

In a mirror, darkly: a comparison of Chinese and Japanese military reform, 1860-1894

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Abstract

By the year 1860, both the Qing dynasty in China and the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan were under considerable strain following Western intervention and domestic disturbances. While the Qing were able to survive the disturbances, the Tokugawa Shogunate did not, and was replaced by a government of the Tokugawa's clans' enemies, under the nominally direct leadership of the Meiji emperor. Both Chinese and Japanese leaders recognized that reform of their societies was necessary to ensure their independence with a special emphasis on military reform. As a result, both the Qing dynasty and the Meiji government sought out and employed Western military advisors to assist their efforts. There are similarities between how the Chinese and Japanese used their western advice, namely that both insisted on maintaining control over their advisors, ensuring that they would serve the desires of their respective governments. However, the differences were greater both in number and severity. The Chinese employment of western advisors was based on regional and provincial interests. Additionally, the Qing focused much more on the acquisition of Western technology. The Japanese used a formal system of official military advisory missions, whereas the Chinese preferred to employ individuals informally on a contract basis. All of these sources of similarities and differences were almost exclusively due to domestic politics, rather than any desire of a foreign power. For Qing China, it was vitally important to maintain the security of the dynasty, and they feared a powerful centralized military would overthrow them. For the Japanese, it was about creating a reliable military to ensure the survival of the Meiji regime. While both governments experienced some success, in the battlefields of Korea and northern China, it was the Japanese model that ultimately prevailed.

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Introduction

Tantalizing questions about “what if” scenarios always abound in the field of history. It is all too easy to see the alternate paths, the potential changes, whole worlds of unique scenarios all predicated on slight changes or different choices. Such scenarios are often useful intellectual enterprises, helpful in determining what is and is not important, and for general entertainment, but very rarely advance beyond that. After all, though many an aphorism might protest otherwise, history does not repeat itself. Until someone creates a working time machine, historians are limited to a single data point. As a result, any situations which bear even a close resemblance to each other provide valuable insight to historians in determining the various influences over past events. There exists a historical situation, the use of Western military advisors in military reform in late 19th century China and Japan, which has gone generally unstudied, particularly in depth.

In the latter half of the 19th century, Both China and Japan found themselves in remarkably similar situations. Both experienced significant domestic turmoil and were the targets of foreign intervention and colonialism. Both realized that their military forces were not strong enough to defeat their enemies and they needed to reform their militaries and increase their military strength in order to preserve their regimes against their enemies, both foreign and domestic. In China, the Qing dynasty, an imperial line of the Manchu ethnic minority, was under threat from multiple rebellions all over the country. Western powers, such as Britain and France, eager to pry open the vast China market for trade, struck repeatedly at the government to break down the Qing tributary system. In Japan, the *bakufu*, or feudal military government of the Tokugawa clan, which had governed Japan since 1603, was under threat from rebellious domains and foreign powers. The Tokugawa government had long maintained a closed-country, or *sakoku*, policy, where interactions with the West were limited to a small Dutch trading outpost. While these policies were never as complete as they were portrayed, these policies successfully limited the influence of Western ideas and philosophies to the broader population.

However, by continuing to keep contacts open with the West and studying western technology and thought, known as *rangaku*, or Dutch knowledge, Shogunate elites remained broadly familiar of the technology and politics of the West. However, this familiarity did not result in appreciation. The arrival of the task force led by American Commodore Perry in 1853 was the culmination of the gradual collapse of those policies and was a serious threat to the *bakufu* government. It meant the failure to secure the Japanese home islands against unclean foreign presence. No longer could either government derive legitimacy from protecting its people from devious foreigners. Tides of change were coming, and if the Qing and Tokugawa wanted to survive, they needed to rebuild their military forces, which were grossly ineffective because of obsolete technology, tactics, and organizations. To do this, both nations turned to the foreign powers, seeking to reform their military forces using Western trainers.

Both China and Japan, beginning from 1860, employed Western military advisors to train and advise their military forces. The situation for both governments continued on roughly the same trajectory, with both achieving significant goals in military modernization but neither country clearly ahead of the other until 1894, when China and Japan went to war over Korea. This war served as a referendum on each nation's military modernization, which Japan won decisively.

While both governments employed their Western advisors to achieve a common goal, to ensure military parity and continued independence from the foreign powers, and they did so with some similarities, there were also significant differences. Both acted in the recognition that they could not rely on the old ways of war any longer. Old forms of military training and organization could not stand against the contemporary military technology of the imperial powers. The *bakufu* contracted a French military mission to advise the Tokugawa on military reforms and train their new military forces. The *bakufu's* weakness could not be overcome, and the Tokugawa Shogunate fell to the rebel domains, who led the restoration of the new Meiji Emperor to direct government. The Meiji government continued

with French advisors after the fall of the Shogunate. It created a relatively consistent program of training and development, with those Western advisors at the center.

On the other hand, while the Chinese did employ small and isolated training programs, the Qing dynasty pursued technological acquisition as its primary line of effort in military reform. Additionally, the Qing dynasty employed what amounted to a foreign mercenary army in the form of the Ever-Victorious Army at the end of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), something that did not happen in Japan. This Army was to serve as the foundation for what few training programs did exist and acted as a blueprint for the limited army reforms. The technological transfer program was focused on developing a domestic arms industry and created great state arsenals and shipyards at Tianjin, Shanghai, and Fuzhou. These programs, however, were pursued haphazardly by important provincial officials such as Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang, and Li Hongzhang rather than through a centralized program under imperial supervision.

This topic has been the subject of occasional and uneven scholarly examination, but the nature of the scholarship reflects the approach of each nation to military reforms. The scholarship focusing on Western military advisors is more fragmented, largely consisting of chapters or sections of individual works such as John Rawlinson's study on China's naval development and Thomas Kennedy's work on China's domestic arms industry, existing on the periphery, coming in and out, only in focus for a few moments or pages before being shuffled away, into the background. In Jonathan Spence's *To Change China*, a classic work discussing Western advisors in China, a single chapter is dedicated to the commanders of the Ever-Victorious Army, Frederick Townsend Ward and Charles Gordon. But the most thorough examination of the Ever-Victorious Army is that by Richard Smith, whose *Mercenaries and Mandarins* examines in depth the history of the Army and their Western advisors, while also describing the surprisingly small impact of the Army after the end of the Taiping Rebellion. In his examination of Li Hongzhang and the Huai Army, Stanley Spector spends a short time discussing Li's role in establishing

Western training and naval development. David Pong's biography of Shen Baozhen spends a great deal of space detailing foreign involvement in the founding and operation of the Fuzhou Navy Yard, China's most advanced and prolific shipyard, supplementing John Rawlinson's more expansive examination of China's naval development. One of the two major European figures of the Fuzhou Navy Yard, Prosper Giquel, is the subject of a biography by Steven Leibo.

On the Japanese side, much like the more organized and directed approach pursued in that country, Ernst Presseisen's work discusses in detail the roles of the French and German advisors in creating the Imperial Japanese Army. But no work directly compares the two approaches, or why they were so different.

There is one major historical work that compares China and Japan, David Ralston's *Importing the European Army*. However, Ralston's comparison is broader and encompasses more than just China and Japan, including Russia, Turkey and Egypt as well. While his focus on the socio-cultural implications of military reform is significant, the brevity and breadth of his work naturally leaves open significant avenues for study, particularly when it comes to the specifics of military reform.

This paper will examine the Chinese and Japanese approaches to Western advisors and military reform and compare them to determine why they were different. The differences between the Chinese approach of technology acquisition and the Japanese approach of training and drill arose out of differences in their domestic political situations and their political culture, rather than being imposed by foreign powers. In Qing China, the cultural weight of the Mandate of Heaven, the bureaucratic structure of the Qing armed forces, and the desire to ensure the political survival of the dynasty against domestic threats created an overwhelming incentive towards a technological solution. The Mandate of Heaven was a nuanced, multifaceted idea that represented the legitimacy of a ruling dynasty in Chinese culture. The Emperor maintained the Mandate through ruling justly and ensuring that the Chinese people lived in social harmony, with a special emphasis on Confucian ritual. A significant element of the Mandate

was peace: if there was peace throughout the Empire, then the ruler had the Mandate, but if the Empire was wracked by internal rebellion and falling prey to barbarians from outside the Empire, then the emperor had lost the Mandate and it was acceptable and expected that a challenger would emerge to attempt to take the throne. In Meiji Japan, the need to defeat multiple domestic enemies and reform the very social structure of society to ensure that Japan could meet the cultural and military challenge of the West created an overwhelming incentive towards an approach emphasizing training. The drastic consequences those different approaches had continue to impact our world to this very day.

China

Looking at the state of the Qing dynasty at 1860, one would be hard-pressed to imagine a world where it would survive to see the twentieth century. The dynasty was under threat from multiple rebellions, from the religious revolutionaries of the Taiping having made their capital at the ancient city of Nanjing, to the Nian in central China, to the Muslim rebellions in Xinjiang. Militarily the Qing Empire was decrepit, with the traditional military forces of the empire unable to stop the many enemies of the empire from taking what they wanted. In this drastic situation, drastic measures were necessary. Local gentry leaders used their own social patronage networks, derived from *guanxi*, or personal connections, to field military forces. These leaders, such as Li Hongzhang, Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang, and later Zhang Zhidong, recognized the inherent weaknesses of the old ways of military training and sought out the technology of the Western imperial powers in a movement that became known as Self-Strengthening.

The local gentry, scholar bureaucrats, and court officials recognized that fundamental military changes were necessary.¹ Current Qing military forces, the Banner Forces and the Green Standard Army, faded under the weight of poor training and equipment, and the soldiers were corrupt and often worse than the bandits they were supposed to fight. They were extremely disorganized, with branches of service layered on top of one another to the point of disorganization. So, the Qing government instituted many reforms, falling into two fundamental types. One was aimed at the intangibles of military service: boosting morale within the army and trust with society outside, loyalty to the dynasty and a place in society for the new soldiers. The second aimed at the tangibles of military service: Western technology and military weapons.² Adopting new Western technology and weapons along with

¹ Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1957), 196.

² Ibid.

the new tactics and techniques those weapons came with required the employment of Western military and technical advisors.

But Western advisors, with few exceptions, remain peripheral figures in the historiography of the Self-Strengthening Movement. The employment of Western military advisors was done in an ad hoc manner, with little to no direction given from the central government. The first experience with Western advisors was with the mercenary Ever Victorious Army, employed by Li Hongzhang against the Taiping Rebellion, which while being peripheral to the military effort, served as a model for China's first relatively modern army.³ In 1862, the Imperial Throne issued an edict directing the major leaders of the Self-Strengthening Movement to train officers at Shanghai and Ningbo, which petered out into nothing. Between 1864 and 1874, a small training camp outside of Shanghai known as Fenghuangshan trained troops of Li's Huai Army. A decade later, Zhang Zhidong, one of the most prominent of the generation of reformist officials that followed Li, employed German officers training his provincial forces and even founded the Western-style Guangdong Military Academy. But these training efforts were peripheral to the main effort of the dynasty: the acquisition of western military technology.

Several patterns appear in the employment of Western advisors across this period. First, Qing employment stayed away from uniformed foreign military advisors employed from a foreign government as a coherent training mission. Instead, they employed Western adventurers and military officers under direct control of Qing officials. Second, Western advisors were subordinated to Qing official goals, rather than their home governments. Consequently, western advisors were almost always employed to train themselves out of a job; these advisors were expected to teach Qing subjects their knowledge so that the capabilities would be added to the Qing dynasty, replacing the Westerner in question. Third, military reform was viewed primarily as a technical, rather than organization problem.

³ Stanley Spector, *Li Hung-Chang and the Huai Army: A Study in Nineteenth Century Chinese Regionalism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), 84.

As a result, Qing officials focused their military reforms on the procurement and employment of modern weaponry, rather than organizational changes and training methods. Fourth, all of these issues were compounded and amplified by a total lack of central direction and control from the Qing dynasty, leaving a patchwork of capabilities both technical and organizational. Thus, any expertise and training brought by Western advisors was significantly reduced. Western military advisors did play a role, but for those four reasons they remained on the periphery of Chinese military Self-Strengthening.

The State of the Qing Army in 1860s

By 1860, the armies of the Qing were in complete disarray. Even before the internal rebellions, evidence of weaknesses within the Qing military emerged. Failed Qing military campaigns against Burma in 1765-1769 and Vietnam in 1788-1789 pointed towards the weaknesses that would soon emerge in the First (1839-1842) and Second Opium Wars (1856-1860) and the crushing domestic rebellions.⁴ Wenxiang, a member of the Grand Council and supporter of the Self-Strengthening Movement, excoriated Qing troops who failed to defend North China during the Second Opium War.⁵ These failed military campaigns were but one sign of dynastic decline. The Qing conquests of Xinjiang had drained the government treasuries, which when combined with the drastic population growth during the reign of the Qianlong (1736-1795) and Jiaqing (1796-1820) emperors and Confucian attitudes towards thrift and government spending meant that officialdom was poorly paid. As a result, corruption and bribery were widespread, limiting the flow of accurate information to the throne.⁶

By the 1860s, there were two primary military forces in the Qing Empire. These two forces followed similar paths: from a period of strength, where they were the most reliable force in the empire, only to degrade over about a century until they were a completely ineffectual force.⁷ First were the

⁴ S. C. M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24.

⁵ Richard S. Horowitz, "Transformation of the Chinese Military, 1850-1911," in *A Military History of China*, ed. David A. Graff and Robin Higham, Up. Ed. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012), 160.

⁶ Paine, 24-25.

⁷ Ibid, 16-17.

Banner Forces which were the original forces the Manchu dynasty had used to conquer China. Originally only 8 banners composed of Manchu forces, upon the conquest of the Ming dynasty the banners expanded to include 8 banners for Han soldiers and 8 for Mongol soldiers bringing the total number of banners to 24. These banners were originally a group of strong mounted archers, whose military lifestyle of hardened plains living facilitated their conquest of China. But a lack of significant military activity after the defeat of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories in the late 17th century and the enforced separation of the Banner Forces from society contributed to their collapse into ineffectual effeteness and they became a hereditary privileged class symbolic only of past military glory.⁸ Beyond their collapse, the Banner Forces were also designed not for a defense against external aggression but rather against internal revolt. The Qing dynasty understood that internal threats were just as dangerous, likely even moreso than external threats. Because the conception of the Empire as the Middle Kingdom was so strong, the assumption was that the 'barbarians' from outside the realm would eventually be subdued, if not through military force than cultural force.⁹

The second group of military forces were the Green Standard Forces. These forces were primarily ethnic Han forces, founded to serve as an auxiliary to preserve order in the provinces, created from the remnants of the Ming army, volunteers and local militia.¹⁰ The Green Standard Army was scattered throughout China in small garrisons, nominally under the command of the provincial commander-in-chief. While it was named as an Army, the Green Standard was primarily a constabulary rather than a combat army whose mission was the preservation of peace and order.¹¹ Economic hardships and mismanagement afflicted the Green Standard Army as much as they did the other branches of government within China. The pay scale for Green Standard soldiers never rose to match

⁸ Ralph L. Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power 1895-1912* (Princeton University Press, 1955), 8-9.

⁹ Ibid, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹¹ Ibid, 13.

inflation, meaning that it stayed the same for 200 years, forcing soldiers to seek outside work to supplement their income.¹² Indeed, financing the various branches of the Qing military was an ongoing issue that would continue until the fall of the Qing dynasty.

Compounding the technological backwardness of the weapons and training of the Banner and Green Standard forces were the incompetence of the officer corps and the complex system of checks-and-balances which were aimed not at ensuring military effectiveness but ensuring the survival of the Qing dynasty. The officer corps of both forces repeatedly demonstrated their uselessness in multiple combat theaters. In theory, officer training and commissioning mirrored the civil system: as civil service candidates studied and passed various level examinations, so too were military officers expected to pass a military examination. However, the military examination had only a tenuous link to actual military leadership or training, as the exercise portion was a scripted, stilted mess, descending into a total farce. Illiterate candidates were able to purchase assistance from various scholars and tutors for the written portion of the examination. The only real emphasis was on various feats of strength with the bow, sword, and lifting a heavy stone. Even then, the examination system and an active commission in one of the various armed forces were disconnected: most military degree holders did not serve in the armed forces, while most serving officers did not hold degrees.¹³ This system was even less suited to produce modern officers, since Chinese officers were not accustomed to partaking in combat, and Western combat placed a great deal of emphasis on the presence and conduct of the officer in combat.¹⁴ Officers also pocketed the pay for unfilled billets, contributing to large numbers of ghost soldiers and low morale amongst the real soldiers.¹⁵

¹² Chung-yun Chang, "The Organization, Training, and Leadership of a Victorious Army: The Hsiang-Chun, 1853-1865," (master's thesis, St. John's University, 1974), 3.

¹³ Ibid, 18.

¹⁴ Wright, 201.

¹⁵ C.Y. Chang, "Hsian-chun," 5.

