

Chinese soldiers, race, and the British Empire

The case of the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry, 1898-1906

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Abstract

This thesis examines racial prejudices among British military officers and colonial officials towards the Chinese soldiers of the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry, in service from 1898-1906. Based on archival studies at The National Archives of the United Kingdom, the thesis focuses on British perceptions of the general Chinese population, the concept of ‘martial races,’ on British views concerning what kind of organisation was best suited for Chinese soldiers, and on perceptions of the soldiers’ ‘trustworthiness.’

In each of this thesis’ subtopics, racial prejudice would be important. However, who expressed racial prejudice and how it was expressed would generally depend on the specific issue at hand. The concept of ‘martial races’ made it important for the British to recruit the ‘correct’ group and organise British-led armed forces in the most suitable way for ‘Oriental races.’ The way ‘martial races’ were divided on ethnic lines in British India was not, however, applicable in China, where groups were instead delineated socially, with different Chinese classes being perceived as more or less suitable for warfare. The key finding of the thesis is that poor peasants and manual workers were generally viewed more positively than the better off and educated classes, who were seen as likely to be corrupt, dishonest, cowardly. However, positive opinions about poorer classes were generally tied to their low status and relationship with Britain and Britons. Additionally, prejudice that was overall only ascribed to the well off and educated classes could also be extended to the rest of the Chinese ‘race,’ showing that this was not a hard divide. While Chinese people were by many considered suitable as soldiers, most Britons did not trust them as officers.

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Introduction

“Since the Boxer riots a prejudice has arisen against the Regiment, solely because they are Chinese, in spite of the loyal service rendered by them at that time.”¹

This quotation was put down by M. Watson, as of December 1901 one of the captains commanding the Chinese Regiment, as a part of a confidential report to the United Kingdom Under Secretary of State for War. The *1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry* was a recently raised military unit from the British leased territory of Weihaiwei, situated on the northern side of the Shandong peninsula in eastern China. Its rank-and-file were largely Chinese peasants recruited from Shandong and the surrounding provinces, and the officers were British. Shortly after the regiment was created, it was put to the test against other Chinese people as a part of the Eight Nation Alliance who invaded northern China to defeat the Qing dynasty forces and the Boxer Movement and relieve the foreign legations under siege in Beijing.

Using ‘native’ conscripts was certainly no new concept in the British Empire, with the most famous example of such a practice being the British Indian Army, although it was much larger and survived for much longer than the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry, which was only active from 1898 until it was disbanded in 1906. Most research on the use of ‘natives’ in the British armed forces thus concerns itself with the Indian Army. Jeffrey Greenhut, writing about the British Indian Army stated that “A British officer might love, even admire, his men, but he never forgot, nor was he allowed to forget by the tight circle of the mess, that he was innately better than his men.”²

This thesis will examine the short life of the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry, from 1898 to 1906, and identify British racial prejudice in relation to the Chinese soldiers of the regiment. This thesis seeks to answer the questions: *What kind of racial prejudices existed among British officers and officials towards the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry during its active period from 1898-1906, and how were they expressed by critics and defenders of the regiment?* This will be analysed within the context of the Boxer Movement, which has been seen as crucial for shaping negative Western stereotypes about Chinese people. Paul Cohen argued that the movement became a “vivid symbol of everything we most detested and feared about China – its hostility

¹ Captain Watson’s portion on a report against accusations, 31st Dec. 1901, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

² Jeffrey Greenhut, “Sahib and Sepoy: an inquiry into the relationship between the British Officers and native soldiers of the British Indian Army,” *Military Affairs* 48, no. 1 (1984). p. 15.

to Christianity, its resistance to modern technology, its fiendish cruelty, its xenophobia, its superstition.”³

The thesis will concern itself with some different, but related topics. It is partly a military history, partly a history of empire, and partly social history with emphasis on race and racism. It is one of the first attempts to focus solely on the experience of the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry. It also forms a part of a relatively small field within imperialism studies in China, that focuses on the experience of military officers, as other works within that field mostly deal with the life and work of merchants and missionaries in the treaty ports. The Chinese Regiment is one of the only British controlled regiments whose soldiers were exclusively Chinese until the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment was raised during the Second World War. While Chinese soldiers had served in other units, such as the Hong Kong and Shanghai Volunteer forces, these units were mixed and not exclusively Chinese as the Chinese Regiment of Weihaiwei was. The Hong Kong regiments who were active simultaneously as the Chinese Regiment were a part of the Indian Army, with Sikh soldiers.⁴

To answer this thesis’ research objective, the source material is primarily acquired from The National Archives of the United Kingdom, in addition to a book written by Allison Arthur Stuart Barnes, another of the captains commanding the Chinese Regiment. Through Captain Barnes’ book and the archival source materials, containing debates, reports, letters, and notes, one will see how both the officers in and outside the regiment, in addition to other state officials talked about the regiment and its soldiers, how they measured its performance as soldiers and their trustworthiness, which would in turn lead to debates about the regiment’s future and organisational structure. These debates, containing much racial prejudice, became important for the decision to disband the regiment. Racial prejudice would, however, show itself in different ways in debates and discussions among officers and officials. At times, the officers of the regiment would directly condemn what they believed to be prejudice against their soldiers because of their race, as Captain Watson does in the introductory quote. At other times, they could invoke racial prejudice themselves to for example explain why Chinese people could not attain officer ranks.

