

Zero Fighter

Syoko Watanabe

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This technohistory, a genre invented by the author, is the history of the production and use of the famous Zero fighter aircraft, the finest dogfighter in the air for most of World War II. Superbly written with an eye to detail and to the poignant and resonant moment, this poetic, highly charged narrative presents World War II from the Japanese point of view. Ultimately more than the history of an airplane—though the Zero is presented with the grandeur due it—this book is an extremely astute presentation of the Japanese character and world view.

From a North American standpoint, *Zero Fighter* makes a number of highly interesting points, having been written for the Japanese market. For example, North Americans are generally not aware of the success of the Zero fighter or of its significance in Japanese minds. Both the superiority of the aircraft in the early stages of the Pacific War and the great stature of Jiro Horikoshi as an aircraft designer (he is to Japan what the designer of the Spitfire is to the U.K.) will come as a revelation to most readers here.

Also completely unknown to most North American readers is the story of the transport section at the Nagoya Aircraft Works. This information is woven nicely into the book, and has a great deal to say about the startling quality of Japanese wartime industry: rigid in many ways, while producing a plane of brilliant originality. The book is a moving picture of the patience of the Japanese in the face of adversity, but perhaps most important, Zero Fighter>/i> is Japanese. It is not often that a Japanese book is encountered here that divulges intimate knowledge about such a fascinating subject. There is significant value in this as we enter an era in which the Japanese and American people must share and respect the other's cultural point of view.



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