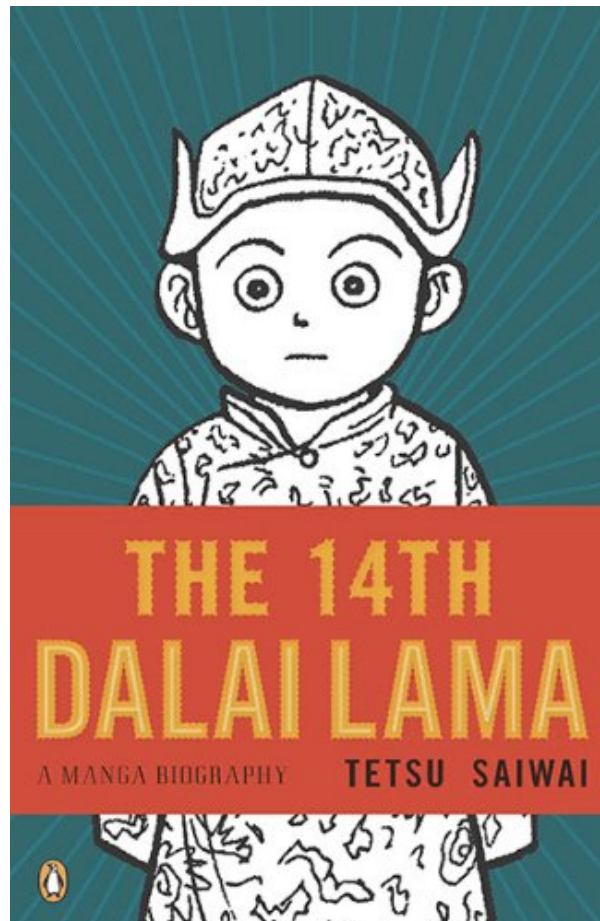
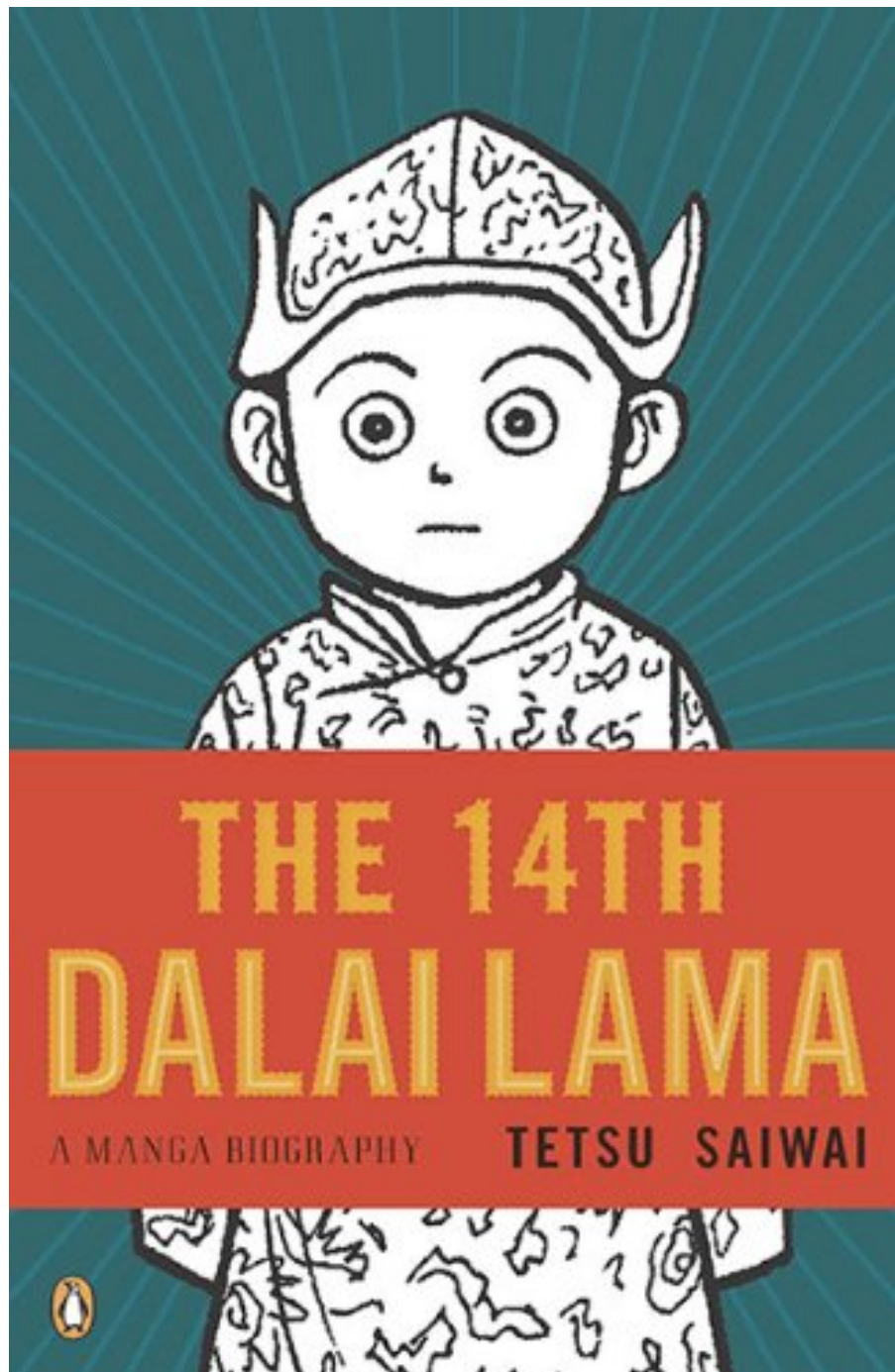


