



Ooku: The Inner Chambers, Volume 9

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A stunning alternative history from Eisner-nominated creator Fumi Yoshinaga

In Edo period Japan, a strange new disease called the Redface Pox has begun to prey on the country's men. Within eighty years of the first outbreak, the male population has fallen by seventy-five percent. Women have taken on all the roles traditionally granted to men, even that of the shogun. The men, precious providers of life, are carefully protected. And the most beautiful of the men are sent to serve in the shogun's Inner Chamber...

Yoshimune brought many changes to the inner chambers in her time as shogun, and now even after death she brings another: the men of the Inner Chambers must study Western learning and discover a cure for the Redface Pox. For if Japan can't increase the male population, it's only a matter of time before a foreign power discovers their secret and invades!

Reads R to L (Japanese Style) for mature audiences.

Ōoku: The Inner Chambers, Volume 9 Details

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Author : Fumi Yoshinaga

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From Reader Review ?oku: The Inner Chambers, Volume 9 for online ebook

Noel says

In volume nine (actually in volume eight, but he carries over into nine), we're introduced to a half-Dutch, half-Japanese man who has come to the Shogunate to teach Holland studies (Western medicine) in an attempt to find a cure for the Red-Faced Pox. This character is humble and wonderful, and I enjoyed everything about him. Of course, I'm sure terrible things will happen soon . . . that's just how the cookie crumbles.

Of course, it wouldn't be Ooku without some Political Maneuverings among members of the court. There is a very angry young woman who feels that she should be in line to rule, and that one of the Shogun's councilors, who comes from lowly beginnings, needs to be out of the picture. This girl is a ball of darkness and hate and, frankly, I think she needs some ice cream and a boyfriend. Or a kitten. They're interchangeable.

My other favorite character in this volume is the woman who almost everyone thinks is a man (a guise that the character intentionally cultivates). This character is hilarious, abrasive, intelligent, and all around fantastic. She clashes constantly with the man who has come to teach medicine in the Shogunate, and they're quite fun together. She also gets herself involved, rather accidentally, in the Political Maneuverings, and I expect that unfortunate things are going to happen soon as a result.

In general, another great volume of this series. I can't imagine it ever ending, but I'm very, very curious about how it might come to a close eventually.

Faith Hicks says

This series is amazing. Probably my favourite volume yet. Unfortunately it ends on a cliffhanger, and there'll probably be a long wait until the next volume. Argh!

Raven says

Another fine installment in the genderflipped series, I'm interested to see the increasing engagement with other nations not being afflicted with the redface pox, and how the interaction between European cultures and Japan in this time period might have gone if Japan had held a major medical secret. I really love comparing what I know of Japanese history to what the series depicts, and in going back and Googling/researching I usually learn a good bit.

Online Eccentric Librarian says

Ooku continues its superior storyline, now passing to the second generation (Shogun Yoshimune's

granddaughters) as they weave their own political machinations. Half Dutch Aonuma and woman-disguised-as-a-man Gennai also play large parts in this volume.

The story starts out as Ieharu succeeds the Shogunate as her mother Ieshige, the idiot Shogun, passes. Menetake, the sharp second daughter of Yoshimune, raises her daughter to eventually take the position she herself failed to get when she had to watch her weaker older sister inherit. As a result, the child has grown up in harsh conditions, taking upon that privation as a mantle to her grandmother's mettle and parsimony in harder times.

Aonuma, humble son of a prostitute and Dutchman, is appointed to teach at the Inner Circle and slowly gains trust as he helps combat the unsanitary conditions at the court that lead to so many deaths each year. At the same time, he gathers proteges who attempt to find and then prevent the ravages of the devastating and male-targeting Red Pox.

Female scholar Gennai, who dresses as a man, works with the half Dutch doctor in an attempt to help his benefactor, Lady Tanuma, in her commission to end the disease. He will make some startling conclusions that might just find a solution to the virus.

