



Ninja: The Shadow Warrior

Joel Levy

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For centuries, the ninja has occupied a unique place in Japanese culture, straddling the border between fact and folklore. Through classical art, traditional proverbs, and superb research, this exquisitely designed volume takes a look back into the origins and history of these notorious “shadow warriors.” Explore their traditions and guiding philosophy, their weapons and martial-arts skills, their mystique as stealthy black-clad assassins, and their enduring appeal as icons of popular culture. A timeline goes back beyond even the very first ninjalike figure, and follows the movement right through the 1800s, when the final ninja mission ever was recorded: the attempt to infiltrate Commodore Perry’s “black ships” off Japan.

Ninja: The Shadow Warrior Details

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Author : Joel Levy

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From Reader Review Ninja: The Shadow Warrior for online ebook

Aliya says

This was a good book. One that I got for my brother several years ago because I liked it and I figured he would too... I don't think he ever finished reading it although it is not even that long. I guess he didn't like it as much as I thought he would...

Ninja – a person skilled in the art of stealth/one who endures.

It was a pretty informative book, giving a lot of history and background on ninjas (given the size of the book). It would have been nice if there were more pictures actually showing the different types of weapons they used as well as images on the different stances they took. They described them pretty well but images would have been clearer and correlated with the written description, providing better imagery for those who are unfamiliar. I like that it also included comparisons to the Samurai as well as controversies over whether ninja actually exist or not, since they were adept at secrecy and covert missions.

I wish my mom had put me in ninja lessons when I was a kid.

Tasha says

I would probably give this closer to four stars because of how the mythology of the ninja was presented and for the number of sources required for writing this book. A topic for which there is very little information and difficult if not impossible to authenticate.

This is a brief look from start to finish of the evolution of the shadow warrior. It is not a how to book. I really liked the time line, the history of what is believed to be the origin of ninjutsu, and the question it leaves you with - Were/Are Ninja's even real?

It also addresses how the view of what a ninja is has changed and how it has been commercialized which was very interesting to me.

This is a good place to start in learning about the Shadow Warrior.

Rubi says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and all the info on ninjutsu, ninja clothes and weapons.

I admit, some parts of the book was a little boring (about two chapters). I almost gave it a three star rating, but...

The art and cover were fascinating, the historical references and such were so good I had to give it a four.

I intend to keep studying more about ninjas and have decided to believe they're real :)

Truly great stories come from real life experiences or plausible accounts. So the fact that the cultural is so well documented in different forms convinces me they did exist (without the super powers of course haha).

Grace the Book Queen says

3.75 stars

An interesting look at ninjas as well as techniques and weapons they used. I also liked how the author talked about the controversy of whether ninjas existed or not. Highly interesting!

Rachael says

i wish there had been more written on kunoichi and i wish the references to the many other authors and books on the subject had a proper citation and bibliography.

i'm curious now though, since the ninja took so much from sun tzu's teachings, if the chinese had a formal ninja class as well? as i've seen similar types of techniques and teachings from my reading (especially around the 3 kingdoms time) and watched some awesome movies like red cliffs too.

i could have sworn when i went to the museum at kimbell for the exhibit on samurai armor there had been armor for hattori hanzo, and toward the end of the book it was mentioned that hattori hanzo was confused for a samurai, but earlier on in the book there were numerous references to there having been multiple hattori hanzos, so this bit gets confusing. also, it seems odd that ninjas would be leading naval attacks as opposed to samurai, or be buried with full honors, etc. which makes me wonder which hattori hanzo is which, and that it could have been possible that there had been a ninja (devil hanzo) and also later after the family rose through the ranks, a samurai as well .

i've also drawn some close parallels between the KGB during the cold war and the tv show "the americans" with a lot of ninja tactics, which i find fascinating.

Cindy says

It was fascinating to read about the lifestyle and techniques of a ninja. Much of the things I read about made me skeptical on how true it all was, but all in all, I've learned more about the ninja history. Their training is intense and some of their methods were pretty innovative for their time.

Nick says

This was a really nice book with a lot of very cool information crammed into it. Very glad i picked it up on a whim. It's excellent for a quick, enjoyable read(provided you like history and/or ninjas).

