



Memoirs of the Warrior Kumagai: A Historical Novel (Tuttle Classics)

Donald Richie

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“A tour de force combining a commanding mastery of historical fact and detail, a comprehensive understanding of the human spirit, and a poetic quality of expression that transforms the hearts of all those it touches.” —The Japan Foundation Newsletter

Kumagai Naozane was a Japanese warrior famous for having taken the head of the young and handsome samurai Atsumori. This episode has become one of the best-known and best-loved stories in the Japanese historical classic, *The Heiké Story* (*Heike Monogatari*). This book is a fictionalized version of Kumagai's own attempt to come to terms with his past—that real past which is his and that other past which he hears the monks inventing as they compose the text which will eventually become *The Heiké Story*.

As the warrior remembers his past and compares it to its fictional parallel, he evokes the wonders of the city of Heiankyo (Kyoto); the wars which raised the Taira (Heike) clan to power and later reduced it to ruin at the hands of the Genji clan; the battles at the Uji River; life in the imperial court of the retired emperor Go-Shirakawa; and the celebrated final Taira battle—the naval encounter at Dannoura, where the infant emperor Antoku was delivered to the depths of the sea. Among the many pleasures of this brilliantly colored chronicle is how the common humanity of this honest, hopeless man transcends his time and milieu to speak to us, here and now.

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