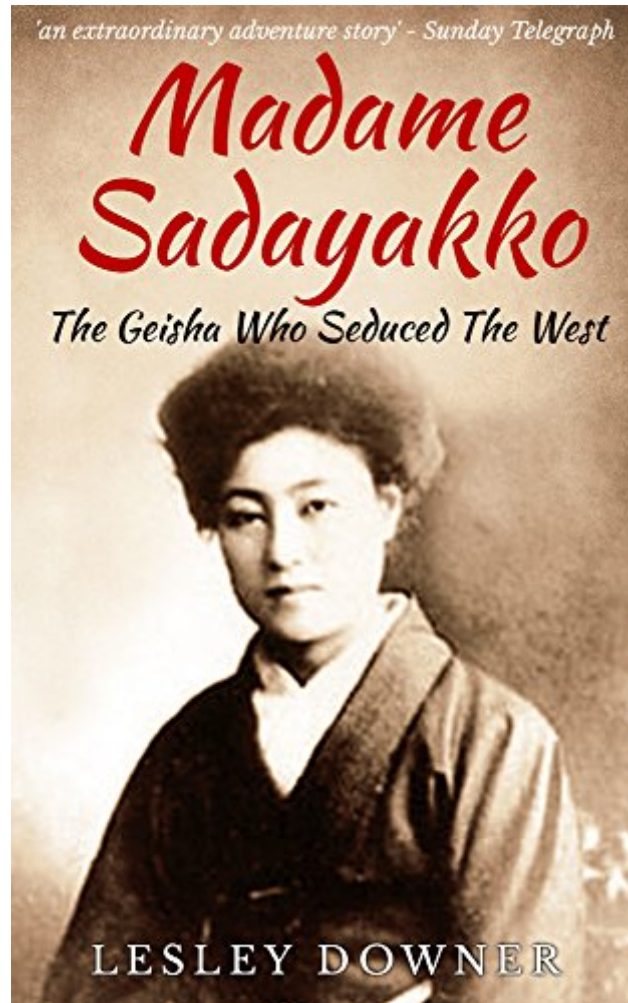


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# Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Seduced The West



## 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

After producing an excellent book on the exotic world of the Japanese geisha (which I reviewed in this website in April 2001), Lesley Downer proceeds to examine in detail the life of one particular geisha for her next publication. And who would make a better and more fascinating subject matter for research than the legendary Sadayakko Kawakami (born 1871), who was not only a top Tokyo geisha during the final years of the 19th century, but also Japan's first actress (in the modern sense of the word)? Together with her flamboyant husband Otojiro Kawakami, a pioneer of Japanese Shimpa (New Wave Theatre), Sadayakko made two triumphant overseas tours in the early years of the 20th century and then, after the death of Otojiro, became a long-time mistress of business

tycoon Momosuke Fukuzawa, who, according to Downer, might in fact be Sadayakko's first love when she was still a budding geisha in her teens. As such, Sadayakko not only blazed a path that was unique amongst women in Japan at the time, she also witnessed how her country gradually opened up to the West during the Meiji Reformation all the way until much of the land was reduced to ashes in World War II just before she died in 1946. Sadayakko thus inhabited three different roles during her life - geisha, actress and mistress - all of which were marginalized by the society which she lived in despite her doing spectacularly well in each of those roles. Downer therefore justifiably divided her book into three major sections, each encompassing one of the three succeeding roles that Sadayakko assumed.

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