The complex system of checks-and-balances instituted by the Qing dynasty played an important role in ensuring no official developed enough military force to challenge the dynasty. Multiple officials filled different roles with overlapping roles and responsibilities within a vague chain of command. In this system, the senior-most military officials in the Qing hierarchy were the Tartar-Generals who bureaucratically outranked the governors-general, but only directly commanded the Banner garrison. The governors-general and governors were *ex-officio* ministers and vice-ministers of war, thus considered as military officers under the Board of War and nominally the supreme military authority in the provinces, but again only directly commanded a brigade of Green Standard forces assigned to their offices. Governor-generals and governors would often further check each other, since they were responsible to the Imperial throne as opposed to each other. However, a Green Standard commander-in-chief was militarily senior to governors, and thus could only be subordinate to a governor-general (and his forces were almost always larger than his civilian colleague's). Subordinate to these provincial commanders-in-chief were brigadier-generals who operated semi-independently and often had even larger forces at their disposal than the commanders-in-chief. However, nearly all of the brigades were decentralized and operated over a huge span of territory and were for all intents and purposes sedentary.¹⁶ When called to participate in a campaign, Green Standard units were created ad hoc, taking soldiers from many commands and creating a new unit and assigning a new commander, creating fragmented units with poor morale and clueless leaders with no links to their men.¹⁷

Qing forces were ill-disciplined and poorly trained. Soldiers were poorly disciplined, as officers frequently failed to attend to their duties, having been appointed through favoritism or nepotism, and thus courted the contempt of their subordinates, leading to frequent insubordination. Soldiers often gambled inveterately and abused opium. Additionally, soldiers often hired local beggars as substitutes to

¹⁶ Powell, 14-15.

¹⁷ C.Y. Chang, "Hsian-chun," 5.

serve in their stead for drill and combat duty. Luckily for the soldiers, they did not have to do so often, because most military officers drilled their units only at the insistence of their senior officers, resulting in as little drilling as possible.¹⁸

All these issues have their roots in and are compounded by the prominence of the civil service and the scholar bureaucrat or *literati*. The Confucian paradigm subordinated military affairs to its conception of ethical human relations, which were focused on ensuring the Mandate of Heaven.¹⁹ The *literati* were essential to the operation of the empire, but beyond that, they were the perpetuators of the virtues of civic rule and responsible for ensuring the continuation of their own dominance.²⁰ As a result, the military could not attract the best talent, and even when an officer demonstrated exceptional talent, he transferred to a civil track as soon as possible.

The Ever-Victorious Army

Despite the rise of the militia in combating the Taiping armies, exposure to Western military methods and trainers remained minimal. The first real experience with Chinese soldiers and Western tactics and drill was the foreign mercenary group known as the Ever-Victorious Army. The Ever-Victorious Army had its roots in many different areas. The founder of the Army, Frederick Townsend Ward, was a wanderer who consistently moved around seeking glory. Born in Salem, Massachusetts, Ward had an eclectic military career, which began when he ran away from his family to fight in the Mexican-American War. After that, he completed less than a year at Norwich College, a military university based in Vermont, after which he left to serve with the French Army in the Crimean War and then with a filibuster army under William Walker during his attempt to conquer Baja California and

¹⁸ Ibid, 7.

¹⁹ Paine, 344.

²⁰ Powell, 16.

Sonora.²¹ After his experience in Mexico, Ward travelled to Shanghai in 1860, where he developed the idea of a privately financed army to fight against the Taiping.²²

As the idea for what would become the Ever-Victorious Army, known then as the Foreign-Arms Corps, percolated into Ward's mind, he contacted Yang Fang, also known to Westerners as Taki or Takee, who was one of the most prominent Qing officials in Shanghai. Ward also recruited Henry Burgevine, who would serve as his second-in-command, and together they handled the military affairs of the Foreign-Arms Corps. Yang Fang and his superior Wu Xu served as the administrative masterminds of the organization. Ward's initial attempts at recruitment involved a mixed force of European, American, and Filipino individuals of dubious quality and were completely disastrous, requiring a second slightly more rational basis for recruitment.²³ While this force successfully retook the city of Songjiang in July of 1860, the following eighteen months was nothing short of disastrous. Ward suffered near fatal wounds at the Battle of Qingpu in August, and the defeat of the Foreign-Arms Corps was so bad that it ceased to function as an organized entity.²⁴ Ward reappeared in Songjiang in April of 1861, again attempting to recruit for a reformed force, but was detained by the British and then released back to the Chinese. Another disastrous attempt to retake Qingpu followed in May.

However pathetic these misadventures may have been, Ward's experience provided him valuable understanding in operating around the Shanghai area. He understood the importance of terrain and mobility, particularly securing means to navigate the many riverway lines of communication throughout the Huangpu River basin around Shanghai, such as steamboats and pontoons.²⁵ More

²¹ Jonathan D. Spence, *To Change China; Western Advisers in China, 1620-1960*, 1st ed., (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 57. Filibuster armies were mercenary armies who engaged in unauthorized military actions in another country in support of or to foment a revolution. It is traditionally given to the mid-19th century American expeditions to Central America. Most (in)famous of these expeditions was when William Walker briefly conquered Nicaragua.

²² Ibid, 61.

²³ Richard J. Smith, *Mercenaries and Mandarins: The Ever-Victorious Army in Nineteenth Century China*, KTO Studies in American History (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1978), 28 and Spence, 62.

²⁴ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 34.

²⁵ Spence, 67.

importantly than that, however, was the realization that for any of his efforts to succeed, Ward and his sponsors would need to secure official sanction for his operations. The solution finally settled upon was to fuse Western military expertise and Chinese manpower: the creation of a Chinese force commanded by Western officers.²⁶

Henry Burgevine initiated the policy of training the Chinese soldiers in Western military tactics during Ward's disappearance between 1860 and 1861 after the disastrous first skirmish at Qingpu.²⁷ When Ward returned to command in the summer of 1861, Wu Xu established a bureau at Songjiang to provide systematic training for local forces in the use of Western weapons and drill. Ward used the remnants of his Foreign-Arms Corps to drill them in the use of small arms, tactics and artillery, and by January of 1862, Ward had a force of over one thousand well-trained Chinese troops under his command.²⁸ As time moved forward, Ward began to envisage a truly Chinese force, eventually seeing his force become purely Chinese after receiving sufficient Western training. While the Ever-Victorious Army would not live to see the development of Western-trained Chinese officers, it did serve as the seed which eventually germinated into a great deal of the Chinese armed forces.

Ward's force drilled twice daily with Western weapons and in Western tactics. This meant learning how to form a square, employ skirmishers, effect and storm a breach, and to respond to commands, both verbal and bugle.²⁹ This put them beyond even the new style, *yong-ying* militia forces of Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, who rarely drilled more than once a day and using mostly traditional weapons, such as swords, spears and gingals (large, unwieldy two-person firearms) in tactics that in some cases dated from as far back as the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).³⁰ Foreign observers who watched

²⁶ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 37.

²⁷ Ibid, 37.

²⁸ Ibid, 38.

²⁹ Ibid, 99.

³⁰ Ibid, 92.

Ward's force at Songjiang, were impressed with the performance of his Chinese troops.³¹ Employed as skirmishers and pursuit troops, Ward's troops demonstrated fearless courage. Both Li Hongzhang and Wu Xu remarked upon the efficacy of the artillery employed by the Ever-Victorious Army. Li believed that the Army's success drew from its advanced weaponry, particularly the employment of artillery.³²

Whatever the strengths of Ward's Army, another issue that arose was the perpetual thorn of "synarchy." The term, coined by John Fairbank defined as the "joint Sino-foreign administration of the government of China under a foreign dynasty." While the integration of foreign administration brought great benefits to the whole country, friction consistently emerged in jointly administered programs because of differing interests of foreign and Qing officials. While this friction might have been acceptable as the cost of doing business in economic matters, it was not acceptable when it came to military matters to the security conscious Qing. Ward represented much that could go right with the employment of foreigners, as he sought to ingratiate himself into imperial service to help buttress his position in China against his low standing amongst the various imperial powers in Shanghai.³³ He became a Chinese subject, and was appointed a Chinese officer commanding a Chinese army, but he was still a foreigner, and his unruly comportment set both local Qing officials and the imperial court in Beijing ill-at ease.³⁴ While the imperial court never ceased to worry about Ward's loyalty, they did not have much to worry about. But Ward's death in September 1862 would give the court a much bigger worry in the form of Henry Burgevine.

While Burgevine was the second in command under Ward, his appointment to the command of the Ever-Victorious Army was not a foregone conclusion and arose from a lack of satisfactory alternatives rather than an endorsement of Burgevine's skill or suitability for command.³⁵ His time in

³¹ Ibid, 93.

³² Spector, 155.

³³ Spence, 69-70.

³⁴ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 78.

³⁵ Ibid, 108-111.

command was inauspicious, known primarily for two things: his personal vices, including his temper, financial profligacy, and excessive alcohol consumption; and his obstinacy in the face of orders to move on Nanjing, which he refused to do in the face of muddled financial accounts.³⁶ This prompted the notorious “Taki Incident,” where Burgevine raided Yang Fang’s offices for the pay he felt his Army was owed. Li Hongzhang used this incident to memorialize Beijing for Burgevine’s removal, which was promptly granted. While Burgevine protested mightily, his appeal was denied, and in a fit of pique, he began a series of desertions, first to the Taiping, then back to the imperial government, that would end with his “accidental” death by drowning in 1865.³⁷ What was not immediately apparent at the time was how central a role Li played in this entire incident. In many ways, Li was responsible for the whole thing.

When he arrived at Shanghai in 1862, he sought to consolidate his position as governor of Jiangsu, which required the cooption of local authority represented by Wu Xu and Yang Fang. The pair were notoriously corrupt and widely suspected of funneling huge amounts of profits to their personal coffers. Li deftly manipulated the financial structure of the Ever-Victorious Army by forcing the pair to take greater responsibility for the financial burden of the Army, which in turn would have required them to dig into their own pockets for payments. In the face of losing significant amounts of personal money, Yang Fang delayed, provoking Burgevine’s assault and removal.

Burgevine’s removal from office began the period of significant British influence over the Ever-Victorious Army. British officers began to serve in the Army, beginning with Burgevine’s temporary replacement, John Holland, a regular British Army officer. Under his command the Army in many ways went from bad to worse. Holland lacked both the touch with the unruly subordinate officers and soldiers and the tactical understanding that Ward possessed. The only battle fought under his command, at Taicang, was an unmitigated disaster. Taking the field in February 1863, Holland led a well-equipped

³⁶ Ibid, 113.

³⁷ Ibid, 113.

force of 2,500 and 22 pieces of artillery; his poor generalship, which included a lack of reconnaissance, poor emplacement of his advanced artillery, and a hasty and ill-advised retreat, doomed the force. In March of 1863, Holland ceded command to Major Charles Gordon, also a regular British Army officer.³⁸

While there were some superficial similarities between Gordon and Ward, they were very different people operating under very different circumstances. They were both mavericks who enjoyed the thrill of battle, but where Ward had craved fame and fortune through expediency, Gordon sought honor and edification through principled action. Ward fought a defensive campaign that remained relatively apolitical, that is to say, he attempted to represent the interests of the Qing dynasty, rather than the American or other foreign governments. As a soldier-of-fortune, whose home country had little influence and was preoccupied with the bloody American Civil War, Ward's actions could be relatively contained as they did not necessarily represent direct foreign impositions on the Qing government. Gordon on the other hand, fought a distinctly offensive campaign that had enormous political undertones given his status as an official of the British government.³⁹

These distinctions had a much bigger impact on Gordon's relationship upwards with imperial officials and foreign representatives, but little impact downwards in the conduct of his army, which proved impervious to his attempts at reform. Gordon struggled to maintain control of his force, and within five months of assuming command of the Army he suffered two major mutinies and one mass desertion over his attempts to institute British-style military discipline.⁴⁰ The increased involvement of British officers and their sensibilities increased conflict both within the Army, as the mercenary soldier-of-fortune American officers resented British control, and outside of the Army with the various Chinese

³⁸ Ibid, 9.

³⁹ Ibid, 123-125.

⁴⁰ Spence, 84.

officials they interacted with. Ultimately the Army operated in essentially the same manner under Gordon as it had under Ward, only with a great deal more friction.⁴¹

It was not all negative however: Gordon brought to the table a winning combination of British supplied artillery and tactical and operation capability. Gordon, much like Ward, greatly appreciated and displayed a preternatural understanding of terrain, emphasizing the importance of waterborne transportation via steamers and pontoon bridges, both to enhance the Ever-Victorious Army's mobility and reduce the Taiping forces' mobility.⁴² Additionally, the well-known bravery of the Army's soldiers remained the same, as Gordon continued Burgevine's example, leading the force from the front lines with only a cane, much as Ward had done.⁴³ Gordon also implemented another significant reform which helped address the constant manpower shortage: the enlistment of defecting and captured Taiping troops. While his use of these troops did raise Li's suspicions, the former rebels fought well despite their lack of training with Western tactics and arms.⁴⁴

Ultimately, the military impact of the Ever-Victorious Army was extremely debatable. While Liang Qichao (1874-1929), a reformer in late Qing and early Republican China, attributed a great deal of Li's success to the Ever-Victorious Army,⁴⁵ the truth was far less clear. The effectiveness of the Army was undermined by the constant financial difficulties and internal unrest, which led Li to compose strategies that relegated the Army to a supporting role as strategic reserve for the other advancing armies. While Gordon was disappointed not to engage in more direct combat, he deployed his army ably by magnifying its capabilities: relying on dramatic key victories as opposed to a grinding war of attrition, severing riverine lines of communication and exploiting dissent amongst rebel commanders.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 133 and 139.

⁴² Spence, 77.

⁴³ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 138.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 131.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 140.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 141.

Beyond the debatable military contributions to the defeat of the Taiping, the most important contribution of the Ever-Victorious Army was as a model for China's first relatively modern army.⁴⁷ Many of the recurring issues and themes emerged over the course of the Army's tumultuous four-year existence, both good and bad. The first and foremost role of the Army was to prove that when properly equipped and trained, native Chinese troops could handle both Western weapons and their tactics. This was not always evident, especially given the dramatic collapses of the Imperial forces during the 1850s against internal and external foes. Second was the continuous issues over control over military forces. Li Hongzhang made concerted efforts to ensure his control over the Ever-Victorious Army. The employment of foreign forces required a delicate balance, as the employment of different foreign advisors challenged traditional Qing policies of treating foreign barbarians in a similar fashion. These policies did not mean equal treatment, rather a broad sense of giving similar rewards and punishments for similar actions. The giving of rewards and promotions, especially valued by Gordon, had to be carefully managed lest it provoke international incidents. But the imperial court did not hand out these rewards for nothing: they took great care to ensure that various awards and foreign-style medals and decorations were properly awarded.⁴⁸ Third was the importance and effectiveness of Western technology. The successes of Western technology, both for the Qing dynasty during this rebellion and against the dynasty by foreign forces, set China down a path of technological acquisition, while keeping full faith in the moral and ethical foundation of Confucian society.⁴⁹ Finally, the ephemeral influence of the Ever-Victorious Army would foreshadow the long and frustrating future of military reforms. While there would be few successful initiatives for training Chinese military in Western methods,⁵⁰ any further attempts at reform encountered insuperable difficulties because despite the acknowledged military

⁴⁷ Spector, 84.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 162.

⁴⁹ Wright, 199.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 216

weakness of Qing forces, the internal political dynamics that favored a weak and decentralized military never changed.

One of the last legacies of the Ever-Victorious Army was the training camp at Fenghuangshan. Founded by Gordon in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Ever-Victorious Army, the camp was intended for two purposes: to defend Shanghai and to form the nucleus of “a Regular Chinese army.”⁵¹ The school was active from 1864 to 1874. Given Gordon’s first-hand experience with Chinese officials and their military system, he understood better than most foreign officials the specific needs of the Chinese situation. He believed completely in the mission of training the Chinese and initially reported good progress just six weeks into the school’s existence.⁵² But Gordon lacked the temperament to truly see the project through, writing just a week later that the work was very tedious and that he lacked the patience to oversee the school. His departure was the impetus for negotiations between China and Britain over the control of the camp. Gordon believed that the permanent agreement was necessary in the case of Li’s transfer, and that leaving the camp in the hands of whichever Chinese official replaced him ran the risk of eliminating an important element of Chinese military modernization.⁵³ The final negotiations created a division of labor: the Chinese commanded the camp and were responsible for administrative matters such as promotion and dismissal, camp discipline, payment, and rations, while the British were responsible for training and education. This largely coincided with the Chinese view of how the camp should be run. It was a Chinese institution in fact, as well as in name. Li, who oversaw the negotiations, was originally forced to accept a Lieutenant Jebb of the 67th Regiment of the British Army as Gordon’s replacement. Jebb unfortunately had difficulty adapting to the environment, clashing repeatedly with the Chinese battalion commander and school commandant, and returned home in 1865

⁵¹ Smith, *Mercenaries*, 168.

⁵² Ibid, 169.

