



## Comrade Loves of the Samurai

*Saikaku Ihara , E. Powys Mathers (Translator) , Terence Barrow (Introduction)*

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In old Japan, sexual love among the samurai was permissible, and often matured into lifelong companionships. *Comrade Loves of the Samurai* touches the subject of both normal and abnormal love with honesty and tenderness.

## Comrade Loves of the Samurai Details

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Author : Saikaku Ihara , E. Powys Mathers (Translator) , Terence Barrow (Introduction)

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# From Reader Review Comrade Loves of the Samurai for online ebook

## Mel says

I came across a gorgeous 1920s version of this for sale in Any ammount of books. It had rag paper and hand coloured illustrations. It was beautifull small press edition. At a time when homosexuality was still illegal in this country I like to think that this edition was treasured. The stories did have the gay stereotype that most of the stories ended up with the characters death, but that was more to do with Samauri honour requiring they kill themselves, rather than because they were gay. One story had a couple living together in old age, which was sweet, except they were terrible misogynists. Normally I much prefer Chinese literature to Japanese literature, the prizing of scholars over warriors, but I really enjoyed these stories.

The version I read also contain poemsof the geishas which surprisingly I also enjoyed. They were translations of translations but I really liked their simplicity and beauty.

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## Deniz Balç? says

Japonya'da sava?lar?n son buldu?u Tokugawa Dönemi'nde(1603-1867) edebiyatta hafif bir geçi?le de?i?ikler ya?anmi?t?r. Öncelikle gelenekselli?e bir dönü? ve Konfüçyüsçü bir anlay?? hakim olmaya ba?lam??t?r. Bu dönemin edebiyat?nda cinsel hikayelerin anlat?m?nda bir rahatlama ya?and??? ve gerçeklikten do?an cinsel öykülerin yaz?ya aktar?ld??? bilinmekte. Hatta erotik mangan?n ilk örneklerinde bu dönemde ortaya koyuldu?u iddia ediliyor.

Bu dönemin içinde ?hara Saikaku meydana ç?k?yor. 1650'li y?llardan sonra yazmaya ba?layan yazar günümüze ula?an kült ?air ve yazarlardan. Ancak o y?llarda yaz?nsal eser vermenin adab? günümüzdeki gibi de?il elbette. Daha çok salt gerçekçi olan bu kitaplar, olan? aktarma ve k?ssadan hisse verme çabas? ile kaleme al?nm??. Bu kitapta bu noktada önem kazan?yor.

Murathan Mungan kitaba yazd??? önsözde çok aç?klay?c? ve güzel noktalara parmak basm??. 13 k?sa öykünün oldu?u bu kitab?n elbette edebi yönü çok kuvvetli de?il. Ancak belge tarihçisi bir bak?? aç?s? ile bak?ld???nda çok önemli. Basitçe bu 13 öyküde samuraylar aras?nda yer alan e?cinsel a?klar konu al?nm??. A?k sözcü?ünü özellikle kulland?m zira eserine pornografi?i geçin erotik olabilecek taraf? bile yok. Ancak samuray ve a?k sözcü?ünü bir arada kullanmak bile oldukça iddial?. Zira samuraylar?n sava?ç? grubun en yüksek rütbesindeki, asil ve duygudan s?yr?lm?? insanlar? olarak tan?mlanm??t?r her zaman. Hetero bir a?k bile kendilerine s?n?rland?r?lm??ken e?cinsel bir a?k ve kendileri aras?ndaki bir a?k çok skandal gibi t?nlamaktad?r. Ancak belgeci bir anlay?? ile yazan Saikaku'nun bunlar? kafas?ndan uydurmad??? tarihi bir gerçektir. Zaten insan? olarak dü?ünüldü?ünde ve tarihi olarak da incelendi?inde samuraylar aras?nda duygusal, cinsel ili?kilerin olmamas? imkans?z gibidir. Tap?nma imgesi ile güçlenmi?, idealize edilmi? platonik a?klar asl?nda o dönem ki Japon ruhuna da çok uygundur. Saikuku'nun bu hikayeleri anlat?rken, erken dönem bat? edebiyat?nda oldu?u gibi e?cinselli?i trajik bir ?ey olarak görmemesi, hatta ailelerin destekledi?i bir ?ey olarak göstermesi; t?pk? Osmanl?'da olan içö?lanl?k gibi bir ?eydir. Elbette ?slam ?mparatorlu?u olan Osmanl?'dan çok daha ?l?ml? ve aç?k ya?anm??t?r her ?ey Japonya'da. Osmanl?'da da oldu?u gibi sakl? tarih, gizli sosyal hayat çok önemlidir ve tarihin yan?lt?c?l???n?n da spesifik olarak en rahat görüldü?ü noktalardand?r.

