



## JAPAN Bibliography

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## Geisha

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*Geisha* literally means “arts person,” although many stereotypes exist in the West about what geisha do and do not do. Geisha are traditional female entertainers who provide singing, dancing, conversation, games, and companionship to customers in certain restaurants. Along with sumo wrestlers, Mt. Fuji, and the bullet train, the geisha is an iconic image of Japan. The books, films, websites, journal articles, and other resources annotated in this bibliography provide some insight into this highly recognizable yet secretive profession.

Content Alert: Teachers should use caution in presenting some of this material to students as topics of sexuality are interwoven into the myths about geisha and the material annotated below.

### The Traditional Arts

*Geisha Story: “Sakurako” san’s Geisha Life*

<http://www.brovision.com/> (Run mouse over images in lower right corner of screen to highlight video segments.) Presents a 16-minute streaming video interview with a geisha. The first two parts of the interview address make-up and kimono wear, the last two parts discuss aspects of her training and present an excerpt of a traditional dance performance.

*Little Songs of the Geisha. Traditional Japanese Ko-Uta.* Dalby, Liza. (2000). Tuttle. Boston. Black and white line illustrations and calligraphy, 100pp, appendices (including musical notations for the *shamisen*), paperback. ISBN- 0-804832-50-1.

This book presents calligraphy and translations of 25 *ko-uta* (the musical embodiment of the geisha, which she sings while accompanying herself on the three-stringed *shamisen*), to which Liza Dalby adds explanatory notes illuminating the puns and Japanese literary devices which might otherwise elude the Western reader.

*Music of Japan and Okinawa*

<http://aris.ss.uci.edu/rgarfias/courses/japan/listening.html>

This site presents numerous audio files of Japanese music heard in an anthropology class at the University of California Irvine. In particular, the site includes a 3:37-long clip of the song style *ko-uta*.

*Traditional Events (Kyoto City)*

[http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info\\_required/traditional/kyoto\\_city/21/](http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/visitkyoto/en/info_required/traditional/kyoto_city/21/)

Presents brief descriptions and colorful images of five of the traditional dances (*miyako odori*, *kyo odori*, *kamogawa odori*, *kitano adori*, and *Gion odori*) that geisha in Kyoto

perform during festivals. Navigate to the other pages featuring these dances using the “next” button in the upper right corner. Pages 20 through 24 feature dances performed by geisha.

*Traditional Japanese Music*

<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/iguides/tradmusic.html>

This Internet Guide presents annotations of websites that address generally the issue of traditional Japanese music and sites that focus on particular instruments (*koto*, *shakuhachi*, *shamisen*, and *taiko*). Music plays a large role in the traditional dramatic arts of *kabuki* and *noh*, so the guide concludes with annotations of sites addressing these art forms.

### The Person

*50,000 Yen Parachute for the Pillow World: Kyoto Group Creates Geisha Pension Plan*

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?nn20050318f2.htm>

An article in the *Japan Times* noting that Japan's prolonged economic slump has sparked moves in Kyoto to establish an additional pension system for geisha who perform their arts in teahouses.

*Autobiography of a Geisha.* Masuda, Sayo. (2003). New York: Columbia University Press. ISBN-0-231129-50-5. Tells the story of a geisha in a rural pre-World War II Japan hot springs resort.

*Geisha.* Dalby, Liza. (1998). Paperback edition with new introduction. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN 0-520-20495-6.

Offers the author’s account of her experiences as the Kyoto geisha Ichigiku. Presents a culturally sensitive perspective on how geisha see themselves on the context of their own society.

*The Geisha Stylist Who Let His Hair Down*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A6563-2004Aug16.html>

Gives a somewhat lighthearted account of the only man among Kyoto’s last five *keppatsu-shi*, or hairdressers to the geisha, and the effort it takes to maintain the elaborate hairstyles that characterize geisha.

*Geisha: The Secret History of a Vanishing World.* Downer, Lesley. (2001). London: Headline. 370pp. ISBN 0-747271-06-2.

Interested in the exotic theatricality of the geisha's mask, so distinctively Japanese, Downer is equally curious about the

human face beneath. The geisha she encounters “turn out to be real, live women, with a refreshingly unfeminine desire for freedom.” The author calls them “liberated women.”

