with a lack of (Western) decorum, summed up as art film sexploitation. These reflections are based on the iconographic elements in the above film cum publicity still, but what do they have in common with the above accounts of the film plot and the labelling of *Insect Woman* as a 'neo-realist drama'? This evident discrepancy is further emphasized by the fact that the film review in *L'Humanité,* contains only one account of an actual scene from the film; namely that of the father suckling his daughter's breast, seen above. What is the reason behind the establishment and lingering of such a discrepancy between the subject itself – the film plot – and its public image – the film still?

The very first review of *Insect Woman* presented to a Western readership was written by Mary Evans and published in *The Japan Times* on November 22, 1963. Although the italicized sentence in Evans' review below explains why it was accompanied by the above publicity still, we must consider that this was probably the first instance of the film's mediatisation in a Western context. Considering its consequences, I would say that Evans' open predilection of Orientalism over social realism was especially unfortunate from this

point of view, although she essentially positioned the film's narrative in relation to literature, and described Imamura's film as being 'a two-hour study of the Japanese condition that is both as satiric – and in a way as tolerant – as a work by Swift or Defoe.':

> 'This long and episodic plot is scratchy with references to greed and hardness with money, shockingly funny with allusions to sexual deceptions and impositions, rather haunting in its evocation of life in the primitive country regions from which still springs the stream of the Japanese mentality. *It is these scenes in Tohoku; with a fertility figure mountain goddess, with old women who seem aged enough and bawdy enough to have given birth to Japan itself, which are the most interesting in the film.* What seemed less pleasing was the insistence of the director (who is known to have leftist leanings) on using as time indicators only events of "social" – meaning leftist - significance. […]'[59] (my italics)

Despite its evident realism, it comes as no surprise that Evans did not label *Insect Woman* a 'neo-realist drama', assuming that she was familiar with the term. Instead, it would seem that she chose to present *Insect Woman* in a rather lyrical, almost innocent, setting and from this point of view the choice of illustration/publicity still seem adequate. It is true that we cannot know for certain, whether this was Evans' own choice of illustration or some one else's, but in any case, it clearly indicates the impact of this particular film still early on in the film's genealogy.

However, when the Association for the Diffusion of Japanese Films Abroad marketed *Insect Woman* to the Western community in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* in January 1964, the introduction of the film completely left out Evans' lyricism:

> Since Tomu can remember men have always cast dark shadows over her life. She had been born only two months after her parents' marriage, and rumour says that she is an illegitimate child.
> Tomu is married at 23, bears a child, but leaves home after finding that her husband has fathered a child by her maid. During the difficult years following the end of the Pacific War, Tome works as a maid at an American Army Base. She then operates a call-girl racket until the law catches up with her.
> After her release from prison she finds that her own daughter has taken up with her patron, but after her long experience with men, nothing can break her spirit.[60]

The above presentation of *Insect Woman* to the West was however also accompanied by the illustration/publicity still used in *The Japan Times*, and I suggest that this obvious breach between Imamura's film plot and the publicity still used to represent it, makes visible an instance of self-Orientalization on behalf of the editor of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* considering its slight relevance to the film plot. I also argue that the choice of illustration and the ensuing act of self-Orientalization was conditioned by the fact that both publications were directed to a Western readership.

The third occasion of the film's presentation in Western media was through an un-illustrated film review in the *New York Times*, in connection with the commercial release of *Insect Woman* in the United States in the summer of 1964, only a few months after its first screening in Berlin:

> […] As a youngster born out of wedlock, Tome Matsuki soon learns that her mother is casually promiscuous and that living with her simple-minded foster father is natural. Buffeted by fate and man, she passes from one liaison to the next sustained only by the instinct for survival. Mr Imamura's chronology takes her from the 1920s through the war years and through a life of prostitution, childbirth (but never marriage) until she is a success as a Tokyo Madame and mistress of a small-business man, who seduces her illegitimate daughter but is foiled in trying to win her to her mother's wayward life. We finally see the indestructible Tome come full circle as she plods back to her native village and, presumably, a contented life with her daughter and her future son-in-law.[61]

This review by A.H. Weiler in fact seems to be the first presentation clearly fitting the French genre description above, indicating that *Insect Woman* should indeed be seen as a 'neo-realist drama'. On the other hand, a couple of months later the same year, Michel Delahaye in the *Cahiers du cinéma* stated that *Insect Woman* was the best film at the Berlin Film Festival in 1964, based on the following merits:

> '[…] It's (no doubt, consciously) the most Brechtian film ever made […] It's also a Mizoguchian film (the director even paraphrases the situation in *Woman in the Rumour* where the young daughter discovers that her mother keeps a brothel and later takes up with her mother's lover) in that Mizoguchi's films (in which the overall theme is women's alienation) are also Brechtian. But […] nobody has yet illustrated as many child-births and intimacies on film, as Imamura have. During these, the partners discuss a lot and each character is original. This makes way for, for instance, the scene of the couple under the tree, where the man, in order to answer the woman, has to take his lips from her left breast, which he is suckling.'[62]

It is not hard to guess from the text, that among the publicity stills published from the Film Festival in Berlin in connection with the report in *Cahiers du cinéma*, the French also chose to reproduce the above film still, enlarged and dominating among the publicity stills under the headline 'Berliner passion'. We are thus again confronted with a choice of illustration matching one of the described scenes in a review, but *not* the one of the girl 'discovering' that her mother runs a brothel, *nor* of the eternal triangle, *but* of the primitive and utterly rural scene of a father *'suckling'* his daughter's breast. This choice of illustration appears equally paradoxical in relation to Delahaye's reference to *Insect Woman* as '[…] the most Brechtian film ever made […]' and such a genre description per se begs further questions with reference to others having labelled the film a 'neo-realist drama'.

David Desser's later inclusion, in 1988, of *Insect Woman* among Japan's new wave cinema further complicated matters as to its genre definition. Desser's account of the film, however, reveals a clearly ambivalent stance, which in this case has a mediating effect on the opposing reviews above:

> 'In *Insect Woman*, Imamura focuses on the life of a woman who is born in near-poverty in rural Tohoku some years before World War II. The film follows her through a series of events corresponding to the changes wrought in Japan by the war and postwar periods. […] If it is true that Tome stands for the essence of Japanese life, then we can claim that Tome's experiences are a microcosm for Japan's modern era. […] Tome is the first of Imamura's fully realized women survivors. […] presented as a whole woman, her flaws intact, from the terrible poetry she writes in her diary, to the cruelty she inflicts upon the girls in the bordello. […].' [63]

Again assuming that a genre definition and a written presentation constitute a reliable guide line, it is still clear that none of the taxonomic labels applied to Imamura Shohei's *Insect Woman*, that is 'neo-realist drama', 'Brechtian drama' or 'new wave film', were fittingly illustrated by the above publicity image. What does it actually say? Is it, in fact, letting us know anything at all about Imamura Shohei's film, or does it mainly convey a general 'image' which we may refer to as 'Japanese' or 'Orientalist'? We need to explore the extent to which the (Japanese) film industry publicists were depending on an already established image of 'Japaneseness' in the West in terms of graphic exhibition, and willingly condescended to self-Orientalization for commercial reasons. The favoured publicity still for Imamura's *Insect Woman* is an excellent example of this assumption, since a cinemagoer who went to see the film only because of what the above publicity still seemed to be promising, would undoubtedly have been disappointed. I therefore argue that had s/he seen any one of the additional publicity stills, as yet more or less unpublished, but presenting the film's plot and mood far more accurately, the graphic ambivalence vis-à-vis the film plot and correct genre definition would have been dispersed, together with the cinemagoer's disappointment:


Figure 64


Figure 65


Figure 66


Figure 67


Figure 68


Figure 69


Figure 70


Figure 71


Figure 72

Figure 73

Despite the 'rural timelessness' represented by the coveted publicity image for *Insect Woman*, the ten remaining stills immediately place the film in a dreary urban surrounding of the early 1960s, reflecting a society very far from the success story of modern Japan at the time. The framing of the scenes furthermore convey a rather photo-journalistic approach, both technically and thematically, almost without any attempts at posing. Photojournalism, having reached its peak in the early 1960s, here unreservedly reflects the neo-realistic aesthetics of Imamura's film and clearly conveys the social issues at the heart of *Insect Woman*. This type of film still was however not used for publicity until in the 1970's, due to its lack of fetishizible components in accordance with the publicity convention at the time, despite the fact that, in our case, few of the ten alternative publicity stills leave the onlooker in doubt as to the fate of 'Tomu's' daughter. Nor do the publicity stills for *Insect Woman* romanticize the situation these women find themselves in. They are clearly prostitutes servicing a less successful clientele; poorly kept and given away by the cheap objects on display in their dwellings. 'Tomu' is still young and unspoiled, a fact which makes her stand out among the worn down women that surround her in the publicity stills, making the question of her future possibilities even more acute.

Imamura thus managed to give his film a very realistic tone, and this realism was perfectly reflected in the alternative ten publicity stills. It therefore seems possible to argue that the instigating of an inevitable discrepancy between the actual plot of *Insect Woman* and the publicity still which has become its emblem, was considered to be of less importance than the maintenance of an Orientalist image of Japanese film in the West, in order to sell the product. The publicist at the Nikkatsu Film Corporation in Tokyo, thus blatantly sponged on the traditional Western image of Japan through yet an other instance of self-Orientalization. In addition to this basic assumption, comes the fact that the Japanese film companies were perfectly aware that the most popular Japanese film genre in the West during the time frame of my study was *jidai-geki* film or period drama.

