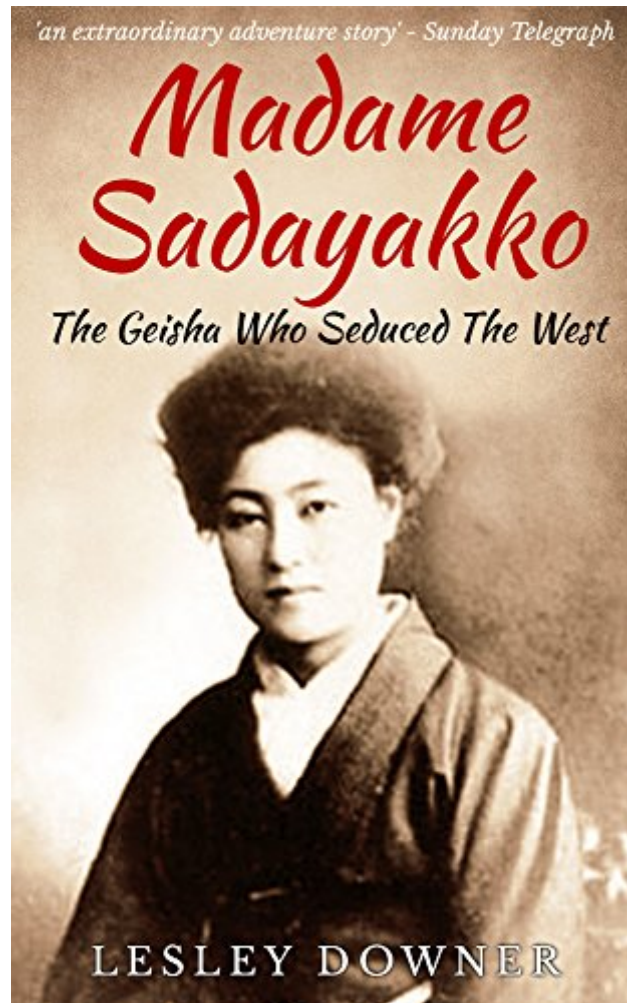




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# Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Seduced The West



## Synopsis

This is the true story of the most celebrated geisha in Japan, Sadayakko. She circled the world when most Japanese had never left the country, became a famous actress when Japanese women weren't supposed to act and became the real-life model for Puccini's Madame Butterfly. Sadayakko (1871-1946) was the ultimate geisha, so exquisite that the prime minister of the day paid a fortune to deflower her. But she was also a rebel and, in 1899, set out for the West with her actor-husband. From San Francisco to New York, Paris and Berlin, audiences thrilled to her mesmeric acting and exquisite dancing. In Washington she danced for President McKinley, in London for the Prince of Wales, in Vienna for Emperor Franz Josef and in St Petersburg for Tsar Nikolai II. Picasso painted her and Rodin wanted to sculpt her. She was a sensation. But in Japan she suffered the stigma of being an ex-geisha and an actor, both professions at the bottom of society. In the end she was forced to make a terrible choice between respectability and love. Geisha, actress, mistress – this is the story of a life lived passionately. Praise for Madame Sadayakko: "An extraordinary adventure story." Sunday Telegraph "Downer is an agile and evocative writer who treats this sensational tale with consistent elegance." The Times "Lesley Downer's emphatic account will restore the memory outside Japan of the first Japanese woman to win fame abroad, but it will do more: by setting Sadayakko so meticulously in context, we can see the influence that her times still have in Japan today." Independent on Sunday "A comprehensive, intricate portrait of a woman whose fame was shaped in equal parts by her will and her time." New York Times "Downer tells a fascinating story." New Statesman "A delicious book, a vivid recreation of Meiji Japan and Belle Epoque Europe." Toronto Star "A perceptive biography." Independent "It's a remarkable life, full of contradictions, oddity and sadness." Sydney Sunday Herald "A colourful tale well-written and researched." Glasgow Sunday Herald "Sadayakko's long-buried story has everything going for it: politics and sex, artistic innovation, human tragedy, worldly triumph, and ultimately that supremely Japanese virtue – heroic surrender to dreary convention." Downer's passion for her subject, and her energy in uncovering the history of Madame Sadayakko's private life yields a super-rich cache of material on the early encounter between Japan and the West, as well as the testament to a passionate, barrier-breaking life. " Scotsman Lesley Downer lived in Japan for more than ten years and speaks fluent Japanese. As well as writing for newspapers such as the Sunday Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times, Lesley

