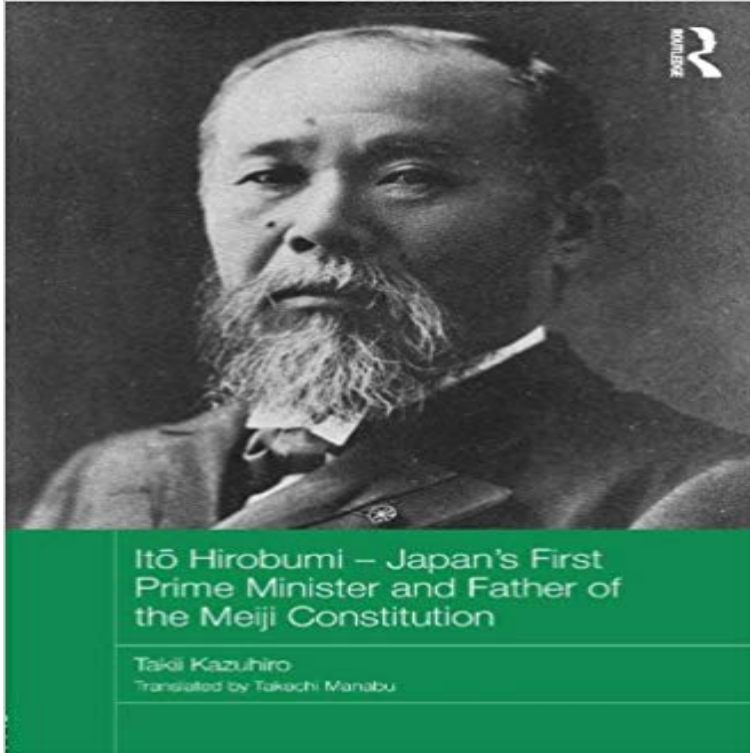


Ito Hirobumi - Japans First Prime Minister and Father of the Meiji Constitution (Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia)



The brilliant and influential statesman, Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909), and the first prime minister of Japans modern state, has been poorly understood. This biography attempts to set the record straight about Itos thought and vision for Japans modernisation based on research in primary sources. It outlines Itos life: the son of a poor farmer, he showed exceptional talent as a boy and was sent to study in Europe and the United States. He returned home convinced that Western civilisation was the only viable path for Japan. Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Ito became a powerful intellectual and political force behind reforms of Japanese laws and institutions aimed to shape a modern government based on informed leadership and a knowledgeable populace. Among his many achievements were the establishment of Japans first constitutionthe Meiji Constitution of 1889, and the founding in 1900 of a new type of constitutional party, the Rikken Seiyukai (Friends of Constitutional Government), which, reformulated after 1945, became the Liberal Democratic Party that has dominated Japanese politics in the postwar period. Concerning Itos role as Japanese Resident-General in Korea from 1905, the author argues that Itos aim, not understood by either the Japanese home government or Koreans themselves, was not to colonize Korea. He was determined to modernise Korea and consolidate further constitutional reforms in Japan. This aim was not shared by others, and Ito resigned in 1909. He was assassinated the same year in Manchuria by a Korean nationalist. The Japanese language edition of this book is a bestseller in Japan, and it received the Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities, one of Japans most prestigious publishing awards.

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