MERCHANTS, MONKS, STUDENTS & SPIES: JAPANESE INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION IN CHINA, 1868-1894

Chapter Six: Preparing for War

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by
Jonathan D. Welch

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14. ABSTRACT From 1868 to 1894, three generations of Japanese intelligence collectors operated in China. Sponsored by the Japanese government (most notably the General Staff of the Imperial Japanese Army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later the Imperial Japanese Navy), these collectors provided information and perspectives that influenced senior Japanese policymakers, encouraged Japan's decision to provoke a war with China in 1894, and contributed to Japan's victory in that war. And yet, the Japanese effort to collect intelligence in China was not an unalloyed success. Soon after war was declared on August 1, 1894, Qing officials began unraveling the Japanese intelligence network and managed to arrest ten Japanese civilians suspected of spying. One of the arrested Japanese civilians escaped by bribing a guard. The others were executed."Chapter Six: Preparing for War" draws upon previously untranslated material from Qing and Meiji archives to examine how Japan mobilized its intelligence collection network inside of China during the run-up to the first Sino-Japanese War. The chapter showcases the activities of two Japanese intelligence collectors and identifies their sponsors, sources, methods, missions, challenges, and miscalculations. The chapter also describes the highly effective counterintelligence investigation undertaken by Qing authorities.

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Preface

From 1868 to 1894, three generations of Japanese intelligence collectors operated in China. Sponsored by the Japanese government (most notably the General Staff of the Imperial Japanese Army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later the Imperial Japanese Navy), these collectors provided information and perspectives that influenced senior Japanese policymakers, encouraged Japan's decision to provoke a war with China in 1894, and contributed to Japan's victory in that war. And yet, the Japanese effort to collect intelligence in China was not an unalloyed success. Soon after war was declared on August 1, 1894, Qing officials began unraveling the Japanese intelligence network and managed to arrest ten Japanese civilians suspected of spying. One of the arrested Japanese civilians escaped by bribing a guard. The others were executed.

Background

During the Meiji Era (1868-1912), as Japan emerged from centuries of self-imposed isolation, Japanese leaders sought information about the outside world. They allowed, encouraged, and even sponsored efforts by Japanese people to travel abroad and acquire new knowledge that could be used to build Japan into a prosperous and militarily powerful modern country. They sent official delegations to the United States and Europe. They hired foreign advisors and lifted restrictions on private citizens traveling overseas. After Japan re-established diplomatic relations with China in 1871, Japanese diplomats and military attachés maintained an official presence in China via embassies and consulates in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and other treaty ports where growing numbers of Japanese explorers, adventurers, entrepreneurs, and

opportunists began to congregate.[1] Known collectively as *tairiku rōnin* 大陸浪人, some of these Japanese expatriates served as the eyes and ears of official Japan, reporting on conditions in the Chinese hinterland. Directed by government officials to obtain and to report certain types of information, they were not mere businessmen. They were paid intelligence collectors.

What they learned changed not only how Japan viewed its neighbors but also how Japan viewed itself. Ironically, this change in perspectives did not always contribute to greater mutual understanding and regional comity. In some ways, it played into a violent century-long transformation of international relations in Northeast Asia, a radical reordering that encompassed multiple wars, the annexation of Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria, the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the invasion of China proper, and ultimately the defeat of Japan in 1945.

Japanese intelligence collectors operating in China for the first time in the 19th century were shocked by the difference between the China they had imagined (a rich, prosperous, and powerful civilization), and the China they actually encountered (weakened by domestic rebellions and foreign attacks, impoverished, technologically backward, and mismanaged by the Qing dynasty). If China was weak, it could not be an ally of Japan in a joint campaign to resist Western imperialism. In fact, if China could not fend for itself, it might fall prey to predatory Western powers, with serious ramifications for Japan's own national security. In the 1870s and 1880s, intelligence reports on China's weakness presented Japanese leaders with a dilemma: Should Japan seek to befriend China, strengthen it, and join with it in combined resistance to the West or should Japan turn on its neighbor and wage a pre-emptive war so as to prevent any

[1] Treaty ports were port cities that China was compelled to open to foreign commerce. Expatriates in the treaty ports lived within foreign enclaves called "concessions," where they enjoyed the privileges of "extraterritoriality." The greatest of these privileges was immunity from the jurisdiction of Chinese law, which permitted the use of torture to extract confessions and the application of exceedingly cruel punishments.

foreign power from dominating northeastern China or the Korean peninsula? That question was answered in 1894 when Japan provoked a war with China in order to establish a Japanese sphere of influence over the Korean peninsula.

The Missing Dimension

Sir Alex Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary at the British Foreign Office once described intelligence as the "missing dimension" of international relations.[2] The topic of Japan's intelligence collection efforts in China prior to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Qing dynasty's counterintelligence response to that effort have gone largely unnoticed in Western scholarship regarding Sino-Japanese relations in the late 19th century. In addressing this missing dimension, I have aimed to produce a case study of a pre-modern, non-Western approach to intelligence that will contribute to the emerging field of comparative intelligence studies while at the same drawing upon the resources of the broader multidisciplinary field of Northeast Asian Studies writ large. Such a task has been challenging. Among the most daunting of challenges have been the (1) paucity of primary and secondary source materials in English, (2) the consequent need to work with both Chinese and Japanese materials, (3) the presence of competing narrative biases, and (4) the simple fact that clandestine intelligence collection, no matter when or where it is conducted, is generally intended to escape attention. As Ian Nish once observed, "Much writing on intelligence is, as we should expect, in invisible ink."[3]

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[2] Christopher Andrew and David Dilks Ed., *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago. 1984) p. 1.

[3] Ian Nish, "Japanese Intelligence 1894-1922" in Christopher Andrew and Jeremy Noakes, ed., *Intelligence and International Relations 1900-1945* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press: 1987) p. 127.

For these four reasons plus one more, few Westerners have written about Japanese intelligence in the 19th century. This one additional reason is perhaps best described as a form of Eurocentrism that was uninformed about, and uninterested in, how one Asian country collected intelligence about another Asian country. The few general accounts of Japanese intelligence that exist in English treat the Meiji era only in passing. And, in some instances, the authors of these accounts seem only too willing to relay sensational tales of sinister behavior by deceptive Orientals or not willing enough to consider that the Japanese might have developed an indigenous approach to intelligence, one not taught to them by a Westerner.[4] The resulting English-language reportage on Japanese intelligence gathering has been a strange admixture of ignorance, prurience and arrogance.[5]

The field of comparative intelligence studies offers an antidote, but it has not yet directed its attention toward the subject of Japanese intelligence collection in China during the 19th century.[6] Most British and American scholars have been concerned more about Japanese

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[4] Richard Deacon, for example, writes that "On the military intelligence front Japan was greatly helped by a Major Meckel, who headed a German military mission to Tōkyō in 1885. Meckel had been a pupil of the great strategist, Count Helmuth von Moltke, who had been chief of staff of the Prussian Army, and he was able to inculcate the need for method and organisation in Japanese military intelligence." See Richard Deacon, *A History of the Japanese Secret Service: Kempeitai*. (New York: Berkley Publishing Group 1983) p. 47.

[5] Written in 1957, Ronald Seth's *Secret Servants: A History of Japanese Espionage* is a particularly egregious example. Seth wrongly asserts that the Japanese learned how to conduct sexual blackmail from the Prussian intelligence chief Wilhelm Steiber. He also mistakenly describes a Japanese pharmacy in China, the Rakuzendō 樂善堂 , as the "Hall of Pleasurable Delights" and assumes it is a bordello used as a honey-trap: "So in the Hall of Pleasurable Delights, they prepared their agents for every variation from the norm of conventional sexual behavior he [sic] might be likely to meet, and taught him special skills by which he might acquire the confidence—here synonymous with love—of women who might be able to aid him in his mission." Ronald Seth, *Secret Servants: A History of Japanese Espionage* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957) p. 64.

[6] See for example, Ian Nish, "Japanese Intelligence and the Approach of the Russo-Japanese War" in Christopher Andrew and David Dilks, Ed.,*The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984) pp. 17-32. See also, Michael Barnhard, "Barnhart, "Japanese Intelligence Collection before the Second World War: 'Best Case' Analysis" in Ernest R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment before the Two World Wars*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986) pp. 424-455. Richard J. Samuels, *Special Duty: A History of the Japanese Intelligence Community* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019).

intelligence efforts leading up to the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and Singapore.[7] Left unexamined has been any question of how or why Japan established a multigenerational intelligence collection effort in China long before 1941. Because the effort is not likely to have been inspired or influenced by any Western power, it has value as an example of an indigenous intelligence tradition that can be compared and contrasted with European models or other non-Western approaches to intelligence collection.[8] The study of Japanese intelligence in the early Meiji era thus illuminates a fundamental, if somewhat overlooked, process that helped shape international relations in Northeast Asia. It can also serve as a baseline for a more thorough and nuanced appreciation of Japanese intelligence in later eras and allow us to see more clearly how exaggerated perceptions of Japanese prowess in espionage prompted over-reactions in China and the United States.

Drawn from primary and secondary materials in Chinese, Japanese, and English, the following study of Japanese intelligence in China during the Meiji era should contribute to the fields of comparative intelligence studies, Northeast Asian studies, and military history. Because some of the Japanese intelligence collectors were members of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) or sponsored by the IJN, and because their intelligence contributed to naval actions, the sinking of naval ships, the blockade of a naval fleet, and surrender of two modern navy bases, this project also adds a footnote to the annals of maritime or naval history.

An examination of Japanese intelligence in China during the Meiji era may also be of some interest to scholars in the field of diplomatic history. China and Japan had accepted an

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[7] Everest-Phillips, Max. "The Pre-War Fear of Japanese Espionage: Its Impact and Legacy" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 2007; 42; 243 DOI: 10.1177/0022009407075546.