³ Paul A Cohen, *History in three keys: The Boxers as event, experience, and myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). p. 30.

⁴ Arthur Alison Stuart Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment: a record of the operations of the First Chinese Regiment in North China from March to October 1900* (London: G. Richards, 1902). p. 67.

In the archives

To investigate the views and thoughts of British officials and officers involved with the Regiment, I used the most relevant files in the National Archives of the United Kingdom. When planning the archival work, I found the doctoral thesis of Pamela Atwell titled *British Mandarins and Chinese reformers: political, economic, and social change at Weihaiwei, 1898–1938* quite useful as she provided a list of archival material for “the discussion of the controversial Chinese Regiment.”⁵ Her list served as a starting point for my archival work. In these files there are discussions and debates about what is to be done with the regiment, from downsizing to organisational restructuring, to recruiting from different ‘stocks’ of people to debates about desertions. The officers and other colonial officials personally involved with the regiment naturally took part in these debates by providing their perspectives on the regiment and the men within it, in the form of reports and letters about its activities and performance, and by arguing against and defending the regiment from accusations raised by other officers. It becomes apparent that the only voices that have left traces in the archives are those of British officials and officers. Due to both the scope of the thesis, materials in the archives and the author’s own insufficient Chinese language level, the Chinese soldiers must in this thesis be relegated to the role of objects viewed by the officers and officials. Their own voices and ideas about their role, however interesting, must be left to other scholars, if appropriate sources exist.

While in London for the archival studies, I spent one working week at The National Archives, and one day at the British Library. For this thesis, the British Library did not contain much useful material. At the National Archives, some time was spent reading through large books of yearly reports, containing much information that was not at all relevant for the thesis, for example the potential of Weihaiwei as a holiday retreat for Europeans in Asia. Due to the amount of material ordered in the archive, I did not always have the time to thoroughly read all potentially relevant files, so in most cases I resorted to notes and pictures. After the archival work was completed, I removed the pictures of irrelevant files and organised the remainder according to reference codes, also attaching notes to most files which showed what subject was contained in each document.

Finally, after already having visited the National Archives in London and roughly a month before this thesis’ deadline, I found David Silbey’s book *The Boxer Rebellion and the great*

⁵ Pamela Atwell, *British Mandarins and Chinese reformers: Political, economic, and social change at Weihaiwei, 1898-1938* (University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (United Kingdom), 1983). p. 117.

game in China, which contained a few references to archival material concerning the Chinese Regiment. Most relevant were the National Archives collection WO 106/6265 titled “Telegrams: China expedition 1900-1901,” which I had missed while at the National Archives. Silbey referred to some correspondence between Chinese Regiment officers, other officers, and British officials.⁶ Due to the content referred to in Silbey’s book, it does not appear that much information specifically relevant for this thesis’ research questions were missed, though without having personally read the collection it is not possible to make a final judgement. This is an obvious weak point of this thesis, as all potentially relevant material should have been incorporated.

Theory

Robert Bickers, in his 1999 book *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism* pointed out that in the preceding decades, the study of imperialism had fallen out of favour with most of the historiography on Chinese history, after Paul Cohen had called for “China centred” histories to reconstruct the histories in modern China without looking at it through the prisms of Western impact followed by Chinese response, imperialism, or the tradition-modernity approach, as such approaches “introduce Western-centric distortions into our understanding of nineteenth- and twentieth-century China.”⁷ While Bickers argues this was a much needed shift, the result has often been to write Chinese history as if there were no foreign presence, or to caricature that presence. With notable exceptions, Bickers argues, histories written outside the People’s Republic of China have been silent on imperialism, and those in Western countries writing on imperialism, often omit China from their work. Bickers places Britain and British social and intellectual history back into China in the hope that some new insights can be achieved from analysing the coloniser.⁸ I follow Bickers and seek to do the same in this thesis. It is argued by Bickers that domestic class, nationality and gender tensions were exported with settlers, administrators, missionaries (and for this thesis, officers), and these tensions found new modes of expression, especially as they interacted with issues of race, as they underpinned the improvised communities of empire.⁹ As will be shown in this thesis, the officers also brought with them their experience from colonial India, which coloured parts of their interactions with the Chinese Regiment.

⁶ David J Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China: A History* (Hill and Wang, 2012).

⁷ Paul A Cohen, *Discovering history in China: American historical writing on the recent Chinese past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). p. 3.

⁸ Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: community, culture and colonialism 1900-1949*, ed. John M. MacKenzie, *Studies in Imperialism*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999). p. 9.

⁹ Bickers, *Britain in China*. p. 21.

When seeking to interpret the archival documents, I have found Ann Laura Stoler's writing on archives particularly helpful, both her book *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*,¹⁰ the article "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance."¹¹ Stoler leans on Lévi-Strauss' view of anthropology and attends to what is *not* written. Stoler does not mean that focusing on what is not written will uncover the real, hidden message below the surface, but rather she distinguishes between what was unwritten "because it could go without saying and "everyone knew it," what was unwritten because it could not yet be articulated, and what was unwritten because it could not be said."¹² It has been common to read the imperial archives "against the grain" and from the bottom up, trying to uncover the human agency of the colonised. But Stoler posed the question, "How can students of colonialisms so quickly and confidently turn to readings "against the grain" without moving along their grain first?"¹³ As this thesis aims to analyse the imperialists themselves, no attempt is made to uncover the human agency of the colonised. Therefore, Stoler's idea of at first reading with the grain is used when approaching the source material, as "reading only against the grain of the colonial archive bypasses the power in the production of the archive itself."¹⁴ This combines well with Bicker's idea of placing the focus back on the coloniser, and studying Western imperialism itself in China. Additionally, Stoler wrote that "Archives produced as much as they recorded the realities they ostensibly only described."¹⁵ The archival material used in this thesis can also be viewed as a part of knowledge-production for the British on Chinese and other 'Oriental' peoples.