Zeke Chase says

I have a unique theory about the success of the Quentin Tarantino film "Kill Bill". The film(s) is both a

commercial success, as well as a critical one, and has become a significant title within pop culture – a trifecta, really. The only problem herein is that the film sucked. So why did it succeed? Well, a few reasons. Obviously it plays in the lust for revenge, it sates a certain gore porn blood sadism of our culture, and Tarantino has a knack for picking really obscure things to pay homage to (in this case, as one friend has pointed out to me, an outdated Japanese film genre called chanbara), but there's a missing element here. He's tapped into and exploited the hell out of a subculture that I don't believe is yet named. In terms of subcultures, you've got your goths, punks, trekkies, bikers, beatniks, hippies, emos, beliebers, twihards and countless others, but there's one out there that I don't think has been properly identified. I'm talking about single (generally white) teen or twenty-something women with a fascination with feudal Japan. Come on, we all know someone like this. She drinks sake, she says konnichiwa, she owns one of those Japanese robes with Japanese characters up the sides, sits at the ridiculously small table cross legged, considers her spirituality to be at least partially influenced by Shinto, whorishly paints her face to look Japanese at times, reads only manga, and watches television and movies only downloaded from a server in Hokkaido (only occasionally with English subtitles) – but ask them about the Shimabara Rebellion, and they'd look at you like you were speaking Greek[1]. You know who I'm talking about. So Tarantino marches into a board meeting with a bunch of Hollywood bigwigs and says, “Here's your idea: We make a pointless gore-fest bloodbath with little to no plot, make it five hours long, and, oh yeah, the protagonist will be a white woman that can punch her way out of a coffin six feet underground by using sensei martial arts and maybe she'll chop off the top of someone's skull along the way with a sword so sharp that the victim gets to finish her sentence before dying face first in the snow.” And corporate Hollywood says “Fuck, this is gold. We haven't exploited this subculture yet!” And the rest is history.

This incredibly longwinded introduction is due to the fact that I think Joel Levy has done the same thing with this book. I picked it up because I do have a genuine curiosity about the ninja – his historical self, not the pop culture representation of him (turns out, they weren't mutants or turtles, but they were at times teenagers). And to that end, it accomplished what I needed it to, I suppose.

The book, as other reviewers have mentioned, is short, and half its pages are filled with pictures. This makes for a very quick, light read, appropriate for both all ages. And there is valuable information in here. However, it's more or less just a composition of what could be Wikipedia articles. Each new subtitle requires an introductory sentence that becomes increasingly repetitive, and begins to sound like a droning high school essay. The content is only the lightest skimming of a glance, and one could easily accomplish the same task in spending an hour or two on Wikipedia.

The content is informative, and it is a broad history lesson on the ninja. It has a historical timeline, a section on their weapons, their tactics, their origins, their place in pop culture, and bios on key ninja figures like Hattori Hanzo. For that, not only is it all valuable information, but I'm certain I'll reference back to it in time. However, each chapter and section is too vague and sparse on the information offered. Levy would have been better off cutting half the pictures (none of which directly correspond to the subject of adjacent pages) and beefing up the text. Just delve into a little bit more detail.

I suppose this book acts as a good starter. It does accomplish the task of introducing the ninja, which admittedly I knew little about before hand. If I want something more detailed, perhaps I'll look into specific biographies of Hanzo or other iconic ninja.

[1] Please note, I have nothing against this subculture. I just find it noteworthy that it exists.

Morgan says

I picked this book up as a gift for a relative and decided to give it a read before it disappeared into the all consuming black hole that is commonly known as a "teenager's room". I'm glad I did, this is a interesting light read on the history of the ninja. It covers from before the time of the first ninjas to the last recorded ninja mission in the 1800's. It's written in easy to understand language and does not get bogged down in the details of each section. Each section is pretty through on hitting the important parts of what it is covering and sometimes directing the reader to where they can get more information. If you are getting this for a child / teenager who is interested or may become interested in the subject there is a short bibliography in the back of the book for more information. On a side note it's not really a long book, half of the pages have a picture of some sort on them, usually showing what the opposite page is describing. I would recommend this to anyone who is interested in the history of ninjas (child or adult) and to those looking for a place to start on learning about it. M.a.c

Lareina Lani says

I really like the in depth story about ninjas. Growing up in Hawaii I was able to require the knowledge of a lot of Japanese history and different aspects of the culture. My husband who is 100% Japanese has also enlightened me into more of his culture and background. He is a descendent of the Samurai Shogun, but as Where the outcast and beyond the socially non-accepted things/people in life seem to attract me more, I find myself drawn to the dark side of things. This book helped me to gain more insight in what is still a very secretive life. It reminds me not so different from the Mason's and secret underground sects, but on the Eastern side of the world. Very imformative, though I find myself still with many questions unanswered. More informative than other Ninja books out there that are very vague IMO.

TJ says

Fun and interesting look into the lives of Ninjas. This book give a nice overview of Ninjas, their history, training, etc. I enjoyed reading this book and there was an added bonus of interesting Ninja art throughout.

Eli Hornyak says

A nice quick read that gives a basic history of the Ninja.

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Mark says

This is a fun book filled with drawings, facts and fables about the ninja.

Should be accessible for a wide range of readers.

Notes

Learn how ninja's can stay underwater for hours

Joe Cowan says

Full of great info and wonderful illustrations, but found the wording a bit jumbled and had several typos. A couple parts the descriptions confuse the imagination. But worth keeping.
