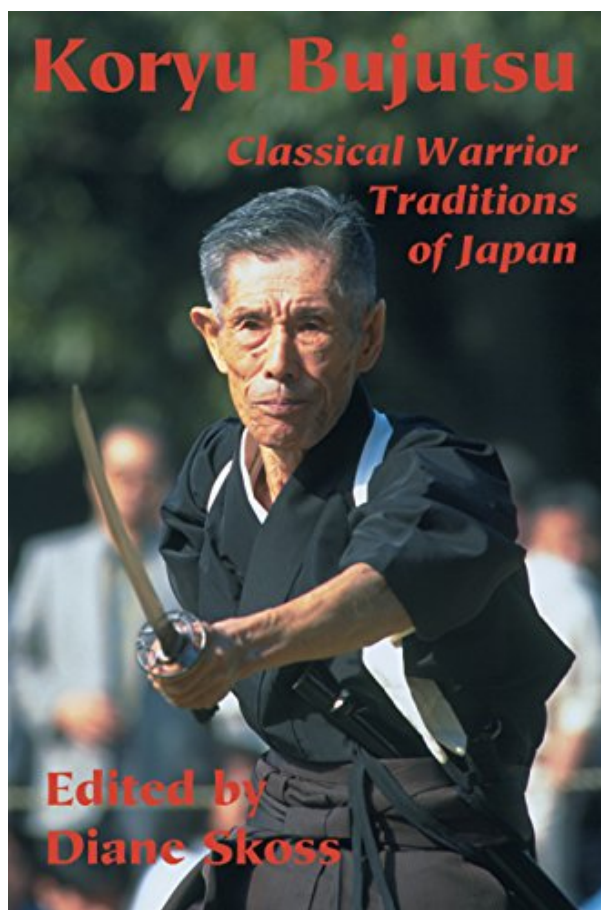
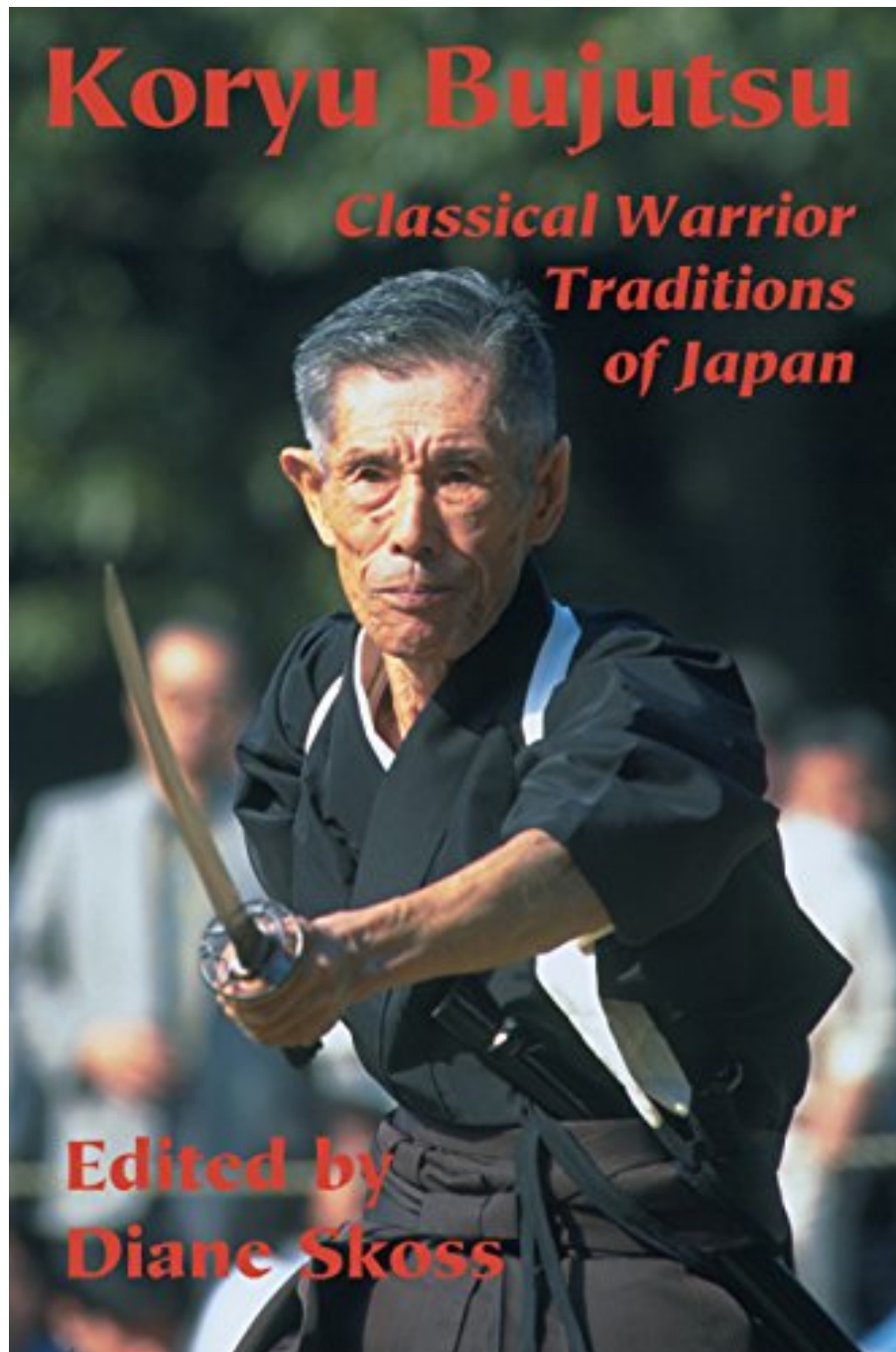


