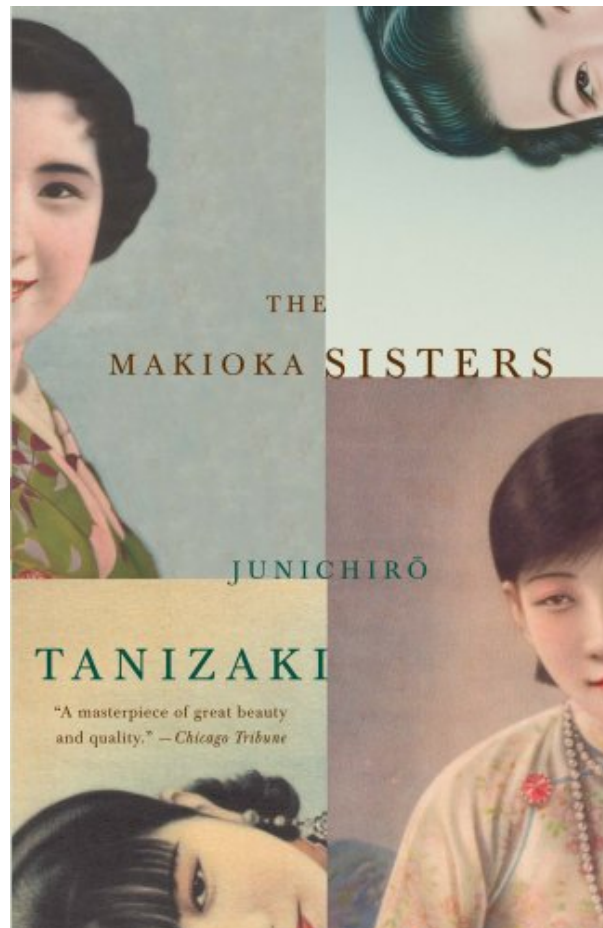
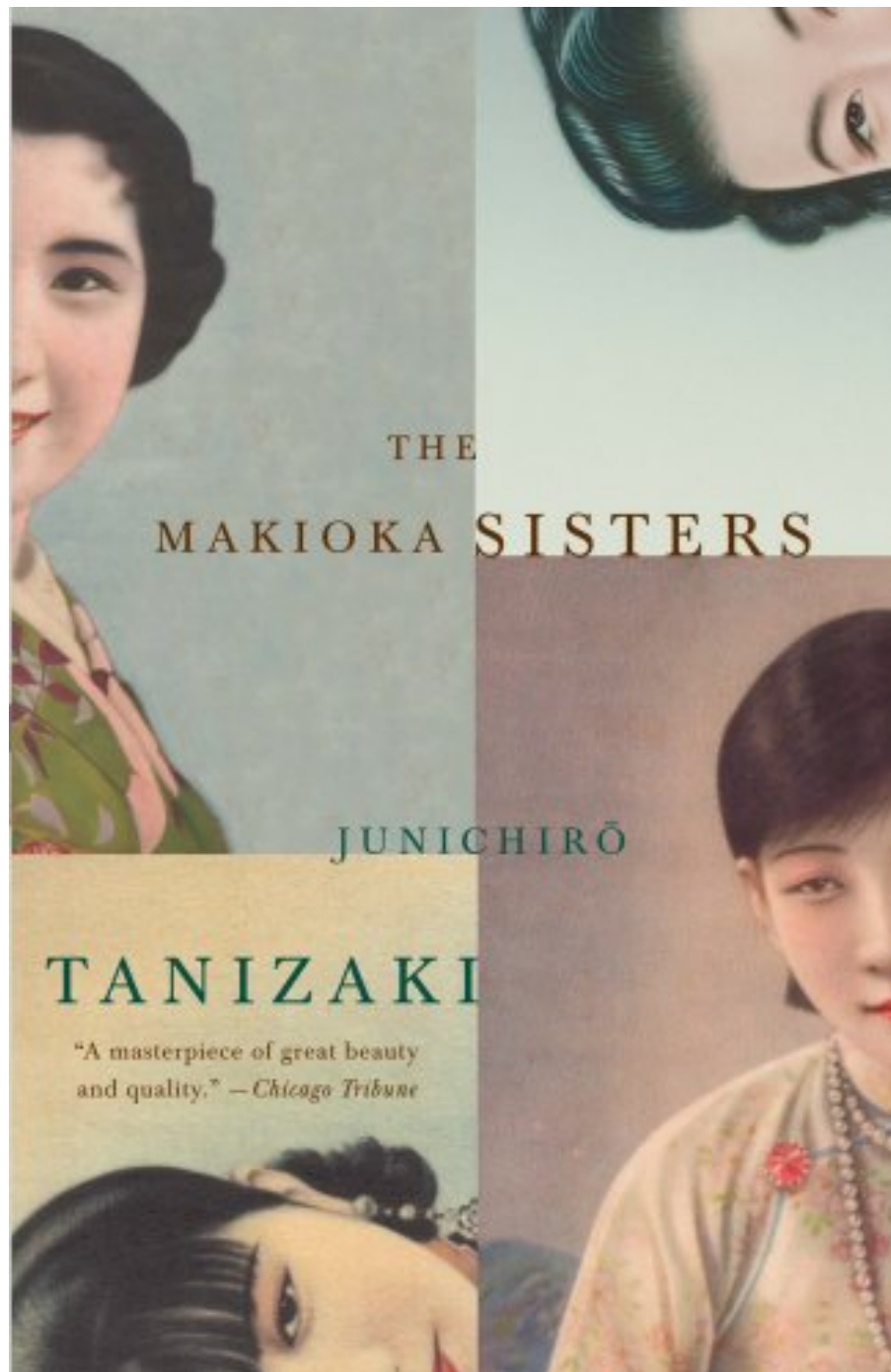


