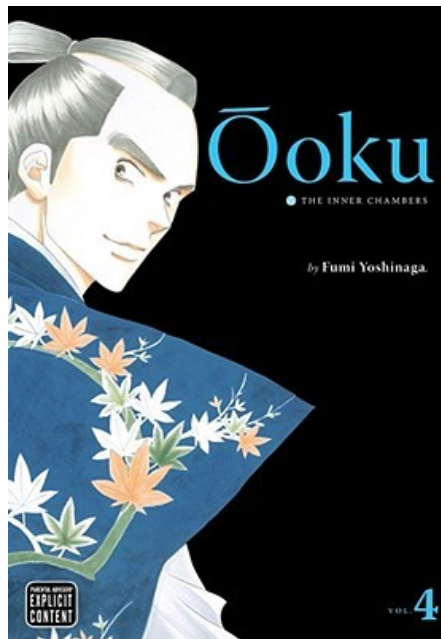




Ōoku: The Inner Chambers, Volume 4

Fumi Yoshinaga , Akemi Wegmüller (Translator)

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Reads R to L (Japanese Style). In this 17th Century Japan the Shogun is a woman...and the harem is full of men.

Despite Iemitsu and Arikoto's best efforts, there is no male heir to take over the shogunate. As the Redface Pox continues to ravage the country, it becomes increasingly clear within Edo Castle that Japan's continued existence relies on overturning the centuries of custom that define it!

?oku: The Inner Chambers, Volume 4 Details

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From Reader Review ?oku: The Inner Chambers, Volume 4 for online ebook

Monique says

Volume 4 wraps up Arikoto's story arch quite nicely and introduces us to the next arch with a new Shogun. Tsunayoshi is a much harsher, more selfish and scemeing Shogun than either Iemitsu or her daughter, Ietsuna. Emonnosuke is a welcome schemier to the Inner Chambers, stirring up some drama and setting the stage for the next arch. I'm looking forward to finding out what happens in volume 5. Should be interesting, at the very least. :)

Arminzerella says

When Iemitsu dies at an early age, Akimoto becomes her daughter's caregiver. Inevitably, she falls in love with him and will take no other suitors. Akimoto decides that it is time for him to retire, and he leaves his position (which then remains vacant for many years). A succession of female shoguns follows – some are better rulers than others. There is some dissent – particularly among men (lords and samurai) – about the changes that have put so many women in positions of power, but gradually, people accept their new roles and many forget how things were, or are too young to remember them being any different. Volume 4 follows the shogunate up through Tsunayoshi, who seems intelligent enough, but also uses her power to do what she pleases without regard to the consequences of her actions (i.e. take another woman's husband as her lover, destroying their family bit by bit). This ends with her taking an enigmatic and charismatic young man (of 34) into her house to assume Akimoto's old position. He bears a resemblance to his predecessor, and has his own personal agenda (to which we are not yet privy).

Elizabeth A says

Dynasties move forward with different figure heads, and usually we die before we have to contend with more than a couple of rulers. That is not the case with this series. You know how you get attached to particular characters in a story, and then they get old, or die, and the world continues to turn while you are still gasping for air? That's how I felt during this one. So much happens, and clearly this is a transitional novel in the story arc, so people come and go at a neck snapping pace.

There are really several story lines that play out in this manga series. There is what happens in the Inner Chamber with the Shogun, her concubines, and all the gossip men. Then there is what happens in Edo and the rest of Japan during the time of the Redface Pox. And, finally, there is the exploration of how society changes as women are now widely acknowledged as heads of family. Absolutely fascinating.

But that is not to say that I don't have my gripes. There are so many people in this series, and because the art makes many of the key characters look alike, it is sometimes hard to keep track of them. The formal way of speaking continues to annoy me, but in spite of all that, I continue to love this series, and cannot wait to see what happens next.

Laura says

Political machinations and intrigue of the highest caliber - with cruelty and blood frequently flowing. I adore this series. Art is amazing, story is engaging on so many levels.

Miss says

a bit less engaging then the previous volumes. i suppose it can't be helped, volume 1 and 2 were a perfect storm of things to appeal to me with its combination of examining gender roles, sociology, and the strong characters of yoshimune and iemetsu.

this is more of a transitional volume, following the court under iemetsu's successors: ietsuna and tsunayoshi. the focus seems to now be on rulership and the exercise of power. i'm not sure how interpret the poor showing both ietsuna and tsunayoshi make in comparison to iemetsu -- i think yoshinaga might be saying something about the kind of leaders that can survive during peace. neither iemetsu and kira were very good people but they were formidable and i suspect their development was meant to showcase what kind of people could survive such calamities as the overhaul in japanese society brought about by the red pox

3 stars

Cassandra says

It is still quite good, but I think this is a volume of transition, between the strong protagonists of the last two, and the characters I am guessing will be the protagonists of the next. So it is a little less compelling, although I did see how it was setting up the world we see in the first volume, where the gender disparity is taken for granted.

