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Nichiren



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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.

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 than 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.

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