THE MAKIOKA SISTERS BY JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI



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Junichir? Tanizaki's magisterial evocation of a proud Osaka family in decline during the years immediately before World War II is arguably the greatest Japanese novel of the twentieth century and a classic of international literature.

Tsuruko, the eldest sister of the once-wealthy Makioka family, clings obstinately to the prestige of her family name even as her husband prepares to move their household to Tokyo, where that name means nothing. Sachiko compromises valiantly to secure the future of her younger sisters. The shy, unmarried Yukiko is a hostage to her family's exacting standards, while the spirited Taeko rebels by flinging herself into scandalous romantic alliances and dreaming of studying fashion design in France. Filled with vignettes of a vanishing way of life, *The Makioka Sisters* is a poignant yet unsparing portrait of a family—and an entire society—sliding into the abyss of modernity. It possesses in abundance the keen social insight and unabashed sensuality that distinguish Tanizaki as a master novelist.

From the Hardcover edition.

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- Published on: 1995-09-26
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- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .90" w x 5.20" l, .86 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 544 pages

Features

- Great product!

Amazon.com Review

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The world in a grain of sand

By Phillip Kay

The Makioka Sisters (Sasame Yuki, Light Snow), first published in 1948, was written by Junichiro Tanizaki (1886-1965). Tanizaki wrote *The Makioka Sisters* after translating the *Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese and the Murasaki novel is said to have influenced his own. It tells of the declining years of the once powerful Makioka family and their last descendants, four sisters. It has been translated by Edward G. Seidensticker in 1957. Powerfully realistic, it mourns the passing of greatness while celebrating in wonderfully evocative detail the beauty of a particular time and place, Osaka in the 1930s. In its creation of beauty out of sadness it can be compared to another family saga, *The Maias* (1888), by the Portuguese master Eça de Queiroz (1845-1900).

Why is this long book, largely concerned with trivial family procedures, one of the finest novels written? It is not concerned with great events, causes or philosophies. It has little concern with the war Japan was fighting with China, and then the USA, when the book was first published. Indeed its characters don't think about the

war, and in a positive way, which doesn't trivialise their concerns at all (most people in fact don't think about the reasons for a war: perhaps it's better that way). This doesn't mean the book is escapist or superficial, just as the concern with women's lifestyle, dress, makeup, etiquette or social vanity make it something written just for women (books and films were once made - by men - to capitalise on what were considered women's 'little' concerns). Tanizaki does that wonderful thing a great artist can do, he finds the universal in the most exact examination of the particular, and makes a work of relevance to us all. Read another family saga, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) and my candidate for the greatest novel yet written (though I'm more than cynical about the word 'great') and marvel at the many routes artists find to the universal.