KORYU BUJUTSU: CLASSICAL WARRIOR TRADITIONS OF JAPAN BY DIANE SKOSS



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Review

After Donn Draeger's books, there have been very few publications that I would recommend to the English-speaking martial arts public in terms of authentic martial arts culture, history, and lore, especially concerning classical budo. This new book is a rarity, something that flabbergasted me. It's a winner; it encapsulates and brings into focus all the striving we and others like us have been doing all these years... This is probably the best book on martial arts this year, if not for several years past and hence... -- Wayne Muromoto, *Furyu: The Budo Journal of Classical Japanese Martial Arts and Culture*, #8 Fall 1997

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Koryu Bujutsu takes readers into the cabalistic world of Japan's classical bugei traditions through eight thought-provoking essays and interviews by authors with more than a century of collective experience in these arts. Editor Diane Skoss has pulled together the talents of six of the world's most distinguished Western students of the bugei to produce a stimulating and informative volume. This is a must-read for scholars, students and aficionados of Japanese martial culture! -- Dr. Karl Friday, Dept. of History, University of Georgia

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Overall this book is a "must-have" for anyone who is serious about the study of the Japanese Martial Arts, classical or modern, bujutsu or budo. -- Kim Taylor, Journal of Japanese Sword Arts, July 1997

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Koryu Bujutsu is a collection of eight essays by the world's most experienced non-Japanese practitioners of the classical martial arts, including Hunter B. Armstrong, Meik Skoss, Diane Skoss, David A. Hall, Liam Keeley and Ellis Amdur. These individuals have spent decades in Japan training and researching with the headmasters of a number of these ancient traditions, and their essays provide a behind-the-scenes look at these most exotic and secretive of the Japanese martial arts. Includes 33 photographs and bibliographical references.

Contents: "Introduction: Keiko Shokon" by Diane Skoss; "The Koryu Bujutsu Experience" by Hunter B. Armstrong; "The Meaning of Martial Arts Training: A Conversation with Sawada Hanae" by Meik Skoss; "Field Guide to the Classical Martial Arts" by Diane Skoss; "Marishiten: Buddhist Influences on Combative Behavior" by David A. Hall; "Tenjin Shinyo-ryu Jujutsu" by Meik Skoss; "Kato Takashi: Reflections of the Tatsumi-ryu Headmaster" by Liam Keeley; "Koryu Meets the West" by Ellis Amdur. With a Foreword by Colonel George H. Bristol.

