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The 47 Ronin: A Graphic Novel



Synopsis

A graphic novel version of the most dramatic example of bushido—the samurai code—in Japanese history. In the eighteenth century, forty-seven samurai avenged the death of their master in a plot that would take over two years to complete. After succeeding in their mission, the masterless samurai—known as ronin—all committed ritual suicide. The story, which is a national legend, remains the most potent example of Japan's deeply rooted cultural imperative of honor, persistence, loyalty, and sacrifice. The historical event has inspired many writers and artists over the years and numerous fictionalized versions and adaptations have emerged. In *The 47 Ronin*, Sean Michael Wilson has created a historically factual portrait, enhanced by evocative and often lyrical drawings by Akiko Shimojima. While there are other depictions of the story in manga form, this version stands out as being the most accurate and most compelling. Wilson and Shimojima have made the characters nuanced and relatable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up—The story of 47 warriors who stage an elaborate plan to avenge their fallen master is legendary in Japan, exemplifying the ideals of samurai loyalty and perseverance. While many details of this historical event have been lost through numerous retellings, this work aims to represent it accurately. Though written in English for a Western audience, this graphic novel assumes significant knowledge of Japanese culture and history—in fact, the term ronin (masterless

samurai) is never defined. More exposition and context throughout would have been helpful, as not all readers are familiar with 18th-century Japanese politics, or the ethical code that compels these warriors to seek vengeance after the unjust death of their master. Despite the steep learning curve, this book offers a dramatic tale of intrigue and action. Readers will enjoy the fast-paced action and intricate plotting once the revenge plan unfolds. Traditional manga-style art enriches the story, bringing Japan's Edo era to life through detailed depictions of period costume and architecture. Grisly scenes of ritual suicide and battles may deter the faint of heart, but most will be undaunted. While this title will hold greatest appeal for those who have an interest in Japanese history, it will also attract fans of the recent Hollywood screen adaptation, providing an engaging way to learn about the film's inspiration. A solid purchase where manga is popular.

— Allison Tran, Mission Viejo Library, CA

KEY: * Excellent in relation to other titles on the same subject or in the same genre | eBook original | Hardcover trade binding | RTE Reinforced trade binding | lib.ed. Publisher's library binding | Board Book | pap. paperback

— "This is a tightly focused, perfectly pitched retelling of the story and a perfect entry point for anyone coming to the story for the first time. The Keanu Reeves version may have all the spectacle, but this version has all the heart."

— BleedingCool.com

— "Like the great Chivalric tales of Europe, *The 47 Ronin* harks back to an earlier, simpler time and an idealized concept of honor. It displays a dedication to honor, comradeship, and nobility that few real people can live up to, yet deep inside our souls we yearn to be as worthy as those examples."

— Joe Gordon, Forbidden Planet International

— "Despite being widely known in both Japan and abroad, the story of the assassination of a court official named Kira Yoshihisa by the 47 Ronin and their subsequent suicide has seldom been retold with accuracy since its occurrence in December 1702. . . . Readers interested in accurate Japanese history rather than Hollywood embellishment will enjoy this well-done retelling of the legendary event."

— The Japan Times

— "A masterful retelling of one of the greatest stories in Japanese culture. An engrossing, engaging, emotional and unforgettable epic."

— Jonathan Ross, BBC television presenter

— "Wilson uses exactly the right scenes to tell this famous story, creating a quick, engaging read."

— Library Journal

"Spare and understated, the script sticks close to historical events and elegantly recounts the legend's central elements."

— School Library Journal

I have been searching for a graphic novel that touched on more philosophical and in depth subjects

for years and I have finally found it with The Demon's Sermon on the Martial Arts. Everything about this book is above and beyond anything I have found in terms of graphic novels. The artwork is beautiful, even though it is black and white which I generally do not like, the story has a wonderful flow which actually has a deeper meaning talked about in the afterword, and the subjects contain deeper philosophical questions and teachings that almost require them to be read again and again. I think what puts it over the top however is the whimsical and unexpected characters that bring the story to life. Have you ever encountered an enlightened cicada that taught you the secret of happiness? Exactly. This will definitely be part of my permanent collection and I plan on buying everything that has been released from William Scott Wilson, Sean Michael Wilson, and Michiru Morikawa. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that they are working on more gems like this!

