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Jidaiya No Nyobo
(The Antique Dealer's Wife)
(JAPANESE-COLOR)

—
Tokyo, March 13.

A Shochiku release, produced by Shigemi Sugisaki and Kanji Nakagawa. Directed by Azuma Morisaki. Features entire cast. Screenplay, Haruhiko Arai, Keiji Nagao, based on novel by Tomomi Muramatsu; music, Toshiyuki Komori; camera (color), Hiroshi Takemura; sound, Shinichi Harada; mixing, Koji Matsumoto; lighting, Hiroshi Ijima; editing, Yoshi Sugihara. Reviewed at Shochiku Central, Tokyo, March 9, 1983. Running time: 97 MINS.

Yasu Tsunehiko Watase
Mayumi & Misato Masako Natsume
Owner of Sunrise Masahiko Tsugawa
Yuki Tomiko Nakayama
Youth Hiroyuki Okita
Drycleaner Shiro Osaka

—
Most understandable is the decision of Shochiku to release "Jidaiya No Nyobo" on a double bill at its chain theatres with "Kamata Koshinkyoku" (Kamata March), named best picture of 1982 at the sixth annual Japan Academy Awards, the 25th annual Blue Ribbon Awards and the 37th annual Mainichi Film Concours. Without the pulling power of the latter film, it's doubtful many viewers here will be drawn to see the former.

Not that the film is a bad one. It has its virtues, almost all of which can be stated negatively: it is not overly long, not hammy acted, not too uninterestingly directed and its inconsequential plot is not quite light enough to allow the pic to float right off the screen.

To the old downtown curiosity shop run by Yasu (Tsunehiko Watase) come two stray cats, one literal, the other — Mayumi (Masako Natsume) — figurative. Natsume moves in with Watase, becomes his common-law wife, sometimes goes wandering off for days at a time.

On one such occasion, Natsume vanishes long enough for several unrelated subplots to come stumbling onto center stage. When the watering hole run by Masahiko Tsugawa goes under, his old girl friend (Tomiko Nakayama) and her new boy friend take over; an old railway ticket found in a beat-up valise sets Mr. Imai, the dry cleaner (Shiro Osaka), to reminiscing; Misato, a Brillo-haired 24-year-old with a surprising resemblance to the the missing Mayumi (not unusual as she is also played by Natsume) has a one-night stand with Yasu before heading off to get married. Mayumi eventually returns before the final credits roll and life in and around Yasu's establishment presumably goes on in as

unengaging a manner as the 97-minute slice of it just presented the viewer.

Whether the fault lies with Tomomi Muramatsu's novel, the screenplay by Haruhiko Arai and Keiji Nagao or the direction by Azuma Morisaki, the film is characterized by a jarring, jangling tone. Bittersweetness segues into slapstick with all the grace of a log jam in a dry creek bed.

Watase's is a genuinely affecting, understated performance, his longing for the temporarily absent Natsume achingly palpable. So good is he that one almost fails to notice the cameo appearance of Mitsuru Hirata, winner of the Japan Academy Award best actor nod for his performance in "Kamata Koshinkyoku." It's unfortunate that the vehicle given Watase is as creaky as most of the items in his little shop. —*Bail*.