And at the heart of the converging storylines is lady Tanuma Okitsugu - appointed as chief Councillor by the Shogun herself, lending her talents and money to assist her liege in ending the red pox scourge.

All will develop powerful enemies and the specter of Shogun Yoshimune will have different affects on each of the characters.

This is another fascinating volume of separate storylines all converging on a single subject: in this case, the red pox that caused the matriarchialization of feudal japan when it killed off so many of the male population. The politics of the pox, the scholarly and empirical research, and its effects are explored from the different viewpoints in fascinating detail. With so many characters, I especially appreciate the info panels the author uses throughout.

This is the type of series that rewards with multiple readings as long term ramifications suddenly begin to materialize across generations. Intelligently written, historically fascinating, and beautifully illustrated - Ooku really is one of those rare pleasure to explore and enjoy.

Received as an ARC from the publisher.

Miss says

'pon my troth

can it be true? do mine eyes deceive me?

was there now a volume of ooku of light heart with no tragedy to be seen?

tis a miracle. a miracle i say!

though i did see ominous tidings towards this volume's end

shun them yoshinaga, i beg you. let hiraga gennai continue upon the world, a blessed grain of merriment and splendour. let tanuma remain that shining rarity, a politician working for the good of her people. let this golden age of few deaths and much character splendour amble on

at the very least let gennai have another kiss if she so desires because her reaction was *cute as heck*

4 stars

David Schaafsma says

This is getting better and better. In this volume, two characters really emerge: Aonuma, son of a prostitute and a Dutchman, who is appointed to teach in the Ooku, and works with a growing group of people to introduce Western Medicine to try to develop a cure for the Red Pox...And also Gennai, who dresses as a man, works with Aonuma to try to figure out how to develop a cure. Gennai also happens to be one of the most beloved writers of the period... This is really heading in a very interesting direction after volumes of political intrigue and romance.

meeners says

two words: HIRAGA GENNAI

sugita genpaku makes an appearance, too. but the moment when ihee meets his hero in person is priceless. that one panel made me laugh for five minutes! looks like book 10 will revolve around hiraga gennai quite a lot - but when will 10 come out????? when???????????

Jon Holt says

Like volume 8, Ooku has taken a turn for the better focusing on intrigue and scientific debate instead of star-crossed lovers and romance, romance, romance. The characters have quirky personalities now, leaping off the page. Yoshinaga is truly on a roll.

cEe beE says

I just love this series! This volume continues from the previous with new characters, Hiraga Gennai, Aonuma, Kuroki etc. on finding the cure for the Redface pox. Family drama and intrigue continue among the Tokugawa heirs and within the inner chambers

Skjam! says

In an alternate history version of Japan, disaster strikes during the reign of Shogun Iemitsu (circa 1630). A plague that becomes known as the “red-face pox” sweeps the islands, with a fatality rate of 80% among boys and young men. Within a couple of years, the gender imbalance among the younger generation has reached crisis proportions. Less important to the people, but vital to our story, all the male heirs to the shogunate fall victim to the plague.

It is decided that the country, already turning topsy-turvy as young women have to take up the jobs normally reserved for men, cannot be allowed to have turmoil at the top as well. Iemitsu’s daughter Chie is forced to masquerade as her father for years. After the people who originally controlled her are dead, and the country has more or less stabilized in its new male-scarce society, she reveals herself to the court. Until a male heir survives to adulthood, women using men’s names will have to fill in.

Naturally, a female shogun needs men to help her produce an heir, so handsome and/or noble fellows are brought to the Ooku, the “Inner Chambers” in a reversal of the harems of our history. Most of the story involves these men, trapped in the Shogun’s palace, and trying to find meaning in their lives.

In the volume to hand, #9, the reign of the seventh female shogun, Ieharu, begins. Ieharu realizes that the rest of the world has advanced while the Japanese hid themselves away to conceal their lack of men. Therefore, one of the men she secures for the Ooku is a half-Dutch fellow named Gosaku, who has been trained in Western medicine. He is renamed Aonuma (“blue pond”) after his eye color.

