



The Revenge of the 47 Ronin - Edo 1703 (Raid)

Stephen Turnbull

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From 1600 till 1866 civil strife in public was virtually unknown in Japan; however, personal loyalty and self-sacrifice could at times rise above the samurai hierarchy to redefine Japanese culture. In 1703 former samurai avenged their lord in the most legendary raid in Japanese history. The story of the 47 ronin is a tale rich in emotion, precise planning, and flawless martial execution.

This was the raid that turned Japan upside down.

Lord Kira had brought about the death of Lord Asano, thus making Asano's loyal samurai into ronin (unemployed 'men of the waves'). In complete secrecy they plotted their revenge, and one snowy winter's night launched a raid against his mansion in Edo (Tokyo). The gates were broken down, and after the fiercest sword battle seen in Japan for over a century Kira was captured and beheaded. His head was washed and placed on Asano's tomb. The Shogun had now been placed in a dilemma. Should he reward the 47 Ronin for behaving more like true samurai than anyone since the time of civil wars, or should they be punished for breaking the strict laws about taking revenge?

In the end the law prevailed, and the surviving 46 ronin committed a mass act of *hara-kiri*, turning them overnight into national heroes as the 'gods of bushido'. The dramatic revenge raid of the Forty-Seven Ronin is the ideal subject for a Raids title. There is a very strong narrative and a wealth of illustrative material. As the raid occurred during the peaceful Edo Period there is scope for original description of the samurai's weapons and their personal & physical environment that is not seen in any other Osprey titles.



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