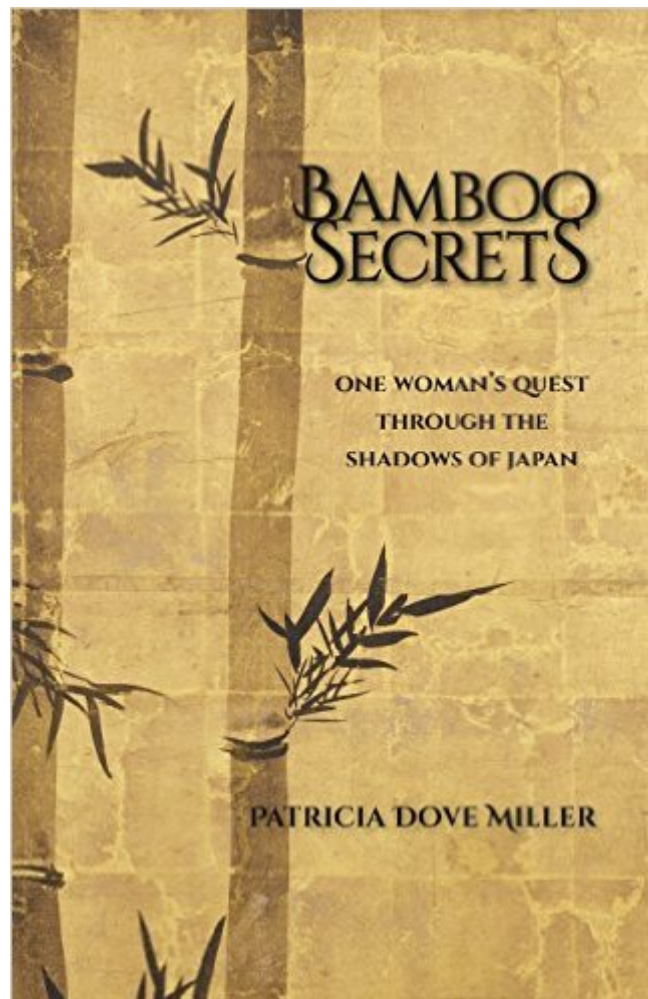


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Bamboo Secrets: One Woman's Quest Through The Shadows Of Japan



Synopsis

While living in Japan in 1993, Patricia Dove Miller's dream of a year of exploration and personal growth is shattered when her husband is detained on drug charges. Miller struggles with a sense of betrayal upon learning her husband's secrets and yet she stands by him, fighting to save both him and their marriage in the face of the terrifying uncertainties now confronting them. To save herself, she seeks refuge in two Japanese traditional arts--ikebana and shakuhachi (bamboo flute)--which not only nourish and strengthen her, but also lead her to finally discover, at age fifty-two, her life's passion: to become a writer. *Bamboo Secrets: One Woman's Quest through the Shadows of Japan* weaves together four strands: a mature woman in search of herself, a marriage in trouble, the dark side of Japan, and the beauty of Japanese art and culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Every six years in the Lake Suwa area of Nagano, Japan a festival is held at the Shinto Suwa Grand Shrine in which the temple pillars otherwise known as Onbashira are renewed. Huge, tall trees are cut down in the surrounding mountains and hauled by hand to the temple. Men, mostly young men in a various range of costumes attempt to ride the logs as they slide downhill and remain sitting on them as they are raised into place. For some a rite of passage. One or two young men are usually killed during the process. Festival time: nightmare time. Given the rare opportunity to work as an honoured foreign professor at a prestigious Japanese University the husband of the author was caught illegally importing marijuana to heighten the experience of his privileged circumstance. He had not anticipated being tied to the Japanese log of law and experiencing a cultural force of gravity. Nor did he consider the consequences, the impact on his wife who would have to sit on the log

behind him. The young men who ride the logs do so voluntarily. They remember and recall the experience again and again throughout their lives. Participation grants both renown and the heightened connection to the temple and the spiritual world the temple serves to mediate. Patricia Dove Miller's voluntary account recreates and examines the experience of becoming a social outcaste through association. In revealing the highly personal Bamboo Secrets of the title she provides a wonderfully brave, open, honest and memorable account of the struggle to cope with the ride, maintain a loving relationship with her partner and her respect for Japanese culture. How rare the opportunity to read such a personal account.

I related personally to this wonderfully written book, having had a similar path of struggling and often floundering to find my inner strength and my calling. But first I had to outgrow passivity, fear-based deference, and anxiety in the face of domineering others. So I related to what for me was the book's major theme: the author's subjugation of herself in deference to others, including her husband, and to a reviewer's comment, "At the end of her year abroad, she has changed into a strong, unique, capable woman, a survivor." I think Miller's journey is a true inspiration for others to become who they were meant to be, both men and women. I also found this fascinating memoir to have three different themes: First, graceful, amazingly beautiful Japan with its striking terrain, architecture, art, music, food; then the underbelly of Japan with its grimly outdated legal system; and finally the inner journey to finally find oneself. Patricia Dove Miller's writing is sonorous, imaginative, and exquisitely delicate yet vivid. I could actually see the characters' expressions, the rich art, the enchanting gardens as well as the bleak, grim, suffocating rooms, the expressions of angry people and the wounds their rants inflicted. Her vivid yet delicate metaphors and descriptions helped me experience those wonders vicariously, like "I soak deep and long, enveloped in steamy water and nourished by the fluttering bamboo, the song of the warbler, the fragrant blossoms of the plum tree outside the window, and the ever-present bells and chants from next door;" and "A warm breeze with only a slight chill at the edges leftover from winter, the laughter of children playing, and the orchestra of melodies from the invisible birds

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