On some words and formulations

Sometimes throughout this thesis, the terms 'the West' and 'Westerners' will be used. This is because these are terms that are used in both archival material from the time of the Chinese Regiment, and in later literature. I specify here that no assumption is being made that the West is a uniform community, culturally, politically, or historically. I do not work with any assumption of an East/West dichotomy. I use 'the West' only when referring to its use in archival documents or in literature in ways that makes it impossible to specify which country is meant, or when I refer to people from multiple 'Western' countries such as Germany, France,

¹⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the archival grain : epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*, Along the Archival Grain, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹¹ Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance," *Archival science* 2 (2002).

¹² Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance." p. 91.

¹³ Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance." p. 100.

¹⁴ Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance." p. 101.

¹⁵ Stoler, "Colonial archives and the arts of governance." p. 103.

England, and the United States. If the subject is the Germans, then the Germans will be mentioned and not ‘the West,’ but if that is not possible ‘the West’ will still be used for lack of a better term. Also, when reading the footnotes closely, one might notice that the rank attached to names sometimes varies. As there is no clear overview of promotions and who held which ranks in the Chinese Regiment, I always write the rank that is also written on the corresponding archival document.

With regard to transliteration of Chinese place names, that practice has changed from this thesis’ timeframe until today. For instance, the province the British territory of Weihaiwei was situated in, today written as Shandong, was at the time transliterated as Shantung, and the former German territory today known as Jiaozhou was then known as Kiaochoo. In all cases, the modern pinyin transliteration will be used, except in quotes where the modern name will be added in brackets. Lastly, the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry has been known under many names, from the Chinese Regiment, the Weihaiwei Regiment, and the Weihaiwei Battalion. In this thesis, I will for simplicity’s sake use ‘the Chinese Regiment.’

State of the research

In this thesis’ literature review, I will now introduce existing scholarship on some key topics related to the thesis, namely research on the Boxer Movement, the Chinese Regiment, the relationship between China, Britain, and the West, the role race played in these relationships, and the use of native military units in the British Empire. The aim of the literature review is to establish the most relevant historical context for answering the research questions provided in the introduction. Additionally, this thesis’ topic will be positioned in relation to already existing research.

The Boxer Movement and the Chinese Regiment

The Boxer Movement is often inaccurately called a rebellion, but it was not a rebellion against the Qing dynasty who ruled China from 1644 to 1912. One of the movement’s main slogans was “Support the Qing, destroy the foreign,”¹⁶ and it was primarily concentrated in the Shandong and Zhili provinces (the province of Zhili no longer exist, while Shandong does, albeit with different borders), and the British leased territory was on the northern side of the Shandong peninsula. The Boxer Movement’s targets were foreigners, representatives of the Powers dominating China, and Christians, both Western and Chinese converts.¹⁷ The

¹⁶ Joseph W Esherick, *The origins of the Boxer Uprising* (University of California Press, 1988). p. xiv.

¹⁷ Ibid

movement had long traditions in local sects, sectarian movements, and popular culture. Despite its local origins, its targets were shaped by imperialism and global developments that manifested themselves regionally.¹⁸ An example is how the household based Chinese cotton industry lost its export markets to foreign competitors after China's 'doors' were forced open, which weakened the economic position of ordinary households and contributed to the anti-foreign sentiment.¹⁹ Economic and political factors were of course important contributors that led to the anti-foreign character of the Boxer Movement, but its initial and most important target was the foreign religion, Christianity.²⁰ Because of the physical threat of the Boxer Movement to Westerners' safety, they became a:

[...] vivid symbol of everything we most detested and feared about China - its hostility to Christianity, its resistance to modern technology, its fiendish cruelty, its xenophobia, its superstition. Arguably, by extension, the Boxers also were emblematic of the range of negative associations Westerners in the twentieth century have had concerning the non-West in general.²¹

The origins, the causes of, and the events of the Boxer Movement have been the subject of extensive research by both Western and Chinese historians. English language works such as *The origins of the Boxer Uprising* by Joseph W. Esherick, *History in three keys – the Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* by Paul A. Cohen, and *The Boxer Uprising – a background study* by Victor Purcell, are all extensive in their explanations of the causes of the Boxer uprising, their links to previous sects and sectarian movements, and the outside forces that shaped them.²² On the Chinese Regiment's experience during the invasion of 1900, the most extensive account is written by one of the Regiment's own captains, A. S. S. Barnes, in the 1902 book *On active service with the Chinese Regiment – a record of operations in North China from March to October 1900*. The book was written with the explicitly stated goal of defending the Regiment from the many unkind things said about it by people with little or no knowledge of the facts on the ground.²³

¹⁸ Esherick, *The origins of the Boxer Uprising*. p. 1.

¹⁹ Esherick, *The origins of the Boxer Uprising*. p. 72.

²⁰ Esherick, *The origins of the Boxer Uprising*. p. 68.

²¹ Cohen, *History in three keys*. p. 15.

