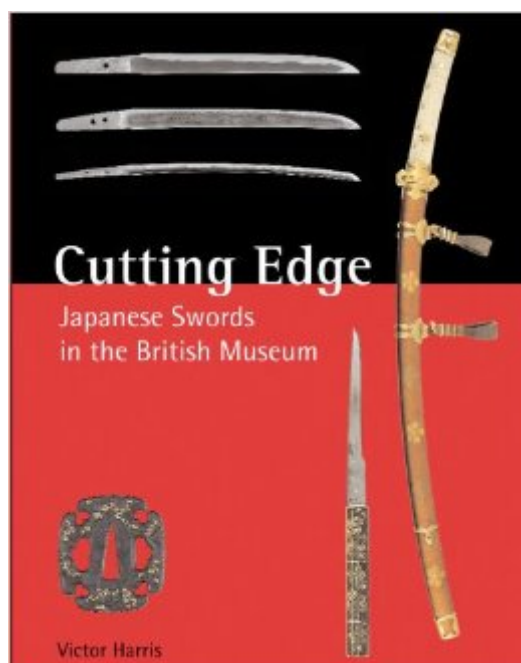


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Cutting Edge: Japanese Swords In The British Museum



Synopsis

The Japanese sword has long been appreciated both as a weapon and as an object of art. Only in Japanese culture has the sword been developed to such a level of technological excellence and spiritual importance. As a cutting weapon, the fully developed curved katana, or samurai sword, of the samurai warrior was uniquely effective. As a cultural object, it offers invaluable insights into the social and spiritual history of the Japanese people. Cutting Edge: Japanese Swords in the British Museum offers a fascinating introduction to the design, manufacture and collecting of these Japanese weapons. It covers the development of sword art and designs, traditional forging methods, regional variations in style and signature works by legendary craftsmen. Includes hundreds of photos with 16 pages in full color.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This fine volume documents an exhibit of Japanese swords (nihonto) on display at the British Museum circa 2005 (at least, that's when the book was published) along with some background information on nihonto in general. As the authors note, "this book is intended to be a catalogue for the exhibition... and also a guide to the study of Japanese sword blades based on that exhibition." The book starts with a solid introductory text that covers rough basics about Japanese swords (how they're made, their place in Japanese culture, etc.) and also reviews in reasonable detail a brief history of medieval Japan, along with corresponding changes in sword manufacture over its different eras. This type of information can be found in any of a number of different

introductory books elsewhere, but here it has just the right amount of detail on the main epochs of sword making -- Heian, Kamakura, Nambokucho, Muromachi, Momoyama, and Edo. Also included within the intro on a two-page spread is a nice illustration of different characteristics of blades -- kissaki/boshi (tip), hamon ('temper' line), jigane/hada (steel grain), blade cross sections, and nakago (tang) styles. This kind of information can also be found elsewhere, in both more and less detail depending on the book, but it's just about the right amount for the intent of this volume. Even better is a two-pager of representative blades from different eras lined up side-by-side and showing changes in sugata (shape) over time -- unlike other books, they are presented as B&W photos here rather than just line drawings which is very helpful to see defining features. The real meat of the volume consists of the catalogue listing of the 89 blades from the exhibit.

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