

# Signs of the establishment of the Japanese Navy until 1869

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## Abstract

Throughout history, the seas and oceans witnessed several conflicts that contributed to shaping the future of peoples and nations and determining the extent of their ability to defend themselves and the extent of their control over international navigation. The nature of the political and military developments it faced at home and abroad until the end of the sixties of the nineteenth century and beyond. Accordingly, this research came under the title "The Signs of Establishing the Japanese Navy until 1869", which tried to address the first beginnings of the crystallization of the importance of the Japanese Navy for the years (1185-1853), and the beginnings of the formation of the Japanese naval force until 1868, and then the development of Japan's military power during the Meiji era, which It witnessed comprehensive and important developments, of which the naval power had a large share in 1869.

## Keywords

Japan, Tokugawa, Sakoku, Meiji, Naval Power.

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## Introduction

This research attempts to uncover the signs of the establishment of the Japanese naval power until 1869, and the extent to which they were affected by the nature of the geographical location and the historical developments that it witnessed at home and abroad? Focusing on the stages of the emergence of the importance of the navy until 1853, it began with the naval battle of 1185, and Japan's entry into the warring provinces period (1476-1615), in which the forces of water emerged seeking to control the interior parts of the sea, and the establishment of secret schools, in addition to the importance of trying Japan invaded Korea in 1592 with the aim of using it as a base for the occupation of China. The research focused on the issue of the (Tokugawa Dynasty) adopting the (Japanese Sakoku 1603-1867) policy of voluntary isolation from the outside world for the period (1636-1854), which did not prevent its benefit from Western technologies, although it was limited in the development of its navy. However, this prompted in the short term some Japan's thinkers have called seriously, in their theses and writings, for the development of the naval forces and the use of the West's expertise since 1730 in light of the increasing threats of Russia, China and other countries, especially the Americans, since 1853, when Japan realized the gravity of the imminent Western challenges. An American joint in 1864 practically established the idea of establishing naval forces, but it was not actually implemented until 1868. However, the difficult circumstances that soon faced Japan again internally and externally, led the government to take a decision on July 8, 1869, to establish the Japanese naval force.

### **The importance of the Japanese Navy crystallized until 1853:**

Japan is located towards the coast of Far East Asia to the east of the Korean Peninsula, between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan (Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan,1983; Darwish,1994), and it is an island marine country that includes about (3,918) islands, of which only six hundred islands are inhabited, while the rest are rocky islands unsuitable for human settlement. It forms a crescent-shaped mountain archipelago, extending from the north-east to the south-west with a length of (3800 km), between latitudes (30° and 45°) north and longitudes (135° and 145°) east over an area of Japan of about (377,708 km<sup>2</sup>). This area includes four main islands: (Honshu - central), (Hokkaido - north), (Kyushu - southwest), and (Shikoku - southeast), and these islands constitute about (99.4%) of the total The area of Japan, as for the rest of it, consists of a province that includes a group of small and isolated islands in the far south, known as Okinawa, with an area of about (250.2 km<sup>2</sup>) (Adheem,2014; zahir ,1999).

However, Japan's geographical location, which provided it with the opportunity to form a naval power, did not show its importance in a clear and organized manner until recently, because despite the fact that the Japanese coast provides natural ports and protected waters, it is fraught with rocky dangers, if it is swept by winter storms and summer cyclones. Japan is a mountainous, volcanic and permanent seismic land (Tidman, N.D.) It appears that the limited competition of China and Korea in the Japanese naval activities did not push them to pay attention to their maritime defenses and development, and that China and Korea did not encourage trade contact with them, at a time when Japan was economically sufficiency, in addition to that Japan did not witness any external threat that motivates it to strengthen the Its naval forces, with the exception of the failed Mongol invasions in the years (1274, 1281), which led to the weakness of its continental contacts. In the absence of maritime and commercial challenges, the Japanese government at that time did not think seriously about the formation of naval power, as it did not have a great incentive towards maritime orientation until the Japanese Medieval Era (1185-1568 AD), when Signs began its actual entry into the seas and the development of its foreign trade (Evans and Peattie,2012).

The first signs of the role of the Japanese navy appeared in the aftermath of the naval battle (Dan-no-Ura, March 24 - April 25, 1185 - towards the southern tip of the island of Honshu), which represented a conflict between the Taira tribe led by Tomomori 1152-1185, which mobilized five hundred ships on one side., and led by Yoshitsune 1159-1189, who mobilized eight hundred ships on the other side, with the aim of dominating Japan. It is considered one of the most important battles that led to the victory of the Minamoto tribe due to its tight organization and numerical superiority, despite the Taira tribe's adoption of naval combat measures and its appreciation of the tidal system (Sajima and Tachikawa,2009).

