



Princess Masako: Prisoner of the Chrysanthemum Throne

By Ben Hills

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The tragic true story of Japan's Crown Princess-with a new afterword by the author.

It's the fantasy of many young women: marry a handsome prince, move into a luxurious palace, and live happily ever after. But that's not how it turned out for Masako Owada. Ben Hills's fascinating portrait of Princess Masako and the Chrysanthemum Throne draws on research in Tokyo and rural Japan, at Oxford and Harvard, and from more than sixty interviews with Japanese, American, British, and Australian sources-many of whom have never spoken publicly before-shedding light on the royal family's darkest secrets, secrets that can never be openly discussed in Japan because of the reverence in which the emperor and his family are held. But most of all, this is a story about a love affair that went tragically wrong.

The paperback edition will contain a new afterword by the author, discussing the impact this book had in Japan, where it was banned.

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Editorial Review

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True tragedy or simply a bad marriage decision? That is up to the readers--if they decide to make the effort to slog through this less-than-compelling portrait of Princess Masako. Initially packaged as the "Japanese Princess Di," Masako was an intelligent Western-educated woman who probably should have known better than to consign her life to the stringent imperial dynasty of Japan. Intelligence aside, the lure of the royal life proved to be too much, and Masako gave up her budding diplomatic career to marry Japanese Crown Prince Naruhito. She soon discovered, like Diana before her, that life in a fishbowl can be incredibly deflating. Unsuccessful in her efforts to modernize the monarchy, unable to produce a male heir, and hounded by a relentlessly curious public, she currently suffers from serious bouts of depression and lives the life of a virtual recluse. Unable to secure any interviews with the principals themselves, Hills' effort lacks depth but will nevertheless appeal to inveterate royal watchers. *Margaret Flanagan*

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About the Author

Ben Hills, one of Australia's leading investigative journalists and foreign correspondents, is a winner of the Walkley Award (Australia's Pulitzer) and the Graham Perkin Award for Australian Journalist of the Year. From 1992 to 1995, he was the Japan correspondent for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, also covering issues and events in China, Siberia, and North and South Korea. His previous books are *Japan: Behind the Lines*, an account of his three years as a correspondent in Japan, and *Blue Murder*, a chronicle of the battle for justice by victims of CSR's Wittenoom asbestos mine in western Australia. He lives in Sydney.

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