

The Tonhaka Rebellion and the start of the Sino-Japanese intervention in Korea

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The *Tonhaka* uprising of 1894 marked the end of a period of latent struggle between imperialist powers for spheres of influence in Korea and their transition to open military confrontation, resulting in the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910.

Tonhaki

In 1860, Choi Jaeu (1824-1864), the illegitimate son of a poor nobleman from Gyeongsang Province, proclaimed a creed to replace all existing Korean religions and supplant the rapidly spreading Western teaching (*Sohak*), i.e., Catholicism. Choi Jahu called his doctrine *Tonhak*, i.e., the Eastern Doctrine. The new prophet had supporters and the congregation grew rapidly in number. But agents of the Korean government became interested in its activities because some tenets of Choi Jau's doctrine were inherited from Catholics persecuted by the Korean government in the 1860s. The suspicion arose that Choi Jaeu was a secret preacher of Catholicism. In 1864, Choi Jaeu was arrested and executed on charges of spreading Christianity in Korea.



**Чхве Сихён,
патриарх учения
в 1894 г. Осенью 1894 г.
присоединился
к Северной армии
повстанцев, после
поражения повстанцев
скрывался. В 1898 г.
был схвачен властями
и казнен**

The next patriarch of the doctrine was Choi Sihyong (1827-1898). Under him the doctrine expanded its sphere of influence, besides peasants small noblemen and *Chun-ying people* joined the *community*{1}. The preaching of equality among people allowed the doctrine to gain popularity. The largest number of believers lived in Jeolla and Chungcheong provinces, as well as in the northern Gyeongsang Province. The main areas in which the doctrine was spread were the so-called 'northern' (Chungcheong) and 'southern' (Jeolla) areas. "parishes" (*chop*). A hierarchy of doctrine was established.

However, the charges against Choi Jeu were never dropped and *the tonhak* was not officially recognized. At a certain point, sectarian leaders felt the need to legalize their activities and sent a petition to King Gojong (1863-1907) in the spring of 1893 asking him to drop the charges against the founder of the doctrine and allow his free preaching and confession throughout Korea.

The filing of the petition coincided with growing peasant unrest in Korea, brought on by intensified taxation and several consecutive bad harvests.

Thousands of peasants rallied to support the petition, and a fortified camp was set up in Chungcheong Province, where Choi Sihyeon hosted walkers and formed armed detachments in case government troops attempted to arrest the leaders of the exercise. However, the request was denied. The sectarians then pledged to enforce their demands by armed force and to eradicate Christianity, which had enjoyed government patronage in the 1870s and 1890s. Anti-foreigner riots began with attacks on missionaries and merchants. Foreign diplomats demanded that the Korean government ensure order in the country. China, Germany and England sent warships to Korea. However, the matter was settled peacefully in 1893 when Choe Sihyun, terrified by the sending of a punitive government force to Chungcheong Province, persuaded his supporters to disperse and renounce violent action.

However, the Korean authorities drew no conclusions from what had happened. After the crisis of the spring of 1893 was overcome, the arbitrariness of local officials became even more rampant. Bribes were extorted for every reason, tax arrears were collected mercilessly, and justice had all but disappeared.

On 8.02.1894, a peasant uprising led by *Chung Bong Joon* (1854-1895), a supporter of the *Tonghak-doctrine*, began in Gobu County, Jeolla Province, against the local government. The uprising spread to the surrounding counties as peasants evicted local officials, burned archives, and seized weapons and food. The uprising raised anti-foreigner and anti-corruption slogans calling for expelling all foreigners (primarily Japanese), punishing corrupt officials, and strengthening the authority of King Kojong, whom the rebels saw as a guarantor of law and order in the country. The banner on Jeongjeon's personal banner was inscribed, "Serving the state, fighting for the good of the people."

The rapidly unfolding events in Jeolla province caused anxiety in the central administration. However, instead of looking into the causes of the unrest and taking adequate measures to pacify the population, it was decided to throw in troops to quell the growing rebellion.

Korean army as of 1894

The Korean army remained in a medieval state until 1876. In general terms, it was expressed in the division of troops into capital and provincial troops, the universal conscription of the unprivileged population aged 16 to 60, closely intertwined with state public works, and the archaic

administrative and tactical organisation, lack of modern military education and officer corps, backward weaponry.



Пленные корейские солдаты, 1871 г. Типичный случай использования местного населения в качестве резерва для армии во время боев против американцев. Можно использовать для демонстрации внешнего вида корейского солдата без оружия и амуниции



Члены отрядов Ыйбён, ок. 1900 г. Однако аналогичным образом могли выглядеть и повстанцы-тонхаки. Разве что с двуствольными ружьями на руках у местного населения в Корее в 1894 г. было сложно

The absence of any external threat for more than 200 years led to degradation of the military service, corruption among military officials, and conversion of the institute of military service into an apparatus of colossal enrichment for the ruling circles of the country. Bribes were demanded not even for exemption from military service, but simply for the collection of taxes and public works, which often replaced active service in the army. Each year many peasants were made to do forced labour on military summonses and the people no longer perceived military service as something associated with defending one's homeland. Members of the privileged classes neglected military service; the whole burden of service fell on the shoulders of the common people. The hereditary military officers were also reluctant to serve, seeing their positions as nothing more than a source of prosperity.

After the Ganghwa Treaty of Friendship with Japan in 1876, which was imposed on Korea by force of Japanese arms, and the military mutinies of 1882 and 1884, the Korean government recognised the need for reform in the military sphere. Initially, Koreans turned to the sovereign country of Qing China for assistance. However, the strong political influence of Japan led to the parallel invitation of a Japanese instructor, Ryozo Horimoto. It was only with the conclusion of an agreement in Tianjin on 17.04.1885 that the two rival empires had agreed that neither China nor Japan would send their instructors to the Korean army, so as not to create unnecessary causes for conflicts.

