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Pirate Of The Far East: 811-1639 (Warrior)

Warrior

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Pirate of the Far East

811-1639



Stephen Turnbull • Illustrated by Richard Hook

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Synopsis

Feared throughout the Far East, Japanese pirates were likened to 'black demons' and 'flood dragons'. For centuries relations between Japan, Korea and China were carried out through a bizarre trinity of war, trade and piracy. The piracy, which combined the other elements in a violent blend of free enterprise, is the subject of this original and exciting book. Stephen Turnbull vividly recreates the pirates' daily lives, from legitimate whaling and fishing trips to violent raids. He explores the bases and castles used by the pirates and uses eyewitness accounts and original artwork to give stunning descriptions of a vicious and brutal life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I remember when I first saw this title advertized earlier this year. 'Pirate of the Far East 811-1639? What the heck?' This had to be the most obscure title yet published by Osprey! Nonetheless, as a fan of both Samurai Warfare and Stephen Turnbull, I went ahead and bought it. I was not disappointed. To sum it up, Turnbull examines 800 years of raids on the civilizations of China, Korea, and of course Japan by bands of cutthroats, mercenaries, lordless Samurai, and plain scum, and the wars of revenge fought against them both on land and at sea. These fierce and unruly warriors, known for their cruelty and complete lack of respect for any ruler or religion, had the ragtag

appearance one would expect, but many managed to acquire Samurai weaponry and armor. In fact, one of their greatest leaders, the 'pirate-king' Murakami Takeyoshi, was of an illustrious Samurai clan. Turnbull opens his book with a summary of the history of these fearsome seamen, and goes on to describe their culture and outline their history. He then examines their physical appearance, clothing, armor, weapons, and ships, and then looks at their daily life, chain of command, and the various types of raid they made. Then he examines their tactics and the battle experience of individual pirates. He closes the title with sections on museums, sites, and further reading. As with another recent warrior title, the plates and plate commentary are spread out throughout the book, rather than being grouped together at the center and back.

Unfortunately, the first thing one notices about this book is what seems like a typo in the title. Instead of 'Pirates of the Far East,' it's 'Pirate of the Far East,' which suggests piracy wasn't so much of a problem in the region because there was only the one pirate—and that the author isn't a fan of either definite or indefinite articles. I'm sure this was done intentionally, but it does read oddly and sounds tinny. This slim book is a typical edition of the Osprey military history series. All of these books are less than 100 pages, illustrated, and focus on a specific class of warfighter over a defined period. In this case, the book presents a class of pirates called wako for the period from 811 to 1639. Wako literally refers to Japanese pirates, but—in fact—these marauders of the high seas were often mixed nationality crews. The book also provides information about counter-piracy activities and those groups of warriors, such as Shaolin monks, who fought against piracy back in those days. This book covers a range of topics including: the life of a pirate, pirate ships, strategy, tactics, and weapons—as well as the history of these groups. The book has five actual chapters, but there are short units providing important information that would usually be appendices, e.g. a chronology, a discussion of museum exhibits, and an annotated bibliography. The illustrations are mostly drawings, but include maps and photographs as well. Some of the art is drawn in the present-day by the illustrator Richard Hook, but some are historic pieces from art collections. The photographs also include some present-day photos of locations that were once bases of piracy, as well as photos of museum exhibits (e.g. topographic and other models).

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