[8] Philip H. J. Davies and Kristian C. Gustafson eds., *Intelligence Elsewhere: Spies and Espionage Outside the Anglosphere.* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013) pp. 4-5.

offer from the United State to provide its "good offices" in the case of war, so when war was declared on August 1, 1894, the United States became responsible for representing the interests of Japanese nationals in China and Chinese nationals in Japan. Whether such representation included the provision of legal defenses became a point of contention after French officials delivered two suspected Japanese spies into the custody of U.S. consular officers in Shanghai. This incident is known to U.S. historians through the diplomatic correspondence between the U.S. consulate in Shanghai and the Secretary of State as well as through the records of a subsequent congressional investigation.[9]

Chapter Six below is based in part on the journal of a Japanese civilian employed by the Imperial Japanese Navy to collect intelligence on the Shandong Peninsula during the months immediately before and after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War on August 1, 1894. The journal entries provide insight into the inner workings of a Japanese intelligence operation, revealing sources, methods, tradecraft, collection requirements, funding, logistical limitations and so forth. The journal's author, Munekata Kōtarō, was a member of the third generation of Japanese intelligence collectors to operate in China during the Meiji era. He was trained and employed by members of the second generation, whose activities are covered in previous chapters. His eyewitness account thus represents the culmination of a three-decade long effort by Japan to collect intelligence in China.

Chapter Six also draws from the Qing dynasty "case files" recording the arrest, interrogation, and confessions (almost certainly coerced) of Munekata Kōtarō's colleague Ishikawa Goichi and Ishikawa's Chinese agent Liu Fen. These materials have never been

[9] This story is ably told by Jeffery M. Dorwart, 1944. *The Pigtail War: American Involvement in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, (Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975) pp. 46-55.

translated into English before. These and other Chinese materials show that, at the outset of the war, China was gripped by panic and paranoia. Chinese officials feared that Japanese saboteurs had been left behind to blow up Chinese arsenals. The Chinese materials also show that Qing officials were capable of carrying out an effective investigation and coordinating a nation-wide counterintelligence effort that resulted in the arrest of nine additional alleged Japanese spies. Ultimately, Palace politics and a need to find scapegoats for China's defeat—not to mention the widespread use of torture in Chinese prisons—prevented the suspected Japanese spies from receiving anything resembling what Westerners might call a fair trial. One or more of the suspected Japanese spies who were executed by Chinese authorities in September and October 1894 may have been actually innocent and merely "guilty" of dressing in Chinese clothes to avoid mob violence. If that is indeed the case, then it should weigh heavily in any assessment of the Japanese intelligence collection effort in China because it would suggest that the effort jeopardized the lives of innocent Japanese or needlessly risked the lives of actual Japanese intelligence collectors who stayed behind.

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Preparing for War

In this chapter, I discuss the sinking of a troop transport on July 25, 1894, six days before war was declared. I provide a short biographical sketch of a Japanese intelligence collector named Munekata Kōtarō and then, using entries from his journal, track Munekata's work on the Shandong Peninsula during the month preceding the war. Next, I describe the arrest of one of Munekata's fellow intelligence collectors, Ishikawa Goichi, in Tianjin on August 4, 1894. I explain how and why the arrest was made, as well as the local and international reactions to the arrest. I then conclude the chapter by analyzing the ensuing Chinese investigation.

The Sinking of the *Kow-Shing*

On 25 July 1894, between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning, the Japanese cruiser *Naniwa* 浪速 under the command of Tōgō Heihachirō 東郷平八郎 intercepted a British merchant vessel off the coast of Pungdo 豐島 Korea. The *Kow-Shing* 高陞, owned by the Indochina Steam Navigation Company and under the command of Captain T. R. Galsworthy, had been chartered by the Chinese government to ferry 1,100 troops to the Korean peninsula. After a tense four-hour standoff during which the Chinese passengers refused to allow Captain Galsworthy to surrender or abandon ship, *Naniwa* fired on the *Kow-Shing*, sinking her and killing nearly all hands. An

estimated 900 Chinese troops died.[10] Six days later, China and Japan declared war on each other.[11] For Japan, the sinking of the *Kow-Shing* was an auspicious beginning to a conflict now known as the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895.

The sinking of the *Kow-Shing* was, in fact, the first in a string of successful military engagements that in less than a year compelled China, the hegemon of East Asia for much of two millennia, to sue for peace on terms dictated by an island nation that had barely emerged from two and a half centuries of self-imposed isolation. In 1895, Western military observers attributed Japan's stunning successes in the Sino-Japanese War to the corruption and weakness of China under the Qing dynasty. They also noted the discipline of Japan's land and naval forces. (The former had had been organized along modern French and Prussian models and while the latter was based on the British model; both were equipped with the latest in European armaments.) Left unmentioned, however, was the significant intelligence advantage that Japan had gained over China before hostilities ever broke out.

Long before Captain Tōgō ever ordered the crew of the cruiser *Naniwa* 浪速 to open fire on *Kow-Shing*, Japan had deployed dozens of agents throughout China to collect and report intelligence. Now with war looming between the Great Qing Empire and the Empire of Japan, this network of Japanese intelligence collectors would be put to the test. Just one month earlier,

[10] Conflicting eyewitness accounts state that either Chinese troops aboard the sinking *Kow-Shing* opened fire on their compatriots who were already overboard (an unlikely proposition) or conversely that the Japanese launched two heavily armed boats and proceeded to shoot survivors. See Douglas Howland, "The Sinking of the S.S. *Kowshing*: International Law, Diplomacy, and the Sino-Japanese War" in *Modern Asian Studies* 42**,** No. 4 (2008) p. 681.

[11] This was the first of three times in the modern era that Japan initiated a naval attack before a formal declaration of war. The attack on Pearl Harbor was the third time. See David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy 1887-1941*. (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1997) p. 41.

on June 26, Captain Shimazaki Yoshitada 島崎好忠, director of the second bureau of the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff 軍令部, had sent a telegram to one of his most experienced and capable agents in China, a civilian named Munekata Kōtarō 宗方小太郎, who had previously worked under commercial cover as an employee of the Rakuzendō Pharmacy 樂善堂 in Hankou 漢口.[12] Captain Shimazaki had recruited Munekata the year before, paying him 250 yen and offering a monthly stipend in exchange for intelligence pertaining to China.[13] In his June 26 telegram, Captain Shimazaki described the situation in Korea as critical and directed Munekata to meet Navy Lieutenant Inoue Toshio 井上敏夫 in Yantai 煙臺, a port city on the Shandong Peninsula across the Yellow Sea from Korea. Lieutenant Inoue was the Japanese naval attaché in Tianjin. He had purchased a 23-foot long Chinese junk and for the last two months, he had been conducting a series of hydrographic surveys off the Chinese and Korean coasts.[14]

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[12] The Navy General Staff or *gunreibu* was established as the highest body in the Japanese Imperial Navy in 1893 and reported not to the Navy Ministry but directly to the Emperor. Its first section was the Operations Bureau. Its second section was the Ordnance and Munitions Bureau, while its third section was the Intelligence Bureau. It seems strange that Captain Shimazaki was head of the second section rather than the third, given his role in directing the activities of an intelligence collector in China.

[13] Osato Hiraoki 大里浩秋, *Munekata Kōtarō Nikki: Meiji 26-29.* 宗方小太郎日記,明治 26 ～ 29 年 (Munekata Kōtarō's Diary: 1893-1896), Posted online at http://human.kanagawa-u.ac.jp/kenkyu/publ/pdf/syoho/no41/4103.pdf (Accessed on 16 June 2013.) p. 32. Here Munekata uses the Chinese characters 情報, pronounced *qingbao* in Mandarin or *jōhō* in Japanese, which predates modern notions of "intelligence" as something more specific than, and distinct from, "information." Literally, 情報 are "reports on conditions." In modern Western parlance, intelligence is information about a current or potential adversary that is collected, analyzed and reported to support decision-making.

[14] *Taishi Kaikoroku* 対支回顧録 (Memoirs of China), Tokyo : Tōa Dōbunkai Taishi Kōrōsha Denki Hensankai 東亞同文會對支功勞者傳記編纂會, 1936. Vol. 2. p. 667. Cited in Shibasaki Rikiei, "Inoue Toshio: A Rear Admiral Turned Lower-House Representative," in *Memoirs of the Osaka Institute of Technology,* Series B, Vol. 55, No. 1 （2010） p. 25.

Captain Shimazaki needed Munekata to link up with Lieutenant Inoue and develop a plan to continue reporting intelligence from within China after war broke out and Japan withdrew its diplomatic personnel.[15]

A Short Biography of Munekata

Before proceeding much further with the story of Munekata's efforts on behalf of the Imperial Japanese Navy, it may be helpful to provide a brief sketch of his remarkable life, which was, in many ways typical for the dozens of other young Japanese men who collected intelligence in China for the Meiji government in the 1880s and 1890s.

Munekata was born on July 5, 1864 in the Uto Domain 宇土藩, which was later incorporated into Kumamoto Prefecture.[16] His courtesy name was Daisuke 大亮. Over the course of his life, he also adopted a large number of Chinese aliases including Zong Yushan 宗玉山, Zong Pengju 宗鵬舉, Zheng Rulin 鄭如霖, and Xu Junguo 許軍國. From an early age, Munekata loved to study history. He was a student of a famous Kumamoto educator and politician named Sasa Tomofusa 佐佐友房.[17] In 1884, Munekata accompanied Sasa to Shanghai

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[15] Osato Hiraoki, Munekata Kōtarō's Diary, p. 69.

[16] Kuzū Yoshihisa 葛生能久, *Tōa Senkaku Shishi Kiden* 東亜先覚志士記伝 (Stories and Biographies of Pioneer East Asian Adventurers) Tokyo: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu 黒竜会出版部, 1933-1936, Vol. 3, pp. 377-379. Hereafter referred to as TSSK, this reference work was written by Japanese rightwing nationalists in the 1930s, who glamorized the efforts of "patriots" such as Munekata. So long as one keeps this bias in mind, TSSK can serve as a reliable source of biographical information.