²² Esherick, *The origins of the Boxer Uprising*.

Cohen, *History in three keys*.

Victor Purcell, *The Boxer Uprising: A background study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

²³ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xi.

Barnes' book serves multiple purposes for this thesis. Firstly, it acts as an eye witness account, as Barnes commanded one of the units originally sent to Tianjin and then Beijing while other groups were left behind at Weihaiwei, and he personally witnessed many key events that the regiment participated in. At other times, the book serves as a secondary source as Barnes at times writes based on information he has received from other people, or newspapers and other literature, because he was not there himself and this distinction will be clarified in this thesis. Barnes' book will thus be used both as a first-hand and second-hand source, and as literature for this thesis. It shows how the officers of the Chinese Regiment saw a need to defend it from controversial accusations, it can show Barnes', other officers', and other Britons' prejudicial attitudes towards Chinese people at the time, which can then be analysed to help answer the research questions. Arnold Henry Savage Landor, an English painter, anthropologist, and travel-writer also wrote two volumes about the Boxer Movement and the Eight Nation Alliance, which serves a similar purpose as Barnes' book. It can reveal different types of British prejudice towards Chinese people, which can be compared and analysed with what is found in Barnes and the archives.²⁴ In Reginald Johnston's *Lion and Dragon in Northern China* from 1910, four years after the Chinese Regiment was disbanded, the unit is mentioned, which is relevant for this thesis, but it is, however, only a small part of a larger book.²⁵

Academically, there is almost nothing written about the Chinese Regiment in English. While it is mentioned in multiple books on the Eight Nation Alliance and the Boxer Movement, very rarely have scholars focused exclusively on the regiment. Its history is the subject of one chapter in A. G. Harfield's *British and Indian Armies on the China Coast, 1785–1985*, which tells the main story of the regiment, when it was raised and disbanded, the battles it participated in, the gear it used and so on.²⁶ There is, however, more literature in Chinese. Liu Bensen's article "A Study on the Chinese Regiment in Weihaiwei during the Late Qing" was one of the first serious academic inquiries into the Chinese Regiment's experience. Liu Bensen names prior research on the regiment, and as of 2015, when he published his article, there were two Chinese academic works on the Chinese Regiment. The first being *Weihaiwei under the British flag* by Zhang Jianguo and Zhang Junyong of the Weihai city archives, which has one section dedicated to the Chinese Regiment. According to Liu Bensen, this was the first time people in Chinese academic

²⁴ Arnold Henry Savage Landor, *China and the Allies*, vol. 1 (William Heinemann, 1901); Arnold Henry Savage Landor, *China and the Allies*, vol. 2 (William Heinemann, 1901).

²⁵ Reginald Fleming Sir Johnston, *Lion and dragon in northern China* (London, Albemarle Street: John Murray, 1910).

²⁶ Alan Harfield, *British and Indian Armies on the China Coast, 1785-1985* (The Trading Estate, Farnham Surrey: A. and J. Partnership, 1990).

circles actually researched the Chinese Regiment. The second academic work on the Chinese Regiment was Hua Ling's master thesis "The Chinese Legion in the Eight Nation Allied Forces," in which Hua states that the Regiment was a great shame for the Chinese nation.²⁷ The lack of domestic Chinese research on the Chinese Regiment has, according to Liu, been due to a lack of material and the influence of ideology.²⁸ The regiment has been mentioned and written about on various online Chinese forums, but Liu argued that there has been no breakthrough with regards to historical facts in such works. Liu Bensen argued in his own article that in contrast to the regiment's soldiers' reputation in China as consisting of traitors, they were ordinary village youths enlisting primarily for economic reasons.²⁹

China, Britain, and the West

In *China and the West: Society and Culture, 1815–1937*, Jerome Ch'en provides useful historical context and a framework for understanding the intercultural exchanges between the 'Western' and Chinese worlds by contextualizing historical discourses and unpacking the ways in which these discourses shaped mutual perceptions. By tracing the complex web of cultural frameworks that influenced the encounters between these two 'civilizations,' Ch'en's work forms a useful base for this study. He focuses on the level 'below' politics, and his book takes the form of an intellectual history, where he focuses on the views and perceptions people in China and Western countries had of each other. It therefore takes form of the views of the elites and educated citizens, as they were the ones who wrote and read about, and interacted with other parties. It was, in essence, one elite trying to understand another.³⁰

In the first half titled "Agents," he focuses on actors who were important in shaping perceptions within both China and Western countries. According to Ch'en the Qing dynasty government was looked upon by Europeans as corrupt and lethargic as a result of what they called 'oriental despotism,' and the people were regarded as depraved and of low moral standards.³¹ Ch'en argues that Westerners who interacted with Chinese people perceived them as cowardly, dishonest and that they disregarded both the truth and human life itself, and possessed little

²⁷ 花玲, *八国联军中的中国军团——英租时期威海卫华勇营研究* (扬州大学, 2009), 硕士论文.

[Hua Ling, *The Chinese Legion in the Eight-Power Allied Forces -- Research on the Weihaiwei Chinese Regiment in Weihai during the British Lease Period* (Yangzhou University, 2009), Master Thesis.]

²⁸ 劉本森, "清末威海衛華勇營研究, 1899-1906," *近代史研究所集刊*, no. 87 (2015).

[Liu Bensen, *Research on Weihaiwei Chinese Regiment in Weihai in the Late Qing Dynasty, 1899-1906*, *Journal of the Institute of Modern History*, no. 87 (2015).]

