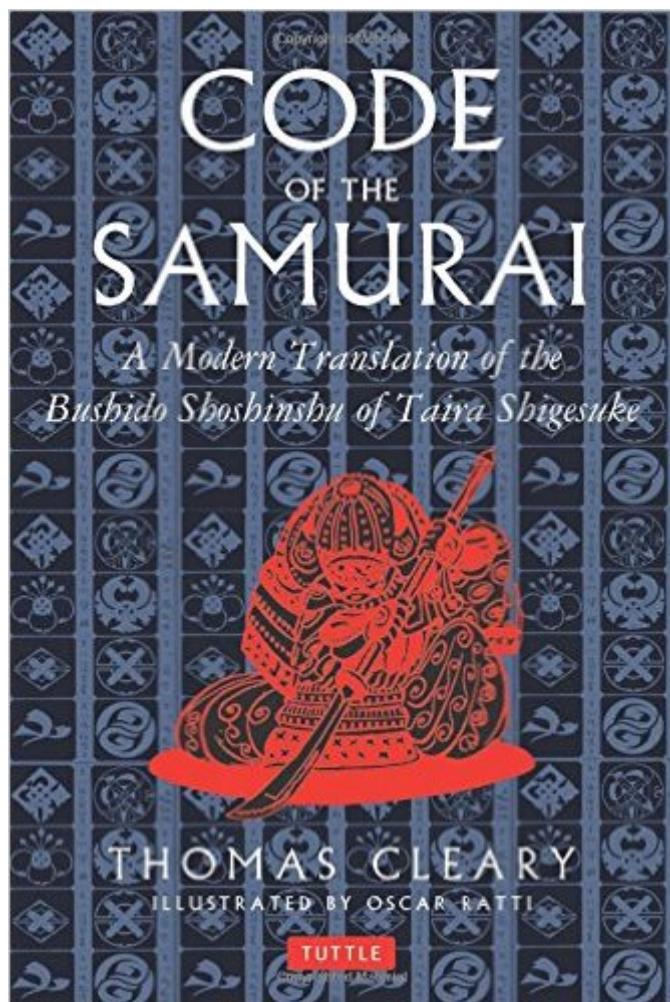


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The Code Of The Samurai: A Modern Translation Of The Bushido Shoshinshu Of Taira Shigesuke



Synopsis

Learn the ways of the Japanese Bushido Code with this very readable, modern translation of the Bushido Shoshinshu. Code of the Samurai is a four-hundred-year-old explication of the rules and expectations embodied in Bushido, the Japanese Way of the Warrior. Bushido has played a major role in shaping the behavior of modern Japanese government, corporations, society, and individuals, as well as in shaping modern Japanese martial arts within Japan and internationally. The Japanese original of this book, Bushido Shoshinshu, (Bushido for Beginners), has been one of the primary sources on the tenets of Bushido, a way of thought that remains fascinating and relevant to the modern world, East and West. This handbook, written after five hundred years of military rule in Japan, was composed to provide practical and moral instruction for warriors, correcting wayward tendencies and outlining the personal, social, and professional standards of conduct characteristic of Bushido, the Japanese chivalric tradition. With a clear, conversational narrative by Thomas Cleary, one of the foremost translators of the wisdom of Asia, and powerfully evocative line drawings by master illustrator Oscar Ratti, this book is indispensable to the corporate executive, student of the Asian Culture, martial artist, those interested in Eastern philosophy or military strategy, as well as for those simply interested in Japan and its people.

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Customer Reviews

The first time I read a book about samurai philosophy and customs, it was the Hagakure. After reading it, I felt sick and even embarrassed that I was so heavily into martial arts having origins in such a death-focussed, suicidal, slavish mentality. After reading it, I lost most of my interest in the

origins of the Japanese martial arts, and Japanese culture. How mistaken I was... Two years ago, I bought the "Code of the Samurai", and my interest immediately returned. This book was written one hundred years earlier than the Hagakure and thus it was written closer to the time when the Samurai were in fact warriors and not so only in theory (as they were at the time of the publication of the Hagakure). Both books have in intention the reformation of the Samurai class to what the authors consider to be proper moral standards. But after reading both, it seems evident that the Hagakure is a forlorn attempt to recreate some kind of "glorious" suicidal mindset that never existed much in reality. The "Code of the Samurai" gives suggestions for every facet of behaviour... Everything about this book is remarkably humane, and very well thought out. It promotes responsibility to all one's acquaintances, colleagues, and leaders. This book could be retitled as "How to be a Responsible Citizen". It is about how to live well, not about how to die.

In a time of peace, at the end of the Tokugawa regime, (1603-1867), the Samurai extended their duties into the administrative class, developing from mere 'attendants' to philosophers, scholars, physicians, and teachers, creating concise systems of mental and moral training. This class influenced the country's culture in profound ways, which continues to be felt and seen in modern day Japan. Fearing that the Samurai would lose their basic purpose and essential character, author Taira Shigesuke, (1639-1730) a Confucian scholar, wrote this handbook for the novice knight. For the beginning knight, this book would have been indispensable, in terms of conducting oneself in the true spirit of the Samurai. The book is structured in three parts, including subjects ranging from education, familial duty, frugality, courtesy and respect, laziness, discretion to military service, vassalage and loyalty to dealing with one's superiors. What is so valuable about this book for the modern western reader is that it provides age-old ethical guidelines that are exceedingly practical and relevant to the present day. Central to the Samurai philosophy is the notion of concerning oneself daily with death. Shigesuke emphasises from the outset, that, "As long as you keep death in mind at all times, you will also fulfil the ways of loyalty and familial duty." In other words, everything else follows from this basic attitude - a long life, and a character that will improve and virtue that will grow. This makes sense, of course, because as the author points out, when you think your time here will last, you're inclined to take it for granted, thereby saying things you shouldn't say and letting important matters slide because "...it can always be done tomorrow.

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