[17] Sasa Tomofusa had been educated in the Chinese studies tradition. After the Meiji government was established, he participated in the Satsuma Rebellion organized by Saigō Takamori 西郷隆生 and was subsequently sentenced to ten years imprisonment. After three years, he was released for medical reasons. Sasa Tomofusa travelled throughout Japan espousing his dream of reviving Asia 興亞 (Kō-A). In 1882, he established the Seiseikō 濟々黌 middle school (a famous school in Japan even today), in order to cultivate a generation of talented men who would "spare

and enrolled in the Toyō Gakkan 東洋學館 (Japanese School) which had been established the year before to teach Chinese and English to students from Japan.[18] In addition to his classroom studies, Munekata toured China's nine northern provinces, wearing his hair in a queue (the long braid of hair that Han Chinese males were required to wear under Manchu rule) and dressing in Chinese clothes in order to pass as a Chinese person. Munekata made this trip entirely on foot.[19]

In 1886, Munekata joined the *Rakuzendō* 樂善堂 pharmacy in Hankou 漢口, which the Imperial Japanese Army was using as a commercial cover for intelligence collection under the guise of selling eyedrops, books, and daily necessities.[20] Over the next several years, *Rakuzendō* employees traveled throughout China and established branches in other major Chinese cities. Munekata was made the director of the Beijing branch of the network, the Sekizendō 積善堂 pharmacy. In a letter to Munekata, the director of the *Rakuzendō* in Hankou, Captain Arao Sei 荒

no effort to preserve the imperial family and spread Japan's might to all corners of the earth." In 1890, he was elected to Japan's first parliament. See Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 66.

[18] In 1883, the Toyō Gakkan was the first school for Japanese students to open in China. It closed in just a couple of months and was soon reincarnated as the Ajia Gakkan 亞細亞學館 (Asia School). See Joshua A. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 91.

[19] Xue Er 雪珥, *Jueban Jiawu: Cong Haiwai Shiliao Jiemi Zhongri Zhanjiang* 絕版甲午: 從海外史料解密中日戰爭. (The Untold Story of Jiawu: Revealing Unknown Aspects of the Sino-Japanese War based on Overseas Historical Materials) (Taipei, Taiwan: Dadi Publishing Co. 2011) p. 67.

[20] The first Rakuzendō 樂善堂 pharmacy was set up in Shanghai in April 1880 by a civilian polymath, Kishida Ginko 岸田吟香, who had made a fortune selling eyedrops based on a formula he received in lieu of back wages from an American missionary in Yokohama, Japan, J.C. Hepburn, Katherine Hepburn's grandfather. See Douglas R. Reynolds, "Before Imperialism: Kishida Ginkō Pioneers the China Market for Japan." *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians* 1984, 5 (1985), pp. 114-120. The Hankou branch opened in December 1884 and was managed by Imperial Japanese Army Captain Ijuin 伊集院 operating under the alias Mikawa Gasui 三河臥水. See Osato Hiroaki, "Kanko Rakuzendō no rekishi," 口楽善堂の歴史 ("*The History of the Hankou* Rakuzendō') in *Jinbun kenkyū* 人文研究 (Studies in the Humanities), Kanagawa University of the Humanities、Vol. 155 (March 2005) p. 62.

尾精 wrote, “That place [Beijing] will be a major stage for the show that we perform.” The reason we are setting up a Beijing branch is so that, “no matter what changing dynamics we encounter, we will be aware of the germinal causes of those changes before they become apparent and not lose the opportunity make use of this knowledge in advance.”[21]

In order to generate operating funds while in Beijing, Munekata took to the streets to sell *Rakuzendō* medicines and books. In his journal, he recalls spreading out his wares on a mat just outside the Chongwen Gate 崇文門.[22] “In Japan, this would be considered behavior suitable only for a low-class merchant,” but “a man of action must, depending on changing circumstances, pretend to be at times a beggar, a servant, a hired hand, a peddler, or at other times a man of vision at court or a benevolent gentleman. While one’s outward appearance seems to never stop changing, one’s convictions remain unshakeable over time.”[23]

In 1890, Captain Arao resigned his commission in the Imperial Japanese Army and established the *Nisshin Bōeki Kenkyūjo* 日清貿易研究所 (Sino-Japanese Trade Research Institute) in Shanghai in order to train a new generation of China hands. Subsidized with secret funds from the Japanese cabinet, the research institute opened for business in September 1890, in the British concession of Shanghai. Munekata accepted an offer to serve as the institute’s head of students.[24] In June of 1893, the institute was forced to close because of a lack of funding. While

[21] Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, pp. 67-68. For a biography of Arao, who is widely hailed in Japan today as a visionary pioneer of China Studies, see TSSK, pp. 607-612.
[22] Munekata was a journalist in both senses of the word. He kept a daily journal, a practice that suggests he was not a trained spy, and later in life, he founded a Japanese-language newspaper in China.
[23] Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 68.
[24] One of the institute’s main accomplishments was its publication in 1892 of the *Shinkoku Tsūshō Sōran* 清國通商要覽 (*Comprehensive Overview of Commerce in China*) a three-volume 2,300-page long compendium of reports by *Rakuzendō* operatives. See Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 68. See also Paul D. Scott, *Japan-China: Arao Sei and the Paradox of Cooperation*. Kansai University of Foreign Studies, Japan. 1988, pp. 39-50

it only graduated one class of 89 members, 72 of them subsequently served as translators and interpreters for the Japanese military during the Sino-Japanese War the following year.[25]

Munekata returned to Japan in January 1893 to raise funds for the institute. Meeting with little success in that endeavor, he remained in Japan through the summer of 1893. On July 22, his patron Sasa Tomafusa relayed a message from Vice Admiral Nakamuta Kuranosuke 中牟田仓之助 stating that there was a private matter he wished to discuss with him and that he, Nakamuta, had entrusted a certain Navy Captain Shimazaki 島崎好忠 to speak on his behalf. Captain Shimazaki visited Munekata the next day, and several days after that, on July 31, Munekata received 250 yen from the *Kaigun-shō* 海軍省 (Navy Ministry). Munekata was now a paid agent of the Imperial Japanese Navy. In exchange for reliable intelligence on China, the Navy would provide him with a monthly stipend.

Munekata returned to Hankou in early October 1893. There, he wrote at least nine reports over the next eight months:

1. *Kaigun chōdo teiyō* 海軍調度提要(A Summary of Naval Equipment) October 5, 1893
2. *Shinkoku taisei-ron* 清国大勢論 (Major Trends in China) November 9, 1893
3. *Bukan mikiki* 武漢見聞記 (Observations from Wuhan) December 4, 1893[26]

[25] Hu Ping 胡平, *Qingbao Riben* 情報日本 (Intelligence Japan) (Joint Publishing Company: Hong Kong. 2008) p. 50.

[26] Munekata's report Observations from Wuhan included topical headings such as conditions in the three cities that comprise Wuhan, schools and religious groups, the Hanyang Armory, the Wuchang Textile Agency, general conditions in the naval and land forces of China, the creation of the Jiangnan Arsenal, the Iron Works and the Ordnance Bureau. See Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, pp. 68-69.

4. *Shōshū no heiran / Taiwan no heibi* 韶州の 兵乱/台湾の兵備に関 (Disturbances in Shaozhou / Military Preparations in Taiwan) January 20, 1894
5. *Hōshū no heiran dai ni no hōkoku* 韶州 の兵乱第二の報告 Disturbances in Shaozhou, Part Two) January 26, 1894
6. *Ro-Shin mitsuyaku no hōkoku* 魯清密約の報 告 (A Report on the Secret Pact between Russia and China) February 10, 1894
7. *Shōshū dai nana hōkoku* 韶州第七報告 (Report No. 7: Shaozhou) February 25, 1894
8. *Daihachi-gō gunkan seizō no kudan* 第八 号軍艦製造の件 (Report No. 8: Warship Manufacture)
9. *Kohoku-heibi oyo Sujinsha unnu Konan Yū no koto-tō dai kyū* 湖北兵備及び輔 仁社 云々湖南遊の事等第九 (No. 9 Military Preparations in Hubei and the Furen Society—Talk about a Trip to Hunan) May 1, 1894[27]

Munekata's Work on the Shandong Peninsula

When Munekata received Captain Shimazaki's telegram on June 26, 1894, he quickly packed his bags and boarded a ferry traveling down the Yangtze River from Hankou to Shanghai some 430 miles away. Upon his arrival on July 2, he received a visit from Navy Lieutenant Kuroi Teijirō **黑井悌次郎**.[28] Together they went shopping for a suitcase and some new clothes for Munekata to wear on his upcoming trip to the Shandong Peninsula where he would

[27] Osato Hiraoki, *Munekata Kōtarō's Diary*, pp. 32-33 and p. 59.

[28] Feng Zhengbao **馮正寶**, tr., The Diary of Munekata Kōtarō **宗方小太郎日記**, in Qi Qizhang **戚其章**, editor in chief, *Zhongri Zhanzheng* **中日战争** (The Sino-Japanese War), Beijing: Zhonghua Bookstore, 1989, Vol. 6, p. 109.

masquerade as a Chinese person and collect information on China's Beiyang Fleet 北洋艦隊.[29] After packing, Munekata sent off a report to Captain Shimazaki and then boarded the Feng Shun Ferry 風順輪 to Zhifu 芝罘 (then known as Chefoo) the port for Yantai on the north coast of the Shandong Peninsula.[30] Steerage was so crowded that Munekata had no choice but to purchase a cabin ticket at the exorbitant rate of Japanese 9.5 yen.[31]

Three days later, on July 5, Munekata reached Yantai and headed immediately to the consulate, where he met Consul Ijuin Kaneo 伊集院兼雄 and Lieutenant Inoue.[32] The next day Munekata wrote in his diary, "A crisis between China and Japan is approaching. Relations are hanging by a thread." Operating out of the consulate, which could communicate directly with Japan via a telegraph, Munekata was able to send a report on general conditions in Sino-Japanese relations to his patron, the influential educator and parliamentarian, Sasa Tomofusa 佐佐友房 in Tokyo. He also learned from Tsunoda Hidematsu 角田秀松 at the Navy Ministry that Captain Shimazaki had been reassigned to a new position, so he re-sent a copy of his report to Captain Shimazaki's replacement.[33]

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[29] Ibid..

[30] Zhifu 芝罘 (previously known as Chefoo) was the commercial port for the city of Yantai 煙臺. Today, Zhifu is a district in Yantai.

[31] Feng Zhengbao, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō,* p. 109.

[32] As a young Army lieutenant, Ijuin Kaneo had scouted Liaoning Province at the request of the Japanese Imperial Staff in 1879. Promoted to Captain, he adopted the alias Mikawa Gasui 三河臥水 and established the Rakuzendō Pharmacy 樂善堂 in Hankou as a commercial cover for intelligence collection in 1884. He was succeeded in that position by Arao Sei 荒尾精

[33] Feng Zhengbao, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō,* p. 109. During the Sino-Japanese War, Shimazaki was captain of the cruiser Idzumi, a protected cruiser purchased from the Chilean Navy in 1894. The British-build warship was known as Esmeralda during her ten years of service in the Chilean Navy.

