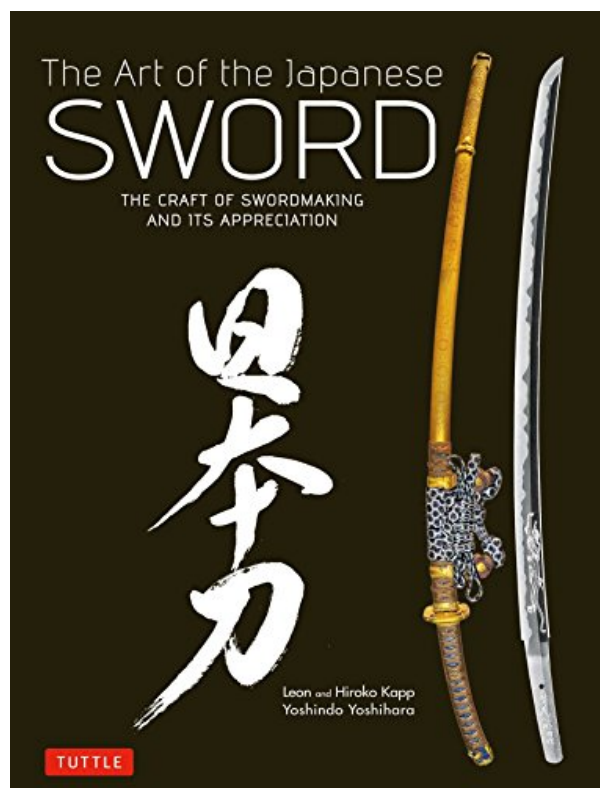
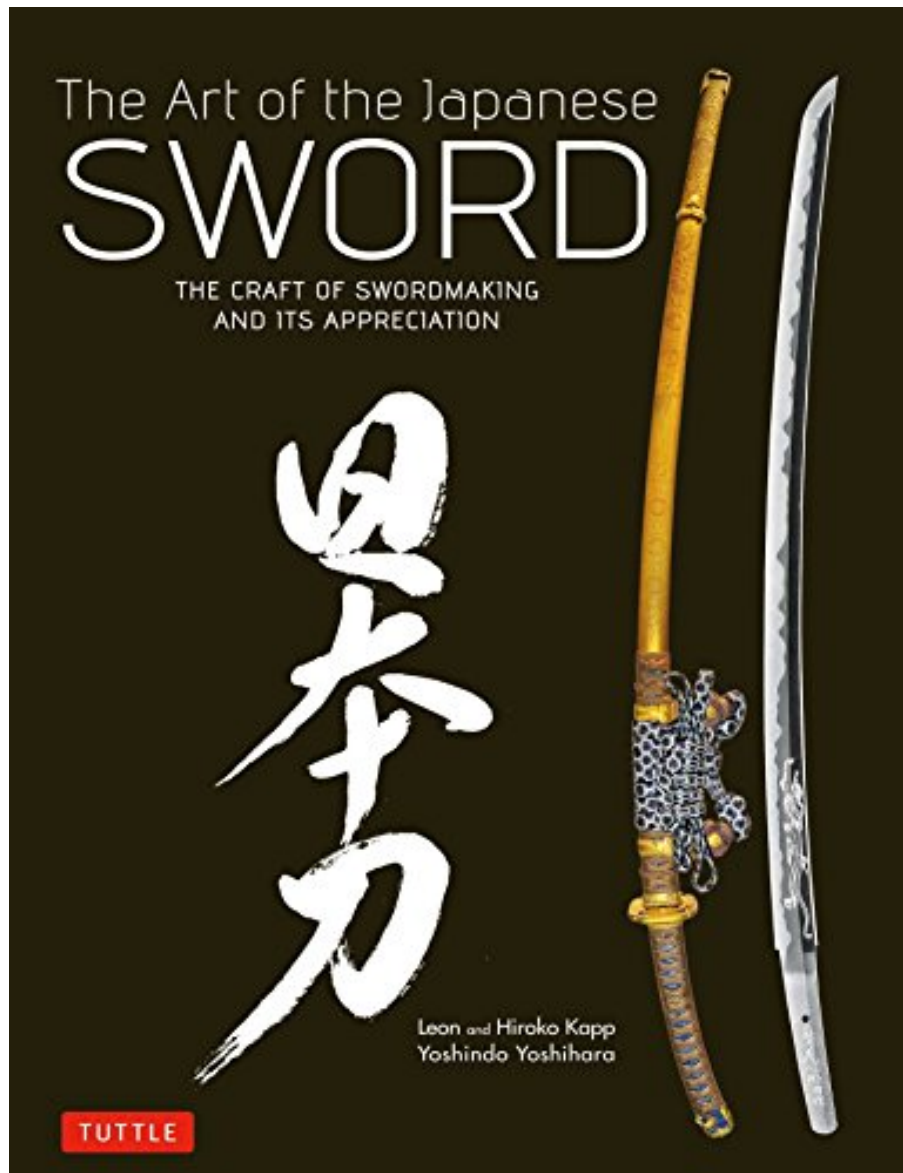


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## Review

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In *The Art of the Japanese Sword*, master swordsmith Yoshindo Yoshihara offers a detailed look at the entire process of Japanese sword making, including the finishing and appreciation of Japanese blades.