In light of these developments, the Emperor of Japan (Takahira-Go-Toba 1183-1198) was very wary

of Yoshitsune' ambitions, who was forced to rebel and suffer heavy losses with his followers, leading to his pursuit and then having to commit suicide after killing his wife and daughter in 1189. The leadership of the clan passed to his brother (Yoritomo 1189-1199), who established on the twenty-first of August 1192 a central military government (Bakufu - tent) that reduced the role of the emperor, and became the first (Shogun - meaning military ruler and commander of warriors in Japan for the years 1192-1868) to begin With that, Japan entered a new phases, which was historically known as the Kamakura 1185-1333) era(Kamil,2001), in reference to the suburb located on the shores of Tokyo, with Heian - the city of peace south of Honshu Island remaining an official capital and a center for administration and the imperial court, soon turning its name to Kyoto - Capital (Reischauer,1989).

Japan witnessed (Sengoku Jidai - Warring States period 1476-1615), in which tribes struggled in what was known as the forces of water seeking to control the interior parts of the sea, but it was not sufficiently organized. During this time, secret schools called (Water power) arose, which represented a mixture of Japanese experiences and classic Chinese principles based largely on Chinese writings, and some Korean techniques. It was adopted by rival clans among themselves to control the merchant ships ( ). In general, it can be said that these developments represented the stage of transition from an economic system based on agricultural activities to advanced military technologies, especially marine ones (Evans and Peattie,2012).

At the beginning of 1592, the shogun (Hideyoshi Toyotomi 1582-1598), who is considered one of the most important military leaders who contributed to the unification of Japan, led a campaign to invade Korea with the aim of using it as a base for the occupation of China. He must head in April towards the city of (Seoul - the center of the Korean Peninsula) (Corfield,2013). The expeditionary forces were transported across the Tsushima Strait in southwestern Korea (in several boats that included pirates and the Samurai, a warrior soldier who puts himself in service, escort, and waiting, the tough and ancient warriors who emerged from the years 1185-1871) (Webb,1960), all of whom did not adopt an organized naval plan on the For its part, Korea launched a counterattack on May 7, targeting the Japanese campaign off the east coast of the island (Geoje, South Korea), encircling the port of (Okpo, South Korea), striking Japanese ships and bombarding them with fireballs, cannons and wooden arrows(Turnbull and Dennis,2008). In order to suppression the Japanese attack, China sent a number of its forces to help Korea, and managed to destroy about twenty-six ships, forcing the Japanese forces to withdraw. This is due to Japan's lack of an actual specialized naval force that relied on naval combat measures and experience on the one hand, and the numerical superiority of Korea, which relied on trained defensive forces entrusted to Chinese forces, on the other hand (Sajima and Tachikawa,2009).

To ensure Japan's security from the dangers of western penetration, and Evangelization, the shoguns of the Tokugawa dynasty (1603-1867) adopted the voluntary (Sakoku-isolation) policy for the years (1636-1854), which represented a defensive and proactive political decision, at a time when Japan developed economically and socially , and strengthened its intrinsic strength, increased its cohesion, unity and development of its culture, and practically confirmed the basic and important transformations in modern Japanese political thought, which harmonized between modernity, authenticity and Japanese specificity (Mohammed and Akar,2019 ). However, this isolation did not prevent the Japanese from benefiting from Western technologies, despite the Europeans' ban on transferring navigational sciences to Japan for their contribution to strengthening their military power and superiority, especially at sea (Al-Munif,1998).

However, the Japanese learned from the Portuguese to build compass-equipped ships. In 1603 the Shogun (Ieyasu Tokugawa 1603-16) encouraged the creation of a naval fleet to head east to Africa and west to (Siam -Thailand), which was a source of concern for the (English East India Company 1600-1874), which assured its representatives to follow up on the details of those steps. They also learned the manufacture of long guns (Arquebus)(Mohammed,2010) that are fed with gunpowder ammunition from the barrel, known as (matchlock-fuse gun). What confirmed the superior ability of the Japanese on imitation and the rapid transition to adapting to emerging data and adapting to it, which was manifested in the conversion of firearms into a subject taught and clarified by scientific manuals (Afif,2010).