Konuyu da??tmazsam Toguva Döneminin en önemli ?ai?r ve yazar?n? okumak elbette güzel.

4/5

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### **Steve Donoghue says**

My review of this creaky little historical oddity:

<http://www.openlettersmonthly.com/ste...>

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### **Huda says**

So real quick:

1. I thought this was a non-fiction work that would explain the subject of comradeship between samurai... in a romantic context. I've seen quite a few hints at such relationships reading history and court life dramas, so it should be interesting to pick it apart. Didn't know this was a collection of short stories though.

2. I keep seeing the word pederasty, and that made me shift a bit. I ran to Google in order to distinguish it from paedophilia, but I still have not made any progress in differentiating the two. Are the two really the same thing?

3. I am aware I need to brush up on my reading -- particularly in old Japan's court life -- so I must be missing a lot of cultural cues. For example, why does a samurai who confesses his love for another samurai, gets jilted, declares it an insult and immediately calls for a duel so that one can die?

.... I thought you said you loved him?

4. Every few minutes it's like a whiplash of emotions for the characters. They adore, they betray and kill themselves in almost laughable swiftness. Can I really be blamed for finding everything so sudden and incomprehensible?

5. I had one or two questions before I started this book and at the end of it I feel like I have opened a whole can of worms. Between the court lifestyle and pederasty, bushido and Japanese poetry -- man, I can't take all that lying down.

P/S: Shocking chauvinism also included. Line verbatim from one story: "Woman is a creature of absolutely no importance, but sincere pederastic love is true love."

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### **khordofon says**

5/6/18:

Quanto mais eu busco romances gays, mais eu volto para esse livrinho aqui e mais eu gosto dele.

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31/1/16:

Acho que me distraí um pouco. Esqueci de resenhar esse livro.

Ele é uma coletânea de contos bem à japonesa, parecido com os que eu li em Kwaidan, do Lafcadio Hearn. A narrativa é simples (mesmo em português de Portugal e com um vocabulário meio arcaico) e as histórias também o são, mesmo que às vezes confunda por causa de tanto nome que é jogado um atrás do outro.

As histórias são todas sobre o sistema "wakashudo" - onde um homem mais velho toma como amante um rapaz, se eu não me engano de 14 a 21 anos, mais ou menos - ou seja, em parte o que hoje em dia chamamos de pederastia. Apesar de tudo, é interessante ver as dinâmicas dos casais: acostumado com os yaois e BLs e gei-komi, imaginei que o rapaz seria o passivo tanto sexualmente quanto no resto do relacionamento, mas me surpreendi ao ver que, ao menos nestes contos, eram eles que ditavam as regras (!). A maioria envolve um homem mais velho desesperadamente apaixonado e emotivo - às vezes a ponto de ficar doente ou de viajar só para ver o rapaz, e também que chora abertamente - e um rapaz que ignora suas afeições ou adia reciprocá-las.

Pra ter noção, o conto que mais gostei envolvia um desses moleques que, ao sofrer cantadas de outro samurai, decide revelar ao seu amante o que acontece. O amante diz para ser bonzinho e escrever uma carta bem educada de volta para o cara; o moleque fica tão puto, mas tão brabo, que decide que vai primeiro matar o cara, depois o amante, e depois se matar. Em casa, ele escreve uma longa carta enumerando tudo que seu amante fez de ruim ou errado nos últimos três anos e envia para ele. Mais tarde, eles se encontram e o amante chora, pedindo perdão, prometendo que iria melhorar.