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West: society and culture, 1815-1937*, vol. 2 (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 41

³¹ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 45.

capacity for original genius.³² Ch'en holds that throughout the period under investigation in his book, most Europeans would also, despite these negative views, be unable to ignore the qualities of the Chinese peasant. "(...) the simple and gracious, dignified and practical, industrious and frugal peasant was China's only hope for survival and revival."³³ Ch'en then roughly divides Westerners' thoughts about what should be done with the Chinese into three categories. Some groups, like the missionaries, wanted to reform them with Western values and Christianity. Others would be content to treat them with contempt, while others still would want to "wipe the race from the face of the earth."³⁴ It is also worthwhile to point out that, as Ch'en states, until the victory of the People's Liberation Army in 1949, no other event in China than the Boxer Movement consumed more Western ink, which shows that the events of 1900 carried great weight and emotion.³⁵

As this thesis' main subject is British views of Chinese people, George Forman's book *China and the Victorian Imagination – Empires Entwined* is important.³⁶ Forman's book is a work on British literary culture and imperialism, how the British thought about themselves and China in relation to each other, and he uses this British literary production as a case study for patterns in Britain's interaction with other parts of the world. Forman makes the point that Britons in China lived within a context where they themselves were sometimes framed as barbarians, and that they were also acutely aware of this fact, which in this thesis' source material is exemplified by Barnes referring to himself and his fellow Britons as barbarians and foreign devils.³⁷

Of particular use for this thesis are the two chapters concerning the Boxer Movement and Asian invasion novels. Forman's chapter concerning the Boxer Movement begins with a description of a British produced short film titled "Beheading of a Chinese Boxer," where a Boxer 'rebel' is punished for his crimes.³⁸ Just as the Chinese Regiment went to war against other Chinese people while being under British command, the headsmen in this short film were also Chinese performing their duties under Western supervision.

Forman also draws a parallel between what was known as the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857 and subsequent siege of Lucknow to the siege of the Legations in Beijing in 1900, and the literature

³² Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. pp. 45-46.

³³ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 47.

³⁴ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 45.

³⁵ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 40.

³⁶ Ross G Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination: empires entwined*, ed. Gillian Beer, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³⁷ Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. p. 6.

Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 2.

³⁸ Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. p. 98.

produced following both events.³⁹ During the ‘Indian Mutiny,’ also known as both a rebellion and a war of independence, Indian soldiers fought against British troops and their local allies, besieged the British residency in Lucknow, but were eventually defeated by British forces who managed to relieve those inside the residency. The similarity to the Qing and Boxer siege of the foreign legations in Beijing was very clear for the British at the time. Another parallel Forman pointed out that may be of use for this thesis is between the soldiers of the Chinese Regiment and the Indian soldiers rebelling against the British nearly 50 years earlier.

Sascha Auerbach, in her book titled *Race, Law, and “The Chinese Puzzle” in Imperial Britain*, researched anti-Chinese sentiment, labour, and immigration in the British Empire, and argues that there was no singular image of ‘the Chinese’ in Victorian Britain.

(...) nor was there an undifferentiated response to Chinese labor and residency in Britain and the empire. The development of Anglo-Chinese relations and the defining of race as a category itself in Britain and the empire were fundamentally fragmented, contested, unstable, and incomplete processes.⁴⁰

For example, the reactions to Chinese labour immigration in Australia differed from reactions to immigration in Britain, but would go on to shape perceptions of Chinese people both in British South Africa and Britain itself. In Australia, Auerbach writes, negative stereotypes commanded a broad consensus, primarily among the working classes, but also in liberal and radical groups, as well as amongst journalists.⁴¹ At the time of the Boxer Movement, this process in which different stereotypes of Chinese people were vying for primacy was still ongoing, and the movement was important in this process. Auerbach shows how, despite previous portrayals of Chinese men as violent and chronic opium smokers, the Chinese were not, as of the late 1800s, perceived as a serious threat to white Australians. On the contrary, Britain’s victories over the Qing in the Opium wars and over the Boxer Movement and gaining its treaty ports led the British to at times depict the Chinese as comical and ineffectual, while also reducing ‘the Chinese,’ with their linguistic and cultural differences, into an undifferentiated mass.⁴²

³⁹ Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. pp. 98-102.

⁴⁰ Sascha Auerbach, *Race, law, and "the Chinese puzzle" in imperial Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009). p. 4.

⁴¹ Auerbach, *Race, law, and "the Chinese puzzle" in imperial Britain*. p. 19.

⁴² Auerbach, *Race, law, and "the Chinese puzzle" in imperial Britain*. p. 16.

Following Chinese labour migration to Australia, two main arguments about the new inhabitants arose, the first viewing them as fundamentally incompatible with the white majority, and the second viewing them as the vanguard of a limitless population. But as late as 1912 there was still no uniform and negative consensus on Chinese immigrants in Britain itself, which shows that for this thesis' timeframe, stereotypes and prejudice towards Chinese people in the British Empire varied depending on location and timeframe and was undergoing changes. It is important to remember such potential spatial and temporal variations, and that prejudice against immigrants from China and those Chinese that remained in their country of origin may differ radically. This makes it important to not reduce the prejudice that is found into *the* British prejudice. Additionally, it highlights Stoler's points that archives are sites of knowledge production. The archival material used in this thesis contained much information about how 'the Chinese' were, what traits they held, how they were to rule and so on, and the material used is viewed as a part of this process of producing knowledge on the Chinese people.

