

About the movie

Memoirs of a Geisha is a 2005 film was based on the epic drama novel by Arthur Golden in 1997. It was produced by Steven Spielberg and directed by the famous Rob Marshall. The movie was told in a first person perspective which tells the fictional story of a geisha working in Kyoto, Japan before the World War II happened and after. As the story progresses, the main protagonist of the story, who later be known as Nitta Sayuri tells her journey to become a geisha. In most dictionaries and in the movie, the word geisha is a term used in Japan to describe a woman who is very highly trained in the arts of music, dance and entertaining, in general. Geisha, in Japanese, is a person of art. To become a full and official geisha, the aspirant must spend years and years of learning to play various musical instruments, sing and dance and to be the best hostess in a an affair and gathering of rich and powerful men. The makeup, hair, clothing and manner of a geisha can be computed through the satisfaction of the fantasy and desire of the men. And due to that reason, men pay huge sums of money and power to invite and fantasize a beautiful geisha to attend and entertain to their gathering and party.

In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, we are toured to a dimension where appearance, performance and art are highly and greatly valued. A geisha is somewhat like sold or auctioned to the highest bidder who would be given her virginity. In the world of geisha, freedom is not present. They are trained, as early as nine years old, to entertain and captivate men as to satisfy the desires and hidden fantasies of men.

The main protagonist's role was played by Zhang Ziya, a chinese-national actress and a model.

Summary of the Plot

A very young girl from a very poor fishing village, was sold along with her older sister Satsu into a life of slavery by their old father. Chiyo, the main protagonist, was taken in by Mrs. Kayoko Nitta, the Mother of a geisha house in Gion, one of the most prominent geisha districts in Kyoto, while unfortunately Satsu was sent and sold to a prostitution brothel.

Chiyo meets another young girl, who later became her friend, named Pumpkin, the ill-tempered Granny, and Hatsumomo who is famous for her breathtaking beauty. Chiyo soon

discovers Hatsumomo is secretly a cruel and jealous woman that views Chiyo as a potential rival due to her striking bluish-gray eyes, along with being a change in Mother's future financial dependence.

For working and pursuing hard to find her sister, Chiyo finally found her older sister and makes plans to run away together. On the night of their planned escape, Chiyo attempts to sneak out but falls off the rooftop and is seriously injured. As punishment for dishonoring the okiya, Mother tells Chiyo that she won't invest any more money in her geisha training. She also informs Chiyo that both her parents are dead. She is also demoted from geisha training to working as a slave to pay off her increasing debts to Mother.

While crying beside a river on day, young Chiyo was noticed by a rich and powerful Chairman. The chairman talked to him and showed her kindness which inspired her to become a geisha so that she may one day become a part of the Chairman's life.

As Chiyo became older enough, she was unexpectedly taken under the guidance and teachings of Mameha, one of gion's most successful geisha.

Chiyo was then called Sayuri right after she was announced and recognized as a full grown geisha. For the record of fifteen thousand yen, Sayuri became very famous and center of jealousy of other geisha. Sayuri's successful geisha career was cut short by the outbreak of World War II. Sayuri and Mameha were separated, with Sayuri going to the hills to work for a kimono maker, an old friend of Nobu's, and Mameha going to a physician, the Chairman's old friend. After the war, Sayuri is reunited with Nobu, who needs her help with impressing an American Colonel named Derricks who has the power to approve funding for the Chairman's firm. Sayuri reunites with Mameha, who now makes a living renting rooms for the poor. Although she is reluctant to return to the geisha lifestyle after what she's been through, she agrees to help impress Derricks. Sayuri is reacquainted with Pumpkin, who is now a flirty escort. Sayuri goes on a trip with Nobu, the Chairman, Mameha, Pumpkin, and the Americans to the Amami Islands.

Nobu confronts Sayuri. He finally confesses his feelings, telling her that he wants to become her danna. Knowing that entering into a relationship with Nobu will destroy any chance of her being with the Chairman, Sayuri is distraught and devises a plan. Mameha catches on to it and warns her against it because of the kindness Nobu has shown her. She wants Sayuri to accept him as her danna and not end up like Hatsumomo did. She refuses and enlists Pumpkin's help to have Nobu catch her seemingly being intimate with the Colonel. However, because of her secret resentment of Sayuri, Pumpkin brings the Chairman instead, having full knowledge of Sayuri's feelings towards him. When Sayuri confronts her, Pumpkin coldly tells her

that she did a lot of favors for her in the past and she stole her chances of being adopted by Mother. She hoped by having the Chairman see her with Derricks, he would be disgusted by Sayuri's behavior and she would have to accept Nobu as her danna.

Several days later Sayuri received a call to go to the teahouse. Sayuri met the Chairman there and he finally reveals to her that he has known all along that she was the girl at the riverbank. He tells her that he had told Nobu about the affair after confronting Pumpkin for her behavior, effectively destroying Nobu's affections for Sayuri and his desire to be her danna. He also reveals that he was responsible for sending Mameha to her so that she could fulfill her dreams of becoming a geisha. Sayuri finally reveals her love to the Chairman.

Cultural Observation

Aside from the most obvious culture shown in the movie which is the geisha culture, there are other things, which are part of their culture, that are observable in the movie. One of which is the wearing and dressing with the kimono on women. Also we also observe the drinking of the sake which is very observable and noticeable when you go visit to Japan. Also in some certain scene in the movie, we could see, during the meeting of Chiyo and Mr. Nobu and the Chairman, the sumo wrestling or the sumo match. Also a unique tradition that can be observed at most scene in the movie is the manner of bowing of their heads as they meet other people or respective and powerful person. With the way the Japanese sit, the seiza sitting is also very noticeable and observable in the movie.

The Geisha culture have been part of Japanese culture for 400 years but many Westerners remain in the dark about the life and role of a Geisha. It is Often mistaken for prostitutes, the women in fact sell their talent for entertaining and not their bodies to the rich and powerful. Their world is often closed to outsiders and tourists may only catch a glimpse of them in passing. But now a Spanish photojournalist has been given unprecedented access into the lives of the women who maintain centuries-old conventions in the modern era. Before graduating to become a full-fledged Geisha, known as Geiko, the Maiko must study music, dance and how to maintain a flowing, comfortable conversation with customers. They must learn how to play instruments, how to be a perfect hostess and how to always carry themselves with grace and dignity.

Insights about the movie

For me, the movie was very informative and an eye-opener. For a very long time, I thought that geisha were the term used for prostitutes of Japan. Geisha were educated women who were trained to become good entertainers of men. The movie did not only tell a very dramatic life of a young girl Chiyo but also gave me life lessons and gave me the correct meaning of a geisha. It may be portrayed in some scenes in the movie that geisha were sold or auctioned to men but modern geishas nowadays were now very formal. It gave me a lesson to become optimistic and hard-working at any things even if the chances are very low. For me, the lessons are very helpful to me as growing individual who will then face the more serious world.