⁵³ Richard J. Smith, “Foreign Training and China’s Self-Strengthening: The Case of Feng-Huang-Shen, 1864-1873,” *Modern Asian Studies* 10, no. 2 (1976): 202.

after only a year in the position. Jebb was succeeded by William Winstanley, a British civilian who served as an officer in the Ever-Victorious Army, removing the camp from direct influence of the regular British Army.⁵⁴

Winstanley remained one of the mainstays of the camp until its dissolution in 1874, but his enthusiasm with the project waned over time. During his initial stint, he commended the performance of the Chinese troops as “uniformly good,” despite some friction on each side, as the Chinese commanders displayed a lack of enthusiasm for learning Western tactics and the foreign drill masters favored far too much coercion in their teaching methods.⁵⁵ However, after a short time away (likely fighting the Nian rebels), Winstanley returned and criticized the state of discipline amongst the Chinese forces, which he could do nothing about as he was not in command of the camp.

Nor were complaints about the Fenghuangshan soldiers limited to foreigners. Ding Ruchang, governor of Jiangsu and primary sponsor of the training camp after Li moved to Zhili, bitterly complained about the quality of the officers there, declaring them to be listless and slippery, while the troops were corrupt, extravagant, poorly led, and unclean.⁵⁶ Poor conditions at the camp and incompetent leadership prompted two separate mutinies in 1872: in the spring, two battalions took their commanders hostage, leading to the cashiering of the commanders in question and several other officers; another mutiny occurred on Christmas Day, which also prompted the dismissal of a third battalion commander. These results led to the termination of the training program, which was regarded as costly and superfluous. In May of 1873, the Shanghai governor placed the Western drillmasters and staff on notice, with the intent to end the program.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid, 204.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 208.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 211.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 213-214.

Zhang Zhidong's Military Academies

While Fenghuangshan represented a realistic worst-case scenario for Western training, there were other training programs and academies that were much more successful, even as many of the same historical themes, such as concern over loyalty of the foreign officers employed and the programs' dependence on their sponsors for any traction, are readily visible. The most prominent example of these successes was the series of academies established under Zhang Zhidong during his service throughout China. The first academy he founded was the Guangdong Military Academy, which he established during his governor-generalship of Liangguang, in the aftermath of the Sino-French War in 1885.⁵⁸

Zhang focused his reforms of the Guangdong Victorious Army, the provincial force under his direct command, sending a memorial to the throne outlining his training plans on July 7, 1885 with a two-pronged effort of adoption of Western military techniques and high recruiting standards. Crucially, Zhang recognized that the force could not just be equipped with Western military weapons and sent forth on operations, his troops must be trained to use those weapons.⁵⁹ In order to train his new army, he contracted a party of German officers who arrived before his memorial to the throne, in October 1884.

His employment of the German officers combined aspects of both Fenghuangshan and the Ever-Victorious Army. The Germans were in charge of training and education but under Zhang's command, much as the instructors at Fenghuangshan remained under the *taotai* of Shanghai's authority. Zhang set the curriculum, focused on two key areas: marksmanship of both direct and indirect weapons systems, that is small arms and artillery; and maneuver, such as dispersed squad movements, river crossings, and mountain warfare. Additionally, Zhang secured the appointment of the German officers as Chinese

⁵⁸ Adam Chang, "Reappraising Zhang Zhidong Forgotten Continuities During China's Self-Strengthening, 1884-1901," *Journal of Chinese Military History* vol. 6, (2017): 162, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22127453-12341316>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 163.

officers, allowing them to command their troops in battle should they be needed before training was complete, in a manner similar to the employment of Gordon in the Ever-Victorious Army.⁶⁰

Zhang's concept of training mirrored the thoughts behind Fenghuangshan and many other Western military organizations at the time: training a small unit of soldiers, in this case a battalion, which would serve as the core to educate the force as it expanded. The Germans would then have essentially trained themselves out of a job.

In order to facilitate training officers for the Army, Zhang established the Guangdong Military Academy in 1887. The Academy was a much more fully formed expression of the contemporary application of Confucian concept of *ti-yong*. The concept addressed the interplay between *ti*, the fundamental cause or origin, and *yong*, or the concrete reality of a thing. The Self-Strengtheners used this concept to weld Confucian *ti*, represented by Confucian political and social structures to Western *yong*, or their technology. Zhang organized the Academy along Western lines militarily, dividing the units into battalion and brigade elements and organized into functional branches of infantry, cavalry, and artillery.⁶¹ But Zhang mandated that Chinese cadets also take part in studying the Confucian classics and recruited among the degree-holder population. Part of this was his broadening the recruitment base by targeting an educated population but also allowing his officers to advance in the civil system. But one significant weakness of his force mirrored many of the other Chinese forces: the lack of uniform equipment, which multiplied supply concerns, as units had to carry multiple types of ammunition for different types of weapons, restricted maintenance, and limited interoperability between companies, restricting their combat effectiveness.⁶²

The use of foreign trainers was minimal throughout this period. Even in places where foreign trainers were employed, friction and frustration abounded and those training missions had limited

⁶⁰ Ibid, 164.

⁶¹ Ibid, 166.

⁶² Ibid, 168.

impact on Chinese military capabilities. But Westerners were not only or even primarily being employed as military trainers. Instead, the Qing dynasty employed Westerners to tackle the most important task the dynasty could conceive: providing China the domestic capability to produce Western-style arms.

Call to Make Arms – Chinese Self-Strengthening, Arms Industry and Naval Development

Qing officials, both Manchu and Han, attributed a significant portion of their military weakness to the advanced technology of the West, and thus made it the primary goal to develop a domestic arms industry capable of replicating Western technology, especially steam-powered naval vessels. While the Chinese initially attempted to replicate Western technology using indigenous methods, it became clear that a whole new economy would have to develop. While the urgency of the situation mandated that the Qing procure machining equipment and arms from abroad initially, there was a great deal of energy put into ensuring that Chinese technicians and engineers would be able to continue the work domestically. By 1875, the principal manufacturing plants were established in China: the Jiangnan arsenal in Shanghai, the Fuzhou dockyard, and the Tianjin arsenal.⁶³ Closely connected to the construction of arsenals and domestic arms production was the development of increased naval capability. Even more so than Qing ground armies, traditional Qing water forces, under both the Banner and Green Standard armies, were horrifically insufficient and outmoded.⁶⁴ Naval development was important militarily because it would allow for the Chinese to push possible foreign interference away from the Chinese heartland by engaging those forces before they reached Chinese soil and exploit the numerous riverine lines of communication for internal development. The overwhelming focus of naval reform was on the acquisition of weaponry and advanced ships.⁶⁵ This meant the acquisition not just of the weaponry and ships themselves, but also the means to produce them domestically.

⁶³ John Rawlinson, *China's Struggle for Naval Development, 1839-1895* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 41.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 16-17.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 44.

China's first arsenal was founded in 1861 at Anqing under the direction of Zeng Guofan and his brother Zeng Guochuan. This team consisted of some of the most accomplished engineers and experts available, indicating the importance of the project. The arsenal produced a small steamer and numerous types of ordinance, and had originally projected to produce percussion caps for small arms. While the brothers were initially enthusiastic about the capabilities of the Anqing Arsenal, less than two years later the scope of the problem became clear to them. In order to develop these capabilities, they would need to procure foreign assistance.⁶⁶

The Lay-Osborn Flotilla

The first attempt to procure Western naval vessels was ongoing concurrently to the construction of the Anqing Arsenal. The British head of the Imperial Maritime Customs Agency, Horatio Nelson Lay, proposed the purchase of a flotilla of steamers to strengthen the imperial navy, and was sent to England to negotiate the purchase of the vessels, which were to be crewed by a joint British-Chinese crew and under Chinese command, at least in Zeng Guofan's view. However, Lay had other ideas, having contracted with Royal Navy Captain Sherard Osborn to serve as the commander of the fleet. For unknown reasons, Lay conceived of a secret agreement with Osborn, where he would be subject to only the emperor himself, with those imperial orders transmitted *only* through Lay, and *only* if Lay thought those orders reasonable. Upon learning of this, the Qing government repudiated the agreement and refused to acknowledge Osborn as commander of the fleet. The British government and the Qing dynasty were at an impasse. Ultimately, the fleet was returned to England, having lingered, unused, in Chinese waters for three months.⁶⁷ The incident only hardened the perceptions amongst the Qing dynasty that foreign governments could not be trusted to handle China's best interests and there was a need to ensure that the dynasty could produce its own weapons.

⁶⁶ Thomas Kennedy, *The Arms of Kiangnan: Modernization in the Chinese Ordnance Industry, 1860-1895* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), 35-36.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 37.

However, the flotilla did deliver something that would be incredibly valuable to the development of naval technology and arms manufacturing: the first set of steam-powered industrial equipment that would be active in China.⁶⁸ Purchased by Li at the behest of his primary Western advisor, Halliday Macartney, in January of 1864, that machinery would soon be installed one of the crown jewels of Chinese self-strengthening: the Fuzhou Naval Yard.

The French and the Fuzhou Naval Yard

While western advisors were employed at all of the major arsenals, the most prominent were Prosper Giquel and Paul d'Aiguebelle, who had served in the Sino-French counterpart to the Ever-Victorious Army during the Taiping Rebellion under Zuo Zongtang. Zuo had long harbored the idea to build naval warships in China. His initial thoughts appeared in 1863, when he memorialized to the Zongli Yamen, the Qing dynasty's proto-foreign ministry created after the Second Opium War, the concept to build steamships as a long-term defense policy.⁶⁹ By 1866 Zuo seized the opportunity presented by the throne, which had invited him to comment on the policy proposals of Robert Hart, the head of the Imperial Maritime Customs, and Thomas Wade, the secretary of the British Legation, and proposed the creation of a naval dockyard. While Zuo sold the naval yard both in terms of military and commercial development, the military developments remained foremost in his mind. The naval yard project was revolutionary and in order to help sell the yard, it was in Zuo's best interest to be as inclusive as possible when discussing its benefits. So, while Zuo's proposals included the amounts of grain that could be carried by the various classes of steamships, he left no doubt about the specific purposes of the ships: they were to be steam-powered warships. While neither Englishman had discussed naval reform in detail, Zuo clearly connected national revival with the creation of steamships. The creation of the

⁶⁸ Ibid, 40.

⁶⁹ David Pong, *Shen Pao-chen and China's modernization in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 110.

Fuzhou Naval Yard, like all other Self-Strengthening arsenals, was intended to employ Western artisans and navigators to ensure complete technological independence from the West.⁷⁰

The Fuzhou Navy Yard was a revolutionary project, in more ways than one. It was not just a shipbuilding facility. The Yard included various industrial and manufacturing facilities, such as a machine shop and an iron rolling plant, to make the base materials and tools for the ships. These were necessary because the facilities, from mines to refineries, simply did not exist elsewhere in China at the time. Beyond the physical infrastructure, the plans for the Naval Yard also included a significant educational component. There were two elements to this component: an engineering school and a naval training school. These represented some of the first schools of these types in China. These schools were vital to the success of the project and would serve as a spring board to further technological development. Additionally, Zuo developed the naval yard as an essentially imperial project, to be funded not only by the Fujian provincial government but also the surrounding provinces as well as Beijing. This represented another significant innovation by attempting to bring together the disparate elements of the empire in order to ease financial concerns for a national project. However, the initial conception of the project quickly had to be scaled back to a provincial level because of local gentry opposition in the neighboring provinces. The inability to secure interprovincial funding would prove to be a significant issue for Naval Yard operations. Additionally, while there was initially support from the central government, when it came time to force interprovincial cooperation, the imperial enthusiasm for the project failed to appear, leaving it essentially a Fujian-only project.⁷¹ When it came to securing Western advice, Zuo turned to those he knew from the Ningbo campaign, Giquel and d'Aiguebelle.

Together with Zuo, the two Frenchmen developed an ambitious contract and signed it in June of 1866. The contract called for the completion of five formal tasks: to establish the necessary workshops

⁷⁰ Ibid, 113.

⁷¹ Ibid, 130.

and building yards; to set up schools of navigation and naval construction to train a sufficient number of native foremen; to engage such European staff as was needed to complete the contract; to build a French-style side-slip launch (a method of placing the completed vessels in the water); and to set up a metalworking forge capable of transforming iron rods into bars and plates. After the five-year contract, the dockyard would be completely in Chinese hands. Beyond the plant and school, the contract called for the completion of sixteen ships, eleven with 150-horsepower engines, the remainder 80-horsepower engines. Two of the larger engines were purchased from France to start on the larger vessels, especially considering that it was expected that construction on the hulls would advance ahead of the engines. The machinery arrived at the end of 1867, the first keel laid shortly thereafter in January of 1868. The start of the contract however began on the opening of the engine shop, which did not come until 1869.⁷²

While Giquel and d'Aiguebelle both believed in the project, their home government was not sure. Much like Gordon, the exact role of the Giquel and d'Aiguebelle gave both parties cause for concern. The Chinese wanted an official backing and guarantee from the consul. To them, the consul's signature was the endorsement of the French government, rather than a matter of mere notarization. Giquel was aware of the distinction, having mentioned the difficulty when he was presenting the proposal to the consul Bernier de Montmorand. The proposal caused a great deal of consternation to the consul, who did not want the French government associated with the potential catastrophic failure of the dockyard. Montmorand believed that the project was merely a provincial one, rather than an imperial project. The consul wrote back to France declaring that the Foreign Ministry should absolve themselves from the project, and demanded that Giquel, who by this point had been on leave from the French Navy for five years, return to active duty or resign.⁷³

⁷² Rawlinson, 45-47.

⁷³ Steven A. Leibo, *Transferring Technology to China: Prosper Giquel and the Self-strengthening Movement* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1985), 78-79 and Pong, 157.

Giquel was incensed, for he viewed his role as consistent with his duty as a French officer and citizen. In Giquel's view, his work in China was spreading French influence, securing France's place in China against pernicious British influence, and giving France a strong ally who would bring honor and prestige to France in the international realm. Giquel appealed to the ranking naval commander in East Asia, Admiral Pierre-Gustav Roze, who supported him with the Naval Ministry back in France. While Roze declared that the work that Giquel was doing was not at odds with French policy and in fact was bringing great credit upon himself and the French nation, the event that truly sealed French consent to the project was a meeting with Hu Guangyong, a top aide to Zuo Zongtang, who convinced Montmorand that the project did in fact have imperial backing.⁷⁴ Giquel was able to secure French consent to his and d'Aiguebelle's involvement in the project, though he could not gain any active support. Essentially, the government pledged to be neutral to the project rather than oppose it, and allowed Giquel to remain on the rolls as a naval officer.

Additional opposition came from the Fuzhou Customs director Eugene-Herman de Méritens. He criticized the project as horrifically unrealistic, that five years was not enough time to teach the students all they needed to know and that the Chinese would be able to purchase cheaper and more capable ships from abroad.⁷⁵ While de Méritens' arguments had some merit to them, part of his argument insisted on gaining control of the dockyard under the Customs service, particularly to ensure financing. De Méritens used his backing from local French officials to insinuate that the French government wanted him to take charge of the project, rather than Giquel and d'Aiguebelle. During the previously mentioned meeting between Hu and Montmorand, Hu was able to determine that de Méritens was acting as a private citizen rather than a French official and did not have any backing within the French government.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Leibo, 86.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 82.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 86.

Besides the external conflict between the French and the directors, the directors also had to deal with internal conflict between them. Prosper Giquel had assimilated into the milieu far better than d'Aiguebelle, speaking Chinese and being far more culturally sensitive. That meant that while d'Aiguebelle had initially been Zuo's contact, Giquel's involvement gradually increased to the point where he was the first director, rather than d'Aiguebelle, which caused tension between the two. Giquel viewed himself as a Chinese employee, nothing more, nothing less, whereas d'Aiguebelle did not take kindly to the idea of subordination to the Chinese.⁷⁷ The dichotomy is not simply one of being pro-Chinese or anti-Chinese; after all, the dockyard had begun with his assistance. Rather, a better way to understand the distinction is that Giquel was willing to tolerate far more inefficiency from the Chinese administration, whereas d'Aiguebelle and the others could not stand the prevarications, arrogance and complacency of the Qing officialdom. Nor did d'Aiguebelle agree with every decision that Giquel made, and he refused to be held responsible for what he perceived to be errors in judgment. While they did develop a stricter separation of duties and ultimately would share equal rewards upon the completion of the contract, the friction was somewhat reduced by d'Aiguebelle's self-appointment to secure a better source of timber for the vessels, which had between 1868 and 1869 become a significant problem for the dockyard.⁷⁸

Following a tumultuous latter half of the 1860s, the 1870s proved to be much more peaceful for the operations of the dockyard. As the administrative difficulties were smoothed over and foreign interference successfully dodged, the yard's building and training operations came into full steam. On his first official day as director-general of the Yard, Shen Baozhen stressed the superiority of Western technology and Westerners' continuous desire to improve, which the Chinese must mirror. Shen led by example in this regard, as one of the few senior Confucian scholar-bureaucrats who would take an

⁷⁷ Ibid, 90.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 91.

active, technical interest in the project under his supervision. This study, facilitated by Giquel's language skills and active involvement from the plant staff, led him to conclude that the key to successful modern shipbuilding was not wielding of a hammer or other tools, but in the principles of design and correct blueprints. As a result of this new understanding, Shen created an additional school for the Navy Yard, a School and Office of Design.⁷⁹

These choices by Shen dovetailed well with Zuo's original justification for building rather than buying a navy. In Zuo's view, building was vital to the acquisition of technology, because it would allow the Chinese to develop their own capabilities unhindered by any political interference from the foreign powers, even if it was more expensive to begin.⁸⁰ For Shen, it was vital that the Navy Yard be a place of learning. As a result, the Naval Yard was the only project in China to have a school attached to it.

