

[PDF] Cloud Of Sparrows

Ron Rifkin, Takashi Matsuoka - pdf download free book

Books Details:

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Author: Ron Rifkin, Takashi Matsuoka
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Description:

Following in the substantial footsteps of filmmaker Akira Kurosawa and author James Clavell is Takashi Matsuoka, whose action-packed debut novel, *Cloud of Sparrows*, unfolds as the age of the samurai warrior starts to wane. The year is 1861, and Lord Genji of Akaoka, last in line of the Okamichi clan, welcomes missionaries Emily, Matthew, and Zephaniah to Japan. Cut off from the West for more than 2,000 years, Japan is as completely unprepared for these outsiders as the missionaries are for geishas and honor killings. Genji, his geisha love Heiko, and the missionaries suddenly find themselves in the middle of several nefarious plots to overthrow the Okamichi leader from as far away as the shogun's palace and as close as Genji's own henchmen. Genji and his visitors journey together across treacherous terrain to seek refuge at the faraway Cloud of Sparrows palace. Although it's a rip-roaring yarn full of ambushes, swordfights, cross-cultural friction, love, and prophetic visions, the book does read a bit like a screenplay, cutting quickly from one scene to another. But the frequent shifts in the story's tempo succeed in making the novel all the more vivid, allowing simultaneous action and contemplation to deepen the story and its inhabitants. --Emily

Russin --This text refers to the edition.

From Publishers Weekly Matsuoka's ambitious first novel is an epic saga of clashing personalities and ideologies in the tradition of Shogun, yet it distinguishes itself from its wide-eyed predecessor with a grimmer perspective on Japan's military culture. Set in Edo in 1861, the book chronicles the arrival of a group of American missionaries (two men and a woman, each hiding secrets) into a land bristling with feudal clans nursing ancient grudges and a central shogunate trying to maintain control in the face of corrosive Western influences (like Christianity). The young Lord Genji, a modern heir to the embittered Okumichi clan and its rulers' gift of prophetic vision, receives the missionaries as his guests. Their visit coincides with an effort by the Shogun's secret-police chief to destroy Genji, which leads to the accidental killing of one of the missionaries. In response, Genji, his mad uncle Shigeru (tortured with visions of "swarms of metallic insects," which presage the devastation of WWII), and Genji's lover, the devastatingly beautiful geisha Heiko, join forces with innocent American missionary Emily Gibson and Matt Stark, also an American, who is hiding under the mission's aegis while he hunts down a man who wronged him long ago, to stave off the imperial assassins and restore the honor of the clan. The novel boasts plenty of Edo-era pomp and pageantry, as well as some nicely convoluted court intrigue and lightly handled romance. But the author's central message appears to be a rebuke of the narrow-mindedness of the isolationist feudal tradition in Japan and its bloody track record: "It is our duty to ensure that all looting, murdering, and enslaving in Japan is done by us alone. Otherwise, how can we call ourselves Great Lords?"
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