Between 1884 and 1888, the Koreans formed a series of new army command structures that mimicked the Qing dynasty. In general, this was a step backwards - the so-called "The five army directorates (*o gunggyeong*) within the War Department (*Gyeongjo*), which was in charge of military manning, arming, uniforming, enlisting, etc.

The military department had numerous military offices such as *Geumwiyeong*, which guarded the royal palace, *Tongwiyeong*, which was in charge of coastal defense, *Cheonggyeong*, *Chanwiyeong* {2} which served as the royal guard, *Gyeongnichon*, which guarded the northern residence of the king, and *Hovichon*, which handled the royal bodyguards, among other things, *Hullyeongwon*, in charge of training troops and making new weapons, *Gungjikchon*, *Yeonghoeon*, in charge of guarding the king, *Kigiguk*, in charge of making new weapons, repairing old weapons, ships and fortifications, *Seongjongwangchon*, in charge of finance, punishment, military music, guarding the king and delivering messages, *Oyeonchon*, etc.

The tangled relations between the departments, their overlapping and unclear division of responsibilities led to extremely inefficient management of the troops, which decreased in numbers more and more: while the total number of persons liable for military service was 2-3 million (1885), only 3 to 7 thousand were on active service in the capital's military forces. In addition, the governors had at their disposal from 300 to 800 mounted and foot soldiers of the provincial troops, which, in case of need, were reinforced by local people, who had not even basic military training. There were no home front services or military medical care. Transportation of army supplies in the near absence of motor roads in Korea was made at the expense of mobilization of peddlers who were accounted for by a special department of the War Department. The navy in the modern sense of the word did not exist at all - only in the 1880s had small steam ships begun to be purchased, primarily for transporting rice harvested in the southern provinces for tax purposes, to Seoul and the north of the country. If necessary, these ships were to perform military transports.

The armament of the troops was extremely archaic. In the late 1880s the main types of small arms of the capital's troops were Peabody, Remington and Mauser rifles with

The artillery pieces were 7.5 cm. Krupp steel field guns of 1883 with a wedge bolt.

In addition, the troops were armed with about 20 Gatling mortars. In the provinces the troops had, at best, some Remington or Peabody rifles, but the bulk of the troops were armed with edged and polearms, wick-loading rifles and archaic muzzleloading *khoni-pho* guns and even more archaic *pulangi pho* guns, which go back to the 15th century European *Wegler* design!

American instructors were invited to train the capital's soldiers as representatives of a "neutral" power that proclaimed the principle of helping all small countries in the Pacific. In accordance with the Korean-American agreement of 1887, "three American officers, General Dai, Colonel Campbell and General Staff Major Lee" arrived in Korea in March 1888 and started training the troops. In addition, an electrified arsenal was set up adjacent to the Royal Palace in Seoul to manufacture Remington rifle barrels and rifle cartridge cases and repair defective weapons, including artillery pieces. The arsenal was also run by an American engineer.

The choice of instructors was unfortunate - General Dai was old and had served almost his entire life as a police officer in an American city (possibly New York), Colonel Campbell, despite his experience overseas, was also old and lacked initiative, and Major Lee, an intelligent and energetic man, did not have the weight and connections to refract the Korean approach to the organization of training.

The original plan was to train 220 men according to American regulations to be used as non-commissioned officers to form a model brigade of 5,000 men. It was also decided to establish a 60-man cadet corps to supply the army with its own cadet officers. But Korean military officials, unwilling to lose their established sources of income, disrupted the training process in every possible way, did not issue funds on time, and discredited American instructors in every possible way. According to Lieutenant Colonel of the Russian General Staff Webel, who was in Korea in 1889, during 17 months of stay in Korea, instructors had very little success in training of the Korean soldiers. The main achievements of the Americans were teaching the Koreans simple formation evolutions, firing of personal small arms, and, to some extent, training of artillerymen - mainly firing from open positions.

The training of non-commissioned officers and officers had practically failed, and the positions in the Korean army were filled by transferring commanders from other formations of the old type to the new formations. The troops were poorly equipped, with poor discipline, and their posture left much to be desired. According to Colonel Karneev, of the Russian General Staff, who observed the Korean capital troops in February 1896, "the troops were not in good hands.



Вооруженная свита корейского чиновника. 1880-е.



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Sending a punitive expedition against the rebels

On May 3, 1894 *Changwiyeongwang* commander Hong Gehun was appointed *the pyeongsa* {3} of Jeolla, but on May 6, 1894 the decision was reversed. Hong Gehun was ordered to promptly assume command of a punitive expedition of five companies of the guards with artillery and to immediately advance to the rebellion area. The dignitaries of *Nemubu*{5} asked the sovereign Kojon for permission to suppress the rebellion in the utmost severity: "We believe [that it is necessary] to suppress and subdue, to crush and kill in those lands, what will be [the highest will]?" Permission was granted.



**Юань Шикай,
постоянный представи-
тель империи Цин
в Корее до 1.08.1894.
Инициатор и провод-
ник политики цинского
вытеснения Японии
из Кореи, сторонник
оккупации Кореи и пре-
вращения ее в цинскую
провинцию**

On 7.05.1894, Hong Gehun selected five companies from the *Changwiyeong* and began loading troops and equipment in Incheon onto the Korean freighters Hanyang {6} and Changnyeong {7}. The Qing coastal defense battleship "Pingyuan" under the command of *Dusa* {8} Li Hae (1852-1930), attached to the Korean government troops by decision of the Qing representative in Korea Yuan Shikai, also approached there. The small Korean steamships could not hold all the soldiers, their arms and equipment, so Li He had to assist in transporting the punitive detachment to its destination and, if necessary, to cover the landing of troops with the fire of his artillery.



