



The Twelve Kingdoms: Sea of Wind

Fuyumi Ono , ?? ??? , Akihiro Yamada (Illustrator) , ?? ?? (????) , Alexander O. Smith (Translator) , Elye J. Alexander (Translator)

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An international bestseller, this spectacular fantasy epic makes its U.S. debut.

Born in Japan and raised as a human, Taiki is overwhelmed when he's brought back to the kingdom of Tai, where he's told he's a kirin. With little knowledge or guidance, he must trust his latent instincts to choose a king for the Kingdom of Tai from among dozens of men and women who seek the position. Will the frustrated Taiki, who can't even figure out how to transform into animal form, make the right choice? And more important, will he discover the kirin that lives within?

The Twelve Kingdoms: Sea of Wind Details

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From Reader Review The Twelve Kingdoms: Sea of Wind for online ebook

PandaRanda says

Reading this book was characterised by an intensely bittersweet sensation in the back of my mind. Knowing what happens beyond the events in this novel is really quite heartbreaking, especially after reading such a seemingly happy ending to Taiki's story at the end of this volume. I sincerely hope there really is a happy conclusion to Taiki's story, because this darn author really makes you love her main characters! It's like you cannot escape her will for you to connect to them and adore them!

Plus so much world building! Getting to know more about the world of the Twelve Kingdoms is always a plus.

Marisol Avalos says

Mi historia preferida de los doce reinos. Mi kirin favorito: Taiki. Hermosa narración, fabulosa historia.

Nicohle Christopherson says

Absolutely riveting. I picked up this book in my local library, and as a fan of the Juuni Koku anime series, I found myself absolutely enthralled. Little Kouki's story is probably the most heartwrenching in the whole series, and he is most DEFINITELY my favorite among the Kirin themselves.

In the Twelve Kingdoms, rule is decided by divine right. Literally. Holy beasts called the Kirin choose the Kings for each of these massive kingdoms. Kouki is one such Kirin. However, his birth and raising were unorthodox, leaving him in a position almost as ignorant as our own on HOW exactly these amazing creatures make their choice. Follow him in gaining back his hooves and hearth, and learn along with him just how difficult it is to go against your own nature.

A wonderful book, and I would gladly re-read it about fifty times.

Mazohyst says

To be honest, I was quite disappointed that most of the cast from the first book in this series did not make an appearance. I was under the assumption that the series would focus on Yoko and her reign and not on separate stories for each book. However, Taiki did quickly capture my heart. There's something about a pure and innocent little boy that you can't help but root for him.

Now this series revolve around this other world or universe. Despite that, it's actually relatively easy to catch on to their terms and customs. It's even easier to get completely absorbed in the world that the author creates! I think this is what I appreciate the most from this series. A lot of fantasies that I read have worlds that are hard to comprehend or believe in, but with this one, it's a piece of cake.

I also enjoyed the shift in perspective. In the first book (spoilers beware) we focus on the future king. In this book, we focus on the person who is about to pick a future king. The only things they have in common are that they are both pulled from Japan into this fantasy world. It's a shame that (okay, here's a big spoiler oops) Yoko eventually loses the way. It kinda makes me sad. I had so much hope for her!

But yes, overall it's a story. :)

LG (A Library Girl's Familiar Diversions) says

[1/7/18 - Just finished my most recent reread of this book. It's both one of my top favorite books in this series and one of my favorite books period. I consider it a comfort read, even though the "comfort" is a little muffled by the knowledge that the book's happy ending turns sour really quickly in the series' timeline. During this reread, I realized that I really connect with Taiki's feelings of self-doubt. I also found myself more angry at Gyoso than I was during past readings of this book. (view spoiler) Taiki had some serious weaknesses, but I'd argue that Gyoso did too, even though they weren't as obvious.]

[4/14/17 - Just finished my most recent reread. Rather than write a new review, I figured I'd paste in the most recent one I wrote, from back in 2016. The one change between now and then: I have since read Eugene Woodbury's fan translation of *The Shore in Twilight, the Sky at Daybreak*, the tragic second part of Taiki and his king's story (and, unfortunately, not the end - I would *love* to know how things turn out for Taiki, and whether he's ever reunited with his king). That book didn't ruin *Sea of Wind* for me as a comfort read, but it did transform certain lines into vicious gut punches. I want Taiki to live a good and happy life with the people he loves by his side, darn it.]

I loved this book when I first read it in 2010, and my recent reread of it didn't disappoint. Although I reviewed it when I first read it, I decided I'd write a brand new review for my reread because 1) my reviewing style has changed since then and 2) I had some new things to say.