On July 7, Munekata confided in his diary, "Tomorrow I will travel secretly to the military port in Weihaiwei 威海衛 to collect intelligence on the enemy, I wanted to bring a Chinese person along with me, but because the trip will be dangerous, nobody is willing to come and I will have to go by myself. I will strip out of my clean clothes and put on some plain, coarse clothes to look like a vagrant." This journal entry is particularly fascinating because it indicates that Munekata was in fact acting as an "access agent," i.e. an agent who recruits other agents. As an access agent, Munekata was taking on greater risk by exposing his identity and the nature of his work to people other than his employer. To reduce this risk, Munekata may have been recruiting Korean nationals in China on the theory that they would have less allegiance to the Chinese. One of Munekata's agents had a Korean name, Park Sip 朴十. Another two of his agents had names that could be either Korean or Chinese: 高 (Gao in mandarin, Ko in Korean) and 遲 (Chi in Mandarin, Jee in Korean). Munekata himself used pseudonyms such as Zong Yushan 宗玉山, Zong Pengju 宗鵬舉, Zheng Rulin 鄭如霖, and Xu Junguo 許軍國. He also used aliases for some of the Japanese nationals mentioned in his journal. The fact that Munekata was keeping a journal at all—especially a journal written mostly in kanji (Chinese characters) and thus intelligible to an educated Chinese reader—suggests that he did not properly appreciate the enormous risk he was taking by operating under non-official cover in China during a time of war. If the journal fell into the wrong hands it could provide a trove of incriminating information and limit Munekata's ability to construct plausible alibis and denials. It would also jeopardize the lives of many other people in his network.

We see in his journal entry of July 7 that Munekata believed he could pass as Chinese person by donning a disguise and masquerading as a vagrant. The next morning, Munekata dressed as a beggar, snuck out of the consulate, and began walking toward Weihaiwei 威海衛, home port of the Beiyang Fleet. The journey from Yantai to Weihaiwei was 102 *li* and took three days.[34] Along the way, Munekata was drenched several times by passing thunderstorms, and he complained that the nights were freezing cold despite the fact that he was traveling at the height of summer. Upon arriving on the outskirts of Weihaiwei, Munekata found lodging in a small establishment inside the West Gate, from which vantage point he was able to observe ten warships in the bay, three *shuilei-ting* 水雷艇 and one inflatable *chi-ting* 氣艇.[35] "The city was lit up at night," he wrote, "and I could see the situation in the bay illuminated by the lighthouse.[36] The next day, Munekata made his way to the East Gate of the city to observe the harbor. "In front of Liugong Island 劉公島, the bay stretched 40 *li* from North to South. In it were anchored 13 warships." After completing his observations, Munekata left the city and spent the night in a tavern "completely exhausted." He reached Yantai on the afternoon of July 13. "It was a true ordeal," he wrote, "and I was spent."[37]

The Japanese consulate in Yantai was a natural gathering place for Japanese nationals traveling through the region and thus proved to be an ideal site for sending and receiving

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[34] A *li* 里 is a traditional unit of length equal to roughly half a kilometer or one-third of a mile. Thirty *li* is thus 10 miles, the distance from Yantai to Weihaiwei about 30 miles.

[35] A *shuilei-ting* 水雷艇 could refer either a mine-sweeper or a torpedo boat, as the distinction between a *shuilei* 水雷 (mine) and a *yulei* 魚雷(torpedo) did not emerge until a later date. A *chi-ting* 氣艇 could be a "steam ship" but since the other warships in the harbor were also steam-powered, it seems odd that Munekata would choose to single out this one particular vessel. Perhaps it was a paddle wheeler, in which case Munekata—no naval expert—might have simply used an incorrect label.

[36] Feng Zhengbao, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō*, p. 110.

[37] Ibid.

information. When Maki Sōai 牧相愛 a Japanese acquaintance arrived from Beijing via Tianjin, Munekata learned that Maki would be taking the *Tongzhou Ferry*通州号輪back to Shanghai. Munekata asked Maki to bring a letter to Tsugawa Saburō 津川三郎. In the letter to Tsugawa, Munekata wrote, "The collectors I sent to Weihaiwei had returned for a debriefing. The ships anchored there—*Chen Yuan* 鎮遠, *Ching Yuan* 經遠, *King Yuen* 靖遠 *Kuang Chung* 廣中(?), *Kuang Chia* 廣甲, *Kuang Yi* 廣乙, *Kuang Ping* 廣丙, *Lai Yuan* 來遠, *Chen Tung*鎮東, *Chen Hsi* 鎮西, *Chen Nan* 鎮南, *Chen Pei* 鎮北, *Chen Chung* 鎮中, *Chen Pien* 鎮邊, *Chao Yung* 超勇, and *Yang Wei* 揚威—have been prepared for action and are heading to Korea this day or next, accompanied by two torpedo boats.[38] In addition, *Ting Yuan* 定遠 set out for Port Arthur for repair, taking a torpedo ship with her, and was scheduled to return to Weihaiwei yesterday. On the 16th, a shipment of arms left Shanghai and was coming to Yantai. *Chih Yuan* 致遠and *Kang Chi* 康濟 filled with grain have already set off for Korea."[39]

One can imagine how much IJN officers would have appreciated knowing precisely which ships in the Beiyang Fleet remained at Weihaiwei and were thus in no position to threaten Japanese naval operations off the coast of Korea over 200 nautical miles away. But, Munekata could only report this information after he or his sources returned by foot to Yantai, a three-day

[38] See Appendix ??? for a list of these ships and their ship types. Here, the names of the ships are spelled as they would have been in 1894 not as they would be spelled in the Hanyu Pinyin Romanization system much more prevalent today.
[39] Feng Zhengbao, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō*, p. 111.

trip. By then, the information would no longer be timely. Further complicating matters, unless Munekata recruited a mole inside the Beiyang Fleet (and there is no indication that he did), Munekata could only speculate where the Beiyang Fleet might be going once it left port and disappeared over the horizon. At best, he or his agents might have been able to overhear rumors about the fleet's destination or operational objectives. The value of such hearsay would have been limited unless it could be corroborated by other means.

While his reporting on which ships were in port had only fleeting value, Munekata did manage to collect useful information about the terrain, layout, and defenses of Weihaiwei. On July 22, Munekata set out on another trip by foot from Yantai to Weihaiwei. Arriving in the early morning of the 24th, Munekata scouted the artillery emplacements to the west of the bay and "explored the area behind the 100-foot cliffs." Munekata also also recorded in his journal that "The wall around Weihaiwei is 2,000 meters in length, and the town has a population of 300-400 households. As for roads, the only ones that exist are the thoroughfares connecting the four gates. The wall around [the city of] Ninghaizhou 寧海州 is 1,400 meters in length. It has four gates. The population is 600-700 households."

The information he collected on this trip very likely contributed to the formulation of the Japanese plan to attack Weihaiwei from the landside. This plan was successfully carried out in late January and early February 1895. After capturing the hilltop fortifications that had heretofore protected the Beiyang Fleet at Weihaiwei, the Japanese trained heavy artillery on the Chinese ships in the harbor below and began firing. The Beiyang Fleet was unable to leave the harbor because the Imperial Japanese Navy had imposed a tight blockade. The bombardment, in conjunction with repeated attacks by Japanese torpedo boats over the course of the next two

weeks, gradually wore down the Beiyang Fleet.[40] On February 12, the Fleet Commander, Admiral Ding Ruchang 丁汝昌 (1836-1895) sent a letter to his Japanese counterparts proposing to surrender. Without waiting for a reply, Admiral Ding committed suicide by ingesting a lethal dose of opium, his "honorable" death impressing Japanese commentators for years to come.

Contrary to the claims of later Japanese propagandists who published books glamorizing the exploits of operatives such as Munekata, reconnaissance work in China during the late Qing period was physically demanding and oftentimes unpleasant. After scouting the high ground behind Weihaiwei, Munekata spent the night of July 25 on Laoyuan Mountain 老元山, where he was attacked by stinkbugs, ants, sandflies, and mosquitos. "I did not sleep a wink the whole night."[41] Making matters worse, Munekata's journey was necessarily prolonged because he was disguised as a vagrant and couldn't well ride a horse. And, so long as he was on the road, Munekata was cut off from news about the war or updates from his "co-conspirators" within the Japanese expatriate community.

Munekata finally made it back to the Japanese consulate in Yantai on July 25. Waiting for him there were letters from three of his Rakuzendō colleagues: Yamanouchi Iwao 山內巖 and Tanabe Yasonosuke 田鍋安之助 in Shanghai and Yamazaki Kōzaburō 山崎羔三郎 in Korea.[42] Munekata noted that "Today, because a war is imminent, the local Circuit Intendant

[40] Piotr Olender, *Sino-Japanese Naval War 1894-1895*. (Sandomierz, Poland: Stratus Publishing, 2014) pp. 118-119.
[41] Feng Zhengbao, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō*, p. 111.
[42] Yamazaki Kōzaburō had disguised himself as a seller of medicines and was active in the Assan area of Korea. It was on the basis of intelligence collected by Yamazaki that the Japanese adjusted their attack and won the battle of Assan. In recognition of Yamazaki's contributions, Chief of the General Staff Arisugawa Miya 有栖川宮 personally received him during a visit to headquarters on the island of Honshu and bestowed a medal on him. See Wang Xiliang 王希亮. "Japanese Rōnin and China" 日本浪人与中國 in Guan Jie 關捷 Ed., *The People Who Have Influenced Contemporary Sino-Japanese Relations: Part Four of The Contemporary Sino-Japanese Relations*

issued a notice regarding the protection of expatriates."[43] (Qing authorities were working with U.S. diplomats to register all Japanese civilians residing in China during this time of war.) In a journal entry dated 26 July, Munekata also mentioned the encounter between *Naniwa* and *Kow-Shing* that had occurred just the day before, though most of the details that reached Munekata were inaccurate:

> Today, four Japanese warships chasing *Ping Yuan*平遠 encountered Kow-Shing 高陞 , *T'u Nan* 圖南, *Chih Yuan* 致遠, and *Ts'ao Chiang* 操江which were transporting the 6th Battalion of the Sheng Army, military supplies and food from Tianjin to Korea. The Japanese warships sank *Chih Yuan* 致遠, damaged *Kow Shing* 高升 and *Tu Nan* 圖南, and captured *Ts'ao Chiang* 操江 (a warship) which was filled with provisions and accompanying the other three ships. It is said that the *Kow-Shing* and the *T'u Nan* immediately fled for Weihaiwei. But we have also heard that *Chih Yuan* 致遠 had been misidentified as *Chi Yuan* 濟遠 and that *Chi Yuan* 濟遠 departed after sustaining damage.[44]

It is remarkable that the reports of this encounter just a mile off the coast of Korea were received by Munekata in Yantai on the opposite side of the Yellow Sea within a day. The speed with which the news traveled suggests that it was communicated via telegraph, either directly from Inchon to Yantai or via a more roundabout route from Inchon to Sasebo, thence to Shanghai, and finally to Yantai.

