

ZATOICHI

ZATOICHI MEETS YOJIMBO

A note about this collector's edition release of Zatoichi meets Yojimbo:

AnimEigo has gone to great lengths to bring you Zatoichi on DVD. Our Production Staff personally oversaw a brand new transfer of this film.

- Starting from a new low-contrast wet-gate 35 millimeter print, made from the original film print, a telecine transfer to Hi-definition master videotapes was made. "Low-Contrast" prints are created especially for telecine transfers.
- Color correction was done during the transfer to the new digital master tape. This enhances the picture to match the quality of the original Japanese theatrical release.
- Film grain, dirt, noise and debris were removed using Revival software to complete the process.
- After the digital enhancements and restoration work, the material was down converted from HD and encoded onto this DVD in anamorphic widescreen, in order to depict the movie in it's original aspect ratio.

We hope you enjoy the high quality of this classic 1965 masterpiece.

Liner Notes:

"Zatoichi" (or "Ichi the Masseur," see below) movies were among the most successful period movies in history of Japanese cinema, in part due to the stellar performances by the matchless Katsu Shintaro, and storylines that combined serious, intelligent plots with action and comedy. In all, twenty-six movies were produced, the first twenty-five between the years 1962 and 1973, and the last one in 1989. A TV version was also produced in the mid-70's.

The Shogunate

The story of "Zatoichi Meets Yojimbo" borrows elements from the mid to later years of the Tokugawa Era (approx. 1603-1868, also called the Edo Period), the period named for the 15 generations of Tokugawa Shogun (Military Overlords) that ruled the nation, maintaining a relatively static society, for over 250 years. This period of military-rule is characterized by its relatively peaceful order overall, clear division of the social hierarchy, extravagance by the privileged classes, isolation from the West, a lot of convoluted treachery, and many important cultural and intellectual advances.

The Shogunate was the official governing body of the nation, consisting of the Samurai centered around their Lord, a Shogun. He was the chief administrator, who gave orders through his councilors, the Tairo (Great Councilor, only appointed during special circumstances) and the Roojuu (Senior Councilors). Although the former were only required to be present at the Shogun's castle 2 days each month, Roojuu were officially at the top of the administrative hierarchy, and were mostly responsible for managing the various administrative affairs of the Shogunate. They in turn gave orders to the commissioners who were responsible for matters relating to finance, taxation, the monasteries, and city administration & justice.

Also taking orders from Roojuu were the Oometsuke (Inspector Generals), who checked up on

individuals suspected of disloyalty to the Shogunate, monitored the the conduct and performance of Shogunate members and officials, and helped to maintain the Shogunate's relationships with the many Daimyo who still survived. Under them were the 16 Metsuke (Inspectors) and further below, the Wakadoshiyori (Junior Councilors, who were responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Hatamoto and other lesser Shogunate retainers). These officials frequently appear in Samurai films, often as the bad guys.

(For more background details on the history of the Shogunate, see our other liner notes, available on our website, www.animeigo.com; we do not have space to present them all here)

Milking the Money Supply

In "Zatoichi Meets Yojimbo," the plot revolved around debased coinage. Although money existed for many centuries in Japan, rice and silk remained the major instrument for exchange until the 12th century, when trade with China re-introduced copper coins after a period of trade standstill between the two countries. "By the 14th century Chinese copper coins were in wide use. The rise of a money economy made the control of copper, silver, and gold mines important, and they became the object of contention among the warring daimyo." (Hane)

The minting and standard usage of gold coins called Oban and Koban ("big coins" and "little coins," respectively) was ordered by the government in the late 1500's. Oban, which were almost a foot long, were primarily used among administrative offices and retainers, while Koban, thanks to their more portable cigarette-box size, were the coins widely used by merchants and richer townspeople.

The koban issued in 1601 by the Fushimi Mint (which was founded that year by Ieyasu, the 1st Tokugawa Shogun) was worth 1 ryo, weighed 44 momme (approx. 6 oz.), and "contained 67.7% gold, 27.8% silver, and 4.5% copper," according to Sansom. The koban from this time period were generally called "Keicho Koban," which refers to the years of Keicho (1595 - 1614). The Oban coins were worth 10 ryo. It should be noted that 1 ryo was a lot of money for an average person. Mon coins, at 1/400th of a ryo, and kan coins, at 1000 mon, were the coins most people used.

Debasement first occurred during Tsunayoshi's rule (the 5th Tokugawa Shogun who reigned from 1680-1709). Just as many expensive projects were begun, the Shogunate was hit hard with decreasing output from the gold and silver mines, and thus faced a growing financial crisis. "Tsunayoshi debased the coinage in 1695 and created an inflationary situation. Although the government's revenues were increased substantially by this means, deficits had again increased by the end of his reign." (Hane) In the last year of Tsunayoshi's rule, "revenues came to about 760,000 to 770,000 ryo, as opposed to expenditures of 1.4 million ryo." Thus, deficit spending is far from a modern invention.