Outra coisa que me chamou atenção é que é bem difícil todo mundo sair vivo. Acho que só li umas três onde ninguém morre no fim. É seppuku pra cá, harakiri pra lá, uma doideira. E, das que todo mundo sobrevive, a única que contava de um par de amantes bem mais velhos - bem passado da idade do wakashudo - era sobre um casal onde um deles era um onna-girai ("odiador das mulheres"), que era um termo para "homem gay" na época. E, nesse caso, ele realmente detesta mulheres.

Fiquei realmente feliz por ter encontrado essa pérola. Quero encontrar mais coisas do Ihara Saikaku para ler agora...

3.5 estrelas.

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## **Miguel says**

Um conjunto de treze extraordinárias narrativas, curtas mas intensas, sobre o amor entre samurais mas sobretudo sobre os seus códigos de valores e de conduta. Uma obra rara e preciosa, que a Index ebooks traz para a língua portuguesa, numa tradução bela e irrepreensível.

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## Hadrian says

Forget vampires and werewolves, the next big trend in prurient romantic literature should be samurai! Oh yes, get me some of that intense devotion and comradely love. Honor, duels, and self-sacrifice. Put Yukio Mishima's bodybuilding pics on the covers and we're set.

All jesting aside, these was a popular literary genre and a social topic in 17th-C. Japan. The aestheticization and popularization of the 'noble warrior', as well as the social manly bonds which exist perhaps only in combat (WAR IS A FORCE THAT GIVES US MEANING). It was indeed considered praiseworthy and admirable for samurai to take on male lovers - not only of their own age, but younger (16-18 y.o.) boys and bring them up as apprentices.

These stories, about 20 pages each at most, have little parables of devotion and love. Few of them end well, with self-sacrifice and seppuku being still a major factor in military life. They're often very touching, despite the differences in centuries and cultures between us and them.

My edition not only came with Comrade Loves, but also some 30 pages of Songs of the Geisha. Song lyrics and poetry seldom preserve their rhythm or form in translation, but these maintain some plaintive beauty and beautiful imagery.

An interesting book, and as cliched as I may put it, is Universal.

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## Fugo Feedback says

Lo comencé a leer hace varios años, pero creo que nunca lo terminé, me debn faltar dos o tres relatos. De todos modos, el conjunto es bastante bueno, y la introducción que establece el contexto histórico es de lo más interesante. Cuando lo retome y lo complete, seguramente escriba su correspondiente reseña. Eso sí, lo recomiendo como imprescindible para entender Los caballeros del Zodíaco y series similares.

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## Ana says

Ihara Saikaku é um autor japonês do séc. 17, na era Edo. Este livro contém contos homoeróticos (*nanshoku* = amor entre homens) entre samurais, monges budistas e atores do teatro Noh. Muitos destes contos são tragédias amorosas de fazer inveja a Romeu e Julieta, com personagens cometendo harakiri em vários momentos.

*"Até os corajosos e valentes samurais são vulneráveis quando amam; o amor é o grande Senhor que governa este mundo."*

Este livro é citado no livro "Confissão de uma máscara", do Yukio Mishima que eu gostei bastante. Porém, o que me incomodou na literatura do Saikaku é a misoginia. Entretanto, se a gente tira-la da literatura e artes em geral não sobra muita coisa, não é mesmo? Então vamos relevar.

Acho que é um livro importante para representatividade LGBTQIA na guerra, nas artes marciais e na religião, áreas em que predomina a ideia do macho-alfa-hétero valentão.

Os contos são muito interessantes, falam sobre lealdade, respeito, honra, amor levado às últimas consequências e vários outros assuntos que o meu olhar ocidental do séc.21 não compreende muito bem.