The Yard's school was separated into two divisions: the French and English schools, named by the language of instruction. The French school contained three different departments: the School of Naval Construction, the aforementioned School of Design, and the School for Apprentices. The School of Naval Construction produced engineers who understood the detailed requirements necessary for ship building. The general conceptions and sketches produced by these engineers would then be given to the graduates of the School of Design, who would in turn produce a detailed working plan based on those specifications. The School of Apprentices was also created after the opening of the Navy Yard, with a view of training young workers to serve as foremen and workshop supervisors.⁸¹

The English school likewise consisted of three departments: the School for Theoretical Navigation, the School for Practical Navigation, and the School of Engineering. The Schools for Theoretical and Practical Navigation were linked: graduates of the Theoretical classes would then move on to the Practical school. The School for Theoretical Navigation, headed by an Englishman named

⁷⁹ Pong, 207.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 225.

⁸¹ Ibid, 231-232.

James Carroll, was a three-and-a-half-year crash course in all of the subjects required for navigation: arithmetic, geometry, algebra, trigonometry, astronomy and geography. Upon graduation to the School of Practical Navigation, students were given the opportunity to go on two lengthy training cruises. These were significant because they went beyond the terms of the contract, as open-sea navigation was thought to be impossible within the time of the contract, even by the eternally optimistic Giquel. Originally, students were only to be trained to navigate within sight of shore. But the head of the School, Royal Navy Captain R. E. Tracey, scheduled an advanced, 75-day cruise to Singapore and Penang in Malaya. These voyages were a wild success.⁸² The School of Engineering was designed to produce engineering officers, rather than mechanical engineers like the School of Naval Construction. They learned the theoretical and practical elements of the steam engines as well as their management and operation while at sea.⁸³ While most foreign instructors departed after the end of the contract in 1874, there remained a handful who were retained individually, including Carroll and Giquel, because even though other elements of the contract had exceeded expectation, it had proved unrealistic to expect the Chinese to be able to maintain and teach a naval engineering college after only five years of training and little practical experience. For many of the ships' officers, additional training and experience in Europe was recommended.

When examining the legacy of the Fuzhou Navy Yard, one finds it to be a qualified success. Against the expectations of many, the original contract was fulfilled: all of the stipulated conditions were met and the ships were delivered. While they had fallen behind the most advanced ships in foreign service, which by then were iron-plated and screw-driven as opposed to the wooden and primarily paddle-driven vessels produced by the Yard, disinterested Western observers declared many of the vessels indistinguishable from similar vessels constructed in London or New York.⁸⁴ The training program

⁸² Ibid, 232-234.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 222.

had gone beyond its original scope, training officers capable of open-water navigation. Even later, after Shen and Ding Ruchang, Shen's successor, gave way to a series of incompetent and indifferent directors-general, Shen's students continued to operate the yard at good levels of efficiency. Here, Western advisors and teachers should take a great deal of credit for the success of these programs.

Insufficient Self-Strengthening – Success or Failure of Western Advisors

While the Ever-Victorious Army, Fenghuangshan, and the Fuzhou Navy Yard are the most prominent and well-documented instances of employment of Western advisors, hundreds if not thousands of Western advisors and technicians were hired and employed all across the spectrum of various Self-Strengthening projects. As a result, it is extremely difficult to determine or evaluate whether these Western advisors were successful within the context of the Self-Strengthening Movement. Many foreigners came to China and sincerely desired to improve the lot of the people and wanted to see the nation prosper. Nevertheless, friction between the Western advisors and Chinese supervisors and workers was constant throughout each project as cultural differences clashed repeatedly. Nevertheless, the common principles remain the same, across each of the disparate programs and institutions.

First, the Qing stayed away from employing uniformed military personnel as a coherent mission and instead chose to employ primarily civilians or officers on an individual basis. Halliday Macartney left the British Army to serve with Li Hongzhang, eventually serving in various positions for him including as director of the Nanjing Arsenal. There were several reasons for this development. It reflected the intimately personal nature of the Chinese social structure and government. Each official hired whomever they saw fit, often relying on personal ties rather than any technical proficiency or qualifications. This individual employment also facilitated the next principle: control over foreign employees.

Second, the central concern of the dynasty was ensuring control over their foreign employees and minimizing reliance upon these foreign advisors. This was symptomatic of a larger anti-foreign

feeling. And it was not mindless, unjustified paranoia. Li Hongzhang's long experience with foreign employees at Tianjin and Jiangnan left him wary of foreign control.⁸⁵ Foreign employees were difficult to work with, quarrelsome, and expensive. For example, a dispute arose at the Tianjin Arsenal when a foreign technician, Daniel Davidson, had issued an illegal and unsafe order to a Chinese technician. The director of foreign technicians, a Mr. McIlwraith, relieved him as a result of the order and later insubordination. Mr. Davidson refused to acknowledge the relief, appealing to the English consul. By the time the case concluded a year later against Mr. Davidson, he had drawn full pay and accommodations for a year without doing any work.⁸⁶ As a result, wherever possible, the Chinese formally subordinated foreign advisors to Chinese directors.

Third, the Chinese understood military reforms as focused on technological advancements in nature, rather than advancements in doctrine or training. The effectiveness of Western arms and ordinance could not be denied. Additionally, Chinese domestic politics incentivized towards the avoidance of direct military reform. By bringing arms production under domestic control, the Qing dynasty sought to buttress its position and avoid reliance on unreliable and dangerous foreigners. Beyond the purely military factors, domestic arms and ordinance manufacturing also provided the opportunity for economic development and the promotion of industrial capability. Technologically speaking, this was a relative success. By the Sino-Japanese War, the best Chinese equipment was at least equal to and often better than Japanese equipment. However, the utter lack of training and weak central leadership drastically undermined the ability of Chinese to effectively leverage their technological advantages.

Finally, because of a lack of imperial direction, Western advisors and technological developments were adopted randomly. This uneven training meant that Qing forces from different

⁸⁵ Kennedy, 70

⁸⁶ Ibid, 73-74.

regions or who had different government sponsors often could not work with each other because of the differences in equipment and doctrine. Additionally, training was not directly linked to the larger Chinese military force. As a result, soldiers and sailors who did receive training often did not have a billet to fill, leaving them without positions within the Qing military and those who did have positions to fill were appointed to billets that were ill-suited to what training they had received.

Ultimately, the Chinese use of Western military advisors did not increase the capability of the Qing military. But all of the issues that contributed to their ineffectiveness arose from Chinese domestic issues, rather than the demands or influence of Western powers.

Japan

During the end of the Tokugawa shogunate (1600-1868) and the initial stages of the Meiji Restoration (1867-1889), the various Japanese governments sought desperately to use Western knowledge to strengthen their military capability to secure themselves domestically against rebellious factions and internationally against foreign incursions. Both the shogunate and the Meiji government turned to the French, at the time regarded as the strongest military power in Europe, for advisors for their new armies.

As a result, the French sent three different military training missions to Japan. The first mission took place under the auspices of the Tokugawa Shogunate, from 1867-1868. The second and third missions took place under the new Meiji Imperial government from 1872-1880 and 1884-1889.⁸⁷ The French Army provided valuable assistance in developing basic military competencies, such as initial officer and noncommissioned officer training, operations at the battalion and brigade levels, and tactical doctrine within the Imperial Japanese Army. While the French pioneered the establishment of the modern Imperial Japanese Army, the relationship could not last: because of fundamental French military weaknesses, domestic difficulties, and incompatible visions of the purpose of military assistance, the Meiji abandoned French military assistance in exchange for German advisors.

German assistance took on a much different character than French assistance. While the French had focused on tactical instruction to the detriment of operational studies and staff work, Japanese experience in the Taiwan Expedition (1874) and the Satsuma Rebellion (1877) revealed the weaknesses of their French-educated Army: operational confusion, disunity of command, lack of logistical support and medical care. Major Jakob Meckel, the primary German advisor employed by the Japanese, taught staff work and operational art using historical examples and map exercises, which were revelatory to the

⁸⁷ Dates for first two missions: M. le Peyrère, *Le Militaire Japon* (Paris: Plon, 1883), 29 and 41, third mission from Ernst Presseisen, *Before Aggression: Europeans Prepare the Japanese Army* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965), 132.

Japanese, whose feudal military past and French instruction had provided them with nothing like the Prussian staff system.

Both military advisory missions though did not exist in a vacuum, as domestic politics in France, Germany, and Japan in addition to the purely military factors drove use of the Western military advisors. First, French policy towards Japan was not driven solely by the Quai d'Orsay. When the French foreign minister appointed Léon Roches as minister plenipotentiary, Roches implemented his own personal policy as he saw fit, and refused to act as a passive, dispassionate though interested observer.⁸⁸ Roches placed France in a position of influence in many fields, but upon his departure French policy returned to passivity, with almost all of the ministers appointed after Roches hostile to the Japanese and their modernization plans, and the influence of French declined. In Japan, Francophile and Germanophile senior officers fought behind the scenes for dominance, which affected the role of the French advisors and the Japanese military system. As German international prestige grew following the victory over the French in the Franco-Prussian War, the German government looked for ways to expand their influence outward, and Japan proved to be an excellent opportunity to win one over on their European rivals.

The military missions' progress mirrored the political situation. The first French mission, though short in duration, was filled with individuals who believed in the mission and received valuable support from the Shogunate. The second French mission, though the longest and most productive, largely fulfilled the initial requirements and vision outlined by the first mission, and operated under constant threat of early termination because of pecuniary issues and Japanese domestic political opposition. The reduced third French mission operated in the shadow of the growing German influence in the Japanese government amidst an army that felt increasingly confident in their abilities to operate without foreign assistance.

⁸⁸ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, "Léon Roches—Diplomat Extraordinary in the Bakumatsu Era: An Assessment of His Personality and Policy." *Modern Asian Studies* 14, no. 2 (1980), 306.

The process of military reform had a far deeper historical precedent than most of the French participants understood. As a result, the French did not tailor their assistance to what the Japanese desired, whereas Meckel and the Germans did. The decision to employ French advisors by the Shogunate and later the Meiji was simply the latest step, though a significant one, in a much longer attempt to transform the feudal militaries of Japan into a capable modern force. While many foreign observers demonstrated a poor track record assessing Japanese military strength,⁸⁹ a significant contribution to that failure derived from their inability to understand the purpose of the new imperial force. The initial first step for both the Shogunate and Meiji government was the establishment of an effective national military that could be relied upon to suppress domestic rebellions.⁹⁰

The Military Situation in the Late Shogunate

By the end of the 1850s, the shogunate's hold on power was tenuous, requiring a delicate balance between various domestic factions and handling of foreign imperial military powers. Any attempts to address these weaknesses would need to happen quickly, and would require foreign support. But calling on foreign support represented a significant challenge to the *bakufu*, or the military government of the shogunate because it challenged the fundamental social structure of feudal Japan. When the Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1613), the first Tokugawa shogun, gained power, he found himself struggling with both internal and external legitimacy.⁹¹ One of the ways that the shogunate gained legitimacy was the imposition of the *sakoku* (closed country) policies. Officially, those policies began in 1639, when the *bakufu* limited Japanese interaction with Western powers, centralized trade through the Dutch at Nagasaki, and banned Christianity. The *sakoku* policy applied only to the European powers, not to Japanese relations amongst East Asian nations.⁹² Nor was the *bakufu* necessarily passive towards

⁸⁹ Hillis Lory, *Japan's Military Masters* (New York: Viking Press, 1943), 219-220.

⁹⁰ Hyman Kublin, "The 'Modern' Army of Early Meiji Japan," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 9, No. 1 (Nov 1949), 22.

⁹¹ Ronald P. Toby, "Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 3, no. 2 (1977): 329.

⁹² *Ibid*, 325.

European powers, rather the government engaged in a series of ambivalent interactions and minor conflicts with Russia over trade and territory in the Kuriles in the 1790s.⁹³

While the *sakoku* policies were implemented with more pragmatic aims in mind, there existed a related but slightly different ideological or moral element, known as *jōi* (expel the foreigner).⁹⁴ *Jōi* philosophies retained their influence, particularly amongst the *shizoku* (lower-class samurai), even after *sakoku* policies were thoroughly discredited, and served as a source for much discontent with both the *bakufu* and the Meiji government after the Restoration. But because the *sakoku* policies represented a fundamental plank of the social order of the *bakufu* abandoning those policies in an attempt to reform invited a challenge to its authority.⁹⁵

Despite the *sakoku* restrictions, Japanese continued to keep abreast of Western thought through studying *rangaku*. Using imported books and news from the Dutch traders at Nagasaki the Shogunate watched military, scientific and political developments from afar. In particular, the disastrous performance of the Chinese forces in the Opium War further highlighted the need for military reform within Japan, for if the great Qing Empire could be defeated by the western barbarian, Japanese forces could hardly hope to achieve much better. Informally, *samurai* practiced musketry and marksmanship through an idiosyncratic school system, resembling martial arts training. In the decades prior to the Meiji Restoration, various instructors taught Western style musketry and marksmanship, known as *takashima-ryu*, after the founder of the original school Takashima Shuhan, using translated drill manuals acquired from the Dutch. For a period, the *bakufu* favored *takashima-ryu* schools with official patronage, finances, and promotions and influence for both teachers and students.⁹⁶

⁹³ Mark Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 61-62.

⁹⁴ Conrad Totman, "From Sakoku to Kaikoku. The Transformation of Foreign-Policy Attitudes, 1853-1868." *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 1 (1980), 11

⁹⁵ Toby, 324.

⁹⁶ D. Collin Jaundrill, *Samurai to Soldier: Remaking Military Service in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 27.

Even before the Perry Expedition arrived in 1853, elements of the *bakufu* recognized the military situation vis-à-vis Western powers and sought to redress the imbalance. In 1842 Mizuno Tadakuni, then leader of the shogunal council of elders, initiated the *tenpo* reforms. These reforms attempted to strengthen the defense of Japan by taking direct control over territories surrounding Edo (current day Tokyo) from their feudal retainers, and establishing state of the art coastal defenses, but Mizuno was undermined by the radical nature of his reforms, as they drew opposition from both the petty *daimyō*, or feudal lords, whose lands he appropriated and the commoners who feared the upheaval.⁹⁷ The *tenpo* reforms foreshadowed much about the next forty years. The shogunate could not implement necessary reforms because of the weakness of the regime. The *daimyō* and the *samurai* class opposed reforms as threats to their social privilege and the peasantry opposed these reforms because of the drastic change it represented to their way of life.

Because of the social status of the *samurai*, the shogunate's attempted military reforms were a significant break from the basic political and social structure of Tokugawa era Japan, which resulted in major challenges implementing reforms. For example, the reorganization of the *bakufu* military forces from feudal units to a Western style military with branch assignments such as infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers and units organized into battalions and brigades posed a huge challenge.⁹⁸ Higher ranking *samurai* did not want to serve underneath lower ranking *samurai*, and *samurai* as a whole chafed against regimented Western tactics and drill, clinging to their individual initiative and honor under the old system. Because of the resistance amongst the warrior class, almost every army in Japan, whether the Shogunate's military forces or the retainer bands of the *daimyō*, was forced to experiment with either new types of units or by reorganizing lower class *samurai* from the hinterlands, without deep ties to the social order to minimize backlash.⁹⁹ Before employing foreign instructors, in 1862 the Shogunate

⁹⁷ Ibid, 69.

⁹⁸ Presseisen, 2.

⁹⁹ Jaundrill, 72.

trained these new infantry battalions using translated drill manuals together with the various *takashima-ryu* instructors. Despite these steps, much work needed to be done, as entrenched *samurai* fought these reforms every step of the way. But these forces formed the core of a new army that *bakufu* leadership could use to reassert Tokugawa dominance.

