



# What Were They Thinking?: A Fresh Look at Japan at War, 1941-45

*John D Beatty, Lee A Rochwerger*

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**What Were They Thinking?: A Fresh Look at Japan at War, 1941-45** John D Beatty, Lee A Rochwerger Merriam Press Military Monograph 90. Second Edition (December 2011). The military leadership of Japan, dominated by the ages-old clans of the samurai class, embarked on a war in 1941 believing that the Americans and British wouldn't fight, but they also knew that Japan could not win a prolonged war. If the West didn't quit...well, the Japanese had no contingency for that. So why did Japan start a war at all? This and other questions are addressed in *What Were They Thinking? A Fresh Look at Japan at War, 1941-45*. Other topics include: (1) The Japanese military was dominated—and divided—by ancient clan rivalries. (2) The Meiji Constitution, the structure of the Japanese government before 1945, was a recipe for military tyranny. (3) With a few exceptions, the Japanese Army was not well equipped, but was trained to attack even if the situation was hopeless. (4) The Japanese Navy was never adequate to the task required of it in the Pacific War; the merchant fleet was even worse. (5) The Japanese air forces suffered from acute shortages throughout the conflict that were often the result of their industrial shortcomings. (6) Planning in the Japanese military often ignored hard lessons of all kinds—their own and those of others, disregarded intelligence that did not fit their ideas, and often overlooked obvious options. (7) Japanese industry was not able to keep up with the demands of the war in part because they had not learned the techniques of mass production. (8) By the middle of 1942 the only open question about the end of the Pacific War was not if Japan could win but who would reach Tokyo first: the Americans or the Soviets. (9) The kamikazes were the most effective ship-killing aircraft of the war in the Pacific. (10) Peace overtures before 1945 often came from low-level Japanese officials not authorized to negotiate, offering terms none of the Allies would or could accept. (11) Neither the atomic bombs nor the Soviet invasion of Manchuria compelled Japan's military leadership to seek peace; only the Emperor's decision drove them to surrender. (12) The history of the Pacific War after 1945 was written to fit postwar needs, not always to tell the truth of what happened. (13) Japan thrived before 1941 and after 1945. So why did they go to war at all? John D. Beatty and Lee A. Rochwerger discuss these and many other issues in this provocative and imaginative inquiry into Japan in World War II. Contents: Dedication; Foreword; Chapter 1: Picking A Fight: Thoughts On Why Japan Started A War With America; Chapter 2: Bringing A Knife To A Gunfight: The Samurai War Machine; Chapter 3: The Sharp Edge: The Japanese Warrior And His War; Chapter 4: Shackled To A Corpse: Samurai Grand Strategy In The Pacific War; Chapter 5: Useful Savages: The Pacific War and Memory; Works Cited; The Authors; Index; 107 photos/illustrations. The Authors: John D. Beatty and Lee A. Rochwerger between them have nearly a century of military history research and study. Both are retired from the U.S. Army where they worked in the one part of the vast and variegated intelligence community that still requires original thought. They live in suburban Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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