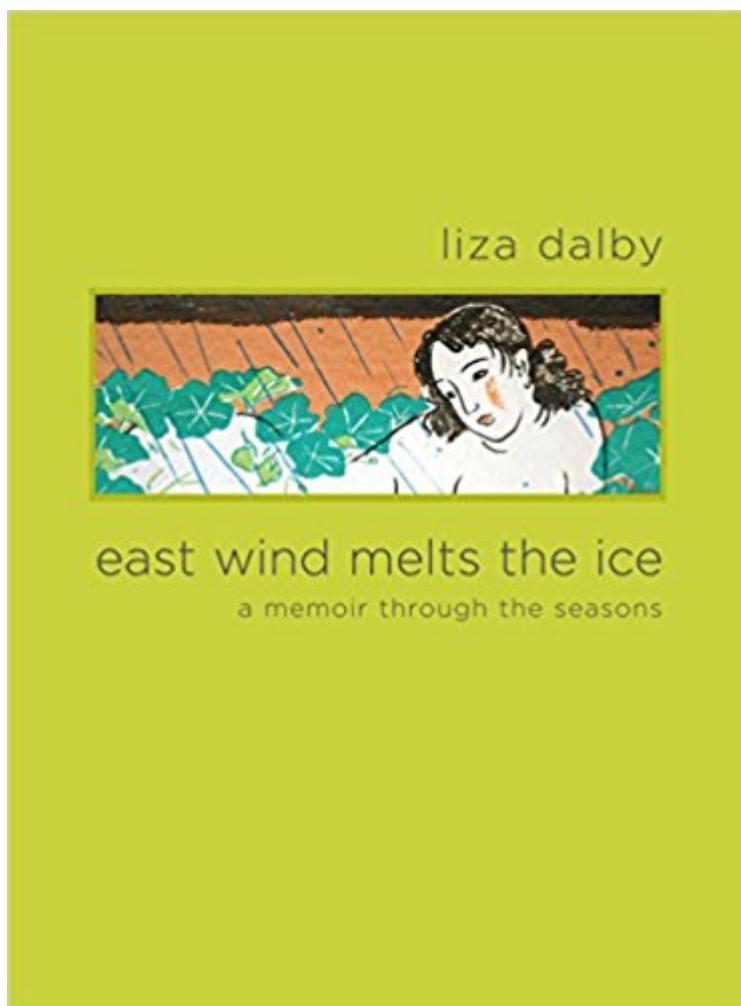


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# East Wind Melts The Ice: A Memoir Through The Seasons



## Synopsis

Writing in luminous prose, Liza Dalby, acclaimed author of *Geisha* and *The Tale of Murasaki*, brings us this elegant and unique yearâ's journal; a brilliant mosaic that is at once a candid memoir, a gardenerâ's diary, and an enlightening excursion through cultures east and west. Structured according to the seasonal units of an ancient Chinese almanac, *East Wind Melts the Ice* is made up of 72 short chapters that can be read straight through or dipped into at random. In the essays, Dalby transports us from her Berkeley garden to the streets of Kyoto, to Imperial China, to the sea cliffs of Northern California, and to points beyond. Throughout these journeys, Dalby weaves her memories of living in Japan and becoming the first and only non-Japanese geisha, her observations on the recurring phenomena of the natural world, and meditations on the cultural aesthetics of Japan, China, and California. She illuminates everyday life as well, in stories of keeping a pet butterfly, roasting rice cakes with her children, watching whales, and pampering worms to make compost. In the manner of the Japanese personal poetic essay, this vibrant work comprises 72 windows on a life lived between cultures, and the result is a wonderfully engaging read.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It may take the earth 365 days to orbit the sun, but the ways in which Eastern and Western cultures organize and understand that transit are as different as night and day. For Dalby, the discovery of an ancient Chinese almanac provides the source of both professional fascination as well as

personal inspiration. Divided into 72 separate 5-day units bearing such luscious titles as "Thunder Sings" and "Rainbows Hide," the almanac's unique structure compelled Dalby to combine her introspective narrative with extrinsic observations of nature and the seasons. As Dalby attentively contemplates each of the various worlds she has inhabited, from graduate student days in Kyoto as the first and only non-Japanese geisha to her museful role as a watchful gardener in northern California, she employs stream-of-consciousness reflection to nimbly navigate their interconnectedness. The renowned author of *Geisha* (1998) and *The Tale of Murasaki* (2000), Dalby seamlessly couples an artist's adroit sensitivity with an anthropologist's keen perception to create a singularly intimate yet universally accessible portrait of the natural world. Carol Haggas

