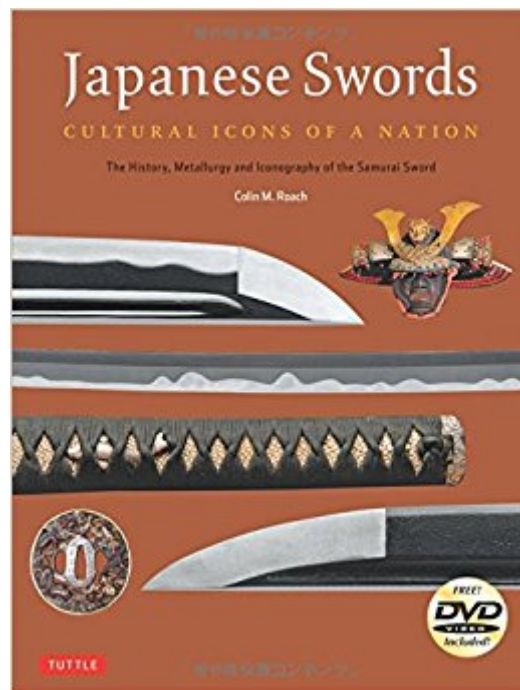


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# Japanese Swords: Cultural Icons Of A Nation; The History, Metallurgy And Iconography Of The Samurai Sword



## Synopsis

With over 300 stunning photographs and woodblock prints along with extensive historical and cultural commentary, *Japanese Swords* is the ultimate authority on Samurai weaponry. Historically, Japanese warriors considered their swords to be far greater than simple weaponry. Their swords were both lethal tools and divine companions – social and religious icons. Traditionally worn by the samurai as a sign of social status, the Japanese sword represented the junction between the reigning military class and those whom they ruled. Moreover, the samurai sword was a technological and artistic marvel. Many scholars consider it to be the finest sword ever constructed. In terms of symbolism and historical importance, no other blade comes close to the Japanese sword. With a historical, iconographical, and technological perspective, author Cohn M. Roach provides an in-depth study of these magnificent weapons in *Japanese Swords*. This richly illustrated sword book weaves the blade's primary influences together, tracking its history and illuminating its progress from infancy to grandeur. By studying the evolution of the Japanese sword from this perspective, we better understand Japan and its warrior archetype. Combining research materials from multiple disciplines, Roach uses his expertise as an educator to guide readers through the sword's rise to greatness in a unique way. This book discusses the history, development, and spiritual symbolism of the sword, as well as the esoteric metallurgical techniques used in making it. It also covers the difficult training practices used by skilled swordsmen. *Japanese Swords* also includes a companion DVD featuring a beautifully-filmed documentary that explores the traditional swordmaker's craft. The DVD also contains an introduction to the Japanese sword at a sword shop in Kyoto and a visit to a dojo for a beginner's class in the medieval sword-drawing art called iaido.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Roach, a student of both iaido and aikido and a dedicated sword-enthusiast, passionately dissects the symbolic essence of the sword throughout history, emphasizing changes in social significance, technological influence, and iconography. The erudite prose is ameliorated by design, modern swordsmanship, traditional artwork, illustrative photos, and etiquette. Historical periods are elegantly punctuated with ornate depictions, highlighting shifts in katana design and value from early periods to the current interpretation of ancient disciplines. Roach's own deep-rooted interest and involvement in the subject ensures a seamless blend of historical and religious themes, as well as much "sword appreciation" (the author champions his comrades in promoting traditional craftsmanship and confronts the contemporary dilemma of commercial fraud and shameless profiteering). In order to truly understand the Japanese sword in its entirety one must, Roach suggests, appreciate the "unique sociological, spiritual, and metallurgical environment in which it evolved." With this at the core of his book, he vividly tracks the fundamental transition from the sword as a mythological instrument to a functional tool for war, and finally to the display art commodity it is today. (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The imagery here is the real selling point. To me, you've got to show me as well as tell me about Japan. Trust me, if you've wanted to see some historical artifacts, detailed descriptions of Japanese swords, and a little glimpse into the world of iaido, then you're in for a treat." [Japan Finds](#) blog "Beautiful photographs of swords, pictures of sword craftsmen at work, and illustrations of Japanese art and artifacts complement the thorough, scholarly text." [Maine Antique Digest](#) "This oversized 176-page hardcover is overflowing with color and black-and-white photographs." [Black Belt Magazine](#) "In order to truly understand the Japanese sword in its entirety one must, Roach suggests, appreciate the 'unique sociological, spiritual, and metallurgical environment in which it evolved.' With this at the core of his book, he vividly tracks the fundamental transition from the sword as a mythological instrument to a functional tool for war, and finally to the display art commodity it is today." [Publishers Weekly](#)

