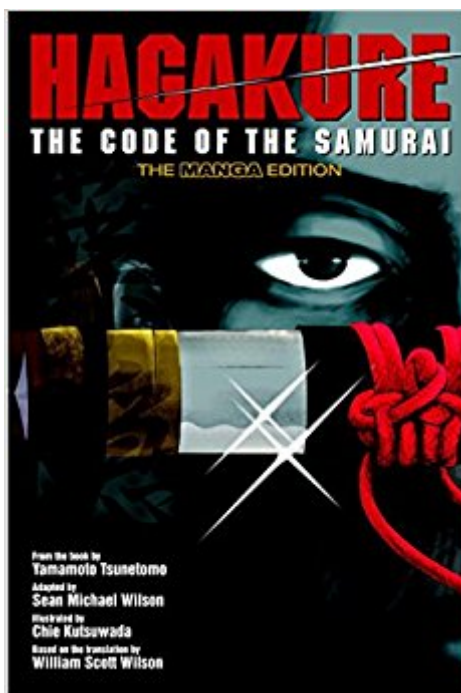


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# Hagakure: The Code Of The Samurai (The Manga Edition)



## Synopsis

Based on William Scott Wilson's definitive translation, adapted by scriptwriter and comic book/manga author Sean Wilson, and with lively drawings by well-known illustrator Chie Kutsuwada, this first-ever graphic treatment of what's considered the most influential of all samurai treatises is sure to delight manga fans, martial arts enthusiasts, and students of Japanese culture. Reminiscent of *The Arabian Nights* in structure, *Hagakure* is a collection of tales and anecdotes that offer instruction and insight into the philosophy and code of behavior that foster the true spirit of Bushido – the Way of the Warrior. A young, upcoming samurai seeks the advice of an older, seasoned warrior who has become a Zen monk. The ambitious young samurai humbly begs to learn from the old master, who consents. So begins a series of eventful meetings. At each sitting, the master tells his young student tales of samurai past. Tales of famous warriors are recited, as well as ignoble gaffs. With brutal, unrelenting samurai justice, wrongs are righted and judgment is enacted. With each incident, the young novice learns what it means to be a samurai. Learns what courage and right thought are. Learns the harsh realities and subtle wisdom of his age. Writer Sean Wilson and illustrator Chie Kutsuwada both bring ample experience in the genre to this project. And, as an added bonus, William Scott Wilson, the translator of the original Kodansha International version of the book, provides an illuminating Afterword.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hi all, this is Sean Michael Wilson, the clever wee lad who made the manga script adaptation of *Hagakure*. Recently our *Hagakure*:manga edition has received two 5 star reviews at the UK version of . One of them is by a Doctor Sahal, and is an ideal example of the kind of intelligent adult reader

who doesn't like manga or comic books normally, but loves THIS book. His review is so perfectly fitted to what our aim was that it's like we wrote it ourselves! (but we didn't - shojiki desu!). One of the main aims we had at Kodansha International (now USA, Inc) was to add to the growing, yet still small amount of 'mature manga' available in English. To show that manga can tackle difficult subjects of history, philosophy, culture, etc in a way that is both interesting and intelligent. 'Of course they can!' is the cry of those smart people already in the know, but most still don't appreciate this. So please pick up a copy of HAGAKURE: THE MANGA EDITION and see for yourself.

Sean Michael Wilson has written a number of new and forthcoming comics and manga books and has also edited AX: Alternative Manga, a collection of cutting-edge Japanese manga in English. He lives in Japan but travels abroad frequently to attend comics, manga and anime conventions. Chie Kutsuwada is the respected manga artist of Shakespeare's As You Like It and other works. She has lectured and taught manga workshops around Britain at such venues as Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Library. She lives in the U.K.

I have been involved in numerous martial arts (Judo, Jujitsu, Karate-Do, Kenjutsu, Wakizashi-jutsu, Tanto-jutsu) for more than 60 years, both as a student and instructor. I have also been fortunate to have read and reviewed many books on the philosophical foundation of these combat systems. Those books include The Art of War, The book of Five Rings, Bushido, The Soul of Japan and this volume Hagakure: The code of the Samurai. This is the first Graphic art novel (Manga) of Hagakure I have read. The fantastic illustrations along with the stories really makes this book come alive. This text is organized into 5 chapters. The first chapter introduces the subject of "The way of the Samurai." The second covers the importance of loyalty. The third deals with the topic of revenge. The fourth explains the role Kaishaku and Seppuku plays in the life of the Samurai. The final chapter emphasizes the vital trait of sincerity and how it applies to the code of the Samurai. Each chapter the master tells a story related to each theme. Do not pass up the Afterword section because it summarizes some of the points made in this book. In conclusion, even if you have read the original book of Hagakure, you may also want to check out this graphic novel version because it clarifies some of the important Samurai principles. This book was a great read. Rating: 5 Stars.  
Joseph J. Truncale (Author: The Samurai Soul: An old warrior's poetic tribute)