Ли Хэ, командир броненосца «Пинъюань», весной 1894 г. принял участие в подавлении восстания тонхаков и лично инспектировал укрепления Чонджу, построенные корейскими карателями

Цинский броненосец «Пинъюань»



On 8.05.1894, a company under Von Serock with artillery (2 x75mm Krupp guns and 2 Gatling mortars), supplies and equipment was loaded on the "The other three companies, commanded by Yi Duhwang, Oh Gongyeon and Oh Wonghyun, boarded the Pingyuan with Honggyeong's retinue. Instead of bulky provisions to save time and effort, Hong Gehun was given money - at the rate of 100 *mun*{9} for each day of the campaign per soldier.

It took the whole of the first half of the day to load. Between 15 and 17 o'clock a detachment of three ships set out from Incheon and exactly one day later, around 17 o'clock on 9.05.1894, dropped anchor in Gunsan Bay. The landing was postponed until the next day.

The battle of Paxson

Meanwhile, the situation on land had worsened. On 8.05.1894, a provincial force numbering about 3,000 men, including attached *pobusans* {10} under the command of the right-wing Yeongwang {11} of the Jeolla Yi Gyun-ho (? - 1894) Garrison engaged in battle with the rebel army of Jeongjeong, which had been encamped near Mount Baeksan since the beginning of the rebellion. The rebel army had over 8,000 men armed with pikes and wick-arms. During their time in the camp, the rebels attempted to establish military training within their ranks. Considering that the provincial government troops had received very little training and lacked modern weaponry, they were outnumbered and did not have the qualitative advantage over the rebels necessary for victory. Peksan Mountain, only 47.7m high, was located in the northern part of Kobu County, commanding a rather vast plain. From the north, the approaches to the mountain were protected by the Dongjinggang and Mangyeonggang rivers, and there was an official granary near the mountain itself. A tent was erected on the mountain where the insurgent commanders-in-chief Jeong Bongjoong (1853-1894), Kim Ganam (1845-1895), Kim Dokmyeong (1845-1895), Song Hwajun (1861-1895), and other peasant leaders were stationed. Considering

Yi Gyun-ho made the unforgivable mistake of blockading the insurgents in their camp, dispersing his forces. A detachment of 300 provincial troops was encamped 4 km. east of Mount Paeksan, more than 1,000 Choll soldiers under *Chungun* {12} Kim Dalgwan encamped 4 km. west of the mountain, while 1,000 *pobusans* under *Chungun* {13} Yugyeongho were positioned on the plains to the south. Thus Yi Gyeongho dispersed his forces, allowing Jeong Bongjun to defeat them one by one. Early in the morning, the rebels attacked the enemy, skillfully exploiting their numerical advantage and the surprise factor - every position of the government troops was taken in pincers. The rebels, caught unawares, offered little resistance and fled in panic towards Jeonju.

In the turmoil, Yi Gyongho was killed and several dozen others were killed and wounded. Insurgent casualties were the lowest. After defeating the government forces, Jeong Bongjoon made a quick raid towards Puang County, where he captured an arsenal and granary, further arming his men and providing them with food, before the rebels encamped at Mount Togyosan in Gobu County. The battle at Mount Peksan was the largest in terms of numbers on both sides in the first phase of the rebellion. The victory at Peksan strengthened the position of the peasant army while demoralizing the provincial government forces.

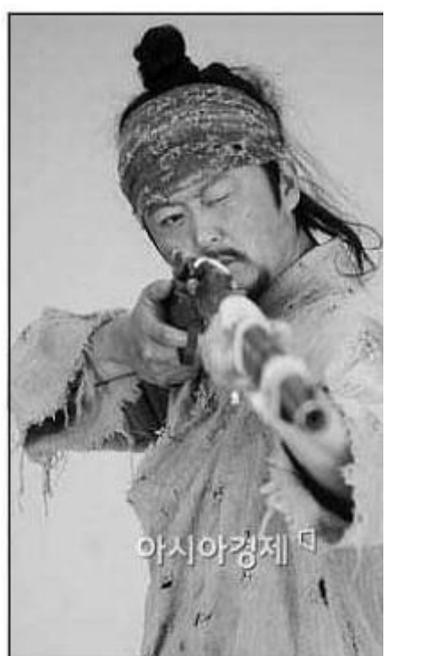
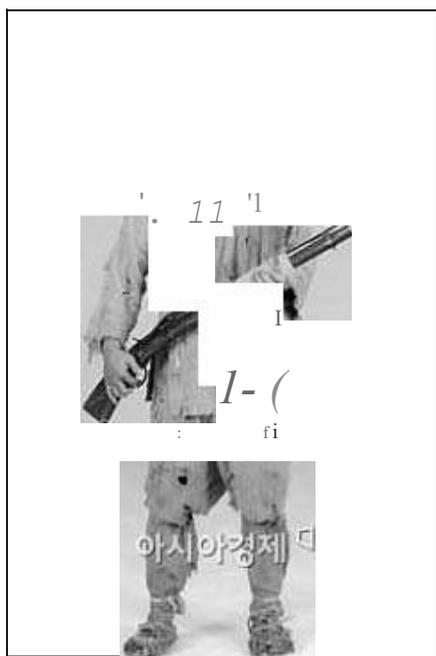
Battle of Hwangthoheung

On May 9, 1894 the remnants of the provincial army, about 1600 men, under the command of Yi Konyang (? - 1894), set out from Jeonju to confront the rebels in hopes of ending the uprising before the government troops arrived. All officials were instructed to arrest the supporters of the Eastern teachings as soon as they were detected.