While Japan lived relatively stable during the isolation phase, its military power, especially the Japanese navy, did not witness a remarkable development, despite the continuation of commercial contacts with Holland (Reischauer,2000), as the Dutch moved smartly not only to obtain a share in Japan's trade, but for the sake of the Portuguese completely banishment and the monopoly of trade for themselves (Afif,2010).

Although Japan focused on strengthening the position of the samurai and instilling the values of

discipline and self-sacrifice (Evans and Peattie,2012), that quickly changed after it realized the danger of Russian ambitions seeking to occupy its northern islands, which prompted Japan to reconsider traditional naval military techniques, and think Seriously, others are more developed and more effective in protecting their coasts (Keene,1969).

The Japanese military scholar (Hayashi Shihei 1738-1793) expressed his admiration for the strength of the large Dutch ships, and his concern about Russia's intentions to advance south from Siberia to Asia, pointing to the weaknesses in Japan's coastal defenses, and stressing the dangers of China's invasion of the country. He also provided a technical description of ship-building and arming them, and in 1787 he issued a sixteen-volume book entitled: (Military Defense of a Maritime Nation), in which he emphasized the importance of coastal defense for maritime countries, as he called for adopting Western technologies and abandoning their Chinese counterparts. In this regard, Hayashi pointed out: "What is a maritime nation? It is a country bordered by the sea on all sides, and there are military preparations appropriate to the maritime nation, and they differ from those stipulated in Chinese military books, and from the traditional techniques taught by various schools in Japan, represented in military preparation Japan and the knowledge of the way in which it responds to foreign invasion, and this knowledge is now vital and the only way to do so is to develop the navy..." However, his criticism of the policy of isolation imposed by the shogunate, led to the banning of his ideas in 1792, and his placement under house arrest (Keene,1969; Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan,1983; Darwish,1994).

For its part, the Netherlands played an influential role in the transfer of some military knowledge and sciences, as the number of military books that were translated into Japanese for the years (1730-1867) reached about one hundred three books, and the matter was not limited to that, but Japan began to learn about European culture through Reading a variety of books specialized in several fields, but the interest in military sciences was at the forefront of those sciences. This is attributed to the emergence of the Russian danger near the Japanese islands, which necessitated securing and protecting the maritime borders on the one hand, and the defeat and collapse of China before Britain during (First Opium War 1839-1842), forcing it to build warships, on the other hand (Mitsukuni,1993).

In this regard, Japan took the same step when the shogun (Ieyoshi Tokugawa 1837-1853) carried out a set of reforms, especially strengthening military capabilities and training samurai in the use of firearms. Japan sought the expertise of students of European techniques, especially in the field of guns. Despite the short period of those reforms due to the criticism they were subjected to, the interest in European military technologies took an increasing pace in the reforms (Afif,2010).

And soon Japan began making Western-style cannons in several provinces, based on a book written by the Dutchman (Ulrich Hogssochen), which focused mainly on the method of cannon casting, and included drawings and explanations for the construction and operation of high-temperature and reflective furnaces, as well as the cavity of cannon structures. Accordingly, several provinces began their attempts to manufacture inverting furnaces, until Saga, northwest of Kyushu, completed the first inverter furnace in 1850, and used charcoal as its fuel (Mitsukuni,1993).

### **Early formation of the Japanese Navy until 1868:**

The developments that Japan witnessed pushed towards building its naval power, especially after the arrival of American ships to the city (Edo - bay-entrance) led by Commodore (Matthew Calbraith Perry) on July 8, 1853, carrying a message from the American President (Millard Fillmore 1850-1853), which included American demands to open Japanese ports to American trade and joint cooperation in maritime rescue operations (Tidman, N.D; Reischauer,1989).

And about this, the reaction of the Shogun Ieyoshi was confused, as he went to the emperor offering him the matter to confirm its importance, and also asked the governors of the provinces to clarify their positions in response to the message of the American president, but this did not lead to a decisive decision. Accordingly, Perry returned on the thirteenth of February 1854 with a larger naval force, intending to open the Japanese ports to international navigation, by peace or by force (Zahir ,1999). He explained that the issue does not exceed two options, either to agree to the American demands or to go to war, which forced the shogun (Iesada Tokugawa 1853-1858, who assumed leadership following the death of his father Ieyoshi on July 27, 1853), to agree to open the gates of Japan and start the stage (The opening - Kaikoku) on the West while preserving the legacies and traditions, keeping pace with the demands and signing the treaty (Kangawa - an ancient city in eastern Japan) on March 31, 1854 (Afif,2010), according to which the United

States of America enjoyed the status of the first country in the care, along with commercial and legal privileges that facilitated He opened some ports to their merchants, and then appointed a merchant and politician (Townsend Harris 1804-1878), the first American Consul General in Shimoda - south of Honshu (Mohammed,2008).

