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| Yamanaka, Sadao (1909–1938) |
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| Sadao Yamanaka was a Japanese film director known for bringing a modern, critical touch to period films in the 1930s. Born in Kyoto, he entered the film industry in 1927 and directed his first film at age 22. He soon became known for his deviations from the period film genre, presenting samurai who avoided violence or, when he transitioned to sound, dialogue in modern Japanese. His stories could vary from the parodic (*Tange Sazen yowa: Hyakumanryo no tsubo* [*The Million Ryo Pot*, 1935]) to the tragic (*Machi no irezumimono* [*The Town’s Tattooed Man*, 1935]), but his film style, while drawing much from Hollywood continuity editing, developed a poetic and humanistic concern for the material conditions of everyday life. Films like *Ninjo kamifusen* [*Humanity and Paper Balloons*, 1937], his last work and for some his masterpiece, depicted the daily sufferings of groups of individuals on the margins of society, using the period film to critique modern Japan. Yamanaka was drafted the day that film was completed and died of an illness on the China front at age 28. Only three of his films are extant, with *Humanity and Paper Balloons* frequently rated by Japanese critics as one of the best Japanese films of all time. |
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| Further reading:  (Chiba)  (Chiba, Hyōden Yamanaka Sadao: Wakaki eiga kantoku no shōzō)  (Freiberg)  (Fujiwara)  (Kato) |