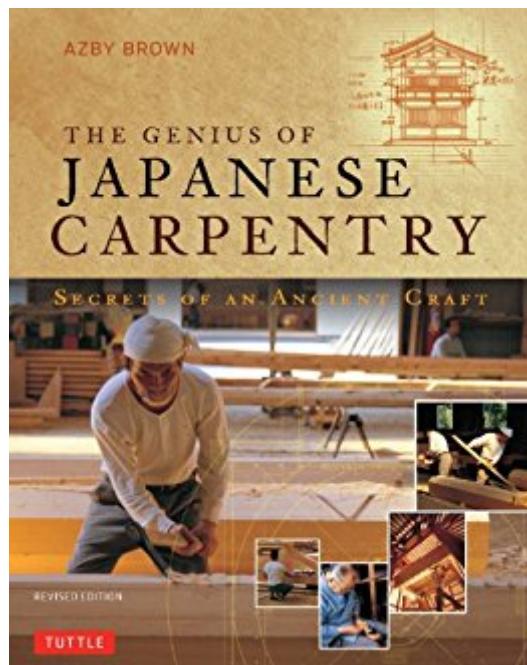


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Genius Of Japanese Carpentry: Secrets Of An Ancient Craft



Synopsis

The Genius of Japanese Carpentry tells the story of the 1200-year-old Yakushiji monastery in Nara and the dedicated modern-day craftsmen who are working to restore what has been lost to the depredations of time, fire and warfare. Although the full monastery reconstruction will not be completed until 2030, one of the main temples, the Picture Hall, has been completely restored employing the same woodworking technology used to create the original building. This new edition of an architectural classic is by Azby Brown— one of the world's leading experts on Japanese architecture. It contains a new preface and many new text materials and photographs— most of them now available in color for the first time. Azby Brown chronicles the painstaking restoration of the temple through extensive interviews with the carpenters and woodworkers along with original drawings based on the plans of master carpenter Tsunekazu Nishioka. An inspiring testament to the dedication of these craftsmen and their philosophy of carpentry work as a form of personal fulfillment, The Genius of Japanese Carpentry offers detailed documentation of this singular project and a moving reminder of the unique cultural continuity found in Japan.

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Customer Reviews

An excellent book. The author is able to capture the spirit of Japanese carpentry. I to was able to apprentice under a daiku. A bit on usual I admit but probably the best teacher I ever had

Great book on the building philosophy, selection of materials and historical notes of building a traditional shinto temple. Not really an instruction manual on how carpentry. I was looking for a book to show me the in's and out's of wood working, but this is not really that book. It does go into detail on how to select the wood and why. It also has super great pictures on the actual temple itself.

Not sure why people gave some harsh reviews of this incredible book? The book is centered around the restoration of Yakushiji shrine in Nara, with the original grandeur expected to be complete in 2030. I do not agree that it is a beginners book, and it is not exactly a how-to book because this art can only be taught from master to apprentice; learning it from a book would be impossible. Further, it states in the intro that it is not a "how-to" book, but is rather an on-the-scenes account of the project; a mission the book excels at. The book explains all the basic techniques that go into this style of construction, from design, to wood selection, to the tools and joinery. It is filled with great b/w photos and diagrams of the architectural design and follows the story as a group of builders recreate an authentic reproduction of the "Picture Hall" in the Sanzo-in sub-compound from 1985-88. On this journey the book aptly demonstrates the intricate process and does so in a way that is easy to understand even though it is next to impossible for anyone not trained in this art to do. The book also tells the story of the fascinating master-builder Nishioka (born 1908) who was contracted for the project, and the author's experience as an apprentice in Japan learning this art. An amazing feature of Japanese temple architecture that Nishioka adhered to is the selection of trees. Giant Hinoki are selected according to orientation, so for example a tree on the north side of a mountain is marked, and the northern exposed side of the wood is used on the north facing side of the temple. I don't think westerners ever dreamed of this concept. One of Nishioka's first projects involved restoration work on Horyuji shrine. Built some 1300 years ago, Nishioka determined the original wood construction was good for another 2000 years! Amazing. If you are unfamiliar with Yakushiji, it is a 1,300 year old Buddhist monastery (built 718). It offered a stunning recurrence of the symetrical composition of the Chinese prototypes, including 2 32-meter pagodas. This is one of my favorite books on traditional Japanese architecture, and I highly recommend it.

I have three of Azby's books and while each has different strengths and weaknesses I think this was the least interesting of the three. If you are planning to build or simply interested in wooden temple/shrine complexes then this is an in depth study on the subject and you will surely be pleased with the detail and photos provided. If however you are interested in Japanese "carpentry" in a larger sense - basic principles, joints, techniques, examples of use in housing and furniture, you will be disappointed as this book really should be called "Carpentry of Japanese Shrines/Temples".

Not a 'how to' book at all. Ordinary carpenters may be mystified by it. Excellent at conveying the spirit and sophistication of the high level temple woodworkers of Japan. Well worth the time to both read and contemplate the history and tradition that inform and support the elegance of traditional building arts in Japan written by a long-term resident (Japan) American architect.

Great book and beautiful pictures but it's all about a single restoration of a Temple. Not much about how to actually do Japanese carpentry.

I am not a carpenter by trade, though I have worked in construction. My father, however, was a carpenter. I always found the concepts and rules of constructing buildings to be fascinating. A hardly, practical application of the physical sciences is necessary for the creation of buildings that stand the test of time. From that perspective, I have found traditional Japanese carpentry to straddle the line between science and art. The intricacies of their woodworking techniques are not well understood in the west. This book was a pleasant glance into the practice of dedicated tradesmen from another land. I got to see some examples of joinery, and also the training and attitudes of the craftsmen. This was well worth the read and the asking price.

Well researched and written, and w great reverence. Well illustrated, inspiring!

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