



The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Musashi is primarily known in the West as the author of *The Book of Five Rings*, a guide to swordsmanship strategies that became a essential business-strategy manual in the 1980s. Wilson, having translated Musashi's book into English, turns for the first time to biography, with as complete a life of the man behind the sword as possible, given his legendary stature and peripatetic, largely undocumented story. Musashi lived in the 17th century and had his first match at 13 with a *shugyosha* (an older, professional swordsman); only Musashi walked away alive. For three decades, he wandered feudal Japan, moving from patron to patron, taking on opponents in formal and informal matches, teaching others his art and sometimes taking part in clan and regional rivalries. He eventually settled in southern Japan, where his martial art skills led organically to visual art: simple-looking, highly disciplined ink-and-brush painting and calligraphy. Toward the end of his life, Musashi synthesized everything he'd learned into the literary work he is now best known for. Wilson integrates a considerable amount of Japanese history and culture into a short, dense book with lots of specialized information. Although Musashi doesn't become fully dimensional—and given the scarcity of primary source material, he probably can't—Wilson provides an extensive appendix of other materials that have depicted the legendary swordsman over the centuries.

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Review

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"William Scott Wilson's newest book offers up the most expansive English-language biography of Musashi to date. This lively and informative treatment is the product of a careful sorting and weighing of earlier works, in search of, as Wilson puts it, 'the single, consistent life within.' Wilson unravels and reweaves his material into a sometimes surprising narrative that significantly enriches our knowledge of Musashi and the legends surrounding him." -Journal of Asian Martial Arts

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