On native military units

Due to the British Indian Army being one of the most researched colonial military units serving European empires, this thesis relies on research of that army. Kaushik Roy researched the Indian Army in the Second World War and tackled the soldiers' combat motivation and the British officers' interaction with the soldiers, with specific focus on discipline and loyalty. Roy calls the Indian Army a quasi-mercenary professional army, because "compared to the national armies, tangible incentives probably played a more important role in ensuring the loyalty of Indian soldiers."⁴³ Roy also names unit pride, loyalty to their comrades, concern for their honour, and personalised loyalty bonds with their officers as important factors that made them willing to face battle.⁴⁴ Roy focused on the British elites' concern about Indian loyalty and whether this loyalty would be damaged during demobilisation. Concerns about loyalty and the regiment's trustworthiness is found in the source material before the Chinese Regiment was disbanded in 1906, and Johnston in *Lion and Dragon* argued that the potential conflicting loyalty of the Chinese soldiers made the decision to disband the regiment in 1906 a correct decision.⁴⁵ It remains important to again note that, in contrast to Roy, who uses Indian language sources, this thesis cannot concern itself with what the Chinese soldiers of the regiment thought

⁴³ Kaushik Roy, "Military loyalty in the colonial context: A case study of the Indian army during World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 2 (2009). p. 501.

⁴⁴ Roy, "Military loyalty in the colonial context." p. 527-528.

⁴⁵ Johnston, *Lion and dragon in northern China*. p. 84.

of their own situation and conflicting bonds of loyalty. I will solely concern myself with what the British officers and officials believed about their soldiers.

Jeffrey Greenhut was among the first to focus on the Indian Army and ‘martial races,’ and holds a very critical view of British officers in the Indian Army. They were according to Greenhut extraordinarily conservative, class conscious, badly trained for anything other than frontier skirmishing and racist to the core.⁴⁶ Greenhut argued that it was beyond doubt that the British officers believed themselves above their soldiers. He named the British policies towards the Indian soldiers after the 1857 rebellion as shaped by a racist ideology influenced by both Social Darwinism and the Indian caste system. Greenhut states that the concept of martial races made educated Indians into cowards, and those more ‘backward’ and uneducated were seen as brave.⁴⁷ Additionally, for the small community of British officers, the British institutions they created in the midst of an Indian majority were very important for their daily lives.⁴⁸

Gavin Rand and Kim A. Wagner also researched British recruitment of ‘martial races.’ Through the latter half of the 19th century, discourses concerning indigenous soldiers became more and more racialised, and led the British to categorise various peoples of the Indian subcontinent as more or less suited for warfare.⁴⁹ Subsequently, the British Indian Army would recruit more and more Punjabi Sikhs, Muslims from north-western regions in British India, and perhaps most famously Nepalese Gurkhas, who to this day are still being recruited for service in the British armed forces.⁵⁰ However, they argue that a direct link between the 1857 rebellion and a “coherent, instrumentalized ideology of ‘martial races’ is ultimately unsustainable.”⁵¹ The increased racialisation of the discourse around soldiering in India should according to Rand and Wagner not obscure that martial-race recruitment was “contested and unstable across the period.”⁵² The debates and disagreements that will be shown throughout this thesis can be seen as a part of this contested and unstable process, and the martial race concept did not lead to a simple consensus among the British on Chinese people as soldiers.

⁴⁶ Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 15.

⁴⁷ Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 16.

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ Gavin Rand and Kim A Wagner, "Recruiting the ‘martial races’: identities and military service in colonial India," *Patterns of Prejudice* 46, no. 3-4 (2012). 232.

⁵⁰ Rand and Wagner, "Recruiting the 'martial races'." p. 233.

⁵¹ Rand and Wagner, "Recruiting the 'martial races'." p. 253.

⁵² *ibid*

Thesis structure

To answer the thesis' research questions, it is organised into five chapters. The first chapter will explain the key events the regiment participated in from early 1900 and as a part of the Eight Nation Alliance and introduce the controversies surrounding it. Through these events, it will be possible to analyse racial prejudice among officers and officials towards the Chinese Regiment. Before moving on to racial prejudice specifically concerning the Chinese Regiment, the second chapter will focus on analysing racial prejudice among officers and officials towards Chinese people in general, which will help provide a fuller analysis when looking specifically at the regiment in the final three chapters. The third chapter deals with racial prejudice and the Chinese soldiers' perceived 'martial qualities,' in which the concept of martial races played a major role. The fourth chapter will look at the debates concerning how the regiment should be organised, the potential for Chinese people to serve as officers, and how racial prejudice played a role in these debates, before the fifth and final chapter looks at the Chinese soldiers' perceived trustworthiness and racial prejudice. Through this divide into categories, where the focus is on martial qualities, trustworthiness, the traits held by the Chinese population in general, and which system of organisation would be best suited for the Chinese Regiment, one has four varied approaches to uncover and analyse racial prejudice which will provide a more complete answer to this thesis' research questions.

Chapter 1: Introducing the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first providing an overview of the main events the regiment participated in from its raising to the end of the Eight Nation Alliance's invasion, and the second introducing the controversy surrounding the regiment, which became crucial for many disagreements and debates concerning it. This will provide the necessary context for uncovering potential racial prejudice when officers and officials discuss the Chinese Regiment in the subsequent chapters.

