



# Pagoda, Skull and Samurai

Rohan Koda



Japanese literary history usually classifies Koda Rohan as an idealist writer, and the three stories included in this anthology belong to this genre. The Five-Storied Pagoda, one of Koda's best-known works, is the moving account of a misunderstood carpenter who has been inspired to undertake the construction of a pagoda by himself. It is not merely a story of individualism, however, for the religious implications of such a task are profound. Encounter with a Skull concerns a fortuitous meeting of two souls not necessarily ordained by karma. The multiple processes of enlightenment are perceptively depicted in this eerie tale. The last story, The Bearded Samurai, is an historical novella whose setting is the sixteenth-century battle of Nagashino between the forces of Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu and those of Takeda Katsuyori. Here, the human side of the warrior and a realistic view of the samurai are delineated. Such stories, in addition to the essays and notes by the translator, will prove of interest to the general reader and especially to the reader already familiar with Japanese literature.

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