The *bakufu* were not the only group to reform their military forces at this time. The other domains, or the independent feudal territories, both pro- and anti-*bakufu*, were just as aware of the need to reform as the *bakufu* itself. Ironically enough for the French, the anti-*bakufu* Choshu domain's reforms were prompted by the utter collapse of its forces during the Shimonoseki Incident of 1863. The incident began when radical Choshu leaders usurped control of domain from conservatives force, and ordered the forces guarding the Shimonoseki Strait to open fire on foreign vessels. British, French, Dutch, and American forces responded by sending a landing party, which destroyed the forts and gun emplacements after an abject performance from Choshu forces, which led to the 1864 invasion by *bakufu* forces to reinstate the conservative leadership. Choshu responded by founding a series of irregular volunteer units, the most prominent of which were the Kiheitai, which were designed to sneak through enemy lines rather than engage the main body of troops.¹⁰⁰ Satsuma, another prominent anti-*bakufu* domain, took a different approach, and reorganized their retainer band into conventional infantry units.¹⁰¹ But the bottom line with these reforms, regardless of domain, was the reorganization of military forces beyond the *samurai* and in uniform battalions responsible to their governments, rather than their feudal lords.¹⁰²

In 1864, the first opportunity to test these new forces emerged. The imperial loyalist and anti-*bakufu* Mito domain began gathering pro-*sakoku* and pro-*jōi rōnin* (masterless samurai), eventually

¹⁰⁰ Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*. Modern War Studies (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas), 2009, 3

¹⁰¹ Jaundrill, 89.

¹⁰² Ibid, 88.

growing to over 3,000 warriors.¹⁰³ The *bakufu* feared that this large force would begin to coordinate with the rebellious Choshu and Satsuma domains in the south, and ordered their suppression. Eventually, these new *bakufu* forces did succeed in suppressing the Mito rebellion, but after a very mixed performance. The *bakufu* commanders however did not blame the poor performance on rifle battalions; rather, they blamed their performance on a lack of training and insufficient numbers. One *bakufu* commander's colorful evaluation of officer and noncommissioned officer training noted that the current methods were akin to "scratch[ing] an itch through one's boot."¹⁰⁴ Soon after the suppression of the Mito in 1866, the Choshu radicals executed a *coup d'état* against their conservative leadership for accepting the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the *bakufu* again sent troops against rebellious *daimyō*.¹⁰⁵ This time around the Tokugawa troops suffered a defeat for three main reasons. First, the commanders of the force squandered their numerical advantage with complicated planning and excessive caution. Second, the Choshu force operated with advanced breechloading rifles and excellent tactical doctrine, taking full advantage of the Kiheitai. Thirdly, Satsuma's forces remained neutral, depriving the Shogunate of valuable troops and strategic lines of communication.¹⁰⁶

After the mixed performance of their forces during the Choshu War of 1864, Tokugawa leaders recognized the absolute need to further drastic military reforms if the Shogunate was to continue to survive. Tokugawa leaders understood securing foreign assistance was an absolute necessity to these expanded reform efforts.¹⁰⁷ This foreign outreach did not represent a total break from the past, but rather a recognition that the haphazard reform efforts of the previous two decades were insufficient to meet the challenges of the rebellious domains and deter foreign incursion. Into this void stepped the French and their dynamic Minister Plenipotentiary Léon Roches, who worked in Japan from 1864-1868.

¹⁰³ Ravina, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Jaundrill, 75-76.

¹⁰⁵ Drea, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Jaundrill, 102-104.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 104.

Roches, French Diplomatic Policy and the Origin of the French Military Missions

Despite being a civilian diplomat with little military experience, Léon Roches did more to define French military assistance than any officer or other military official. Roches, born to an impoverished old bourgeois family from Grenoble,¹⁰⁸ was an alluring enigma, whose prior diplomatic and adventuring experience in North Africa showed a deeply romantic and impassioned individual whose personality, force of character, and deep cultural understanding completed numerous delicate and complicated negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, Roches demonstrated an extremely charismatic nature, having gained the trust and genuine friendship of nearly every major ruler in whose court he served, regardless of the confluence of local or French interests.¹¹⁰ An important note here is that in spite of his charisma and obvious affinity for the *bakufu*, Roches clearly enabled *bakufu* initiatives, rather than driving the military reforms himself.¹¹¹ In Roches, the *bakufu* had found an individual who could be counted upon to bring foreign assistance to support of the regime.

Beyond the individual dynamism of Roches, the partnership between France and Japan was an attractive choice. For the Tokugawa Shogunate, the French were the world's greatest military power, with a long and cultured history and strong code of laws and governmental traditions which could serve as a blueprint for the reformed Japanese military. The French were eager to gain prestige and influence in Japan, as well as combat potential English influence, and for Roches personally, engage in a *campagne civilisatrice*.¹¹² Roches represented a fairly drastic departure from previous French diplomatic policy

¹⁰⁸ Lehmann, "Roches," 276. While Roches served the French army in North Africa, he was a translator and a local guide as opposed to a St. Cyr-trained officer or enlisted man.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 281.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 283. Individuals he charmed include the Algerian amir Abd al-Qadir, Moroccan Sultan Mulay Abd al-Rahman, and both Muhammad Bey and Muhammad al-Sadiq Bey of Tunisia, and ultimately nearly every member of the first French military mission.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 290.

¹¹² Archive Ministère des affaires étrangères (AAE), correspondance politique (c.p.) Japon, Vol 14 (1866), Roches to French Foreign Minister, No. 55, 15 Feb 1866, with Annex no. 1.

towards Japan of passive observation. This departure would trickle down to alter the dramatic tone of French military assistance.

When it comes to French policy in Japan, an important distinction must be made between the policy of Roches and the Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry). Just as Japan was subject to its own internal political divisions, so too was France. Japan was very far away from metropolitan France, and there was a great reluctance in the Quai d'Orsay to exercise central control over policy regarding Japan. Japan existed on the periphery of French concern. Communication was difficult. Even after the installation of telegraphic communications, Quai d'Orsay was disinclined to use it because of the cost. The French government left much to the diplomat on the ground.¹¹³

In this permissive environment Léon Roches developed and shaped French policy according to his own vision to such an extent that between 1865 to 1867 he operated more or less independently.¹¹⁴ He initiated a close relationship, positioning France as the model for Japanese modernization under the Tokugawa Shogunate, which he described as his "*politique personnelle*," a phrase which never appeared in his dispatches, but he used to great effect both in Japan and his previous assignments.¹¹⁵ While that is not to say that Roches was not subject to certain limitations or delay by the Quai d'Orsay, Roches was able to skirt by with behavior that would have been considered unacceptable to someone subject to more oversight. He sent a significantly reduced number of dispatches compared to others that followed him, and what dispatches he sent were filled with vague allusions and lacked the detail of other ministers. That the Quai d'Orsay failed to censure him indicates the limited interest in Japan by the central government.¹¹⁶ Roches' attitude also trickled down to the members of the military mission, who

¹¹³ Sims, 75.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 57.

¹¹⁵ Sims 65, and AAE, c.p. Japon, Vol 16, 22 Aug 1869, Outrey to Moustier. In Outrey's dispatch, he mentions that Roches only carried out his "personal policy."

¹¹⁶ Sims, 66.

despite their short time in the nation developed close personal ties with the Japanese they trained and real sympathy for the *bakufu*.

The French Army

Before examining the military missions, the obvious question arises as to what kind of army the Japanese were getting when they selected the French. While the French had the reputation of one of the strongest militaries in Europe, there were many severe weaknesses for those who took the time to examine the French system, nearly all of which would eventually show up in the French trained Japanese Army to varying degrees.

One of the most prominent features of the French Army of the time was its professional, long-service soldiery.¹¹⁷ While this structure had a certain appeal to the Japanese, particularly as a way to channel the martial spirit of the *samurai*, both the *bakufu* and the Meiji desired to move away from a *samurai*-dominated military. Additionally, the long-service of the French Army had a deleterious effect on its quality which was noted by many senior French officers. General Louis Trochu (1815-1896), who had spent much of 1866 investigating schemes for reorganizing the army, laid out many of the flaws of the French long-service system in his pamphlet *L'Armée française en 1867*. The French system produced soldiers who were tired, jaded and cynical, having served into their fifties and sixties. Despised by their officers because of their rough provincial roots, most French soldiers were not well supplied even in their garrisons, and as a result developed into inveterate scroungers whose activities often bled into plain theft. Additionally, many soldiers of the time were hardened alcoholics whose insubordination caused chronic problems.¹¹⁸ However, the Japanese did not adopt this system. For both the *bakufu* and Meiji government, domestic political considerations dictated their choice of personnel systems, rather than any inherent strength or weakness of the French system.

¹¹⁷ Wawro, 41.

¹¹⁸ Louis Trochu, *L'Armée française en 1867* (Paris: 1870), 86-98.

Another French weakness was the general staff system. The French army throughout this period had long struggled with intellectual decline, where officers, often brought through the ranks, would never complete their studies.¹¹⁹ The general staff was a backwater, whose officers often delegated their duties to civilians.¹²⁰ When the French went to war with Prussia in 1870, they had no maps, no war plans, and mobilization was extraordinarily chaotic.¹²¹

French tactics were primarily defensive, developed in response to the overwhelming Prussian victory against the Austrian Empire in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. French battalions, which were the smallest unit of maneuver, were trained to operate in tightly prepared, narrow positions along the battlefield bristling with their advanced Chassepot rifles. In artillery, the French preferred lighter, more mobile guns which would serve the Japanese army well over the mountainous and restricted terrain of the main Japanese islands. The French were very proficient in small unit operations, but anything beyond that was extremely difficult, owing largely to French military experience in Algeria.¹²² The heavy defeat of the French Army by the Prussians in 1870 had little impact on the tactics taught by the French to the Japanese. Within France, much of the reform of towards the Army in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War was aimed to ensure the political neutrality of the Army and create a solid base of trained manpower.¹²³ Additionally, regardless of whatever tactical reforms took place in France, the French advisors thought the Japanese unready to handle them.

First French Military Mission to the Shogun

The first French military mission to Japan was almost certainly doomed from the start. The mission took a significant amount of time from request to arrival, beginning in 1865 but not arriving until early 1867. This was time which the Shogunate did not have, as by 1866 full-blown rebellion had

¹¹⁹ Eugene Carraï, *La pensée militaire française* (Plon: Paris, 1960), 257, 259, 262.

¹²⁰ Wawro, 49.

¹²¹ Ibid, 50.

¹²² Carraï, 260.

¹²³ Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 7, 34-36.

already commenced and was gaining strength day by day. The earlier arrival of French advisors and trainers would have been of vital assistance to the *bakufu*. Shortly after the arrival of the mission, the *bakufu* collapsed, the Shogun resigned, and the mission ended before it had really had a chance to begin. In spite of this fact, and in some cases because of it, and the heavy investment by Roches and the mission's members into its success, the first mission was the most colorful mission of the three.

The official request for the military mission took a great deal of time, especially for something so important to both the *bakufu* and Roches. Serious negotiations began between members of the *bakufu* in late 1865, but it took until February, 1866 before the Shogunate formally requested French military advisors.¹²⁴ The official response from the Quai d'Orsay was unhurried, despite the repeated attempts by Roches to move the process along, including a direct plea from the Shogun.¹²⁵ After reiterating again the Shogunate's desire to accept whatever conditions the French Ministry of War thought necessary, both parties finally approved the mission on October 25th. The personnel assigned to the mission assembled and signed the contracts by early November, departed on November 19th, and after nearly two more months of travel, finally arrived in Japan sometime in January or early February, 1867.¹²⁶

The original request was for a mission composed of nine officers, eight noncommissioned officers and eighteen soldiers. The French Ministry of War however reduced the size of the mission for unclear reasons, much to the annoyance of both Roches and the officials of the *bakufu*. A General Staff officer was selected to be the chief of mission, and the remainder were to include infantry, cavalry, and artillery specialists, as well as military musicians. The mission conducted its training at a specially constructed facility in Yokohama, which included barracks, an artillery firing range and an exercise

¹²⁴ Presseisen, 6 and AAE, c.p. Japon, Roches to French Foreign Minister, No 55, 15 Feb 1866.

¹²⁵ AAE, c.p. Japon, Vol 14, Roches to French Foreign Minister, 27 May 1866.

¹²⁶ Presseisen, 7-11, for a more detailed account of the approval process. While it is extraordinarily unlikely that an additional year of French instruction would have saved the *bakufu*, a speedier process would likely have greatly increased the impact of the mission.

field.¹²⁷ Roches added that the personnel selected for the mission should be carefully considered, and there is every sign that the War Ministry concurred.¹²⁸ The final roster of the mission included chief of mission Captain Charles Chanoine, who would eventually go on to become a general and Minister of War during the Dreyfus affair; Lieutenant Jules Brunet of the artillery, who would serve as Chanoine's chief of staff during his tenure as Minister of War; Lieutenant Léon Descharmes of the cavalry, who would eventually serve on the second military mission; and Lieutenants Charles Albert Dubousquet, consequently seconded to the French minister in Japan after the conclusion of the mission, and Édouard Mesourot of the infantry. Additionally, there were engineer and artillery noncommissioned officers who served as instructors.¹²⁹

After their arrival in Japan, the mission quickly set out to accomplish its time-sensitive task. The mission's Japanese hosts clearly communicated the importance they placed upon their tasks when they presented the mission's emblems to the Shogun's Council of Elders upon their arrival in February, and then to the Shogun in person in May.¹³⁰ In view of the limited space available at their prepared facilities at Yokohama, Chanoine began by training small groups of Japanese officers and noncommissioned officers as cadres around which to build their new army. This first block of instruction would produce 800 trained infantrymen and 200 artillerymen. After that first class graduated from their training program, the mission transferred to larger facilities near the capital Edo.¹³¹ Much as the performance of the rifle battalions against the Mito rebels just four years prior highlighted the desperate need for additional training and officers, so too did that initial class even further underscore to Chanoine the desperate need for increased throughput as he sought to build a larger force. The time the mission

¹²⁷ AAE, c.p. Japon, Vol 14 (1866), Roches to French Foreign Minister, No. 55, 15 February 1866, with Annex no. 1.

¹²⁸ Presseissen, 7.

¹²⁹ Peyrère, 26.

¹³⁰ AAE, mémoires et documents (m.d.), Japon, Vol 1. (1854-1870), Chanoine to French War Minister, 16 Mar 1867 and AAE c.p., Japon, Vol. 15 (1867), Roches to French Foreign Minister, No. 83, 8 May 1867.

¹³¹ Presseisen, 10.

required to train a capable force simply did not exist, as political events within Japan swiftly overtook the capacity of the training mission. Beyond the basic training of soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers, Chanoine partook in secret war councils, and prepared the *bakufu* leadership with detailed plans regarding other aspects of military organization, such as proposals for regularized training at battalion level, the creation of mountain artillery batteries, recruiting practices, and the administration of military justice.¹³² Between its arrival and the end of January 1868, when the Boshin Civil War (1868-1869) between the Tokugawa and their supporters and imperial loyalist domains, primarily Choshu, Satsuma, and Tosa, began, the French military mission trained 1,500 infantrymen, 230 officers, 250 cavalrymen and mounts, along with five artillery batteries and a company of sappers.¹³³

Upon the outbreak of civil war, Roches' pro-Tokugawa policy experienced nearly as rapid a collapse as did the Tokugawa armies in the field. In response to a Tosa domain proposal for the restoration of imperial rule and the goading of Choshu and Satsuma, the Shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu agreed to resign.¹³⁴ In an attempt to regain his authority, Yoshinobu announced he would march on Kyoto, the home of the imperial court, with a significant body of those French-trained troops, along with their French instructors, who served as advisors but did not join in the conflict.¹³⁵ After disastrous defeats along the road to Kyoto in February, the Tokugawa regime lost the ability to resist the loyalist domains with any sort of effectiveness, ending any real chance of the continuation of the *bakufu*.

Roches attempted to maneuver between the officials of the Quai d'Orsay at home in France and local politics and other European envoys in Japan. While Roches could not offer Yoshinobu any materiel support, he did offer France's moral support as well as his services as an intermediary between the other foreign powers. But the fluidity of the situation made this policy problematic, because any pro-

¹³² Ibid, 11.

¹³³ AAE, m.d., Japon, Vol. 1, Captain Chanoine, "The state of Japan at the moment of the revolution," 25 Mar 1869.

¹³⁴ Jaundrill, 110.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 110 and Presseisen, 12.

bakufu position he took could change so quickly as to remove his advantages. However, he was able to secure a declaration of neutrality from Western nations, which might not otherwise have occurred.¹³⁶ As the Meiji leadership, who had previously been known for their *sonnō jōi* ideology, became more well-known and their modernizing agenda made clear, the fear of drastic reprisal against Western imperial powers shrank and willingness to deal with the new government increased. Combined with the rapid collapse of the Tokugawa regime, the opposition of the Quai d'Orsay to his pro-*bakufu* policy led to his recall to France at the end of 1868.

The appointment of Roches' replacement, Ange-Maxime Outrey, represented a drastic break from Roches' policy. While Roches had reconciled himself to the existence of the Meiji government, the combination of other French international conditions, namely the weakening of French position in Europe after the Austro-Prussian War (1866) and the failure of the Mexican Expedition (1861-1867), the replacement of Drouyn de Lhuys as Foreign Minister by Lionel de Moustier in 1868, and British opposition to French involvement in Japan, led the Quai d'Orsay to abandon Roches' activist pro-*bakufu* policies when he was recalled.¹³⁷ Or rather more accurately, end Roches' near constant insubordination and neglect of his instructions to play a passive role in Japanese politics. In Outrey Moustier found a perfect fit for his intentions, as he had neither the ambition nor imagination to pursue an independent line, and was already conditioned from his previous service in Alexandria to seek cooperation with the British, and lacked Roches' flamboyant adventurist spirit and charismatic personality.¹³⁸ While Outrey worked out a neutral and cautious policy, the military mission continued to sit, seething as they saw their trainees and employers be abandoned by the French government. Before long, one of the members of the mission would do something drastic that nearly threatened to undermine the position of the French with the new Meiji government.