Recognizing that the Japanese attack on the *Kow-Shing* would soon precipitate a declaration of war, the next morning Munekata sent a report to Yamanouchi and Tanabe and then

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Anthology 近代中日關係從書之四：影響近代中日關係的若干人物 (Social Sciences Academic Press (China): Beijing, 2006) p. 13.

[43] A circuit intendent or 道台 *daotai* was the senior most official responsible for a province or large metropolitan area. Reporting to viceroys or 總督 *zongdu* who were responsible for two or more provinces, circuit intendents themselves supervised district magistrates 縣知 *xianzhi* responsible for a particular county or other local administrative jurisdiction.

[44] Feng Zhengbao, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō*, p. 111-112.

boarded the *Wuchang Ferry* 武昌號輪 to Tianjin, where he could confer with Japanese military attachés and consular personnel before they departed China.[45] As dawn broke on the morning of July 28, Munekata arrived at Dagu Harbor 大沽口, and then cruised up the White River 白河 to Tanggu 塘沽. From there, he caught a sampan for .60 yen to the train station and boarded a train for Tianjin at 2:30 in the afternoon. Two hours later, he reached the Japanese concession in the Zizhulin 紫竹林 district of Tianjin and headed straight to the Matsusho Trading Company 松昌洋行 in the British Concession for a meeting with former Rakuzendō colleague Ishikawa Goichi, Navy Lieutenant Takagawa Tomokazu 瀧川具和 and two Army officers: Yamada 山田, and Hayashi 林.[46] That night, Munekata accompanied Ishikawa and Lt. Takagawa to the temporary residence of Major Kamio Mitsumori 神尾光臣, for "consultations." Major Kamio was the Japanese military attaché in Beijing. Like many other Japanese officials, he was departing China via Tianjin before war broke out.[47] Major Kamio likely called this meeting to relay instructions

[45] Feng, *Diary of Munekata Kōtarō*, p. 112.

[46] The Chinese translator of Munekata's journal, Feng Zhengbao 馮正寶, notes that Munekata used the code name Sage 堤 to refer to Lieutenant Takagawa, but Feng does not indicate how he knows that Sage and Takagawa are one and the same person. A contemporary Japanese scholar, Osato Hiraoki 大里浩秋, who has reviewed Munekata's handwritten journal and published a type-written facsmile of it so that it will be more legible, does not assert that Sage and Takagawa are one and the same person; however, he follows Munekata's practice of identifying Sage as a lieutenant.

[47] Modern Chinese sources make the rather dubious claim that the Japanese originally planned for Lt. Takagawa and his fellow military attaché Yamada to remain behind in the British concession of Tianjin but that when Japan's charge d' affairs and concurrent acting minister in China, Komura Jutarō 小村壽太郎 proposed the idea to the British minister in China Sir Nicholas Roderick O' Conor, he opposed the idea, fearing it might jeopardize the security of the British concession. The same sources suggest that the Japanese also planned for former Army lieutenant Kawahata Jōnosuke 川畑丈之助 to go to ground in Beijing. See for example Yang Furong 楊馥戎 ed. *Zhenshi Jiawu Zhanzheng: Qingzhengfu Houzhihoujue, Rijiandie Wukongburu* 真實甲午諜戰：清政府後知後

to Ishikawa, Munekata, and their Chinese-speaking compatriot Kanezaki Saburō 鐘崎三郎, regarding the collection of intelligence under non-official cover once war began. [48]

Munekata recorded in his journal that, "Ishikawa, Kanezaki and I spoke late into the night."[49] That same night, Munekata and Ishikawa also called on Wu Yongshou **吳永壽** at Mitsui.[50] The next morning, Mitsui delivered 500 silver dollars to Munekata, a sum that would support his operating expenses, including payments to Chinese assets, after war came. The nexus between the Japanese military attachés, civilian intelligence collectors, and private banking institutions could not have been more clearly evident.

At this point, the paths of Munekata, Ishikawa, and Kanezaki parted. Munekata returned to Yantai, where he continued to recruit Chinese and Korean assets to collect military intelligence on the Beiyang Fleet. We will pick up his trail again in the next chapter. Kanezaki headed north to collect information on Qing military movements towards the front lines of the war. Kanezaki managed to evade capture and return safely to Japan, where he was granted an audience with Chief of the General Staff Prince Arisugawa Miya 有栖川宮 at the Imperial General Headquarters in Osaka.[51] Ishikawa Goichi meanwhile stayed behind in Tianjin where he faced an altogether different fate.

覺，日間諜無孔不入 (The Real Sino-Japanese Spy War: The Qing Government Didn't Know What Hit It). Accessed at http://big5.huaxia.com/zhwh/sslh/3015198_2.html on October 22, 2013.

[48]Xue Er **雪珥**, *The Untold Story of Jiawu*, p. 79.

[49] Kanezaki and Army Lieutenant Arao Sei **荒尾精**, who managed the intelligence collection operation under the Rakuzendō cover in Hankou, were students of the same Chinese language teacher, Mihata Masafumi 御幡雅文. Mihata had been one of the first students sent by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to China. Later, he had also studied in Europe. The cosmopolitan Mihata had devoted much time and effort to mastering Mandarin and regional variants such as Shanghainese and Taiwanese. See Xue Er, *The Untold Story*. p. 79.

[50] Mitsui is and was a conglomerate with banking and other commercial interests. It is not clear from Munekata's journal, whether he is referring to a Mitsui Bank or to a Mitsui Trading Company. Either way, it provided him with substantial funds.

[51] Wang Xiliang 王希亮, "Japanese Rōnin and China" 日本浪人与中國 in Guan Jie 關捷 Ed., *The People Who Have Influenced Contemporary Sino-Japanese Relations: Part Four of The Contemporary Sino-Japanese Relations*

The Arrest of Ishikawa and His Chinese Associate

Ishikawa was a native of Akita Prefecture on the northwest coast of Honshu. As a child, he attended private schools and was later enrolled in the Kō-A Gakkō **興亞學校** (Revive Asia School), where he studied Chinese.[52] In 1884, at the age of 18, he went to Shanghai to study spoken Chinese under the tutelage of Navy Lieutenant Sone Toshitora 曾根俊虎, a member of the first generation of Japanese intelligence collectors to operate in China during the Meiji era.[53] Ishikawa later accompanied fellow Japanese expatriate Takahashi Ken 高橋謙 on a trip through 13 Chinese provinces including Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, Hebei, Henan, Sichuan, and Shanxi. In 1886, Ishikawa and Takahashi traveled through Hunan and joined the Rakuzendō Pharmacy in Hankou. [54] Disguised as a traveling salesmen for the pharmacy, Ishikawa and Matsuda Mitsuo 松田滿雄 explored the southwestern region of China.[55] With

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Anthology 近代中日關係從書之四：影響近代中日關係的若干人物 (Social Sciences Academic Press (China): Beijing, 2006) p. 13.

[52] This school was founded by members of the Kōa-kai **興亞會** (Revive Asia Society), a political discussion group established in 1880 by Japanese politicians and intellectuals and Chinese diplomats within the Tokyo legation. According to Paula Harrell, "The idea was to better integrate the teaching of classical, written Chinese with training in the spoken language so that Chinese, like English or French, would have real-world applications." In 1882, Japan's Ministry of Education transferred the few students still enrolled at the Revive Asia School into a special China course at the Tokyo Foreign Language School. See Paula Harrell, *Asia for the Asians: China in the Lives of Five Meiji Japanese*, Portland, Maine: MerwinAsia, 2012. pp 178-179.

[53] Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 26.

[54] Zhou Hui **洲匯**，*The Japanese Spies Who Infiltrated China Before and After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, **甲午前後的潛入中國日本間諜群** (PLA Publishing: 2002). As excerpted and published on line by the Wenhui News on February 21, 2003 at http://big5.china.com.cn/international/txt/2003-02/21/content_5280397.htm (accessed Aug 30, 2008 and Jan 01, 2020).

[55] Matsuda was a native of Kumamoto. During the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 he served as an interpreter for the Japanese military. After the war, he participated in Sheng Xuanhuai's **盛玄懷** Daye Iron Mine **大冶鐵礦** cooperative project. See Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 27. As the Intendent of the Tianjin Custom Circuit, Sheng Xuanhuai was the second most powerful Qing official in Northern China when Ishikawa Goichi was active in Tianjin.

Chengdu as their center of operations, they traveled throughout Sichuan, encountering members of the Miao tribe and reaching Tibet where they studied pastoral nomadism. On one occasion, indigenous people surrounded and attacked Ishikawa and Matsuda. Local authorities, who suspected that they were spies, responded by placing them under arrest. Ishikawa, by now a fluent speaker of Chinese, was able to negotiate their release.[56] Ironically, Ishikawa and Matsuda were, if not outright spies at this point in their careers, intelligence collectors reporting to the Japanese military.[57]

In 1890, Ishikawa moved to Tianjin where he worked undercover as an employee of the Matsusho Trading Company 松昌洋行 in the British Concession and assisted the Japanese military attaché Navy Lieutenant Seki Fumiaki 關文炳 on trips to Mongolia, Xi'an, and Loyang. In 1888, Lieutenant Seki Fumiaki had collected intelligence on the Shandong Peninsula disguised as a merchant and suggested that, in order to attack Weihaiwei, an amphibious landing must first be made in Rongcheng Bay 榮成灣 at the tip of the Shandong Peninsula. It is unclear whether Ishikawa was directly involved in Lieutenant Seki's work to conduct hydrographic surveys in the Bohai Gulf. After Lieutenant Seki died in 1891, Ishikawa worked with Seki's successor Lieutenant Inoue who continued the effort, providing important intelligence for the Japanese military's subsequent encroachments upon China.[58] On the basis of the topographic and

[56] Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 27. Xue Er's account follows very closely Kuzū Yoshihisa 葛生能久, *Tōa Senkaku Shishi Kiden* 東亜先覚志士記伝 (Stories and Biographies of Pioneer East Asian Adventurers) Tokyo: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu 黒竜会出版部, 1933-1936. Volume 3 [biographies.] pp. 49-51.