3.5/5

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## João says

Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693), foi um romancista e poeta japonês, considerado um dos pais do conto e do romance no Japão. Com os seus livros da série "Mundo Flutuante", revolucionou a prosa japonesa, abordando temas populares e quotidianos, por vezes licenciosos e proibidos, numa linguagem simples e coloquial. Escrevia para vender e ganhar dinheiro, mais que para permitir a reflexão do leitor ou para o informar. As suas obras tiveram enorme sucesso comercial durante a sua vida, mas acabaram por ser esquecidas até ao final do século XIX, quando finalmente começaram a despertar o interesse dos estudiosos. No entanto, devido ao seu conteúdo erótico, muitos contos e novelas continuaram censurados pelos governos militares que dominaram o Japão no início do século XX, e só após a II Guerra Mundial foram publicadas as suas Obras Completas. Yukio Mishima declarou uma vez que o seu livro, Confissões de uma Máscara, era a primeira obra importante a abordar o tema da homossexualidade no Japão depois de *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, de Saikaku.

*Comrade Loves of the Samurai* é uma seleção de contos de Saikaku que aborda o tema do amor entre samurais, traduzidos para o inglês por E. Powys Mathers, em 1928, a partir da tradução francesa por Ken Sato. São pequenas histórias ternas e cândidas de paixões devastadoras entre samurais, que terminam frequentemente em haraquiri, de acordo com o código de honra dos tradicionais guerreiros japoneses. O amor retratado tem, surpreendentemente, dada a distância geográfica e temporal entre as duas culturas, muitas semelhanças com o amor grego, surgindo frequentemente a figura tutelar do homem mais velho, que ama, aconselha e educa o jovem por cuja beleza se apaixona. Surpreendente é, também, a descoberta de que por detrás da frieza marcial e assassina que nos habituámos a associar aos míticos samurais japoneses existiam, na verdade, relações homossexuais de amor e ternura inesperadas.

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## Margarida says

A INDEX ebooks já nos habituou à qualidade das suas publicações. Esta não foge à regra. Para além de uma excelente tradução, fiel ao texto original, apresenta uma introdução que enquadra o autor, as suas obras e o tema abordado. Por outro lado, fazendo jus à referida qualidade desta editora, é de louvar a inserção de links neste ebook que, no Kobo, pude consultar à medida que lia.

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## Chris says

At last, the book you've been waiting for - a book of gay samurai love stories! Woo-hoo! Hot Bushido love! Awwwwwww yeah.....

No, seriously, it's short stories of gay samurai love.

You see, here's the thing - prior to the modern era of Japan, the attitude towards gay love was similar to that of ancient Greece. Women were fine for having children and securing alliances and building property, but if you want real passion, real true love, you needed a bright-eyed young boy. This kind of relationship between an older man and an adolescent boy, generally known as pederasty (which is often wrongly confused with pedophilia), was considered a natural and healthy bond in those days, and assuming that both parties acted honorably and respectfully, it was mutually beneficial.

As in many other world cultures, this kind of bond was a common one, especially amongst the religious and ruling classes - people who were less interested in breeding large families and more interested in the aesthetic aspects of romance and eroticism. It wasn't necessarily a lifelong bond, but it could be, and some of these pairings have inspired love stories as passionate and heartbreaking as any other.

This being Japan, of course, most of the love stories in this book don't end well. About half tend to finish with *seppuku*, ending the lives of the lovers and, occasionally, other people who are unlucky enough to be in the area. The story *All Comrade-Lovers Die by Hara-Kiri* is a case in point - it's the story of Ukyo, Uneme and Samanousuke, three youths bound together by a deep, passionate love. When Ukyo murders a romantic rival in order to prevent the deaths of his friends, he is ordered to kill himself to pay for it. His beloved Uneme joins him in death, and Samanousuke, unable to live without either of the men he loves, takes his own life soon after.

Then there's *Love Vowed to the Dead*, in which young Muranousuke fulfills the dying wish of his best friend Gorokitji by giving himself to Gorokitji's lost lover. In *He Died to Save his Lover*, young Korin allows himself to be tortured and executed by one lover to save the life of another, and of course, *He Followed his Friend into the Other World, After Torturing him to Death*, which is pretty much what it sounds like. Let it be said, though, that Sasanousuke didn't *mean* for Hayemon to freeze to death, it just kind of happened that way.

