



Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai

Yamamoto Tsunetomo

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Living and dying with bravery and honor is at the heart of *Hagakure*, a series of texts written by an eighteenth-century samurai, Yamamoto Tsunetomo. It is a window into the samurai mind, illuminating the concept of *bushido* (the Way of the Warrior), which dictated how samurai were expected to behave, conduct themselves, live, and die. While *Hagakure* was for many years a secret text known only to the warrior vassals of the Nabeshima clan to which the author belonged, it later came to be recognized as a classic exposition of samurai thought.

The original *Hagakure* consists of over 1,300 short texts that Tsunetomo dictated to a younger samurai over a seven-year period. William Scott Wilson has selected and translated here three hundred of the most representative of those texts to create an accessible distillation of this guide for samurai. No other translator has so thoroughly and eruditely rendered this text into English.

For this edition, Wilson has added a new introduction that casts *Hagakure* in a different light than ever before. Tsunetomo refers to bushido as “the Way of death,” a description that has held a morbid fascination for readers over the years. But in Tsunetomo’s time, *bushido* was a nuanced concept that related heavily to the Zen concept of *muga*, the “death” of the ego. Wilson’s revised introduction gives the historical and philosophical background for that more metaphorical reading of *Hagakure*, and through this lens, the classic takes on a fresh and nuanced appeal.

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