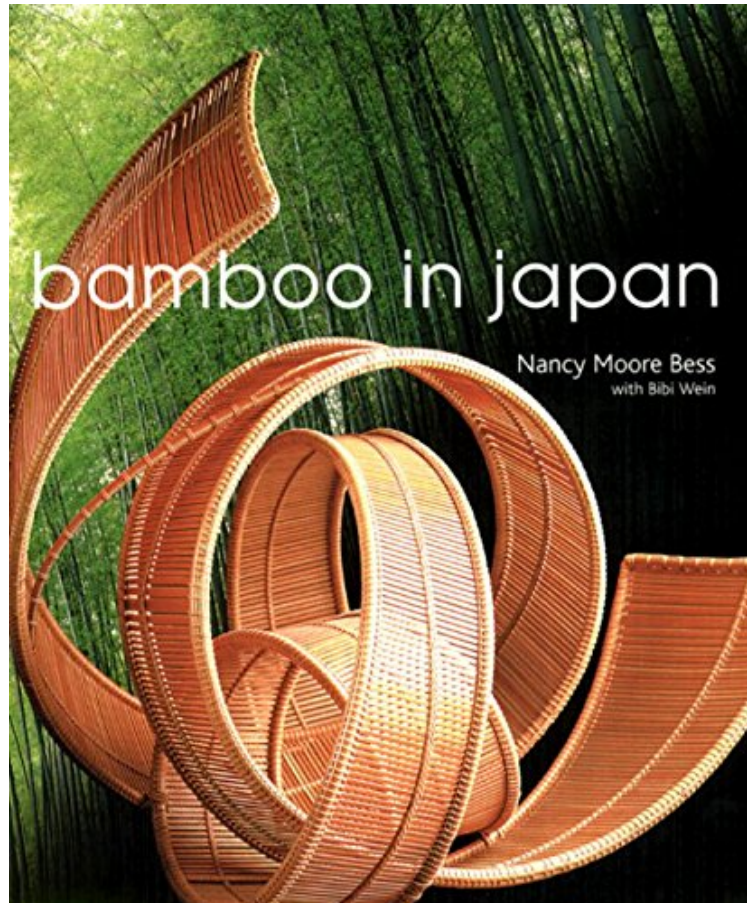


Bamboo in Japan

Nancy Moore Bess

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Nancy Moore Bess : Bamboo in Japan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bamboo in Japan:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful book on bamboo!By Warwick Press Nancy Moore Bess has produced a fabulous, informative book - and the photographs are instructive as well as being beautiful. I had an occasion to take a two-day Japanese basketry workshop with her. Don't ever pass up the chance to be around her - her knowledge of all things Japanese is vast and she has wonderful stories to tell.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very infirmativeBy ForrestGreat book, tons of info0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great Text and Mostly Good PicturesBy sgI thought the pictures could have (actually, SHOULD HAVE) been better. The text is interesting, and this book is a nice addition to my library of books on bamboo.

For centuries, bamboo has fascinated legions of craftspeople, plant lovers and devotees of the handcrafted object. And nowhere is bamboo used more elegantly and distinctly than in Japan. Its presence touches every part of daily life-art, crafts, design, literature, and food. Its beauty enlivens textile designs, restaurant interiors, and holiday festivities.Artist

and writer Nancy Moore Bess set out to discover just how bamboo-crafted objects attained such heights in Japan. Her travels took her throughout the country and through centuries of accumulated artifacts. After five years of dedicated research and study, she has assembled an unparalleled collection of writings and photographs that uncover the hidden beauty of bamboo. Bess unveils the boundless uses of this versatile material in Japan, ranging from the most elegant and refined to the most humble. She shows bamboo's applications in the garden and home, in the cherished accessories of the tea ceremony and flower arranging, and in an endless array of crafts from elaborate baskets to colorful kites and dolls. With illuminating text and over 250 exquisite photographs, illustrations, and artwork, Bess reveals the intricacies and resources of this lovely versatile plant. She explores the Japanese reverence for bamboo's natural beauty, adding immeasurably to our knowledge of the Asian sensibility and lifestyle. [AN ON-LINE INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR]

Q. Could you tell us a little about your background? A. I am fond of saying that I'm a basketmaker from California. It is true, but ... I have lived on the east coast more years than those early, influential ones in California. I learned to make baskets on 8th Avenue in New York City. Basketry is the focus of my professional life. I weave, teach, and exhibit. No matter where I travel, I find basketmakers and a conversation begins. Much of my first trip in Japan (11 months in 1986-87) was devoted to meeting basketmakers and watching them work.

Q. What motivated you to write this book? / What got you started? A. When I first wrote the book proposal, I was thinking only of those basketmakers I had met in Japan - how hard they worked, how varied their baskets, how ubiquitous basketry was in Japan. As the book topic broadened to include ALL of bamboo in Japan, I found that I had much to learn, and the research began. Each interview led to more library work. Each book in the library led to more interviews. It was a never-ending circle for five years. I still can't resist a good book that reveals something new to me about bamboo in Japan.