My first read of *Sea of Wind* took place several years after reading the first book. This time around, I read it right after finishing *Sea of Shadow*, and this had a definite effect on my understanding of what was going on and my feelings about it all.

Sea of Wind is set several years prior to *Sea of Shadow* and has a tighter focus. At the start of the book, we see a little boy who has been sent outside into the snow as punishment for what his grandmother believes is a lie. When he feels a gust of warmth and sees an arm beckoning him, he goes to it, and is taken to the world of the Twelve Kingdoms. The boy is told his name is Taiki and that he is the kirin of the Kingdom of Tai. He doesn't really know what's going on, but he feels safe around Sansi, the lamia that was born to protect him until he reached adulthood.

The entire book deals with Taiki adjusting to life among the oracles at the Brush-Jar Palace. Although they tell him he's a kirin, he doesn't feel like one, and he's worried that he'll never be able to do what these nice people expect of him. He can't shift into his kirin form, he can't see kirin auras, he can't pacify even the tiniest of demons, and he's sure he'll never have the revelation that is supposed to help him choose the next king of Tai.

After Yoko's grueling journey in *Sea of Shadow*, Taiki's story was a breath of fresh air. He desperately wanted to be loved and to please those who cared about him. While in our own world, he couldn't do that: his grandmother found fault with everything he did and made his mother cry, his little brother didn't like him, and his father sided with his grandmother. In the world of the Twelve Kingdoms, he was adored by everyone

around him. Seeing him move from the one life to the other gave me warm fuzzies, even though I felt sad about what it must have been like for his mother in our world when he suddenly disappeared.

Unfortunately, Taiki wasn't used to getting unconditional love. He fretted over his inability to do the things the oracles expected of him. The oracles, in turn, protected him from the full knowledge of the importance of his existence and duties. Taiki had no idea that, even as he spent each day enjoying the love and attention of the oracles, the people of Tai were suffering and would continue to suffer until he finally chose a king.

I don't think I realized until this reread just how sheltered Taiki was, and just how precarious his position was. As powerful as Taiki turned out to be, his will was incredibly weak. He was timid and filled with self-doubt. As a kirin, Taiki would be expected to advise his king, but I couldn't imagine him 1) finding the courage to voice his opinions or 2) being able to defend his opinions even if he did manage to voice them. While I very much enjoyed the book's ending, it didn't change how I felt about Taiki's future. Knowing that Taiki and his king were declared either dead or missing only a few years later, I couldn't help but feel a little ill despite the book's fairly happy ending.

One of the nice things about rereading this book so soon after rereading the first one was that I could see more of the connections between the two. For example, in Book 1 Enki stated that the kirin is a pitiful creature. Book 2 gave a much better sense of what he meant. Taiki was used to the idea of free will, so it took him a while to wrap his brain around the idea that he literally could not go against the mandate of Heaven. Because he was young, he didn't seem to realize the implications of that. The kings, who have no say in being declared kings, have more choices than the kirin do, even if one of those choices happens to be death.

It was nice seeing more of Keiki in this book, including a tiny bit from his perspective. In the first book, he appeared to be stiff, cold, and seriously lacking in empathy. This book allowed me to warm up to him a bit more. As it turned out, Keiki had exceptionally bad people skills, to the point that even the oracles chided him. He had no clue how to deal with his current king (the "Lady-King" who ruled just prior to Yoko) or the very sensitive Taiki. I now wish that *Sea of Shadow* had shown a bit from his perspective. I imagine that at least a part of him must have been worried about repeating some of the same mistakes he'd made with his first king with Yoko. It was lucky for him that Yoko turned out to be stronger and more flexible than his first king. (It feels kind of weird referring to two women as "kings.")

I'm glad this reread went so well. Although Yoko made for a stronger and more complex protagonist than Taiki, I still found myself preferring Book 2 to Book 1. The story was gentler, and the world and its rules were more clearly presented.

(Original review posted on A Library Girl's Familiar Diversions.)

Arctialuna says

It's been a long time since I finished a book in such a short time. I am really not sure the book truly deserves 5 stars since I loved the anime before reading the novel, so being able to finally read it is something I've been longing for many years.

I started reading the second book, skipping the first one. I am sure that the first one is necessary to get in context with the Twelve Kingdoms but, as I said, I already have this knowledge from watching the anime.

This season was my favourite and I wanted to read the novel to go deeper in the characters. Indeed, reading the thoughts of Taiki adds something. Taiki is an insecure kirin which tries to understand this new world and his duties. Also, when he chooses the king of Tai, in the anime you get the feeling that something is wrong (since you only see Taiki's view) while, when reading it, you can foresee all the clues that Taiki doesn't get when he meets Gyoso and that he misunderstands.

