



Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army

By Meirion Harries

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Soldiers of the Sun traces the origins of the Imperial Japanese Army back to its samurai roots in the nineteenth century to tell the story of the rise and fall of this extraordinary military force.

Meirion and Susie Harries have written the first full Western account of the Imperial Japanese Army. Drawing on Japanese, English, French, and American sources, the authors penetrate the lingering wartime enmity and propaganda to lay bare the true character of the Imperial Army.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This is a well-written, comprehensively researched survey of the Imperial Japanese army--its fighting power and mentality. The Harrieses (*Sheathing the Sword*) describe an ethos based on service to the "Japanese way," embodied in the emperor. The book argues convincingly that the Russo-Japanese War marked the zenith of the army's popularity and efficiency. Over the following three decades it fell victim to its own myths. The soldiers increasingly advocated transforming Japan into a self-sufficient garrison state through total physical and psychological mobilization. This ideology, however, was not translated into operable strategy. Unable to conquer China, the army embarked on war with the West as well. This reckless advance into the unknown involved missed opportunities and repeated mistakes from Bataan to Imphal. Spirit and willpower were expected to compensate for material weaknesses. Unreflected decisions were made at all levels of planning and command. Eventually the gap between the samurai way and modern high-tech warfare became obvious even to true believers. But by the time of Japan's WW II surrender its army had unrepentently inflicted death and destruction throughout the Pacific on a scale that continues to assert Japan's status as an outsider among Western-style democracies. This first-rate analysis will appeal to general readers and specialists alike.

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From Kirkus Reviews

``How was it possible," the husband-and-wife Harrieses ask about the Imperial Japanese Army, ``for an organization displaying the highest of soldierly qualities to possess such a capacity for barbarism?" In this nicely researched, compelling history of the Imperial Japanese Army from its inception during the Meiji Restoration to its dissolution in 1945, the authors (*Sheathing the Sword*, 1987, etc.) answer that question well. At the core of the paradox lies the code of bushido, the ancient ethos of the samurai that, according to the authors, was perverted by modernizers of the Japanese military into a philosophy that exalted death and violence and taught contempt for the vanquished. These alterations, the Harrieses say, ``did indeed contribute to war crimes." The development of the Imperial Japanese Army evidently was also pervasively influenced by the military institutions of Europe (particularly Germany), and, in emulating the armies of Europe, the Japanese distilled much of the best of both the samurai and the European traditions while developing a fighting force that could compete successfully with those of the Great Powers. Once it emerged from international isolation, the authors explain, Japan began to imitate Europe's imperialism as well as its militarism. Detailing Japan's intrigues against China and Russia and its successes in the first Sino- Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, as well as its successful though peripheral involvement in WW I, the Harrieses show how the island nation's warlords developed a hubris that led inexorably to Japan's imperialist adventures on the Asian mainland and war with America. The authors go on to tell the story of the atrocities of the WW II Japanese forces and the collapse of Japan's martial tradition in the wake of defeat, and assess the modest role of the military in postwar Japanese life and policy. A fine history that analyzes the military legacy of the Imperial Japanese Army and assesses moral responsibility for its excesses. (Sixteen pages of b&w illustrations--not seen.) -- *Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

Praise for *Soldiers of the Sun*

"This book ought to be read as a necessary prelude to the ill-informed and uncultured debate that rages in the United States. The lessons of history, and of what happens when a thwarted nation finds itself encircled, are

there to be learned."

-- Newsday

"A fine history that analyzes the military legacy of the Imperial Japanese Army and assesses moral responsibility for its excesses."

-- Kirkus Reviews

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Dennis Stclair:

Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but still delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort that will put every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army but doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource info that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into fresh stage of crucial contemplating.

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