

Chapter 2: Historical facts show why the Japanese military was brave and strong

The Boxer Rebellion

The Chinese Boxer Rebellion took place in 1900. The Boxers, organized Chinese religious fanatics with extremely xenophobic and anti-Christian views, killed a British missionary in Shandong Province on December 30, 1889. In May 1900, they attacked a Christian church about 70 kilometers from Beijing and then headed to Beijing.

On May 8, 1900, the envoys of eight countries met in Beijing and agreed that the situation was urgent—they agreed to summon their naval landing forces. Based on a previously agreed to protocol signed with the Qing government in September 1889, the Eight Nation Alliance, Great Britain, the United States, France, Russia, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Japan, called in 30 naval landing units to protect their embassies and citizens. On June 2, a total of 442 military personnel entered Beijing. Military officers from each country recruited civilians to form volunteer units to strengthen their defenses. On June 1, a British missionary and several Belgian railway engineers were murdered. On June 11, the Secretary of the Japanese Legation Sugiyama was butchered by the Qing army. The German envoy was murdered on June 20.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the author of *Japan's Holocaust* wrote that **"10,000 missionaries were employed in a large-scale campaign between 1870 and 1884 to firmly establish the beliefs of Emperor worship and Zen Buddhism."** Over 10 years after this, the Boxer Rebellion occurred, so this would be a similar event that invites comparisons. In addition, the Japanese army fought alongside the armies of seven major powers during the Boxer Rebellion, so I chose to look at the Japanese army during the Boxer Rebellion to compare the actions of the Japanese army with those of other armies, how it was viewed by other armies, and how it was viewed by the people of Beijing.

On June 21, the Qing Dynasty announced its support for the Boxers and declared war on the Eight Nations. The besieged Eight Nation forces, protecting their legations and foreign residents in Beijing were in a desperate spot. The Eight Nations tried to send a relief force to Beijing, but the Qing army pushed them back, halting their advance. It was not until August 14 that a relief force finally entered Beijing. For about two months, the besieged Eight Nations cooperated in fending off attacks from the Qing and Boxer armies

and in protecting the residents.

Within the defenders, Colonel Shiba Goro and his Japanese soldiers performed an outstanding job, as Lancelot Giles, British Legation Students' Corps, wrote in his diary (June 24):

"The Japanese Colonel Shibata is in command of the Fu [royal palace]. He is considered the best officer up here, just as the Japanese are undoubtedly the best soldier. Their pluck and daring is astonishing, our marines are next to them in this respect; but I think the Japanese lead the way."¹

Peter Fleming, who unearthed these diaries and compiled them into a book, *The Siege at Peking*, wrote:

"In the Fu [royal palace], the other vital sector, the Japanese were the backbone and the brains of the defense. They were supported, not very reliably, by the Italians and were reinforced by young volunteers—mostly Customs employees or student interpreters—from the British Legation. ... The Japanese were commanded by their Military Attache, Colonel Shiba, the ablest and most experienced officer of any nationality present. He was universally liked and respected, and the Japanese, with whom in those days few Europeans or Americans had had very much to do, emerged from Peking as paragons; everyone admired their courage, their dependability and their cheerfulness, and they are the only nationality of whom no criticism, veiled or otherwise, is to be found in the copious records of the Seige."²

This was written by an observer, who had no reason to lie. This passage speaks the truth, unlike wartime propaganda that slanders the enemy or sensationalist newspaper and magazine articles. Where in this do we find the image of the Japanese soldier that Rigg talks about, who "**willingly killed in order to exterminate an inferior race**"? Does this passage not say the exact opposite? Isn't it clear that what Rigg says is just an incredibly malicious lie?

