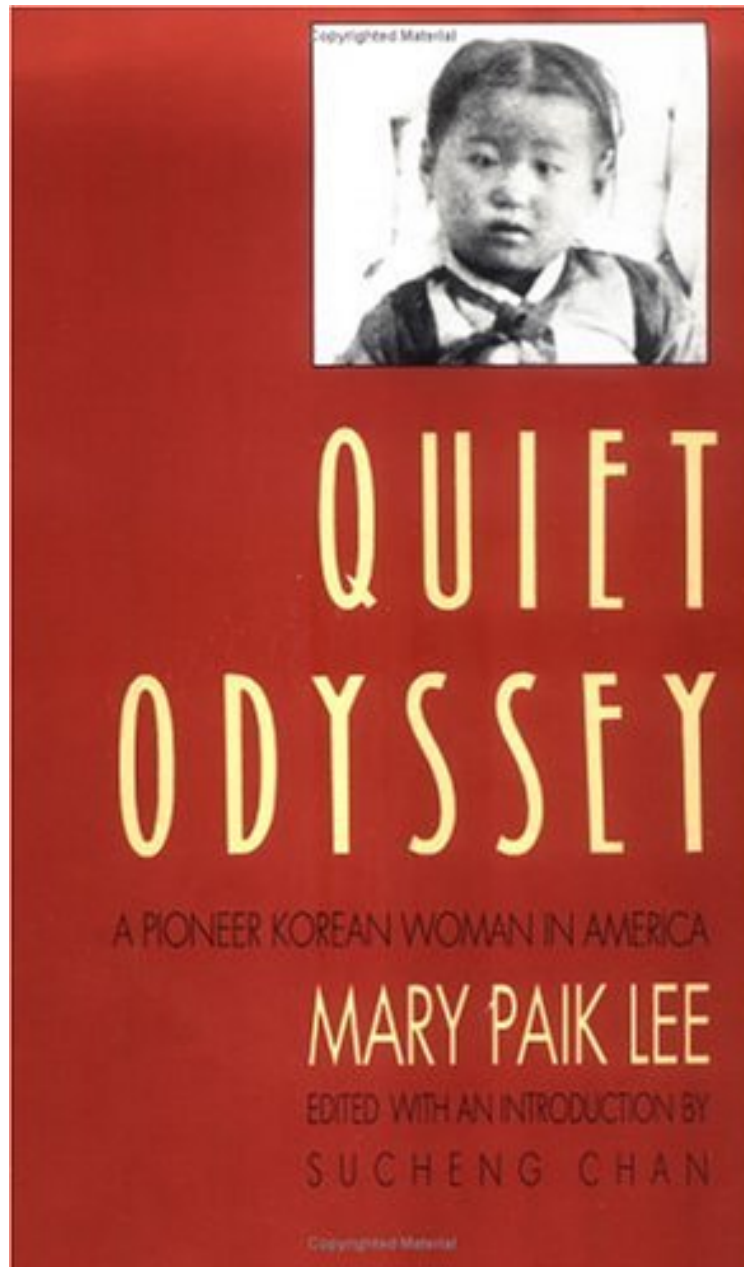


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Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America (Samuel and Althea Stroum Books)

Mary Paik Lee

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Pioneer Korean Woman in America (Samuel and Althea Stroum Books):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent read!By Julie AnnThis is a wonderful book. As a 3rd generation Korean-American, it conjures up memories of stories that my grandparents told me, gives a detailed description of the lives they led and explains so many things that I didn't even realize I lacked the answers to. It brings tears to my eyes and pride to my heart.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I am very glad to have found this bookBy JamericanVery informative book, prior to this, there was much written about the early Korean immigrants. I am very glad to have found this book, although Mary's story made me sad and angry, it is a story that needs to be told.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy Eugene I.Great historical review in introduction. Memoir starts very concise and factual. Want to keep reading more.