A Review of Hagakure The Code of the Samurai: The Manga Edition  
From the Hagakure by Yamamoto Tsunetomo  
Adapted by Sean Michael Wilson  
Illustrated by Chie Kutsuwada  
Based on the

translation and with an afterword by William Scott Wilson. Published by Kodansha, 2011. US \$14.95. "After reading books or the like, it is best to burn them or throw them away." Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*. The abstract concepts of philosophy are often difficult to communicate to audiences, if for no other reason because of the ineffectiveness of language. Foreign cultures, translated languages, and philosophies far removed in time further complicate matters. Using a visual component, however, can aid readers in understanding these concepts. Sean Michael Wilson's manga adaptation of William Scott Wilson's translation of Yamamoto Tsunetomo's *Hagakure* attempts to present to readers a visually appealing interpretation of the central concepts in bushido. Though useful as an introduction to bushido, the selection of certain items over others, however, presents this work only in partial and limits readers' understanding of the entire context, historical, cultural, and philosophical, of the work. Because of the intertwined relationship of the three authors, it is necessary to begin with a few words on each. The original progenitor of the *Hagakure* is Yamamoto Tsunetomo, an eighteenth-century samurai and former retainer of the Nabeshima. When his feudal lord, Nabeshima Mitsushige, died in 1700, Yamamoto was unable to follow his lord in death through suicide due to both the proclamations of the Tokugawa Bakufu and Nabeshima Mitsushige's own wishes. As an alternative, Yamamoto entered the Zen priesthood. In 1710, he received visits from a young samurai seeking to hear his wisdom, Tashiro Tsuramoto, who later recorded Yamamoto's words of wisdom. Yamamoto shared his concerns for and observations of samurai behavior during the eighteenth century. According to his assessments, and much to his vexation, samurai of his day were less interested in serving out their traditional roles as loyal retainers from the class of military elite and more concerned with ostentatious extravagances. William Scott Wilson is one of the most influential translators of the *Hagakure*. His original translation of the work, published by Kodansha with assistance of a grant from the Japan Foundation, appeared in 1979. Wilson found his way to the *Hagakure* from his interest in the works of Mishima Yukio. His original translation possessed only a small selection of the original transcriptions of the *Hagakure*, approximately three hundred of the original thirteen hundred. Of these three hundred, Japanese editors often exclude a number. The final author in the triumvirate is Sean Michael Wilson. Modern readers note Wilson for his efforts in producing graphic novels, especially of important works in literature. One particularly notable title is a manga interpretation of Lafcadio Hearn's *Japanese Ghost Stories*. To complete his works, Wilson works in conjunction with British, Chinese, and Japanese artists. He also lectures on topics related to manga throughout the United States and Great Britain. This interpretation of the *Hagakure* presents Yamamoto's advice in a series of anecdotes told during the meetings between Yamamoto and Tashiro. Each of five

chapters covers one specific topic from the Hagakure: "The Way of the Samurai," "Loyalty," "Revenge," "Kaishaku and Seppuku," and "Sincerity." Each chapter depicts a distinct meeting between Yamamoto and Tashiro, wherein Yamamoto recalls stories from the bygone eras of ideal (according to Yamamoto) samurai behavior to illustrate his points. The manga edition of the Hagakure highlights a few essential lessons that communicate central concepts in bushido. These include humility and selflessness, confidence and resolution, and the importance of proper behavior within social contexts (exempla gratia, using proper manners and not bullying others). What is difficult to extract from the work, especially the manga edition, is that much of the philosophical underpinnings highlighted there originated in Confucianism. Nevertheless, though a work inspired by centuries old Chinese civil philosophy and originally composed nearly three hundred years ago for samurai who did not know the import of proper behavior, these lessons apply just as well to modern readers from a variety of backgrounds. This work, however, is a broad overview of the philosophy of bushido as interpreted by Yamamoto Tsunetomo. Being this, it does lack certain attention to details in the art, especially regarding swordsmanship, sword construction, and military culture. Perhaps the most noticeable discrepancy between this work and historical precedent is the lack of or incorrect details regarding the practice of seppuku. This is ironic, considering the importance Yamamoto Tsunetomo placed on details and understanding the intricacies of samurai life. Though in the manga many breeches of etiquette were solved with the quick cut of the sword, such problem resolutions are impossible in today's world. This, perhaps, makes some elements of bushido (as recounted in this manga) more difficult to maintain. As a result, without immediate consequences, or the ability to enforce immediate consequences, it requires a greater amount and quality of self-discipline and personal courage to be an upstanding person in today's society. Someone of no Consequence

A good book, with some caveats and a few flaws. Firstly, I'd like to address my first grievance, and that is the editing job. The book has some awkward misspellings and bad grammar at times. This can be overlooked, but considering the serious nature of the topic and the dignified and artistic style that I've come to love from Sean and William Wilson's renditions of these samurai classics (I have also read the manga edition of Go Rin No Sho, the Book of Five Rings by Miyamoto Musashi), the misspelling is annoying, and disrupts the flow. Secondly, the book is shockingly violent. This is both a good thing and a bad thing in my personal opinion. It is intriguing, but also is not for the weak of stomach, and for those who have very romanticized opinions about samurai, like I tend to have, prepare for those to get shattered a little bit, as some of the stories seem to champion things of

questionable ethics if looked at from a modern perspective, like(SPOILER SPOILER SPOILER SPOILER)cutting someone's head off for peeing off the side of a boat, then ordering the boatman to bury the body, and then killing the boatman. Not very honorable.Overall, a good reading experience, especially with some nice traditional Japanese music (I recommend Takeo Izumi's traditional samurai zen music) and a pot of Gyokoro tea, if you're into that sort of thing.

A great introduction to Japanese classical literature for a younger reader. "Ghost Dog: Way of the Samurai" is an excellent video companion but contains gratuitous language and violence.

This is an excellent rendition of a written book, turned into images and set into a story line that is easy to read and understand. Rarely is there philosophy books that are presented in this way.

Grownup subject matter, handled in first-class manga style. Wonderful artwork, a well-thought-out adaptation to graphic novel format. Anyone who enjoys literature about samurai and/or old Japan, and likes quality manga, will probably love this. (I probably wouldn't give it to a kid under 16)  
Recommended.

This tells about the traditions and customs of the Samurai. How boys as young as 5 were trained to behead their enemies. It speaks of revenge, honor, ritual suicide. I've learned quickly that the Samurai were most likely sociopaths, which made them so fearsome in battle!

excellent artwork, true to the book. definitely not for children, though, as there are adult themes.

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