A background for the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry

The Chinese Regiment was founded on the 28th of December 1898, shortly after the area around Weihaiwei on the Shandong peninsula was leased to the British Empire.⁵³ The stated reason for Britain commencing the lease of Weihaiwei was to act as a counterbalance to Russian influence in northern China, after they had acquired Port Arthur (today known as Lüshunkou) on the

⁵³ Army Order showing that the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry has been raised, 28th Dec. 1898, WO 32/6793, The National Archives (TNA), London.

Liaodong peninsula from the Qing.⁵⁴ In the spring of 1900, but prior to the outbreak of the Boxer Movement itself, there were already some violent battles between the villagers of the new British territory and the new Chinese Regiment. It was written in a newspaper at the time that a reason for this unrest was a new tax imposed by the British that did not harmonise with Chinese customs.⁵⁵ While a joint British-Qing commission was working to delimit the territory's border, there were reports that unrest could potentially break out, and the Qing group withdrew from the commission. The British continued on their own, and this commission was attacked by the local population who managed to injure two Chinese soldiers and some British officers before they were relieved by another group from the Chinese Regiment. Another time, A. A. S. Barnes states there were about 3000 villagers attacking them, of which 20 were killed, while none in the Chinese Regiment were injured. In both of these battles, Barnes states that about 20 villagers were killed, while it was not possible to confirm the number who were injured. The soldiers of the regiment were lastly urged to desert their British officers, but according to Barnes "[...] not one man was enticed away by this plea, although many came to their officers to know if they could rely on the long arm of England seeing them righted in the case any of these threatened misfortunes overtook their homes."⁵⁶

After the foreign legations in Beijing were besieged by Qing and Boxer forces, Major General and Commissioner at Weihaiwei, Dorward, received a request for soldiers to participate in the invasion to relieve the foreign legations, which first involved taking the city of Tianjin.⁵⁷ 200 men of the Chinese Regiment were sent towards Tianjin, which at the time was under much pressure by Qing forces. Tianjin was eventually taken, and subsequently more troops from the eight countries participating in this invasion arrived, including a large contingent from the British Indian Army.⁵⁸ Due to the now much larger international force being available, the regiment's responsibilities were downgraded until it was decided that 100 men should participate in the army moving towards Beijing.⁵⁹ Barnes was one of the officers who commanded this force, and in total Barnes states that the Chinese Regiment participated in more expeditions and battles than any other corps in 1900.⁶⁰ After Beijing was taken and the Qing

⁵⁴ Atwell, *British Mandarins and Chinese reformers: Political, economic, and social change at Weihaiwei, 1898-1938*. p. 26.

⁵⁵ Newspaper cutting from an unnamed newspaper, no author, 8th May. 1900, CO 521/1, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁵⁶ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 1-22.

⁵⁷ Dorward to Secretary of State for War, 20th June 1900, CO 521/1, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁵⁸ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. pp. 107-109.

⁵⁹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 108.

⁶⁰ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xiii.

court had fled, it was eventually decided that the international force should march through the imperial palace, and the Chinese Regiment participated in this march, which was the first time European troops had ever entered the Chinese emperor's palace.⁶¹

The Han ethnic group was and still is the majority ethnic group in Shandong, today making up about 99% of the Shandong population, and most of the Chinese Regiment's initial recruits were drawn from in and around the British territory. While no ethnic background is provided for the soldiers, it is relatively safe to assume they were primarily Han Chinese as most soldiers were recruited from the surrounding area.⁶² China's emperors at the time were ethnically Manchu, a people from the region roughly corresponding to modern China's three north-eastern provinces, who had conquered China from the collapsing Ming dynasty in the 1600s and established the Qing capital in Beijing in 1644. With the British lease of Weihaiwei, the Han Chinese of the territory would go from the rule of Manchu emperors to the British Empire. However, the Manchu people had at the time gone through a process of Sinicization, or acculturation into Chinese culture. While there have been debates regarding the correctness and extent of Sinicization,⁶³ for this thesis the key lies with the British point of view. The Han-Manchu distinction was not regarded as crucial in their relationship. When discussing this relationship between the soldiers of the regiment and the Qing imperial family, the British presented the Qing Emperor as *their* (the Chinese's) *Emperor*, meaning that many British people did not perceive the Qing to be foreigners to the general Han-Chinese populace, or at least saw this difference as unimportant.⁶⁴

With regards to Chinese Christians and the Chinese Regiment, one might think that due to the Chinese Christians being heavily targeted by the Boxers, there may have been Chinese Christians who enlisted with the regiment, or that the officers and officials would write about that group. In this thesis' source material, that is in fact not the case. There is never a reference to Chinese Christians enlisting with the regiment, and they are in general barely mentioned in the archival material. This does not necessarily mean that there were no Chinese Christians with the regiment, but due to the lack of references to such a fact, the number could hardly have been very large. Keeping Stoler's idea of the 'unwritten because everyone knew it' in mind, that Chinese Christians are mentioned to such a small extent in this thesis' source material could be

⁶¹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 145.

⁶² Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce to Commissioner Lockhart on local recruitment, 4th Oct. 1904, CO 873/142, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁶³ Xiaowei Zheng, "Sinicization vs. Manchuness: The Success of Manchu Rule," 2010, <https://ucsdmodernchinesehistory.wordpress.com/2010/05/01/1039/>. For a summary on the Sinicization debate.

⁶⁴ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xi.

because it mostly involved officers and officials who perhaps saw Chinese Christians more as the responsibility of missionaries rather than their own, thus regarding it as unnecessary to give them much thought.