But, generally, the anime is a really good adaptation, except for the beginning and ending. I don't get why they made up that the Taiki return to Hourai when in the novel such a thing doesn't happen (truly, I've wanted to read the novel to understand why he came back and it ended being something that never happened. Which suits the story better).

Now, I am eager to buy and read the third book, although the story of Taiki is not continued in any of the next novels, I think. It will be a difficult task since they are discontinued and I depend on the second hand market (with impossible prices, with these novels). But I'll keep my hopes on!

Cornerofmadness says

This is book 2 in the Twelve Kingdoms series. It's a 'sequel' in that it's in the same universe but pretty much has none of the original characters so I guess this series is more about the world than the characters (and I'm more a character driven reader). This chunky novel is about Taiki, the Kirin. In this universe, the Kirin picks the kings (this is a non-gender specific title in this case). Kirin, like their lamia guardians, are grown from eggs on a tree.

This book can be broken down into four sections, Taiki's birth, Taiki's childhood, looking for the king, what happens once the king is found.

Taiki had a bizarre upbringing in that his egg was stolen and he was raised human for a decade or so. He doesn't even know he is a Kirin. He just knows he's not well loved. The next section, Taiki is returned to where he belongs and the oracles, unaging women, have to teach him what it is to be a Kirin. He even gets help from another of his kind but Taiki cannot shift into his Kirin form and he can't bind demons and he really is a timid young boy. Finally, the king wannabes arrive and he doesn't know how to choose one of them. He really would like it to be a lady general but knows this isn't the case. Once he makes his choice, he regrets it until the final pages.

It's not a bad story. However, it's very inactive for something 300+ pages long. It's a whole lot of dialogue. Taiki is a sweet character but sometimes his self-doubt makes you want to punch him. The one thing that really did bother me was that some of the tension relied too heavily on the 'gee I should have explained that better trope.' I get annoyed when if someone just told a second character something it would have cured everything but the author doesn't have time say a word and you get all this tension. Um, that's just lazy. Overall, though, I like the series and I liked this story. It's just draggy in spots, especially when it gets obsessive over names and spellings there of but that is a very Japanese thing.

machinaheart says

I liked Taiki's story a lot because it gave more insight into the world of the Twelve Kingdoms and especially about the Kirin. I liked Taiki and the oracles, as well as Gyoso and Risai.

What I loved about it though were the bits about Keiki. I just loved Keiki from the first time I set my eyes on

him in the anime (it also may have to do something with Koyasu Takehito, I have no illusions about that). I would love to know more about Keiki and the Kingdom of Kei before Youko became the Lady-King. But since the bits about Enki and Shouryu delighted me as well - oh my that pair, really, like a married couple! - I look forward to the next volume.

Sarah says

Tiny, apologetic boy becomes godlike. Tears ensue. Then MONSTERS. Woo!

Did you like book one? Here's more info about kirin and kings. Did you not read book one? That's cool; book two is it's own story.

Not picaresque, like the first, but the geographic stationarity allows for lovely description of where the hey you are instead of "no time to look at junk! I'ma get killed" as in the first. Also, though the pace is a little slower, the book's also shorter. There aren't as many characters, but we get to know them better. This is a different story from the first, but just as good.

planetkimi says

I like Taiki. He's a complex character, and an unusual hero. I can see how his personality isn't to the taste of some readers, but I found myself empathizing with him quite a bit.

Ono's characters overall really shine. It's easy to populate fantasy worlds with cookie-cutter characters, but Ono deftly rounds out even minor characters with sparks of individuality.

I think the way Ono handles the backstory of other characters, Keiki in particular is a nice touch. It doesn't distract from the overall story, and adds subtle texture to what we know of Kei from the first volume.

I've seen the anime, and I vaguely recall that there was more to Taiki's story presented in the anime. I'm happy with the way this volume ended, however. And now I'm eagerly awaiting the third one ...

Dakota Thompson says

softly crying Oh Taiki, you precious, precious creature!

About the book: While the first one carried more action, this one was used more as a helpful guide to further expand this world of the 12 Kingdoms. It was a quick read, so much shorter than the last, yet the character development of Taiki was remarkable. You were really rooting for the little kid, and for the friends he makes along the way. The last few chapters are, of course, the best and really build on a climactic ending and resolution that you don't exactly see coming.

A plus side: it can be read as a stand-alone. Just as with the first, while there are similarities and you may lose out on the connections between the books (like King En, Enki, and Keiki), you don't really need to carry anything further than where it already exists.

