

## Document Citation

Title	<b>The new earth</b>
Author(s)	Will.
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Atarashiki tsuchi (The new earth), Fanck, Arnold, 1937



# THE NEW EARTH

(JAPANESE MADE)

Tokyo, Feb. 5

News item release of J. O. production. Directed by Dr. Arnold Fanck and Masaharu Hara. Co-stars Imamu Kosugi, Setsuko Hara. Features: Sessue Hayakawa, Ruth Evers. Story by Dr. Fanck; camera, Richard Angst; music, Kosaku Yamada. At Imperial theatre, Tokyo, Feb. 4, '37. Running time, 120 minutes.

(In Japanese and English)

It, as has been announced, New Earth cost \$215,000 to make most of it must have been squandered in raw film stock. At least that's the impression gained after sitting through two hours of unwinding a not too bad story which could easily have been told in six reels. As Japan's foremost bid for world film recognition, this opus is headed for anonymity unless sent back to the factory. Sessue Hayakawa, sub-featured here, alone means anything for the U. S. marquees. Two native names are the technical co-stars. The titular similarity to 'Good Earth' is, of course, obvious.

Even if it were possible to overlook the obvious lapses in direction, poor control of sound and stilted acting, it still wouldn't jell as b.o. anywhere outside of Japan. It may have a mild draught in Germany because of the Fanck, Evers and Angst names, but it's doubtful. It's a sort of German-Japanese combo on production, with the coin dug up locally.

Story, written by Dr. Fanck, isn't a bad one, and when it emerges from its meanderings in search of scenic shots, depicts many of the old customs of Japan to which the country still clings, in spite of having adopted quite a number of Western habits, both good and bad. Placing a foreign woman in the yarn makes possible many of the situations which unfold the Japanese philosophy of life.

Hayakawa delivers a very sympathetic performance as the foster father, with the spirit of the old Samurai dominant in his characterization. Miss Evers obviously feels out of place in her surroundings, and Kosugi isn't at all convincing. This may be partially due to the fact that he spends so much time puffing cigarettes that he hasn't time to devote to his acting.

First reel is devoted largely to shots which cover every inch of Japan which could be of possible interest to the tourist. For good measure, closeups of plum blossoms and whatnot are included, none of which have any place in the story, which finally starts to unwind with the camera picking up the ship which is bringing Kosugi home and to his troubles.

Kosugi, during his European travels, has forgotten the good old Japanese custom based on the family system, which calls for filial piety in all matters. He has fallen in love with

Miss Evers, a journalist and fellow passenger. Upon arriving in Japan, Kosugi is reminded by his foster father, Hayakawa, that he is expected to marry Miss Hara and thus fulfill his father's desires in the matter. Faced with the problem of conforming to the old customs of Japan or renouncing them in favor of western ideas, Kosugi eventually decides to tread the beaten bath of his forefathers. Miss Evers helps this by graciously withdrawing from the situation and the pic.

In unraveling the yarn Dr. Fanck has introduced some superb scenic shots, particularly those of Mt. Fuji and of the sacred Torii at Miyajima. Most of the scenery he has included has no relation whatever to the story, and therefore would have better been made into a travelog. These shots, after the first three reels, become extremely tiring, and towards the end positively boring. Earthquake scene in the early stages of the pic could have been made very exciting, but was completely muffed through inadequate direction.

Scenes depicting Japan's modern development could have been cut two-thirds without impairing the story any. Most glaring lapse of direction is a scene at the volcano when Miss Hara decides to jump in. Camera is trained on her and, as she topples, seems to follow her in her plunge. Only nothing but blank crater wall registers. Although the victim had fallen quite a long distance, there wasn't the semblance of a scratch on her person, and her clothing was in perfect order when picked up again. Volcano ledges in this country are well padded to insure a nice easy landing. Maybe.

In addition to emphasizing the spirit which underlies Japan's cultural life, particularly the family system, film gives the impression that certain government departments may have had a hand in the production, with the idea of slipping over a hunk of propaganda for both home and foreign consumption. Several spots in the story dwell upon the fact that Japan is very much overpopulated and develops the idea that Manchukuo is a good place to go in for large-scale farming along western lines.

In certain spots the characters speak in English and the diction is none too good. Sound, in the main, is passable, but tends to blast in close-ups. In other spots the mixer wasn't on the job and gave too much volume to distantly approaching characters.

With all its faults, 'New Earth' will do sock biz locally as Japan's biggest and greatest effort to break into the foreign pix mart. In America, Sessue Hayakawa's name may help a bit, but he can't overcome the bad features of the film. As a novelty it may show some strength in the arty spots.

-WUL