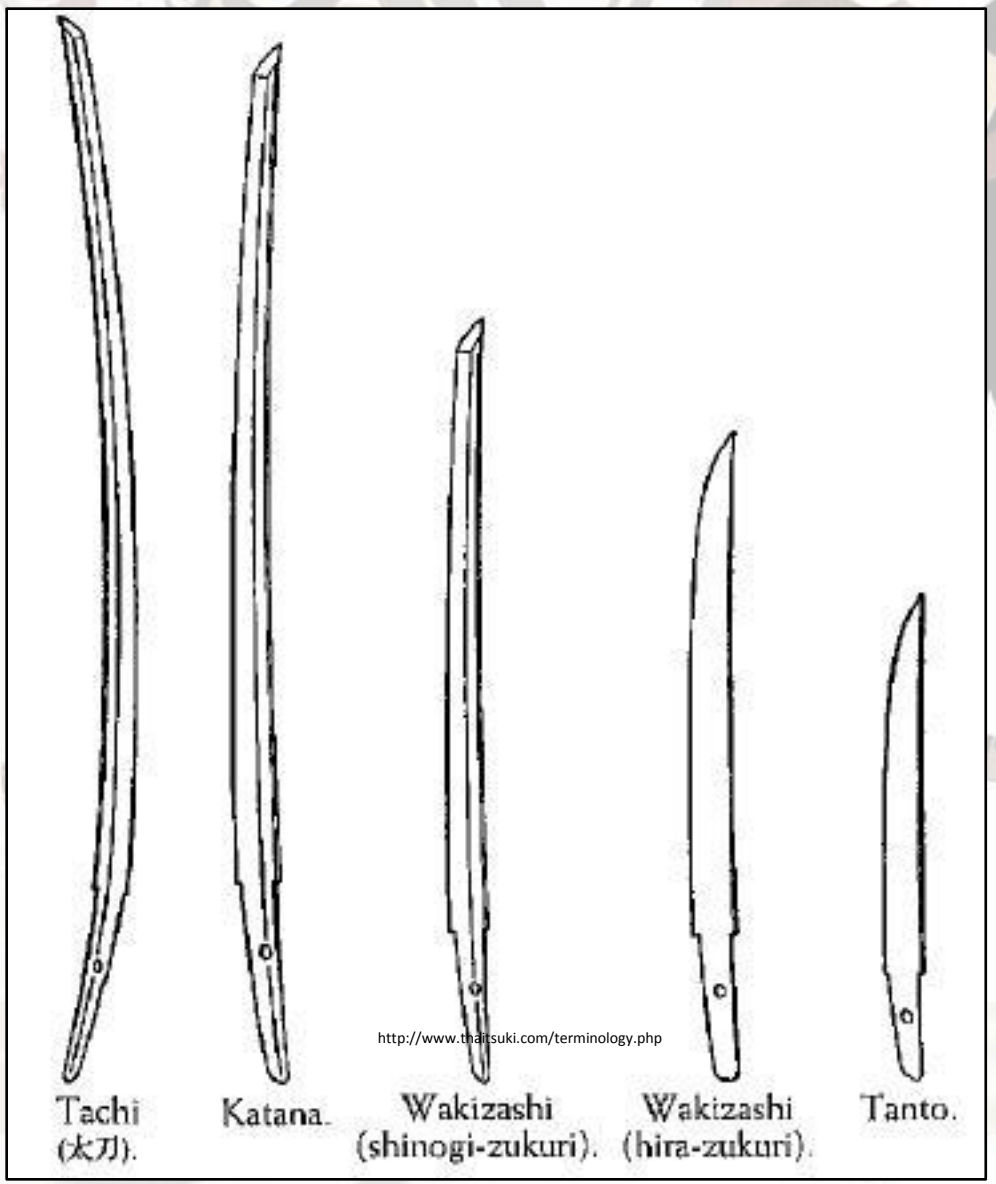
Refined Deadliness: An American Perspective of Samurai and Their Blades

By: Tiffany Arnold

Crash Course in Japanese Swords

- Tachi
- Katana
- Wakizashi



http://www.thaitsuki.com/terminology.php

Nagayama, 1997

Why Did the Blades Change?

- Trading
- Straight blades to curved
- Mongolian invasions
- Battle tactics change
  - Warring states, Japan unified
    - Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, & Tokugawa
- Meiji Restoration
- WWII
- Weapons vs. art

YAYOI PERIOD	300 B.C.-300 A.D.
HEIAN PERIOD	782-1184
KAMAKURA PERIOD	1185-1332
MUROMACHI PERIOD	1392-1572
EDO PERIOD	1600-1867
MEIJI PERIOD	1868-1912

