



SABER

Throughout the ages, various forms of sword fighting have expressed different cultural philosophies. The swordplay of Alexandre Dumas' *Musketeers* was not so much a practical means of defeating an enemy as an art of interaction, in which honor was more important than even survival. The highly disciplined samurai of Japan invested their swords with great ritual significance, while the crude pirates of the Spanish Main used their cutlasses like butchers' knives, reflecting their lack of respect for life. As always, in cultural expression one may read clues to identity.

So too in the *Star Wars* universe, where Jedi and Sith duel with ancient weapons known as lightsabers. To the uninitiated, lightsaber combat can seem like a confusing blur of swipes and blade clashes, but on close examination, the secrets of the Jedi Knights become clear. To understand the combat of these warriors, we must delve into the sacred history of the fabled Seven Forms of Jedi lightsaber combat and look at how these have played out in the *Star Wars* saga. Only then can we understand the extraordinary combat moves of Yoda, perhaps the greatest lightsaber master the Jedi Order has ever seen.

BY DAVID WEST REYNOLDS