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Thomas C. Hone, ed., *The Battle of Midway: The Naval Institute Guide to the U.S. Navy's Greatest Victory*. Annapolis: Naval Inst. Press, 2013. Pp. xx, 333. ISBN 978-1-61251-126-9.

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The Battle of Midway, fought in the opening week of June 1942, was the pivotal naval engagement of the Second World War. The destruction of the cream of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) fast carrier force by US naval aviators changed the course of the Pacific War. Both the particulars of the battle and its larger historical significance remain topics of robust scholarly debate. In this new Naval Institute guide to the battle, historian Thomas Hone presents a collection of detailed retrospectives by participants and later generations of naval officers and scholars.

Hone, who has served as a senior official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and as a faculty member at the US Naval War College, has himself written extensively on the history of the US Navy.¹ *The Battle of Midway* comprises fifty-three short chapters and three appendices, arranged in eight sections, each treating a specific aspect of the battle. The volume gathers primary documents (from oral histories of USN and IJN veterans to official post-battle reports), scholarly articles (many drawn from the *Proceedings* of the US Naval Institute), and excerpts from book-length works on the battle.

The book's first section lays out the events that led to the battle. Several chapters detail the impressive triumphs of the IJN's *Kidō Butai* (carrier battle group) in the Pacific War's opening months. Yet Japan still faced serious strategic dilemmas. Several senior IJN officers, particularly Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, became convinced that the occupation of Midway Atoll was a necessary next step to complete the destruction of the US Pacific Fleet begun at Pearl Harbor. Subsequent sections trace the movements of the opposing fleets in the days before the battle, the decisive aerial actions of 4 June 1942, and the battle's immediate aftermath, including the (ultimately unsuccessful) efforts to save the badly damaged USS *Yorktown*. The final three sections of the volume feature brief biographical discussions of the American and Japanese admirals who directed the fighting, an analysis of the role of US code-breaking efforts in the Navy's eventual triumph, and assessments of the battle's military and historical significance.

The chapters containing oral histories of American and Japanese sailors and airmen are the most fascinating in the entire volume: they vividly convey the complex emotions felt by these young men. For example, in chapter 14, "Out in Front at Midway," former US Marine Capt. John Carey describes landing his crippled F2A Buffalo fighter at Midway on the morning of 4 June, after being severely wounded in both legs. Asked if he could feel the plane's rudders, he replied "No, not at all. This black cloud would come in and get about to the instrument panel, and I'd shake it off and go on. I couldn't feel either leg.... I headed back to the island, and this wave [of blacking out] again would come in, and I'd push it off. Evidently, it was a strong human instinct to survive" (89). In a later chapter, former Lt. Cdr. Yahachi Tanabe, skipper of the submarine I-168, describes evading a screen of protecting destroyers and ultimately sinking the carrier USS *Yorktown* after Japanese aircraft had savaged it:

If I followed the usual procedure and fired my four torpedoes with a two-degree spread, they would cover six degrees. But I wanted very badly to deprive the Americans of this carrier. I intended to limit my salvo to a two degree spread. I would fire No.1 and No.2 first, then send No.3 and No.4 in their wakes, on the same courses. That way, I could achieve two large hits instead of four small ones. I could thus deliver all my punch into the carrier's midsection, rather than spread it out along her hull. (152)

1. He co-authored, with Norman Friedman and Mark Mandeles, *American and British Aircraft Carrier Development, 1919-1941* (Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 1995).

The I-168, having sustained considerable damage from the vigorous depth-charge attacks by the US destroyers, was forced to surface in order to charge its batteries; Tanabe and his submarine nonetheless escaped and eventually returned to Japan to great public fanfare.²

The book also contains many selections from work by highly regarded scholars of the Pacific War. The excerpt from Mark Peattie's *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941*³ in chapter 11, "Forging the Thunderbolt," examines the evolution of the IJN's aviation doctrine and finds that its extreme privileging of offense over defense left its carriers vulnerable. Other passages are culled from the work of naval historian John Lundstrom, especially his biography of Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher.⁴ Hone himself contributes an original essay on Admiral Raymond Spruance, the commander of Task Force 16, who assumed effective command of US naval forces at Midway when the *Yorktown*, Fletcher's flagship, was crippled on the afternoon of 4 June.

Despite the uniformly high quality of these well written, engaging, and informative essays, the book's treatment of the battle's historiography is disappointing because of what it omits. Hone chose to include several long passages from Mitsuo Fuchida and Masatake Okumiya's book on Midway;⁵ Fuchida had been one of the *Kidō Butai's* senior air officers in the opening months of the Pacific War and later wrote extensively about his wartime experiences. His account, as Hone notes, "shaped most subsequent histories of the Battle of Midway" (82). But more recent scholarly investigations have revealed several critical inaccuracies in that account, chiefly the claim that victory at Midway hinged on "five fateful minutes," when US Navy dive bombers attacked three IJN aircraft carriers as they were in the process of launching their own strike at the vessels of Task Forces 16 and 17: "One after another, planes were hoisted from the hangar and quickly arranged on the flight deck. There was no time to lose. At 1020 Admiral Nagumo gave the order to launch when ready. On *Akagi's* flight deck all planes were in position with engines warming up. The big ship began turning into the wind. Within five minutes all her planes would be launched.... Five minutes! Who would have dreamed that the tide of battle would shift completely in that brief interval of time?" (111).

This version of events was accepted in many American histories of the Battle of Midway for well over half a century, until the publication in 2005 of Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully's *Shattered Sword*,⁶ which for the first time offered "a full and accurate Japanese account of the Battle of Midway" (81). Yet no selections from it are included here. Given the book's significance, Hone, writing eight years later, should at least have indicated just how it has clarified and corrected the historical account of the Battle of Midway.

That criticism notwithstanding, *The Battle of Midway* is a most welcome addition to the literature of the Pacific War. It will serve as an excellent starting point for readers unfamiliar with the battle's details. While most of the book's materials have appeared earlier in print, their compilation in a single volume will expose them to a much wider audience. The first-person accounts are gripping, and the expert contributors' analyses of the battle and its effects on the course of the war are well argued and persuasive. The short shrift given to changes in our understanding of the battle over time is mitigated by the book's helpfully annotated selected bibliography. Readers wishing to explore further the events of June 1942 will not want for materials to choose from.

2. As often noted in *The Battle of Midway*, the IJN tried hard to conceal the extent of its losses from the Japanese people—and even from the Imperial Japanese Army. The hero's welcome for Tanabe and his crew was part of the effort to paint the Battle of Midway as a Japanese victory.

3. 2003; rpt. Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 2007.

4. *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal* (Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 2006).

5. *Midway, the Battle That Doomed Japan: The Japanese Navy's Story* (1955; rpt. Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 1992).

6. Subtitle: *The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005). Through a meticulous study of the surviving flight logs of the Japanese carriers, Parshall and Tully conclude that no strike force could have been "spotted" on Japanese flight decks when the US dive bombers attacked. The carriers had for several hours been conducting intensive flight operations—launching and recovering the morning attack forces at Midway itself, as well as constantly cycling combat air patrol fighters in response to successive American attacks. The rapid tempo of those operations would have prevented any of the ships from using their flight decks to organize a strike against the US carrier fleet. This revelation completely undermines Fuchida's account, which states that IJN carriers, on the morning of 4 June, had been mere moments from launching an attack that might have altered the battle's outcome. In fact, no such attack could have been ready to depart until much later that morning.