Japanese sword art stands out in many ways: functionality as a weapon, sophisticated metallurgy and metal smithing, the shape of the blade itself—all contribute to the beauty of these remarkable weapons. *The Art of the Japanese Sword* conveys to the reader Japanese samurai sword history and Japanese sword care, as well as explaining how to view and appreciate a blade.

With 256 full-color pages, this sword book illustrates in meticulous detail how modern craftsmen use traditional methods to prepare their steel, forge the sword and create the unique hardened edge. By gaining a good understanding of how a sword is actually made, the reader will be able to appreciate the samurai sword more fully. Topics include:

- Appreciating the Japanese sword
  - History of the Japanese sword
  - Traditional Japanese steel making
  - Making the sword
  - Finishing the sword
- 
- Sales Rank: #283838 in Books
  - Published on: 2012-09-10
  - Released on: 2012-09-10
  - Original language: English
  - Number of items: 1
  - Dimensions: 12.00" h x 1.00" w x 9.00" l, 3.90 pounds
  - Binding: Hardcover
  - 256 pages

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The new definitive introduction to Japanese swords

By Joe Pierre

Authors Leon and Hiroko Kapp and mukansa swordsmith Yoshindo Yoshihara have, with their fourth collaboration, managed to assemble what must now be considered the definitive introductory book on Japanese swords in the English language. To some extent, this volume puts all the essentials from their previous books (*The Craft of the Japanese Sword*, *Modern Japanese Swords and Swordsmiths*, and *The Art of Japanese Sword Polishing*) into a single 255-page volume, with the added benefit of high-quality color photos on every page (often many of them per page and always with accompanying explanatory text).

The book is divided into five chapters, each with the chapter title written in Japanese calligraphy by Yoshindo himself. Chapter One provides an essential introduction to the appreciation of the Japanese sword. This covers basic sword handling that ensures safe and respectful handling as well as guidance on what kind of features to look for when looking at or studying a sword. The section includes pages of glossary covering sword shapes, styles, parts, mountings/fittings, and specific features with clear photos, drawings, and oshigata (sword "rubbings" that illustrate the tempered edge, or hamon, of the blade). It also includes some

wonderful pages on metallurgy that shed light on the Japanese sword as both art object and scientific/technological achievement. Chapter Two traces the development of the sword through the history of Japan, explaining briefly the evolution of blade characteristics according to the needs of the day (e.g. wartime vs. peace, economic prosperity vs. depression, etc.), including extensive coverage of modern blades (gendaito) post-WWII and into the present. Several characteristic examples of noteworthy blades from each major historical era are highlighted with oshigata to illustrate. A slight disappointment that actual blades photos of these blades could not be included here, but that's made up for with great photos of modern Yoshihara Family blades (for the uninitiated, Yoshindo comes from a family of well-known swordmakers and is without exaggeration generally regarded as one of the best living swordsmiths on the planet). Chapter Three covers the smelting of iron sand ore into tamahagane, the core component used to make Japanese swords. This section was written by Dr. Muneo Yaso of the Wako Museum and includes information on the chemical composition of different types of iron sand found in Japan, its chemical conversion into tamahagane within the extreme 2700-degree F temperatures of the tatara furnace, and how smiths use different pieces of tamahagane based on differing carbon content for different parts of a sword. Chapter Four (don't miss the little "Yoshindo doll" made by Suishinshi Masahide on page 120!) reveals in detail how Yoshindo crafts a Japanese sword by hand (with the help of a few sledgehammer wielding apprentices) painstakingly working a few pieces of tamahagane with a hammer and the heat of the forge into the finished iconic end-product. Here especially, the pictures are numerous, complement the text along the way, and show amazing detail such as how the hamon is made, how the blade curves during the quench, and how horimono are engraved. There's also a great brief section on hadaka-yaki, or heat-treating and creating a hamon without the use of clay (something the authors speculate was done with some regularity during the Koto era). Finally, Chapter Five covers sword polishing (with a nice review and pictures of the many stones needed for each stage) and making a habaki (sword collar) and shirasaya (storage scabbard).

There are so many excellent photos in this generously-sized book that at first glance it's easy to dismiss it as a coffee-table picture book and admittedly, there is more text and detail in the authors' previous books. But there is in fact an impressive amount of text here too that captures the essential details of the wide-ranging sub-topics about Japanese swords that are covered in their other three books, all here in one compendium. Simply put, for under \$30 for this hardcover book with all of its great information and its wealth of high-quality photos, no Japanese sword enthusiast should be without it. For many, it will be "everything you need to know about Japanese swords," and hopefully for others it will be an inspirational stepping-stone along a long path of appreciating and learning much more about the art of the Japanese sword.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Simply the Best Book on the Subject

By Thomas Raven

I own over a dozen books on Japanese swords. Some of them do indeed go into greater depth on one aspect or another, but this is the best overview of the process from sand to shirasaya I've ever seen. Even after reading multiple books and watching multiple DVDs on the subject, I still had questions. This book answered them.

It should be noted that this book doesn't go into much detail on the furniture of the sword. In particular, tsukamaki is ignored except for a casual mention or two when discussing existing, mounted blades.

It's a beautiful overview, filled with large pictures and printed on heavyweight paper. If you're looking for one book on the subject, this should be the one.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Do not purchase Kindle edition

By ccole



I'm sure this is a fanstastic book but the Kindle edition is seriously lacking. The primary reason I purchased this was for the example images of various swords from different eras, none of which appeared on the Kindle version.

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