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Kempe Tai: A History of the Japanese Secret Service

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Deacon, Richard. *Kempe Tai: A History of the Japanese Secret Service*. New York: Beaufort Books, 1983. 306pp. \$14.95

Richard Deacon is the pen name assumed by Donald McCormick, British ex-naval officer and onetime Foreign Minister of the London *Sunday Times*. He has put forward four other such tomes treating, respectively, the British, Chinese, Israeli, and Russian "secret services." Demonstrably, therefore, in a field of endeavor where those truly in the know are prohibited from publishing, and those venturing to do so are not fully in the know, Mr. Deacon has given evidence of an intrepidity well beyond your conventional historian's call of duty. How has he acquitted himself?

The strictures that follow apply as well to the author's British and Israeli titles (we have not seen the Chinese and Russian). To begin with, for a former journalist they are surprisingly poorly written. True, style is of secondary import here; but the present volume lacks readability for another reason, too: Mr. Deacon's failure to develop effectively even a few of the genuinely fascinating case histories any such research cannot fail to uncover. On a mechanical basis the author may also be haled into court. Though the volume contains fourteen illustrations, there are not maps or organizational charts. His index is very skimpy. His parsimonious annotation at the rear exhibits the annoying trait of rarely supplying the precise page number for a source. The bibliography not

only does not embrace all titles cited in the notes but from time to time languishes at proper identification. For example, John L. "Spival" should read Spivak. "Colonel S. Mashbir" is Sidney F. Mashbir, who is cited from a secondary source rather than from his own *I Was an American Spy* (1963). Likewise the *Revelations* (1916) of that international oddity, Ignatius Trebitsch-Lincoln, are not mentioned. Again, in the case of the Soviet agent Ozaki Hotsumi, we find no reference to Chalmers Johnson's thoroughgoing treatment, *An Instance of Treason* (1964). The author speaks of "one William Friedman" without clueing us to the fact that this is the individual whom David Kahn has termed "the world's greatest cryptologist." And, on the same page, how can a discussion of the Purple Machine not at least give a nod to Ladislav Farago's *The Broken Seal* (1967)? There is no statement as to whether the author reads Japanese.

At yet another level, though we gladly concede that perfection is unattainable, a decent degree of objectivity is mandatory in historical writing. But Mr. Deacon is so sweepingly benign in his judgments about his subject that we cannot help but wonder if he is any way beholden to an organization with which he seems smitten, the Japanese government's Ministry of International Trade and Industry?

Having disgorged ourself of all this biliousness, may the reviewer recommend *Kempe Tai*? Well, it straddles its subject, however fitfully, from the beginnings in the

1880s right up to today. There are discussions of the secret societies, the Sino-Russian imbroglio, industrial espionage, etc., etc. In reaction, therefore, to Mr. Deacon's avowal on p. 1 that this topic has "been very much neglected," we can affirm that he has, if nothing else, struck off in the right direction.

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O'Neill, Richard. *Suicide Squads: W.W. II: Axis and Allied Special Attack Weapons of World War II: their Development and their Missions*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. 299pp. \$15.95.

Works on the technology of warfare fall into several categories. Scholars such as Bernard Brodie, William H. McNeill, and Carlo Cipolla have tied technological innovations to historical changes that stretch over centuries. John F. Guilmartin and Dennis Showalter have traced the impact of technological change within a few decades. There are also authorities such as Siegfried Breyer or Ian Hogg who study the evolution of specific weapons. The most common works on military technology, however, are those lavishly illustrated and elaborately diagramed tomes which are always being remaindered at bookstores. These last books are the military historian's guilty pleasures. His training teaches him to dismiss military minutia as "button collecting" or "buff" trivia. Yet few military historians do not own at

least one coffee-table book with an unscholastic title such as *Gurkha Knives, 1800-1950* or *P-25 "Wombat" at War*. Richard O'Neill's *Suicide Squads: W.W. II* is an interesting example of this genre because it demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to military studies.

As the rather long title suggests, this is an overview of the various weapons used for suicide missions in World War II. O'Neill deals primarily with midget submarines, motor torpedo boats, airplanes, manned bombs, and human torpedos. There are also accounts of several missions in which these weapons were used. The book is profusely illustrated with photographs, drawings, and maps. There is also a great deal of data on armament, speed, construction, number of models built, and so on. Readers who are interested in the machinery of suicide warfare will doubtless find this book well worth the price.

The chief problem with *Suicide Squads: W.W. II* lies in the author's attempt to place suicide weapons within the broader context of both World War II and military history. When he is not dealing with specific material details, O'Neill's work is unfocused and lacks thought. It is never clear, for example, whether the author believes that suicide weapons represent a tactical response to modern warfare, a unique technological invention, or (in the case of the major practitioner of suicide war) a holdover from Japan's samurai past. While the author emphatically believes that kamikaze tactics were