I have also traced two German film posters[64] for *Insect Woman* from the 1960s, which seem to confirm the continued iconographic exploitation of Orientalism in relation to the Japanese post-war film product. As already discussed in this chapter, my research indicates that Western poster designers were inclined to appropriate original Japanese publicity material for their own purposes when designing posters for contemporary Japanese films, and one line of inquiry has therefore been related to the formal aspects of this exploitation, in terms of possible gender exploitation vis-à-vis a certain image of a national cinema. The Japanese title of Imamura's film is *Nippon Konchuki,* which is

literally translated as 'Record of Insect Life in Japan'; a title which would seem to indicate a 'verfremdungseffekt' in Shohei's direction of this 'neo-realist drama', as previously indicated in the review in the *New York Times*.

In connection with its introduction in the West, the film was however given Western titles combining the two words 'woman' and 'insect' (*Insect Woman, Femme Insecte, Das Insektenweib*); an improbable choice of title by any standards today, and, I would imagine, impossible already by any of the 1960s standards as a title and/or publicity image for a Western drama.

Figure 74

Figure 75

Still, none of the German poster designers refrained from illustrating this so called 'insect woman' which makes it obvious that both posters above display clear instances of gender exploitation (or 'woman-as-spectacle'[65]), as well as an implicit racist disrespect for Japanese women in particular, by staging the figures semi-naked, and crawling or huddling against an uncivilized landscape setting. On closer inspection, we can see that one of the female figures does not display any Japanese features at all; whereas the other figure is characterized by strong Japanese facial features, accompanied by claws instead of fingernails. In addition to the women's semi-nakedness, these images display an explicit lack of human dignity which has been replaced by overt sexuality through body poses. A closer examination of one of the publicity stills above furthermore reveals that the girl in this particular still served as copy for the German film poster on the right hand side. When comparing the social realistic situation reflected by the film still – the punter's hand forcing its way through the picture frame towards the girl's closed thighs (and presumably farther) - the cold-hearted sexploitation of the vulnerable character in Imamura's film by the German poster designer become even more blatant while at the same time unavoidably underlining

the average prejudice invested in Western images of the Other woman from the 1950s until the mid-1970s.

In order to further illustrate my point on disrespectful poster design in this particular case study, I refer to the Polish poster for *Dark Waters* in this chapter, which may serve as a counterpoint to the German posters for *Insect Woman*, since the iconography of the Polish poster indicates an artistic effort which resulted in a Japonist woodcut-like 'close-up' of a Japanese woman lacking all indications of the sexualized identity hinted at in the original film poster. We may thus conclude that the Polish poster design indicates the film's genre without lending itself to sexploitation of the Other, in contrast to the German poster designs for Imamura's *Insect Woman* above.

My inferences are based on general Western iconographical traditions regarding representations of the Other which may involve nakedness, landscape settings far from modern urbanity, unfavourable rendering of physical features, and/or a disrespectful body posture. Such a compromised iconographical tradition obviously involves a gender perspective as well, simply because most image makers have traditionally been men. Contrary to the representation of the woman in the above mentioned Polish poster, the female figures in the German poster designs are clearly displayed as animals, and the chauvinism/racism inherent in the iconographical rendering of them is further emphasized by the Western film title comprising a word like 'insect'. These poster designs thereby seemingly contradict the myth that the early globalization of the world through 1960s' and 1970s' television, together with women's liberation movements, should have ensued the disappearance of this particular type of biased publicity iconography.

I have thus found that the Western film posters for Japanese films that I have researched in this chapter on more than one occasion demonstrate a similar iconography to the Western posters representing art film presented by Mark Betz in his essay; in that they all indicated 'a frequent [iconographical] concentration on the imaging of sexuality, especially female sexuality, as iconic markers of the films' purported content.'[66] The issue is further complicated in this case by the fact that David Desser, in his book on Japanese new wave film, relates to Imamura Shohei as a feminist: 'The New Wave director most often thought of as a *feminisuto*, and even a genuine feminist by some, is Imamura Shohei.'[67]

The second line of inquiry confirming a continued exploitation of a given image of Orientalism is again concerned with the public reception of a seemingly inconsistent publicity material through the example of *Insect Woman*. I suggest that the contradiction

between the newspaper reviews and the preferred publicity still and the iconography of the poster designs, must be understood as a case of 'a shared means of address'[68] by which Betz meant the fact that 'Virtually all of the scholars who have written on art cinema as a movement or as a field of textuality mention the degree to which sexual frankness and 'adult' displays of sexuality are constituent elements of European art cinema's appeal'[69]. I believe the same approach guided the exhibition of *Insect Woman* in Germany in 1964 and I therefore argue that the choice of locale (the art house cinema) is paramount also in relation to the above argument on the difference in aesthetics between the Polish poster for *Dark Waters* and those produced in Germany for *Insect Woman*. The former Soviet countries had no equivalence to Western art house culture between 1950 and 1975 which also accounts for my reference to a certain ideological agenda in relation to the aesthetics of the Polish film poster above. At the time of its exhibition in Germany, the cinema owners/exhibitors in question would presumably have had both the publicity stills above *and* the two German film posters for *Insect Woman* at their disposal for publicity purposes. It's not likely that a European cinema in the early 1960s would have displayed all eleven film stills illustrated above, however. Instead, it seems likely that the film still on display would have been the very first illustrated above, and it would most likely have been displayed together with any one of the locally produced film posters. Such an assumption could only be confirmed by much welcomed photographic evidence, but my research indicates that the shared means of address in reference to a Japanese film would have implied advertising an 'emblematic' Orientalist image of Japan in relation to *Insect Woman*, as well as a more sexist and exploiting image as perceived in the above film poster designs.

In view of Mark Betz' postulated development of publicity material related to art cinema in the United States at this time, my material indicates that a more or less identical development occurred in Western Europe. The iconographical elements in the German poster could thus be seen as the result of a specific socio-cultural development. In terms of gender and womanhood, I however believe that the consequence of any of the chosen displays would undoubtedly have created an unsettling impression on the potential *female* art house *habitué*. A highly unsatisfactory result since the feminist aspect conveyed by Imamura Shohei in this film would probably have been of considerable interest for this particular female cinemagoer. Instead, I suggest that the tantalizing quality of the iconography of both the publicity still and the film posters was meant to encourage the mainstream heterosexual male cinemagoer to go see the film, irrespective of the film's actual style and plot. These assumptions would seem to reveal an unwillingness by both

Western film distributors and audiences of the early 1960s to take Japanese film product seriously, even though Japan's independent/new wave film films were highly up to date with the general social development in the West. Instead, Western cinephiles of Japanese cinema primarily preferred to continue the brand of Orientalism related to the image of Japanese film product, a fact which once again brings up the subject of gender distribution among these fans, and whether or not a different attitude among the distributors could have resulted in a different programming and advertising of Japanese films at this time. The same unwillingness seems to explain the successful iconography of the particular publicity still at centre stage in this essay.

Based on this dichotomy, and the above discussion, we may thus conclude that both the dispersion of the above publicity still by Western critics and exhibitors in relation to Imamura Shohei's *Insect Woman*, as well as the production of the German film posters for the film, were undertaken without any immediate interest in the film itself.

## **5.6** SUMMARY

Basing my exposition on both capitalist and communist ideologies of advertising, I have outlined some formal and socio-cultural concepts which seem to have impacted on Western exploitation of the publicity material which represented Japanese film product between 1950 and 1975 in this chapter. After adding the condition of 'national identity' to Mary Beth Haralovich's matrix of typically Western poster iconography criteria, the essential criteria for my study was to see if an iconographical agenda which primarily mediated this condition could indeed be confirmed for Western posters for Japanese films, and then to determine to what degree ethnicity dominated the poster design over such 'capitalizable components' as gender and film genre and how the element of ethnicity was joined in.

Beginning with Western posters for *jidai-geki* films, my research clearly indicates that the fetishizible components habitually used to convey national identity in these posters indeed consisted of stereotypes of female sexuality and male ferociousness, in tandem with formal aspects such as imitation of the wood-cut technique or the typical iconography of Far Eastern traditional prints. The combined persistence of an Orientalist discourse and Japanese *jidai-geki* film never gave the graphic artists/poster designers in the West the impetus to evolve around new images, and thereby contributed to the geisha's and samurai's becoming emblematic figures and remaining the prime Western film poster representatives of the Japanese national identity. I have also observed that the limited digressions into Western society by Japanese film advertising, in combination with the

charisma surrounding the above stereotypes invalidated Haralovich's central criteria for an optimal poster iconography:

> - [Posters] contain similar narrative devices [as the films they represent] but focus on the relationship of characters to narrative.[70]
>
> - Posters place the characters *within* the narrative of the film, at a point of narrative enigma.[71]
>
> - A [character] is established as protagonist by her position in the poster and by the way the fragments of text and her image are graphically juxtaposed.[72]

The dominance of a certain view on Japan's national identity also resulted in a mainly communist poster iconography which reduced the impact of a Westernization on the modern stereotypes of women and reverted them back to a more geisha-like figure, such as the Polish poster for Imai Tadashi's *Dark Waters*.

