

G. MINAS PRODUÇÕES AUDIOVISUAIS

THE CANGACEIRO AND THE SAMURAI

SYNOPSIS

SCREENPLAY BY
GERALDO SANTOS PEREIRA

SCENE: BRAZIL, 1935

THE CANGACEIRO AND THE SAMURAI

"The cangaceiro, the mystic from the backwoods, both law-abiding and outlawed, forms with the American cowboy and the Japanese samurai, the trinity of the great heroes of the cinema, at least as far as Brazilians are concerned".

Alberto Silva.

THE CANGACEIRO AND THE SAMURAI
by Geraldo Santos Pereira

SYNOPSIS

1. Back in 1935, after receiving a cattle farm in Bahia as payment of a debt, the japanese Massao Takeda left São Paulo where he lived with his wife Kimie, to settle down as a farmer in that North eastern savannah-type area known as " caatinga " which, in the 1930's was scourged by armed gangs of rude countrymen who called themselves " cangaceiros ".

Already living in Bahia Kimie died and Massao found himself alone and childless in such large, rough and yet beautiful region. He, then, decided to invite his nephew Kyoshiro Takeda, who lived in Japan and was also a farmer, to come to the farm in Brazil and later become Massao's heir.

Kyoshiro Takeda, newly married to young and attractive Sayuri, took a boat bringing his wife and his widowed mother, Mari. Around April 1936 they reached the port of Salvador. Among their luggage an exquisite, antique wooden trunk was always handled with extreme care.

Affectionately welcomed by Massao, the three japanese travellers caught the Bahians' eye and inherent curiosity, as they walked across downtown Salvador in order to take an old bus that would pass by the vast property known as " Fazenda do Japonês " (the Japanese's farm).

The delicate and youthful presence of Sayuri, her melodious voice and the nostalgic tune of the shamissen that she gracefully played awakened Massao's memories of his own time, making reminiscences develop into admiration and anxiety, for the young lady looked very much like young Kimie.

As much as Massao, Antonio Garcia, the rude, taciturn and manly farm-bailiff felt particularly attracted by Sayuri's magic.

Under Kyoshiro's energetic and competent guidance the " Fazenda do Japonês " had a great development allowing the japanese to quickly adapt to the northeastern country life without difficulties.

They kept, however, faithful to their traditions, stablishing the unique contrast between two rich cultures and folklore.

While, for example, inside their large house the japanese family celebrated the " Tanabata-Matsuri ", and old and traditional festival carried on by the countrymen of Japan, in return for the sweets and dishes kindly distributed the Bahians would start a noisy celebration of Candomblé, at which Antonio Garcia represented Ogūn, its leading and most impressive character.

Alternating decoration, rythms, melodies, chants and dancing in the warm night, the parties seemed to exalt the mysticism of both races and more deeply antagonize Kyoshiro and Antonio Garcia.

One evening, being Kyoshiro away on a business trip, old Massao and Sayuri, captivated by the spell of the night in the backwoods, went to the farm-house terrace nostalgically recollecting their far-away motherland. Massao, taken to the past, in his imagination saw beautiful Sayuri turn into young Kimie, his late wife, and walked towards her impelled by desire, happiness and excitement. Scared, Sayuri left him to hide in her room, while Massao shattered by shame and embarrassment, locked himself in his own room, wrote a letter and then committed suicide.

2. After his uncle's death Kyoshiro became the owner of the farm and coldly dismissed the farm-bailiff.

Without uttering a word, Antonio Garcia fetched his belongings, guitar and Candomblé attire, a broad knife and his St. Anthony statuette. Then he took his horse, for which he insisted on paying to the farmer and rode off along the dirt road.

Some kilometres further, by the strongly sun-beaten wayside, Antonio saw a wounded agonizing " cangaceiro " who was asking for help. Just before dieing the man asked Antonio to tell about his death to his family in Manga Rosa and to his gang leader, Aparício Meireles, very famous throughtout the Northeast, at that moment living around Chapada da Ema.

In an attempt to keep his promise, Garcia went as far as Manga Rosa, innocently carrying the rifle, cartridge-belt, packsack together with a few other objects which had belonged to the " cangaceiro ".

As he was riding across Manga Rosa main square, Garcia was intercepted and violently arrested by soldiers who shouting and beating threw Antonio into a prison cell as they had mistakenly assumed that the farm-bailiff took part in the armed gangs.

Badly injured and humiliated, in silent and impotent hatred divided the moment when he managed to escape a few days later and set off to meet Aparício Meireles and finally join his group, thus starting a new page in his life.

Meanwhile, the Japanese's farm was having its land covered by different sorts of plantations, cattle and other breedings which accounted for Kyoshiro's becoming notorious and full of prestige.

