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Golden Kamuy, Vol. 1



Synopsis

A tale of high adventure and survival on the Japanese frontier! In the early 20th century, Russo-Japanese War veteran Saichi Sugimoto searches the wilderness of the Japanese frontier of Hokkaido for a hoard of hidden gold. With only a cryptic map and a native Ainu girl to help him, Saichi must also deal with every murderous cutthroat, bandit and rogue who knows about the treasure! In the early twentieth century, Russo-Japanese War veteran Saichi is immortal. Sugimoto scratches out a meager existence during the postwar gold rush on the wild frontier of Hokkaido. When he stumbles across a map to a fortune in hidden Ainu gold, he sets off on a treacherous quest to find it. But Sugimoto is not the only interested party, and everyone who knows about the gold will kill to possess it! Faced with the harsh conditions of the northern wilderness, ruthless criminals and rogue Japanese soldiers, Sugimoto will need all his skills and luck and the help of an Ainu girl named Asirpa to survive.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fun read. The art is really cool, though some of it is violent / graphic. Cool adventure story with one main character being a traumatized war vet and their being a young girl from Japan's northern island.

Golden Kamuy is a more adult take on historical events of the early 20th century in Northern Japan - specifically Hokkaido. Using a milieu very little told/known, it is the story of the survivors of the

Russo-Japan war (1904-1905) as told through Hokkaido lore. This includes mythology heavily centered around the Ainu people - a people native to the northern area of Japan and with a completely different culture than the Japanese. The story is brutal, graphic, but also full of very interesting cultural and historical facts. The violence doesn't feel egregious but a natural result of living in the wild or during a lawless time. Story: Sugimoto survived the Russo-Japanese war by one simple mantra: avoid death by not dying. Heavily scarred and carrying a dead comrade's gear, Sugimoto needs to find a way to make money to help the soldier's widow. A chance encounter leads him to a mystery of gold looted from Ainu gold miners and then hidden - the location tattooed in pieces onto fellow escaped prisoners of the person who stole the gold. Sugimoto decides to seek the treasure but he isn't alone - one of the murdered Ainu's young daughter has agreed to help him and together they will brave the 'wild west' frontier of Hokkaido - running into former soldiers, lawlessness, a savage wilderness, and men willing to kill to also get their hands on the treasure. Think of the Yukon during the gold rush and you get an idea of the adventures our pair will get into - from capturing and skinning squirrels, fending off bears, capturing fugitives, and trying to discern the mystery of the map pieces tattooed onto so many men. It's not only the fugitives themselves who are hiding and willing to kill - the prison guards are also out and about and ready to kill anyone asking about tattooed men. Add in an almost supernatural bad guy in the form of the prison who did the tattoos and you get a story full of adventure and survival. But there is also a lot to learn here - from Ainu mythology (a Kamuy is a deity) and habits, their persecution, the repercussions of the Russo-Japanese war, Hokkaido nature, the dusty frontier-like towns, society at the time, and more. It's all about Hokkaido and the lives that were lived there at the time - most especially, the persecuted Ainu and returning soldiers of a hellish war. In all, this is a very violent and brutal story - mature and intelligently written. But there's also enough adventure and excitement to keep readers invested while also learning more about Hokkaido history. Reviewed from an advance reader copy provided by the publisher.

Sugimoto, a hard-bitten veteran of the Russo-Japanese War (1905), is trying to pan for gold in order to help his comrade's widow. He was a hero, with a reputation that he can't be killed, but that doesn't make him money. Then a drunk tells him a legend of a hidden horde of gold, with clues to its location held in a set of prisoners' tattoos. Between the opening war scenes and a fight with a bear, this historical action-adventure series can be bloody, but in spite of the gore, I was impressed by the dramatic staging of the battles and the vitality of the storytelling. Plus, the scenery, as the pair navigate the unbuilt frontier, is gorgeous. It did take me a bit to get

used to the protagonist talking to himself, narrating his choices and actions, but it helps the reader be sure of what's going on. That doesn't last long once Asirpa, an Ainu girl with poison arrows, shows up. She's my favorite part of the book, from her practical yet well-decorated costume to her quiet determination and her knowledge of the wilderness of Hokkaido. It's only due to her that they survive to start their treasure quest. The time the first volume spends on natural predators serves as a fascinating comparison with the human villains we'll see more of as the series progresses. Both are bestial, caring only about their own survival, which makes us root for Asirpa and Sugimoto even more. *Golden Kamuy* is still ongoing in Japan, with 10 volumes out so far. Viz will be publishing it here quarterly. (The publisher provided an advance digital review copy. Review originally posted at ComicsWorthReading.com.)

This new volume 1 is very intriguing. An historical fiction set just after the Russian-Japanese War in 1905. The main character is a soldier who is out gold digging in order to make a large amount of money quickly to fulfil a promise made to a fallen comrade. In the forest, he meets an Ainu girl, a native of the island they are on, Hokkaido. There they find out their personal missions are connected and tied to a criminal group. The art is good, a bit of violence and the dialogue is well-written. My interest is piqued!

I really enjoyed this manga and am eager to see how it progresses. It is kind of a dark story but that just adds to the atmosphere. I loved both of the main characters and I like that the lead clearly isn't a 'perfect' human being. He's seen a lot of things in war that still haunt him and acts more realistic when he is thrown into certain situations. I think this is an excellent start and hope the following volumes continue to stay this strong.

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