THE 14TH DALAI LAMA: A MANGA BIOGRAPHY BY TETSU SAIWAI



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From Publishers Weekly

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A new way of getting to know one of the world's most beloved spiritual leaders.

Featuring a charmingly illustrated format that will appeal to readers of all ages, this unique biography is an ideal introduction to the leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile. Born in 1935 to a peasant family in a small village, Tenzin Gyatso was recognized at the age of two as the reincarnation of his predecessor, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. In 1950, His Holiness assumed full political power when China invade Tibet-a tragedy that forever changed him and shaped his efforts on behalf of world peace, for which he was award the Nobel Peace Prize. This graphic novel is an appealing and approachable depiction of the life and personality of an iconic figure.

- Sales Rank: #754407 in Books
- Published on: 2010-09-28
- Released on: 2010-09-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.40" h x .60" w x 5.50" l, .51 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Intelligent, effective manga about Tibet

By GraphicNovelReporter.com

The life of a Dalai Lama is obviously not an easy one: promoting peace and spirituality in the midst of insurmountable conflict, being thrust into a position of enormous power at a very young age, and living with the inescapable weight of an entire fading country on your shoulders. As a reader who is an outsider to the world of foreign politics, understanding the position of the Dalai Lama in Tibet's political and spiritual existence definitely isn't easy, but it's spelled out here in enough simplified detail to tell a solid story while providing a gateway into a much larger, bloodier scene.

Initially, it's easy to dismiss *The 14th Dalai Lama* as a work of manga for the sake of being manga: It's a popular format that sells very well and, subsequently, is relatively easy to capitalize on. Even as a reader who doesn't often enjoy or comprehend the appeal of manga, I found that Tetsu Saiwai's art and storytelling stand up by themselves as pure, excellent narrative. The artwork doesn't feature the bizarre exaggerations of many fantastical manga stories, or the emotional, hazy dreamscapes that haunt the genre. This particular volume isn't even read back-to-front. In many ways, this resembles American comic traditions much more strongly than Asian ones, making it accessible to multiple audiences. Manga is thematically appropriate when visually discussing matters of history that have taken place in Asia, after all.

Narratively, the biography is told with the Dalai Lama as protagonist, so the Chinese are consistently portrayed as deceptive, violent, and perpetually angry, making them a cartoonishly nefarious group of characters without actually stepping into racist territory. This biography focuses on many critical events with succinct vignettes, but makes a giant leap through time from 1959 to 2009. Fifty years of the Dalai Lama's life, which are presumably not as interesting as his first years as leader, are omitted for the sake of space. Of course, the struggle of Tibet is not a story that has ended yet, and the life and work of the Dalai Lama continues, but the lack of 50 years of landmarks implies that he spent half of a century without taking any

major initiatives, which is obviously false. Very basic research about Tibetan politics prior to China's invasion also reveal a much more complex picture of a Tibet that endured practices of slavery and forced mutilation, but the most important aspect of this book is the idea that it provokes a very real interest in a much deeper picture of a fascinating, important subject. Ultimately, it is intelligent and effective.

Because these politics are violent, the death of women and children is prominent, but never graphic. The subject matter skews toward an older audience despite the nature of the art, so don't be misled by the appearance of The 14th Dalai Lama--keep it in the teen collection, but definitely keep it.

-- Collin David

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Will non-violence free Tibet? A graphic novel's saga

By John L Murphy

Inspired by non-violence and inked as a story of Tenzin Gyatso's struggle as he matures within a homeland under Communist invasion, this simple depiction illustrates the tensions. Idyllic panoramas heighten the contrast with the massacres of innocents, for this Tibet's filled with resistance to Chinese genocide, and Mao's reprisals after he fails to manipulate the Dalai Lama and the second leader, the Panchen Lama, into being puppets for a utopian ideology that masks cultural and political and religious extermination. The style is in the "manga" manner of large faces, not a lot of subtle detail, and direct linear expression of emotions and action.