After signing the treaty, Japan realized the potential European challenges, so it quickly strengthened its military power, especially the navy and coastal defenses, and recommended the equipping of fifty cannons from Saga Province, and coordinating them with six arms production centers: (Sekiguchi) guns factory, (Ishikawajima) shipyards and factories (Akabane) for marine ordnance, and (Itabashi) for gunpowder, as well as (Yokosuka) and Nagasaki iron factories, which are the largest in the shipbuilding industry. This is the first step that laid the foundations of modern industry and technology in Japan, especially after its decision to build its naval power according to the European pattern. The Netherlands immediately rushed to provide its assistance in an effort to surpass the United States of America and other countries that have striven to strengthen their relations with Japan (Mitsukuni,1993).

In 1855 the project negotiations were completed and a naval training school was established in Nagasaki, and the first training crew of the Dutch army, led by (Fabius), arrived on board the ship (Soeming), which was equipped with a 150hp engine as a gift to Japan. Purchasing the necessary equipment from the Netherlands (Klos and Leon Derksen,2016).

In 1857 the equipment arrived and the factories were built under the supervision of a training staff headed by the engineer (Archie Hardees). In the same year, an institute of marine navigation was opened in Edo, and the teaching mission was entrusted to a team of Dutch trainers. The shogun Iesada also received a warship from the King of the Netherlands (William III 1849-1890), which was not of advanced military specifications, but rather a small sailing ship equipped with a 100-hp steam engine. Nevertheless, the ship sailed in 1860 to the United States of America with a Japanese crew of graduates from the Navigation Institute who mastered the art of navigation on the high seas, and on board an official mission that included the writer, translator, politician and one of the most prominent advocates of reform in Japan (Yukichi Fukuzawa 1835-1901), who wrote in his memoirs proudly With this achievement, "I am ready to admit my feeling of pride in this achievement that has been achieved for Japan, as the steamship was not seen in Japan until 1853, and in 1855 we began to study navigation at the hands of the Dutch, and in 1860 the science of navigation became sufficiently understood, so that we can sail By ship across the Pacific, which means that after seven years of seeing the first steamer, and after only five years of practice, the Japanese people made their first crossing of the Pacific Ocean" (Afif,2010).

During the rule of the shogunate (Iemochi Tokugawa 1858-1866), Japan continued to develop the navy, starting to lay the foundations for the local production of steam warships by establishing a shipyard in Nagasaki in 1861. To confirm its interest in Western studies, it established an official institute for teaching Western sciences, translation and linguistics. To the Japanese language in order to benefit from it, Japan followed its new steps in the field of the navy, so it established in 1863 in the city (Kobe - southwest of Honshu) a center for naval training, and steel works began in some cities of Honshu Island, especially in (Yokosuka) and (Yokohama) after That the operating techniques and shipbuilding were provided by foreign consultants (Sajima and Tachikawa,2009). In the same context, a number of small ships were built according to Western design, and eight steam warships were run by individuals with naval capabilities and limited combat training, as they were suitable for transportation and not for war. Nevertheless, shipbuilding continued in (province Satsuma - on the island of Kyushu), although it was not ready to participate in wars, and a naval center was established and a number of its students were sent for training outside Japan. In general, the facts proved the weakness of the navy at that time, as Japan was subjected to a naval attack on September 5, 1864, launched by the British, French, Dutch and American navies in a series of intermittent military clashes known as the campaign to control the Strait (Shimonoseki - West Honshu). Naval forces within the army formations, but it did not turn into actual steps until 1868 (Evans and Peattie,2012).

