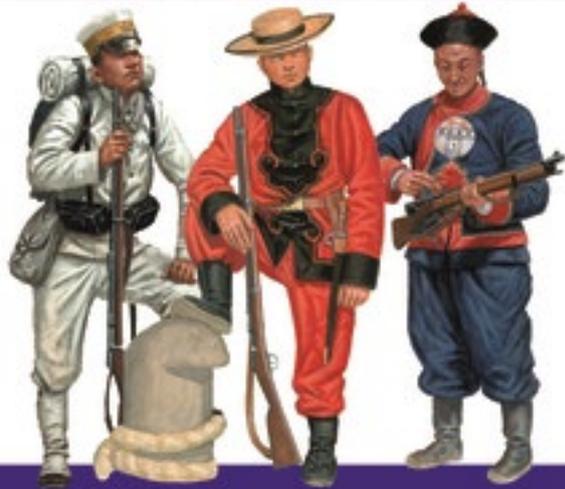


Men-at-Arms

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Armies of the First Sino-Japanese War 1894–95



Gabriele Esposito • Illustrated by Giuseppe Rava

Book Review

Armies of the First Sino-Japanese War 1894-95

Author: Gabriele Esposito

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The Osprey Men-at-Arms series give an excellent overview of the participants in units, armies and conflicts and cover a lot of ground in 48 pages including 8 full page illustrations. This is no exception. Fans of the movie “The Last Samurai” featuring Tom Cruise might have wondered what happened next in Japan’s imperial growth. This book chronicles the events that surrounded Japan’s first steps towards becoming a colonial power that was to lead to Pearl Harbour and then ending in Hiroshima.

The introductory section covers the events in Korea preceding the war that lead to Japan’s involvement and subsequent clash with the decaying Chinese Qing Dynasty that lead to the conflict. The book includes a useful map showing the locations of the key events and Japanese progress as well as a Chronology to give you a guide to these.

The Military Operations section covers both the naval and land battles starting from the battle of Pungdo (naval battle on the 25th July 1894) and ending with the Japanese occupation of Formosa (present day Taiwan) in 1895. The descriptions of these battles are in outline as is customary with the MAA series but should give a good overview and set the scene on the overall campaign. Note the description of the Yalu River naval battle refers to the Chinese flagship as the Matsushima – this was in fact the Dingyuan, correctly the book ascribes the destruction of the flying bridge to Japanese gunfire rather than a Chinese accident as found in some other sources. The author also does not shy away from noting the comparatively rare atrocities attributed to the

Imperial Japanese Army such as at Port Arthur (Lushun) and during pacification of the Formosan hinterland noting both of these were in reprisal rather than the unprovoked type of incident they were to become notorious for during the Pacific War.

For wargamers and modellers the sections on the armies involved will be an invaluable start into exploring further the period. Here not only are the Japanese and Chinese described but also the other protagonists, the Koreans and Defenders of Formosa. Other books have looked at the Japanese and Chinese armies involved in the Boxer uprising but here the information is specific to this conflict and includes details of conscription, formations and order of battle information including a basic Japanese order of battle chart on page 30. These also include details of weapons including artillery as well as logistical support troops. For both major armies there are useful period photos of the participants giving further uniform details, the author carefully notes in the captions where the period photos give a false image of colours. Similarly for the Chinese, setting out the various types of army units employed and their manifold weapons which ranged from archaic polearms and bows that would be at home equally in the 15th century to a variety of modern European designs including Krupps field guns and Nordenfeldt machine guns. Details are included on the Korean forces and what is termed here the Defenders of Formosa from the Chinese garrison to the exotic looking aboriginal forces divided here into "civilised savages" and "wild savages"!

Of course for many, the mainstay are the colour plate illustrations, often used as visual references by modellers, wargamers and diorama builders. Here Giuseppe Rava, known to many for his illustrations often seen on historical magazines, books (including my own!) and even model soldier boxes. Here G. Rava has produced 8 illustrations of high quality covering all four types of army. His work just gets better and better as can be seen on the elaborate brocade details on the Imperial Guard Bannerman archer. Experienced model painters will want to step up to the challenge here! The Koreans and Defenders of Formosa not often seen illustrated get a page each of some inspiring warriors.

Rounding the book off there is a Select Bibliography not to forget the other related MAA series books such as Imperial Chinese Armies 1840-1911 (MAA 505) for those intrigued enough to want to go further.

Highly recommended for those with an interest in trying something different and wanting an overview of this significant conflict.

John Kersey

ILLUSTRATIONS. see below for examples of the book illustrations. **Reproduced by kind permission of Osprey Publishing and are copyright Osprey Publishing.**

A. From left to right. **CHINA: BEIJING BANNERMEN.** Swordsman, Tiger Hunting Battalion. Rifleman, Inner Units, Firearms Division. Guardsman, Imperial Bodyguard.

B. From left to right. **JAPANESE IMPERIAL GUARD DIVISION.** Sergeant 1st Class, Artillery Brigade. Corporal, Cavalry Regiment. Captain, 1st Infantry Regiment.

C. From left to right. **CHINA: HEREDITARY & VOLUNTEER ARMIES.** Musketeer, Army of the Green Standard. Manchu Horse Archer, Army of the Eight Banners. Volunteer, Huai Army.







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