Shoguns after Tsunayoshi took measures to prevent further debasement of the coinage, and even to raise their quality. However, adulterated coins were issued several times after Tsunayoshi's time for various reasons. A chief officer at the Mint named Goto Shozaburo was appointed by Ieyasu to formulate currency policies for the Shogunate, and many years later, the

Goto family was still overseeing the Mint. During the time of Ienari (the 11th Shogun, reigned from 1787-1837), Goto San'emon, burdened with his own family debts, was approached by the Elder Mizuno in an effort to repair the Shogunate's financial situation (and to help Goto at the same time). They succeeded in 'raising' more than 2 million ryo by issuing smaller and adulterated coins, though only to be faced with disastrous consequences as time went by, primarily due to the extravagance and pleasure-seeking customs that characterized this time period. Koban issued around this time, called Man'en Koban, weighed no more than 3 grams, and measured about quarter the size of Keicho Koban. The last money issued by the Shogunate was in fact paper money upon which was written "100 ryo of gold."

Currency Conversions

1 "ryo" = 4000 "mon" coins = 4 "kan" coins = 50 "momme" (silver weight, 3.75 grams or 0.13 oz.) = 6.5 oz (of gold, ideally)

1 "kan" = 1000 "momme" = 3.75 kg or 8.2 lbs.

1 ryo can be considered roughly equivalent to 350,000 Yen. (Based on the gold exchange rates, reported by NHK in the late 1990's). 1 ryo bought roughly 1 koku (approx. 180 liters or 5 bushels) of rice, which is about a year supply of rice. In a recent NHK documentary, it was reported that Tokugawa Ieyasu (the 1st Tokugawa Shogun) had amassed by the time of his death approximately 6 million ryo of gold (about 64% in Koban, 14% in Oban, the rest in other forms of gold), roughly equivalent to 2.1 trillion Yen.

The Title

The original Japanese title, "Zatoichi To Yojimbo," can simply mean "Zatoichi and Yojimbo," but both a translation of the title that was made many years ago and Toho's suggestion have resulted in our "Zatoichi Meets Yojimbo."

"As long as you can slice daikon with it." - Ichi
Daikon are long, arm-sized, Japanese radishes.

"As you can see, I am an anma... people call me "Ichi the Masseur." - Ichi
"Anma" refers to blind men, for whom giving massages was a traditional occupation. Another word for "anma" is "zato," hence the main character Ichi is called "Zato-no-Ichi" (Ichi the Zato, or Ichi the Masseur), "Zato-Ichi" (or Zatoichi) for short.

As in medieval Europe, at the time, the names of many people were based on their occupations.

"So you steal from the bathers whenever you have a chance." - Ichi
At this time, public bathhouses were gaining popularity, not only with the patrons but with the thieves who preyed upon them.

"Oh, the coffin-maker! Yes, sir. He sculpts jizo all year round."
Jizo are stone statues commemorating the deceased.

“Count me out! You kill an anma, and his ghost will come back and haunt you!” - Sasa
An ancient superstition, one that no doubt anma took pains to encourage!

“1-ryo per man. If paid right now, then 1-bu” - Sasa
1-bu is equal to one-fourth of a ryo. The koban gold coins are each worth 1- ryo.

“Could you possibly lend me 2-bu or so, to get me started?” - Ichi
“2-bu?! I don't carry around pocket change like that! Sorry, but I've only got big money. I've got 3-ryo!” - Sasa
The joke here is visual. When Ichi slices the koban (which is 1-ryo, or 4-bu) in half, he gets the 2-bu that he asked for.

“I don't care if you're Zato-ichi or Zato-ni, just let me earn my 100-ryo!” - Sasa
“Ichi,” the main character's name, is homonymous to the word that means “1.” “Ni” means “2.” Hence the pun used by Sasa in this scene.

“The scent of plum... I remember now... Umeno... Umeno, it's you, isn't it?” - Ichi
Umeno's name was a common one from that time period. It is derived from the word for plum, “ume.” Therefore, it is befitting for a lady named after a fragrant plant to smell beautiful too!

“Don't you shout, yojimbo... sir. I don't like people who shout.” - Umeno
“Yojimbo” literally means a guard or bodyguard. Many of them were former samurai hired on temporary basis.

“There's 100-ryo in it for me if I slay Ichi, but I won't pocket 1-mon if I do Masagoro.” - Sasa
1-mon is worth one-four-thousandth of a ryo, making it the smallest unit of currency.

“Anma might have know-how, but we don't know how we know how!” - Ichi
The original line in Japanese uses a pun based on similar-sounding words: “chie” (knowledge) and “tsue” (cane). Totally untranslatable, so we came up with our own lame joke.

In Memoriam

Katsu Shintaro died of cancer on June 21st, 1997 at the age of 65. The famous, multi-talented actor-director-producer, affectionately called “Katsu-shin” by most Japanese, began his career in the 1940's, and was perhaps best known for his portrayal of the blind swordman, Zatoichi, in a long-running film series which was among the most successful in the history of Japanese cinema. As a producer, he fathered such hit movies as “Lone Wolf and Cub,” which starred Katsu's brother, Wakayama Tomisaburo, and “Nemuri Kyoshiro,” both of which we have the honor of releasing in the United States.

Known for his love of alcohol and cigarettes, in the recent years Katsu-shin spent increasing amounts of time in the hospital, only to be seen lighting up cigars at press conferences held to announce his recovery.

Two days after his death, five thousand people attended his memorial service at a Tokyo temple.

For further reference, we suggest the following sources:

- 1) "Tokugawa Japan - The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan" Chie Nakane, Shinzaburoo Ooishi and Conrad Totman, eds. Univ. of Tokyo Press, 1990
- 2) "Japan - A Historical Survey" Mikiso Hane. Scribner, 1972
- 3) "A History of Japan: 1615 - 1867" George Sansom. Stanford Univ. Press, 1963