¹³⁶ Sims, 71.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 65.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 76.

The Brunet Affair

After the foreign powers issued their declaration of neutrality, the members of the French mission remained on enforced idleness in April. Members of the mission chafed at the restrictions imposed upon them, and ached to engage in the defense of their employer. Roches' pro-*bakufu* policies and genuinely pro-Japanese attitude trickled down to the members of the mission,¹³⁹ who genuinely believed in their mission and the capabilities of their trainees. Beyond the mission's confidence in their charges, they developed close relationships with their counterparts, and identified strongly with the *bakufu*. Ignored by Outrey, confounded by their nation's chosen policy, and unceasingly beseeched by Tokugawa officers to join in their struggle, finally Captain Jules Brunet and Corporal André Cazeneuve visited Yokosuka on the 4th of October, 1868, in order to join the Tokugawa fleet.¹⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter Brunet took command of the forces of the Republic of Ezo, the government founded on Hokkaido by *bakufu* Admiral Enomoto Takeaki.

While Brunet had been the only officer from the mission to act, he clearly represented the feelings of many officers within the mission. Chanoine clearly stood with his subordinate and attempted to shield him from blame and defended him and his motivations both to Outrey and the government back in France.¹⁴¹ The mission was officially terminated shortly thereafter on the 17th of November,¹⁴² and Chanoine's contacts in the War Ministry encouraged him to try and bring Brunet home.¹⁴³ Brunet did the exact opposite, and wrote letters to Chanoine promoting the opportunity that the Republic of Ezo presented for French influence. Outrey would simply have none of it and refused to allow a headstrong junior military officer to endanger this new policy of neutrality.

¹³⁹ Presseisen, 18.

¹⁴⁰ Sims, 78. Brunet had tried to resign his commission multiple times to Outrey that he might serve in the remaining Shogunate forces. Outrey rejected his resignation, prompting Brunet to surreptitiously abandon his post.

¹⁴¹ Presseisen, 20.

¹⁴² Charles Chanoine, *Document pour servir à l'Histoire des Relations entre la France et le Japon*, (Paris: 1907), 73-74.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 79.

While Brunet's actions were very nearly catastrophic for French influence amongst the Meiji government, circumstances conspired to reduce his actions to a historic footnote. First, Outrey's consistent outrage and clear frustration at the actions of Brunet clearly moderated the new Meiji government's wrath. The newly established Meiji government understood that Brunet's actions were taken independent of the official French position. Second, Brunet drastically underestimated the capability of the new Meiji government, telling Chanoine in his letters that he did not expect an Imperial army to ever arrive, and believed that factional divisions would fatally undermine the new government.¹⁴⁴ That army came very shortly after the establishment of the Republic of Ezo, and after a short battle at Hakodate in 1869, the Meiji government ended military challenges by remnants of the *bakufu*. Brunet surrendered to the crew of the French vessel *Coetlogon* and was returned to France.¹⁴⁵

The entire Brunet affair fizzled into something of very little consequence for everyone involved. Brunet kept his commission and was only put on leave for six months, losing only a few months of seniority despite his open rebellion against Outrey and abandonment of his post. He would go on to have a remarkable career, eventually serving as chief of staff to his compatriot Charles Chanoine when he was Minister of War.¹⁴⁶ Outrey's response guaranteed the French position with the new Meiji government would not be damaged, and only three years later in 1872 a new French mission would arrive to instruct a new generation of Meiji officers and soldiers. Even Enomoto, the last and most capable leader of the pro-Tokugawa camp, found himself rehabilitated shortly thereafter in 1872 and used his position to allow Brunet to return to Japan and decorated with the Orders of the Rising Sun and Sacred Treasure.¹⁴⁷ The Meiji government eliminated the last serious Tokugawa threat to the regime

¹⁴⁴ Sims, 81.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 82.

¹⁴⁶ Chanoine, 84.

¹⁴⁷ Ravina, 128.

quickly and without much ado. But the affair concluded on one of the most colorful and intriguing episodes of French military involvement in Japan.

The Military Reforms of the Early Meiji Period

In the next few years after the Brunet Affair came to its conclusion, the Meiji government faced two competing imperatives that caused constant friction: the need to establish a new society as quickly as possible and the need to be as cautious as possible while doing so. The tension these two imperatives caused manifested itself in the military reforms implemented by the government. Multiple instances occurred when the government had in mind a reform, but because of the potential opposition or difficulties, adopted a half-measure or delayed implementation. These measures included the abolition of the domains, universal conscription, and contracting the second French military mission. Despite the restoration of executive power to the Imperial throne, each individual domain still had their feudal military retainers. The new Meiji government needed to establish a new locus of military power, for the unstable society that existed seethed with sedition and treachery, as disgruntled warriors, marginalized commoners and a torn social fabric represented serious threats to the new government.¹⁴⁸ The Meiji government urgently triaged these threats and addressed them as quickly as possible.

The first step to secure the Meiji government was to disband the domains. While the government girded itself to engage in a potentially long and drawn-out conflict, the various *daimyō* understood that their rule had come to an end, and for most the end of the domain system was a relief. The entire system was financially unsound, and many domains were under crushingly large debts trying to maintain their retainers.¹⁴⁹ The transition was not instant. In 1869, the domains symbolically returned their feudal holdings to the emperor, who in turn reappointed them as agents of the central government. The new government continued to push for the abolishment of the domain system and

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 120.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 130-2.

succeeded in 1871 with an imperial edict replacing the domains with a system of prefectures. When combined with the generous pension offers presented to the *daimyō*, this package lured many into placid abdication and retirement, though some *daimyō* went on to serve in the new government.¹⁵⁰ Most importantly, the new central government assumed their financial liabilities and responsibility to pay for the *samurai* stipends.¹⁵¹

While the domains disbanded and the *daimyō* retired peacefully, the remaining *samurai* absolutely did nothing of the sort. The government faced twin threats from the *samurai*, firstly the threat they posed to the government as disgruntled possible revolutionaries and secondly as unreliable soldiers in a modern army. The Meiji leaders sought to solve both problems with the same solution: a government-controlled military force composed of Japanese from all parts of society.

The disgruntled *samurai* represented the greatest domestic threat to the newly established Meiji government. The government eliminated the official social status and accompanying privileges of the *samurai* in 1871 when the domains were abolished, but many still clung to any vestige of their old status and found their lot under the new regime to be extraordinarily disappointing.¹⁵² In the eyes of the Meiji government, the various *samurai* uprisings represented a much greater danger than any peasant revolution. Though there were numerous peasant revolts during this time, they were largely local issues that were pleas for attention from the central government against a particular injustice that rarely threatened to spread to a nationwide rebellion.¹⁵³ These peasant rebellions were overshadowed by the potential for a *samurai* disturbance to quickly transform into a national rebellion.¹⁵⁴ Throughout the next decade, the government was under a minor but serious threat from these disgruntled samurai.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 131. Ravina details the story of Hachisuka Mochiaki, *daimyō* of Tokushima, who desired to abdicate and study in England, and eventually became the ambassador to France and later Minister of Education.

¹⁵¹ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000), 344-345.

¹⁵² Jaundrill, 121.

¹⁵³ Kublin, 33.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 33.

Many engaged in acts of terrorism against the new government, going as far to assassinate the Vice Minister of War, Omura Masujiro (1829-1869) in September 1869.¹⁵⁵ The assassination of Omura by these resentful *samurai* emphasized the need for a reliable, independent military force as quickly as possible.

In order to protect against the *samurai*, the government needed to broaden the base of reliable manpower available. The original plan for a semi-independent imperial military was to have the three main anti-Tokugawa domains (Choshu, Satsuma, and Tosa), pledge the use of a portion of their forces for an independent Imperial Guard.¹⁵⁶ However, nearly every official involved recognized that this force would not be sufficient and would promote unrest amongst the other domains. As a result, the government implemented a system of universal military service on January 10th, 1873 through three documents: The Conscription Edict, Pronouncement, and Ordinance. The edict and pronouncement justified the changes to the system, while the Ordinance laid out the detailed plan for implementation.¹⁵⁷ The conscription system was riddled with flaws and exemptions, the most notorious being for adopted sons prompting a wave of adoptions across rural Japan, which required three revisions, in 1875, 1876, and 1879, to eliminate because of opposition to conscription by both *samurai* and commoner alike.¹⁵⁸

The Second Military Mission

Much like the *bakufu* before it, the Meiji government recognized the need for a foreign model for their new national military force. Before his death, Omura favored the adoption of the French system as a model for the Imperial Japanese Army,¹⁵⁹ while others such as Yamagata Aritomo favored

¹⁵⁵ Drea, 21.

¹⁵⁶ Chen, 77.

¹⁵⁷ Jaundrill, 1361

¹⁵⁸ For details on the revisions, see Édouard Villaret, *Dai Nippon* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1889), 151; for details regarding the significant discontent, see Drea, 30-31.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Chen, "The Japanese government and the creation of the Imperial Army, 1870-1873" (PhD diss, Harvard University, 1963), 41.

the Prussian system, with the English and Dutch models also under consideration.¹⁶⁰ Though Yamagata assumed Omura's role in developing the army after the latter's assassination, he set aside his belief in the superiority of the Prussian system because of the circumstances and implemented the French model.¹⁶¹ While the global reputation of the French Army had plummeted after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, the French system had several benefits for the Japanese. First, the French system was already familiar, having been the model for the Shogunate's military forces, and had more supporters than any other system.¹⁶² Second, French interpreters were far more numerous than German interpreters, reducing the administrative burden significantly. Third, the government did not want to appear unreliable to the other Imperial powers by abandoning French tutelage after defeat.¹⁶³

Having selected the French as their model, the Meiji government set out to secure another French mission. Much like the abolition of the domains, the implementation of conscription, and the engagement of the first mission, it took a great deal of time from initial inquiries, which were made as early as March, 1870. These inquiries came directly to Outrey from the Meiji government and indirectly from Iwakura Tomomi, a major Meiji official, through Doubousquet, who had remained on as attaché to the French diplomatic mission.¹⁶⁴ Outrey directed Doubousquet to inform Iwakura that he would only countenance such a request officially, lest it encounter difficulties in France. However, when the Meiji government presented the request to Outrey in Yokohama in June, Outrey insisted on linking military aid to ending persecution of Christianity.¹⁶⁵ This insistence on linking religious concessions and the military mission created much angst amongst the Meiji government, leading to a delay of about a month

¹⁶⁰ Kublin, 29.

¹⁶¹ Chen, 43. While Chen notes that Yamagata was unclear as to the exact circumstances, nearly all primary and secondary sources were in consensus on the following points for the selection of the French system. It is unclear as to the nature of the debate, but the triumph of the French model is the most important.

¹⁶² Presseisen, 38.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁶⁴ AAE, c.p. Japon, Vol. 20 (Mar-Dec 1870), Outrey to French Foreign Minister, No. 11, 11 May 1870.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, Outrey to French Foreign Minister, No. 13, 4 June 1870.

as the Meiji government wrestled with its response. Ultimately, after learning that the Meiji government withheld a favorable offer for a military mission because of the fears of domestic unrest at French influence on the issue of religious toleration, Outrey clarified his remarks and downplayed a direct link between the mission and religious reform to the government.¹⁶⁶ However, concurrent to these negotiations the internal debates regarding the selection of a foreign model occurred and led to an even further delay. By the time of the announcement, the Franco-Prussian War had concluded and the domestic conflagration that followed the collapse of the Second Empire pushed official negotiations back even further.

It was not until September 1871, almost eighteen months after the initial request, after further negotiations between Outrey and the Japanese that the government officially requested another French military mission, composed of ten officers and sixteen noncommissioned officers and specialists to train troops, establish schools and serve as instructors within those schools.¹⁶⁷ After further negotiations clarified the details, the agreement for the mission was signed and the mission landed on May 17th, 1872 at Yokohama. The mission was composed of 11 officers and 28 noncommissioned officers and specialists, including six returnees, among them both Brunet and Cazeneuve of the eponymous Brunet Affair.¹⁶⁸

Upon arrival, the mission began its work. The mission was assigned many tasks over the 8 years it was in Japan. As a result, the mission planned many projects including an officer candidate school, noncommissioned officer school, an infantry school which became known as the Toyama School, a large military arsenal, a gunpowder factory, and numerous garrisons.¹⁶⁹ Other projects included a coastal

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, Outrey to French Foreign Minister, No. 17, 4 July 1870.

¹⁶⁷ AAE, c.p. Japon, Vol. 21 (1871-1872), Outrey to French Foreign Minister, No. 57, 18 September 1871, and Annex "Resumé of the note sent to Mr. Samejima in Paris;" No. 59 30 September 1871, and Annex No. 1 Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Terajima to M. Outrey, 23 September 1871.

¹⁶⁸ For complete list, see Chanoine, 84-85.

¹⁶⁹ George Lebon, *Les origines de l'armée japonaise* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1898), 26-27.

defense plan in 1874 and various inspection programs throughout Japan.¹⁷⁰ The initial priority was training the new army in French drill and military regulations, transitioning after 1875 to building the various schools, primarily the officer candidate school, modeled after St. Cyr. The French mission conceived itself as a part of a long-term military tutelage of a nation that had very little experience in modern warfare. As a result, French trainers focused their efforts on small unit tactics and drills, at the battalion and brigade level, forgoing large scale, free play exercises.¹⁷¹ This limitation was both sensible, given the size and task of the mission as well as the capabilities of the French Army, and a fatal misstep as the military elements, such as logistics and general staff operations, the Japanese most needed assistance with were beyond this limited scope.

Throughout its time in the Japan, the mission faced many difficulties which continuously interrupted its work. These included armed conflicts both internal, such as the Saga Rebellion led by former minister of justice Eto Shinpei in 1873, in response to the government's refusal to launch a punitive expedition against Korea for perceived slights, along with many other *samurai* uprisings throughout its time in Japan which culminated in the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion, and external such the 1874 Punitive Expedition against Taiwan, which nearly led to war with China. In addition to these clashes of arms, Japanese domestic politics constantly threatened to intervene. Captain Lebon, an artillery instructor in the mission, noted that opponents boasted they would force the mission to return to France within six months.¹⁷² During the first year of instruction, the remaining feudal military forces and former *samurai*, such as the Imperial Guard, menaced the mission and threatened to disrupt its training.¹⁷³ The Meiji government's financial difficulties also endangered both the mission's work and

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 31 and Presseisen, 49.

¹⁷¹ Presseisen, 67.

¹⁷² Lebon, 24. Lebon does not specify the justification for this claim, whether it was made by a former *samurai* in a fit of xenophobia, a pro-German officer, or an officer who believed the Japanese Army was sufficiently capable it did not need foreign instruction. While some secondary sources attribute this to *samurai* arrogance, each of these reasons is possible, though slightly irrelevant; the mission remained for eight years.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

the mission itself.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, the French mission felt the pressure of the pro-German camp within the Japanese government. While the French advisors exaggerated this threat, especially early in the mission's tenure, throughout the 1870s and 1880s there was an undeniable upswing in pro-German feelings within the Army.¹⁷⁵ Finally, the Japanese proved to be extraordinarily difficult students and employers, refusing to follow instructions, implement French orders correctly, and continuously seeking changes to the curricula.

The officer candidate school demonstrated nearly all of these difficulties throughout its tenure. The mission's contract was renewed in early 1875, after the disastrous 1874 Punitive Expedition to Taiwan highlighted the continued necessity of the French mission. Throughout the latter half of 1874 the mission developed the rules, organization, curriculum and doctrine of the officer candidate school with their Japanese counterparts. But when it came time to execute this plan, difficulties and hurdles abounded. The mission desired to start classes in January, 1875, but the Meiji Army Ministry refused to appoint the Japanese portion of the teaching staff, and even after appointing a complete staff refused to expand the staff in accordance with French wishes, and did not announce entrance exams in time. The Ministry also appointed inexperienced junior officers over the cadets, who refused to allow the French to observe their drilling.¹⁷⁶ The government also attempted to reduce the class sizes, ostensibly for financial reasons, and attempted to excuse graduates of the secondary military school, established for children of military officers seeking to follow their fathers' careers, from entrance exams. The Japanese continually proposed changes, making any attempt to maintain a routine at training and education both

¹⁷⁴ Presseisen, 54.

¹⁷⁵ While there were occasional efforts by the German government to promote itself as a military model for Japan, there was no serious effort to engage German advisors until after the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877, which revealed the deficiencies of the French military model. The Germanophilia was also a much broader social phenomenon, and the German state was sought as a model for the new Meiji government and constitution.