The Western poster iconography for modern Japanese dramas increased the importance of original Japanese publicity material and gave way for copied publicity stills which in some cases increased the compliance with Haralovich's premise regarding the placement of 'the characters *within* the narrative of the film, at a point of narrative enigma', such as in the case of Shohei Imamura's *Pigs and Battleships*. Quite unexpectedly, I have also found posters for modern Japanese films based on original publicity stills which seem to have been used in adherence with an Orientalist discourse in that the characterisation of the young protagonists in the resulting Western poster iconography took on certain criteria which I have related to the geisha and samurai stereotypes, such as female compliance and male ferociousness. This is true, for example in the case of the posters for Oshima Nagaisa's *Naked Youth* aka *Cruel Stories of Youth*. It would thus seem that the Western exploitation of Japanese publicity material was aimed at a different reading of its contents than that made by the Japanese themselves (see case study in Chapter Two).

There is a similar element of ambivalence inherent in the publicity material related to Shohei Imamura's film *Insect Women* negotiated in the case study of this chapter. I cannot explain how a publicity still closely related to the iconography of *shunga* became the emblem for a contemporary Japanese film about prostitution, in the West, except by taking into account the persistence of an Orientalist discourse regarding the Japanese art film, and Mark Betz' premise that there existed a shared discourse and means of address between art film and grindhouse cinema during the time frame of my study.

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[1] Haralovich, 'Advertising Heterosexuality', *Screen*, 23.2 (1982), 50-60 (p. 50).
[2] Cf for exampel of the Japanese youth films distributed by Gala Film between 1957 and 1960:

*The Stormy Man/Arashi o yobu otoko* (1959) by Inoue Umeji (Nikkatsu)
*Black Nets/Kindan no suna* (1958) by Horiuchi Manao (Shochiku)
*Juvenile Passion/Kurutta Kajitsu* (1957) by Nakahira Yasushi (Nikkatsu)
*Girls Behind Bars/Oinaru ai no kanatani* (1960) by Ohno Tetsuro (Shochiku)
*Youth in Fury/Shikamo karerawa yuku* (1960) by Ohno Tetsuro (Shochiku)
*The Cola Game/Watashi wa shobusuru* (1959) by Itaya Noriyuki (Toho)

[3] The issue of Orientalism in Western film has already been adequately addressed in works focusing on the films themselves; see for example *Visions of the East.*
[4] Miayo.
[5] Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema', p. 123. Klinger cites Staiger's argument validating the opposite assumption, that a significant amount of the 'epiphenomena' surrounding the Hollywood film product has been central to the construction of the films per se. I would argue that the trans-national character of the locally designed posters made them irrelevant for the Japanese film industry.
[6] Haralovich; Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions', 117-134.
[7] Klinger, 'Digressions', p. 119.
[8] Ibid., p. 127.
[9] Ibid, 127; see also Klinger on 'Other' narratives, ibid., pp. 129-132.
[10] Susan Sontag, 'Posters: Advertisement, art, political artifact, commodity', in *The Art of Revolution – 96 Posters from Cuba* , ed. by Dugald Stermer (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), pp. 7-23 - hereafter referred to as *The Art of Revolution*. p 8.
[11] Sontag, p. 8.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977).
[14] Klinger, 'Digressions', p. 118.
[15] Barthes, pp. 37-41.
[16] Ibid., p. 33.
[17] Haralovich, p. 50.
[18] Ibid., p. 50.
[19] Ibid., p. 52.
[20] Ibid., p. 52.
[21] Ibid., p. 53.
[22] Hirano, 'Prohibited Subjects' p 69. In relation to Hirano's discussion on pp. 52-53 regarding the Occuptional Authorities' objection to the appearance of Mt Fuji in post-war media, it would perhaps be fruitful to see how this was negotiated in Japanese poster design of the time.
[23] The highly evolved star system in Japan obviously gave the country its own tradition of fan clubs, but the Japanese did not only cater for its own, national stars, but generously included many of the famous Western film stars among their fan clubs. One of the most popular to date being that of Audrey Hepburn.
[24] Jieun Rhee, 'Performing the Other: Asian Bodies in Performance and Video Art, 1950s-1990s', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2002).
[25] Rhee, p. 54.
[26] See Dower, Chapter 4, 'Cultures of Defeat', pp. 121-167.
[27] Haralovich, "Digressions", pp. 52 and 50.
[28] Haralovich, p. 53.
[29] Ibid., p. 50.
[30] 'DAS ist Film: Die Sieben Samurai. Ein prächtiges Abenteuer von Akira Kurosawa mit Toshiro Mifune und sogar "besonders wertvoll".'
[31] Haralovich, p. 50.
[32] Barthes, p. 33.
[33] Cf Lambourne, pp. 66 and 124.
[34] *Insel der Harten Männer,* directed by Toshio Shimura, no year. In the holdings of Film Museum Berlin, Germany.
[35] In the collection of Neue Pinakothek in Munich, Germany.
[36] Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), p. 242.
[37] 'The Documents: The Cinema 16 Programs, and Selected Letters, Program Notes, and Reviews from the Cinema 16 files, Part II: Fall 1952-1966', *Wide Angle*, 19.2 (1997), p. 57.
[38] Haralovich, p. 52.
[39] Ibid., p. 53.
[40] Kawara (Japanese, b. 1933) and Holzer (American, b. 1950) became known as conceptual artists in the 1960s, but some say this style was introduced by Marcel Duchamps already in the 1910s. Conceptual art emphasizes the idea and process around the art object rather more than the object itself.

Such an intellectual approach is naturally best pronounced through the written word, writing up the image and its message, as it were. For example On Kawara's famous *Today*-series; each work consists of a date, and was painted within the 24 hours of that particular day. In order to make it complete, Kawara made a wooden casket for it, in which he put the painting together with an excerpt from the newspaper of that day.

[41] *Films and Filming*, 1.7 (April 1955), p. 17.

[42] Barthes, p. 39.

[43] Cinémathèque Française, Document No 034/1972, in 'Collection Jaune', Film Library, Paris

[44] Cf Janet Staiger, 'Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising' *Cinema Journal* 29.3 (Spring 1980) pp 3-31.

[45] Ibid., p. 7.

[46] *UniJapan Film Quarterly* 4.2 1961, pp. 36-37.

[47] Ibid., p. 52.

[48] I have not been able to determine whether the Japanese publicity material aimed at Western countries in any way differed from the material sent out to other countries in the world.

[49] Mark Betz, 'Art, exploitation, underground' in *Defining cult movies: the cultural politics of oppositional taste*, ed. by Mark Jancovich and more (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 201-222.

[50] Ibid., p. 204.

[51] Ibid., p. 217.

[52] See for example David Meadows, *Set Pieces* (London: Bfi Publishing, 1993).

[53] Nakata Toichi, 'Shohei Imamura', in *Shohei Imamura*, ed. by James Quandt (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario Monographs, 1997), 107-124.

[54] Bibliothèque du Film, Paris, Reference no 70992-41121 and 100412-41122 – 100421-41131.

[55] André Cornand, 'La Révue du Cinéma', *Image et Son* (1972), p. 150. 'Valeur: A travers l'histoire de Tome et de sa fille, Imamura nous donne une peinture de la réalité sociale du Japon. A la campagne, puis à la ville, c'est exploitation des pauvres et des faibles par les plus riches et les plus forts. Même si Tome semble s'élever dans l'échelle sociale, celle de sa condition de prostituée, elle demeure l'éternelle victime, constamment exploitée. Et la question finale posée par le film sur l'avenir de sa fille appelle une réponse affirmative: elle suivra le même chemin que sa mere.
Or, ce constat n'apparaît pas comme le poids d'un destine inexorable mais comme la consequence d'un système social, d'une réalité politique, d'une société de classes où regne à tous les echelons l'éxploitation de l'homme par l'homme.
C'est cette société que nous montre Imamura et c'est bien son propos, dévoilé par le titre original du film: "Chroniques entomologiques du Japon"[…]'.

[56] Albert Cervoni, 'Néo-Réalisme made in Japan, 'La Femme Insecte' de Shohei Imamura', in *L'Humanité*, 14 October 1972. '[…] une sorte de chronique néorealiste sur le Japon pendant et après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.'

[57] Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971), p. 163.

[58] Betz, p. 217.

[59] Mary Evans, 'Nippon Konchuki', *The Japan Times,* 22 November 1963.

[60] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, Vol 7.1 (1964), pp. 26-27.

[61] A.H. Weiler, 'Insect Woman', *New York Times*, 1 July 1964.

[62] Michel Delahaye, *Cahiers du cinéma*, #158 (August-September 1964), p. 39. '[…]C'est (consciement, sans doute) le film le plus brechtien qu'on ait jamais fait, […] C'est aussi un film mizoguchien (l'auteur reprend même la situation d'*Une Femme don't on Parle*: la fille découvre que sa mere tient bordel, puis elle lui fauche son amant) dans la mesure où les films de Mizoguchi (le grand theme de l'aliénation feminine) sont déjà brechtiens. Mais […] personne n'a montré, autant qu'Imamura, d'accouchements et d'étreintes au cinema. Pendant celles-ci, les partenaires discutent beaucoup et chacune est faite sur une trouvaille originale. Cela donne par exemple, la scène du couple debout sous l'arbre, où l'homme, pour repondre à la femme, doit detacher ses lèvres du sein gauche qu'il suce.'

[63] Desser, p. 123.

[64] Film Museum Berlin, Ref. nos 1-02 659 and 1-02 658.

[65] Compare with Betz, p. 210.

[66] Betz, p. 207.