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Most helpful customer reviews

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent & scholarly

By magellan

Written by some of the leading western experts who studied for years in Japan, this is an excellent introduction to the ancient Koryu or old arts of Japan. The book focuses mainly on the weapons arts using the sword, yari (spear), naginata (halberd), and so on, but jujutsu and the grappling arts also get discussed. Some of these authors were familiar to me from their contributions to martial arts journals like Furyu or the online Electronic Journal of the Martial Arts, like Ellis Amdur. Meik Skoss, the husband of Diane, was part of Draeger's original research team that went to Indonesia that resulted in Draeger's books covering Pentjak-Silat and the other Indonesian bladed arts, so I had high expectations about the quality and depth of the articles, and I wasn't disappointed.

As far as the coverage of the various arts is concerned, one thing that needs to be mentioned, since most people who study a martial art in the U.S. are studying karate or a similar boxing art like TKD or kung-fu, is that there isn't any coverage of that, since karate didn't arrive in Japan from Okinawa until the 1920s, and Japan really had no native tradition of boxing like ancient China, although China had a grappling art similar to jujutsu in the art of chin na, and in the north there was Mongolian wrestling. Jujutsu did have atemi-waza, or striking techniques, but it wasn't a separate art and didn't develop to the same extent that it did in China and Okinawa before being introduced into Japan. Why this is I don't know, but I point it out just in case.

I had one other comment about the Hunter Armstrong chapter. He discusses in detail iaido, which he feels has lost the combative aspect, if it ever had it, pointing out that drawing the sword isn't an issue on the battlefield since you'll already be in the ready with your sword drawn, and in the heat of battle, if you have to draw your sword, it's probably too late anyway. Draeger brings this issue up too in his book, and that especially since the end of WWII iaido curriculums have been modified to make them more artistic than combative.

While this may be true, this problem isn't unique to iai or kendo or the other weapons arts. Karate has the same problem too, and so do the other unarmed martial arts. Unless you are willing to put on the heavy contact gear and risk getting your head bashed in, you're not participating in the ultimate combative aspect of the art, either. Although the samurai of previous centuries honed their arts and skills on the crucible of the battlefield and in individual duels, this isn't medieval Japan anymore, and is no longer practical. So although I would agree with Armstrong that the paired partner practice is certainly more realistic than the solo katas of iai, even that doesn't come very close to the original environment, and I don't see much help for the situation unless people are willing to make pretty radical changes that are unlikely, if only for the liability reasons.

Overall, this is a fine collection of articles about various aspects of the old Japanese martial traditions that are still poorly understood in the west and outside of Japan in general.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

An insightful primer for studying Bujutsu/Budo

By Bryan Wither

I first became interested in studying Bujutsu and its lasting impact on modern martial arts as an exponent of Judo and the short staff (jo). As my interests grew more towards the cultural backgrounds of these arts, I was pointed to the Draeger books and Secrets of the Samurai. Having no prior base of information, these complex and deeply analytical books left me even more confused. What I found in "Koryu Bujutsu" was a way to simplify some of the jargon that was found in the deeper research. It also gave me a bit of insight as to why certain instructors teach the way they do, and that a sensei that constantly points out your mistakes is better than one that just lets you work. To paraphrase a line in the book: Kobudo is not a proper term for these arts, because the term kobudo implies that they are dead arts. Koryu bujutsu tells us that these ancient arts continue to effect the techniques learned in the dojo to this day.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

A faultless jewel in the martial artists' library !

By A Customer

It has been a pleasure to read Diane Skoss book. Since Donn Draeger's works, no author has touched on martial arts history, principles and ideas, with such expertise and knowledge. Diane is a true heir to "Bun Bu Ryo Do"(the pen and the sword, the same thing), the idea that the true martial artist must not only have technical proficiency, but culture and moral character as well. Buy this book and any other by Skoss : you won't regret it and it will raise your comprehension of the martial art you train in or, if you practice none, you'll have a better insight on japanese culture. RENATO ALCANTARA(Technical Director - Shintokai Dojo of Aikido - BRAZIL)

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