



Art of the Samurai: Japanese Arms and Armor, 1156-1868 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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Samurai arms and equipment are widely recognized as masterpieces in steel, silk, and lacquer. This extensively illustrated volume is published in conjunction with the first comprehensive exhibition devoted to the arts of the samurai. It includes the finest examples of swords—the spirit of the samurai—as well as sword mountings and fittings, armor and helmets, saddles, banners, and paintings. The objects in the catalogue, drawn entirely from public and private collections in Japan, feature more than 100 officially designated national treasures and important cultural properties. Dating from the 5th to the 19th century, these majestic works offer a complete picture of samurai culture and its unique blend of the martial and the refined.

Many of the greatest Japanese blade makers are represented in this volume, from the earliest *koto* ("old sword") masters such as Yasuie (12th century) and Tomomitsu (14th century) to the Edo-period smiths Nagasone Kotetsu and Kiyomaro. These blades, cherished as much for their beauty as for their cutting effectiveness, were equipped with elaborate hilts and scabbards prized for their exquisite craftsmanship and materials, including silk, rayskin, gold, lacquer, and alloys unique to Japan, such as *shakudo* and *shibuichi*. Japanese armor is also fully surveyed, from the rarest iron armor of the Kofun period (5th century) to the inventive ceremonial helmets made toward the end of the age of the samurai.

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