[67] Desser, p. 122.

[68] Betz, p. 204.

[69] Ibid., p. 205.

[70] Haralovich, p. 50.

[71] Ibid., p. 52.

[72] Ibid., p. 53.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CANON FORMATION

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

As we have seen, the common denominator in all the areas of reception researched in this study is a lack of diachronic shift in the Western attitude to Japanese film product as from the late 1950s. I suggest that this lack of diachronic shift had a strong impact on the transnational canonicity of the Japanese cinema, although efforts were initially made to give it another face. The history of the canonicity of this national cinema actually represents the most crucial component in its Western historiography.

## 6.2 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON CANON FORMATION

Most of the reception practices discussed in the previous chapters have had a crucial impact on the Western image of Japanese film and its canon formation. Interestingly though, my study also indicates that there was at times not just one but several parallel accounts of the history of Japanese film, and that the national reception practices differed between countries and ideologies. There were thus different film canons applicable to the subject of Japanese cinema at this time.

Janet Staiger confirms this historical development in her essay on 'The Politics of Film Canons', where she wrote that canon formation is located in various cultural segments, such as film criticism, archival practices, theoretical writing, history, and filmmaking.[1] In the case of Japanese cinema, I also want to add canon formation based on criteria involving the introduction of a national cinema in two or more overseas countries, and the effect of both the geographically foreign locale, as well as cultural divergences between the receiving countries. All these factors, as well as my collected data, thus indicate that there were several extant national canons referring to Japanese film in the West during the time frame of this study, but before I consider them, I shall elaborate on the general premises for canonization.

In her essay, Staiger asked which films become subject to such an elevation, and suggested that 'films chosen to be reworked, alluded to, or satirized, become privileged points of reference, pulled out from the rest of cinema's predecessors'.[2] I don't disagree with her selection of references, but have to add that with regard to Japanese film in the West, these parameters hardly apply, since very few average filmgoers would have been aware of the fact that for example *Chusingura* aka *The Loyal 47 Ronin* is one of the most often filmed stories in Japanese film production. Nor is the average Western filmgoer or

cinephile likely to ever experience a screening of all three versions of *The Woman Who Touched Legs/Ashi ni sawatta onna*, which was filmed by Abe Yutaka in 1926, Ichikawa Kon in 1953, and Masumura Yasuzo in 1960. Nor is s/he likely to find out that these multiple versions were made in accordance with the Japanese fondness of filming the best stories (novels or essays) over and over again. The possibility of appreciating an allusion or a satirisation of another Japanese film is even less likely to be comprehended by the Western cinemagoer at a commercial cinema. I therefore conclude that elevation on these grounds has not played a major role for the success of Japanese film in the West. Instead, I argue that the canon formation surrounding Japanese film in the West was controlled by the cultural images of Japan (essentially through *Japonisme*) which existed in the geographically foreign (Western) locale long before the introduction of its national cinema.

Among Staiger's three sets of politics applicable to the formation of a film canon, the first instance refers to a 'Politics of Admission', and Staiger mentioned that the proving of 'film as an art form', and a 'worthy product', were the main dilemmas facing the medium in the early 20th century.[3] Japanese film did not ask to be admitted into the Western world of films and filmmaking until in the early 1950s, and I therefore suggest that its positive reception at the European film festivals must be understood as a case of granting 'admission' to a new national cinema.

The second set of politics is related to 'selection', and was particularly relevant for the formation of a Japanese film canon in the West. Staiger has given three main reasons why certain films were selected to form a canon: efficiency (pointing out the number of films an educated scholar should know); making order in chaos through genre division; and, most of all, universality. Staiger, however, professes that: 'If a film is claimed to be universal, what the proponents of such a possibility are implying is that such a film speaks in the same way to everyone. Not only does this claim wipe out historical, cultural, and social differences, but it denies sexual difference, treating all individuals as uniformly constituted.'[4] It follows from her definition that any reference to an individual film as a representative of a particular national cinema is thus rendered invalid. She furthermore contests that: '[…] if a work of art is raised to canonical status on such a basis, it is provided as a model for social behaviour and, thus, social good. The work may also reinforce the cultural and economic dominance of one gender over the other.'[5]

Staiger also identified two types of film critics and their respective attitude to canon formation; the (Romantic) auteur critics, and the ideological critics, of which especially the former is openly involved with canon formation. While she herself adheres to the latter, Staiger states that the 'claims for universality are disguises for achieving uniformity, for

surprising through the power of canonic discourse optional value systems', with reference to auteurist film criticism.[6] According to her, these particular film critics use 'three evaluative criteria in their canon making; the transcendence of time and place, a personal vision of the world, and consistency and coherence of statement, seeking universality and endurance.' The problem with these auteurist criteria would be that 'the value of a work is claimed to be in its cross-cultural, cross-temporal benefits. Historical, social, gender, and political effects are removed from the agenda.'[7]

When applied to the critical reception that was practiced on Japanese film between 1950 and 1975, we shall see that the criterion which was mainly applied to this cinema was the consistency and coherence of statements created by auteurists such as Kurosawa Akira and Ozu Yasujiro. This criterion was presently manifested by Western representatives through their predilection for the Japanese *jidai-geki* film, and left out the transcendence of time and place, as well as the personal vision of the world, although in less strong terms. I furthermore suggest that Staiger's second claim, that the auteurist critics valued works for their cross-cultural and cross-temporal benefits, went sadly amiss when it came to the Japanese cinema, because of their decision to again privilege period drama. By way of identifying their opponents, Janet Staiger wrote of the ideological critics that they 'want to reconsider the criteria that we use for evaluation, and the process of evaluation itself, in order to evaluate films on the basis of the film's ideological effect',[8] and mentions André Bazin as one of its exponents. Although my study confirms that Staiger's statement that the ideological critic 'chose, analyzed, and discussed the implications of film form, style, and subject matter as it related to specific historical and social conditions'[9] indeed applied to Japanese film until the *politique des auteurs* came into play, I do not see Bazin as one of its foremost representatives given his strong Catholic leanings. This is all the more obvious given Staiger's assumption that the ideological critics also judged films in terms of 'whether or not they led to progressive or regressive social or political effects',[10] which led her to conclude that most of them had strong connections to Marxism; George Sadoul is one of the more well-known among them and obviously adherred to French humanist Marxism. I therefore suggest that although Bazin 'profoundly disagreed with the younger [*auteur*] critics',[11] he still cannot be considered an ideological critic.

The connection between the references representing the ideological critics and those referring to reception study theory is represented by a common interest in contextual references rather than focusing on the textual properties of the films per se, and may be said to characterize the historiography of Japanese cinema which I have presented in this study. I have also been able to conclude that this particular criterion went sadly amiss since so few

contemporary Japanese films were exhibited in the West, although it was at the heart of George Sadoul's discussion of progressive Japanese films mentioned in Chapter Four. My assumption that the Western critics responded to Japanese cinema according to a continued Orientalist discourse, instead of a contemporary image represented by the Japanese effort to achieve socio-cultural acceptance based on a transnational set of aesthetics, is on the whole confirmed by Staiger's prerequisites for canon formation. These circumstances also indicate the importance of the second set of politics over the first and third in Staiger's presentation of canon formation.

The third set of politics, which Staiger identified as the 'Politics of the Academy', involves the 'canon of literature about film' and the 'canon of film methodologies'.[12] Whether or not this particular set of politics is applicable to the image of Japanese film in the West between 1950 and 1975 is an open question, since film studies did not exist as an academic discipline at the time. From a diachronical point of view, however, Joseph L Anderson and Donald Richie's *The Japanese Film* must be taken into consideration as a representative of the 'canon of literature about film', despite the fact that their book does not represent an academic approach to the subject matter. Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris' book on Japanese cinema will never be elevated to such a level. The simple reason for this outcome is the overall influence of auteurism, which led to Anderson and Richie being considered the original Western source of knowledge about Japanese film, and their book being re-edited a number of times. Consequently, the Giuglaris non-auteurist approach quickly made their book problematic in the wake of the ever more dominant *politique des auteurs* in France.

## **6.3** WESTERN CANON(S) OF JAPANESE FILMS

### EMERGING CANON

Beside the influence of a favoured film genre as well as that of a dominant critical dogma on the critical assessment of Japanese cinema, I thus suggest that an Orientalist image of Japan, in combination with the cultural divergences between the receiving countries, played a crucial role in the formation of a number of alternative canons of Japanese films, in the West. These canons, beginning with the one emerging from my own material, will be presented below.

Given the influence of different reception practices on the Japanese national cinema, the material I have collected for my study has generated several rationales which may constitute the basis for a canon of its own. Based on the amount of films that have been screened in France, Great Britain and the United States between 1950 and 1975, such a list

contains approximately 550 Japanese films, divided among roughly 140 directors. A canon presenting the ’Top Thirteen’ among Japanese directors screened in the West would feature the following names:

| *Director* | *Registered films* | *Festival screenings* |
|---|---|---|
| Honda Ishiro/Inoshiro | 23 | 4,3 % |
| Ichikawa Kon | 23 | 35% |
| Kurosawa Akira | 21 | 53% |
| Inagaki Hiroshi | 20 | 15% |
| Oshima Nagisa | 16 | 37,5% |
| Ozu Yasujiro | 15 | 6,6% |
| Mizoguchi Kenji | 14 | 64% |
| Naruse Mikio | 14 | - |
| Imai Tadashi | 12 | 50% |
| Masumura Yasuzo | 11 | 18% |
| Hani Susumi | 10 | 20% |
| Shinoda Masahiro | 10 | 40% |
| Shindo Kaneto | 10 | 40% |
| *Film total* | *199* | |

As we can see, the 199 films by these directors correspond to 38% of the total amount of films. I have also added the percentage of their films screened at Western film festivals, since the discrepancy between the number of registered films and festival screenings represents an interesting rationale when considering for example the effects of auteur status and choice of film genre.