Most likely, Yi Konyan was motivated by jealousy of the capital's troops, a desire to justify the defeat of provincial troops at Mount Peksan, and a desire to be rewarded for defeating the rebels. A large part of Yi Konyan's detachment consisted of Pobusans. In the evening of 10.05.1894 Yi Konyan arrived at Hwanghoeung, where, according to his information, there was an insurgent camp. During the night from 10.05.1894 to 11.05.1894, without waiting for the troops of Hong Gehun, he ordered to bombard the suspected location of the enemy. The soldiers opened fire with rifles, the rebels did not respond. It turned out that Jeong Bongjun had learned of the government's approach and had ordered a false camp to be built of straw and reeds, setting his men in ambush. Encouraged by the enemy's silence, Yi Konyan ordered the attack. When the soldiers rushed into the enemy's position, their impulse to fight was replaced by confusion - there was no one among the tents and huts. At this time the insurgents struck from ambush. Having no time to regroup and reload their guns, the soldiers fled in panic, being beaten on all sides. And Konyan fell in the battle, over 750 men from his squad were killed and wounded. A considerable quantity of arms and foodstuffs fell into the hands of the victors. Seizing the opportunity, the insurgents reached the town of Chonip and seized an arsenal and granary there, once again replenishing their supplies, before retreating back to the territory of Kobu County, to the village of Samgori. The battle of Hwanthoeung was the bloodiest battle of the first phase of the rebellion and brought government forces in Jeolla and Chungcheong to the brink of disaster. It was expected that after the capture of Jeonju the rebels would march on Seoul. All hope now rested on the arrival of the capital's troops of Hong Gaeghoon.



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Побусаны



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Strengthening the defence of Jeonju

On 10.05.1894, Hong Gehun's capital troops landed in Kunsan Bay and marched towards Jeonju. They were accompanied by 17 Qing warriors who were to assist Hong Gehun in setting up his positions and training his artillerymen to fire four 37 mm Gochkis 5-shot cannons, which had been removed from the battleship and turned over to the punishers on the orders of Li He. 100 soldiers were left behind to guard the Kunsan.

On May 11, 1894, he marched into Jeonju with his troops and after meeting with *the Kamsa* {14} Kim Munhyun (1858 - ?) he fortified the city. Then Qing *dusa* Li Hae, who had left his battleship, arrived in Cheongju to inspect the defensive lines and to advise on their improvement. Thus, even before Korea officially turned to Qin China for assistance in suppressing the rebellion, Qin military sailors had already taken part in the hostilities as instructors and advisers.

Manoeuvre warfare

On 12.05.1894, a detachment of *Tonghaks* again entered Kobu and looted it, killing all those who did not share the rebels' views {15}. This news compelled Hong Gehun to march urgently out of Cheongju, to intercept the rebels and prevent the pillaging of other towns. The few soldiers of the provincial army, already twice defeated by the rebels at Mount Baeksan and near Hwanghoeon, remained to defend the provincial centre. But it did not help - on 13.05.1894 the fate of the inhabitants of Mujang was dismal. Moreover, the population, intimidated both by the oppression of officials and the brutality of the insurgents, fled to the mountains at the mere rumour of the approaching armed units.

The men feared that they would be taken as porters and hid in desolate places. Hong Gehun's fruitless pursuit of the main rebel forces began - taking advantage of their numerical superiority, Jeong Bongjoong could easily direct the punishers on a false trail, while striking in places where no one expected his units to go.

The chief of the peasant army proved to be a master of manoeuvre warfare by imposing his own rules of the game on the government troops. After defeating Mujang, *the Tonhaks* headed towards Yeongwan and after passing that town, they stopped at Hampyeong. After some time, the rebels left Hampyeong and arrived at Naju. The harsh road conditions were wearing out the pursuing rebel soldiers, burdened with artillery {16}, the lack of population in the towns and villages rendered useless the 100 Muns issued daily for the purchase of provisions. Hungry and not understanding why they should severely punish the population suffering at the hands of the authorities, the soldiers began to desert {17}. Hong Gehung reported the matter to Seoul, where, on May 16, 1894, 500 soldiers of the *Changwiyeong* department {18} and two companies of soldiers with another 75 mm Krupp gun and 1,000 shells were hurriedly prepared to be loaded onto a steamer.

It was only on 19.05.1894 that Hong Gehun's thinning detachment arrived in Mujang, lagging behind the insurgents by 6 days. According to various reports there were between 470 and 3,000 soldiers and *Pobusans* under his command at this time. The reliability of the army was in doubt.

On 20.05.1894, the punishers set out from Mujang and followed the rebels' tracks, staying overnight in Yeongwang in the evening. On the morning of 21.05.1894, Hong Gehun proceeded to Yeongwang and, passing through that city, reached Hampyeong, where the insurgents had been on 15-16.05.1894. At that time, the rebels had already left Naju and reached Changseong.

Part of the rebel army fortified itself on the banks of the Hwangnyeong River near Wolpyeong village. Jeongjeong's troops were marching under yellow banners, had on

armed with many wick-arms seized from government troops, as well as edged weapons. However, they were seriously inferior to Hong Gehun's soldiers in terms of firepower and training. Only the morale of the punishers and their exhaustion by the long hard march allowed Jeongjeon to hope for victory in the encounter.