Pieces In My Museum Display

Sōten Tsuba

Nara Tsuba

Pieces In My Museum Display

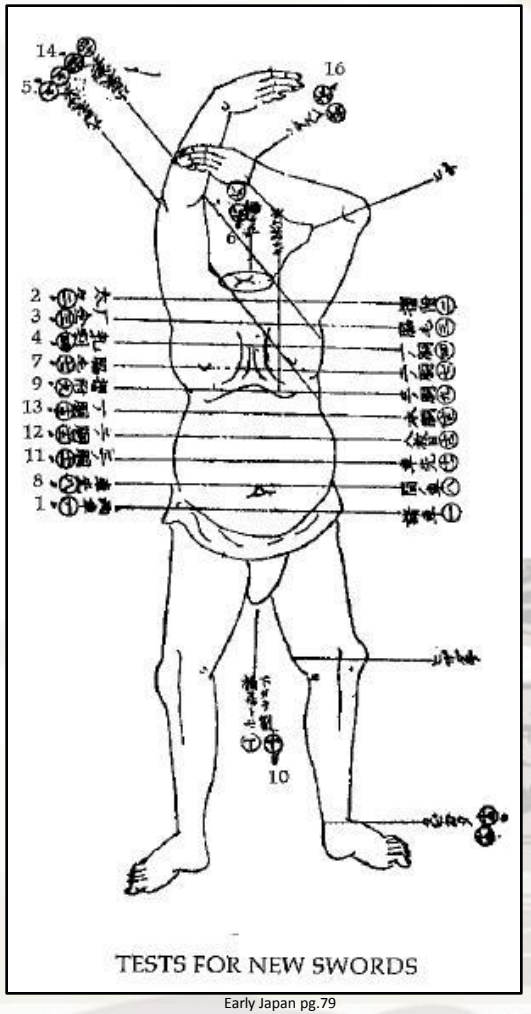
Ivory Scabbard & Steel Blade

Pieces In My Museum Display

Top to Bottom: 2 Army Parade Sabres, Modern Katana (unsheathed), & a NCO

American Perspective: Pre-Trade

- Every man was a samurai
- John Saris
- Samurai and test cuts
- No value for life?
- Barbaric



Early Japan pg.79

http://www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/culture/samurai.html

American Perspective: Post-Trade

- Commodore Perry
- Ambiguous nature
- Japan still trying to modernize
- Political strife
- Fear of the samurai
- Foreigners arm themselves out of apprehension and a perceived threat

http://www.spaciousplanet.com/world/guide/7-samurai-myths

American Perspective: Paris Expo (1867)

http://artmuseum.arizona.edu/exhibitions/faithful_samurai.shtml

- Exposition Universelle (1867) in Paris, France.
- Woodblock prints of traditional culture
- Trinkets sold to Western tourists
- Fear turns to admiration

American Perspective: Japanese-Russo War

- Seppuku (ritual suicide)
- Battle tactics gain them prestige
- Admiral Tōgō
- *Bushidō: the Soul of Japan*
- 'Way of the Warrior' translated across seas
- Impact on American high society → samurai now seen as Gentlemen

American Perspective: WWII

- Shock in response to Pearl Harbor
- Americans felt betrayed
- Anti-Japanese media & propaganda influence Americans
- Astonishment at kamikaze
- Japanese soldier=vicious samurai
- Cruel Japanese training
- Code of obligation

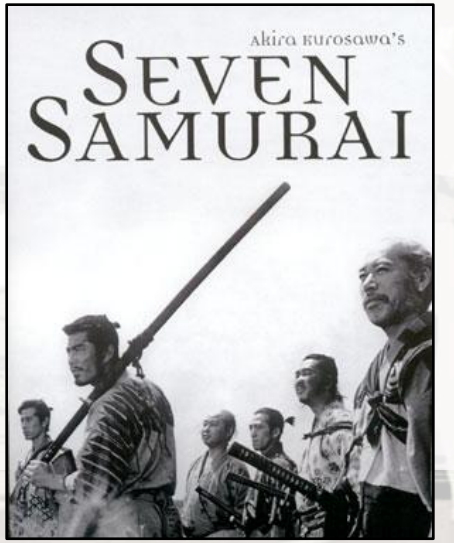
http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_4OYGjUrdllo/SMQ0QRYHyDI/AAAAAAAAG_k/ZPXRonk6_Qc/s1600-h/italy_mair_1.jpg

American Perspective: Atomic Bomb

- Bombing necessary
- John Hersey's account
- Feelings of guilt
- Japanese seen as people again

American Perspective: 1950s – 1990s

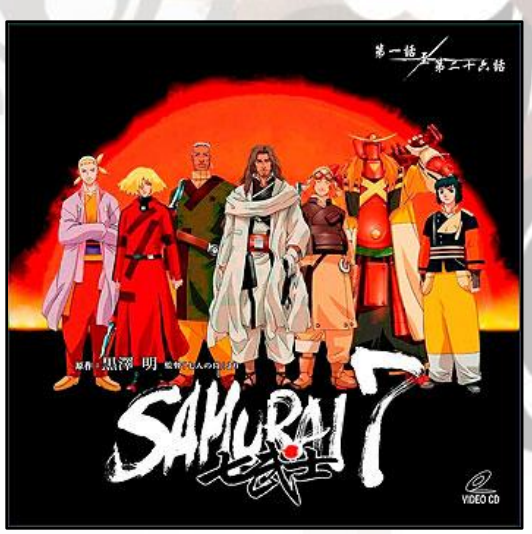
- Tourism, love of Japanese culture
- Japan helps America
- Americans become wary of the trade imbalance
- Fear of economic war
- Samurai in business suits
- Global marketing



http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/webpages4/filmnotes/fns04n4.html

American Perspective: 21st Century & Popular Culture

- Akira Kurosawa's films
- Samurai becomes a cowboy
- Samurai relatable once again
- Samurai are glamorized
- Samurai cool and marketable
- Samurai=symbol of spirit



http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SamuraiSeven

http://www.blingcheese.com/wallpaper/view/95/kyo+wallpaper.htm

http://kagamizen.wordpress.com/2009/12/10/samurai-champloo-review/

Things To Take With You

- Perceptions based on misunderstandings and cultural confusion.
- Stereotypes based on ‘national’ character and not individuals
- Impressions differ based on our age, race, education, etc…
- A country’s image shifts based on war, tourism, economy, & media. They go through cycles of appearing ‘good’ and ‘bad’.
- Samurai legacy will continue to adapt.

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Display set up in Lovejoy Library across from the Information and Circulation Desks