In my favorite, *The Tragic Love of Two Enemies*, a man, Senpatji, falls in love with the young son of the samurai that he had been ordered to kill many years before. The boy, Shynousuke, is ordered by his mother to kill Senpatji, and thus avenge his father, but the boy cannot bring himself to murder the man he loves - especially since Senpatji had been acting under the orders of his lord. He convinces his mother to give them one more night together, which she does, because she's not completely heartless. She finds them dead the next morning, both impaled through their hearts on Shynousuke's sword.

Who says the Japanese aren't romantic?

There are happy(ish) tales, too. Tales of constant dedication, of loyalty and hidden desires in the courtly world of the ruling classes of Edo-period Japan. Men and boys endure great hardships and risk their lives to be together, and on occasion get to spend the rest of their lives together.

These stories were all written back in the 17th century and the author gained great notoriety writing these kinds of soft romances. One of his books was titled, *Glorious Tales of Pederasty*, which I would really love to see on a bookshelf at Borders someday. Just to see the reactions.... There's a whole lot of, "They lay together through the night" kind of language, and a general avoidance of sordid detail. Still, they're well-written, and well-translated, so you can get a very good sense, in these short, short stories, of the kinds of relationships that popped up among the samurai class way back before Western prudishness got its claws into people. In the preface to *Glorious Tales*, Ihara says:

Our eyes are soiled by the soft haunches and scarlet petticoats of women. These female



beauties are good for nothing save to give pleasure to old men in lands where there is not a single good-looking boy. If a man is interested in women, he can never know the joys of pederasty.

So that should give you an idea of the cultural divide you're working against when you pick up this book. It's tough for us modern folks, whose culture is dead set against cross-generational homosexual relationships, to really be comfortable reading stories like this. Usually when you hear stories about a grown man and a teenage boy, it's immediately classified as "abuse." Images of windowless panel vans, sweaty gym teachers, NAMBLA meetings rise up and.... Yeah.

Speaking from an American perspective, I can't think of any situation where a relationship such as the ones in this book would ever be considered acceptable, despite the purity of the feelings involved. The characters in these stories, it must be noted, are not leches. They're not Herbert from *Family Guy*. But no matter how pure my intentions might be, if I were to start hanging around the arcades, chatting up fifteen year-old boys, my life as a respectable citizen would be effectively over.

Even assuming that a relationship built on pederasty can be mutually beneficial - and it could be argued that it can - it's still a) illegal in most places and b) massively creepy. So that makes it an interesting challenge to get into these stories. Life was different back then, after all. The extended childhood that we take for granted in our teenage years pretty much didn't exist. As soon as someone reached the age of sexual maturity, they were basically proto-adults, rather than lingering children, and were therefore fair game. So as much as I hate to invoke cultural relativism (because I find it wishy-washy and noncommittal), I have to just say, "It was a different time." In times gone by, pederastic relationships worked, but our culture has moved to a point now where even if it *were* legalized, the emotional and experiential gulf between the older and younger party would probably make it impossible to go beyond a relationship built on physical eroticism.

Still, the feelings in these stories are just as valid and pure as "traditional" romances, the obstacles they overcome and risks they take are just as real and just as difficult. If you can set aside your more judgmental self, you can appreciate the depth of feeling that existed in these relationships, and recognize the universal themes of all great love stories - discovery, love, loss, betrayal, redemption.... They're all here. So get reading.

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## Irs says

Todos los relatos de este libro se resumen en un: [drama intensifies]

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## João says

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### **J. Watson (aka umberto) says**

I thought the 13 stories and the 86 songs in this two-part book would have been normally translated from Japanese but it was my misunderstanding because the translated stories were in fact from a French translation by Ken Sato (pp. x, 98) and the 90 songs were “retranslated by E. Powers Mathers from Gaston Morphy's anthology *Le Livre des Geisha*” (p. xiv) and in his introductory note, the translator said, “I have selected some of my ninety from *Le Livre des Geishas* of Gaston Morphy, and the rest from *Chansons des Geishas* by Steinilber-Oberlin and Hidetake-Iwamura” (p. 103). Therefore, this is the first book originally written in Japanese, translated into French then English so I read its L3 version, not L2 as usual.