This could be used to teach younger readers; I gave it to my teenaged son, given a curiosity about Buddhism (he's never read about it) and a love of graphic novels. There's a lot of attention to the diplomatic dissension during the 1950s, and this provides the main plot. Those expecting a broader look at the Dalai Lama's life in exile will not find as much here, but for an introduction to what Tibet faced after Mao's triumph spread his ambitions towards Tibet, this is a swift, and effective primer that sets out the challenges of what happens when arms are taken up and world attention sought, but when both fail against a massive occupation.

Saiwai credits Martin Scorsese's "Kundun" among his sources, and the cinematic nature of this book shows in juxtapositions of the backs of the heads of praying monks with the face of a benevolent giant, triple-faced Buddha, or the last glimpse of the Potola palace by the fleeing Dalai Lama as he disguised hastens into exile from a Lhasa bombarded by an army that claims to be the people's liberators.

I found this an effective reminder of the difficult message of the Dalai Lama that violence no matter how "moral" as intended sparks further reprisals, and often deadlier repression. All options are explained, the violent as well as the pacifist, and the complexity of options and the futility of rebellion darken the tone. There's not much about Buddhism itself, but citation of teachings on peace gain effective placement at key points as the Dalai Lama reminds himself of them.

Saiwai takes pains to be fair to all sides in this saga, but he emphasizes the Buddhist reminder "how anger and hatred can grow inside and cloud people's vision." He shows the Dalai Lama trying to bring about peaceful reform for Tibet, and how this effort was ruined by the imperialism that was foisted upon his countrymen and women as if an anti-colonial opportunity to overthrow feudalism. The factions bicker, the CIA hovers, the Cold War uses this land as its staging ground and as its ignored entity, for Nepal, India, England, and America all turn away as Tibet faces attack.

Today, the situation does not differ much. The Dalai Lama for most of these panels, first round-eyed and happy, later bespectacled and bereft, is shown trying to guide his people as China outwits and outnumbers

them. Later, he travels the world preaching his appeal to find harmony with one's foes, and this entreaty widens as Sensai portrays the need for progress in a China shown in need, post-Tiananmen Square, of the same hopes for its people as those that Tibetans try to achieve.

The main story begins as the Dalai Lama in 2009 tells of his coming of age. A coda recaps his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 1989, with his hope for Tibet's survival, appending an update on the arrival of the rail line to Lhasa that allows further weakening of Tibetan traditions as the Communist regime seeks a "sinicization" of the vast plateau, as migrants already outnumber the six million Tibetans there.

Saiwai shows the Dalai Lama talking to crowds, finding room for orphans who have fled the same homeland as he had, and attempting to convince a world where few leaders hear what many ordinary folks in his audiences may come to accept: the restoration of Tibet as a natural park, the arrival of peace to its people, and the autonomy of their homeland. Meanwhile, the Chinese import their people, strip its resources, and crush its resistance. Whether this tale has a happy ending remains ambiguous. Impermanence remains.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Great opportunity to learn about His Holiness in a fun way

By Nate DeMontigny

A while back, I reviewed another manga/ graphic novel about Je Tsongkhapa. I was excited to read one day on The Worst Horse about a manga that had been done about His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

Manga is the Japanese word for comics. Summed up, mangas can come in a variety of forms. Whether it's a serial comic, or like this book, done as a complete work, a graphic novel.

The artist behind "The 14th Dalai Lama: A Manga Biography" is none other than Tetsu Saiwai. With a body of work spanning 20 years, Tetsu's main interests as far as topics for his mangas go are human rights and environmental issues.

Tetsu took his inspiration for the storyline from Scorsese's "Kundun" and His Holiness' book "Freedom In Exile." If you've seen and or read the two titles, you will see where the similarities are. Heinrich Harrer, the main focus of the movie "Seven Years In Tibet", makes an appearance in the manga as well.

For those that are looking for a cut through the bull, and brief, explanation of how His Holiness was found, and what he went through as a child, than "The 14th Dalai Lama: A Manga Biography" will definitely do so. It also boils down the brutal takeover of Tibet by the Chinese Communist machine. I enjoyed how Tetsu was able to create certain emotions in his characters, which followed the storyline very well.

I am grateful that Testu has written/ created such a graphic novel. I think this manga may help people truly understand what Tibetans have been fighting for, and what was taken away from them. I believe "The 14th Dalai Lama: A Manga Biography" is an enlightening, yet fun, biography about one of the most important people of our time.

We all know his name, but how many of us really know who the Dalai Lama is? Do we all know where he came from, and how he came to be what he is today? No, I don't think everyone does. So again, I applaud Tetsu for taking this story on and making His Holiness accessible to everyone.

"The 14th Dalai Lama: A Manga Biography" is a quick, yet enjoyable read. I'd recommend it to anyone who is curious about His Holiness and Tibet, for those that are fans of non-fiction mangas or for anyone who truly enjoys graphic artistry. Highly recommended!

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