

## Document Citation

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**Onimasa**  
(JAPANESE-COLOR)

Manila, Jan. 27.

A Toei Company release of a Shigei Okada production. Directed by Hideo Gosha. Script by Koje Takata and Gosha, based on Tomiko Miyao's novel. Camera (Fujicolor), Fujio Morita; music, Mitsukai Karno; editor, Isamu Ichida; production design, Yoshindon Nishioka. Reviewed in the competition section of the 1983 Manila Film Festival, Manila Film Center, Jan. 27, 1983. Running time: 146 MINS.

Onimasa	Tatsuya Nakadai
Matsue	Masako Natsume
Uta	Shima Iwashita
The Big Boss	Tetsuro Tamba
Hanako	Kaori Tagasugi
Hanako's Mother	Akiko Kana
Second Mistress	Emi Shindo
Third Mistress	Akika Nakamura
Opponent's Mistress	Mari Natsuki

For sheer cinematic splendor in drama, cinematography, production design and acting, Hideo Gosha's "Onimasa" will be hard to beat as a contender for this year's Golden Eagle best picture award. Whether the jury will find film's subject matter sufficiently uplifting (a quality much looked for at this event) is another thing. (Film is Japan's official submission for 1982 foreign language Academy Award consideration. —Ed).

Working from a script based on a highly praised novel, Gosha has created a work of purest cinema. Each frame has composition, flash and style without in any way interfering with the story's dramatic flow. Actually, the pictures form a truly natural part of the narrative's endless energy.

Although much human abuse is shown in "Onimasa," it does end on an uplifting note, scoring a triumph of a kind for the obdurate spirit, particularly the female one. The title figure, though, is a man, a handsome Mafia chieftain in the town of Shikoku in the years between 1921 and 1941. His energy in all matters borders on madness. He has a wife, two mistresses, but no children, and so he adopts Matsue, a girl nearing her teens. Matsue notes the displays of power, political as well as sexual, personified in Onimasa, with some trembling. But, early on, she forms an attachment to her new father, which is reciprocated. This feeling is not diminished when Onimasa later on succeeds in fathering a daughter of his own with one of the mistresses.

Scenes of life in the Onimasa house with all its male brutality being shrewdly curbed by various female devices and designs, interchange with scenes of gang warfare. The latter has political aspects and later on, Matsue goes away with Tanabe, a young socialist. She does not give up her attachment to Onimasa, however, nor to her kid sister, Hanako. And as Onimasa's wife is dying with typhoid, Matsue insists on sharing her room until she dies.

Since all characters are drawn with multi-layered characteristics, some good, some very bad, all this comes out less sentimental than a brief resume might indicate. Audiences, as a matter of fact, are kept in constant suspense about what direction the story might take. But whatever happens, the outcome appears logical enough.

Tattooed bodies in sexual action figure strongly in a film that nevertheless has nine of the "Empire Of Passion" single-mindedness about it. Violence of several kinds explodes as the natural results of carefully built-up suspense. At one point, Onimasa tries to rape Matsue. She fights him off successfully by trying to kill herself, not him, with a

piece of broken glass. The way this sequence runs makes it quite reasonable that Onimasa and his adopted daughter love each other even more afterwards.

The film is full of such surprises, so it does not appear too fanciful, either, the Matsue survives to the end of the picture as the only member of the family who can walk away — with a swirl of her parasol — into a new sunrise.

Masako Natsume is the actress who adds sweetness and light to the film in the Matsue role. While creditable performances are given also by Shima Iwashita as Onimasa's wife, it is Tatsuya Nakadai in the title role who will be remembered the longest. His bursts of softness and sad resignation come as truly human touches amidst his parading of macho attitudes. Nakadai, used by Akira Kurosawa in "Kagemusha, The Shadow Warrior," seems destined to become as internationally known and respected as Toshiro Mifune.

— Kell.