One day, during the farmer's absence, as he had gone to Salvador, the farm was invaded by a gang now headed by Antonio Garcia, who had taken over after Aparício's death in a combat against the police.

Submitting somewhat quickly a few workers' resistance, Antonio Garcia entered the house searching for Sayuri.

Seeing Kyoshiro's mother menacingly hold a gun, one of Garcia's companions killed her with a single shot. Sayuri fainted in Garcia's arms. He opened her wardrobe and took from inside it the beautiful garment she had brought from Japan and which he admired so much.

Garcia carried her in his arms, mounted his horse and before leaving asked Pedro Roque, the new farm-bailiff, to tell Kyoshiro that the gang-leader had come to take Sayuri away. Holding the terrorized young Japanese lady the cangaceiro galloped down the dusty country road.

3. Returning from his trip Kyoshiro was met by the tragic scene: his mother dead and his wife kidnapped.

In silent revolt and great determination the Japanese demanded that a horse should be prepared for he would start his journey searching for Sayuri in order to bring her back. Once the animal was ready Kyoshiro brought from inside the house the precious old trunk and tied it to the saddle.

Alone he left the farm behind, not carrying a single shot-gun, beginning the long, dramatic, pathetic persecution riding through the inland fields of Bahia and other Northeastern states.

Dressed in his old farm clothes and straw hat, keeping his small eyes fixed in the distance, Kyoshiro went on amidst the backwoods, carefully watching for tracks, trying to interpret the smallest signs while in contrasting action Antonio Garcia's gang fled crossing the Northeast, misguiding, sometimes fighting Government troops, building up a legend of blood and violence.

Always beside Garcia, riding a bay dun, Sayuri would never say a word, in her colourful blouse and skirt and large straw hat as a protection against the blazing sun. Invariably next to her at a certain moment Garcia said:

- When you demand, madam Sayuri, I'll leave all this behind. We can go to São Paulo and lead a decent life there; I don't want to be an outlaw, believe me.

The japanese young lady did not answer but just looked at him, misteriously, almost ironic.

In the meantime, at another spot of the backwoods Kyoshiro continued, undefeatable, his obstinate search. Nothing could stop him in his abyss of revenge, neither the unmercifull sun, nor the thorns that ragged his skin and clothes. He kept moving forward through areas of high and dry bushes, past thorny " caatingas " under a cloudless sky, reaching the border of Piauí, going past Caracol, Raimundo Nonato, crossing Piauí River at the same point that Antonio Garcia and his group had been to.

Wounded during a confront with soldiers Garcia fainted and when recovered conscience, he found himself alone in a hiding place, on the grass. Innitally he thought Sayuri had run away but he soon heard some steps and saw the girl bringing some water to take care of his wound.

Some time later, while recovering his health and strength lodged in a remote village taken by the reassembled group, Garcia saw Sayuri enter the room where he rested. She was taking him some soup, intending to leave the bowl on his side table. Before she could go as softly as she had come in, the " cangaceiro " stopped her by holding her hand.

Sayuri turned back, attracted by Garcia. He held her in his arms, put her on his bed, kissed her hair, face and mouth. Then he slowly took off her blouse, bras, skirt, kissing her white and delicate body.

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Outside, in the village's long and poorly lit street, a beggar loitered singing his misery, asking an alms.

- God, it's too much misery in this town! But, who knows, would Garcia's people help me out? Let's try to ask...

Guided by the noise the "cangaceiros" were making at a nearby whore-house, the blindman walked in their direction saying:

- Guess they're all in the cabare. Brothers, give me some help, for God's sake, some help brothers!

4. Early in the morning on the next day all the "cangaceiros" set off on a new journey, and the town was left quiet and empty. However, as the city life gradually got back to its normal routine the still frightened inhabitants commented on the invasion, resuming their humble duties.

At this point, from a far end of that same village Kyoshiro Takeda came along with his horse and old trunk shining in the sun.

He rode down the main street where there were other dwellers, some on horseback too, looked for a grocer's, dismounted, asked for water, bought some corn for the animal, mounted his horse again and calmly left the town.

The persecution continued, persistent, relentless, Kyoshiro now following the enemy gang quite closely, moving like a shadow, cautious, examining footprints and whatever details that could indicate the gang's whereabouts.

After getting rid of another group of policemen, Garcia's gang returned to an area of harsh vegetation arriving, by nightfall, at an arid region in the North of Bahia.

It was there, protected in a recess of dense vegetation, that Garcia and his companions decided to put up a camp, while Kyoshiro, having wasted some time following by mistake a track which had been left by the police, got back to the correct route that led him to the camp.