Pygmy says

Beautiful, fascinating world with interesting characters. The main character might be considered annoying because he is very weak-minded and apologizes constantly for things that aren't his fault...but it's a 10 yr old boy whose self-confidence has been eroded to nothing because he was born in a world he did not belong in. And the way it was presented evoked my sympathy very easily.

The flow of the English seems to be better than the first volume and I didn't notice any glaring grammatical/typographical errors as in the first volume. On LJ communities, it's interesting to see what people say about the outright insertions the translator made that are not backed up by the original text. But again, that seems to have been done fewer times than with the first volume of the series.

Majo says

Al igual que en el libro anterior, esta novela ligera prescinde de grandes descripciones, pero tuvo una enorme cantidad de información nueva sobre este misterioso mundo.

De la mano de Taiki nos metemos en el costado mitológico de la historia. Considero que estas dos novelas han sido más introductorias, una desde el punto de vista de una reina y la otra de un kirin, ambos siendo taikas que no han nacido en este mundo y él cual necesita ser explicado.

El protagonista, Kaname Takasato, un pequeño de diez años despreciado por su familia, es en realidad el kirin negro del reino de Tai, **Taiki**. En un confuso episodio en la nieve, él es extraído de Hourai y llevado a los doce reinos. Al ser solo un niño, asimila todo el cambio mejor que Youko, lo ve como algo más normal y se adapta de manera inmediata a su nueva vida. Aun así, al siempre haber sido odiado por su abuela y hermano, tiene una personalidad sumisa y solo desea agradar a todo el mundo, ya sea a las sacerdotisas que cuidan de él, como a los aspirantes a reyes de Tai.

A pesar de adaptarse muy bien a su condición, Taiki no termina de comprender qué es realmente un kirin, como transformarse y, sobretodo, qué es la voluntad del cielo de la que tanto se habla.

La mayor parte de la novela, nos relata a Taiki intentando aprender todo lo necesario para ser un buen kirin e intentando comprender como transformarse. Cuando las puertas finalmente son abiertas, Taiki debe elegir un rey, pero se dedica a socializar con los candidatos, sobretodo con la amable y maternal **Risai** y con el intimidante general **Gyousou**.

Durante la historia también aparecen los kirines **Enki** y **Keiki**, así como el rey eterno de En, **Shoryu**.

Al ser, cronológicamente, anterior a la primera novela, podemos ver el comienzo del debacle del reino de Kei y la reina Joukaku. La manera en que Keiki actuaba, frío y sin sentimientos, y como esto comienza a cambiar gracias a Taiki. Lo cual, lamentablemente, va a terminar en desastre.

El anime es una adaptación muy fiel de esta novela, prácticamente no existen diferencias. Tal vez un cambio de escenas o ampliamiento de otras, pero no hay grandes cambios.

Disfruto muchísimo leyendo estas novelas ligeras y espero pronto leer la siguiente, que es la última en haber sido adaptada.

Katie says

Out of the 4 books in this series that have been translated into English, this one is by far my most favorite. I loved the characters in this book, the plot, everything. Taiki was adorable and heartbreaking. The details of how they go about choosing the new King/Queen of the Kingdom, and the emotional strain it puts on him is well written. The action scenes are well done as well, gripping you and keeping you turning the pages. The only downside is, that like the rest of the books in the series, they flow one into another and as such this one doesn't have a truly resolved ending. The resolved ending you are hoping for doesn't happen for Taiki and his Kingdom in any of the books yet translated into English.

Aelvana says

In the second of the Twelve Kingdoms books, Taiki was living as an ordinary human in Japan until the day he saw a white arm beckoning him from a corner of his yard. It draws him into the Twelve Kingdoms, a world where he is revered as one of the most sacred forms of life: a kirin. Taiki quickly grows used to his new life, but he is plagued by the worry that it's all somehow a lie. Taiki can't do anything all kirin are supposed to be born knowing how to do. How can he choose a king?

If you've seen the anime, Taiki's arc will hold no surprises. At the same time, that's a very good thing. The anime was incredibly faithful to the book, and those four or five episodes brought this wonderful novel perfectly to the big screen. The novel delves deeper into the thoughts of the major characters, which is particularly nice for Taiki himself. When Taiki is taming his first shirei, you can only imagine what he's thinking in the anime. The book details every moment.

The obsession with showing the kanji various things are written in might annoy some people, but I like that they kept that detail from the original novels. The translation is very good all around; I didn't notice any errors like I had seen in the first book. This can be read as a stand-alone since it doesn't connect much with the first book. Highly Recommended.

