



Letter to the Editor - January 2009

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Letters to the Editor

Byline:

Yukino Semizu writes about **Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior**.

Dear Editor

In your review of **Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior** (BfK No.172), the reviewer enthusiastically writes about 'historical and cultural context' and 'explanation of philosophy underpinning the samurai way of life'. Did it ever occur to you to check if these 'historical and cultural contexts' are accurate before you publish such a glowing review?

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Whilst the author has collected an impressive amount of information on various matters and items, though quite a number of them are inaccurate (e.g. the term *gaijin* is a 20th-century invention), he clearly has no understanding of the 'historical and cultural context' of his own work. In the time of the story, a shipwrecked European would be immediately handed to the authority, and no individual would have been allowed to keep the person in a private household. The author also does not seem to be aware that bullying happens when a group of people expect everybody to be the same. The Japanese in the early seventeenth century expected Europeans to be different. The author explains that the term *gaijin* is a derogatory one, which clearly indicates that he misunderstands the Japanese attitude to westerners now as well as then. In addition, girls did not go around with boys having adventures in seventeenth-century Japan. Quite the contrary, girls and women were strictly separated from male members of society, even from their own family in higher classes. These are only a few examples of the author's unfounded assumptions.

By all means review the book but the readers must be alerted that this is entertainment with an exotic setting, and its cultural backgrounds are not to be taken seriously. Or we will be in danger of misleading young people that the norms and values they know are the only ones and universal.

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[Young Samurai.jpg](#) [3]

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