Kim Moohyun, *the commander of Cheongju*, was ordered, after much delay, to look for ways to appease the rebellion and find out its cause. On 22.05.1894 he learned the reasons for the rebellion! Nonetheless, Hong Gehung, who was tired of the plan, sends a dispatch to Seoul on 23 May 1894 stating that "foreign troops are indispensable. It took Kojong about a week to discuss the news and consult with the Qing's envoy to Korea Yuan Shikai. As a result, a telegram was sent to Tianjin to ask Li Hongzhan for help.

The battle of Chansong

Meanwhile, Hong Gehung had stopped at Hampyeong and began to put the troops in order. At the same time, he ordered Yi Haksun to select 300 of the strongest soldiers, provide them with horses, take one Krupp gun and one Gatling cartridge and continue pursuing *the Tonghaks*. Haksun resolutely pursued the order and on 25.05.1894, he spotted the *Tonhak* encampment at Hwangnyeongcheon. According to government officers, there were at least 3,000 insurgents in the Wolpyeong camp.

On 27.05.1894, at about 1 p.m., the well-trained soldiers of the capital opened fire on the insurgents with guns and crossed the river under cover of artillery fire. However, the numerical superiority of the insurgents enabled Jeong Bongjung to withstand the first onslaught of the punishers and launch a counterattack with edged weapons. Even Gatling's buckshot could not stop the offensive impulse of the peasant army - the soldiers were crushed and fled, throwing their artillery into position. And Haksun tried to turn the tide of battle to the end, but was killed. Four junior commanders and several dozens of soldiers died with him{20}.

However, *the Tonhaki* also suffered heavy casualties as the punishers' advanced weaponry tore gaping holes in the ranks of the attackers. Only the superior morale of the insurgents allowed them to decide the outcome of the battle in a short hand-to-hand fight. The remnants of the troops were totally demoralised and could not continue pursuing the enemy. A large number of modern weapons - several dozen Mauser rifles, a Krupp field gun and a Gatling cartridge gun with a considerable amount of ammunition{21} fell into the hands of the insurgents.

This played a cruel trick on Jeongjeon as the rebel leadership overestimated their strength. Not fearing the remnants of Hong Gehun's detachment, *the Tonghaks* moved on to Jeonju through the Noryeong Pass and the towns of Cheonp and Wansong.



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Fighting for Jeonju

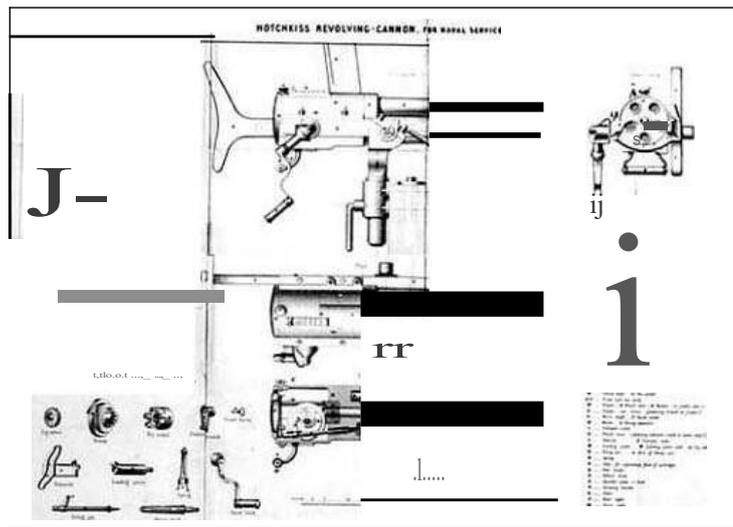
On 28.05.1894 the rebels approached the city. Moonhyun Kim fled to Seoul, leaving the small garrison demoralized. The royal family's archive and portraits of their ancestors were taken from the town and hidden in the mountain stronghold of Wibong.

On 31.05.1894 the rebels took Jeonju. According to some reports, the garrison offered little resistance and fled after a brief exchange of fire. According to others, the garrison quickly seized the gate, fired guns in the air and mingled with traders and porters arriving at the Jeonju Exhibition Grounds. The terrified garrison fled without even trying to resist. The *Tonkhaks*, who entered the city, immediately destroyed the telegraph office and took up defensive positions on the walls, preparing to repel a possible attack by government troops. According to contemporary historians, the army of Cheon Bongjung at that time numbered from 3 to 6 thousand men. The Kabo Saga reports that in those days "the frightening might of the rebels reached the peak of their greatness.

In the meantime, Hong Gehung had his troops in order, reinforcements, including 500 soldiers redeployed from Pyongyang, had arrived and the total number of his detachment had reached about 1,500 with artillery.

On 1.06.1894, the rebels approached Jeonju, but did not dare to attack the city - remembering the fanaticism of *the Tonghaks* and their numerical superiority, Hong Gehun decided to act for sure. In addition, he may have feared that the rebels could use captured artillery - this equalized the firepower of both armies and gave the rebels a serious advantage in morale and numbers. Therefore, Hong Gehun took up positions on the Tagasan (119m above sea level) and Wansan (182m above sea level) mountains to the west and south of the city respectively. Hong Gehun set up his command post in the Hwanghaktea gazebo on Mount Wansan.

