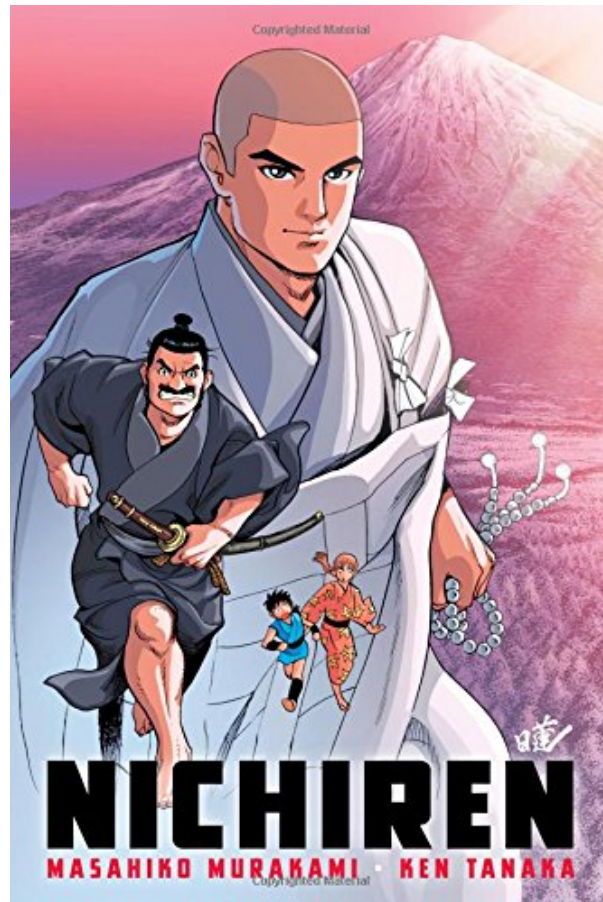
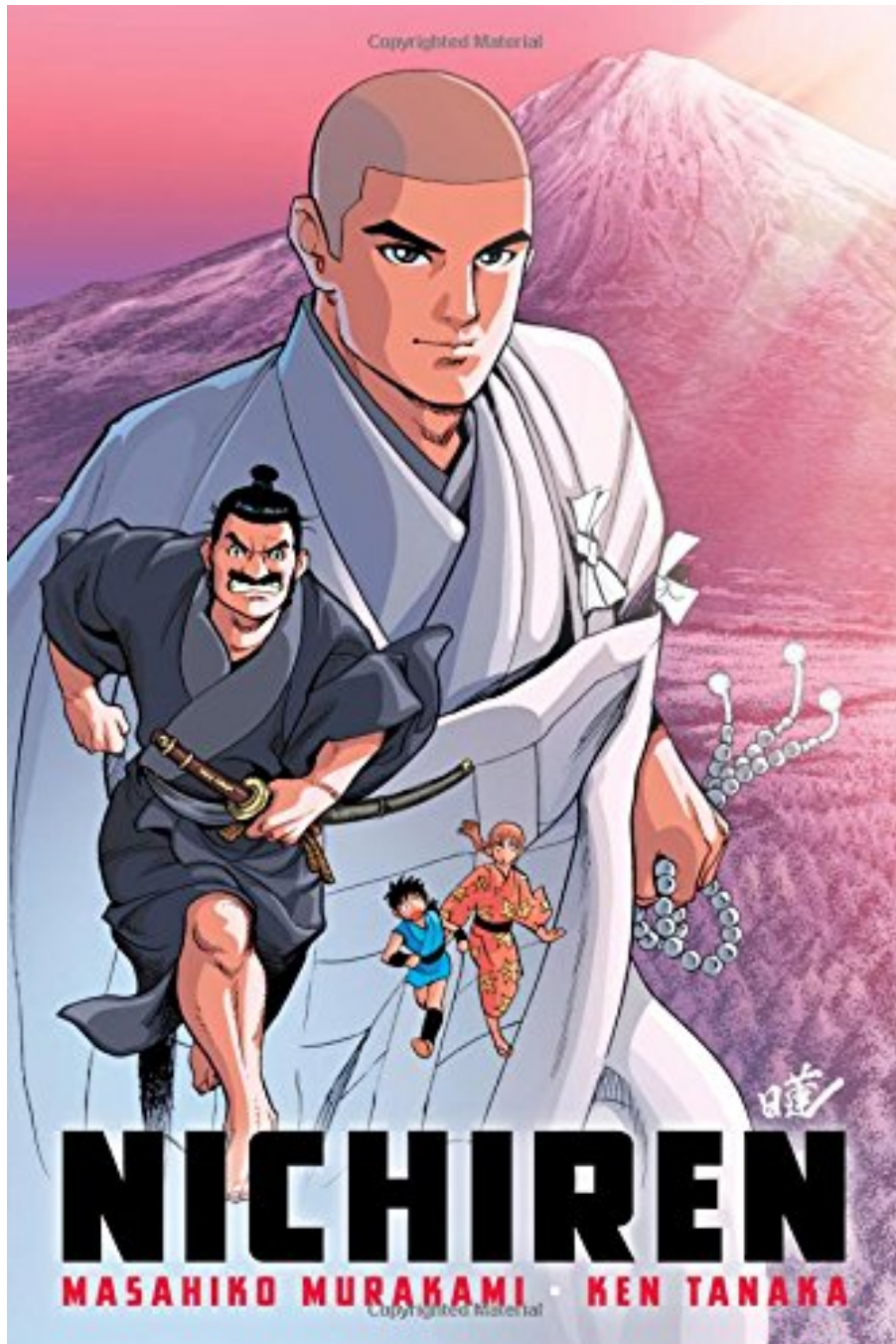