Well written, profound, meaningful, gripping. It resonates. This is one of those books that you hold on to for life, and I don't have many of those. What is most interesting is that as of the writing of this review, not one reviewer mentioned the true message of this work. Some of the reviews only say that it is good. Others go to great length to explain why it's good, but none of those actually get it. So either no one else understood the text, or I didn't understand the text. Either way, I'm going to give it another read. I suggest you do the same.

Another awesome book from Sean Michael Wilson. I have all of his Manga adaptations of classic Japanese texts including: *Hagakure: The Code of the Samurai (The Manga Edition)*, *The Book of Five Rings: A Graphic Novel*, and *The Demon's Sermon on the Martial Arts: A Graphic Novel*... and they are all excellent books. I had heard of the story of the 47 Ronin, but this the first time I've seen it all the way through... and I really enjoyed it. From the book: "If you would let go of your private worry and deal with the essence of the matter, the criticism of other samurai would not bother you." Replace the word 'samurai' with whoever you feel you need to impress or be accepted by... and you have universal wisdom for life. The only slight challenge I had with the story was I found myself a little mixed up in the first chapter. But after that, the story is excellent, and I'm very happy with the art as well. Well worth the read!

This graphic novel is based on the philosophical teachings of Issai Chozanshi, an 18-century samurai, on the meaning of life. This book does a beautiful job with its images to narrate the stories.

I have recently read and reviewed numerous graphic novels, many of them based upon legendary

martial art philosophies such as the famous Miyamoto Musashi's "The Book of Five Rings" and Sun Tzu's "The Art of War." This one ("The Demon's Sermon on the Martial Arts: A Graphic Novel) is based upon the classic stories and legends written by Issai Chozanshi, who was a Samurai in the eighteenth-century. He was also a student and teacher of Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto and Confucianism. This text is based on the translation by William Scott Wilson, adapted by Sean Michael Wilson and beautifully illustrated by Michiru Morikawa. He stressed many of the well-known philosophical concepts many serious life-time martial artists are familiar with, if they have trained under true martial art masters. As someone who has been fortunate to have studied numerous martial arts (Judo, Jujitsu, Karate-Do, Kobudo, Kenjutsu, Kendo and other arts) under some fantastic teachers, I really enjoyed reading this excellent volume. This text is organized into 5 parts. Part 1 explains the parable about "Transformation of the Sparrow and the Butterfly and Meeting the Gods of Poverty in a Dream. Part 2 covers the story about "The greatest Joys of the Cicada and its cast-off shell and "The Owl's understanding." Part 3 deals with the sermon of "The centipede Questions the Snake." Part 4 is my favorite sermon because it deals with "The Toad's Way of the Gods" and "The Mysterious Technique of the Cat." The final part is the shortest and provides insight into the lessons learned by the traveling Samurai as he becomes enlightened. "I have been to the mountains, met with demons, and now I can carry on... Man is a moving being." In conclusion, if you are a serious student of the martial arts you may already be familiar with Issai Chozanshi's writings; nevertheless, this graphic novel version should also be in your personal library of Martial Arts philosophy. A wonderful and enjoyable book to read. Rating: 5 Stars. Joseph J. Truncale (Author: The Samurai Heart: An old warrior's poetic tribute)

This is a most accurate portrayal of the historical 47 Ronin that is celebrated in Japan on December 17. Artwork is exquisite and the story line matches the events as close as possible to the actual story. A good read to learn what loyalty is and it brings out the heart of Samurai code.

This really isn't about the martial arts except in an oblique sort of way. As with many Asian teachings, these are stories that have layers of meaning and must be reflected upon by the reader. I found them enjoyable both as stories and as teachings. The translator has done a fine job; the stories seem to flow along nicely with no awkwardness from being translated from another language and culture. Highly recommended.

This is one of those books that will leave you swimming in the information it contains long after you

read it. Not a how to manual, but a mindset for training manual. Unlike other Japanese works from the Fuedal Era the focus is not on being ready to die, but on how to approach training from day to day. The supplementary texts included with the book are very helpful in laying a groundwork to understand the actual sermon.

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