The soldiers built fortifications and batteries all day on 2.06.1894, and then began shelling Jeonju from the heights in command over the city. The *Tonghaks* trapped in the city, unfamiliar with the basics of modern warfare, which mandated that the commanding heights above the terrain must be occupied, found themselves trapped. On the one hand, they could not suppress the artillery of the punishers for lack of modernly trained gunners in their ranks and, on the other hand, it was extremely dangerous to remain under prolonged shelling in the city. After a military council, Jeong Bongjun decided to attack the punishers and impose hand-to-hand combat, the only way for the rebels to level the technical superiority of the government troops. According to the Korean feudal historian Maecheon, *the Tonghak* came out of the city through the northern gate and, bypassing the city from the east, attacked the punitive positions in the southern sector of the defense near Hwanghaktea gazebo. Only massive cartridge fire allowed the soldiers to repulse the attack. The first salvo killed over 30 of the finest soldiers, all clad in armour and marching with swords ahead of the insurgent units. After losing over 100 men killed and wounded, *the Tonkhaks* retreated to the fortress. This private success emboldened Hong Gehun's warriors. According to contemporary South Korean historians, the first battle between the punishers and *the Tonhaks* over Jeonju took place on 4.06.1894, while North Korean historians have indicated 3.06.1894.



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CJ4,HLcep OxpаHWWX soi,ic,c. 1890-e.

It was a critical situation for the rebel army - destroying the enemy's artillery positions on Mount Wansan was a vital prerequisite for the successful defence of the fortress. In the meantime, government soldiers on the orders of Hong Gehun did not stop bombing the city. The residential buildings were the first to suffer. The government forces were hesitant to launch an assault. The superior numbers of *the Tonghaks* would negate the technical advantage of the government forces in the beginning of a street battle. Hong Gehun made the only correct decision in this difficult situation - to disturb the enemy by constant shelling and force them to make frontal attacks on the fortified positions of government troops.

On 6.06.1894, Jeong Bongjoong ventured to attack Hong Gehun's positions again. This time more than 5,000 men marched out of the city. According to Jeong Bongjoon's plan, the insurgents were to cross the Jeonjeukheon River and quickly cross the shelled area, come within firing range of a wick gun and volley fire at the punishers, before going into hand-to-hand combat. At about 2 p.m., *the Tonhaks*, who emerged under large yellow banners in two columns from the northern and western gates of the city, launched an attack on the government forces' positions. The attack was initially quite successful and the rebels were able to dislodge the punishers from the positions on Mount Tagasan and part of the positions on Mount Wansan, but the command post at Hwanghakte and the batteries were held. Gatling's cartridges inflicted horrific casualties on the insurgents attacking at full strength. Among the fallen warlords of *the Tonhak* were Kim Sunmyeong, Yi Bohyeon, Song Phangil, who served as the rebel chief of staff, and others. Jeong Bongjoong himself was wounded in the leg and head.

The punishers' fire mowed down the front ranks of the rebels, and their standard-bearers fell. The wounded Kim Sunmyeong was captured and immediately beheaded by Hong Gehun's soldiers, his head suspended from a yellow banner captured from *the Tonhaks*. *The Tonhaks*, demoralized by their immense losses, trembled at the sight of this spectacle and, pursued by government troops, fled into the city, where they locked the gates and stubbornly resisted all attempts by the soldiers to take the city by storm. The battlefield left the bodies of more than 500 insurgents lying on the field of battle, an equal number more fell into the hands of the punishers and were decapitated in full view of the defenders of Cheongju.



Арест выданного одним из руководителей секты командующего Южной армией Чон Бонджуна в декабре 1894 г. Чон Бонджун был казнен после допросов в марте 1895 г.



Голова казненного лидера повстанцев, выставленная на всеобщее обозрение. Обычно атрибутируют, как голову Чон Бонджуна, однако полной уверенности в этом нет – можно принять его и за Чхве Сихёна

Negotiations and truce

The situation was stalemated, with both sides unable to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy. However, the reserves of government troops were stretched to breaking point and the number of *Tonhak* supporters was not diminishing. As a result, a truce was being negotiated between the insurgents and the government. According to "Cabo Sagi", the rebel leaders asked for negotiations no later than 7.06.1894, and Hon Gehun, feeling pity for the ordinary people who had been subjected to violence from both sides, decided to conclude a truce{22}.

However, it seems that the reasons for starting the negotiations were different - the impotence of the Korean government and the inability to build on the success achieved on the battlefield. A high-ranking official, Eom Seyong (1831-1899), came from Seoul to conduct the negotiations. By that time (9.06.1894) the advance of Qing's 1,500,000-strong expeditionary force under the command of Generals Ye Zhichao and Ne Shicheng had landed in Asan. This fact was used by Eom Se-yong to put pressure on the rebels - a royal proclamation read to the rebels indicated that a major clash between Qing and Japanese troops, which had already arrived in the country, was imminent. As a result, a ceasefire agreement was reached. The terms put forward by the rebels were accepted by the government; for their part, *the Tonhaks* undertook to disband the army and leave Cheongju. A royal decree was issued on the occasion. *The Tonhaks* left the city.

On 11.06.1894 at about 9 a.m., Hong Gehong's troops entered Jeonju. The city was badly devastated - the Qing brigadier general Ne Shicheng, who later inspected it, wrote in his diary that he personally distributed the 900 victims to families 1806

The government has also given the army a large amount of silver yuan to rebuild houses that were burned down during the fighting, noting that much of the destruction occurred in the southwestern part of the city, where fighting with the punishers had taken place. A large part of the population has fled. Gyeongju Old Palace, which housed portraits of the founder of the Korean royal dynasty, Lee Seonggyo (1335-1408) and other monarchs, barracks buildings and government offices were also destroyed in the fighting for the city. The invaders captured all the modern artillery pieces they had lost in battle in the city, as well as 24 old-style cannons, over 1,000 rifles and lances, large quantities of ammunition and various implements such as sabers, axes, helmets, armor, bows and arrows. Measures were also taken to increase the guarding of the city and to restore civil administration.