*Geisha: A Life*. Iwasaki, Mineko; Brown, Rande. (2002) New York: Atria Books. ISBN 0-743444-32-9.  
A geisha at the top of her profession tells her own story.

*Kimono: Fashioning Culture*. Dalby, Liza Crihfield. (2001). University of Washington Press. ISBN 0-295-98155-5.  
This book traces the history of kimono--its uses, aesthetics, and social meanings--to explore Japanese culture.

*Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*. Golden, Arthur. (1999). New York: Vintage Contemporaries. ISBN 0-679781-58-7.  
A best selling work of historical fiction, with a film version to be released in December 2005.

*Photo Journal: Geisha*  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/picture\\_gallery/04/asia\\_pac\\_geisha/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/picture_gallery/04/asia_pac_geisha/html/1.stm)  
This collection of 12 photographs and accompanying text tell the story of Kimina, a 23-year-old geiko (the local term for geisha) in Kyoto.

### Stereotypes

*The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls, & Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient*. Praso, Sheridan. (2005). New York: Public Affairs Press. ISBN-1-586482-14-9.  
Challenges readers to see Asia and Asians as they really are. Traces the origins of Western stereotypes in history and in Hollywood, and provides profiles of Asian women's lives, including the geisha who inspired Arthur Golden's bestselling *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*.

*The Geisha and Japanese Women: Western Stereotypes*  
<http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/ChalkGuides/Mme.Butterfly.html>  
One of 26 guides to Japanese films, this lesson plan for grades 9-12 offers reading and viewing selections based on the libretto and 1995 film version of Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, as the lead work for a humanities unit. Discusses themes, the story, and teaching approaches.

### Additional Multimedia Resources

*Geisha and Maiko Girls of Japan (Kyoto)*  
<http://phototravels.net/japan/photo-gallery/geisha-maiko.html>  
<http://phototravels.net/kyoto/geisha-maiko-dance.html>  
Offers two photo galleries containing high-quality pictures by a professional photographer.

*Geisha: Beyond the Painted Smile*  
<http://www.pem.org/artscape/index.php?setID=3685>  
Collection of 37 images from the recent exhibition by Peabody Essex Museum. Be aware that several of the images contain partial nudity and might not be appropriate even for advanced students.

*Geisha*  
Go to <http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/index.las> and search the media database for “geisha.”  
Filmed in collaboration with Arthur Golden, author of the best-selling *Memoirs of a Geisha*, this program captures the geisha mystique while documenting the experiences of two *maiko*, geisha-in-training. 1999, 51 minutes.

*Taikomochi or Houkan, the Male Counterpart to the Geisha...*  
<http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/taikomochi.html>  
Discusses the *taikomochi*, or the *houkan*, the original male *geisha* of Japan, who originated as court jesters in the 1200s but whose tasks evolved into pure entertainment by the 1600s. Contemporary *taikomochi* entertain guests at banquets together with his female counterpart *geisha*.

### Journal Articles

*Teaching the "Geisha" as Cultural Criticism*. Pradt, Sarah J.; Kawashima, Terry. *Education about Asia*; v6 n1 2001. Availability: Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 1021 East Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.  
<http://www.aasianst.org/ea-toc.htm>  
Suggests the geisha can be used to engage students of various backgrounds in serious study of Japanese cultural history. Presents a detailed summary of a college-level course that used Japanese literature, theater and film, as well as Western images of the geisha. Provides suggestions for readings in literary criticism, gender studies, and historiography.

*Suggestions for Comparing The Life of an Amorous Woman, Moll Flanders, and Memoirs of a Geisha*. Traubitz, Nancy. *Education about Asia*; v5 n2 Fall 2000. Availability: Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 1021 East Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.  
<http://www.aasianst.org/ea-toc.htm>  
This essay provides suggestions for teachers, particularly those with little or no background in Asian literature, who would like to include Asian subjects in the curriculum. Includes study questions, references for related texts, videos, Web links, and teacher resources.

Compiled by Roger Sensenbaugh  
Full text with live links can be found at  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/biblio/geisha.htm>

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