At night bonfires were lit in strategic points of the "cangaceiros" shelter and the men continued their normal activities of sewing their clothes and provision bags, bathing in water brought from a nearby stream, putting on some perfume and some grease on their hair, washing their horses, playing cards or counting money, etc.

Sayuri's tent could be seen in a corner between "umbu" trees. In the centre of the camp site two men started a capotira dance under the pace given by berimbaus and tambourines.

That was when Kyoshiro Takeda was able to get near the refuge, hidden among the trees. He carefully got off his horse to avoid being seen by the nightwatch and tried to have a closer look at the camp.

He had finally managed to have his great enemies at hand. His face, tense and severe, showed an unconcealable expression of contentment strengthening his energy in the effort of confront and revenge.

Kyoshiro walked back to where he had left his horse tied to a tree. The old trunk was taken off the saddle and carried to a hayfield. With a key the precious box was unlocked.

He lifted up the trunk cover and carefully drew from within an old Japanese apparel also revealing, at the bottom of the trunk, a sinister samurai sword enclosed in its scabbard. A small compartment in the box kept papers, photographs and documents yellowed with age.

Having the apparel folded in his arms, Kyoshiro walked to a nearby tree, put the old clothing on the tree root and unhurriedly, as if through a ritual, took off his cotton, collarless shirt, khaki pants boots and straw hat, and left them aside.

Then, solemnly, half-naked, he started to put on the Japanese outfit, ample and comfortable, covering all his body like a sacerdotal attire.

A new and amazing figure took form in that hidden site, strange in the inland night landscape.

Extravagant, almost unreal, the intriguing transmutation of the Eastern warrior myth to a tropical land. The ritual took form in flesh transforming the man into a new reality.

Instead of a native, peaceful farmer, in hieratical magnificence appeared the medieval swordsman, keen eyed, ready to fight for life and death.

At the camp, unaware of the japanese's solitary presence, the "cangaceiros" kept busy on their duties, or danced capoeira in provocative swayings incited by the shouts and encouragement from their comrades.

Back in his hiding place Kyoshiro could hear the uproar, indiferent to everything while still finishing to dress up. As a next step, from inside the old trunk he took the ancient sword which he had inherited from his ancestors.

He tied the sword and acabbard to his waist as the samurais used to do, chose a suitable place for his meditation and prayers, calm and deeply concentrated.

Once ready for the final act, insolit image of fiction and legend, he walked a few metres and listened, for the last time, to the sounds and shouts, voices of a celebration emanated from the "cangaceiros' " party.

All of a sudden, though, with the thrust of a feline jump, Kyoshiro Takeda, brandishing the sword, advanced to the centre of the camp, letting out an appalling cry of war.

Feet on the ground, as a deadly lightning the japanese attacked the startled men, many of whom were drunk, not allowing them any time to fetch their guns or defend themselves.

The terrible warrior fled against them, cutting their bodies and heads, throwing them to blood ponds on the soil. Dreadful the sword moved on mutilating arms and legs, pouring blood under piercing cries.

Antonio Garcia dashed from his tent to the horrible scene, astonished, as if not understanding anything at all. Sayuri followed him some steps behind, wearing her flowery and colourful kimono, hair done in the japanese style. When she saw her husband transformed into a samurai her face turned pale, paralised by the impact.

Kyoshiro saw her, too. Slowly he walked towards the couple, sword soaked in blood.

Garcia drew his dagger and moved towards the samurai who was waiting for him.

In the soundtrack, formerly marked by a blend of sounds of both berimbaus and japanese war drums, there is now silence and Garcia's steps mixed/contrasting with the samurai's exhausted breathing.

Kyoshiro went in Garcia's direction, with sharp eyes, dodging corpses and blood ponds.

Face to face, knife against sword, samurai against cangaceiro, man against man.

They stopped a few steps from each other, eye in eye, measuring forces, repressing hatred. A confront of two races to decide antagonism and revenge.

Suddenly, hands lifting up the sword, Kyoshiro burst forward, ready to knock his oponent down. But Garcia, in a second's flat, flashed out of the swordsman's reach and also brandished his knife.

The weapons clenched, steel against steel under gigantic strength of a fight for life and death. At a distance and unable to help, Sayuri witnessed the frightening duel.

On screen, or video monitor, during the impressive battle, there is a fusion of Garcia's complete image of cangaceiro and the one he represent in Candomblé - Ogūn, both fully dressed, his dagger accompanied by the strong beat of African drums (atabaques, cabaças, agogôs, berimbaus).

For a while the duel is marked by alternating Afro-Brazilian and Japanese sounds, " violas " (10-string country guitars) and " shamissens ", shouts and imprecations in both languages as the fighters' image in slow motion (by use of high speed) become hieratic.

The special editing of this sequence ends at the precise instant in which the japanese strikes Garcia dead, when images resume their normal speed.

