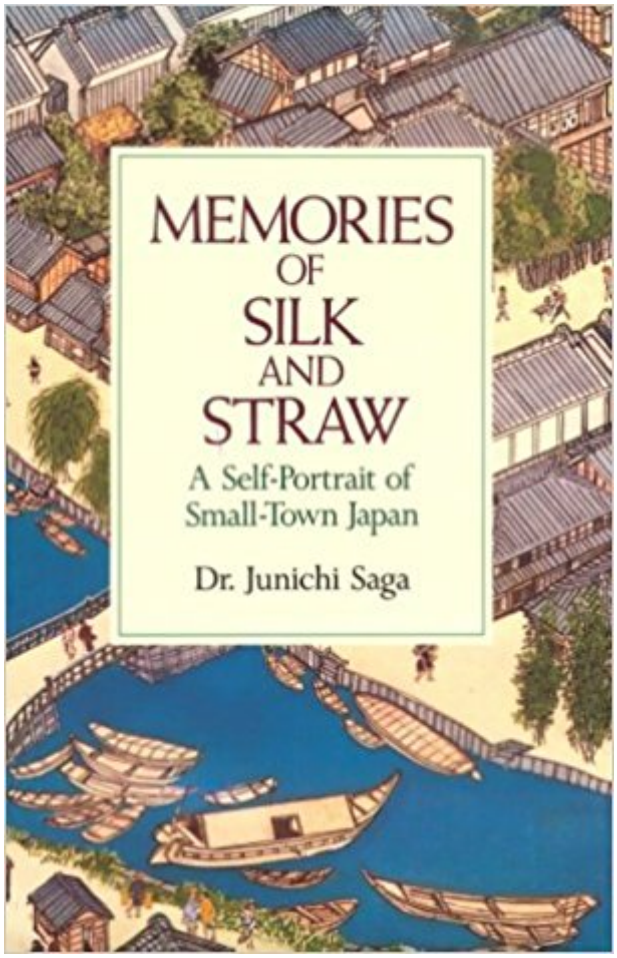
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Memories Of Silk And Straw: A Self-Portrait Of Small-Town Japan



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Synopsis

Over 50 reminiscences of pre-modern Japan-illustrations of a way of life that has virtually disappeared. Voted "Best Book of the Year" by Japan's foreign press.This is a collective biography, based on interviews taped by a small-town doctor, recording the lives of a cotton dyer, blacksmith, tofu maker, undertaker, carter, tenant farmer, local gangster, casual laborer, horse-meat butcher, magistrate's wife, apprentice geisha, rice merchant, thatcher, carpenter, midwife, county hangman, pawnbroker, draper, fisherman, hairdresser, servant, charcoal burner, and so on-over fifty in all. Their memories are all related to a lakeside town and its rural suburbs northeast of Tokyo.Born in the early years of this century, these people have both seen the old Japan and lived through the changes brought about by modernization and the onset of affluence. In a real sense, they provide the sole surviving links with a feudal way of life and its attitudes which have altered, in the space of fifty years or so, beyond recognition.Through plain-spoken anecdote-their voices by turns amused, nostalgic, disturbing but unsensational-they describe their youth in a tougher world where poverty was commonplace, where unwanted children were sometimes "thinned out'' at birth, where poorer families cooked out-of-doors and fishermen in summer went almost naked. By saving their memories for posterity, the author hoped to close, just a fraction, the gap in perception between a traditional past and the Japan we know today. The result-as the distinguished anthropologist, Ronald Dore, says in his preface-is "a book to savor, and a book to learn from."These reminiscences are accompanied by illustrations painted by the author's father, Dr. Susumu Saga-themselves a record of an old man's past.

Book Information

Paperback: 260 pages
Publisher: Kodansha USA (June 15, 1990)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0870119885
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Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 0.9 x 5.5 inches
Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces
Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #107,694 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Social Security #65 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Rural #124 inÃ Â Books > History > Asia > Japan

Customer Reviews

The finest book on ... traditional life to have been published in English for a very long time - if ever." -Alan Booth, author of The Roads to Sata"A sensitive portrait of a Japan known to too few in the Western world." -Choice"Fascinating, plainspoken, and uninhibited." -The Magazine

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Japanese --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My only regret of Dr. Saga is that he did not write more books. They are beautiful. I love this book. Chapters are short and sweet but filled with wonderful descriptive stories. Just right for someone who does not get extended periods of time to read (working mom here). I would highly recommend this book.

Maybe not a suspenseful page turner I found this book to be an intriguing look into to the lives and memories of everyday people, some were funny some were sad some just represented the simple daily life and others the relentless hard work of much of the working class rural Japan.

A collection of interviews with people who tell stories of their lives in a small japanese village from about 1890 to 1930. Arranged by occupation, all are very interesting. One of the most intriguing aspects of the book is the commonality the stories share with my own American relatives (as to the hardships of farm life, what people did for fun, etc.). The book even occasionally slips into a "when I was a kid we had to walk two miles uphill in the snow" sort of mode, but this makes many of the stories all the more touching.

seen through the eyes of villagers, in their own words.

10/10

Not a dry history book... Simply very short vignettes of people’s memories of life in the past. No interviewer’s questions, just a couple pages of someone telling a story... very fun to read.

Intriguing, personal stories that illustrate pre-war Japan from the point of view of peasants and tradesmen. Illustrates the deep poverty that the vast majority lived under. Strongly recommended.

An awesome look into a bygone time in Japan. I've read this many times over and it never gets old.

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