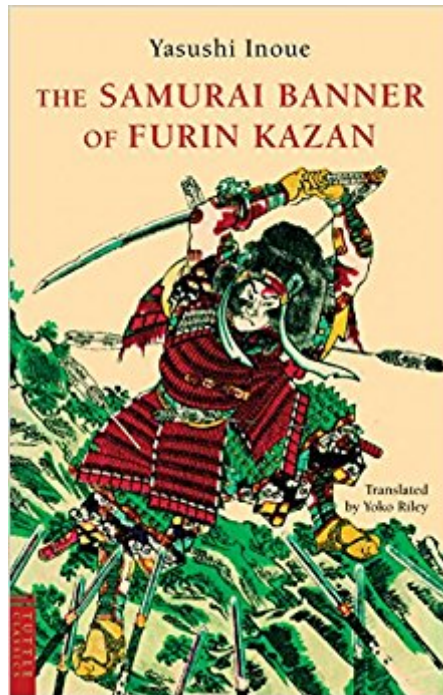


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The Samurai Banner Of Furin Kazan (Tuttle Classics)



Synopsis

The Samurai Banner of Furin Kazan presents an accurate portrait of this era in Japanese history. Originally published in Japanese in 1959, this classic novel by Yasushi Inoue takes place during the Japanese Warring Era (1467-1573)â "a time when a fractured Japan was ruled by three young powerful warlords: Takeda Shingen, Iwagawa Yoshimoto and Hojo Ujiyasu. The story focuses on Takeda Shingen and his one-eyed, crippled strategist, Yamamoto Kansuke. The brilliant strategies of Kansuke, inspired by his passion for war and his admiration for his enemies' war tactics, are beautifully expressed throughout this book. Takeda Shingenâ "a proud and confident warlordâ "wants to expand his territory. When he retains the ambitious and mysterious Yamamoto Kansukeâ "a masterless, unheralded samuraiâ "as his war strategist, he discovers a bold and cunning collaborator. Kansuke's talents at diplomacy and his prescient understanding of war strategy leads Shingen's clan to great success, a path which leads the pair to Princess Yuu. When Kansuke discovers her among the ruins of a castle he has just captured, she is about to commit ritual suicide, jigaki. Kansuke falls under her spellâ "and convinces her to live to carry on her family's lineage. The conflicting ambitions of Shingen, Kansuke, and Princess Yuu are at the heart of this complex and intensely dramatic story. Each of the three needs the others in order to attain their goals. In the end, the lines between who is using whom are blurred beyond understanding. Though there's some doubt as to whether Kansuke really existed, the historical narrative and depictions of daily life present a unique and engaging look at the end of the feudal era in Japan.

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Customer Reviews

Yasushi Inoue's *SAMURAI BANNER OF FURIN KAZAN* is written from the point of view of a short, old, and ugly samurai named Yamamoto Kansuke who serves as the chief military strategist for Takeda Haronobu, War Lord of Kai. He has an unerring gift of foreseeing how military strategies will turn out, and of fine-tuning the tactics required to position Takeda to win in any given situation. Well, almost any given situation. Kansuke also advises Takeda on matters of the heart, and here he is on shakier ground. While he has the best interests of the Takeda clan at heart, women have other goals in mind that he perceives only dimly, being a bachelor. As Takeda tires of his marriage, he takes on two concubines in Princess Yuu and Princess Ogoto; and the problems posed by these two beautiful young women almost prove to be his undoing. The most powerful enemy of the Takeda clan is Uesugi Kenshin of the nearby state of Echigo. His constant feints remind me of a superb defensive chess player who is familiar with the concept of "reculer pour mieux sauter" -- to retreat to gain running room for leaping forward. In the end, there is a final showdown at Kawanakajima in the contested province of Shinano. Inoue ends with an ironic epilogue in which he sees all the efforts of the 16th century war lords come to naught as Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu finally succeed in unifying Japan in the next generation, leading to the 300-year Tokugawa Shogunate that lasted well into the 19th century.

This novel is mostly the story of an extraordinary warrior and general who lived in XVI century Japan. Yamamoto Kansuke (1501-1561) came to prominence late in his life, as he entered the service of the legendary Shingen Takeda only in 1543, as one of his advisors. He was very short (in some sources he is even called a dwarf) but with surprisingly strong and long hands and very large shoulders (in some sources he is even described as a hunchback). Because of an accident in childhood he became lame and also lost an eye and scarred his face - and it seems that his face was a rather unsettling sight... But this strangely shaped and damaged body contained the spirit of an excellent strategist. It is generally considered, that Yamamoto Kansuke's advice greatly helped Shingen Takeda to rise from a petty local castle holder to the position of one of main players in the great fight for power over all Japan. His skills were however put to the great test when the Takedas had to fight the Uesugi clan and its extremely able leader. The climax of this confrontation was the dramatic and tragic fourth battle of Kawanakajima, described in this book in great detail. The second great figure of this book is Takeda Shingen himself, a fierce and terrifying warlord who fascinated generations of writers and filmmakers (Kurosawa's "Kagemusha" is the story of the Takeda clan and its leader). The relations between the lord and his master strategist are like a chess game between

two brilliant minds and they make an excellent read. But possibly the most extraordinary person in this book is a woman - but to avoid spoilers I will not say much about her.

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