



JAPAN AND KOREA (Armies of the Nineteenth Century: Asia)

Ian Heath

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This volume provides a detailed study of the astonishing reinvention of the Empire of Japan during the 19th century as it emerged from 200 years of self-imposed isolation to become a military superpower. As late as the 1850s the country remained technologically and militarily stagnant, but within just 40 years - in what must rank as the most rapid and comprehensive cultural transformation in world history - it had managed not only to absorb and successfully imitate several hundred years of Western technological progress, but had become one of the late Victorian world's top ten military powers. During the same timeframe it also embraced the concept of colonialism, and with its invasion of China in 1894 and virtual occupation of Korea soon after took its first fateful steps along a road that would lead, with horrible inevitability, to head-on collision with the Allies in World War Two.

The evolution of its army, arms, uniforms and tactics during the 19th century are all covered, from samurai armor to Western uniforms, and from Katana to Krupps. Korea, by contrast, participated only reluctantly in military modernization, and adopted a limited program of reform only under foreign pressure - especially Japanese, but also American, Russian and Chinese - in the closing decades of the century. Such reforms as the country attempted nevertheless proved too little and too late, and were insufficient to prevent Korea becoming first a puppet state and then a colony of its maritime neighbor. The final part of the book comprises a detailed index for the five volumes of the series published thus far.

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