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Review

"*Nichiren's* life is compelling and smartly interpreted by Tanaka with black-and-white manga-style illustrations. An intriguing imagining that is both edifying and enlightening and that makes an ancient figure easily accessible to a modern audience." —Kirkus Reviews

About the Author

Masahiko Murakami is a well-known Japanese novelist and playwright. Ken Tanaka is an illustrator of several Japanese manga on Buddhist history.

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In 13th-century Japan, disease, famine, violence, and natural disasters plague society. Samurai lords, blinded by power, shirk any responsibility to protect the citizenry. Religious leaders care more about currying favor with the powerful than helping common people find hope and a positive way to deal with their suffering. But one unknown Buddhist monk dares to speak the truth to power: Nichiren remonstrates with the authorities. He insists that all human life is precious and that the government needs to change its ways and become of service to the people. He criticizes the established religions as being merely pawns of the state, who teach ideas that only further the people's sense of powerlessness. The true purpose of Buddhism, he asserts, is to teach people a way to empower themselves, challenge their destiny, and experience happiness in this life. Based on actual events, this exciting comic touches on major milestones in Nichiren's life interwoven with basic Buddhist principles. This real-life adventure story will captivate readers as it illustrates the life of one courageous human being who stopped at nothing to bring happiness to the people and peace to the land.

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Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Fantastic presentation of part of the history of Buddhism

By Jessica

I received a free copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I studied a lot of religion in college, enough to complete a second major. Some of my favorites were Eastern religions, including the teachings of the Buddha. I think this graphic novel would have been a fantastic addition to my Religions of the Far East class and I will be reaching out to my professor to consider it.

This graphic novel illustrates many of the main points of the teachings of Buddha:

"He realized that some things cannot be overcome with wealth or power - namely, the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death." (Page 50)

There is also information on the history of Buddhism as well as the explanation of the different branches. What I really like is that Nichiren is not just some fictional character whose fictional life is used to teach a lesson. He was, in fact, a real monk. While the story is embellished by the authors to include some less factual information, the point is this graphic novel is based on a very real historical figure.

During Nichiren's lifetime, his homeland was plagued with a lot of natural disasters, including widespread illness.