Both rivals are in the centre of a break; Garcia with a bleeding wound in his breast and Kyoshiro, terrible, strongly holding the sword, ready to give the finishing stroke.

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FIRST VERSION TO THE STORY END.

Kyoshiro does not give the finishing stroke as astonished he sees Sayuri run to offer her lap for Garcia, who is agonizing, to lay his head.

Understanding it all, Kyoshiro slowly puts down the sword, while Garcia, just before expiring, lovingly admires the japanese girl's face now uncommonly marked by traces of deep suffering.

Before her, perplexed, Kyoshiro remains motionless, fixedly looking at the girl, feeling a blend of hatred, mercy, despise and sadness.

The cangaceiro lets his head rest on the girl's lap and dies, staining her colourful kimono with blood.

Kyoshiro gives some steps backwards, kneels and turns the tip of his sword against his belly, ready to kill himself. Before doing so, however, he looks strangely and deeply at his wife for the last time. Gathering all his strength he puts himself to the sword, falls forward and dies.

Camera goes up on crane or helicopter, showing the break where the fight has been covered with dead bodies and, at the centre, Sayuri lonely caressing Garcia's hair. The day is about to dawn and an absolute silence takes the backwoods harsh landscape.

The soundtrack is solely composed of a monotonous berimbau tune.

SECOND VERSION TO THE STORY END

After having given the finishing stroke that killed the farm-bailiff (Garcia) Kyoshiro cleans the sword and puts it back to its scabbard. Then he walks slowly towards Sayuri who is silently waiting some metres away.

He utters one single word in their native tongue:

- (Let's go.)

They both leave that place, walking uphill where his horse had been left. There, while Sayuri picks up her husband's belongings, Kyoshiro undresses, returning the samurai clothes and sword to the antique trunk, to wear his farmer's outfit again.

Next, he ties the trunk to the saddle, mounts his horse lifting Sayuri to ride with him.

They go back to the winding dirt road along the backwoods, at dawn.

The soundtrack gradually brings to the foreground the voice of a Northeastern " cantador " (street singer) and his " viola sertaneja " (10-string or 7-string country guitar), starting an ABC (rhymes in music to tell the saga of the cangaceiro and the samurai):

Lend your ears to what I say,
my people, pay attention, pray,
an ABC that's very tragic
and happened in the backwood land
involving a whole family
which came from Japan.

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At the same time that Kyoshiro and Sayuri, on horseback go farther along the track through the " caatinga ", now flooded with sunlight, the singer's voice gradually weakens (sounds distant) with a new ABC rhyme:

Bless whoever lives in peace
working on the farms:
thus lived a japanese
free from all contends
thinking only of his land
his Japan of many charms.

English version by: *Edna Mae Waddington*
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Geraldo Santos Pereira was born in Minas Gerais, Brazil, where performed as a journalist, and graduated in Law, besides founding the Minas Gerais Film Club, practicing film critics and making documentary films.

With a French Government Scholarship, he left to Paris where attended the "Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques" (Film making and Production), 1949-1951), and Contemporary Literature, in Sorbonne.

When he came back to Brazil, in 1951, he worked as 1st. Direction Assistant in "Vera Cruz Film Company", São Paulo, as journalist in "Folha de São Paulo" and, in 1957, directed the color picture "Rebelião em Vila Rica", exhibited in Brussell Film Festival, 1958.

When he came to live in Rio de Janeiro, when he worked at the Education and Culture Secretary Cabinet; was secretary of "Gouvernement Film Commission" and "Grupo de Estudos da Indústria Cinematográfica" (Group of Research of Film Industry), and then he made several documentary films.

In 1965, he directed "Grande Sertão", based on the book "Grande Sertão: Veredas", by João Guimarães Rosa. In 1970 he directed "Balada dos Infieis", a feature film in "Eastmancolor", and in 1976, in co-production with Embrafilme, the very well-succeeded "O Seminarista", one of the greatest hits of the modern Brazilian cinema.

Also in co-production with Embrafilme, he directed "O Sol dos Amantes" (The Sun of Lovers). In 1976 his script of "O Cangaceiro e o Samurai" conquered the first prize of a competition sponsored by Brazilian Government.

Geraldo Santos Pereira was, for a long time, 1st. Secretary of Brazilian Union of the Film Industry and is the author of the books "Plano Geral do Cinema Brasileiro", "O Sol dos Amantes" and "Ciranda Barroca".

In 2000 Geraldo Santos Pereira directed "O Aleijadinho", not released in the Brazilian film market, and prepares "O Cangaceiro e o Samurai" and "Ciranda Barroca", his new features productions.

Geraldo Santos Pereira lives in Belo Horizonte, State of Minas Gerais.



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