This book is a phenomenal compilation of information via literature, photographs and a compact disk. The information succinctly explains the cultural etiology of the Samurai Sword (Nihonto), its historical religious significance, and its relationship, influence and integration into modern Japanese society. The chapters are well categorized in a logical sequence that detail the cultural and religious lore associated with the genesis of the traditional steel used for a sword's production (tamahagane); historically, the manifest martial need, events and evolution that created the world-renowned Samurai Sword; the various methods of craftsmanship, technique and skill employed in a blade's production which, fantastically, have resulted in a cultural heritage integrated into a modern society and industry; the historical periods of the Samurai Sword and their distinguishing characteristics and features; the transition and transmutation of the Sword into an artistic and cultural icon; the modern craftsman who continue the cultural heritage of Samurai Sword and the its impact on the modern world. The book smartly utilizes a variety of photographs that effectively illustrate technical explanations. The illustrations provide a clear understanding of the subject matter. And the book serves well to dispel common myths and misunderstandings about the Samurai Sword. I would highly recommend the book for the connoisseur, aficionado, and the novice alike who appreciate the Samurai Sword and seek a continuing education on the subject.

As others have mentioned, the component parts of this work are all excellent. From the photography to the in-depth analysis of Japanese sword making and the sword's place in Japanese culture, everything is well done. So why couldn't the publisher be troubled to actually proofread the book? It's astonishing to me that such a high quality work can be eroded by the carelessness of a publisher. On a single reading I found so many typos that they became a distraction from the content. I feel that this particular edition (I bought the hardcover) was given short shrift by Tuttle. That's a real tragedy considering the subject matter and the obvious care the author put into this work. The accompanying DVD provides some good "extras" similar to those found on movie releases. They left me wanting to see even more.

This is a beautiful book. I love just looking into it. Then reading about the history and background of this art is amazing. The work and love of sword craft is very special. The author has a great knowledge of what he's writing about. I never thought it could fetch my interest as it did. I really recommend this book. Just put it on your table and go back into it from time to time. Being a Norwegian it's very exotic to read about a far away culture such as the Japanese... I just had some knowledge about Samurais and their swords... I guess that's why this book caught my attention. I'm

glad i bought it.

This is an excellent, comprehensive book on Japanese swords and their history. The pictures are high quality and really show off the the different characteristics of sword creation. There is an excellent glossary of terms and definitions which is critical for any beginner who is interested in learning more about Japanese swords.

I appreciated the blending of history, eastern religion and practical sword making methods in this excellent book. Of course Japan changed with the entry of Christianity and western trade. For my purpose I learned the "Bushido" code was a westernized notion (invention) and has really no connection to Japanese culture. The title is an accurate descriptor of the content. I recommend this book if you have an interest in Japanese swords!

This book is very well done. The history of the Japanese sword and martial arts is amazingly researched and documented. The illustrations are beautiful. Just like the Japanese sword, this book is a work of art. The included DVD is a great bonus. If you want to learn more about the history and culture of the Japanese sword, this is a must have resource. Roach Sensei does an amazing job bringing the sword to life in this book.

Better than I anticipated. Book is full of everything, you would want to know, as a beginning collector,

I really enjoyed this book and the DVD. Lots of facts and pictures. The details are covered in words and clear illustrations and photographs. I would recommended this book to anyone wanting to start learning about Japanese Swords.

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