Mary Paik Lee, born Paik Kuang Sun in 1900, left her native country in 1905, traveling with her parents as a political refugee after Japan imposed control over Korea at the close of the Russo-Japanese War. Her father labored in the sugar plantations of Hawaii for a year and a half before taking his family to California, where Mrs. Lee has lived ever since. Though her father knew the comforts enjoyed by the educated traditional elite in Korea, after emigration he and his family shared the poverty stricken existence endured by thousands of Asian immigrants in early twentieth century America. Mrs. Lee's parents earned their living as farm laborers, tenant farmers, cooks, and janitors, and the family always took in laundry. Her father tried mercury mining until his health gave out. In their turn, Mrs. Lee and her husband farmed, sold produce, and managed apartment buildings. The author is engagingly outspoken and is extremely observant of her social and natural surroundings. Recounted incidents take on memorable life, as do the sharply etched settings of California's agricultural and mining country. She tells of singular hardship surmounted with resilience and characteristic grace. During much of her life Asian Americans were not treated as full human beings, yet she kept a powerful vision of what the United States could be.

From Publishers WeeklyLee's indomitable spirit pervades this absorbing autobiography spanning much of the 20th century. Born in 1900, the author left Korea in 1905 with her family, as political refugees. Among the earliest Korean immigrants to America, they settled in California, where they faced a constant struggle for the bare necessities, living wherever Lee's father could find work, often as an agricultural laborer. In addition to economic adversity, Lee often encountered racism. Determined to attend high school, she endured lectures about "stinking Chinks and dirty Japs." After the attack on Pearl Harbor, she had to stop three teenagers from striking her child. Even such unreasoned hatred could not break Lee who, from the perspective of the 1980s, sees in her children's successes the triumph of a century of cultural change. Chan, author of *This Bittersweet Soil* and a professor of history and Asian American studies at UC Santa Barbara, supplements the memoir with historical background. Her notes help make this brief, accessible volume a worthwhile addition to the scholarship on Asian American culture. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library JournalIn this moving testament, Lee shares with her readers her feelings of growing up poor, Asian, and female. Her story begins in Pyongyang, Korea, as part of a Christian family in the well-to-do upper class. With the occupation of Korea by the Japanese in 1905, the social station and comfort of her family was threatened. Thus they immigrated to America so that one part of the Paik family line would be preserved. Chan's introduction provides a concise and comprehensive review that helps place the author's life history within its global context. Three appendixes shed light on her role as a historiographer in augmenting the text, historical verification, and editorial decisions; a detailed bibliographic essay adds a wealth of well-researched data. An excellent primary source, enhanced by Chan's scholarly additions, that will enrich a variety of subjects such as anthropology, women in history, psychology, and Asian studies. --Dolores M. Steinhauer, Jefferson Sci-Tech, Alexandria, VA Copyright 1990 Cahners Business Information, Inc. Forced by Japanese soldiers to leave their home in Korea, Paik Kuang Sun (later Mary Paik Lee), her parents, and her brother emigrate to the United States in 1905, leaving behind their extended family and comfortable way of life. They spend one year in Hawaii, then move on to California, changing locations every year or so in hopes of finding work that will allow them to feed and clothe their rapidly growing family. Mary Lee writes of "whites only" signs, of laws that prohibit Asians from renting or buying property, of the year they eat only biscuits and water. Through it all her father works at back-breaking and sometimes life-endangering jobs, always ready to give to others who are in need. Mary grows up to be a hard-working, honest, and caring woman, prepared to stand up for what she believes is right, particularly when it comes to racism. Her autobiography is written with the intimacy of an oral history and through her memories, the reader is allowed into the life of one of the few (perhaps less than three dozen) Korean-born children growing up on the west coast before 1910. Su Cheng Chan, the book's editor, has added an extensive introduction and appendix which place Mary Lee's autobiography within a detailed historical and cultural context without invading its boundaries. The result is a book that can be read both as a piece of a history or and the personal testament of one courageous woman. -- For great reviews of books for girls, check out *Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14*. -- From 500 Great

