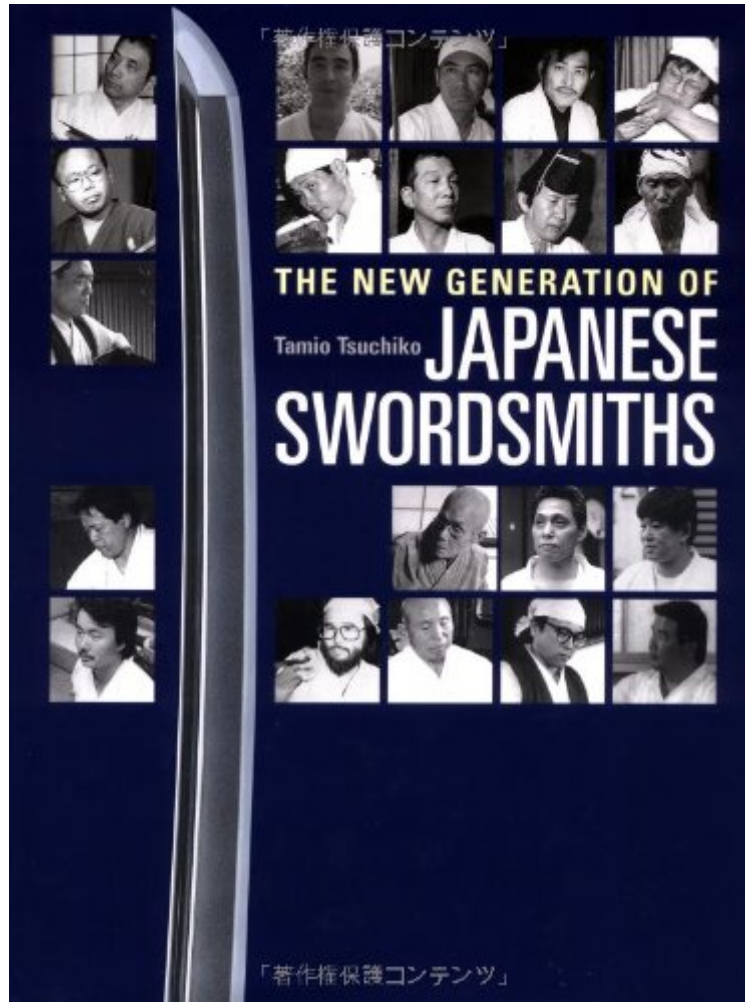


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The New Generation of Japanese Swordsmiths

Tamio Tsuchiko

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Tamio Tsuchiko : The New Generation of Japanese Swordsmiths before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Generation of Japanese Swordsmiths:

Unparalleled in its deadly cutting power, strength, and enduring elegance, the Japanese sword is a triumph of both technical merit and mythical appeal. For a thousand years the Japanese sword was the linchpin of the warrior class, the mainstay of social order, and the definitive weapon on the battlefield. Now incongruous with modern warfare and society, its practical role has been consigned to history. But the sword has retained its artistic and symbolic power. Most of the qualities that are considered aesthetically pleasing in the sword, from the intricate patterns on the steel itself to the blade's characteristic curvature, derive from its function as a weapon. The sword must embody both

lightness and durability, and the blade requires a toughness that is not too brittle or its effectiveness as a weapon would be compromised. The perfect harmony of these conflicting elements characterizes the swordsmith's art. The history of swordmaking was interrupted in the wake of World War II, when the occupying forces banned all activities associated with the Japanese sword. Many of the old swords were destroyed and, for those remaining, their status as weapons was changed forever. Today's working craftsmen form a new chapter in this history as they revive the art form and find a vital, meaningful role for the sword in modern society. In this insightful volume, noted sword expert, journalist, and editor, Tamio Tsuchiko, explores the world of gendaito, visiting its practitioners and sharing views and ideas. Through close-up interviews with twenty gendai-tosho, and dialogues between smiths and polishers, Tsuchiko presents the reader with a fascinating and enriching array of experiences, theories, and reflections from those at the forefront of modern sword craftsmanship, as they take this ancient art into purely aesthetic directions. Never before has such a thorough and illuminating study of this kind emerged. The book is divided into three parts, the first of which provides a context of sword history, from the types of blades, their respective periods, and the prominent styles of workmanship. This will primarily be of interest to specialists. Diagrams accompany explanations of key terminology, which can be cross-referenced in a detailed glossary and index. The centerpiece of *The New Generation of Japanese Swordsmiths*, however, hinges on part two, in which Tsuchiko visits twenty gendai-tosho, revealing their thoughts, experiences, and aims, and providing the reader with the most comprehensive discourse on gendaito to appear in English. In part three, Tsuchiko presents in-depth interviews with three of the leading figures of the sword society: Akitsugu Amata (Living National Treasure swordsmith); Kokan Nagayama (Living National Treasure sword polisher); and Mitsuo Shibata (Japan's most influential sword dealer). Each offers his own unique insight into the dynamic and changing picture of gendaito. Including over one hundred photographs of the artists and their most recent creations, this will be an important addition to the libraries of collectors, craftsmen and sword aficionados, as well as those with a more general interest in Japanese weaponry.