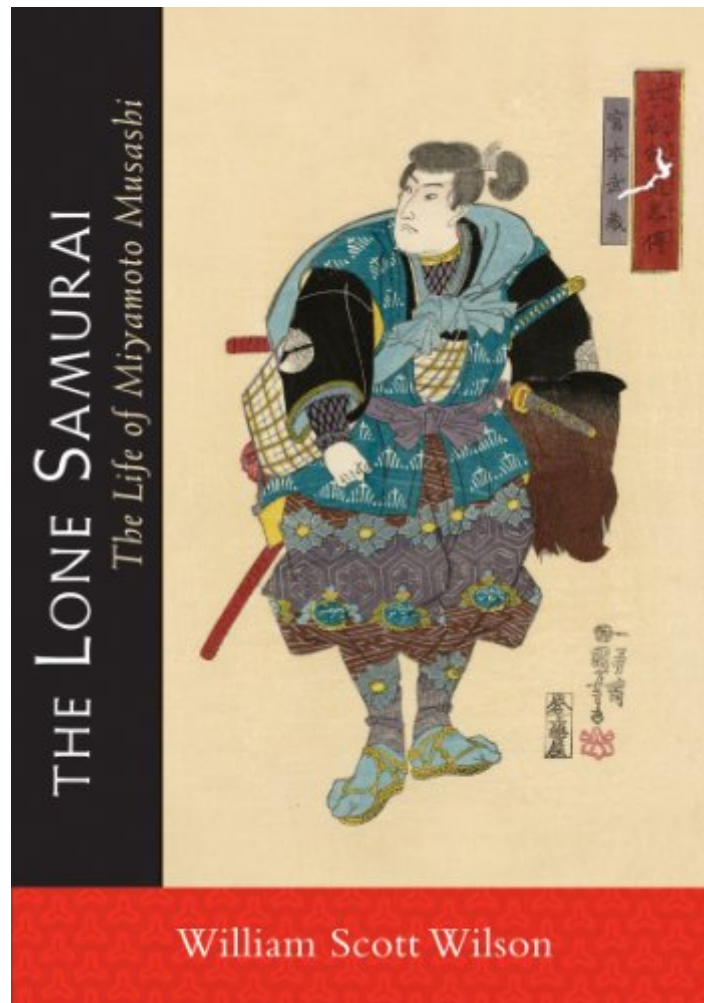


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The Lone Samurai: The Life Of Miyamoto Musashi



Synopsis

Miyamoto Musashi (1584â '1645) was the legendary samurai known throughout the world as a master swordsman, spiritual seeker, and author of the classic book on strategy, the Book of Five Rings. Over 350 years after his death, Musashi and his legacy still fascinate us and continue to inspire artists, authors, and filmmakers. Here, respected translator and expert on samurai culture William Scott Wilson has created both a vivid account of a fascinating period in feudal Japan and a portrait of the courageous, iconoclastic samurai who wrestled with philosophical and spiritual ideas that are as relevant today as they were in his time. For Musashi, the way of the martial arts was about mastery of the mind rather than simply technical prowessâ ”and it is this path to mastery that is the core teaching in his Book of Five Rings. This volume includes supplemental material on Musashiâ ’s legacy as a martial arts icon, his impact on literature and film, and the influence of his Book of Five Rings.

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Customer Reviews

Miyamoto Musashi, like Billy the Kid, Rob Roy MacGregor and Robin Hood, is a historical figure

who has become so obscured by fictionalized accounts and romantic dramas that it is difficult to separate fact from fancy. In "The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi," William Scott Wilson has stripped the legends away and presents a true historical account of the wandering swordsman, artist and philosopher. In this instance, the history is no less interesting than the fantasy. Wilson, who has an impressive resume when dealing with Musashi and the Samurai, having translated Samurai works such as "Hagakure," "The Life-Giving Sword" as well as Musashi's own "The Book of Five Rings," presents us with a "Real Live Human Being." He has sifted through the various conflicting history books and biased clan records, investigated the several "confirmed" birth places and graves of Musashi, and logically assembled an accurate history of the man, his philosophy and his biography. From his first lethal match at 13, to the famous duel at Ganryu Island that was to secure Musashi's place in history, followed by his later years refining his technique and maturing into the warrior-poet who would write "The Book of Five Rings," secluded in an isolated cave on the grounds of a Buddhist temple, Musashi's complete life is detailed. More than Musashi the warrior, it is clearly the seemingly contradictory image of Musashi the philosopher and artists that interests Wilson the most. Of Musashi's 60 duels, only the most important are given any coverage, but several of his paintings and works of art are analyzed in-depth, discussing both the skill Musashi had with an ink brush as well as the Zen Buddhist philosophies backing each piece.

For most Americans, Eiji Yoshikawa's fictional novel, Musashi continued to be the most vivid view of this legendary samurai warrior, Miyamoto Musashi. Yoshikawa's image of Musashi proves to be hard to shake. To reinforced that image, the three "Samurai Trilogy" movies starring Toshiro Mifune which was based on Yoshikawa's book, totally popularized Yoshikawa's Musashi. This is mostly due to the fact that Yoshikawa's book is probably the only book in the English language that dealt with Musashi's life in detail and even came out in popular paperback series in the 1990s. However, thanks to Wilson's new book, that is no longer the case. The Lone Samurai is the first English language biography on Miyamoto Musashi ever published. The book is highly readable, informative and considering the limited primary sources, pretty well researched. I seem to get the feeling that the author was trying to do his best to debunked the popular Yoshikawa's Musashi to the real man and his life. Musashi as a real man, still remains somewhat of a mystery to most historians. The book really isn't that thick and its pretty reflective on the lack of information on the subject. However, the author was pretty successful in presenting the facts in the simplest and most effective way possible for American readers for whom Japanese history, zen and culture may be bit confusing. I also enjoyed the maps presented in the book, one which traces Musashi's journey through life

which I thought to be well designed. One of the few weaknesses I thought the book could use was that it could have probably used some diagrams illustrating Musashi's style and what made it stand out so much. If anyone out there has seen that movie "Kill Bill Vol.

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