



**JAPAN 2021: 100 YEARS OF JAPANESE CINEMA**

# **Marital Relations (Meoto zenzai)**

Despite paternal disapproval, the heir to a wealthy family embarks on a relationship with a geisha. Another filmmaker deserving of greater fame in the West, Shiro Toyoda is celebrated particularly for his direction of actors. Here, he elicits superb performances from Hisaya Morishige and Chikage Awashima in what remains one of Japanese cinema's most mature and realistic accounts of romantic commitment.

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## **Shiro Toyoda**

Shiro Toyoda (1906-1977) began with a fascination for theatre; then he got a job at the Shochiku Tokyo Studios in 1925 and became an assistant to Yasujiro Shimazu (a pioneer of the modern social drama) when his chief assistant Heinosuke Gosho was promoted to director. As a result, Toyoda's interest in the theatre waned and in its place grew his love for the motion picture.

Due probably to his early theatre background, Toyoda gradually became known as a very sympathetic and acute director of actors. He believed that casting was the most important element in a film and was inclined to reject stars when he felt they did not fit a part. He also strove for a distinct unity and loyalty among his technicians and used many fine screenwriters to produce his well-honed scripts. As Donald Richie commented, 'this attitude is entirely responsible for the excellence of the Toyoda film, its fine polish, its expert craftsmanship and its depth.'

Thematically, he covered many genres from kooky comedies to gorgeously designed period pieces and, probably most importantly, modern dramas often concerned with romantic liaisons (and their corresponding discords) and stories about people striving to find their place in the world. Using great actresses like Hideko Takamine, Machiko Kyo and Chikage Awashima, he also injected a strong feminist tone into the way his heroines' burdens are inflected and questioned.

Toyoda believed in the well-made film – visually eloquent and intelligently written – and he invariably delivered the goods.

**John Gillett, National Film Theatre programme notes**

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**MARITAL RELATIONS (MEOTO ZENZAI)**

*Director:* Shiro Toyoda  
*Production Company:* Toho Co. Ltd.  
*Producer:* Ichirô Satô  
*Screenplay:* Toshio Yasumi  
*Based on the novel by:* Sakunosuke Oda  
*Photography:* Mitsuo Miura  
*Editor:* Kôichi Iwashita  
*Art Director:* Kisaku Itô  
*Music:* Ikuma Dan  
*Sound:* Masao Fujiyoshi

**Cast**

Hisaya Morishige (*Ryukichi*)  
Chikage Awashima (*Choko*)  
Yôko Tsukasa  
Haruo Tanaka  
Eiko Miyoshi  
Yoshiko Morikawa  
Isao Yamagata  
Kichijirô Ueda

Japan 1955  
120 mins

Print courtesy National Film Archive of Japan

The screening on Mon 7 Nov will feature a pre-recorded intro by  
Professor Hideaki Fujiki, Nagoya University

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