

## BRIEF STORY OF ERTUĞRUL FRIGATE

Japan is the oldest friend of Turkey in East Asia. The first substantial contact between the two countries was the visit of Prince Komatsu, the nephew of Emperor Meiji and Princess Komatsu in 1886 during their trip to Europe . The royal couple arrived in Istanbul in the fall of 1887 and the occasion appears to have revived the desire to pursue closer relations. Using the visit of the Prince as an occasion to rekindle relations with Japan, Abdulhamid II launched a second attempt to form close relations with Meiji Japan, by then seen as the rising star of the East in Ottoman public opinion. The Ottoman Government decided to send the imperial frigate Ertugrul with Commander Osman Pasha and his crew of 609 men to Japan . Osman Pasha was empowered to represent the Sultan and was delegated with extraordinary powers.

The ship and her crew sailed out in July 1889 with the objective of paying a goodwill visit to the Emperor of Japan in return for the visit of Prince Komatsu. The voyage turned out to be a hazardous journey with recurring technical problems and mishaps. After sailing in Asian waters for more than a year, the Ertuğrul finally arrived in Japan in June 1890. Osman Pasha and his crew managed to complete a successful visit with the Japanese authorities and the imperial family. On the return voyage, however, the Ottoman frigate, which had set out in September, sank on the 16 th day due to a severe typhoon. She foundered on the dangerous sharp rocks off the coast of Wakayama in South West Japan. Except for a mere 69 survivors, the waves of the Pacific Ocean claimed the Pasha and his men.

According to the official narratives of the tragedy, deeply saddened by the tragic event, the Japanese Government sent the few survivors back to Istanbul with the Japanese frigates, the Hei and the Kongo, together with the condolences of the Meiji Emperor and the Japanese Government. The Japanese delegation which set out in October was to arrive in Istanbul on January 2, 1891 with Oyama Takanosuke as the Commander. The visit was to also bring Yamada Torajiro, who was going to be first resident merchant, and the unofficial emissary of Japan in Istanbul for the next twenty years.” (from “the Rising Sun and the Turkish Crescent by Selcuk Esenbel and Inaba Chiharu, Bogazici University Press, Istanbul 2003, pages 21-22).

There stands now in Oshima (Kushimoto), Wakayama Prefecture, near the lighthouse, the " Ertugrul Monument " built in memory of those pioneers of Turkish-Japanese friendship. The compassion demonstrated by the Japanese people in saving and returning to Istanbul the survivors of the crew of the Ertugrul Frigate has left a lasting memory of gratitude in the minds of the Turkish people. Thus, this tragic accident became a solemn symbol of friendship between the two nations.