¹ "Defender of the Castle: The Life of Meiji General Shiba Goro" (Murakami Hyoe) (Kojinsha), Tokyo, 2002. p.572

² *Ibid.*, p.586

The account of Polly Condit Smith, an American woman who was one of the besieged residents in Beijing, and did not participate directly in the battle, nonetheless supported Western impressions at the time:

"Apropos of Colonel Shiba, he is splendid, small person. He has taken his position here by the strength of his intelligence and good right arm, solely because the Ministers and the guard captains were not especially inclined at the first morning conference to listen to him ... his active and continuous fighting in the Fu, and has proved himself such a general, that his opinion and help are asked by all the commanders."³

It seems that among Western soldiers at the time that looting and rape war's collateral damage. Civilians were well aware that foreign soldiers were just as bad as Chinese soldiers. However, the Japanese soldier adhered to strict discipline and did not permit any personal misconduct. Civilians were shocked--they had never seen such an army before. Such talk spread to neighboring towns, and civilians welcomed the Japanese army, waving the *hinomaru* flag (national flag of Japan) with the words "Great Japanese Obedient People"⁴

By contrast, Rigg repeatedly bleats that the Japanese army engaged in gratuitous plundering, assaults, rapes, and massacres--everywhere--but the actual record of the Japanese army is far from Rigg's musings. It is clear that Rigg did not bother to separate wartime propaganda from the truth, thus blithely accepting propaganda.

The Eight Nation Alliance Enters Peking (Beijing)

On August 14, the Eight Nation Alliance finally entered Beijing. That afternoon, the first international commanders' conference was held at the Russian Legation. British Minister Sir Claude MacDonald was there and began with a report on the progress of the siege of Beijing.

As a war veteran, Sir MacDonald described the situation in a detached manner, with attention to details: "We were short of weapons and food, and there were not enough

³ *Ibid.*, p.587

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.624

soldiers to defend us, but thanks to the bravery and indomitable will of the soldiers and their tireless work, we were finally able to welcome the Allied forces to our rescue ..." And charitably, Minister MacDonald added, "Half of the credit for lifting the siege of Peking should go to the particularly brave Japanese soldiers."⁵

"On this day, the Japanese volunteers who had been defending Prince Su's palace [Fu] were disbanded. The Marine Corps will also leave the command of Colonel Shiba as of today.

Colonel Shiba gathered everyone together and sincerely thanked them for their long years of brave fighting and conveyed the words of the British envoy at the Conference of Commanders of the World.

Sobbing could be heard from the ranks. Everyone was savoring the proud feelings of having protected the honor of their country and been recognized by the people of Europe and America.

Sobbing spread among the group. All the men were crying tears of joy.

Colonel Shiba, as expected, looked back at the faces of each of his subordinates who had fought bravely, his eyes red and teary, as if to engrave them in his memory."⁶

This is the real Japanese army. However, Rigg's portrayal of the Japanese, as a mob that plundered, raped, and massacred civilians at will, is clearly motivated by malice and raw racism.

The Japanese Army After Entering Peking

After the troops of the Eight Nation Alliance entered Peking, urban warfare continued for five days. Qing troops were forced out of the city. Criminals ran rampant and troops of the Eight Nation Alliance turned to plundering and ran amok, turning Peking into a hell zone.

The area on the north bank of the inner city--the area occupied by the Japanese army--was the first area in Peking restored to normality.

Thus, civilians moved from areas occupied by other countries to areas occupied by the

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.649

⁶ *Ibid.*, 650-651

Japanese army.

The excellent security in the Japanese area of operation was well-known not only among Chinese civilians but also among the Eight Nation Alliance. The American commander made a special visit to inspect the area and visited Colonel Shiba, asking for advice on maintaining security.

At the suggestion of the British commander, a "Police Committee" was established, and officers from each country's military were selected as committee members. The system was largely based on the suggestions and knowledge of Colonel Shiba.⁷

On viewing the operational reality of the Japanese army during the Boxer Rebellion, one can see that Rigg's view of the the Japanese military and Japanese people is embarrassingly mistaken and based on an exceedingly insular, racist viewpoint.

"Japan's pathetic solecism that they were the direct descendants of the gods and are ruled by one of them fostered an extreme egoism that helped create an unforgiving citizenry willingly to commit some of the most grotesque atrocities any modern power has ever performed precisely because they believed they had divine permission to do so."

Japan's Holocaust, Chapter 1, p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.659