

Document Citation

Title	Sancho dayu
Author(s)	David Stewart Hull
Source	<i>The Playgoer</i>
Date	
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	7, 9
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Sanshō dayū (Sansho the bailiff), Mizoguchi, Kenji, 1954

SANCHO DAYU

(*Sancho, the Bailiff*)

Japan, 1954

Saturday,

February 22, 1964

West Coast Premiere

Tamaki	Kinuyo Tanaka
Zushio	Yoshiaki Hanayagi
Anju	Kyoko Kagawa
Bailiff Sancho.....	Eitaro Shindo
Tano	Akaske Kano
Zushio (as a boy)	Mashahiko Kato
Anju (as a girl)	Keiko Enami

Adapted, from the folk tale of the same name, by Kenji Mizoguchi. Photographed by Kazuo Miyagawa. Art direction by Kisaku Ito. Music by Fumio Hayasaka. Produced by Masaichi Nagata for Daiei Film Company.

Directed by KENJI MIZOGUCHI

ABOUT THE FILM

It is not often that we are able to offer in two consecutive weeks two unquestioned masterpieces of world cinema as yet virtually unknown in America. For, although the name of Kenji Mizoguchi is familiar in America due to his great *Ugetsu Monogatari*, only three other films by him have been seen in this country, and his masterpiece, *Sancho Dayu*, has had to wait almost ten years before its United States premiere.

As John Minchinton has written about the director when a retrospective of his works was offered in London not long ago, "Mizoguchi died in 1956 at the age of fifty-eight; he made some eighty-seven features in thirty-four years. A graduate of a Western-style art college, he brought a painterly approach to films, experimenting with classical and modern stories, and styles ranging from expressionism to social realism. His great subjects, which he often combined, were the conflicts between past and present and the life of Japanese women. His great style was the creation of atmosphere — the place, the period, the environment which conditioned the lives of his characters."

Sancho Dayu is adapted from an extremely popular folk tale of the Heian period, a Japanese literary classic which is entirely unknown outside of that country. The "Sancho" of the title is an evil slave-owner, but he is only a minor character in the story. Our interest is centered on the struggle of two nobly born children who are sold into slavery, the boy's final vengeance on his captors and his tragic efforts to locate his mother. Like all folk tales, the pace is leisurely and the settings varied.

Such a story reflects Mizoguchi's talents as a recreator of the classic periods in Japanese history. On the whole, to Western audiences at least, his "costume" pictures are far more successful than his excursions into contemporary life, odd as this might seem. But then, the four most popular Japanese films seen in America to date, *Rasho-mon*, *Ugetsu Monogatari*, *Gate of Hell* and *The Seven Samurai* all belong in subject matter to some period in more or less remote Japanese history, and this exoticism, coupled with excellent direction, acting and photography, has endeared this genre to American audiences. However,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Try C. C. BROWN'S • Originals • Famous Chocolates • since 1906 • 7007 Hollywood Blvd.

SANCHO DAYU

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Mizoguchi has been represented in local cinemas to date with but a scattering of his many films.

Several things about *Sancho Dayu* will make an immediate appeal to the Western audience. First, the story is uncommonly interesting and unpredictable. It could crudely be called a sort of Japanese *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its subject matter. But it is far more vicious; the violence is so casually introduced that we have no time to be appalled, only benumbed. The photography, by Kazuo Miyagawa, sets the mood squarely in the remote past with misty shots of extraordinary beauty filmed in a number of real locations in addition to the studio re-creations. The acting (as in all Mizoguchi films) is so good that one can feel a great deal of sympathy for the participants, which is often difficult in other Japanese costume films.

Sancho Dayu was selected as the opening film of a special supplementary series, devoted to the works of the past not as yet seen in America, which was offered at the Museum of Modern Art during the New York Film Festival of 1962. According to newspaper reports, hundreds of people were turned away at both screenings, and the critics agreed that it was the highlight of the festival, a film everyone seemed to appreciate.

Because of the not-too-surprising popularity of this masterpiece in New York, we have scheduled two showings of the film in one evening. *Sancho Dayu* is a film which definitely is not to be missed, a very special work of greatness which will probably achieve in the future a secure place in the olympus of film classics.

— David Stewart Hull