The film list above also indicates a clear hierarchy among the ’Top Thirteen’ directors, in that those at the bottom of the list have had less than half as many films screened in the West, compared to those at the top. Furthermore, the bottom half of the full list making up this canon contains 19 directors who are represented by only two films each, and no less than 54 directors represented by only one film each. The divergence in film volume between those at the top and those at the bottom is therefore clear, and so is the fact that *certain directors* have been more successful than others, thus indicating the dominating influence of the auteur principle of ’ a personal vision of the world’.

When it comes to the Japanese ’top’ directors that have been canonized in the West one must take a closer look at the films that represent them in the West, in order to find out more about the issues related to the Western image of the Japanese national cinema. I suggest that the best way to identify this image is through choice of film genre, as we shall see. According to my data, Honda Ishiro shares the top position with Ichikawa Kon

regarding the highest amount of films screened in the West (23 films each). The type of screenings involved were commercial screenings in France, Great Britain and/or the United States between 1950 and 1975, as well as screenings at the Cinémathèque in Paris, and at the National Film Theatre in London. I have also made notes of which films were marketed through *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. When considering Honda Ichiro's films in terms of film genre, I have found that according to my film list, only his science-fiction films were exhibited in the West, which per se also indicates the victory of a film genre which is traditionally considered to be of less high standing than for example contemporary or period drama, Japanese or not. This may also explain why Honda's films were rarely screened outside the commercial circuits, although both *Invasion of Planet X* aka *Invasion of Astro-monsters/Kaiju Daisenso* (1965) as well as *The H-Man* were screened on three and two occasions respectively at the French Cinémathèque. As for the commercial screening of Honda's films, Great Britain comes to the fore, followed by France. It would seem that the United States exhibited only five of Honda's science-fiction films commercially over the years, although no less than ten were marketed in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* between 1957 and 1972. The only Honda film screened at a festival in the West was *Dogora, the Space Monster/Dogora* (1965), at Trieste Science-Fiction Festival in 1965.

Ichikawa Kon's film production is characterized by a high amount of contemporary dramas which, like Honda's science-fiction films, represent a Japanese film genre which again has not been very coveted by Western film critics, and, it is therefore equally unexpected to find Ichikawa Kon among the most widely screened Japanese filmmakers in the West. I therefore suggest that the predominance of the *gendai-geki* genre among his films has had two consequences for the screening of Ichikawa's works in the countries involved in this study. Firstly, it would seem that his films were mainly introduced to the West through non-commercial exhibition, which explains why only seven among the 23 films on my list were commercially screened, chiefly in the United States (seven), but also in Great Britain (five) and France (three).

Secondly, in consistence with Ichikawa's choice of film genre, his films were also rather sparingly screened at the French Cinémathèque, with the logical exception of *Harp of Burma* which was screened five times, and *Conflagration* aka *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* and *Fires on the Plain* which were screened on four occasions each. The programming of 16 of Ichikawa's films at the National Film Theatre in London between 1950 and 1975 however attests to a completely different attitude towards this Japanese director. Like the French Cinémathèque, the NFT focused on *Harp of Burma* during this time period, but the British screened it no less than nine times. In contrast to the French, the

British exhibition of *Harp of Burma* was closely followed by three films with completely different themes; *Odd Obsession*, *Alone on the Pacific*, and *An Actor's Revenge* aka *The Revenge of Yukinojo*, which were screened on seven occasions each at the NFT. It's also worth noticing that none of Ichikawa's films programmed at the NFT were screened less than twice, whereas seven of the 16 films programmed at the French Cinémathèque, were screened only once. A very small number of Ichikawa Kon's films were marketed through *UniJapan Film Quarterly*; five films of which only one was successful, *Odd Obsession*, although I suggest this success was due to the film having been screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1960. At first glance, these observations seem only to indicate a crucial difference in attitude between France, Great Britain and the United States in relation to Ichikawa Kon's work, but we shall see that both Honda's and Ichikawa's popularity had wider implications for the image of Japanese film in the West.

Kurosawa Akira comes third among the most successful Japanese directors in the West with 22 films, of which slightly more than half (54%) were screened at Western film festivals. The data surrounding his films is certainly impressive, and all his films had a great success in the United States, with exception for *No Regrets for Our Youth* which was not screened in the country during the time frame of this study. From a film genre perspective we can see that most of Kurosawa's early post-war contemporary dramas, such as *Drunken Angel*, *Stray Dog* and *Silent Duel* were not commercially released in the United States until in the late 1950s, or later still, and these films generally seem to have been less successful in the West based on their exhibition rates. Kurosawa's victory is therefore obviously related to his period dramas, and it would seem that *Rashomon* was indeed the most celebrated of all Japanese films included in this study, with no less than 39 screenings at the French Cinémathèque between 1950 and 1975, and 16 screenings at the National Film Theatre during the same time period. From a French perspective, *Rashomon* is closely followed by *Seven Samurai* and *Throne Of Blood*, both screened on 32 occasions, whereas the National Film Theatre championed the contemporary drama *Living* as their second choice, with 13 screenings. Another interesting difference in appreciation concerns the screening of *Drunken Angel* and *Stray Dog*, which were screened on 17 and 18 occasions respectively in Paris, but were given only one (1) and two (2) screenings respectively at the National Film Theatre.

According to my data, only seven of Kurosawa's films were commercially screened in the United States, including *Drunken Angel*, *The Lower Depths*, *The Bad Sleep Well* and *I Live in Fear* aka *Record of a Living Being*.[13] Since most of these seven films were continuously screened at the French Cinémathèque (*The Lower Depths* on no less than 17

occasions), I argue that the almost identical exhibition of Kurosawa's films in the United States seems to indicate that art house cinema screenings compensated for the lack of institutional screenings of his works in the same country. It may be worth considering if this mode of operation applied to the exhibition of other Japanese films as well in the United States.

Inagaki Hiroshi's films are uniquely famous in the United States where all bar two of his 20 films on my list were commercially screened. This fact is all the more interesting since only one of his films was screened in all three countries involved in this study; *The Rickshaw Man*, a remake of a film Inagaki made in 1943. After being promoted in the very first issue of *UniJapan Film Quarterly* and screened at the Venice film festival in 1958, it was soon commercially released in Europe and the United States.[14] The new version of *The Rickshaw Man* was never screened at the French Cinémathèque, although the National Film Theatre screened it twice. I suggest that one reason for the success of Inagaki's films in the United States was that they starred Mifune Toshiro, another reason would be that 17 of the films on my list are *jidai-geki* films.

Places five, six and seven, at the centre of the 'Top Thirteen' list above are occupied by Oshima Nagisa (16 films), Ozu Yasujiro (15) and Mizoguchi Kenji (14) in that order. Interestingly, these are the three directors most often mentioned in relation to Japanese art film, in Oshima's case we know from the case study in Chapter Five that David Desser also included him among the directors of Japanese new wave film. Whether or not this is the reason, Oshima's films were hardly commercially exhibited at all during the time frame of this study, except for *The Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, *Death by Hanging*, *The Ceremony*, and *The Boy* which were screened in at least two of the countries involved. When it comes to the French Cinémathèque and screenings at the National Film Theatre, only *The Catch* was really successful in France, with six screenings, whereas *The Ceremony* was screened on six occasions at the NFT.

Ozu Yasujiro's success is mostly connected to the United States where ten of his films were screened between 1950 and 1975, compared to only two in France, and three in Great Britain. The records clearly indicate that *Tokyo Story* was the most popular film, both commercially and at the institutions (including the Museum of Modern Art in New York), with no less than 13 screenings at the NFT.[15] Considering Ozu's elevated status at these institutions and within the commercial circuits in the United States, one is surprised to find that he and Honda Ishiro are indeed the only directors who had only one of their films screened at a Western film festival during these years. On the other hand, films by both directors were frequently promoted in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*; Honda's *The H-Man*[16]

already in the second issue, and Ozu's *Equinox Flower/Higanbana* (1958)[17] in the third. The exact reason why the latter was not commercially released in the United States until in 1977 is not yet fully known.

Mizoguchi had no fewer than nine of 14 films screened at festivals, and compared to Kurosawa Akira, they had almost the same amount of institutional (French Cinémathèque and National Film Theatre) screenings per film; 11 screenings per film in Paris, and five in London. My records also indicate that Mizoguchi was more popular in France and the United States, than in Great Britain, where only three of his films were commercially screened. Mizoguchi's most popular film was the period drama *Tales of the Taira Clan*, produced by Nagata Masaichi, in spite of its absence from Western film festivals until in New York 1964. *Tales of the Taira Clan* was screened on 32 occasions at the French Cinémathèque, and 13 times at the National Film Theatre during the time frame of this study.