My review is impossibly partial: *The Makioka Sisters* is the most beautiful novel I've ever read. The language (translation) is so smooth and flowing, the characters and situations so gentle and muted, yet precise and meaningful, that reading the book is like seeing the universe in a drop of water - you see, which is moving, and awareness of where and how you see brings amazement and then a real pleasure.

In this beautiful book the characters have a greater degree of reality than many real people - Tanizaki is a great master of characterisation. I know more about them than I do about most of the people I know. It is done by the accumulation of enormous amounts of detail, but detail which, trivial though it may appear, is just right. The result is the creation of a most ethereal and delicate beauty, a lovely world crumbling to extinction yet all the more precious because of its inevitable passing away.

Sachiko, the second sister and her husband Teinosuke are that rare achievement, a convincing depiction of really good and admirable people, though in no way heroic. They are very ordinary people, but their goodness, their little troubles and worries, their faults, even weaknesses, all serve to charm and captivate. Of all the characters in the book these two are the loveliest. It is a real affirmation of humanity to have created two such kind and gentle and sensitive people, and to have made them so real and convincing.

The careworn life of Tsuruko (first sister), the hesitations of Yukiko (third sister), the unhappiness of Taeko (Koi-san, fourth sister) all gain from contrast with the stability and happiness of Sachiko and Teinosuke. And what an evocation of the old ways of Japan. Changing rapidly even as Tanizaki writes of them.

Detail by detail - Etsuko's games with the German girl Rosemarie, Itakura's leather coat, the 'old one', Koi-san's mimicry and mingled love and resentment of Yukiko...there are literally thousands of details. Teinosuke's love of Spring in his garden, the vitamin injections the sisters take, the forthrightness of Itani - all, everyone, is so precise, not random at all, chosen to evoke mood, reveal character, show milieu.

So powerful and evocative has the book been - yet nothing really happens, except to Koi-san. The war approaches, the old Japan changes, Yukiko gets married - unforgettable!

I've seen advertised a TV serialisation of *The Makioka Sisters*, but can't imagine how it could succeed. So much of the book's effect is through language. Visually, certain scenes stand out, such as the cherry blossom viewing or the flood. The narrative though is largely uneventful, small actions that dramatically and convincingly reveal a character's state of mind, early history or personality.

Written with love, a strong love of people and place, the book creates love in the reader. Because of Tanizaki I have loved Osaka in the late 1930s and have learned to treasure and respect its people. For those hesitating to undertake reading such a 'Japanese' work as *The Makioka Sisters* there is the perfect bridging novel *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru, 1995) by Haruki Murakami, which does mention the war - and Charlie Parker and 'hard-boiled' detective stories and Jungian archetypes and the surreal: a roller coaster of a novel and one of the best as well.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

The end of an era story in Japan

By Mary Ann Marko

The translation had only a few minor glitches. Usually I forgot I was reading a translation. Although it was nearly 500 pages, it was constructed with short chapters which gave it many good stopping points. I read it slowly which matched the pace of the writing. There was so much of the story in the long inner thoughts of the characters. Each sister was distinct so I had no confusion as to which one I was reading about. Some of the descriptions were so real that I can recall them easily. The depiction of the cherry blossom festival itself was worth the price of the book.

I read the book with the sad knowledge that all this (1936 - 1941) was to radically change in a very short time. The book though does not have any feeling of dread for coming events. It is a lovely book by an obviously great writer. I can see why it is considered an international classic. The book itself, a selection from Everyman's was a joy to hold. The pages are silky and there is an attached bookmark made of black ribbon. For someone who likes to immerse themselves into long story of a rather short time span with credible people caught in history, this is a perfect book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

could be edited better....some typos etc....faulty translation work?

By cwh

very enjoyable read However there are a few typos or imperfect translation/editing that can make it difficult to understand. kind of disturbing. otherwise very sweet read.

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