has presented television programmes for Channel 4, the BBC and NHK. Her previous books include *Geisha*. *The Secret History of a Vanishing World*, *The Brothers* and *On the Marrow Road to the Deep North*, which was shortlisted for the Thomas Cook Travel Book of the Year award and made into a television documentary entitled *Journey to a Lost Japan*. She lives in London and New York. Endeavour Press is the UK's leading independent digital publisher. For more information on our titles please sign up to our newsletter at [www.endeavourpress.com](http://www.endeavourpress.com). Each week you will receive updates on free and discounted ebooks. Follow us on Twitter: @EndeavourPress and on Facebook via <http://on.fb.me/1HweQV7>. We are always interested in hearing from our readers. Endeavour Press believes that the future is now.

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## Customer Reviews

Exceedingly well researched and written. However, her descriptions are lovely but I don't understand why there aren't pictures! Clearly Ms. Downer saw pictures. She really needed to include them in this tome. I had to keep Googling over and over to attempt to see what she was describing. It disappointed me.

I purchased this book for use as reference, because I'm currently doing translation work regarding her husband, Kawakami Otojirou, and to that extent it has been quite informative. If you're interested in her or those related to her, this is a pretty fantastic book to own.

I read this book today, and I couldn't put it down. It is beautifully written and had some happy and sad parts. It is a really great story about the life of Japan's first star who traveled to America and Europe telling of her experiences. It also tells of her lovers, historical events, scenery, family, and geisha life. While I was reading this, I felt like I was in olden day Japan. Very descriptive and a wonderful read. I highly recommend this book.

Loved it. Fascinating view of interaction between Japanese and western culture.

Loved the story came in today not rips or anything it was perfect

Some parts were very interesting and others were on the verge of being boring.

If you are interested in Japanese culture, strong willed women, or the entertainment industry of the past this is a great read. I picked it up because I love learning about Geisha culture and lifestyle, not as a fiction but as fact. This was a highly enjoyable read because of that.

Sada became a trainee Geisha as a very young girl, soon rising to the highest echelons available to her - her Danna (patron) was one of the most important men in the country, and she was as renowned as a woman could be in Japan at the time. She married an actor, and eventually travelled to the West, where she began acting as part of a Japanese acting troupe, touring their mish-mash version of Japanese dance and theatre through America and Europe. Sadayakko was always the star of the show, and was one of the highlights of the Paris Exposition. Sada returned to Japan and founded an acting school for girls. This is a well-written book, the author being most famous for her book on Geishas. Many readers will probably come to this book searching for another read on Geishas, and if this is the case, they may be a little disappointed - Downer does not write in too much details about this time in Sada's life, choosing to concentrate on her overseas travels. However, this does not detract from the overall story. What does is the fact that Downer states some things as fact when they must be supposition: "He stood watching until she disappeared from

view. He could not help noticing her sweetness and pride and the skill with which she handled her horse." I can almost guarantee that there is no written record anywhere that on the exact occasion in question the man who saw Sadayakko was thinking those exact thought. This is a fault of many biographers, and it will probably be overlooked by all but the nitpickers like this reader. This is a book I would recommend to the growing number of readers interested in Japanese history and culture, and also to anyone interested in the cultural currents of the late 19th Century, as Madame Saddayakko had a far reaching influence in the realms of drama, dance and fashion for the Japan-crazed period.

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