As for the remaining directors at the 'Top Thirteen' list, I can only confirm that they do not come close to any of the characteristics of the previously mentioned directors, or films, although Naruse Mikio's film *Mother* was very popular with the programmers at the French Cinémathèque, which resulted in 13 screenings over the years. This does not alter the fact, however, that none of Naruse's films were screened at the National Film Theatre, nor at any of the Western film festivals. As to commercial releases, only *Mother* was really successful in Europe, with the addition of *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* and *Lonely Lane* aka *A Wanderer's Notebook/Horoki* (1962) in the United States. Interestingly, Naruse Mikio's films represent the highest amount of *gendai-geki* or contemporary dramas among the above listed directors, together with Imai Tadashi. They were also undoubtedly the least successful directors listed, with Imai's relative success based on festival screenings and a certain popularity with the programmers at the National Film Theatre.

## ALTERNATIVE CANONS

While working on this study I have come across material which is per se well qualified to form the basis for several alternative canons regarding Japanese film in the West. I believe the earliest instance of such an implicit canon formation may have been initiated by Donald Richie while he worked for *The Japan Times* as a film critic in the late 1950s. In addition to the film reviews, the newspaper also published a column called 'Recommended Revivals' which alerted the reader to the most important films on view at the moment. The list obviously included both foreign and Japanese films, of varying production dates, thus giving the film critics an opportunity to propose vintage films to the readers.

Among the nine films recommended for revival in February 1956, two were Japanese; *Escape at Dawn/Akatsuki no dasso* (1950) by Taniguchi Senkichi, which was introduced as 'A very interesting 1949 Japanese film, script by Kurosawa, about the occupation of China, and one in which the tension between officers and men is the whole story. With Ryo Ikebe. Japanese not too necessary for grasping the essential story.'[18] The second film suggested was *Maid and a Boy* aka *The Maid's Kid/Jochukko* (1955) by Tasaka Tomotaka, presented as 'A Japanese film of several years back in which Sachiko Hidari's performance stirred up a lot of noise. About a farm-girl from Akita who comes to Tokyo as a house-maid. Though the film cheats like anything to get its unhappy ending, it is definitely worth seeing. A knowledge of Japanese would probably help you enjoy it more.'[19] A couple of years later, the 'Recommended Revivals' of Japanese films read:[20]

*Harp of Burma/Biruma no tategoto* (1956) by Ichikawa Kon
*Conflagration* aka *The Temple of the Golden Pavillon/Enjo* (1958) by Ichikawa Kon
*Equinox Flower/Higanbana* (1958) by Ozu Yasujiro
*The Ladder of Success/Yoru no sugao* (1958) by Yoshimura Komisaburo

The last film, *The Ladder of Success,* was introduced as 'Claws and nails in the world of classical dance with Machiko Kyo and Ayako Wakao as first class bitches.'[21]

These columns of 'Recommended Revivals' were a recurrent feature in *The Japan Times* between 1956 and 1975. After Donald Richie had left the paper in 1969, an additional column entitled 'Production Highlights' was introduced. This column gave the latest news on film productions in progress as well as general news of the Japanese film industry, and was edited by James Henry for many years. I suggest that the whole idea behind the publication of a number of recommended films in *The Japan Times* must be understood as initiating a film canon, although its characteristics and impact have not yet been fully researched. One may argue that 'Recommended Revivals' is not a proper canon due to its lack of authority in the West, which would be further confirmed by the fact that the publication took place in a daily paper, instead of in a film periodical. In my opinion, however, these drawbacks does not prevent it from being identified as a canon driven element among *The Japan Times*' film news, implicit or not.

Donald Richie, in fact, initiated a more crucial alternative canon in the late 1960s, in connection with his programme of Japanese films for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The launching of such a programme had been on Richie's mind for at least ten years, and had been foregone by several proposals by him to the museum, the first dating from 1960. A couple of years later, Richie proposed a program he wanted to entitle 'Japanese Film 1928-1962', in a letter to Richard Griffith, curator at MOMA. The entire programme

was meant to be composed of 14-15 films, and Richie suggested the following post-war films to be included:

> *First Love Questions and Answers/Hatsukoi mondo* (1950) by Shibuya Minoru
>
> *Clothes of Deception/Itsureru seiso* (1950) by Yoshimura Kozaburo, screenplay by Shindo Kaneto
>
> *Dark Waters/Nigorie* (1953) by Imai Tadashi
>
> *Floating Clouds/Ukigumo* (1954) by Naruse Mikio
>
> *Marital Relations/Meoto Zenzai* (1955) by Toyoda Shiro, Oda Sakunosuke novel/Yasumi Toshio Screenplay
> *Conflagration/Enjo* (1958) by Ichikawa Kon
>
> 1961 and 1962 'to be decided'. [22]

He made the following comments to his selection:

> - Every director of note has been included (for this reason the films for 1961 and 1962 should include directors Hani and Horikawa)
>
> - That no director is included more than once, and that he is represented either by his best or by his debut film
>
> - That none of the films have previously received showings in America
>
> - That taken as a unit these films indicate the development of the Japanese film style
>
> - That at least half of them are of interest to American distributors for commercial showings.[23]

I shall briefly comment on Richie's choice of films and his aspiration that his film programme would lead to their commercial release. As far as I can see, none of his selected entries had been or became commercially released in the United States (which was his primary objective), nor in France or Great Britain. Three of the films; *Dark Waters*, *Floating Clouds* and *Conflagration* were however screened at different institutions, such as the French Cinémathèque, Cinema 16 in New York, and at both the Cannes and Venice film festivals. The first two of Richie's proposed films, *First Love Questions and Answers* and *Clothes of Deception* are contemporary dramas which have never been mentioned at all in a Western context, nor has the comedy *Marital Relations*. As for his notes on the films which should be representing the early 1960s, Donald Richie indicates that he wanted films by Hani Susumi and Horikawa Hiromichi. It is my guess that he would then have chosen between two of Hani's films; *Bad Boys* and *A Full Life*, and Horikawa's *Blue Beast* aka *Dangerous Kiss/Aoi yaju* (1960), among which the latter was commercially released in the United States in 1965. All three films were marketed through *UniJapan Film Quarterly* after having been reviewed by Mary Evans in *The Japan Times*.

Donald Richie's comments on the principles guiding his selection of the films are equally interesting, since they partly disclose a strategy resembling that of Staiger's notion

of canon formation based on a *politique des auteurs*. At the same time, the films Richie selected had not yet been commercially released in the West. We can therefore conclude that Richie's canon is an alternative compilation of films based on Richie's thoughts on 'directors of note', their previous international screening, as well as the national success of the individual films and the average commercial prospects for the films in the West. I however suggest that the most interesting parameter is the fourth, where Richie implies that the proposed films 'indicate the development of the Japanese film style', since this must be understood as pointing towards an idea of a national cinema.

The third and final instance of an alternative canon of Japanese film which I want to propose in this study, is represented by a list of films which was compiled by the Japanese Cinémathèque in connection with the first extensive European presentation of Japanese film, entitled 'Initiation au Cinéma Japonais', at the French Cinémathèque in 1963 (see Chapter Four). The document is entitled 'The best Japanese films since 1926, A list established by the management at the Cinémathèque in Tokyo'[24], and presents a chronological list of Japanese films produced between 1926 and 1961. This type of alternative canon reflects a different strategy since it is based on choices made by Japanese film scholars or by readers of Japanese film journals, and comprise a select number of films for each year aimed for exhibition in the West. In this case, a number of the approximately 147 Japanese films already have a history in the West, such as Kurosawa Akira's and Ozu Yasujiro's films dating from these years, but the list also promotes a few directors without firm recognition among Western filmgoers, such as Makino Masahiro, Saburi Shin and Chiba Yasuki, all directors of so called popular film. It seems to me, that this mixture of directors indicated that the Japanese were more prone to praise a story well told than the individual director for his personal view, which would have resulted in a more varied type of canon of Japanese film, than was later established in the West.

## **6.4** SUMMARY

In summing up, I find that these three alternative canons perfectly illustrate the delicacy of canon formation as well as the inevitable bias and randomness involved in the process, whether it be a canon based on national or international film distribution. I also find that these alternative canons reflect more than just one particular filmmaker, or an individual film. In the case of Japanese national cinema, it certainly also reflects an attempt at presenting a cultural image of the country involved. I therefore suggest that the Western canon formation of Japanese films was accomplished without any further references to sources inside Japan, such as an institution like the Cinémathèque in Tokyo, or a film

scholar like Donald Richie, or an influential film journal like the Japanese *Kinema Jumpo*. Instead, this film canon was based entirely on Western parameters like auteurism and Orientalism, which basically resulted in the Japanese cinema remaining an art cinema on Western screens, instead of a national cinema.