But normalization was slow - even in early July 1894, Ne Shicheng saw houses in Cheongju destroyed and abandoned by the inhabitants, although officials had already returned to their offices. In mid-June 1894, Hong Gehong's capital troops were ordered to leave the city and return to their permanent cantonment site. On June 29, 1894, the Changwiyeong department reported to His Majesty that *Cheon* Gekhng returned from an expedition at the head of his troops. That same day, King Gojong summoned Hong Gehoon for an audience to report on the progress of the war effort. Hon Gehun's mission to Honam was completed.

From a purely military point of view, the Hong Gehun expedition is an example of manoeuvre warfare in mountainous terrain. The difficult conditions of the theatre of operations, lack of food, lack of support from a considerable part of the local population, insufficient qualification of the Korean officers led to a virtual failure of the military aims of the expedition - to suppress and punish, arrest and kill insurgents. A small and ineffective army {23} prevented the Korean government from finally defeating the rebels. King Kojong was forced first to ask his suzerain, Qing China, for military aid, and then to enter into negotiations with the rebel leaders.

Beginning of Japanese-Chinese military intervention in Korea

On 1.06.1894, the Qing government responded to Kojong's request and decided to provide military aid to Korea by recalling Brigadier General Ne Shicheng from an inspection trip to Manchuria. On 3.06.1894, consultations between the Qing and Japanese ambassadors regarding the transfer of troops to Korea were held in Seoul. On 7.06.1894 the Qing ambassador to Japan notified Japanese Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1897) of the dispatch of a Qing expeditionary force to Korea. As early as 9.06.1894 a vanguard of Qing troops consisting of 800 troops of Lutai guards under the command of Ne Shicheng arrived in Korea.

Under the terms of the Treaty of Tianjin in 1885, Japan automatically received the right to introduce its troops into Korea. On the same day, June 9, 1894, Japan sent a detachment of Japanese sailors to Seoul and on June 11, 1894 an expedited landing of a large Japanese landing force began in Incheon.

Intimidated by the actions of its powerful neighbours, the Korean government hastened to declare a total suppression of the uprising on 21.06.1894 and requested the withdrawal of its troops. To avoid an escalation of the conflict the Qings were also prepared to accept this explanation and stopped the build-up of their forces and already planned to withdraw their expeditionary force. However, the Japanese side, referring to the fact that there was no longer any communication with the troops sent by sea, refused to suspend the transfer of troops and declared that the troops to be landed would remain in Korea as long as the situation remained such that the lives of Japanese subjects in Korea might be endangered.

As a result, a small force of around 1,500 men and 8 cannons was concentrated in the area of Asan county seat in Chungcheong-do, in preparation for barring the rebels' way should they proceed to Seoul. Over 10,000 Japanese troops with a large number of artillery forces occupied Incheon, Yeongsan and all key positions in Seoul, effectively taking over the Korean government and neutralising the small Korean government forces of the Seoul garrison.

Li Hongjiang's negotiated withdrawal of both Japanese and Qing troops failed - sensing their superiority due to the faster strategic deployment of their troops in Korea, the Japanese refused to withdraw and offered to establish a joint protectorate over Korea, mutually controlling the Korean government's modernization of the country along the lines of the Meiji reforms. Naturally, such an offer was not acceptable to the Qing Empire. On July 23, 1894 Japanese troops stormed the palace and captured the Korean emperor Kojong. The pro-Japanese puppet government of King Kim Hongjip (1842-1896) quickly established an anti-Chinese alliance with Japan, and his father, Yi Heung (1820-1898), known by his title of Taewonghun, "solicited" the Japanese ambassador Keisuke Otori (1833-1911) to expel the Qing army. The outbreak of war between Japan and China became inevitable. Ne Shicheng estimates that by the last decade of July 1894, some 30,000 Japanese soldiers had already been present in Korea, against 3,000 (including reinforcements sent to the country in the late 20s of July 1894) of the Qing military.



**Ким Хонджип,
глава прояпонского
марионеточного
правительства
в 1894 г.**

Japanese intelligence activities in Korea

The speed with which the Japanese were able to prepare the transfer of a significant number of troops to Korea suggests that the Japanese command was preparing in advance for this landing and was only waiting for the right moment. G.D.Tyagai wrote about the mission of Lieutenant-General Kawakami Soroku (1848-1899), deputy chief of the Japanese general staff, from 9.04.1894 to 27.05.1894, which "decided to use *the Tonhaki*. However, Tokutomi Sohyo points out that Kawakami visited Korea and China, where he stayed for 90 days from April 16 in 1893, not 1894, on business related to purchasing materials for the war industry^{24}. Regarding Kawakami Soroku's whereabouts in the spring of 1894, Tokutomi Sohyo states that Kawakami was in Fukushima from April to June 1894. Another Japanese emissary to Korea, Ijichi Kosuke (1854-1917), was sent to Korea on 20.05.1894^{25}. His assignment stated that Lieutenant Ijichi was instructed to "ascertain the situation [in Korea] at the time of an internal rebellion.

As early as the early seventeenth century, the Tsushima *daimyo* had a permanent representative office in Busan. It is likely that over more than 200 years, despite all the obstacles imposed by the Korean side, certain stable relations between Japanese residents and representatives of local trade circles have developed.

Thus, he was supported in Korea by Japanese Consul in Pusan, Murota Yoshifumi (1847-1938) and Colonel Watanabe Yoshishige (1858-1937), who happened to be in Pusan, while simultaneously maintaining contact with the Japanese interim ambassador to Korea, Sugimura Fukashi (1848-1906). This indicates that Japanese diplomacy and military commanders were preparing in advance to intervene in Korea's domestic affairs. It is likely that it was Lieutenant Ijichi who made direct contact with the Tonhaks.

