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**The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies.** Compiled by the War History Office of the National Defense College of Japan. Edited and translated by Willem Rummelink. Leiden, the Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2015. ISBN 978-90-8728-237-0. Maps. Photos. Charts. Notes. Appendix. Glossary. Indexes. Pp. Xxxii, 640. \$87.50.

This is the first and only unabridged English translation of a volume from the 102-volume War History Series (Senshi Sōsho) published by the War History Office of the Japanese National Defense College between 1966 and 1980. While this alone makes the book unique, it is even more noteworthy because the volume deals with the little-known (to English speaking military historians at least) Japanese invasion of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) in early January 1942. Since one can only understand how the Japanese fought in the Pacific by looking at the Senshi Sōsho series, and as *The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies* shows in detail how the Japanese planned and executed their very successful conquest of the NEI just a month after the attack of Pearl Harbor, this gives the reader an “unparalleled insight” (p. xv) into Japanese wartime operational planning in a military campaign.

While the title suggests a comprehensive treatment of the Japanese invasion of the NEI, the book in fact deals mainly with the *operations* of the Japanese Sixteenth Army from the early January until the early March 1942, when the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL) surrendered. But this is not really a limitation, since the activities of this unit arguably were the most important in the success of the military campaign.

*The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies* was written in the 1960s by a Japanese Army veteran of the campaign. He was not a professionally trained historian and consequently, only a few pages are devoted to the run-up to the invasion, and there is little analysis of the war plans or their execution. (The author does, however, write that once Japan decided that war was inevitable, the conquest of the NEI was necessary to provide Japan with oil.) The bulk of the text – more than 500 pages – is devoted to operational details, including: planning by the Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo and the orders issued by it to the Sixteenth Army; the landings in Sumatra, Balikpapan, Ambon, and other islands in the archipelago; and the invasion and conquest of Java. The excellent maps and diagrams in the book are of great benefit in understanding the movements of various units, and the photographs of both Japanese troops in the field and unit commanders provide additional context.

The Japanese invasion of the NEI was, at the time, unprecedented in its scale in the military history of the world. The invasion also included the first-ever Imperial Japanese Army paratroop operation (a surprise attack on Palembang, the source of more than half the oil produced in the NEI) (pp. 288-89). In any event, when Lieutenant General Imamura Hitoshi, the Sixteenth Army commander, entered Batavia (today's Jakarta) on 7 March 1942, hostilities were effectively over and the Japanese had suffered only limited losses in capturing a strategically important area with priceless resources. As for the actual surrender of Dutch forces, there is an interesting dialogue between the senior Japanese commander and the governor-general of the NEI, in which the latter states that while he is the senior Dutch official in the islands, he is unable to surrender KNIL military forces because only the Dutch queen has that authority. The clearly exasperated Japanese

commander responds: "Do you mean you can make war but cannot surrender?" Ultimately, a solution was found: the governor-general would not formally surrender, but ordered all Dutch forces "to suspend the current hostilities." (pp. 529-33).

The importance of *The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies* is that it reveals that the Japanese Army consisted of officers who were experts at planning and executing complex operations involving air, land, and sea forces. The Japanese who defeated the colonial Dutch troops in the NEI were not lunatics wielding samurai swords who simply showed up on the beaches of NEI, shouted banzai, and then somehow defeated the KNIL. On the contrary, they were military professionals who carefully planned and then brilliantly executed an invasion that first outflanked and then destroyed the Allied enemy that opposed them.

A final note. This book is part of a larger project that has as its goal the translation into English of those volumes of the War History Series that deal with Japanese military and naval operations in the Netherlands East Indies. Willem Remmelink, an expert in Japanese and Indonesian history and the translator of this book, is working on a translation into English of the *Senshi Sōsho* volume covering the Japanese Navy's operation in the NEI. A third volume, dealing with the Japanese (Army) Third Air Force in the NEI, may also be translated in the future.

While *The Invasion of the Dutch East Indies* is definitely a book for the specialist, its reasonable price and unique features will make it attractive to all those with an interest in the operational history of World War II in the Pacific.

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