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[1] Janet Staiger, 'The Politics of Film Canons', 4-23.
[2] Ibid., p. 4
[3] Ibid., p. 5.
[4] Ibid., p. 16.
[5] Ibid., p. 17.
[6] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[7] Ibid., pp. 12-13.
[8] Ibid., p. 14.
[9] Ibid., p. 14.
[10] Ibid., p. 14.
[11] Johnston, p 40.
[12] Ibid., p. 18.
[13]See Donald Richie's Appendix on 'Japanese Films Circulated in 16 mm in the United States', published in Richie, *Japanese Cinema*, pp. 244-245.
[14] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 1.1, 22-23.
[15]*Tokyo Story* is indeed the only individual Japanese film covered in *Movie*, see Wood, pp. 32-33.
[16] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 1.2, 16-17.
[17] *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 1.3, 6-7.
[18] Donald Richie, 'Recommended Revivals', *The Japan Times*, 9 February 1956.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Donald Richie, 'Recommended Revivals', *The Japan Times*, 27 November 1958.
[21] Donald Richie, 'Recommended Revivals', *The Japan Times*, 27 November 1958. *The Ladder of Success* has a script by Shindo Kaneto, and was actually introduced to the West through *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, 2.1 (January 1959), p.18. The film was never screened in the West, however.
[22] Letter to Richard Griffith, dated 8 March 1962, in EXH 231, file 2 of 2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY.
[23] Ibid.
[24] 'Les meilleurs films Japonais dépuis 1926, Liste établie par les responsables de la Cinémathèque de Tokyo' in *Initiation au Cinéma Japonais* (Paris: Cinémathèque Français, 1963), unmarked page.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the Western reception of Japanese cinema product cannot be separated from the overseas marketing strategies of the product by the Japanese, although my study has established that they were only partly successful in their efforts. I have also pointed out the interaction of Orientalization and self-Orientalization in this process, from the careful canvassing of the European film festivals by the Japanese companies, which resulted in the resolute launching and subsequent success of the Japanese *jidai-geki* genre in the West, to the ensuing discussion by both Japanese and Western film critics about the authenticity of the *jidai-geki* films exhibited at the European film festivals during these years, and whether or not they could be said to represent the full extent of Japanese national cinema. The first sign of a change of direction within the industry was the publication of its trade journal *UniJapan Film Quarterly*. The invitation to travel it offered clearly gave the West a perfect opportunity to get to know Japanese cinema more fully, including the attempt at a transnational film genre represented by Nikkatsu's 'borderless action films'. My study of different practices related to the Western reception of Japanese cinema however shows that the Oriental discourse remained very deeply rooted in Western culture during the time frame of this study and explains why the Japanese film industry failed in its ambition to interest the West in a wider range of its product.

I have also mapped the motivations behind the essentially diverging discourses of Japanese cinema presented in the books by Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris, and Joseph L Anderson and Donald Richie. To what extent these books were commissioned by the Japanese film industry is not known but judging from their contents, both writer-teams had a unique and direct access to people and documentation within the industry itself. I have also stressed the decisive impact of auteurism on the Western reception of Japanese cinema, and the fact that the Giuglaris' book was never published in a second or third edition, whereas Anderson and Richie's book has been re-edited at least twice. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that the influence of auteurism may account for both the rejection of the socio-economical agenda which framed the history of Japanese cinema in the French presentation and the success of Anderson and Richie's film (industrial) historical account.

The exhibition practices related to Japanese film in France, Great Britain and the United States, indicate a basic difference in attitude to this cinema between the countries.

Not only have I commented on the importance of locale and personal dedication, mainly represented by Henri Langlois; I have also mapped the difference in institutional ambition and its consequences for the exhibition of Japanese film in the West. My findings make way for questions regarding the identity of a national cinema, and which film genres could be said to represent it. Embedded in the material is again the issue of art film, especially in relation to the exhibition of Japanese film in the United States. Should we consider Toho's running of its own cinemas in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco as an effort at breaking such a categorisation of the Japanese cinema?

By looking at the Western critical reception of Japanese film at all levels, I have been able to establish highly differing attitudes to this cinema, although the *politique des auteurs* generally remained its focal point from the mid 1950s, until its decline in the late 1960s. According to my study, there was a general, pivotal moment in the wake of auteurism when a more social and contemporary image of Japanese cinema had to give way for the ever more dominating aesthetics of auteurism among film critics, and this was especially true for the discussion of Japanese film in *Cahiers du cinéma*. As for my study of the most relevant French and British film periodicals, I have moved diachronically between them, especially highlighting the first special edition related to Japanese film in *Cinéma 55*, which was a unique issue of *Cinéma* at the time since it did not give in to auteurism, and therefore indicate that there existed French institutions which displayed an unbiased interest in the Japanese national cinema at the time. This interest was furthermore supported by *Cinéma*'s mainly original (that is, Japanese) sources of information as to the characteristics and development of the Japanese cinema, an editing strategy which was to a certain extent also sustained by the under-discussed British film periodical *Films and Filming*. My research into American film periodicals that mattered at during the time frame of this study has indicated that they too seem to have been focused on auteurism, although its early introduction as a critical parameter indicates its explicit roots in other humanist disciplines, especially those of literature and theatre. The main representative of literary criticism in the United States was Donald Richie, and his reviews more or less dominated the publication on Japanese cinema in three of America's most important film periodicals; *Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television*, which became *Film Quarterly*, *Films in Review* and *Film Comment*. All three periodicals published essays by Richie and Joseph L Anderson in the mid-50s which were later re-edited for their book on the Japanese film industry, and Richie continued to publish essays in them during more or less the entire time frame of this study.[1]

A closer adherence to the French variant of auteurism was displayed by Andrew Sarris in *Village Voice* and *Film Culture*.

I have also acknowledged the overlooked contribution to Western knowledge of the Japanese national cinema made by Mary Evans and Donald Richie through their reviews of Japanese films in *The Japan Times* between 1956 and 1970. Their intense reviewing between 1957 and 1968 mirrored both a non-auteurist attitude and a pedagogical impetus which perfectly matched the Japanese effort to reach out and export their film product to Western countries. An enigma resides in the apparent refusal by Western critics to increase their knowledge of Japanese cinema through institutional programming such as that at the French Cinémathèque or the National Film Theatre, or by reading the books that were published on the Japanese cinema by the Giuglaris and Anderson and Richie. On average, the French journalists displayed the best knowledge of Japanese cinema whereas the material from the *San Francisco Chronicle* stands out as the poorest in both quality and quantity. Another avatar among Western publishers is the near product placements written by a number of 'critics' for publication in *Variety*. When comparing the sales jargon in *Variety* with the tame product information in *UniJapan Film Quarterly*, the necessity of *UniJapan Film Bulletin* becomes quite obvious, as well as Donald Richie's effort to have his film reviews published in the American trade journal as well as in *The Japan Times*. The hybridal quality of his work thus becomes more evident, as well as its enormous impetus on the Western image of Japanese film.

Like other scholars before me, I have also found poster iconography and other forms of publicity fruitful as historical denominators regarding the reception of a certain kind of cinema. I found that the design of Western posters for Japanese films was completely reliant on an Orientalist discourse when expressing national identity. The pre-conceived iconographical stereotypes of 'Japaneseness' represented in Western poster design became foregrounded when compared to communist posters of the same period. Here, I found that the most significant difference seemed to be that the Communist posters expressed a higher degree of artistic merit and were primarily perceived as works of art, a fact which made them even more distant from the popular cultural idiom they were meant to represent. A comparison between the stereotyped images of 'Japaneseness' represented in Western and Communist posters also pointed to a similar reliance on Orientalism on both occasions.

The case studies in chapters two through to five work along several lines of investigation. By relating primarily to the practice addressed in the chapter they have placed in, the case studies represent a micro aspect of that practice.

I have already established that the marketing of Japanese film product may generally be defined in relation to a self-Orientalizing context. The case study in Chapter Two therefore represents an instance of a reversed focus in that Nikkatsu consciously sought to produce a non-Oriental product with their borderless action films. We may therefore conclude that these films were not primarily intended for overseas exhibition but rather fell in with the general ideas of New Japan that existed in Japan during the 1950s. Japanese youth wanted to engage in a Western life-style and their longing was quickly picked up and commodified by the Japanese film industry. It was not only Nikkatsu that produced Western inspired youth film, but they were the first company to promote Western ideals through sub-genres to action and youth film. We may therefore conclude that Nikkatsu did not apply a reversed focus when they marketed these particular sub-genres, and that they expected a more successful reception in view of the fact that this product appeared to be less 'Oriental'.

The case study in Chapter Three refers to Western exhibition of Japanese at art film cinemas. It goes without saying that Nikkatsu's borderless action films could never have been exhibited in such a milieu since this product looked to fit in with the average Western film product. Although the art film cinemas exhibited 'Other' Western film product which evinced to the influence of American ideals on their film product, the problem with these particular Japanese films was that they aspired to equal the American product. Such an aspiration would not have been welcomed by the American film industry since it could have made product differentiation less obvious. When it comes to the European art cinemas, I suggest that they were mainly too biased to consider it. This bias may have been directed either towards Orientalism or against Americanism, or both.

The case study in Chapter Four is concerned with the critical reception of five Japanese films emanating from differing practices. My study however implies that it did not make any difference if the critic involved represented an official institution such as the BFI's *Monthly Bulletin* which vouched for the quality of all film product commercially exhibited in Great Britain, or if it involved a skilled and discriminating newspaper critic from for instance the *New York Times* or *Le Monde*. I concluded that the difference between the critical outcome among the Western institutions and the marketing in *UniJapan Film Quarterly* was marginal, whereas the Western critics reviewing Japanese films in *The Japan Times* made it clear that they were well aware of changes within the traditional genre definitions by the Japanese film industry. The attitude among Western critics thus indicates that they never ceased to reconnect to an Orientalist discourse and retained these critical

parameters in their work vis-à-vis the Western public. Whether or not there was a call for this among the cinemagoers is not known, but these views seem to have dominated among the distributors and exhibitors in view of the Western programming of Japanese film product.

