

Manchu Army System & Northern Warlords

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Mr. Ding Zhongjiang wrote a great book called "*History of Northern Warlords*" in 1964. He thoroughly traced the warring history of China from 1912 to 1928. During this time period, there had ensued 38 cabinets, with the shortest cabinet lasting only 6 days. This period of Chinese Republic was called Northern Warlords time period because the regimes in Peking were of the same lineage as Yuan Shi-kai cronies.

Per DZJ, the Northern Warlord Lineage could be traced to Manchu's Xiang-jun (Hunan Province Army) and Huai-jun (Anhui Province Army). Yong Ying (Brave Camp) System, including Xiang-jun and Huai-jun headed by Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, had exhibited themselves as a better army during the crackdown on Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Rebellion & Nian Rebellion. (Manchu Banner System/Green Camp System and Yong Ying (Brave Camp) System are covered in the qing.htm section.) After defeating the Taiping Rebellion and the Nian (Nian-jun) Rebellion, majority of Xiang-jun and Huai-jun troops were retained as garrisons in place of the Eight Banner and Green-Camp soldiers. Gradually, Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang and their cronies took over the posts of governor-generals for Jiangsu and Jiangxi provinces, South-Sea Minister, North-Sea Minister and governor-general for Zhili Province (Beijing area). Li Hongzhang, at age 42, took over governor-general for Zhili Province in 1901.

During the 1894 Sino-Japanese War, however, the backwardness of Huai-jun was shown by the total annihilation of Huai-jun's Sheng-jun column in Korea. Before the 1894 defeat, Yuan Shi-kai spent 12 years in Korea training the Korean army; after the 1895 defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, Manchu government began to recruit the so-called Xin-jun ('New Army') in accordance with the West's military system. King Chunqin-wang (Yi-xuan), King Qingqin-wang (Yi-kuang), Weng Tonghe, Li Hongzhang and Rong-lu etc adamantly recommended Yuan Shi-kai for training 'Xin-jun' or the New Army at Xiaozhan. Yuan Shi-kai contacted Yin-chang of Tianjin's "*Wubei Xuetao*" Academy for referrals of talents, and Yin-chang recommended to Yuan Shi-kai "*Wubei Xuetao*" top students such as Feng Guozhang, Duan Qirui, Liang Huadian and Wang Shizhen. (Among the four guys, Liang Huadian accidentally drowned himself on one night, and the other three would be appointed lecturer for field or infantry battalion, cannons battalion, and cavalry battalion, respectively. The three would become the so-called 'Distinguished Three' among the Northern Warlord Armies later. Duan Qirui had at one time studied in military school in Germany.) Yuan Shi-kai's training of the new army will be expanded to 12000 men, with

eight infantry 'ying' (i.e., camps or battalions) totaling 8000 men, two cannon battalions, two battalions of cavalry totaling 1000 men, and 1000 men engineering battalion.

'Engineering Battalion' was in charge of repairing arms, building bridges, building castles, planting mines, sending telegraphs and surveying maps. German, Japanese and American lecturers were hired, and a German language school was also set up.

In Feb of 1899, Rong-lu inspected Xiaozhan again and told Yuan Shi-kai that he was empowered with building a brand new Manchu Qing Army mapping Yuan Shi-kai's scheme. Three days later, Yuan Shi-kai re-devised his army into five 'jun' (equiv to regiments or brigades), with eight battalions each, including five field or infantry battalions, one cannon battalions, one cavalry battalion, one engineering battalion and one student army battalion.

Rong-lu, at the advice of Yuan Shi-kai, named his new Manchu army 'Wuwei-jun Army' (i.e., martial defense army), comprising of five 'jun' (equiv to divisions): frontal division, hind division, left division, right division and middle division. Rong-lu would act as 'marshal' as well as general in charge of the middle division; Ma Yuekun in charge of frontal division; Nie Shicheng leftside division; Yuan Shi-kai rightside division; and Dong Fuxiang the hind-side division. Yuan Shi-kai rightside army or "*wuwei-you-jun*" would comprise of his Xiaozhan army; Rong-lu's middle division or "*wuwei-zhong-jun*" would comprise of new recruits from banner people; and the rest three divisions would be converted from existing Brave-camp armies in Hebei and Gansu provinces. Dong Fuxiang's hind army, Ma Yuekun's frontal army, and Nie Shicheng leftside army had later participated in the resistance fighting against the invasion forces of Eight Allied Powers. Nie Shicheng sacrificed his life near Balitai area, southside of Tianjin on June 13th (July 9th of 1900 [solar calendar]). Rong-lu's 'Wuwei-jun Army' should be considered Zhi-li or Beijing provincial army, only; later, Zhang Xun blamed his abortive 1917 restoration of Manchu throne on his lonely fight in an analogy to Zhi-li army's resistance to the eight allied powers.