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“[Dalby has] the keen eye of a naturalist and fluent language of a poet, Dalby.”  
(Southeast Review Of Asian Stds 2008-01-01)

This book has been a great inspiration to me, and I started doing the same thing as Liza by tracking the periods of the year in my blog. By doing so it has made me more attentive to the seasons and the passing of the year, seeing the poetry in every moment (for instance I had never noticed before when exactly the plants began to put out new shoots in the spring), as well as being more present in my body as we feel the seasons change, with the corresponding effects on health, mood, etc. But this book is in many ways more than an almanac, and represents an in depth view of Japanese culture, interspersed with the author's time in California it is able to ground and tie these differences for a western audience (comparing different species of goose or oranges or the climate). Instead of being a dry and academic evaluation of the peculiarities of Japanese, it is a series of anecdotes of Liza's time in Japan, especially of her time as a Geisha which gives a humanisitic view of traditional Japan from the inside, that allows us to empathize with how others may view things differently. All in all a deeply sensitive description of how the seasons play such an integral part in Japanese culture in little things such as how the patterns of the kimono change with seasons, and how haiku contain certain seasonal words, and how the condiments and flowers change with the seasons for the tea ceremony. All this along with funny little anecdotes about the cold of Kyoto and toasing Mikan (japanese tangerines) on the radiator. It is also a gardener's treasure trove, with stories of numerous plants and trees and their symbolism and how some of them have been transplanted to her garden in California. Highly recommended.

I found the book by chance in my local library. After reading it, I knew I had to own it. Though American, Dalby has an intimate knowledge of Japanese culture unavailable to most. Her academic pursuits led her to be the first caucasian admitted into a geisha house to study and obtain a status of geisha. She was a consultant on the film "Memoirs of a Geisha", and has parlayed this knowledge into her two passions: gardening and Japanese culture. The book contains daily essays, or I consider them meditations, that combine life experience, cultural connections, and seasonal passages parsed out in the Japanese five season year. The lyrical names of the seasonal segments were enough to hook me into the book, but her musings made me know I wanted to own it and re-read it as my seasons changed. I am not one to re-read books often, but this is a beautiful exception to the rule. *East Wind Melts the Ice: A Memoir through the Seasons* *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*

I have been looking for a written chronicle of the Asian Monthly Ordinances since I first read a reference to this calendar in Liza Dalby's other book 'The Tale Of Murasaki' (which I might add, is also an excellent read). As an artist whose work is greatly influenced by Asian art, I find the aesthetics of this Farmer's Almanac style calendar very inspirational and Liza Dalby's explanation and interpretation of the individual calendar entries weaves a virtual tapestry of beautiful imagery and ceremony along with historical references that help to understand the Asian culture more thoroughly. When I first heard of this book, I ordered it from the Public Library but within the first few pages, realized that borrowing it would not do, I had to buy a copy to add to my own personal library of art and reference books.

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I've always been a fan of Liza Dalby's work, and her historical novel *Tale of Murasaki* contained intriguing references to an ancient Chinese calendar that divided the year into 72 curiously-named seasons like "rainbows appear" and "tiger begins to roam". Finally, we get all 72 seasons, along with Dalby's poetic reflective essays on each. She covers a breadth of material, from her geisha days in Kyoto to her gardening adventures at her current Bay Area home. Her writing is calming and meditative but stimulates the imagination. I allowed myself to wallow in her world for hours at a time. Her reflections on Japanese and American culture are interesting, and she also has a lot of knowledge to share about the natural world. Read this book and be transported.

So functional, love it. Good item! fast shiping!! like it! It is a great stuff with high quality. Just as advertised. Good price and more than I expected You deserve it. Seems to be a high quality one!!

One of the most beautiful reads ever...I re-read every 1-2 years for its sheer beauty and insight.

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