Thanks to records concealed in the Inner Chambers, Aonuma is able to piece together information about the red-face pox and its origins that have new meaning with his special training. There might even be a way to prevent it! However, prejudice against his foreign appearance and the schemes of a woman who believes that she should have been shogun instead may doom these efforts.

This series is an interesting sideways look at Japanese history—what would change if the gender roles were partially reversed, and what would stay the same? The target audience in Japan is josei (young women), so romance both fulfilled and tragic is a large part of the series. Unfortunately, so is rape, and there’s some frank depiction of prostitution, so the American edition is rated “Mature.”

The art is quite good, but often the minor characters are hard to tell apart, particularly the handsome young men of the Ooku, who tend towards same-face. The student of Japanese history will be able to spot certain character traits from clothing styles that are lost on most of us foreigners.

I’d recommend this to historical romance fans and people interested in exploring ideas about gender roles.

Denise ?? Hutchins says

This series continues to be just as engaging, dramatic, and beautiful as ever. I particularly enjoyed the healthy dose of humor that this volume delivered. I’m excited for the next book since this one ended with a bit of a cliffhanger!

Arminzerella says

Gosaku (who is renamed Aonuma once he is installed in the Inner Chamber), an expert in Holland medicine and language comes to offer lectures to any of the palace men who wish to learn. His reception is initially frosty, but his skills as a physician and rapport with the prince make him sought after. There are some traditionalists (a former shogun's granddaughter in line for the throne, for instance) who do not approve of this learning or the money flowing into the palace coffers from taxing the merchant class. They feel that the current shogun and her advisor are living beyond their means and that their policies will bring poverty and dishonor to the nation. Meanwhile a study of the redface pox has commenced – some believe that it is closely linked to a disease that affects bears. Aonuma and his students begin to consider the possibility that a vaccination might be created that will inoculate young men against it.

Although this is alternative history, I wonder how much is based on fact? It is true, for instance, that Japan closed itself off from foreigners for a long time, before allowing them entry to Japan at all. Were there fears that foreigners would sense some kind of weakness? Were they trying to keep their culture pure? All of the political machinations seem bound to interfere with the scientific/medical progress that Aonuma and the others are making. It is unfortunate, because their efforts might actually eliminate the danger of the redface pox. The dissenters will only set the country back and hurt the people in the end.

Jami says

Hiraga Gennai trans masculine character

Lady Entropy says

Still as awesome as the previous books, recovering some of the shine of the earlier ones. It's still massively interesting from the cultural point of view even if seen through the lens of an Alternate Universe.

Elizabeth A says

I'm in the final three installments of this manga series set in 17th century Edo, Japan, and they are getting better and better. I am so often disappointed when a series loses steam over time, but that is not the case with this one. Loved this book which is #9 in the series.

When children feel that their mother loved them unequally, there is usually trouble on the horizon, and in this volume, the anger and jealousy of one generation is passed down to the next, poisons a lovely girl, and sets some unfortunate events into motion. There is the usual intrigue, back-stabbing, and jostling for power, and these women play the game like chess masters - with long term strategies in mind. In the meanwhile, the blond haired, blue eyed giant, also known as Aonuma, has entered the inner chambers, and his mission is to teach the men about the Hollander language and medicine. But will anyone be interested in learning the foreign ways? I really liked the exploration that Aonuma spearheads in regards to the spread of infection, and how to prevent and/or stop the spread of the Redface Pox as well as other diseases that devastate the

population.

All the modernization in the land is because of my two fave characters to-date: Hiraga Gennai, the cheeky and brilliant woman who everyone thinks is a man, and the lovely and formidable Tanuma Okitsugu, who has attained the highest rank of political office after the shogun herself - and you know that there are women quite unhappy about that.

I started this one last night and could not put it down until I turned the last page. There is trouble a brewing, and I am tense as I think of all the things that might go badly in the last two books of this fantastic series.