[57] A spy is someone who steals a secret or causes someone else to betray a trust by stealing a secret. An intelligence collector is someone who observes or gathers information of use to a sponsor. All spies are intelligence collectors; not all intelligence collectors are spies. In the late Qing era, Chinese officials made no such distinction. In the modern era, Chinese scholars continue to conflate the two concepts.

[58] Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 27.

hydrographic information that Ishikawa and his naval colleagues reported, the IJN was able to identify suitable locations for two amphibious landings. On October 24, 1894 the IJN executed an uncontested landings at Huayuankou 花園口, disembarking troops from the Imperial Japanese Army's 1st Division at the base of the Liaodong Peninsula 136 kilometers away from Port Arthur, and on January 20, 1895, the IJN, following Lt. Seki's advice, landed troops from the IJA 2nd Division at Rongcheng Bay 67 kilometers from Weihaiwei.[59] These two amphibious landings hastened the surrender of the Beiyang Fleet's two most important Naval Ports and thus significantly contributed to a rapid conclusion of the war on Japanese terms.

Whether Ishikawa would live long enough to receive credit for his valuable contribution to the Japanese war efforts would; however, be determined by events that transpired during the weeks shortly before and shortly after the formal declaration of war between the Qing empire and the Japanese empire on August 1, 1894. So long as China was at peace, Ishikawa was safe, but that would change once news of the *Kow-Shin*g's sinking reached Tianjin.

The United States had agreed to requests from both China and Japan to provide "good offices" to Chinese nationals residing in Japan and to Japanese nationals residing in China. This meant that the United States, in the case of war between the two countries, would protect the lives and property of Japanese residents of China and Chinese residents of Japan, but the definition of "protection" was vague and needed clarification. It would be tested repeatedly over the next several months. In late July 1894, U.S, diplomats were deeply concerned about the

[59] Piotr Olender, *Sino-Japanese Naval War 1894-1895*. (Sandomierz, Poland: Stratus Publishing, 2014) pp. 90-93 and pp. 118-119.

inexorable slide into war. On July 22, the U.S. Consul in Tianjin Sheridan Pitt Read reported that the Chinese emperor, supported by conservative palace officials, seemed "hot for war."[60]

Hostility between China and Japan escalated in the heat of late July as Japan pressed forward with its plan to establish a sphere of influence over Korea. In China, Japanese citizens, fearing retaliation, began making their way to treaty ports such as Tianjin, Shanghai, and Hankou, where U.S. diplomats tried to protect them from angry locals. At Hankou, Consul Jacob T. Child relied on a "display of rifles" to protect Japanese subjects.[61] In Tianjin, Consul Read personally escorted Japanese Consul Arikawa Minoji 荒川 巳次and his entourage to the pier where a British steamer, S.S. *Chung-King*, was waiting to take them to Shanghai the next day. When news of the *Kow-Shing's* sinking reached Tianjin on July 31, a mob of enraged Chinese led, some witnesses later claimed, by Qing military officers disguised as commoners, pushed its way aboard the *Chung-King*. The mob assaulted the Japanese passengers on board, bound the hands and legs of the Consul's wife and son, and tossed both dependents overboard onto the pier six feet below. They were later moved to a nearby warehouse where they were beaten and "insulted" until about 5:00 A.M., when a Qing army officer appeared and returned them to the ship. Meanwhile, aboard the *Chung-King*, the mob searched the cabins of all Japanese passengers, overturned their luggage, stole their valuables and, in the chaos, discovered confidential letters from Lieutenant Takagawa to Lt. Commander Inoue. Modern Chinese scholars assume that the confiscated letters revealed the true identities and purpose of Ishikawa, Kanezaki, and Munekata.[62]

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[60] Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Pigtail War: American Involvement in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 1895*. Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975, p. 30.
[61] Jacob T. Child to Assistant Secretary of State Edwin F. Uhl, September 3, 1894. *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Hankow*, vol. 7, National Archives Record Group 59.
[62] Xue Er, *The Untold Story*, p. 27.

As a result, on August 1, the same day that China and Japan declared war on each other, the Tianjin Garrison 天津守城營 was ordered to place all Japanese nationals in Tianjin under surveillance. Deputy Garrison Commander Ren Yusheng 任裕升 learned that Ishikawa and Kanezaki were apparently attempting to pass as Chinese by wearing Chinese clothes and sporting a queue.[63] (Under the provisions of the Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty 中日修好條規, which established formal diplomatic relations between the Qing empire and Japan in September 1871, Japanese expatriates in China were forbidden from dressing in Chinese garb, so Ishikawa and Kanezaki were technically violating the law.) Ren also reportedly learned that Ishikawa had interacted frequently with a member of the local defense forces, squad leader Wang Kaijia 汪開甲.[64] Ren reported his findings to Garrison Commander Chen Jitong 陳季同, who had previously served as a Counselor in the French Mission and was familiar with international affairs. Chen believed that if he seized Ishikawa and Kanezaki while they were in the British concession, Britain would protest and cause unnecessary trouble, so he advised Tianjin Customs Circuit Intendant Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷 that "If we can lure them out of the concession, nothing will be able to stop us from detaining them."[65]

[63] Other sources give his name as Ren Rusheng 任如升.

[64] Yang Furong 楊馥戎 ed. *Zhenshi Jiawu Zhanzheng: Qingzhengfu Houzhihoujue, Rijiandie Wukongburu* 真實甲午諜戰：清政府後知後覺, 日間諜無孔不入 (The Real Sino-Japanese Spy War: The Qing Government Didn't Know What Hit It). Accessed at http://big5.huaxia.com/zhwh/sslh/3015198_2.html on October 22, 2013.

[65] Ibid.

According to one uncorroborated Chinese source, by August 3, the British Minister in China. Sir Nicholas Roderick O'Conor, had informed Japan's acting Minister in China, Komura Jutarō in no uncertain terms that Ishikawa and Kanezaki were not welcome in the British concession.[66] That night, they left the concession under cover of darkness and parted ways. Ishikawa headed straight to the home of one of his Chinese informants, a clerk in the Tianjin Ordnance Bureau named Liu Fen 劉芬.[67] This was a mistake. Qing authorities arrested Ishikawa and Liu early the next morning.

Reactions to the Arrest

China, Japan, and the United States reacted to the news of Ishikawa's arrest in very different ways. In China, rumors that Japanese spies and saboteurs were at work enflamed public sentiment, became entangled in palace politics, prompted a rigorous investigation, and led ultimately to the arrest of nine other suspected Japanese "spies." Despite Chinese fears that Japan might retaliate against Chinese residents in Japan, official reaction in Japan was muted. As for the United States, disagreements amongst diplomats over how best to provide "good offices" to Japanese nationals accused by China of spying led to a national scandal that tarnished the reputation of Secretary of State Walter Q. Grisham.

In Tianjin, Circuit Intendent Sheng immediately reported the arrest to the senior Qing official leading China's diplomatic and military defense against Japanese aggression, Superintendent of Trade for the Northern Ports 北洋大臣 and Viceroy of Zhili 直隸總督

[66] Ibid.
[67] Liu Feng was also known as Liu Shufen 劉樹芬 or Liu Wu 劉五.

(modern day Hebei) Li Hongzhang 李鴻章. On August 6, Viceroy Li informed his superior Prince Gong, whom the Empress Dowager had placed in charge of the Zongli Yamen, (the Qing dynasty's Ministry of Foreign Affairs), that "Japan had sent 20-30 spies to Tianjin, who, dressed in Chinese clothes and wearing their hair Chinese style, have been collecting all kinds of military intelligence," and "that Japanese spies disguised as Chinese were operating in Jiangsu and Zhejiang in order to collect intelligence and incite banditry."[68] Prince Gong responded by directing the Zongli Yamen to send an advisory about Japanese spies to senior government officials across China and at the same time to notify the United States Legation in Beijing, which was responsible for protecting Japanese nationals in China. On August 8, the Zongli Yamen then issued an advisory to all the regional viceroys and superintendents in China stating that "Japanese civilians in China are protected under the good offices of the United States in accordance with international law" and that "while both China and Japan are responsible for protecting each other's expatriates during times of war, the most stringent investigations into Japanese spies should be undertaken because the Japanese are so deceptive and cunning."[69] The Zongli Yamen concluded its advisory with this statement:

> Wherever Japanese are travelling—whether on the seacoasts, along the rivers, or deep into the interior—steps should be taken to investigate and question them. This is

[68] Guo Tingyi 郭廷以 and Li Yushu 李毓澍 eds., *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han Guanxi Shiliao.* 清季中日韓關係史料 (Historical Materials Related to Relations between the Qing Empire, Japan, and Korea) *Zhongguo jindaishi ziliao hui bian* 中國近代史資料彙編 (A Compilation of Materials in Contemporary China) (Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1972). Vol. 6, Item 2051, p. 3424.

[69] Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials*, p. 3424.

permissible under international law. Moreover, Japanese use the same written language as we do, and they look similar to us, so extra precautions must be taken against them. [70]

It should be noted that the August 6 report from Li Hongzhang that prompted this nationwide advisory does not specifically mention the arrest of Ishikawa and Liu. This raises the possibility that Li's report was prompted not by the arrest of Ishikawa on August 4 but rather by the discovery of Lieutenant Takagawa's confidential letters aboard the *Chung-King* on August 1. In that case, the lag time between the event and the report of the event was six days. Assuming that six-day lags were normal, we might then expect Li's office to report the August 4 arrest of Ishikawa six days later, and indeed, a compilation of Qing documents pertaining to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 includes a receipt for a report from Li dated August 11. While the content of the report is not provided, its subject is listed as "The arrest of a Japanese national."[71] On the basis of this analysis, one can further surmise that Lieutenant Takagawa's confidential letters contained not a specific reference to Ishikawa, Munekata, and Kanezaki as modern Chinese writers have assumed, but rather a generic reference to 20-30 Japanese civilians employed by the Japanese military to report intelligence from inside of China during the war.

