



The Voice of Sin

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2020/142min/Colour/English Subtitles

Distributor: TBS

Director: DOI Nobuhiro

Cast: OGURI Shun, HOSHINO Gen

Filmhouse screening information:

Fri 18 Mar	The Voice of Sin	5.45 pm
Sat 19 Mar	Kiba: The Fangs of Fiction	5.45 pm
Sun 20 Mar	The Lone Ume Tree The Hunter's Diary	3.20 pm 5.35 pm
Mon 21 Mar	Life: Untitled	6.00 pm
Tue 22 Mar	Eternally Younger Than Those Idiots	5.45 pm
Wed 23 Mar	Aristocrats	5.45 pm
Thu 24 Mar	Will I Be Single Forever?	6.00 pm

'What's the point of digging it all up again?' asks AKUTSU Eiji, an Osaka-based journalist tasked with writing a piece on an unsolved extortion case from 35 years ago, known as the 'Ginga-Mando Case', in which confectionary companies were blackmailed and police were taunted by an organised crime group. He sees no point, especially as neither the group received money, nor did anyone die. In other words, it is not 'newsworthy'. Nearby, in Kyoto, SONE Toshiya, a tailor who insists on making British-style suits because of its timelessness, makes a shocking discovery: his childhood voice was used to blackmail a company in that very same case. In *The Voice of Sin*, based on the novel by SHIOTA Takeshi and on a true unsolved case, what gets overlooked and its devastating consequences are among some of the chief themes the film explores.

As AKUTSU and SONE revisit the case to answer their own questions, they find the presence of organised crime pervasive. Organised crime groups in Japan are best known as *Boryokudan*, or the Yakuza. Post-war, the growth of the Yakuza shared a similar pattern to that of the Japanese economy: when Japan rose in economic strength, the Yakuza thrived off illegal ways to make money such as gambling and protection rackets. Membership was at its peak in 1963 with over 180,000 (i). In the 1970s and 80s, when Japan was considered an economic superpower, Yakuza financial pursuits from both illegal and legal sources, such as the running of construction firms, increased so that they were known as 'the economic Yakuza' (ii). In the 1990s, however, with the start of economic stagnation, the government enacted anti-Yakuza legislation meant to curb the syndicates' influence and reach (iii). Reasons for passing these laws had to do with criticisms and pressure to act against the Yakuza and waning social tolerance towards them after a number of major violent incidents the decade before. As of 2019, the Yakuza comprised about 28,000 members (iv). They are now more likely to deal in corporate-level crimes such as setting up front companies for extortion or to evade tax (v).

A number of injustices leave their mark on some of the film's characters. One of them is the suspect of interest. He masterminded the Ginga-Mando extortion, believing he was exposing the country as the flawed society it really was. Concerning official crime rates, Japan is reputed for being a safe society, with comparatively low crime. Decreases in crime despite post-war industrialisation had defied the expected pattern that such changes led to higher crime. This contributed to a national identity of uniqueness in the 1970s and 80s. Although visible crimes against person and property – known also as street crimes – are low, crimes that are less visible, as they can happen behind closed doors or have an indirect impact, are likely to be high. These crimes include domestic violence, sexual assault, and those described as white-collar, like insider trading and money laundering. All of these may go unreported to the police; white-collar crimes can be considered victimless as there is no direct person who is targeted, while sexism and fear

Dates & Venues:

4 – 13 February
ICA, London

5 – 22 February
Phoenix, Leicester

5 February – 26 March
Firstsite, Colchester

6 – 27 February
Eden Court, Inverness

6 – 27 February
Watershed, Bristol

8 – 23 February
Depot, Lewes

9 – 27 February
Storyhouse, Chester

12 February – 1 March
Cambridge Film Trust,
Cambridge

13 February – 2 March
Aberystwyth Arts Centre

13 February – 27 March
Hyde Park Picture House,
Leeds

13 February – 27 March
Chapter Arts Centre,
Cardiff

15 February – 3 March
HOME, Manchester

16 February – 16 March
Brewery Arts Cinema,
Kendal

21 February – 31 March
Tyneside Cinema,
Newcastle

26 February – 20 March
Queen's Film Theatre,
Belfast

28 February – 28
March

Macrobert Arts
Centre, Stirling

1 – 30 March
Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry

2 – 15 March
Dundee
Contemporary Arts,
Dundee

2 – 30 March
Exeter Phoenix,
Exeter

4 – 6 March
QUAD, Derby

7 – 28 March
Cinema City, Norwich

7 – 28 March
City Screen
Picturehouse, York

8 – 31 March
Showroom Cinema,
Sheffield

12 – 20 March
Belmont Filmhouse,
Aberdeen

15 – 29 March
Plymouth Arts
Cinema, Plymouth

18 – 24 March
Broadway,
Nottingham

18 – 24 March
Filmhouse, Edinburgh

of stigma may discourage victims of the former crimes from coming forward. Although official statistics show that Japan has relatively low crime, it does not completely capture the situation (vi).

The Voice of Sin asks viewers: what makes an action just? In the pursuit of justice, does the end excuse the means and who loses out because of that pursuit, and is that okay? Perhaps just action is one of quiet strength. But, nowadays, 'newsworthy' is considered whatever is on-trend, sensational, or extreme. The accompanying incentives and rewards we get for 'newsworthy' action can motivate us to overlook what matters.

Dr Laura Bui
Lecturer in Criminology
University of Manchester

- i. Organized Crime Department, National Policy Agency. (2020). Fight against organized crime. National Police Agency. https://www.npa.go.jp/english/Police_of_Japan/2020/poi2020_p28-30.pdf
- ii. Hoshino, T., & Kamada, T. (2021). Third-Party Policing Approaches Against Organized Crime: An Evaluation of the Yakuza Exclusion Ordinances. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 37, 791–811. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-020-09466-6>
- iii. Baradel, M. (2021). The rise of shaming paternalism in Japan: recent tendencies in the Japanese criminal justice system. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 24, 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-019-09357-8>
- iv. See endnote i
- v. Baradel, M. (2021). Yakuza Grey: The Shrinking of the Il/legal Nexus and its Repercussions on Japanese Organised Crime. *Global Crime*, 22(1), 74-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2020.1813114>; Rankin, A. (2012). 21st-Century Yakuza: Recent Trends in Organized Crime in Japan ~Part 1 世紀のやくざ — 日本における組織犯罪の最近動向. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. 10(7). <https://apjif.org/2012/10/7/Andrew-Rankin/3688/article.html>
- vi. Bui, L., & Farrington, D.P. (2019). *Crime in Japan: A psychological perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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