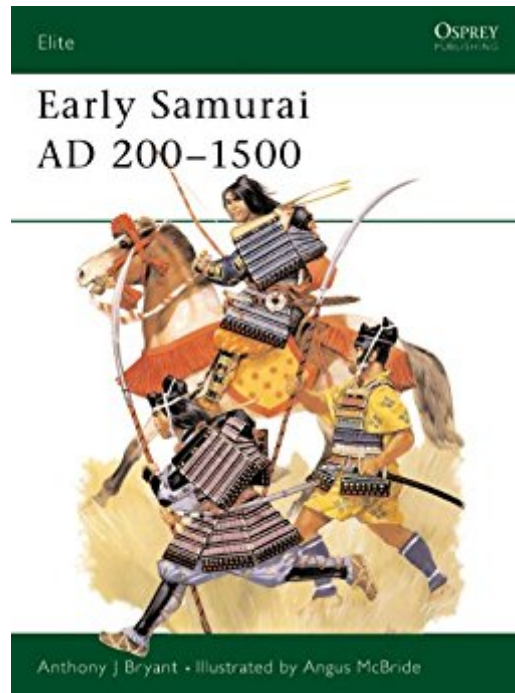




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Early Samurai AD 200–1500 (Elite)



Synopsis

War played a central part in the history of Japan. Warring clans controlled much of the country. The wars were usually about land, the struggle for control of which eventually gave rise to perhaps the most formidable warriors of all time: the Samurai. Ancient Yayoi warriors developed weapons, armour and a code during the ensuing centuries that became the centrepiece for the Japanese Samurai. Anthony Bryant chronicles the history, arms and armour of these truly elite warriors, from the rise of the Yayoi through the Genpei War between the Minamoto and Taira clans to the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Nice study of the old samurai. Detailed and supported with pictures.

I had the paper copy and had to get the Kindle version when I saw the low price. Beautiful art (Angus McBride's passing is a loss to historical art), in depth history, and worth having in your library.

I was very disappointed by this book. I expected to get a book about the early samurai and, instead, I got a book which focused mainly on the history of early Japan. Half of the text is taken up by an excellent, but unwanted history of Japan's early political development. That's NOT what I paid for. There's very little discussion of training, tactics, and weaponry. Armor is covered well, but the author insists on referring to all components by their Japanese names. My Japanese is non-existent and I kept asking myself why the author couldn't just write "breastplate" instead occasionally. Weapons aren't covered well. There is a drawing on page 16 of early swords which are very different than the curved katana sword we associate with later samurai. The text doesn't mention these swords (keeping in mind that the sword was supposedly the "soul of the samurai"), their evolution, variations, etc. The b&w photos and color plates are excellent as one could expect for an Osprey book. I was very disappointed in this book and would caution readers seeking more information on early samurai that this book will offer them little other than the color plates.

Meticulous armor details and visually appealing artwork (McBride) makes this a worthy addition to Osprey's books of samurai interest, and it focuses on a little known period. For a reader seeking less armor detail and more on what these guys actually did, I would recommend some of Stephen Turnbull's books in addition to his Osprey titles. Again, the plates were awesome; I especially liked Queen Himiko and the sohei.

Early Samurai provides an interesting and much needed look into the military history of classical Japan. The content of the text is well researched and gives an excellent analysis of the development of Japanese arms and armor. The text is supplemented by B&W photographs and detailed illustrations, including 12 full-color plates by Angus McBride. The book covers a period lasting more than 1300 years, so there are some gaps that could be filled by future Osprey titles. "The History of Japanese Armor [Volume 1] From the Yayoi period to the Muromachi Period" by Ritta Nakanishi is an excellent companion to this book. Given my experience, I would definitely recommend adding this title to your collection! The full-color plates include: -Himiko's Yamataikoku, c. 230-Invasion of Korea, 366-Mononobe's chastisement of Iwai, 527-Jinshin no Ran, 672-Naramaro's Revolt, 757-Tenkei no Ran, 940-Heian fashions, 1083-Go-Sannen no Eki, 1086-Dan-no-Ura, 1185-Shokyu no Ran, 1221-The Mongol Invasion, 1181-Nanboku-cho, c. 1333

Another excellently researched, written & illustrated Osprey title. Bryant brilliantly summarizes the

timeframe which includes the proto-historic era, the various clan insurrections, Gempei War, Mongol invasions, and the early shogunate. McBride masterfully captures the very early Japanese warrior class in his artwork. This book is a steal at the price.

While the Momoyama, Sengoku, and Edo periods of Japanese and samurai history have certainly captured a fair share of attention in print and cinema, episodes in the earlier development of the samurai tradition are certainly their equal in color and drama, both of which are wonderfully captured in this volume. Impeccable scholarship related in layman's terms, interesting anecdotes, outstanding photographs of period armor (or reproductions), and the unsurpassable artwork of Angus McBride make this volume a must for the enthusiast of Japanese or military history. A brief summary of Japan's military history from the court of the mysterious Himiko through the Heian and Kamakura/Nambokucho periods is followed by a detailed explanation of the development of Japanese armor and weapons of these eras. The photos of o-yoroi, do-maru, and haramaki-do armors are among the best I've seen in any work on samurai armor, even though they are only black and white. Angus McBride has, once again, captured the spirit of the epoch in his splendid color plates. The samurai armor of the Kamakura period is classic! You will not be disappointed with Osprey's Early Samurai.

Although this book is easy to read and follow, I found it that it skimmed the surface a bit much. It glosses over many important events and people who were instrumental to the development of the warrior & samurai class, without delving too much into anything. I think that the format of this entire series is more at fault than the author is; however, a more informative, detailed, and equally easy to read is Turnbull's "A Military History". The one thing which this book does cover very well is the armor, and Bryant probably does know what he is talking about, as he is an armor specialist. This mismatch between the very deep armor and the quite shallow history made me confused as to who the author's intended audience was supposed to be.

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