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**Mineko Iwasaki**

**Geisha, a Life**



Title: Geisha, a Life

Author: Mineko Iwasaki

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## Description

*"No woman in the three-hundred-year history of the karyukai has ever come forward in public to tell her story. We have been constrained by unwritten rules not to do so, by the robes of tradition and by the sanctity of our exclusive calling...But I feel it is time to speak out."*

Celebrated as the most successful geisha of her generation, Mineko Iwasaki was only five years old when she left her parents' home for the world of the geisha. For the next twenty-five years, she would live a life filled with extraordinary professional demands and rich rewards. She would learn the formal customs and language of the geisha, and study the ancient arts of Japanese dance and music. She would enchant kings and princes, captains of industry, and titans of the entertainment world, some of whom would become her dearest friends. Through great pride and determination, she would be hailed as one of the most prized geishas in Japan's history, and one of the last great practitioners of this now fading art form.

In *Geisha, a Life*, Mineko Iwasaki tells her story, from her warm early childhood, to her intense yet privileged upbringing in the Iwasaki okiya (household), to her years as a renowned geisha, and finally, to her decision at the age of twenty-nine to retire and marry, a move that would mirror the demise of geisha culture. Mineko brings to life the beauty and wonder of Gion Kobu, a place that "existed in a world apart, a special realm whose mission and identity depended on preserving the time-honored traditions of the past." She illustrates how it coexisted within post-World War II Japan at a time when the country was undergoing its radical transformation from a post-feudal society to a modern one.

"There is much mystery and misunderstanding about what it means to be a geisha. I hope this story will help explain what it is really like and also serve as a record of this unique component of Japan's cultural history," writes Mineko Iwasaki. *Geisha, a Life* is the first of its kind, as it delicately unfolds the fabric of a geisha's development. Told with great wisdom and sensitivity, it is a true story of beauty and heroism, and of a time and culture rarely revealed to the Western world.

## Insightful reviews

Nadia: reading the book is far better than watching the movie , more details of Japan's famous geisha life .

Petra X: The book, *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden was based around interviews with Mineko Iwasaki. She was unhappy with the misuse of her words and wrote this, her autobiography. The book details her life as a geisha from childhood up until her retirement a few years ago, in her 40s.

In the West, at least, 'geisha' has always been thought of as a euphemism for a high-priced whore, but as the book shows, the women earn far more as geishas than they could ever hope to do on their backs. The world of a geisha is one where women run things and make lots of money whilst all the time looking like the epitome of sweet, submissive femininity.

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Lady: I'd give this 2.5 if I could but it doesn't deserve a three. The author is stuck up, spoiled and full of herself. She Disparages both the Queen of England and Prince Charles for trivial things that a normal person would never even consider. She acts like shes better than everyone around her and bosses people around from a young age. She spends the entire book slamming the entire geisha system and is terribly offended that everyone doesn't change and do her things her way instead. If you're reading this because this is the woman that memiors of a geisha is based off of I wouldn't bother, Very little of her life was directly used in the book and most that was has been changed around so you may not catch it anyway. Mineko is nothing like Sayuri in any way. I spent most of this book being kind of disgusted at her holier than thou attitude. At one point when shes a child she takes off her shoe and expects another little girl to scratch her toe for her!!

Mary: i didn't just like the 'other' booklet "Memoirs of a Geisha"; even though it used to be attention-grabbing to benefit concerning the geisha culture, i did not just like the sexual storylines concerning teenagers and extremely younger ladies that the unconventional portrayed. it seems that the 'other' e-book used to be in keeping with the lifetime of THIS geisha (or geiko), yet she was once no longer too happy with her portrayal either. So she wrote this one ("Geisha: A Life") to counteract the preferred opinion portrayed that geishas have been high-class prostitutes. If there has been something she sought after us to learn, it used to be the falseness of that insinuation. I like to examine international cultures; i've got had little or no chance to shuttle and get to grasp the world, so examining is my top approach to learn. i will be honest, i'm baffled by way of the probably contrary tradition that Japan possesses (possessed?) in comparison to our own. i've got lengthy been conscious of those differences, yet to work out them performed out within the lifetime of a person used to be eye-opening. the appropriate eastern lady in her scenario felt that her satisfaction used to be extra very important than anything. That it was once larger to take the entire blame than to lose peace. That find out how to achieve the higher hand is to by no means ask humans to regard you better. the gang is extra very important than yourself, even if the crowd damages you. I bet I see what she's saying...but as with such a lot cultural norms, it'll basically paintings in a society the place all others are striving for the same. i will not even think being this kind of doormat the following and having it prove good for a woman. Of course, i've got much to profit approximately grace and turning the opposite cheek--I'm now not claiming she's thoroughly incorrect. It was once easily fairly noticeable the total time i used to be reading, that my social values didn't fit hers. It made for a few attention-grabbing reading, though! similar to a educate spoil that by no means really occurred regardless of me awaiting it. I do suggest the read...I simply cannot supply it four stars simply because it isn't within the class i'm going to most likely ever learn a moment time.

Tracey: i would vaguely remembered hearing/reading whatever (maybe on NPR or 50bookchallenge posts) approximately Mineko Iwasaki, the leading resource & proposal for Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*, being dissatisfied with the portrayal of the geisha lifestyles in that novel, and therefore, she had written her personal memoirs. So I checked this publication out from the library and that i now see the place her matters lie. Mineko (born Masako Tanaka) joined the Iwasaki okiya as a child, as a result of a few kinfolk issues. She used to be fascinated about the dance, striving to arrive perfection because the basically approach to make every thing right. She debuted as a minarai, or apprentice geisha, at an surprisingly younger age and labored herself approximately to demise for the following few

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years. As she matured, she turned the most renowned geisha of the Gion area. Eventually, she began to burn out and made the choice to finish her profession particularly early. Falling in love can have had whatever to do along with her choice as well. The 2 sections of images have been very worthwhile to spot yes parts of the dress, in addition to get a consider for the circulate of her life. The writing sort is comparatively undeniable and straightforward, what i'd anticipate of an autobiography, rather than a piece of fiction. The various effective issues of the social standings and rituals bought a bit confusing, however. It was once attention-grabbing to learn those books again to again - seeing what small incidences in Iwasaki's existence Golden selected to switch into significant plot elements, and vice versa. For example, Golden selected to maneuver his tale again one new release (Iwasaki used to be born in 1949), most likely with the intention to upload WWII as a dramatic plot point. The attribution of a definite ritual of the oiran (courtesans) to the geishas was once most likely what made Iwasaki upset. (and i would not blame her!) advised to an individual searching for a extra lifelike portrayal of the waning "flower and willow world" of the geisha.

Norah: i discovered this tale fascinating, in that it defined a tradition very a ways faraway from the informal manner we are living in Britain today. Formalities have been so important, even for the children, and this woman selected for herself to go away her circle of relatives and subscribe to the home of Geisha to learn as one, and suffer the entire hardships involved. She was once evidently very very influenced and determined, and appeared satisfied many of the time. it's written within the voice of a child, although possibly this is often because of translating from Japanese. after all however, she left the ochaya, if that's the correct word, and married happily.

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