¹⁷⁶ This particular anecdote seems particularly petty and mindboggling given that any drilling the cadets would be partaking in would be French drill.

within the academy and without impossible.¹⁷⁷ While this is certainly understandable given the vast amount of progress and change both the Japan and the army, it drove the French instructors to despair combating it.¹⁷⁸

At this point, the mission felt secure in its place: the summer of 1876 showed the officer candidate school was progressing well, Captain Lebon supervised extensive artillery exercises for both the Imperial Guard and the students of the infantry and Toyama schools conducted field exercises under the mission's oversight. That summer, Yamagata informed the mission that the government desired to renew their contracts through the end of 1878, though with a reduced size and scope, focusing on teaching at the schools established by the mission rather than training the troops in the field. Soon however, the fears of the government regarding a *samurai* rebellion would come to pass with the Satsuma Rebellion in January 1877.

The Satsuma Rebellion and the Decline and End of the Second Mission

Up to 1876, the mission endured many hardships and disruptions in their attempt to train the new Imperial Japanese Army, but the following eighteen months would prove to be the defining years for the mission. Hints of the trouble to come began in April, 1876, when Yamagata informed the mission that they would need to hastily organize and outfit the 14 infantry regiments that the mission originally identified as the core of the new Japanese army. The government planned to announce the end of *samurai* stipends and the end of their special privileges, such as the ability to wear swords in public and they expected trouble. The announcement came and went in August with little response. Instead, the biggest test for the new Japanese Army would occur shortly thereafter, when simmering tensions between Saigo Takamori, one of the original Meiji leaders who resigned over the government's Korea decision, and the central government flared into open war.

¹⁷⁷ For the history of the founding of the school, see Presseisen, 51-52.

¹⁷⁸ Lebon, 5. He notes that the Japanese nation took five years to eliminate the feudal state to an absolute monarchy with centralized state control, where the French took two centuries.

The Satsuma Rebellion was the new army's first real military test and revealed the limitations of the French-trained army. The government successfully crushed the rebellion within nine months, but at a terrible cost both in manpower and money. The government committed the entirety of its army and reserves and experienced huge casualties and difficulties that arose from lack of high-level operational planning. No mobilization plans existed, nor were supply depots or transportation prepared, leaving local commanders to commandeer what transportation they could, making coordinated operations impossible.¹⁷⁹

In hindsight, these flaws were obvious considering the focus of the mission: small unit tactical training and drill and education for noncommissioned officers and officer candidates. Even had the mission focused on operational level activities and general staff training, it would likely not have made any difference. Nearly all of the deficiencies identified in the Japanese army were present in the French Army, evidenced by their abject performance in the Franco-Prussian War. If the French Army struggled to operate at division and corps levels, and failed to conduct any war planning at all,¹⁸⁰ how could they be expected to teach the Japanese, who did not have the French advantages of the experienced soldiers and advanced rifles? Colonel Munier was not blind to any of these developments, and attempted to address these weaknesses by lecturing on the composition and roles of the German and French general staffs, but there existed no education system for senior officers or even a Japanese general staff to educate.¹⁸¹

With the return of tactically experienced Japanese officers who could drill and train their units on small unit operations, the French mission was no longer indispensable. Nevertheless, senior Meiji officials understood the intellectual weakness and arrogance of their own force, whose newly bloodied troops abandoned their studies because of their confidence in their experience. As a result, the pressure

¹⁷⁹ Presseisen, 55.

¹⁸⁰ Wawro, 48.

¹⁸¹ Presseisen, 56.

for additional education and instruction assisted in retaining the French mission on for another three years, but at reduced size and focus.¹⁸² By the end of July 1879, it was clear that the mission's time was coming to an end sooner or later. The Japanese felt comfortable with their tactical experience in the Satsuma Rebellion and believed that further tutelage under the French would not solve the problems identified in that conflict. After some further negotiations, which appear to have been face-saving on either the Japanese or French parts (possibly both),¹⁸³ the date of departure was set for July 30th, 1880 and the position of military attaché established and filled by Lieutenant Bougoüin.

Despite the enormous difficulties faced by the second French military mission, they were able to accomplish a great deal. They established foundational training establishments and basic schools for officers and noncommissioned officers. They provided experts for arms manufacturing in the country. They trained the army that defeated the Satsuma Rebellion and secured Japan for the Imperial government. But these accomplishments were overshadowed by Japanese ambivalence towards the mission, and ultimately undone by the weaknesses of the French Army.

With a Whimper – The Third Military Mission

While Japan abandoned foreign military assistance at the tactical level, the Meiji government recognized the need for continued foreign military assistance with general staff training to address the army's weaknesses identified in the Satsuma rebellion. The reforms within the Imperial Japanese Army began in 1878 when the government created an independent general staff. But unlike most European systems, the Japanese general staff did not consist of a separate corps or branch of officers, but rather officers detached from their basic branches for a period of service. The absence of a general staff corps led to serious problems in organization and planning in major military exercises in 1880 and 1881. While Bougoüin believed that the government did not take the issues revealed by these exercises very

¹⁸² Ibid, 57.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 58. As far back as 1867, the Japanese identified to Munier that the mission would remain in principle until July, 1880. While the experience in the Satsuma Rebellion likely influenced much of the diplomatic theater that occurred, the truth is that this agreement concluded exactly as foreseen.

seriously, the 1882 decision to found an army staff college to produce general staff officers indicated otherwise. The Meiji government which desired to downplay any foreign military assistance nonetheless recognized the necessity of employing foreign military advisors.

By 1882 when the Japanese sought foreign instructors for the staff college, the German influence that previous missions had so feared and exaggerated had metastasized throughout the Army and represented a significant threat to French influence. The Japanese minister of war, Oyama Iwao, proposed to the French Minister Arthur Tricou that France send two officers and two noncommissioned officers to instruct at the new staff school.¹⁸⁴ However, only two months after this proposal Tricou was informed that the plans had to be shelved because of unexpected difficulties,¹⁸⁵ likely because of a combination of pro-German opposition and genuine financial difficulties. For in September 1883, Captain Billet, who had served with the second mission, attempted to return to Japan as an instructor at the officer candidate school, but refused after the Japanese made an unsatisfactory offer.¹⁸⁶ While diplomats assumed that the government often used financial difficulties as a justification, this offer, when combined with proponents of a smaller Army and deflationary policies used to repay foreign debt indicate that financial difficulties were more than just convenient excuses.¹⁸⁷ Whatever the reasons, the pro-German party in the government eventually overcame the Francophile party and secured a German advisor for the staff college, Major Jakob Meckel. While the Japanese did contract for four Frenchmen to teach in Japan, they were junior to Meckel both in rank and duty position. Captain Henri Berthaut would teach at the Military Academy, and Lieutenant Étienne de Villaret would teach at the Toyama Infantry School.

¹⁸⁴ AAE, c.p., Japon, Vol 28 (1881-1882), Conte to French Foreign Minister, No. 25, 4 May 1882 and Vol. 29 (1883-Feb. 1884), Tricou to French Foreign Minister, no numbers, 6 January and 5 February, 1883.

¹⁸⁵ AAE, c.p., Japon, Vol 29, Tricou to French Foreign Minister, No. 44, 30 March 1883.

¹⁸⁶ AAE, c.p., Japon, Vol 29 (1883-Feb 1884), Vielcastel to French Foreign Minister, No. 63, September 1883.

¹⁸⁷ Drea, 55-56. While Army budgets did rise, they only did so after a long and drawn out political battle and the occasional setback.

While the French continued to serve in Japan, their influence was gently declining. In the contracts, the Japanese strictly restricted Berthaut and Villaret's roles. They were not to involve themselves in any "political questions," nor would they have any say on the "relative questions of military teachings."¹⁸⁸ When informed of Meckel's employment, the French promoted Berthaut and Villaret at the prompting of the French Minister in Japan in a transparent attempt to ensure French prestige. Meckel's school instructed at a much higher level than Berthaut, who repeatedly demonstrated a lack of respect for the capabilities of his Japanese protégées. Berthaut consistently kept his lectures fairly simple, and insisted that only through prudent and repeated small-scale exercises would the Japanese learn the necessary details of military organization.¹⁸⁹ When warned by the French War Minister about increasing German influence, Berthaut replied that the Japanese choice was politically motivated, that they could not determine the difference between French and German military systems. It is not without some rather severe irony then, that nine months after Berthaut wrote those words, the Japanese transformed the French-influenced Military Academy into one modeled after Prussian officer training standards. Trainees graduated the academy as cadets, and only received their commissions after successful service in the Army. Berthaut's students (though he had long since given up direct teaching of his students, instead seeking to counter Meckel's influence by giving a series of lectures on strategy) would wear the stripes of noncommissioned officers rather than the epaulettes of an officer. Oddly, and with no small amount of irony, only Sienkiewicz, the contemporary French minister in Japan, but not Berthaut, understood the significance of this event, and even then, only fifteen months after it happened.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ AAE, c.p., Japon, Vol 30 (March-December 1884), French Foreign Minister to Sienkiewicz, no. 9, 28 July 1884 and m.d., Japon, Vol. 2 (1871-1884).

¹⁸⁹ Presseisen, 108.

¹⁹⁰ AAE, c.p., Japon, Vol. 33 (1887-1888), Sienkiewicz to French Foreign Minister, No. 65, 26 September 1888. Given Berthaut's sensitivity to German influence, it seems very odd for him to not have remarked on this reorganization, even considering his abandonment of his teaching responsibilities.

Despite the reorganization, Berthaut and Villaret's replacement, Captain Lefebvre, remained until January 1889, when the Japanese government declined to renew his contract. Captain Bougoûin, the long-serving military attaché, departed shortly thereafter in 1890. While a certain Francophile element remained, led primarily by Oyama, by the end of 1888 French influence had been reduced to negligible levels.¹⁹¹

Meckel and the German Military Mission

Whatever the circumstances, the appointment of Major Jakob Meckel as a military advisor to the Imperial Japanese Army represented the final blow to French prestige, which never recovered. Meckel served in two roles while he was posted to Japan: instructor at the Army Staff College, established to create a German-modeled general staff, and advisor to the Imperial General Staff. Meckel's influence was enormous in both roles. His pedagogy at the Staff College combined with the adoption of the German model of officer training represented a drastic change in the officer training of the Japanese Army. As an advisor, Meckel helped transition the Japanese Army from the legacy, garrison-based territorial system to a far more mobile division-based system, enabling the Imperial Japanese Army to contemplate expeditionary operations on the Asian continent.

Meckel's teaching represented a drastic departure from French instruction. While French instruction had focused on basic tactical training and introduction to Western-style drill, Meckel's instruction was focused at a higher echelon: operational level planning and the focus on *élan*, or the psychological dimension of warfare. Meckel's synthesizing of tactics on inculcating the mindset of the offensive was very attractive to the Japanese, as it meshed well with the existing warrior mentality that remained from the *samurai* tradition, as well as the Meiji government's desire to use universal military service as a conduit for social indoctrination into the new, modern Japanese society.¹⁹² On a personal

¹⁹¹ Presseisen, 110. German Minister blamed Oyama for the passive resistance that resulted in the continued presence of a French element in the Japanese Army.

¹⁹² Drea, 59 and Jaundrill, 205-207.

level, Meckel was a genial figure. While he looked every bit the part of a stern Prussian disciplinarian, and was unbending in his sternness and toughness towards his students as a teacher, off-duty he was quite jolly and enjoyed drinking and socializing. Meckel also lacked the arrogance associated with the Prussian officer corps and displayed an uncanny empathy and understanding towards his pupils; instead of his uniform, he often wore civilian clothes and showed a remarkable degree of discretion that inspired a fanatical level of devotion from his students.¹⁹³

The primary difference between Meckel's instruction and French instruction was summed up by Shukuri, Meckel's Japanese biographer:

Meckel's teaching methods were practical; he based them on military history rather than theory. Captain Berthaut at the Military Academy was teaching a theoretical military system. Berthaut's teaching followed a "marching theory" and Meckel's teaching followed a "combat theory." The French method was limited to textbooks; it never quite reached the point where blood was spilled."¹⁹⁴

As Shukuri highlights, Meckel's teaching methods were drawing primarily from military history, and he liberally used examples of historical battles to illustrate his operational art. While the material, and the tactical and operational lessons they contained, enraptured the Japanese officers who had little exposure to similar ideas, the actual lectures themselves were somewhat arduous.

The language issue, which had previously served as an incentive to retain the French instructors, reared its head. The lectures involved lengthy translations, with students' questions drawing out the lectures even longer as the question-translation-answer-translation format took an enormous amount of time. But Meckel was aided by the decision to print out fully translated copies of his lectures, as well as his students' questions and his answers for distribution throughout the Army, which helped disseminate his ideas to those who did not attend the Staff College. Beyond printed copies of his lectures, Meckel also prepared a series of reports and recommendations for the government regarding

¹⁹³ Presseisen, 112.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 108.

military affairs. These printed materials were conspicuously absent from French instruction and helped increase Meckel's influence throughout the Japanese Army.¹⁹⁵

Meckel used the staff ride as a key part of his pedagogy. The staff ride was a type of field exercise which focused on the operational planning and execution of a given mission, as well as advanced tactical training such as bridging operations and supply movements. Meckel was unrelenting in his criticism of his students, and many students failed his classes. Despite this tough handling of his students, Meckel did so with ease and a calm demeanor. His criticisms were never personal, and always focused on improving the performance of his students.¹⁹⁶ Operationalization remained Meckel's guiding light throughout his teaching: he consistently focused on producing officers who could understand and execute operational maneuvers and plans.

This focus on operationalizing the army is even more prevalent in his work as an advisor to the General Staff. In March 1886, Yamagata Aritomo and Katsura Tarō confirmed the establishment of the Provisional Committee to Study Military Systems under Colonel Kodama Gentarō to study and recommend courses of action on Army reorganization. Meckel worked with the committee, meeting with Kodama bi-weekly and provided additional position papers for consideration by the committee¹⁹⁷. Meckel's proposal focused on three issues for reform: the conversion from fixed garrisons to mobile divisions, the structure of training, and the supervision of training.

Meckel's proposal shifted from the fixed garrison system to a divisional structure, with seven divisions. He also proposed abolishing the superintendency which supervised the existing garrison structure, which in war time would serve as a corps-level headquarters. Meckel believed this level of organization was superfluous, as the Japanese Army was small and focused only on internal defense. As a result, Japanese divisions would need to be structured differently than their European models. Rather

¹⁹⁵ Drea, 59.

¹⁹⁶ Presseissen, 116.

¹⁹⁷ Drea 62.

than house specialized troops such as engineers and artillery at the corps level, these units would be housed at the division level.¹⁹⁸

This structure facilitated a much more maneuverable Japanese Army, important to another element of Meckel's work: development of a mobilization plan. This mobilization plan required a maneuverable force because as Meckel saw it, the Japanese simply could not field an effective navy, which was the best form of defense for the island nation. As a result, the Japanese would require the ability to rapidly react to whichever landing site the enemy would select. Because there existed innumerable locations and methods for a possible invasion, the nation's defense and mobilization plan must maximize flexibility. Meckel proposed additional defensive reforms, beginning by fortifying Japan's straits and harbors and constructing camps to facilitate defensive action. Railways were another major part of Meckel's reform policy. He constantly pushed back against rail lines that hugged the coast, because those lines were vulnerable to enemy military action. He proposed an enormously costly inland railroad which was not adopted. Additionally, Meckel recognized the drastic need for increasing the quality of equipment the army utilized, reorganizing the commissariat in order to better handle this new equipment and mobilization. Meckel also recognized a serious weakness in the reserve system, with the previously discussed weaknesses of the conscription system and inadequate training and leadership for the reserves.¹⁹⁹

With the garrison system replaced by a divisional structure, the superintendency was rendered obsolete. Meckel proposed an inspectorate that would serve as the director for all military training and education, which would report directly to the emperor.²⁰⁰ In addition, the inspector-general was given control over the personnel section of the Army, responsible for managing officer assignments and

¹⁹⁸ Presseissen, 119.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 122-124.

²⁰⁰ Drea, 62.

promotions.²⁰¹ While the inspectorate was modeled after the German Army, Meckel modified the institution so that rather than multiple inspectors-general supervising two or three divisions, one inspector-general would be responsible for the whole army, with assistants in the various technical fields to ensure the uniform training and competency of the soldiers.²⁰²

After a significant amount of work which served as a turning point for the Imperial Japanese Army, Meckel departed Japan to return to Germany in March, 1888 under a strange cloud, as senior Japanese officers had come to believe that he was a German spy for unclear reasons.²⁰³ The bitter memories of his difficult departure faded though, as Meckel continued to regard Japan fondly, mentoring the Japanese students who came to Germany to study and maintaining contact with his old comrades. While other German officers succeeded Meckel and worked in Japan until January 1889, they followed in Meckel's footsteps rather than forge a new path. In 1906, Meckel received an opulent memorial service in Japan, and a bust was prepared and displayed outside the Staff College until the end of World War II.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

After 23 years of advising the Japanese Army, the French had surprisingly little to show for it. By the end of the third and final mission, French influence over the Japanese Army remained only symbolic: uniforms, rank structure, and minor tactical doctrine. While the French had built the Japanese Army, multiple issues contributed to the Japanese abandoning the French model. First, while the French had a good reputation, there were several weaknesses-- operational confusion, disunity of command, lack of logistical support and medical care that the French imparted to the Japanese, revealed in the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion. Second, the Japanese domestic political situation moved away from the French as the Meiji government adopted German political organization and military methods. Finally, the Japanese

²⁰¹ Presseissen, 120.