Ilana says

Maybe this volume was more a 3.5 for me, simply because I lost track of the various titles of rank and nobility and couldn't quite make out the political intrigues. But in the end it doesn't quite matter because the intrigues in several successive female Shoguns's bedrooms and their Pavillon of Men during this alternative history Edo period, when a pox left very few men alive and women ruled the heads of families and the nation of Japan as a whole, is plenty enough to make this series interesting for me to continue for several volumes and female Shoguns (and male concubines) to come.

sweet pea says

this series is perplexing to me. while i like it, it's turning into much more of a soap opera and i wish it would return to the "present". in this volume, we see a number of new shoguns: harsh, ineffectual, and randy. it is definitely a unique view of history and court intrigue. i just think the slow plod through time is a strange device.

Rafael Suleiman says

A very good graphic novel depicting the life of the nobility in Japan.

Rosa says

I am still enjoying the story as it continues to progress through the history of the female shogunate. I love the attention to detail in the artwork but I have to admit that it seems to be more in clothing and backgrounds than in the characters themselves. I found myself having trouble keeping some characters straight because they looked so similar.

Ruthsic says

We move on to the change in the society. While the Inner Chambers are still the focus of the story, we also see what is happening in the villages, and what is creating the society known in the first volume, that is, 80 years later. The development in this volume was fast, and we get the next shogun, the daughter of the 3rd one, and now Arikoto is in a position of the Senior Chamberlain. The customs and code of the Inner Chamber are being set as the 3rd shogun falls ill, even the barbaric ones as the Secret Swain. The story comes full circle to the 8th shogun at the end. Once again, there was impeccable storytelling, attention to detail and good continuity. I am in love with this series!

Matimate says

I read Fumi Yoshinaga's yaoi manga and I liked them. When I learn, that there is non yaoi work as well I had to read it. I was caught by the unique setting and tender story of love in the environment, where the traditional male and female roles are swapped. Tokugawa Japan was plagued with strange disease caller red pox, which was killing males and soon male was rare in all female society. Females slipped in to the male roles and males were kept for breeding purposes. Little jewels in a way. Ooku is the inner chamber in shogun palace, which was filled with beautiful women, but in this manga with the men ready to serve shogun...but this time it was female shogun. It was very romantic manga, which used the historic background only to swap gender of the characters and put it in to the tender love story of shogun and her male concubine.

The intrigues, murders and over all harem jabbering is ensured :)

Anna says

[I was somewhat surprised about the affair between Keisho-in and Yoshiyasu. Isn't he supposed to be a monk? Did he become more worldly now that he no longer as Arikoto as a role model? (hide spoiler)]

D'face says

How is it that Akimoto can simply retire when the next generation want him as a bed partner? That puzzled me. He started out as a monk, was kidnapped into the Inner Chambers where became influential for his good looks, great dress sense and wisdom, and then can decide not stay on for the next generation? How does that work?

Another entertaining installment of the Ooku series where red pox virus has reduced men to one in four of the population. Women take on the decision making roles, at first covertly and then openly.

Lovely drawings and some real history in this reverse historical fiction from Japan.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nwwhyte.livejournal.com/1745393...>

This is the first manga series I have really got into (I bounced off the first volume of Osamu Tezuka's Buddha a few years back) and I will start with some general reflections. First, it is easy to read these too quickly. The sparse black and white illustrations, the subtleties of the difference in appearance between characters, the condensation of the equivalent of many prose paragraphs of plot and emotion into a single frame, all make it important to take these slowly and sensibly. Second, I was a bit unnerved at first by the stylistic device where people's faces go all cartoony when they are in the grip of strong emotion (usually anger); but in fact this is a fair metaphor for what it feels like, and to an extent what it looks like, when one is consumed by rage, joy, sadness or whatever, and I have not only got used to it but practically welcome it as an extra signal to the reader.

Volume 4 of ?oku: The Inner Chambers is a transitional work, covering the end of the reign of Iemitsu, zooming rather rapidly through the thirty year reign of her successor Ietsuna, and then getting stuck in to the career of Tsunayoshi and the arrival at her court of the young nobleman Emonnosuke. It is also about the historical legacy of Arikoto, a central figure of the previous two volumes, whose valet ends up as Tsunayoshi's father.

The background to the story is of course a Japan which has lost 75%-80% of its men; but I feel the plot is more and more about the exercise of power, Iemitsu's wise and enlightened decisions - including "coming out" as a woman ruler and permitting other lords to do the same - contrasted with Ietsuna's indolence. We then see Tsunayoshi as largely concerned with using power for her own sexual pleasure, to the annoyance of her courtiers, and the end of the book suggests that Emonnosuke's arrival will take her and her rule in a new direction, though we cannot be quite sure what. It's enough to make me want to get the next volume anyway. (
