FAREWELL TO ETERNITY: THE FRIGATE ERTUĞRUL'S VOYAGE TO JAPAN

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NAVAL MUSEUM

Address: Sinanpaşa Mahallesi Beşiktaş Caddesi No: 6/1
Beşiktaş / ISTANBUL

Phone: +90 212 327 43 45 - 46
Fax: +90 212 236 68 93

E-mail: muze.istanbul.iletisim@dzkk.tsk.tr
www.denizmuzeleri.tsk.tr
THE FRIGATE ERTUĞRUL'S VOYAGE TO JAPAN

The Frigate Ertuğrul which was built at Istanbul Dockyard and launched in 1863 was instructed by the Sultan Abdülhamit II to set sail to Japan with the objective of paying a goodwill visit for the presentation of gifts and the highest decoration of the Ottoman Empire from the Ottoman sultan to the Japanese Emperor.

Ertuğrul, with a group of 612 people on board, was instructed to set sail from Istanbul on July 14th, 1889 and arrived in Japan after a visit to Jeddah, Aden, Bombay, Colombo and Singapore. Osman Pasha was received by Emperor Meiji of Japan on June 13th, 1890. The gifts and the medal sent by Sultan Abdülhamit II were presented to their intended recipients. After completing the visits, the Frigate Ertuğrul set sail from Yokohama on September 15th, 1890. Shortly after Ertuğrul left for the return journey to Istanbul, she encountered a typhoon off the coast of Kii Peninsula, in front of Kashinozaki Lighthouse. The ship hit the reefs and sank around midnight on September 16th, 1890.

The accident resulted in the loss of the most of the crew, including the admiral Osman Pasha and Ali Bey. Only 69 sailors and officers survived. The first aid treatment for the survivors of the incident was provided by the personnel of the Kashinozaki Lighthouse and Oshima inhabitants. The martyrs were buried on a hill near Kashinozaki Lighthouse and “Memorial for the Ertuğrul Frigate Martyrs” was built there.

The wounded sailors were transferred from Oshima to Kobe and their medical treatment was provided by doctors who were particularly sent by the Emperor. When the survivors regained their health, they were transported back to Istanbul on January 2nd, 1891 aboard Japanese corvettes Kongo and Hiei. In the first anniversary of the incident in 1891, a commemorative ceremony was held by the Japanese at the Memorial.

This incident is often referred in both Japan and Turkey as a seminal point in founding the relationship between these two countries and still commemorated today.

REAR ADMIRAL OSMAN PASHA (1858-1890)

Rear Admiral Osman Pasha was the grand child of Vice-Admiral Osman Pasha who was captured during the Crimean War (1853-1856). His father was Captain Ahmet Bey. In 1870, he entered the Naval High School. Then he entered the Naval Academy in 1874 and graduated in 1877. After graduating from the Academy, he assigned to the Steamer Resmo with the rank of ensign.

On March 6th, 1889 he was assigned as the commander of the Frigate Ertuğrul which was charged with delivering the medal of distinction that would be presented to the Japanese Emperor. Captain Osman Bey was promoted to rear admiral with a command dated November 25th, 1889.

During the incident which the Frigate Ertuğrul encountered a typhoon in September 16th, 1890, he drowned and died as a martyr. Nearly 150 martyrs were taken out from the sea on the following days; but Rear Admiral Osman Pasha was not among them. Despite later investigations, he could not be found in the water.

TORAJIRO YAMADA (1866-1957)
He was born in Edo in 1866. He was adopted as the lawful son of Sōju Yamada, the 7th Master of Sōhenryū Tea Ceremony in 1882.

After Japanese battleships brought sixty-nine Turkish survivors to their homeland, Yamada came to Istanbul in 1892 and submitted the donation money which he collected at the recommendation of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When he had a meeting with Sultan Abdülhamit II, he presented a Far Eastern sword and armor which are in Topkapı Palace today.

Yamada dedicated his life to the development of Japanese-Turkish relationship and played a major role in the cultural exchange between the two far distant countries. As an unofficial medium to manage the relations between Japan and Turkey, Yamada was approved directly by the Ottoman state. In the later years he became the only man for trade activities with the Ottoman Empire. Due to his close diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Palace, he acted as an unofficial consul and paid attention to Japanese visitors who came to Istanbul.