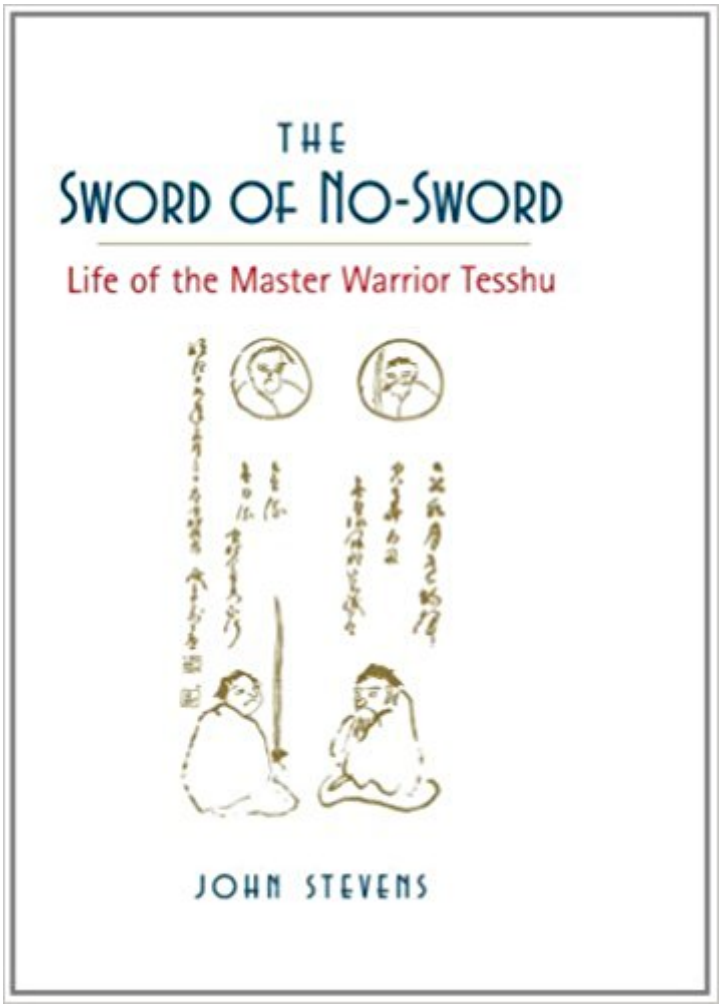
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The Sword Of No-Sword: Life Of The Master Warrior Tesshu



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Synopsis

Master swordsman, calligrapher, and Zen practitioner, Yamoaka Tesshu is a seminal figure in martial arts history. John Stevens's biography is a fascinating, detailed account of Tesshu's remarkable life. From Tesshu's superhuman feats of endurance and keen perception in life-threatening situations, to his skillful handling of military affairs during the politically volatile era of early nineteenth-century Japan, Stevens recounts the stories that have made Tesshu a legend. This is the book all martial artists must own.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Though there have been several accounts of the life of Tesshu (he has been called 'the modern Miyamoto Musashi') there has been until now no account in English. John Stevens' is full and responsible. . . . This is a work filled with respect and devotion."Ã¢â ¬â • The Japan Times

John Stevens is Professor of Buddhist Studies and Aikido instructor at Tohoku Fukushi University in Sendai, Japan. He is the author or translator of over twenty books on Buddhism, Zen, Aikido, and Asian culture. He has practiced and taught Aikido all over the world.

The Sword of No Sword, Life of the master warrior Tesshu,Tesshu Yamaoka was a man who was famous in Japan for a variety of reasons. For us martial artists he is most known for his swordsmanship. Further he was famous for his calligraphy and his zen practice. His calligraphy is

still very sought after by collectors. These three practices, Ken-Zen-Sho are in his case as with many other famous martial artists inseparable. He was also famous as a statesman as well as his part in the peacefull surrender of Edo castle.This book is the biography of this master showing his life as a martial artist as well as a statesman in the turbulent era which marked the birth of modern Japan, the bakamatsu. It talks about how the three ways led him on his path to enlightenment. The book has many illustrations of TesshuÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s work and also contains TesshuÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s teaching. Often compared with Musashi as they both exemplify the same spirit of warrior ship what makes Tesshu interesting is that there is more reliable information available on him. This was the first work about Tesshu available in English.This book is indispensable in the library of any martial artist interested in the Japanese Budo arts, anyone interested in Japanese calligraphy and the people interested in zen. Last but not least I recommend this book to anyone who loves a good inspirational story.

This is a very nice book by John Stevens, and if you have encountered his other books, you probably know that not only he knows what he is talking about himself being a practitioner of various Oriental arts, but his books have a certain readability that appeal to the mass reader, not just someone who is into the martial arts, or calligraphy etc.Yamaoka Tesshu was undoubtedly a very special man. Not only was he very tall for a Japanese man (over 2m) but was a powerful swordsman, calligrapher, and poet, many say the best, or one of the best of his day. John compares him to Miyamoto Musashi only somewhat more humane in his approach to dealing with the enemies. Of course it was a different era and required development of somewhat different set of skills. To me though, Musashi remains unrivaled in his approach to strategy and battle tactic. Tesshu’s life was complicated and he passed on sitting in Zazen. This is interesting as no one except him was able to do that in the Meiji Era. He passed away at will.The book talks about his life in a very interesting context of his time and his friends, who are a story in themselves. But it was nice to know and come to value this individual, and be inspired by him, if not by his fanaticism, definitely by his immense stamina and spiritual strength. With his death, I really felt like the world has lost someone very kind and very important. I definitely recommend this book to the students of Zen, but especially swordsmanship, as there are Tesshu’s writings in the back, as well as many of his calligraphy pieces in which you can see his stroke and judge how good of a swordsman he may actually have been without being able to see him fight on the video.Again, I would like to reiterate in conclusion, that being a "good swordsman" is not just about being good with the sword. Far from it, in the Japanese understanding one comes to see the larger picture of life, death, human nature and

relations. All that comes to play a very crucial role in one’s posture.

For a long time I was very skeptical of people’s claims regarding the greatness of Yamaoka Tesshu. The issue I took was when viewed against someone like Musashi, who killed many adversaries in documented duals often with a wood sword, I couldn’t see how anyone could compare such a record with someone like Tesshu who lived in a time of Samurai decline and was not a dueler. After reading this book, now I know.This is essential reading for anyone on the martial path, and you will be floored by what an amazing individual Tesshu was. Sword of No Sword is loaded with stories and anecdotes on his life, examples of his greatness, and gems of philosophy and martial wisdom.Tesshu was basically a renunciate freak of nature. He trained harder, drank harder, calligraphied harder, and was simply inhumanly productive partially because he almost never slept. I want to give a number of my favorite quotes, but I don’t want to ruin the journey for anyone. However I will make this one exception:"Tesshu placed himself in formal zazen posture, bid his family and friends goodbye, closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and entered eternal meditation. Some accounts said he smiled briefly just before his death. He was 53 years old." (p81) It is said Tesshu is the only person to "die in state", meaning in zazen during the 19th century.As you can probably tell The Sword of No Sword made me a passionate Tesshu fan. It is said he scripted over 1 million calligraphy’s in his life. I am fortunate to have acquired one. I highly recommend this book. Enjoy!!

A fantastic book which chronicles the life of master swordsman tesshu. It talks about his enlightenment and the events leading up to it. I loved the calligraphy examples that were included. This book will offer you insights into your life and will provide an invaluable opinion on zen, swordsmanship, calligraphy and strategy. This book belongs on every martial artists shelf as well people interested in zen.

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