S.Baqer Al-Meshqab says

Sea of Wind is the second of Seven Books of The Twelve Kingdoms series. For Fantasy lovers, the Twelve Kingdoms is a must read. A Mystical World embodies all kind of mythical creatures, kings, gods, demons, familiars, magicians and unheard of spells and wizardry. From the twelve, Sea of wind deals mainly with the Kingdom of Tai. While outlining the rules of the twelve kingdoms universe, the book tells the story of the "Kirin" of Tai - Kirin is a divine creature born to select the righteous king for its kingdom, and his quest to find his own way in a completely new world. Sea of Wind, and I quote, "explores what it means to truly know yourself, in the face of a destiny outside of your control."

Verbera Rules says

SPOILERS IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY SEEN THE ANIME.

Volume 2 in the 12K series. This one tells the story of Taiki the kirin of Tai. It is quite different from the anime in some respects so it's best to just let go of the anime and approach this with an open mind.

This story is referred to in the first volume but from a future looking to the past perspective. So the events in this book occurred before Yoko came to the twelve kingdoms.

It tells the story of Taiki up to the point where he has chosen the King and ascended to Tai and is having doubts about his "revelation." As in the anime, Keiki, Enki and the Ever-King help him and that is the end of the book. So this book does not go as far as the anime although the first book references that something bad happens to Taiki and the King of Tai. The anime goes farther than this book but not far enough to explain what went wrong and why they disappeared. So you won't find an answer here either. (Hopefully we will in a later book.)

I actually found that I enjoyed the book version of this story over the anime version. In the anime, they felt obliged to have more flow early in the stories and so created them in a way that the (anime) characters from Yoko's story would cross into this story. After reading the book, that seems completely unnecessary now and I think the book has more power describing a completely separate but loosely related event.

Again, I thought this book was just as good as the first and moved on immediately to the next one.

Rebecca says

Okay, so when discussing the Twelve Kingdoms anime, Lena, a friend of mine, noted that it seemed a bit odd that no one would have told Yoko 'Hey, you know what? Keiki is the name of the minister of Kei, and he has golden hair and could easily have brought you here'. And then Yoko could have described how she met Keiki in her world, and people would be all 'Hey, you know what? You're the next King of Kei!'. Then I got to thinking that Yoko knowing that she was the King of Kei wouldn't have changed much. Sure, Takki might not have tried to trick her, since she would have known that someone would be looking for her, but then again, Takki might have just assumed Yoko was crazy. Rakushun would have still suggested they go to En, if only to get the Ever-King's help in getting Yoko to the throne in one piece. The tenor of Yoko's inner conflict would change, but it would just shift to the later in the book 'Do I take up the mantle of kingship just because everyone expects it of me, or do I chose what I do as my own person?'. Yoko would still have to come to terms with being her own person versus being what people expect of her.

The reason I bring this up with regards to the second book is because Taiki's inner conflict in the second half of the book could have easily been solved if Keiki had told him 'don't worry -- as a kirin, Heaven won't let you chose the wrong king. To the point where you physically can't do the ritual, or even kowtow to anyone but the king of Tai'. Of course, if Taiki didn't know he couldn't fake it, he might not have even tried and then there'd be another problem. But, it just felt a lot like an idiot plot -- a plot that was driven by a fake-seeming lack of information.

Other than that, I did enjoy the book for a different look at the Twelve Kingdoms.

Kristyn says

This story conveys the mental agony people sometimes feel when they feel they do not deserve the kindness

that others show them. Not worthy of kindness, and so guilty that they are receiving it. Sent back to a world he belongs to but does not know, to a destiny out of context with anything he's known.

I was recently re-watching the anime of this, and found myself wanting to know more about Taiki's story, so I searched out the novels, which are somewhat difficult to find.

The anime stays remarkably true to the novel, though it is told in retrospect, but through the book, we can feel more specifically Taiki's point of view, so there is a greater emphasis on what he feels.

I enjoyed it, and have ordered book 3 from the library.

Cibele Andrade says

I read Eugene Woodbury's translation, divided in two parts like the original.

Tells the early life of Taiki, kirin to the kingdom of Tai who was carried by a Shoku to the modern Japan and his return to the sacred Mt. Hou.

Although the story is mostly centered on the boys fears and insecurities, Ono never lingers too long on such matters as to make the reading bothersome. But rather she fills the gaps with explaining minutiae of the world of Twelve Kingdoms. The complex rituals and status privileges, only thinly drawn in the first book are more widely shown both to the reader and to Taiki, who has to learn all from the beginning in short time.