²⁰² Ibid, 118.

²⁰³ Drea, 60.

²⁰⁴ Presseissen, 149.

and French had very different conceptions of military assistance: the French viewed their mission as a long-term mission, the Japanese as unable to understand the complexities of military operations without a long tutelage; the Japanese wanted results as quickly as possible. The French viewed themselves as an indispensable part of modernizing the Japanese Army, unaware that they were only a part of the Japanese efforts to modernize their military. As a result, while the three French military missions helped pioneer the basic structures of the Japanese Army, their legacy was ultimately fleeting, having little long-term impact. Instead, the credit would go to just Meckel, who despite his short stay in Japan, would go on to have an impact that would last until World War II.

Comparison

On the surface, the methods and the results of the Chinese and Japanese use of Western military advisors could not be more different. These differences are not imaginary or insignificant but arise out of common goals and desires from the Japanese and Chinese governments. Thanks to internal and external conflicts, both governments recognized that the old ways of war would not suffice: the interference of foreign powers ensured that things had changed. Both governments recognized that foreign military intervention was one of the greatest threats to the survival of the Qing and Japanese empires. Both governments sought to use Western military advances to secure their position and turn the tables on the foreign imperialists. But as this study has demonstrated, both took very different steps to address their military weaknesses. The Chinese emphasized technological development, while the Japanese emphasized training and organizational reform, each to varying levels of success. This is not to say that they ignored the less favored path completely. The Japanese developed a very creditable arms industry with a significant shipyard at Yokosuka, which remains a key base and shipyard today. The Tokyo Arsenal was producing the advanced Type-38 Murata rifle, a five-round clip fed weapon which was only issued to a small portion of the Imperial Japanese Army.²⁰⁵ Likewise, what Chinese forces received creditable military training through this period performed well in the Sino-Japanese War. Regardless of their primary path of development it was *their* path of development, rather than one imposed on them from a foreign power. The Western imperial powers jockeyed for power and influence over the Chinese and Japanese governments but did not determine their policy.

The drastically changing domestic and international situations forced both the Qing dynasty and the new Meiji government in Japan to face the reality that the old ways of war were insufficient. For the Qing dynasty, the abject failure of their forces could not be ignored after the burning of the Summer Palace and the Anglo-French occupation of Beijing (1860) and the occupation of huge stretches of the

²⁰⁵ Drea, 74.

country by the Taiping and the Nian rebellions. For the Meiji domains and the *samurai* class, that realization was brought to the forefront following the abject failure of the Choshu forces at the Shimonoseki Strait. While both nations were not ignorant of foreign military advances and techniques, it took existential threats to both powers to drive home the necessity for military reform. For the Meiji government, the scale of the military reforms went far beyond the use of foreign drill, tactics, and organization. It meant a drastic reorganization of a society that had long been defined by its rigid class system, headed by the *samurai*. The feudal nature of the *bakufu* and the domains and their standing military forces meant that the new Meiji government had to move quickly to ensure that the reforms could create a sufficiently powerful military to defeat the restive warriors. For the Qing, no such social reform was required to institute appropriate military reforms. But the overwhelming might of foreign military weapons and ships could not be denied, and the provincial and court officials who understood the threat made it one of their highest priorities to acquire that technology, so the dynasty would endure.

In order to ensure the continued independence of their nations in the face of the overwhelming military superiority of the foreign imperial powers, both the Chinese and Japanese governments took great pains to ensure that the Western military advisors and technicians aimed towards the Qing dynasty and the Meiji government's goals rather than the pursuing their home nations' political policies. While the two governments took different approaches to accomplish this goal, ensuring a loyal force was essential to both programs of military reforms. For the Self-Strengthening officials in China, repeated experiences with foreigners such as the Lay-Osborn flotilla, the uneven performance of the Ever-Victorious Army, and the Fenghuangshan training camp outside of Shanghai consistently reinforced the perception of the unreliability of foreign assistance. As a result, the Chinese took constant pains to ensure that foreign instructors were training their Chinese replacements, so that China could achieve technological independence. Likewise, the Meiji government perfectly understood the weakness of their

position, and played the Western powers off of each other in order to secure their assistance. Also, by employing a foreign mission, the Meiji government were able to use the French and German governments to hold their officers accountable, such as during the Brunet Affair. Additionally, both governments were not afraid to act against their Western advisors. Chinese officials repeatedly used the contracts of their advisors to fire underperforming or discontented workers. Japanese officials who distrusted Jakob Meckel's motives were able to successfully ensure that he received lesser awards when he departed Japan, despite the large body of support he had in the Imperial Japanese Army.

Domestic policy and domestic needs determined the reactions of the Chinese and Japanese governments. But the biggest driver of the differing use of Western military advisors between China and Japan was the cultural differences between the two nations. Both cultures were hierarchical in nature, as the traditional Chinese Confucian morality was focused on maintaining the appropriate relationship in that hierarchy, to preserve this balance and thus the Mandate of Heaven. There was no place for relations between strictly equals.²⁰⁶ The currency of this hierarchical system was face. Closely related to face was the concept of *guanxi* (or a network of personal relationships). *Guanxi* networks could be expanded or contracted by the status of one's face. While the Chinese system was somewhat amorphous and flexible, the Japanese system was an expanded and refined version, with an extremely complicated etiquette system and numerous ways of engaging individuals of different status.²⁰⁷ Another important difference was the primary source of this face: in China, the highest rung of the social ladder was occupied by civil leadership and civil service. Because of the unique Chinese form of dual service, most key military reformers like Li Hongzhang, Zeng Guofan, and Zhang Zhidong held dual positions within the military hierarchy and the civil hierarchy. Most importantly, the preeminent position for all three reformers was their position as civil officials and Confucian scholars. On the other hand, the

²⁰⁶ Paine, 344.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 347, 354-356.

bakufu was a military government and the Meiji oligarchs owed their positions to their *samurai* heritage. Additionally, the feudal nature of the *bakufu* and the presence of strong, military heritages and distinct military forces gave the Japanese an advantage in military affairs. Because the use of Western advisors remained under Chinese and Japanese control, that use of western advisors cannot be separated from the broader picture of military reforms undertaken in response to foreign imperialism.

The Chinese domestic situation remained uncertain despite the victory over the Taiping. While the Qing dynasty had created the Zongli Yamen to manage relationships with the foreign powers, the drastic reorganization of foreign affairs rewrote the Chinese conception of the world. The Qing dynasty could not rally the people around nationalist feelings. The traditional rituals associated with the imperial throne, which ensured that foreign relations were ordered according to Confucian notions of social harmony, were thrown into chaos.²⁰⁸ Because of the Mandate of Heaven, the Han people saw the repeated defeats of the dynasty at the hands of their foreign enemies as a natural consequence of the course of history. When a dynasty grew weak and fell, it came about because of the dynasty's perceived loss of the Mandate; the corruption and military weakness was a natural consequence of dynastic collapse.²⁰⁹ As a result of the Qing's domestic position, the imperial court was justifiably paranoid about the negative consequences of foreign influence. But the leaders of the dynasty understood that the West had the better technology and sought to learn from it through the Self-Strengthening Movement. As a result, the Qing reformers were caught in an inexorable paradox: the need to learn from Westerners and the need to push them out because of the dramatic threat they presented.

The Japanese government on the other hand was not nearly as culturally threatened as the Qing dynasty by the appearance of the Western imperialists. Part of this was due to the victory of the Meiji loyalists over the forces of the *bakufu*. As a result, there was a much stronger centralizing incentive.

²⁰⁸ Paine, 30-31.

²⁰⁹ Paine, 241.

Whereas the Qing correctly assessed that a strong, centralized military force would have been a threat to the dynasty, and were thus incentivized to continue divided rule,²¹⁰ the newly established Meiji government needed a strong, centralized military force to secure the future of the government. The Japanese government also had a long history of borrowing from other peoples, which historically meant the Chinese. This brought twofold consequences: on the one hand, the Japanese were able to successfully adopt many western ideas although with some friction, while on the other hand, they had a highly developed sense of cultural self, to the point of chauvinistic xenophobia. As a result, the Japanese understood the cultural dimensions of adapting Western technology. Thus, they adopted not just Western military technology, but also elements of western military organization and training far more readily than the Chinese. The Japanese understood from their long history that foreign gadgets and foreign culture were a package deal.²¹¹

As a result of these differences, the Chinese and Japanese approached things in a much different manner. The Chinese adopted a piecemeal approach at the provincial level, where Western advisors were employed as individuals, with a focus on unaffiliated civilians or military officers who were appointed to the Chinese military service. The Japanese on the other hand, employed an organized foreign mission who did not just train drill and weapons handling, but also advised the central government on the reorganization of their armed forces. This had several consequences. First, the impact of Western military advisors in China, particularly when it came to the ground forces, was minimized. Because they were employed individually and not in concert with any great strategic plan, their impact was correspondingly small. However, on the other hand, the choice to employ individuals enhanced the Qing government's ability to find and exploit Western men of talent, such as Giquel, who

²¹⁰ With the military reforms instituted by the dynasty in the aftermath of the First Sino-Japanese War, led to the formation of the modern Beiyang Army, and with it the rise of the Yuan Shikai, who would go on to topple the dynasty with Beiyang troops.

²¹¹ Ibid, 80-81.

had expressed loyalty and friendship towards China. This was a long-term pattern, where the ruling dynasty Sinicized the peripheral peoples. This was ideally suited to the Qing dynasty's chosen path of technological reform.

On the other hand, the Japanese choice of a singular set of military training missions was ideally suited to their need to completely reorganize their military structure. This was because the military origins of the *samurai*, and alterations to the political or military systems would require drastic reform. Adopting the western model of training and removing the hereditary military class from power required a drastic reorganization, both politically with the abolition of the domains and class system, and militarily, with the introduction of commoners into military service. The military training mission allowed the Japanese to create a unified military system. The Meiji government was incentivized to utilize their Western advisors in a much more effective manner. Jakob Meckel's influence has no counterpart in the Chinese military experience.

But the Qing struggled under a grossly unprepared administrative and military system. As already detailed, the military system was very inadequate. It existed as neither an expeditionary nor organized, centrally controlled force. Where the Japanese were able to draw on clearly superior Western forms of military organizations, the Qing were both unable and unwilling to consolidate and reorganize their various military organizations and services. In some ways, this was a military version of the high-level equilibrium trap, to which Mark Elvin has attributed the Qing dynasty's failure to properly industrialize.²¹² Another factor that contributed to increasing the complexity was the financial burden of employing Western trainers. Even in the technical positions at the arsenals where the foreign employees were nearly irreplaceable, administrators and directors sought to replace western employees and trainers with their Chinese trainees because of the vast financial resources the foreigners consumed. Additionally, to fully train and equip the vast number of Chinese troops on the rolls would have been

²¹² Rowe, 217-218.

ruinously expensive. Beyond the financial burdens, the Qing's administrative system was unprepared. Even the minimal training efforts were mitigated by a clear lack of progression from the training programs into regular Qing service. Outside of Zhang Zhidong's recruiting efforts at his military academies, there was little effort to attract competent and qualified recruits to the various Qing military services.

This is not to say that the Qing decision to pursue technology acquisition was a failure. While the Self-Strengthening Movement will always struggle with the stain of the humiliation in the First Sino-Japanese War, recent scholarship's reappraisal has recalibrated our understanding of technological successes of the domestic arms industry and shipbuilding. While the Chinese advantage was not overwhelming, and the Chinese arsenals could not keep up with the advances in technology from the West, they were more advanced than the Japanese domestic arms industry. In particular, the shipbuilding facilities at Jiangnan and Fuzhou remained superior to Yokosuka throughout much of the latter-half of the 19th century.²¹³ Additionally, the gap between the Chinese and the French during the Sino-French War (1884) was not nearly as great and significant as the gap between the English and the Chinese during the First and Second Opium Wars. In fact, the drastic defeat of the Fuzhou Fleet and the Navy Yard was due to lack of Chinese preparation because of ambiguity in international law relating to the declarations of war. The Chinese were not ready and as a result were taken advantage of, resulting in a horrific defeat, they were not beaten by the inherent technological superiority of the French.²¹⁴ In the First Sino-Japanese War, the quality of the fortifications throughout China-proper, such as Port Arthur, was not in question: after their capture, the Japanese recognized that had they been manned by well-supplied and well-led soldiers, the Chinese soldiers would have been able to hold off a concerted Japanese attack indefinitely. Unfortunately, because of a combination of mutiny and lack of provisions,

²¹³ Elman, 295-296.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 316.

the defense collapsed.²¹⁵ But this technological advantage came with a trade-off: the Qing never developed a competent officer corps during this time, and in fact the officer corps' resistance to embracing modern drill meant that despite the advanced small arms produced by Jiangnan and other state arsenals, the Chinese army were never able to effectively use their superior arms in combat.²¹⁶

Ultimately, the biggest difference in the two governments' use of their Western military advisors and trainers comes down to their direction. The Japanese centrally controlled their military advisors, aided in assuming control over them by employing them in a mission. This way, there remained formal accountability for their actions, and events such as the Brunet Affair could be controlled and dealt with by the government. The Japanese government used the military to inculcate a new set of social values. The Meiji government also needed a strong, capable force to ensure the safety of the regime. As a result, the government was greatly invested in ensuring the loyalty and effectiveness of its military force. The Western advisors were employed according to a central development plan to create a military suited to Japan's unique internal and external security needs.

On the other hand, the Qing government failed to direct a central strategy, relying on the senior provincial officials to plan and execute Self-Strengthening policies. As a result, the military disorganization that existed prior to the Taiping Rebellion persisted. The local-led, gentry militia became coopted into the state military structure, but the Banner and Green Standard Forces remained. In the Qing navy, even Li Hongzhang, the most powerful provincial official in the Qing hierarchy, could not institute naval centralization, leaving the fleet organized into three regional fleets, which did not operate jointly or cooperate where necessary. Training was not centralized in any way, and there was no guaranteed pipeline for strong, well-trained military forces, especially officers. This lack of military centralization was merely another outgrowth of a lack of domestic political and economic centralization.

²¹⁵ Paine, 236

²¹⁶ Fung, 1022-1024.

Until after the utter humiliations experience in the first Sino-Japanese War and the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the Qing dynasty lacked the political capital to overcome resistance to the drastic reforms, both military and political, that would have been necessary to address the various political and military deficiencies throughout the system. As a result, the nation did not pull together, as provincial leaders who were not threatened by Western and Japanese military intervention allowed parochial concerns to override the national need and refused to support those provincial leaders who were.²¹⁷

It is not an exaggeration to say that the results of these choices were some of the most consequential of the period. While certainly not the most prominent or obvious to the historical record, the decisions made by the Qing and Japanese governments set their military readiness throughout the latter half of the 19th century. As Allen Fung concluded in his study of the performance of the Chinese forces in the First Sino-Japanese War, it was the superior training and organization that was a decisive factor in the War. Where the Japanese battalions had more rigorous training and experience with their equipment, they experienced more success. Where the Chinese battalions had more rigorous training and experience with their equipment, they fought well. After 1895, when the post-war reforms began in earnest, the trained Chinese army were quickly able to cause problems for the first-rate armies of the imperialist powers.²¹⁸ The consequences of the war continue to play out to this day. As S.C.M. Paine notes, the defining feature for both Chinese and Japanese foreign policy has been to overturn and confirm the results of the war, respectively, ever since. Even today, the consequences of the war continue to affect international relations.

The origins of the different approaches to the employment of Western military advisors taken by the Qing dynasty and the Japanese government were plentiful. There were multiple reasons, from foreign pressure to domestic court politics, from cultural identity to financial concerns. For the Qing

²¹⁷ Paine, 364.

²¹⁸ Fung, 1029-1031.

dynasty, it was vital to ensure the perpetuation of the regime. But the incentives that ensured regime survival also sowed the seeds of their downfall. Their use of Western military trainers was just one part, though a key and representational part, of the institutional, cultural, and personal elements that characterized the downfall of the Qing. For the newly established Meiji government, it was the desperate need to secure the survival of an unstable regime in the face of significant social chaos. But for both regimes, there was a recognition that the old ways were not going to be enough anymore. That meant developing a more effective military. Those regimes chose two different paths: The Qing chose technological development, and the Meiji chose training and drill. While the Qing had had more success than historians had traditionally recognized, the simple truth of the matter is that whatever the relative level of technological success of the Qing, when it encountered Japanese training and drill it was shot dead on the fields of Pyongyang and sunk to the bottom of the Yellow Sea at Port Arthur and Weihaiwei.

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