### **Japanese Navy during the Meiji era until 1869:**

In the wake of the fall of the shogunate and the return of the actual authority of the emperor represented by (Mutsuhito), in what was known historically as (Meiji Era- Enlightened Rule 1868-1912), Japan entered a new phase in which it witnessed comprehensive and rapid changes in politics, economy, military affairs, society, thought and culture, and intellectuals had a role Prominently, embodying their belief that supporting Japan in the face of its enemies requires

building a unified nation-state with a strong central authority, which cast a shadow over building naval power (Ali.2019). In this regard, a number of naval commanders resolved to establish a Japanese navy based on the (Naval fleet), a modernization that initially included about two hundred ships, but they faced a group of difficult political, economic, industrial and military obstacles that surrounded Japan at the time (schencking,2005). Accordingly, the role of the navy during the period of Tokugawa Dynasty and the beginning of Meiji Era did not exceed the transfer of land forces and support of their operations, and there was no naval force under central control during the first two years of the Meiji era, as the new government did not control all other naval units, including the warship that Some of them remained under the control of some powerful leaders, in a state of instability. In this context, the Naval Commander (Kaishu Katsu 1823-1899), who worked at the Naval Training Center in Nagasaki (1855-1859), then was appointed in the Japanese Naval Office as Deputy Minister of the Japanese Navy, and then its Minister for the period (1873-1878) (Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan,1994), recommended the necessity of Government control and centralization On the Imperial Navy (Schencking,2005).

The consequences of the government's lack of control over the entire navy became clear when a former naval officer (Takeaki Enomoto 1836-1908), known for advocating the expansion of Japan and potential new areas for settlement outside it (Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan,1994), led a rebellion with the remnants of the shogunate navy against the imperial government, which was forced to order Helping provinces (Soma - northeast Honshu, Chucho - south Honshu, Tosa - northeast Kyushu) to crush the rebellion. For the period (4-10 May 1869), the government fought the naval battle of (Hakodate - northern Japan) against Takeaki, and was able to destroy his naval fortifications on the island of Hokkaido and seize his ships after the escape of all the fighters who were on board, and Takeaki was arrested and imprisoned on charges of high treason, However, the government pardoned him in 1872. Although the government forces won the battle in their favour, facts proved the extent of the weakness of its navy, which faced difficulty in defense, coordination and naval plans, which necessitated the advancement of the Japanese naval force according to modern central foundations (Schencking,2005).

In light of these decisive developments, the provinces (Soma, Chucho, Tosa) willingly ceded their lands and naval forces to the emperor, and the other provinces took them to begin the stage of building the modern central state. On July 8, 1869, the government took a decision to establish the Imperial Navy after it included all the ships it had seized, and although it represented an important step on the way to building the Japanese naval power, it was not isolated from the other formations of the army, as it was attached to the Department of Army and Navy Affairs, and soon The leaders of the new government canceled this section and established the Military Defense Affairs Office, which later turned into what was known as the Military Ministry, which included the land and naval military formations. This came based on the viewpoint of the military leaders based on non-discrimination between the army and the navy, especially since the navy was only an auxiliary force for the army (Sajima and Tachikawa,2009).

## Conclusions

In light of the research's emphasis on the role of the geographical nature and the internal and external political developments that Japan faced until 1869, in pushing towards the establishment of the Japanese naval power, it can be said that:

- 1- The political developments that Japan witnessed during the internal naval battles since 1185, the territorial conflict (Sengoku Jidai - Warring States period 1476-1615), and the emergence of water power, prepared Japan for the transition of an economic system based on agricultural activities to advanced military technologies, especially the marine ones.
- 2- The policy of self-isolation (Sakoku) adopted by Japan during the reign of (Tokugawa 1603-1867) to prevent the dangers of missionaryization and economic penetration, did not prevent the use of modern Western techniques in strengthening their naval forces.
- 3- The defeat of China by Britain in the First Opium War 1839-1842, the arrival of the West, especially the United States of America to the Japanese coast in 1853, and the Russian threat to head south from Siberia to Asia, represented an important turning point in the emergence of the importance of the Japanese Navy in a more serious and broader manner.
- 4- Despite the opposing positions in the army that tried to hinder the development of the navy, the attack of the British, French, Dutch and American navies in 1864 to control the

(Shimonoseki Strait), prompted the development of the navy in order to defend the Japanese coast.

5- In addition to the role of some shoguns such as (Iemochi Tokugawa), the efforts of some reformers, thinkers, and military, especially (Yukichi Fukuzawa) and (Hayashi Shihei) in opening centers, schools, and institutes for naval training in 1863 and later years.

6- Because of the view of the military leaders based on the non-discrimination between the army and the navy, the issue of establishing a Japanese navy did not turn into actual steps until 1868, but the Japanese government soon decided on July 8, 1869, to establish the Imperial Navy.

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