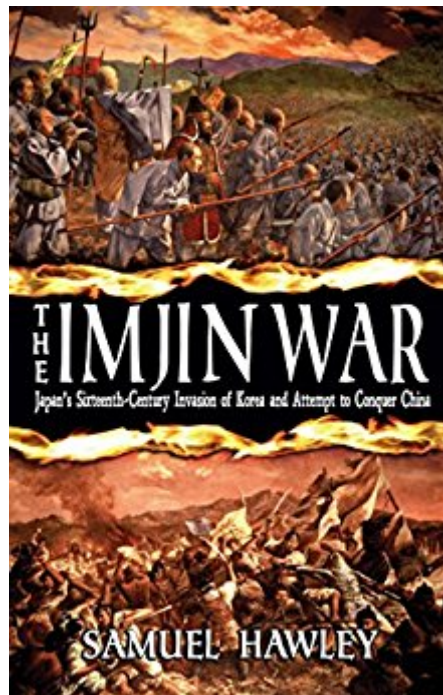




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The Imjin War: Japan's Sixteenth-Century Invasion Of Korea And Attempt To Conquer China



Synopsis

“Magnificent!” (South China Morning Post) “A wonderful read!” (JoongAng Daily News) “The scope is truly vast!” (Seoul Magazine) “Like a prelude to Shogun!” (StrategyPage.com) “A feast!” (Shogun-ki) In May of 1592, Japanese dictator Toyotomi Hideyoshi sent a 158,800-man army of invasion from Kyushu to Pusan on Korea’s southern tip. His objective: to conquer Korea, then China, and then the whole of Asia. The resulting seven years of fighting, known in Korea as imjin waeran, the “Imjin invasion,” after the year of the water dragon in which it began, dwarfed contemporary conflicts in Europe and was one of the most devastating wars to grip East Asia in the past thousand years. The Imjin War is the most comprehensive account ever published in English of this cataclysmic event, so little known in the West. It begins with the political and cultural background of Korea, Japan and China, explores the diplomatic impasse that led to the war, describes every major incident and battle from 1592 to 1598 and introduces a fascinating cast of characters along the way. There is Hideyoshi, hosting garden parties as his armies march toward Beijing; Korean admiral Yi Sun-sin, emerging from a prison cell to take on the Japanese navy with just thirteen ships; Chinese commander Zhao Chengxun, suffering defeat after promising to “scatter the Japanese to the four winds”; the courtesan Chu Non-gae, luring a samurai into her arms and then jumping into the Nam River with him locked in her embrace. One nation fighting to expand, another to survive. Shockwaves extending across China and beyond. The Imjin War is an epic tale of grand perspective and intimate detail of an upheaval that would shape East Asia for centuries to come.

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Customer Reviews

This is a great book on a war that few in the West know about. [Equally great, in my view, is Stephen Turnbull's "Samurai Invasion: Japan's Korean War 1592 -1598." Compared to Turnbull, Hawley delves a little deeper into the Korean perspective, while Turnbull has a wealth of detail on the Japanese. But this is not a criticism of either; I read them both, Turnbull first, then Hawley, and in so doing it reinforced many of the key points of the war.] One of the most gripping chapters in Hawley's book deals with "The Annals of The Chos'n Kingdom" and how these priceless historical records were nearly destroyed. Koreans are meticulous about record keeping, and the Annals which began in 1413 CE and ended in 1910 are claimed to be the longest continual record of a single dynasty in the world. They were written without interference from the king and his court, and followed the Confucian belief that records kept in the present would help future generations learn from the past. It was also felt that record keeping encouraged the living to follow principles of integrity and benevolence in order to keep their own legacy unmarred, and that this sense of responsibility towards one's legacy should apply especially to the king. As an example of the independence of the Annals, there is an actual entry that documents the king falling off his horse. Embarrassed that the fall would enter into the Annals, he told his scribes not to record the fall. They silently nodded and wrote away. The Annals recorded both the fall, as well as the king's order not to record the incident. The Koreans kept four identical copies of the Annals in different locations, so that a fire or other disaster in one location would not wipe out the entire historical record. During the Imjin War, the invading Japanese army found and burned three copies of the Annals, and narrowly missed the fourth. The last remaining copy was then taken to a remote location where it survived the war. After the war, the court used the surviving Annals to once more make additional copies of their kingdom's history. Lessons from this book are as true today, as they were in 1592: some wars begin because of a colossal misunderstanding (the Japanese thought that the Koreans would welcome them, and could not understand why they fought back); not keeping up with the technology of the time can put you on the losing side (the Koreans did not exploit the matchlock firearm, which was used by the Japanese against them, to devastating effect); leadership is the ultimate force-multiplier (Admiral Yi Sun-shin's leadership of

