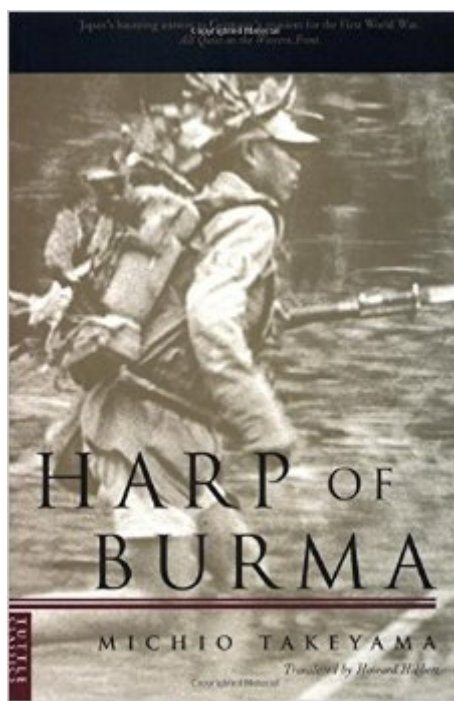


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Harp Of Burma (Tuttle Classics)



Synopsis

Harp of Burma is Japan's haunting answer to Germany's well-known requiem for the First World War, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Winner of the prestigious Mainichi Shuppan Bunkasho prize, and the subject of an acclaimed film by Ichikawa Kon, Harp of Burma portrays a company of Japanese troops who are losing a desperate campaign against British forces in the tropical jungles of Burma. The young soldiers discover that the trials of war involve more than just opposing the enemy. The foreign climate and terrain, the strange behavior of foreigners, the constant struggle to overcome homesickness and nostalgia, and the emotions stirred by the senselessness of war—all of these forces, new and baffling to the soldiers, contribute to their distress and disorientation. In the midst of these overwhelming challenges, they discover the power of music to make even the toughest situations tolerable—through their commander's ability to lead them in song. Even though they face the inevitability of defeat, singing the songs of their homeland revives their will to live. Through the story of these men and of the music that saw them through the war, Takeyama presents thought-provoking questions about political hostilities and the men who unleash them. Harp of Burma is Japan's classic novel of pathos and compassion in the midst of senseless warfare. Harp of Burma was made into a critically acclaimed movie (*The Burmese Harp*) by the celebrated director Ichikawa Kon.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is near the end of World War II. A company of Japanese soldiers are dodging the British in the jungles of Burma, trying to slip over the border into Siam. They have learned to sing to ease their miseries. Their singing is centered around the magical playing of Mizushima on a Burmese harp. One night they are surrounded by British forces. What saves them is Mizushima playing "Hanyu no Yado" ("Home Sweet Home") on his harp. A deadly firefight is averted. Soon both Japanese and British have joined together singing "Home Sweet Home" in the middle of the night in the middle of the jungle. It turns out that the War is over. Mizushima goes on a solo mission to persuade a holdout Japanese unit to surrender, while the rest of the company is sent to a POW camp in South Burma. There they await the return of Mizushima and repatriation. And they sing. That covers the first third of HARP OF BURMA. The fairy tale goes on and on. There are two parakeets, one of which says, "Let's go back! Let's go back to Japan together!" and the other, "Ah, I cannot go home!" There are Burmese cannibals who find a wounded Japanese soldier, restore him to health, and then tell him they are fattening him up for their cannibalistic rituals; he is saved at the last moment (via a happenstance that would have been beyond the creativity of the Brothers Grimm) and becomes a Buddhist monk. The dulcet tones of "Home Sweet Home" played on a Burmese harp mysteriously emanate from a large statue of a reclining Buddha. A large red Burmese ruby is found in a sandy river bank while burying the corpses of Japanese soldiers. And much more. The story really isn't important.

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