Chinese officialdom reacted swiftly and strongly to the advisory from the Zongli Yamen. On August 13, low-ranking law enforcement officers or "runners" from the Viceroy's Yamen in Shanghai apprehended two young Japanese men Kusuuchi Yajirō 楠内友次郎 and Fukuhara Rinpei 福原林平 as they were attempting to leave the city disguised as Chinese nationals. Five

[70] Ibid.
[71] Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials*, p. 3445.

days later, the Intendant of the Ningshao Circuit Wu Yinsun 吳引孫 ordered the detention and interrogation of two Japanese men, Takami Takeo 高見武夫 and Fujishima Takehiko 藤島武彥, who had been caught masquerading as Buddhist monks in a fleet concentration area south of Shanghai.

Meanwhile, upon receiving Prince Gong's notification about Japanese spies on August 8, the acting U.S. Minister to China, Charles Denby Jr., cabled Secretary of State Gresham and noted that, "the Prince and Ministers wrote to this Legation, stating that they were informed that Japanese spies had been sent into the interior of China, in disguise, and announced their intention of dealing with them severely if apprehended." Denby Jr. added, "I considered it my duty to urge the Chinese government to proceed with moderation and to be influenced rather by motives of humanity rather than bitterness toward Japan."[72] Denby Jr. recommended that Japanese spies seized in China be punished by transporting them back to Japan. On the August 12, the Zongli Yamen replied that "the suggested punishment seems inadequate and that China will be obliged to act more severely in her self-defense."[73] This disagreement over how to treat suspect spies derived on the one hand from China's perception that it was entitled under international law to treat military spies severely and also by a sense that China was the aggrieved party and had every right to defend herself. On the other hand, the U.S. desire for leniency was driven by the awareness that the Qing penal code allowed for "horrible cruelties and tortures," by concern that innocent Japanese would not receive a fair trial, and also by fear that the principle of

[72] Charles Denby Jr. to Gresham, August 8, 1894; Zongli Yamen to Denby Jr., August 6, 1894; United States Department of State, *Despatches from United States ministers to China, 1843-1906. Vol. 95*. Vol. 95. Group 59. (May 1-August 31, 1894). Hereafter referred to as *China Despatches*.
[73] Charles Denby Jr. to Gresham, August 14, 1894; Zongli Yamen to Denby Jr., August 12, 1894; *China Despatches*.

extraterritoriality, under which foreign nationals in China were not subject to Chinese jurisdiction, might be otherwise degraded.[74]

Fearing that the Chinese would vent their anger upon all foreigners not just Japanese, American missionaries pressed Consul Read to ask the U.S. Navy to send a warship to Tianjin. In fact, one was already nearby. The4,413-ton flagship of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron, USS *Baltimore*, a 327-foot cruiser with a crew of 36 officers and 350 men had reached Inchon (then known as Chemulpo) in early June, disembarking nearly 50 heavily armed Marines and sailors for duty in Seoul.[75]

The Chinese Investigation

The Qing dynasty could have alleviated American distress by inviting U.S. diplomats to observe the investigation and interrogation of suspected Japanese spies, but such a course of action was never contemplated by China or requested by the United States. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of Chinese historians in the 20th century, who compiled several collections of Qing documents pertaining the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the Zongli Yamen's case file on Ishikawa is accessible to anyone. Inside this file are instructions from the Guangxu Emperor to Viceroy Li, accusations from an imperial censor regarding a potential cover up, Li's own instructions to Circuit Intendent Sheng, reports from the magistrates appointed by Sheng to investigate, and even the confessions of Ishikawa and his conspirator Liu. These materials shed light on the domestic politic pressures and external diplomatic concerns with which Viceroy Li

[74] Ibid.
[75] Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Pigtail War: American Involvement in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 1895*. Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975, p. 30.

had to contend. The materials also provide insights into the investigative procedures employed by Qing magistrates, and provide some indication of the tradecraft, or lack of tradecraft, employed by Japanese intelligence collectors such as Ishikawa.

The case file begins with an angry message from the Guangxu Emperor to Viceroy Li dated September 9. The day before, the emperor had received a memorial from the Supervising Censor for the Jiangnan Circuit Zhang Zhongxin 張仲炘 advocating the impeachment of Viceroy Li for failing to investigate rumors of Japanese sabotage and for delaying the investigation of Ishikawa. Zhang insinuated that Li had dithered because his nephew Zhang Shiheng 張士珩 managed the Tianjin Armory where Ishikawa's "co-conspirator" Liu Fen worked as a clerk. Rumors to this effect had been swirling around Tianjin for nearly a month. In early September Zhi Rui 志鋭, a mid-ranking Manchurian bureaucrat working hundreds of miles away from Tianjin, reported breathlessly, "Yesterday, I learned…. a Japanese spy had been hiding in Tianjin in hopes of using mines and explosives to blow up the Haiguang Temple, where ordnance is stored. If the temple had been destroyed, all of Tianjin and our maritime defenses would have been destroyed as well."[76]

Missives such as the ones from Zhang and Zhi were hardly the first to reach the Emperor. Throughout the summer of 1894, both before and after the onset of hostilities between China and Japan, senior Chinese officials in a pro-war faction led by Grand Councilor Weng Tunghe 翁同

[76] Zhi Rui 志鋭, Memorial to the Throne, in *Qing Guangxuchao Zhong–Ri Jiaoshe Shiliao* 清光緒朝中日交涉史料, *Gugong bowuyuan* 故宮博物院 (Beiping: [Gugong bowuyuan], 1932) Chapter 16, Item 1394, Appendix One p. 35

鹹 repeatedly submitted memorials to the Emperor excoriating Viceroy Li for moving too slowly to counter Japanese provocations, for failing to prepare adequate defenses, for engaging in nepotism, for employing foreigners, and for a myriad other offenses. It is not clear whether these senior officials were aware that Li had been diverting a portion of the funding intended for the armed forces under his control to underwrite a grandiose birthday celebration for his patron, the Empress Dowager. Viceroy Li, realizing the true state of the financially constained forces under his command, sought to buy time by inviting Britain, the United States, and other powers to mediate between China and Japan. He could not reveal the true state of China's porous defenses without angering the Empress Dowager.[77]

In his message to Li, the Guangxu Emperor minced no words:

> You stated in your cable that the arrested Japanese national Ishikawa Goichi had, when questioned, denied transmitting any military intelligence, but he had been detained because his movements were suspicious. The Imperial Censor reports that you failed to mention in your memorial rumors that Japanese spies were planting mines and burying explosives. … I direct you therefore to have the criminal Ishikawa Goichi rigorously interrogated so that the truth can be ascertained and his transgressions clearly rectified.[78] I also direct you to submit another memorial to the throne stating whether any explosives were actually buried.[79]

In his reply to the Emperor, Viceroy Li said that he had ordered the Circuit Intendant [Sheng Xuanhuai] to conduct a proper investigation, i.e. one that followed legal precedents and

[77] Bonnie Bongwan Oh, "The Background of Chinese Policy Formation in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895." (Unpublished dissertation) pp. 414-434 and pp.438-439.

[78] The phrase "rectifying his transgressions" is a euphemism for punishing him for his crimes. The Chinese phrase is 明正其罪. It connotes that a crime or transgression has distorted the rightful order and must be rectified.

[79] Guo Tingyi 郭廷以 and Li Yushu 李毓澍 eds., *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han Guanxi Shiliao.* 清季中日韓關係史料 (Historical Materials Related to Relations between the Qing Empire, Japan, and Korea) *Zhongguo jindaishi ziliao hui bian* 中國近代史資料彙編 (A Compilation of Materials in Contemporary China) (Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1972). Vol. 6, Item 2264, p. 3600.

complied with the Emperor's instructions, so as to determine the facts of the case. Viceroy Li also said he ordered Circuit Intendent Sheng to record Ishikawa's confession and plans, and report back as soon as possible.[80]

Next in the Zongli Yamen file is Circuit Intendant Sheng's report to Viceroy Li:

> I opened an investigation into this case as soon as the Ordnance Bureau secretly informed me that it had learned that one of its clerks named Liu Fen, a.k.a., Liu Shufen, had hidden a Japanese national disguised in Chinese garb. I met with Tianjin's Wu Zhen 吳鎮 and ordered that soldiers and officials from the magistrate's office be dispatched to apprehend the Japanese national Yoshikawa Hiroshi 義倉告 a.k.a. Ishikawa Goichi, 石川伍一.[81] They verified that he had a shaved pate and was dressed in Chinese garb.[82]

Circuit Intendent Sheng noted that he had instructed the Tianjin District Magistrate Li Zhenpeng 李振鵬 to obtain a confession, dismiss Liu Fen from office, and cause Liu Fen to turn over Wang Da 王大 who worked in Ishikawa's office. According to Circuit Intendant Sheng, the two detainees (Ishikawa and Liu) had been immediately separated and questioned: "Each of them prevaricated, whereupon, in accordance with orders, they were detained for further investigation." Mindful that the investigation was likely to attract attention from the highest levels of the Qing government, Circuit Intendent Sheng reported how the questioning was proceeding to the Zongli Yamen and asked it to submit a memorial to the throne on his behalf. He also acknowledged Vicerory Li's concern that the investigation could have international

[80] Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials,* p. 3600.

[81] The Chinese scribe apparently miscopied one character in Ishikawa's cover name. I suspect it should be 浩 Hiroshi, a common Japanese given name, *not* 告 which is pronounced nearly the same as 浩 in Chinese and may have been a mistake by a scribe recording Ishikawa's testimony.

