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Aka "A Geisha"

Thursday, May 6 Screenwriter Yoshikata Yoda in Person!

GION FESTIVAL MUSIC (GION BAYASHI) 9:30

A young geisha rebels against her environment, encouraged by her older sister, also a geisha, who thinks herself too far gone to change her way of life. Yet the older woman resists in her own way, refusing to become a common prostitute, the lot of many geishas after the war. The younger, soon lost in the upside-down world of the postwar geisha, is actually the daughter of a former patron of the elder geisha; their mutual sacrifices form a very severe criticism of the geisha tradition.

This remake of the 1936 masterpiece SISTERS OF GION (GION NO SHIMAI) is almost completely unknown in America. In Japan, however, the film was regarded as superior to the director's other work of that year (UGETSU MONOGATARI) and as his most fully realized depiction of geisha life.

In her 1964 book on Mizoguchi, the Vietnamese critic Ve-Ho describes the film in the following terms: 'The changes in the screenplay serve to simplify the plot, and the story no longer has the sad and shocking ending of SISTERS OF GION. The geishas' condition is still precarious and pitiful, but Mizoguchi no longer has the impassioned attitude that he had in the earlier film. In GION FESTIVAL MUSIC he shows profound compassion, infinite tenderness, and calm serenity. In comparing the two works, we can see how far the man and the artist have come. The first film, while dealing with the drama of two geishas, is concerned essentially with their social condition, while the second is enriched with the lived experience which has matured its author since that time. The fate of his characters is examined by a man who has understood and then accepted the profound meaning of the human condition.' --translated by Peter Scarlet

Directed by Kenji Mizoguchi, Written by Yoshikata Yoda and Matsutaro Kawaguchi, With Michiyo Kogure, Ayako Wakao, Eitaro Shindo, Ichiro Sugai. (1953, 85 min, 35mm, French titles with English voice translation provided, Print Courtesy of Japan Film Library Council)