the Korean Navy enabled it to rule the waves against the Japanese, even when greatly outnumbered); politics and personal agendas frequently trump the common good (one of Admiral Yi Sun-shin's Korean rivals succeeded in getting him fired during the war; he was later reinstated). A final observation is on the sheer savagery of war. In some battles, the victorious Japanese killed every man, woman, child, dog, cat, cow, pig, and chicken that they could. Both sides routinely cut the heads off dead bodies, in order to bolster claims of battlefield success. At least 60,000 Koreans lost their lives in the Second Battle of Chinju, most of them massacred after the taking of the city. The Japanese sent approximately 30,000 noses from dead Koreans to Japan as war trophies, and to this day they remain buried in an enormous mound in Kyoto, misnamed "The Mound of Ears." The war left Korea in terrible shape, nearly bankrupt, and it took them centuries to recover and to rebuild. As examples, two hundred years after the war ended, the Koreans still could not afford to rebuild their destroyed palace in Seoul, and agricultural production was still below pre-war levels. Perhaps even more than the 1910-1945 Japanese colonization of Korea, this war goes a long way toward understanding why Koreans have ill feelings toward Japan. Hawley is to be commended for his scholarship, and for being a pretty good writer, too. The book is very readable. It's hard to find in print at affordable prices, so consider the Kindle option.

Very good book. As a Korean American who wants to learn more about his culture this book detailed everything that I wanted to know and more about the Imjin War. The book is fairly long but did not feel like a chore to read. The author does a great job of balancing the political, military, and diplomatic aspects of the war without failing to mention the human aspect of how destructive the war was. The book mainly focuses on Korea but gives a good background of China and Japan as well. I cannot fully attest to the accuracy of the book as it is difficult to find many books on this topic in the west but many of the stories seem to be well researched and have been corroborated by many of the stories that I have learned from reading about Korean history.

This is an absolutely great book on the Imjin War. This is a time period where information is not easily accessible. The book covers the two Japanese invasions of Korea between the years 1592 and 1598. The book appears to be fairly well researched. It gives the viewpoints of the Koreans, Ming Chinese and Japanese throughout the entire text. This makes it easy to understand why each nation acted in its own interest during the conflict. Key events, leaders, battles, etc. are discussed in fairly good detail. The strengths and weaknesses of each nation are discussed. Diaries and written accounts from all three participants are used as the resource material. The aftermath and

consequences of the conflict are also covered in good detail. Anyone interested in this time period in Asian history would probably enjoy this book. It is not meant for those looking for just a brief summary of the conflict. It is very detailed. The only things lacking would be illustrations and pictures but otherwise this is a great book! I highly recommend this book.

This is a thorough, well researched view of an important war. It is written to a western audience that knows little of Asian culture. I was thoroughly entertained. There are times where the author would repeat a story, and the lack of maps made it hard to follow at times. This might be a problem with the kindle version though. The Names of places in Korea were not always easily found by google. Also, do NOT google "chindo". It is an island in south western Korea, just leave it at that.

The megalomaniac, Toyotomi Hideyeshi, dictator of Japan wants to rule China and all of Asia, even had dreams of going on to conquer Europe. There was a 'monkey wench' in this Great Plan, little Korea. The Japanese had to go through Korea to attack Ming China. The Japanese dominated the land but the Koreans dominated the Seas. Yi Sun-Sin, admiral of the Korean Navy, is one of the greatest Admirals of History and the Hero of this war. He brings, Toyotomi Hideyeshi mania to dust. Thousands of lives are lost, mostly Korean in this war. Today the Korean People still have a great hatred for the people of Nippon as a result of this war. A outstanding military history and a excellent study of the folly of going to war to fill the ego of a maniac. The people of all lands should be careful of who they let rule over them whether it's a Democracy or a Dictator.

The book brings to life the main characters at this point where Korean, Chinese and Japanese history intersects in vivid detail. The events leading up to the War are revealed, and the prosecution of the War are laid out in memorable ways that Westerners and non-Westerners alike will see how names of people and places may change but the Human Animal has not changed one iota. "Nation shall not lift up a sword against another nation, neither shall they learn war anymore....."

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