In 1901, Yuan Shi-kai succeeded the posts of North-Sea Minister and Zhili Province Governor-General that were historically held by Li Hongzhang. Yuan Shi-kai adopted the same nepotism approach as Zeng Guofan. While being dispatched to Korea, he had assembled a team of cronies. After taking over Li Hongzhang's posts, he built an army that knew only following Yuan's order, not Manchu's. In Rise of Yuan Shi-kai, a list of Yuan Shi-kai's protégé is provided to show how north of the Huai River fell under Yuan's direct control as the 'Domain of Northern Warlords'. Among his protégé would be: i) his relatives and pals, ii) Li Hongzhang disciples graduated from "*Beiyang Wubei Xuetang*" (i.e., North-Sea Military Academy), including the Big Three (Wang Shizhen, Duan Qirui and Feng Guozhuang) and second-level generals (Duan Zhigui, Cao Kun, Li Chun, Wang Zhanyuan, Lu Jianzhuang, Yang Yongde, Lu Yongxiang, Bao Guiqing and Zhang Huaizhi); and iii) Huai-jun officers, including Jiang Guiti, Zhang Xun, Ni Sichong and Meng Enyuan.

In 1903, King Qing-wang (Yi-kuang) was authorized to rebuild the New Army. King Qing-wang recommended Yuan Shi-kai, Tie-liang, and Xu Shichang for rebuilding the New Army on basis of "rightside martial defense column", the only remnant that survived the wars against the invasion of the Eight Allied Nations while the other four columns had been basically decimated. Manchu court also decreed that provincial level New Army be recruited as well.

Beginning from 1905, Yuan Shi-kai identified himself with the 'constitution proponents' and pressured Manchu government into adopting this approach. In 1906, Zheng Xiaoxu, Zhang Jian and Tang Shouqian declared the founding of 'public society for preparation of constitutional government' in Shanghai and called upon Manchu government in adopting constitutional government. Yuan Shi-kai expressed support for the movement and recommended Yang Du to Dowager Empress Xitaihou (Ci-xi) for interpreting the meaning of constitutional government. Newspapers across the nation praised Yuan Shi-kai as the 'giant hand opening up China for civilization'.

By 1906, Yuan Shi-kai expanded his New Army into 6 'zhen' (division equivalent). Meanwhile, Governor-general Zhang Zhidong recruited one division each in Hubei-Jiangsu provinces. By late 1906, Manchu court re-organized "*bīng bù*" (military ministry) and "*lián bīng bù*" (army recruitment ministry) into "*lǚ jūn bù*" (field army ministry), with Tie-liang acting as "*shàng shū*" (secretary). By 1907, Manchu erected military consultancy bureau for centralizing the control over nationwide armies. Yuan Shi-kai, for sake of avoiding suspicion, surrendered four of his divisions to the "field army ministry". By July [lc], Manchu court stipulated a total of 36 divisions across the nation, with 4 in Peking, 3 in Sichuan Province, 2 in the provinces of Zhili [Hebei], Jiangsu, Hubei, Guangdong, Yunnan and Gansu, and 1 in other provinces including Jiangbei and Rehe [Jehol].

In Guangxi Province, Governor-general Zhang Mingqi established "infantry elementary school" in 1906 and "infantry middle school" by mapping Japanese and German systems, which offered free room and board, tuition exemption, and monthly stipends. Zhang Mingqi also endorsed the establishment of politics and law school, prison and punishment studies institution, agriculture and forest schools, normal colleges, police academy, infantry cadre school, and infantry measure school. Zhang Mingqi attracted such talents as Zhuang Yunkuan, Niu Yongjian, Wang Xiaozhen, Li Shucheng, Sun Mengji, Cai E, Yi Changheng, Geng Yi, & Zhao Hengti. Graduates of Guangxi Prov's "infantry middle school", with Cai E sponsorship, would have the privilege to attend National Baoding Cadet Academy in Tianjin for 2 years. (Today's dissidents and democracy activists often rebuked Chinese communists for not catching up a bit with the old time warlords in providing free education to the populace.) In 1907, 14-year-old Bai Chongxi, who had graduated from countryside school set up by graduates of provincial normal college, left the countryside for