"Natural disasters are unavoidable, but human beings must have strength to overcome them and wisdom to move on with their lives. Negative thinking, however, can prevent people from summoning this inner strength and overcoming obstacles. Moreover, Buddhist scriptures offer the insight that disorder within human beings is reflected as disorder within society." (Page 62)

He felt that a common problem with the current Buddhist way of thought was the following of The Pure Land school of thought. This practice taught disciples to just give in to fate and accept it so that they might achieve their place in The Pure Land. Nichiren found this to actually be a negative practice and petitioned for a return to the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. He felt that one should not just be governed by fate but that people should still attempt to improve their lives. Like many religious leaders before him, he was met by excessive resistance from leaders of his religion.

Many attempts were made on his life and Nichiren held fast to his devotion, willing to die for his beliefs. It's interesting that he was exiled twice and so many attempts were made on his life but the government that couldn't stand him was not able to silence him.

The author has kindly provided a link to a website about Nichiren for further information. My interest has been piqued and I look forward to finding out the whole truth about Nichiren and his teachings.

5 stars.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Unfortunate negativity toward other forms of Buddhism

By Kindle Customer

I would give it less than one if I could. I have enjoyed reading manga versions of the lives of other Buddhist leaders; Just as You Are is a very nice manga about Honen Shonin, founder of Jodo Shu and teacher of Shinran, the founder of Jodo Shinshu for example. There is also a good one about the 14th Dalai Lama, and Higashi has published a multi-volume manga about the life of Shinran. SO I was looking forward to reading this one about Nichiren...right up until it made some really negative comments on Pure Land Buddhism. This book does Nichiren a dis-service. It's a real shame that one school of Buddhism feels it needs to build itself up by saying nasty things about another equally legitimate form of Buddhism. I won't even end up donating this to my local library, as I think it would be unfortunate for this to be some young person's introduction to Buddhism.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

It's not perfect, but still enjoyable

By Magda Zmijan

If you're interested in a biographical manga here's something for you. It's not perfect, but still enjoyable.

I don't read many biographies, so if I'm actually reaching for one I do have some expectations. In this case, I was more interested in the setting rather than character, although the blurb caught my attention enough to read the story.

It's all about the monk who decided follow other Buddhist teachings then most of Japan. Because of that, he was outlawed, chased and punished. He had some faithful followers, and thanks to the mantra he chooses to follow, he managed to stay calm and happy throughout his life.

The story itself is nicely written and well drawn, but don't expect a fascinating read and action packed story. It's supposed to be based on a life of a monk after all ;). Most of the "action" happens when Nichiren convinces others to follow the same sutra as he does. Most of the people he meets follow him quite easily, I'd even say too easily. Actually, the more I think about this story, the lower rating I want to use, but it does deserve these 3 stars.

The "bad" characters in this book were portrayed as very simple minded, they instantly believed in what someone told them. They instantly wanted Nichiren dead or imprisoned. Names of both authors seem Japanese (although at least one is a pseudonym) and yet the characters they portrayed didn't behave like they were in Japan. Everything seemed rushed, thoughtless, almost mad. When you imagine a person from Japan it's usually someone calm, reasonable, someone who hides their feeling (yes, I know these are stereotypes, but it is kind of true. I can honestly say I found no person like that in this book except Nichiren.

One of the issues I had with the graphic is that the characters didn't change. Maybe the authors thought we wouldn't recognize them, but if you show a pair of kids and after ten and more years they look and behave exactly the same and even wear the same clothes it's simply not right. I know some people have troubles with recognizing manga characters, it seems this style requires from readers some getting used to, but it doesn't mean we can't see the characters evolve.

As far as historical biographies go this was OK, but I think I was expecting more. I did like the graphic style. I do like manga ad since I haven't read any in a while this was a nice change from other graphic novels. I even didn't mind it being black and white, although I might've added half star for some colors. After all, if you'll think about all the fancy kimono's you could find in old japan it might've been a treat.

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