After the conclusion of an armistice between *the Tonhaks* and the Korean government a delegation of the Japanese chauvinist society Genyosha headed by Uchida Ryohei (1873-1937) and Yoshikura Osei (1868 - ?) visited the *Tonhak* headquarters in Suncheon on 14.06.1894, but the visit was not successful. The Korean rebels, in spite of rumours circulating in the international press, were not creatures of Japanese militaristic circles and would not cooperate with the Japanese, neither officially nor, moreover, unofficially.

Nevertheless, in spite of its unsuccessful contacts with the Tonhaks, the insurgency in Korea played into the hands of Japan's military circles and played a major role in the start of the Sino-Japanese war and in the new stage of the imperialist powers' policy in the Far East.

Thus, the failure of Hong Gehun's military expedition ushered in a dramatic new chapter in Korean history, triggering a major Japanese intervention that radically changed the map of the Far East in the space of just 15 years.

Notes

1. The middle class in feudal Korea, formed from illegitimate children of nobles who were not entitled to nobility. As a rule, they worked as teachers, medics, interpreters, petty administrators, etc.
2. *Changwiyeong* was a Troop Training Department founded in 1888. It had 349 officers and officials, 2,250 soldiers and 1,960 support staff.
3. A high rank in the so-called "new troops" between 1883 and 1894.
4. A military official of rank 2, second class, in charge of the armed forces in a subordinate area; military governor of a province.

5. The name of the Korean Ministry of the Interior from 1885 to 1894.
6. The former Chinese steamer Hanyang, built in 1893, sold to the Korean government in October 1893.
7. Former German steamer "Signal" built in 1878 with a displacement of 476/514 tons. Sold 8.12.1892 to the Korean Government.
8. *Dusi* is an officer rank of the 4th rank, 2nd class, in Qing China.
9. Korean cast copper coin with a square hole. 1,000 copper *mun* was equal to 1 *Jan*.
10. Korean itinerant merchants of the *pobusan* guild, divided into *pusan*, who wore "In 1866, the Pobucheon government was established with a government-appointed royal family member, Yi Geumyeong (1845-1946) as head of the Pobucheon government. In 1866, *Pobucheon* was established, headed by Yi Geumyeong (1845-1912), a government-appointed member of the royal family. In 1883, the *Hesanggongguk* government was established, which included the *Pobucheon* government. Both were affiliated with the military department. In 1885 *Hesanggongguk* was renamed *Sanniguk*, with *the Busan* becoming a "left division" and *the Posan* becoming a "right division." In 1894 the government mobilised over 1,000 *pobusans* to assist provincial troops in suppressing the *Tonhak* rebellion as porters, guides and scouts.
11. A high military rank in the old Korean army.
12. Military rank 2nd class, 2nd rank.
13. Military rank 2 class 9, centurion.
14. Civilian post 2nd class 2nd rank, equivalent to governor.
15. In the Kabo Saga, the name of the town is not mentioned - it says "in this town". Judging from the previous reference to Kobu, it was the inhabitants of this town who suffered atrocities at the hands of the rebels. Other sources also mention the brutality of the insurgents and bandits masquerading as them - for example, the missionary U. Jankin.
16. At present we have no precise data on the type of artillery pieces that were with Hong Gehun's detachment, but it is possible that they were not special mountain guns that were dismantled for transport into pieces weighing about 100kg each, and field guns, which were extremely difficult to move on roads unprepared for cart traffic, which constituted a major part of the road network of old Korea.
17. According to contemporary South Korean researchers, by the time the unit approached Jeonju, it had only 470 men left.
18. The capital department of the old Korean army, established in April 1888 and constituted the base for the deployment of the central division. It consisted of a rear battalion, a right battalion and a coast guard battalion. During the 1894 reforms inspired by the Japanese invaders, the *Tongwiyeong* department was abolished.
19. Consultations were held to give the impression that Qing Chinese troops would arrive in Korea "legally" - at the request of the Korean government.
20. Sources have differed - some report that four junior commanders were wounded, while there is no mention of any soldiers killed, only of artillery abandoned on the battlefield. However, it is likely that government troops suffered substantial casualties.
21. All sources and contemporary scholars are unanimous about the spoils of rebellion.
22. There is no doubt that this is an exaggeration - a truce was equally desirable for both insurgents and government troops.
23. The Japanese troops in Korea were far more effective than the metropolitan Korean forces trained by American instructors and the Japanese officers far more professional. For example, in November 1894, when they acted against the rebels along with the Korean government troops.

Lieutenant Minami Koshiro of the 19th Reserve Independent Infantry Battalion, with a mere 200 Japanese and Korean soldiers, defeated a rebel force five times larger in the battle of Sesongsan on 8.11.1894, inflicting heavy casualties.

24. The purchase of materials for the military industry may have been the official cover for the intelligence activities of the mission, comprising General Kawakami Soroku and Lieutenants Ijichi Kosuke and Tamura Hiroshi.

25. Ichichi Kosuke (also spelled Ichiji in Japanese documents, but known in international historical literature as Ijichi) was a Japanese spy, whose first known assignment was to visit Korea, China and Russia in the spring of 1893, as part of General Kawakami Soroku's entourage.

26. A Japanese nationalist society established in Fukuoka in 1881. Seeking allies for the expansion of Japanese colonial expansion on the mainland, it attempted to communicate with representatives of the Korean and Chinese opposition, including members of secret societies. After the occupation of Japan by US forces, it was dissolved in 1946.

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