Guilin's "infantry elementary school" exam. Bai, pretending to be 15 year old, excelled No. 6 among 1700 examinees, out of whom 220 students were admitted. However, Bai Chongxi fell ill three months later, and even with an approval of one year sick leave from Cai E [aka Cai Dongpo], Bai Chongxi failed to return to school. Later, Bai Chongxi went to provincial capital to attend normal college, and participated in the daring-to-die column of 125 students which Brigadier-general Zhao Hengti brought to Wuchang in echoing support for 1911 Xin Hai Revolution. (The student columns, consisting of students from half a dozen Guilin schools, were part of Guangxi Province Northern Expedition Contingent. After 1912 south-north reconciliation, Bai Chongxi was sent to Wuchang's Nanhu [south lake] Infantry Preparatory School and further on to Baoding's Cadet Academy.)

As part of "xin zheng" [i.e., Manchu new administration], Guangxi Province established "provincial public-funded textile learning institute" to which Li Zongren [Li Tsung-jen] was admitted as one of 200 students; however, after graduation in 1907, Li Zongren failed to apply his skills, and furthermore messed up two weaving machines at his own home as well as his relative's home. Li Zongren, with the encouragement of a martial arts specialist Li Zhifu who was a friend of Li Zongren's father, applied for 2nd session of "infantry elementary school" in Guilin but had to apply again for 3rd session the second year after he was late for 10 minutes in reporting to school. In 1908, Cai E, a Hunan Province native, assumed the post of Guangxi Province army preparation department which supervised the "infantry elementary school". In 1909, Guangxi Province consultation bureau was established as an organ equivalent to "provincial parliament". Cai E later had to depart for Yunnan Province when being pressured by Guangxi natives as to his nepotism on the matter of hiring Hunan people for posts in Guangxi Prov. (In Yunnan Province, Cai E took charge of Cadet Academy in training numerous generals who later assisted him in the Republic Restoration War against Yuan Shi-kai.)

After the death of Dowager Empress Cixi and Emperor Guangxu, Manchu Emperor Xuantong (Aixinjueluo Pu-yi, r. 1909-1911) got enthroned. Manchu Regent Zai-li [Zai-feng], ignoring a rumored late Emperor Guangxu's wish to have Yuan Shi-kai killed for the betrayal to Hundred Day Reformation, would merely deprive Yuan Shi-kai of his posts. Even though Yuan Shi-kai was deprived of his posts in 1908, he indirectly influenced the Manchu court through his cronies. Manchu Regent Zai-li [Zai-feng] changed the military consultancy bureau to the military consultancy office, and assigned his brothers the posts in charge of the military establishment. When Wuchang Uprising broke out, Manchu Regent had to recall Yuan Shi-kai for sake of mobilizing the armies to crack down on the revolutionary government in Wuchang.

By the time the uprising broke out in 1911, Manchu court had only fulfilled the recruitment of two thirds of the 36 divisions originally planned, with 16 divisions and 16 mixed purpose brigades recruited. Wuchang Uprising, heralded by Manchu 8th Division of the New Army

in Hubei Province, would mark the end of Manchu Qing Dynasty. In Shanghai, Sun Yat-sen was supported as the interim president of the Republic of China which was officially founded on Jan 1st of 1912 (solar calendar). Sun Yat-sen's government further demanded that Manchu emperor abdicate. Manchu officials were scared into concessions after a revolutionary (i.e., Peng Jiazhen) assassinated Liang-bi in front of the residence. Yuan Shi-kai authorized Duan Qirui in demanding an imperial abdication in the name of 42 Manchu generals. Yuan Shi-kai reached a deal with Sun Yat-sen in regards to pressuring the last Manchu Emperor Xuantong (Aixinjueluo Pu-yi, r. 1909-1911) into abdication on Feb 12th of 1912 (solar calendar). After Sun Yat-sen resigned on 13th, Yuan Shi-kai obtained the ROC presidency from Sun Yat-sen subsequently when interim upper house made the announcement on Feb 15th 1912.