

## **Battle of Yashima**

The Battle of Yashima was a decisive engagement in the closing stages of the Genpei war (1180–1185), in which the rival Taira and Minamoto samurai clans struggled for dominion over Japan. By 1185, the Taira had suffered repeated defeats and lost the capital of Kyoto to the Minamoto. The Taira then retreated to the fortified island of Yashima, where they had established a temporary palace for the six-year-old Emperor Antoku (1178–1185). Despite their previous losses, the Taira had more ships and manpower than their enemies, and were expecting a naval attack. They hid their fleet in a small cove on the eastern side of Yashima and planned to ambush the Minamoto.

Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–1189), the Minamoto commander, opted for an overland approach instead. He had fires lit along the coast, fooling the Taira into believing that a large force was about to attack them from behind. The Taira took to their ships, and the battle began. Led by the legendary Nasu no Yoichi, the Minamoto archers routed their opponents, forcing the Taira to abandon Yashima and flee across the Inland Sea to Shimonoseki, off the southern tip of Honshu. There they were ultimately defeated by the Minamoto, who went on to establish the Kamakura shogunate and rule Japan from 1192 to 1333.