[82] Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials,* pp. 3600-3601.

ramifications: “Thinking that in this case we must obtain incontrovertible evidence of espionage in order to appropriately rectify the transgression without causing problems for Chinese nationals residing in Japan, the investigation has been conducted in secret. [83]

Throughout August, Ishikawa and Liu continued to deny any wrongdoing, so on September 4 and 5, Circuit Intendent Sheng “summoned Cui Heling 崔鶴齡, Hu Yu 胡玉, and Ma Jun 馬均, all of whom previously worked in the office of the Japanese military attachés in Tianjin.”[84]

> To build our case, we called up Ishikawa and Liu to be questioned in each other’s presence. Unable to prevaricate any longer, they finally revealed that they had been “without reservation” collecting all kinds of intelligence. [85]
>
> According to Ishikawa, he asked Liu Fen to look through ordnance and troop lists and gave him a thank-you gift for the information he obtained. From that point on, he and Liu had good rapport. Following the declaration of war, the Japanese personnel in Tianjin fled back to Japan, leaving Ishikawa behind to collect military intelligence. He disguised himself as a Chinese person and on August 4 discussed with Liu Fen the possibility of hiding out at Liu’s house. He was arrested the same day. He stated that he had only remained behind in Tianjin to collect military intelligence and had no other plans. He asked how he could have been able to bury mines and explosives when he was unable to even find a safe place to stay before he was arrested.[86]

Ishikawa was mistaken if he thought he could save his life by denying plans to bury mines while admitting that his sole purpose had been to collect intelligence. Both offenses were capital crimes under the Qing Code, and given palace politics and public sentiment at the time, Viceroy Li and Circuit Intendent Sheng were in no position to grant Ishikawa or Liu any leniency. Of course, Ishikawa had no access to legal counsel nor any hope of pleading his case in front of a Western-style jury.

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[83] The word used here for espionage is *jianxi* 奸細.

[84] GuoTingyi, *Historical Materials*, p. 3601.

[85] The Chinese characters for “collect all kinds of intelligence” are *dietan geqing* 諜探各情.

[86] See Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials*, p. 3601.

At this point, Circuit Intendent Sheng ordered District Magistrate in Waiting Ruan Guozhen 阮國楨 to work with the Tianjin District Magistrate Li to confirm the confessions and investigate further. Sheng directed the two magistrates to summon the person who had introduced Ishikawa to Liu, a former imperial guardsman named Wang Kaijia 汪開甲, for questioning. The two magistrates, Sheng suggested, should also invite the Navy Department to take action regarding concerns that its runner Yu Bangqi 於邦起 may have developed divided loyalties after interacting with Ishikawa. [87]

While the fates of Ishikawa and Liu were sealed, the two magistrates leading the investigation weighed the evidence they had collected thus far regarding three other individuals connected to the case: (1) Wang Kaijia, the imperial guardsman who had introduced Ishikawa to Liu, (2) Yu Bangqi, the Navy Ministry runner, and (3) Wang Da 王大, an employee of the Matsusho Trading Company where Ishikawa worked. Wang Kaijia had testified that war had not broken out when he introduced Ishikawa to Liu Fen and also relayed Ishikawa's request to look over the lists. It appeared that "Ishikawa had failed in his attempt to acquire telegraph messages with military intelligence from his acquaintance Yu Bangqi." "Yu did not use the money that Ishikawa tried to give him," the magistrates noted. As for Wang Da, Liu Fen had confessed that he was just an employee in Ishikawa's office who delivered letters to and from Ishikawa without knowing what was in them.[88] Nevertheless, the magistrates were not content to accept the testimony at face value. "Further secret investigations must be carried out," they said, "to

[87] Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials,* pp. 3600-3601.
[88] Guo Bingyi, *Historical Materials*, pp. 3601-3602.

determine whether Wang Kaijia and others have been fully forthcoming." We will carry out a thorough investigation to determine what actually transpired and make a detailed report on our findings. In the meantime, we will respectfully ask [the Beiyang Fleet] to summon Yu Bangqi to appear before the court so he can be questioned about the matters that Ishikawa Goichi referred to. "If the testimonies of Yu and Ishikawa are consistent, then Yu should be questioned in the presence of Wang Kaijia, so that their joint testimony can be carefully assessed and reported side by side."[89]

The Zongli Yamen's case file contains a report from one of the district magistrates, or perhaps even Circuit Intendant Sheng himself—it is not clear—stating that it would be inadvisable to spend much time pursuing further investigation or staging an elaborate execution.[90] The author of this report also wrote, "I will respectfully follow the instructions I received from Your Excellency in person and have Ishikawa executed by firing squad in accordance with international law while applying capital punishment to Liu Fen. As for Wang Kaijia and the others, we can discuss [how to handle them] depending on how their questioning goes." The unknown author then added, "while they may not be co-conspirators, this case has very significant implications, so the seal-holding officials should be ordered to conduct a thorough and complete investigation in order to accurately determine what happened, to move expeditiously, and avoid misplaced leniency.[91] As for the issue of buried mines and explosives, which has been rumored for a long time in Tianjin, we have made exhaustive inquiries. In fact, these rumors have no basis."[92]

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[89] Ibid.

[90] 未便久稽顯戮

[91] Seal-holding officials 印委 were deputies who were given warrants stamped with an official seal as a sign of temporary authority.

[92] Guo Tingyi, *Historical Materials,* p. 3602.

The Zongli Yamen's case file ends with the confessions of Ishikawa and Liu, which describe how they met and the specific conditions of their partnership. According to Ishikawa, shortly after he moved to Tianjin, Wang Kaijia, a member of the Imperial Guard, had introduced him to Liu Fen, "who provided me with an ordnance list." "I knew that Liu was a clerk in the Ordnance Bureau," Ishikawa said, "and I wanted to make friends with him." "Sometime before May, I once again asked Liu to tell me the number of troops in the area, and he had Wang Da bring me a sealed letter which, I discovered after opening, contained the information I requested. Altogether, I paid Liu 80 Mexican silver dollars." Ishikawa said Wang never knew what was in the letters. Ishikawa added, "Since the beginning of the dispute in Korea, I had asked Liu to collect information about military deployments. He had Wang Da deliver several letters, but the information they contained was not accurate."

Some Chinese historians have speculated that Ishikawa had a source in the Beiyang Fleet's telegraph office, but in his confession, Ishikawa claimed that he had failed to recruit a source in that office: "Because Yu Bangqi worked as a runner for the Beiyang Fleet, I asked him to collect any cables regarding military intelligence. Altogether, Yu visited me there four times, but whenever I asked him for information, he said he had not heard anything." Ishikawa tried in vain to sweeten the pot for Yu. "I gave him 50 Mexican silver dollars, but he later returned the money. I still sent it back to him. I heard that he deposited it in a bank for me to withdraw, but I never did."[93] Ishikawa concludes his statement by denying that he ever intended to commit

[93] In his memorial to the throne in early September Zhi Rui reported hearing that the "Japanese spy has admitted that Japan intercepted telegraphs before sinking the Kow Shing and the Caojiang." See Zhi Rui, Memorial to the Throne, p. 35. Ishikawa's signed statement, which was likely obtained under duress, contained no such admission. If Japan had intercepted Qing dynasty telegraphic communications, it did so without any support from Ishikawa.

sabotage: “I would like to take the opportunity provided during this hearing to state that I really only stayed behind in Tianjin to collect military intelligence and had no other plans. I was caught before I could even find a safe hiding place, how could I have buried mines and explosives? It really never happened. That’s a fact.”

Liu’s confession relays the same information as Ishikawa’s in the same order, an unlikely uniformity that suggests the confessions were not written by Ishikawa and Liu separately but instead prepared by the district magistrate’s clerks and presented to the Ishikawa and Liu for their signature. Such a practice is not necessarily an indication that the confessions were coerced; however, it does open up the possibility that clerks composed the confessions in order to address the overarching concerns expressed by the Emperor, the Zongli Yamen, and Viceroy Li. In that case, the clerks would have been careful to insure there were no major discrepancies between the two confessions.

All in all, Viceroy Li and Circuit Intendent Sheng had overseen a fairly competent and robust counterintelligence investigation in a short period of time, under unusual circumstances, and in the knowledge that multiple audiences, domestic and international, would scrutinize their work. After the confiscation of Lt. Takagawa’s letters aboard the SS *Chung-King* on August 1, Viceroy Li’s office circulated a nationwide notice, alerting other senior government officials to the presence of as many as 20 or 30 Japanese spies in China dressed as Chinese. The Tianjin Garrison responded by surveilling Ishikawa and arresting him on August 4 after he left the protection of the British Concession in Tianjin. Tianjin Circuit Intendent Sheng ordered Ishikawa and his Chinese associate Liu held separately, and politely but firmly fended off requests by U.S. Consul in Tianjin Sheridan Pitt Read to merely expel any Japanese nationals suspected of spying. Sheng also assigned two District Magistrates to oversee the case and interviewed Chinese

nationals who had worked in the Japanese military attachés office in Tianjin to determine whether Ishikawa had any dealings with that office. After Ishikawa and Liu continued to deny any wrongdoing, the District Magistrates had them questioned in each other's presence and soon obtained confessions from them. The District Magistrates were able to quickly rule out unsubstantiated rumors that Ishikawa had planted mines in Tianjin and was planning to sabotage the ordnance depot at a local temple. The magistrates also developed a list of potential other accomplices, interviewed multiple other suspects and witnesses, and did not take their statements at face value but continued to investigate all potential concerns.

Following their arrest, Ishikawa and Liu were almost certainly beaten if not tortured. The Emperor had insisted that Li Hongzhang order his subordinates to "carry out a rigorous interrogation."[94] In the Qing dynasty criminal justice system, coercion was applied in even the most mundane cases. Suspects and witnesses alike were routinely beaten or tortured, even though Qing officials understood that torture could produce false confessions.[95] It is certain that, given the palace politics and public sentiment at the time, Ishikawa and Liu had little chance of receiving leniency. While the confessions of Ishikawa and Liu would certainly not be admissible in a U.S. court today, the preponderance of other evidence clearly indicates that their confessions were largely accurate and truthful. Ishikawa was undoubtedly a spy who operated under unofficial cover in concert with Japanese military attachés to collect military intelligence in China before and during the Sino-Japanese War. Can the same be said of the other Japanese nationals arrested in mid-August after the Zongli Yamen had issued a notice to all viceroys and

[94] The precise wording in the Emperor's edict was *yanxing shenxun* 嚴行審訊.

[95] Implements of torture included the bone-crushing ankle press 夾棍 and finger press 子拶. Prisoners and witnesses alike were routinely beaten with batons, cudgels or switches.

provincial governors warning them about the presence of other Japanese spies disguised as Chinese? The answer to this question may be found in the Chapter Seven.

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