Q. Could you tell us a little about the contents of the book? A. The main thesis of the book is that bamboo touches every aspect in daily life in Japan, even in urban Tokyo or Osaka. At first, everyone tends to think this is an overly 'romantic' approach; however, upon more careful examination (or reading of *Bamboo in Japan*), it becomes clear that, unlike other single 'material' in Japan, bamboo is linked to everything - language, ritual, home life, food, design, art, and crafts. Other plants are important, pine and rice straw, for instance. But they don't have both the symbolism AND the practical use, it is 'either/or.' Only bamboo touches the everyday and the elegant, the practical and the elite, the farmer and the urban housewife. Only bamboo can go from kitchen *zaru* to the artwork of Living National Treasures.

Q. What do you see as the centerpiece of the book? / Why is the book important? A. The marriage of text and illustration makes *Bamboo in Japan* successful. This bond allows the reader to penetrate the book at many different levels - one can look at the illustrations, read only the captions, dive into one section or all. All the text and illustrations are tied to the main thesis - bamboo touches every aspect of daily life in Japan - so the impact is considerable. *Bamboo in Japan* is important, in part, because it hasn't been done before. Earlier English-language books on the topic of bamboo covered part of the story, but not all. This book offers everyone a chance to really read about this incredible plant in Japan and its many guises. *Bamboo enchants*, and *Bamboo in Japan* lets the reader experience this.

Q. What did you yourself learn from writing the book? A. So many things ... some personal and emotional. I learned that I can't do everything, but I can be persistent and decide my priorities. I knew I was attracted to bamboo as a craft material, but I didn't realize how passionate I would become about bamboo as a plant. I'll never stop reading and learning about bamboo and never stop being an advocate for bamboo workers.

Q. What would you like readers to take away with them after reading this book? A. I'd like people to acknowledge the bamboo craftspeople for their skill, vulnerability, and dedication. I'd like everyone to look to other cultures with an open mind and heart. I'd like them to walk down a lane in Japan and SEE the bamboo.

Q. What people or books were influential in the writing of your book? A. The Japanese publications about bamboo and crafts were an amazing resource. I only wish I could read them myself and not have to rely on sections being translated for me. That separation between me and the information is troubling. I always think there is one more book I need to read, one more craftspeople I need to talk with, one more garden I need to photograph ... then I'll be on top of it. The bamboo enthusiasts in both Japan and the USA were amazing. We all share a common passion, and they were generous with information and, sometimes, funding. The Japan Bamboo Society in Kyoto was especially helpful, as was The American Bamboo Society here. I'd still be writing if ABS hadn't helped me out with grants!

Q. What are your plans for the future, in terms of new books or other projects? A. I don't think I'll ever stop the research on bamboo. At the moment, I am concentrating on gathering information about bamboo as a 'motif' in folk tales around the world. I suspect that will be my next book. However, the link to Japan will not be broken. I try to assist others who want to do research there; I keep in touch with bamboo folks there and with basketmakers; I get back whenever I can scramble together the money for a ticket. There is nothing like the feeling of flying into Narita or arriving on the night train into the bamboo region of Beppu - that expectation of yet another wonderful bamboo moment!

Q. Is there anything else the reader should know? A. Find something you are passionate about and pursue it. Or borrow my passion, bamboo in Japan, and immerse yourself in another world.

"... a worthy addition to the library of anyone interested in bamboo and its place in Japanese culture." *Orientations*"It's beautifully produced, astoundingly comprehensive, and obviously a labor of love." *Surface Design Journal*"... stunning

graphics, photographs and comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the big grass. Recommended." Kansai Time Out"Anyone who has interest in bamboo, bamboo crafts, rituals, or Japanese culture would benefit from owning this beautiful book." Bamboo: The Magazine of The American Bamboo Society"A must for any library." Los Angeles Basketry Guild Newsletter"... speaks to an American basketry artist's passionate engagement with a ubiquitous Japanese material and, by extension, with Japanese culture." American Craft"Beautiful photography makes this book a coffee table star, but the thoughtful scholarship elevates it to the permanent reference shelf." Oregonian"A visually stunning book with beautiful layout, extraordinary photographs, and sensitive, well-written text." Fiberarts"Part lavish coffee-table book, part illustrated encyclopedia, it is an exceptional blend of beauty and instruction." Joseph Lapenta, Ikebana International"A spectacularly beautiful book... Broad in coverage and fascinating to peruse ..." ChoiceFrom the Publisher

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Only bamboo can go from kitchen zaru to the artwork of Living National Treasures." What do you see as the centerpiece of the book? / Why is the book important? "The marriage of text and illustration makes B in J successful. This bond allows the reader to penetrate the book at many different levels -- one can look at the illustrations, read only the captions, dive into one section or all. All the text and illustrations are tied to the main thesis -- bamboo touches every aspect of daily life in Japan -- so the impact is considerable. "B in J is important, in part, because it hasn't been done before. Earlier English-language books on the topic of bamboo covered part of the story, but not all. This book offers everyone a chance to really read about this incredible plant in Japan and its many guises. Bamboo enchants, and B in J lets the reader experience this." What did you yourself learn from writing the book? "So many things ... some personal and emotional. 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About the Author

NANCY MOORE BESS is an internationally known textile and bamboo craftsman. For the past 30 years, she has been creating unique baskets that reflect her research into the cross-cultural, especially Japanese, influences on her craft. Her continuing interest in multicultural art forms led her to explore the structural and aesthetic properties of bamboo. She lectures on basketry and bamboo around the world and is an active member of the American Bamboo Society. Her studio is in

Amherst, Massachusetts, where she both weaves and writes.