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Author(s)	Max Tessier
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## "Dersou Ouzala" in Paris



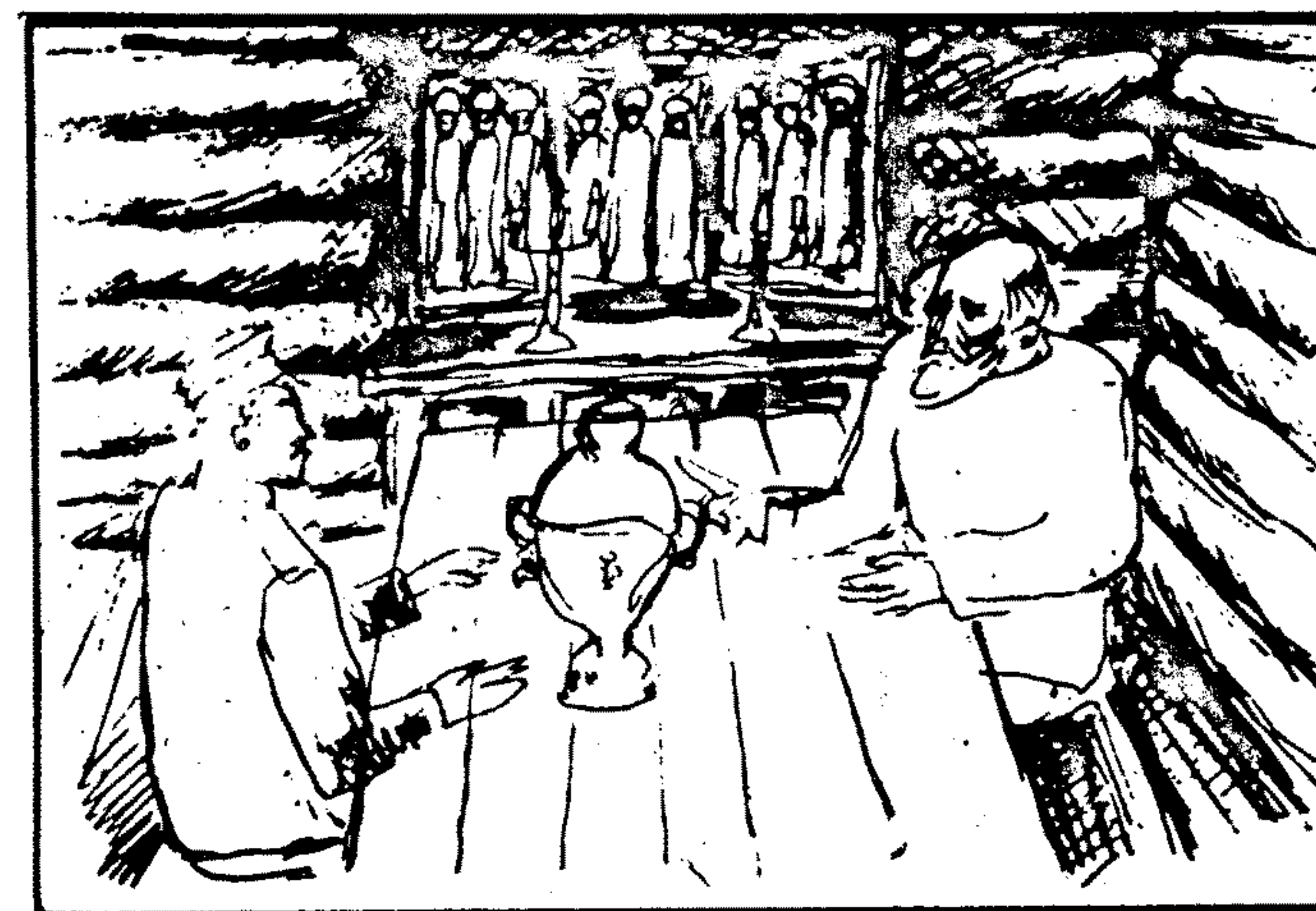
'Dersou Ouzala' designed by Akira Kurosawa

A lasting success marked the beginning of 1977 in Paris, that of Akira Kurosawa's film *DER-SOU OUZALA* which totalled over 279.000 entries in Paris and the near suburbs in 23 weeks.

A doubly surprising success first for a Russian film (the best result in the past was for *ANDREI ROUBLEV* by Tarkovski, which was far from reaching this figure in its first run) and second for a film by Kurosawa, whose reputation does not always ensure such specta-

cular results. In fact, despite certain critical support his *DODES' CADEN* in 1975, only attracted 30.898 spectators in 13 weeks and *TENGOKU TO JIGOKU* (HIGH AND LOW), which opened in June 1976, only had 3.540 spectators in 3 weeks.

To what can be attributed the unexpected success of *DER-SOU OUZALA*, released in three Paris theatres on December 22, 1976, then in four extra theatres because of its success? Was it the Oscar for



Set design drawing by Akira Kurosawa

the Best Foreign Film in 1976? Was it the new fashion for nature films? Was it the good commercial launching? Was it the success at the Paris Film Festival in 1976? Was it the success of the word of mouth publicity? It was perhaps due to all this, but no definitive explanation can be given.

In fact, *DER-SOU OUZALA*'s exhibition in France was not easy. First of all, the Russians (Sovexport Film) presented the film at the Paris Film Festival in a 35mm print and not 70mm and also cut by at least 10 minutes, which horrified Kurosawa who was at the Festival. Because of the director's protests and those of several journalists, the film was later shown in its full version of 2 hours 23 minutes, and later, after various technical incidents, the film was screened in a 70mm print at the Arlequin Cinema in Paris.

Audiences were enthralled by *DER-*

*SOU OUZALA*, which was defended, almost unanimously by the press. Its formal qualities, the feeling for nature, the ecological message and also, perhaps, the absence of sex and violence, thrilled a wide audience. Thus this beautiful film by the 'Emperor of Japanese cinema', now too the Emperor of Russian cinema, has exceeded all expectations.

*DER-SOU OUZALA* has now started its career in the major provincial towns, where its success has been very satisfactory for a film of this type, its style and length must be taken into account, not to mention its slow rhythm.

It would be only right that other unknown films by Kurosawa be shown in French theatres, and that those already announced, such as *RED BEARD* meet with the same success, unless *DER-SOU OUZALA* is the exception that confirms that sad rule.

Max Tessier