The last case study is related to a less established reception practice, but it clearly testifies to a continued Orientalist discourse within publicity material for Japanese film as well. It is not possible to calculate its overall impact on Western publicity material, but given the impact of locale and critical reception on the average Japanese film product I suggest that *Insect Woman* represented a standard case of Western film promotion. There is an interesting oscillation between high and low culture involved in this marketing effort which simultaneously implies a reversed focus on the 'Other'. There clearly seems to have been no inherent conflict in marketing a film according to principles guiding two different cultural traditions. Instead it would seem that this inner contradiction actually increased the interest in the production by catering for two different audiences.

I finally suggest that seen as a whole, these case studies manifest the interdependency of the four practices for the presentation of canon formation as well as the conclusion of this study. By interconnecting them we can see that a reception study of a national cinema seems to gain from involving more than one practice. This study also signals the fruitful outcome of a comparative study involving two or more countries.

The common denominator in all the areas of reception researched in this study is a lack of diachronic shift in the Western attitude to Japanese film product as from the late 1950s. I suggest that this lack of diachronic shift had a strong impact on the transnational canonicity of the Japanese cinema, although efforts were initially made to give it another face. The history of the canonicity of this national cinema thus confirms the basic character of its Western historiography.

The aim of this study has been to establish the particular characteristics of the Western reception of Japanese cinema and to research its possible reliance on an Orientalist discourse through the study of certain non-cinematographical practices. By finding out that the Japanese had already recognized the strong influence of *Japonisme* on European culture and had decided to exploit it through their film industry, our knowledge of this initial Japanese effort to conquer the West through *jidai-geki* films has provided us with a better understanding of why the image of Japanese film has remained so strongly connected to the geisha and samurai stereotypes. The Western predilection for this Romantic image of Japan instead of the turmoil that characterized the postwar Japanese society, also explains why

Western distributors were so eager to re-established this film genre during the early post-war years, and why *jidai-geki* films remained the most exhibited and coveted exponent of Japanese cinema in the West between 1950 and 1975, despite the early misgivings from some of the (mainly French) film critics. The negative outcome of this predilection for period drama is indicated by its clearly limiting influence on the exhibition of other Japanese film genres in the three countries involved in this study, despite the subsequent effort on behalf of the Japanese film industry to introduce its other productions in the late 1950s. By using Orientalism as a cultural reference to reflect upon the hard facts presented in this study, we can make sense of this evasive response from the West, although it remains to be seen whether it should be considered as merely a Romantic, escapist gesture, or an implication of inherent racism. We also need to find out more about whether or not the image of a national cinema is subject to changes over time depending on the current ideological preferences at play. Why, for example, were Kurosawa Akira's immediate post-war films not considered as equally representative of Japan's national cinema as his *Rashomon*?

The domination of the *jidai-geki* genre among exported Japanese film product is also fully consistent with the requirements of art film production. The information in Chapter Two indicate that the Japanese film industry was set on art film production within a short time after World War Two had come to an end. At the same time the Japanese found themselves in a difficult situation in view of the restrictions on *jidai-geki* production during the American occupation. I have argued that the construction of *Rashomon* was the successful answer to their situation at this time. I suggest that the subsequent, very focused, screening of *jidai-geki* film at the European film festivals indicates a tendency towards art film production in view of the fact that period films were not very popular among Japanese filmgoers. I also suggest that the decision on art film production was prompted by an awareness of West's inclination towards Orientalism among the Japanese. The Japanese film industry could thus benefit from the fact that the exploitation of their country's own culture and history for purposes of art film production was in fact a very safe investment. The overseas countries were already familiar with the film product they wanted to export.

Such an open flirtation with the Western notion of art film however led to dire consequences for the Japanese film industry in that it had in fact opted for separate treatment by focusing so hard on period films. My study shows that Japanese film was from then on consistently received as an instance of art film in the West, regardless of film genre. The only Japanese film genre which was not automatically picked up by the art film cinema

circuit was science-fiction film. In view of this situation, I propose that the findings presented in this study clearly indicate the exclusive character of art cinema, whereas our notion of national cinema is connoted by an inclusive character. Why so? I believe that the answer to this question is inherent in Orientalism and the fact that this notion is based on white primacy. The hierarchic nature of this discourse was demonstrated by Yoko Ono in her performance *Cut Piece* which I referred to in Chapter Five. The artistic creation of *Cut Piece* is based on an Orientalist discourse. Japan was after all politically and economically committed to the United States during the entire time frame of this study. From this point of view Orientalism and the *jidai-geki* film genre constituted both an answer and an impediment for the Japanese film industry during these decades.

Paradoxically, the stereotyped approach to the *jidai-geki* films exhibited in the West, confirmed in terms of both publicity material like Western film posters as well as by the vocabulary used by Western film critics, uncovers a persistent lack of deeper knowledge of this film genre in the West. There is no sign in the material that the data in for example Anderson and Richie's *The Japanese Film* or other sources of information on Japanology or Japanese film history ever influenced the Western film critics or distributors. One of the main reasons for this is the obvious absence of academic study into this particular field until the mid-1960s, which has also been confirmed by recent studies of the *jidai-geki* genre by scholars like Isolde Standish and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto. I therefore find that the above material referring to the Western introduction, exhibition and subsequent critical reception of Japanese cinema has been fruitful in my attempt to map the consequences of its marketing in the West. I have also been able to establish that certain parameters related to reception theory appeared to be more crucial than others when applied to a foreign cinema, such as the importance of locale, cultural stereotypes, and the formative role of certain film genres. The outcome of this study thus indicates that the 'construction of a new position of knowledge through a careful negotiation between the self and the Other'[2] suggested by Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto was not really in play during the time frame of this study. The simple reason for its non-existence was obviously the persistence of certain cultural values related to the colonial history of the Far East, which resulted in a 'frozen' image of the Japanese cinema in the West during the entire time frame of this study. There is nothing in its diachronic aspect which indicates a change in average exhibition policy, or in the critical reception of Japanese films. The main change that occurred in relation to the publicity of Japanese cinema was the increase in film posters based on film stills as from the late 1960s,

but this particular development in poster design occurred in many countries at this time, and was due to general changes in design aesthetics and technology.

From a theoretical and methodological point of view, my study indicates that most of the reception models I have applied are indeed flexible enough to be used in connection with reception studies of non-Western national cinemas as long as the study is based on a Western material and the research concerns the screening of a national cinema in Western countries. This also applies for Mary Beth Haralovich's detailed model for the study of poster iconography, which was perfectly suitable for my study after some modification.

The unexpected consequence of my choice of a reception based methodology is found in the explicit contradiction this inclusive perspective poses to the *politique des auteurs*. In consequence of Janet Staiger's above presentation of the latter's claim of universality as excluding 'historical, cultural, and social differences' as well as those related to gender in relation to canon formation, reception studies provides an opportunity to look at the early presentation of Japanese cinema in Western countries from a different perspective.[3] This study has already indicated the possibilities inherent in such a change of focus, in that it confirms that the image of post-war Japanese fiction film in the West was markedly influenced by century-old stereotypes that were quickly re-established by both parties after the war. Both the Japanese film industry and the Western distributors thus essentially invited the cinemagoer to travel back in time, instead of travelling in the present, a marketing strategy which was also endorsed by Japan Travel Bureau when it published Donald Richie's invitation to travel through his book *Japanese Movie*, in 1961. Postwar Japan was thus marketing its potential through the cultural branding of ancient Japonist stereotypes. These were endorsed by Western representatives at a very early stage, even though there were some voices which called for a more contemporary image. Mary Evans was one of those who clearly stated her opinion on West's stale image of the Japanese cinema on more than one occasion: 'Now that Toho has its own theater in New York, the company is particularly anxious to have exportable films, and since many of the important reviewers in New York were condescending enough to the Japanese film makers to admire that monument to the persistence of bad traditions, Hiroshi Inagaki's recent 'Chusingura', Toho has designed Inagaki's latest chambara, 'Dai Tatsu Maki' (Big Cyclone) [aka *Whirlwind*] with an obvious eye to lovers of exotica. […]'[4]

Considering its supreme position from the mid-1950s until the end of the 1960s, we must ask ourselves if the Western reception of the Japanese cinema was actually shaped to fit the emerging critical tenets of auteurism already at an early stage. If so, can we re-think

Japanese cinema without the enforcing strains of auteurism in order to see its true colours? There is no way of knowing what our image would have looked like if the 'wrong' Japanese film genres (directed by the 'wrong' directors) had indeed made their way into the Western cinemas, but the alternative canons in the previous chapter indicate that there is undoubtedly another history of Japanese film still waiting to be fully acknowledged in the West.

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[1] Donald Richie 'Sex and Sexism in the Eroduction', *Film Comment*, 9.1 (1973), 12-17 seems to have been his last essay for a film periodical within the time frame of this study.
[2] Yoshimoto, 'The Difficulty of Being Radical', p. 339.
[3] Staiger, 'Politics of Film Canons', p. 22.
[4] Mary Evans, 'Big Cyclone aka Whirlwind', *The Japan Times,* 10 January 1964.

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*History of Post-War Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess/Nippon sengoshi madamu onboro no Seikatsu* (1970) Imamura Shohei (Nichiel Shinsha)

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*Hole, The* aka *Devil Woman/Onibaba* (1968) Shindo Kaneto (Kindai Eiga Kyokai)

*Human Condition/Ningen no joken* (1959-1961) by Kobayashi Masaki (Shochiku)

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*Imposter, The/(no Japanese title)* (1952) Osone Tatsuo (no company)

*I Was Born, but…/Umarete wa mita karedo* (1932) Yasujiro Ozu (Shochiku)

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