Having read and written my brief reviews on Saikaku Ihara's “*The Life of an Amorous Man*” (Tuttle, 2001), “*Five Women Who Loved Love*” (Tuttle, 1956) and “*The Life of an Amorous Woman*” (New Directions, 1969), I instantly recalled comparing this book to the second title above as the characters' romantic love in which the stories of the five women portrayed “five determined women in their always amorous and usually illicit adventures” (back cover). In contrast, this one in question has focused on “the theme of homosexual love: of samurai for samurai or samurai for court boy bent on becoming samurai” (back cover).

Nearly equally captivating, each story with at least two protagonists has revealed their fate, their renunciation, their pardon/admiration, etc., in other words, each case categorized as “deadly love” or not has depended on the lovers themselves. One of the reasons is that they have their own character as well as motive in which we can see how they have ultimately dictated those involved to a sad or surprising finale. For instance, I found the story (No. 12) on Jinnosuke Kasuda and Gonkuro Moriwaki admiringly touching due to their valor and comradeship. Of course, it was a tale of comrade love between Jinnosuke, a thirteen-year-old boy and his lover Gonkuro, a twenty-year-old samurai. When Jinnosuke was sixteen, another samurai named Ibei Hanzawa fell in love with him and tried to send him love-letters but in vain; so Ibei was so furious that he challenged him for a duel. Jinnosuke wrote a letter to Gonkuro, an excerpt as follows:

‘I have many other things with which to reproach you, but am feeling infinitely sad. And even now I cannot help loving you. I do nothing but weep for my unhappy passion ...

‘I have still much to write, but evening is drawing near, and I must cease. To my dear Gokuro from his Jinnosuke. May 26th, in the seventh year of Kuanbun (A.D. 1667).’ (p. 88)

As for the songs, I think they should be ideally appreciated by means of listening to each one sung by a

geisha in Japanese since they were primarily meant to be sung to entertain guests, not to be read like the haiku; therefore, knowing Japanese like native speakers is a must to the listeners. Moreover, any song translated into English might be doubly tough when one tries to understand and appreciate it. Again, the extracts from the translator's note should be helpful in guiding us to see the light, "The following verses are definitely popular ones. They are folk-songs, almost music-hall songs, and are taken solely from the singing repertoire of Geishas. ... It should be remembered, too, that practically all the Japanese poems with which we have been made familiar in English are classical and written to one or other of very strict rules, whereas these songs for the samisen are technically free. ..." (p. 103). Considering these three songs as our literary starter, we may eventually try browsing the following and see what we can cherish in mind, that is, identify any line you like and ask yourself why:

#### 21. The Letter

If there were no moon  
I would read it by the Winter snow light,  
Or in Summer by the fireflies,  
Or if there were no moon or snow or fireflies  
I would read it by the light of my heart. (p. 112)

#### 25. A Single Cry

A flight of flying cuckoos  
Across the moon, a single cry.  
Is the moon crying cuckoo?  
Night pales slowly. Men are cruel  
And women are not.  
They weep and say over sorrow  
For a small separation. (p. 113)

#### 40. Green Willow

The breeze is so light  
That when it soothes the green willow  
It seems not to touch her.  
Indistinct shadow.  
We have set our two pillows  
Very close in the bed.  
Our mornings and our evenings.  
And our useless little quarrels  
And then our letters.  
Is waiting or parting bitterer?  
Let us not separate. (p. 118)

In summary, while reading this 13-love book by Ihara Saikaku, we can see the stories themselves seemingly have limited narration, in other words, they are obviously far less romantic, emotional and adventurous than his "Five Women Who Loved Love" in which we can admire some 17th-century illustrations by Yoshida Hambei, enjoy reading more dialogs as well as a background essay "Saikaku's "Five Women"" by Richard Lane at Columbia University. Moreover, the songs added in this book could be randomly read, any one you like, as the basic step for some readers so that some might be eventually interested in studying Japanese, then ultimately and blissfully reread each song in its original version.

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