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Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941

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powerful, he fails to consider the possibility that Emperor Hirohito might have flown to Manchuria to continue the Japanese war effort even if the home islands had been overrun. Nor does Wolk deal with the outrage against the Japanese that festered after Pearl Harbor, irrespective of racial bias. U.S. servicemen were stationed as observers only ten thousand yards from ground zero during testing (nuclear fallout being a theory rather than a proven reality at the time); the bomb seemed merely a more efficient means of mass destruction. Racism may be overemphasized by Wolk as the primary motivation for its use. Ambrose and Villa provide what may be the most compelling essay of the lot. They comprehensively discuss alternative rationales for the use and nonuse of nuclear weapons, coming to the conclusion that the decision made excellent sense in structuring the postwar U.S.-Japanese relationship. President Harry Truman receives credit for adroit politicization of the nuclear military option, in using it to drive a wedge between the militarists and the emperor—without which the former would not have been discredited, and Japanese society would not have been restructured on favorable lines.

The Pacific War Revisited will be of particular interest to those who are conversant with major World War II events and are interested in broadening their understanding. While some essays widen the debate over particular events rather than provide definitive answers, all are meticulously researched. Perhaps the book's strongest aspect is its usefulness as a "mine" of resource materials. Considering the relative brevity

of some of the compositions, the wealth of source documentation throughout is indeed impressive.

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Evans, David C., and Mark R. Peattie.

Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887–1941. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 696pp. \$49.95

Like a flare ascending from the dark sea, the Imperial Japanese Navy rose swiftly, burst brilliantly, and then winked out. Like a flare, after it was gone it left almost no evidence that it had ever existed.

The authors of this long-awaited book, David Evans and Mark Peattie, make plain their purpose in their introduction: it is "to explain as far as possible the sources of both the navy's triumphs and its defeat. The perspectives we have chosen are those of strategy, tactics, and technology, or, more precisely, the evolving interrelationship of the three. . . . We have sought to understand the overriding strategic issues confronting the navy, the synthesis of foreign and indigenous influences in the shaping of its tactics, and how the navy acquired its technology and material assets. We have, at various points, discussed aspects of the navy—intelligence, manning, logistics, naval fuels, to name the most prominent—that relate directly or indirectly to our three main concerns. Finally, as much as anything else, we have attempted to explain how the Japanese navy thought

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about naval war and how to prepare for it."

To achieve this aim, Evans and Peattie have found and used more evidence on their subject than most people knew existed. They have used it to provide an accurate, clear, concise (even though long), and essentially complete account of a great fighting navy's short but dramatic and, for a time, highly influential life.

The authors began their work long ago, when they could still take advantage of the memories of some of the senior officers of the Imperial Japanese Navy. They have read widely and perceptively, and they have checked their work with other people well informed on their subject. They have written well, and their styles are so much alike that it is not possible to tell by whom which part of the book was written.

Authors and publisher alike have provided this book with plenty of well chosen illustrations, some of them photographs, others drawings; they have served their readers well with maps both suitable and sufficient; they have provided useful tactical and organizational diagrams; they have given us full, informative, and interesting notes; and their bibliography will be helpful for years to come.

The Imperial Japanese Navy's combat history lasted little more than half a century, from 1894 to 1945, and during that period it fought three wars, each larger and longer than the one before. The first, against China, ended successfully in 1895 after about six months of fighting; the second, against Russia, ended equally successfully in 1905 after about eighteen months of fighting; and the last, merging with an

already existing assault upon China, was fought against many countries, the United States foremost among them. It lasted for forty-five months and ended in failure. But, as the authors observe, had that war ended any time in the first two years, that is, in 1942 or 1943, it too would have been a success.

However, except in the very last chapter, "Reflections on the Japanese Navy in Triumph and Defeat," the authors do not dwell on the imperial navy's last war. Their book deals with all that came before, and all that explains that navy's last war.

Despite the surprise attack by Japan's carriers on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, which (though in American eyes only) began the war in the Pacific, that war was not one swiftly decided upon. In 1907, the same year the U.S. Navy began working on its Orange Plan for rescuing the Philippines from Japan, the United States became for the Japanese navy the "budgetary enemy." By 1923, the year after the Washington naval conference in which all five of the great naval powers of the time agreed to reduce the sizes of their navies, the United States had become the "inevitable" enemy.

Because they expected to fight a fleet bigger than their own, the Japanese navy's leaders made great efforts to outrange the expected foe tactically. In aircraft, torpedoes, and guns, they succeeded. More than that, they ensured that the Japanese navy's aviators not only had better aircraft than the Americans but that those aviators were more skillful than the Americans. Japanese cruisers and destroyers were armed with torpedoes far more powerful and far longer in range than those the

Americans or anyone else had, and their officers and men were more skillful at night warfare than were their American opponents. What was important about this was that, as it turned out, most of the forthcoming war's surface actions took place at night. Night was also the time when the torpedo was most effective.

About the same time, the Japanese navy decided to convert its ships fully from coal-fired to oil-fired boilers. But nearly all of Japan's oil came from the "inevitable" enemy. The only practical alternative source for oil was the Dutch East Indies. But in 1940 the Germans invaded the Netherlands, which made that country's government-in-exile an ally of Britain, and therefore of the United States. It was shortly after this that Japan chose to ally itself with Germany, thus making itself officially hostile to, though not yet at war with, Britain and the Netherlands. An advance by the Japanese army into southern Vietnam in 1941 led to an American and Dutch embargo on all trade to Japan, including that in oil.

The Japanese navy could not deal with this problem peaceably. The decision to seize the Dutch East Indies made war with the United States inevitable. But though they were foreseeable, the navy had not reckoned on the wartime needs for both a large number of tankers and escort forces powerful and effective enough to protect them. This failure was to prove disastrous.

As Evans and Peattie make clear, while the Japanese navy was able to overcome many difficult tactical and technological problems, it proved incapable of overcoming the enormous logistical and strategic problems that

came with war against the United States. Though it is no part of the book under review, the U.S. Navy, surprised by its tactical and technological inferiority to the Japanese in so many ways, proved able from the beginning to overcome its own daunting logistical and strategic problems in the Pacific. It was this ability that gave the Americans both the space and the time they needed to make good their technological and tactical shortcomings. In 1944 and 1945 the Americans annihilated the imperial navy and made possible the end of the world's most terrible war.

Evans and Peattie have written a splendid book on the Imperial Japanese Navy. Now it is time for some other scholar, or scholars, to do as good a job on the U.S. Navy in the same period. There are some who could do that.

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Ambrose, Stephen E. *The Victors: Eisenhower and His Boys: The Men of World War II*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998. 396pp. \$28

As reflected in the commercial success of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, no military historian is in greater public demand than Stephen Ambrose, whose *D-Day*, *Citizen Soldiers*, *Band of Brothers*, and *Pegasus Bridge* provide the most extensive coverage of World War II in the European theater. In his latest work Ambrose has drawn from his best-selling accounts of World War II to create a single volume of the campaign from D-Day to V-E Day. The