Japan too participated in the Eight Nation Alliance and provided the largest contingent of troops. As has been shown in among others Forman's research, Asian invasion novels often had half-Chinese half-Japanese protagonists, and Japanese and Chinese people were often shown as working together to overthrow British and Western power, joining forces to invade Australia, the western United States, and Europe.⁶⁵ The fact that this thesis will investigate anti-Chinese prejudice, while the Japanese played such an important role in defeating the Boxer Movement and Qing forces, while some simultaneously imagined them as a threat that could work together with China, poses the question of how the Japanese were imagined, on their own and compared with the Chinese. However, due to limitations in the archival material this discussion will not be seen in this thesis. Japanese people are hardly mentioned in the archival material and while there are a couple of references in Barnes' book, for instance that the Chinese and Japanese were "kin," and that dealings with Japanese people were always systematic,⁶⁶ that is hardly enough to base any further analysis on, and such a comparison will have to be left to other scholars.

Due to the many controversies and debates surrounding the regiment, which will be introduced shortly, it was decided to disband the unit in 1902.⁶⁷ This decision was, however, modified after a new Commissioner, Mr James Stewart Lockhart, arrived at Weihaiwei and recommended that the regiment be kept active. Instead of disbanding, the number of soldiers and officers were reduced from roughly 1300 to 585, which remained the case until it was finally disbanded in 1906, meaning the Chinese Regiment was only active for close to eight years.⁶⁸

Introducing the controversy surrounding the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry

Following the war of the Eight Nation Alliance, the Chinese Regiment would become a controversial unit among British officers and government officials. This controversy first appeared in official papers in the form of a report from Major General O'Moore Creagh, who first commanded the Indian contingent in the Eight Nation Alliance and later became the

⁶⁵ Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. p. 27.

⁶⁶ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. pp. 117 and 188.

⁶⁷ The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir. E. Satow, 6th April 1902, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁶⁸ Report on Weihaiwei for the year 1906 by James Stewart Lockhart, 14th May. 1907, CO 1071/410, The National Archives (TNA), London.

commanding officer in charge of the entire British force in north China. Creagh's report to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, contained information that the Qing troops had modern artillery and plenty of ammunition, and that "requisite officers have been trained in the Chinese Regiments at Wei-Hai-Wei."⁶⁹ This "requisite" was later corrected by Creagh to "some of the requisite."⁷⁰ The Secretary of State asked for clarification, and whether it was "a fact that many Chinamen fit to command troops have served in, and left, Chinese Regiment?"⁷¹ To this question, Creagh replied that it is a fact that the officer commanding Ma Yukun's artillery and other men in the force were previously in the Chinese Regiment, that the amount of deserters from the regiment was very large, and that he had reports from Chinese people that it is regarded as a good school of instruction for them.⁷² Ma Yukun was a Qing general who commanded troops against the British Empire and the Eight Nation Alliance.

Having read A. A. S. Barnes' book before delving into the archives, I was first surprised by these statements. Barnes had never mentioned either the very large number of desertions Creagh now pointed out, nor the apparent fact that men previously in the Chinese Regiment were now in the Chinese army, even commanding troops as officers themselves. Referring back to Stoler's idea of the unwritten, these mass desertions can be regarded as 'unwritten because it could not be said.' No matter the reasons Barnes had to explain these desertions, which will be thoroughly shown in chapter five, admitting to mass desertions in a book intended to defend the regiment would hardly be conducive to his argument. This initial accusation from Creagh would grow to become a very important one for the officers, soldiers, and the future of the regiment.

Additionally, Creagh would forward to London a report which contained an extract from the diary of an unnamed British railway staff officer in Beijing, dated November 26th, 1901. This officer had been informed that the large number of desertions from the Chinese Regiment was due to three principal factors: (1) that three years (the period soldiers in the Chinese Regiment were enlisted for) is a long time to serve, (2) the English officers beat and treated the soldiers badly, and (3) some system of squeezing (corruption) that was going on.⁷³ Additionally, a European interpreter had got the same statements confirmed through three Chinese non-

⁶⁹ Major-General Creagh to Lord G. Hamilton, 29th Sep. 1901, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷⁰ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷¹ Secretary of State to General Officer commanding China Expedition, Major-General Creagh, 7th Oct. 1901, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷² Major General Creagh to Secretary of State, 9th Oct 1901, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷³ Extract from the Diary of the Railway Staff Officer, Acting Commissioner Cowan to Joseph Chamberlain, 6th March 1902, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

commissioned officers (NCO's) of Ma Yukun's army, also adding that men who are killed in action were not buried, and their families did not receive sufficient compensation. The interpreter added that those who have served in the Chinese Regiment and joined Yuan Shikai's and Ma Yukun's armies received higher pay "than the ordinary sepoy" and did a "good bit of instruction."⁷⁴ The first accusations mentioned here, specifically those concerning the treatment the Chinese soldiers supposedly received from their officers, cannot be either confirmed nor denied based on the archival material. The Chinese Regiment's officers naturally deny them, but it is not possible to go deeper and to arrive at the facts of the matter. They are still important for this thesis, as they triggered many debates and disagreements in which racial prejudice played important roles.

These accusations, first put forward by Major General Creagh, would reach the highest level of government when Joseph Chamberlain, at the time Secretary of State for the Colonies, not long after asked for a report from the Chinese Regiment's Major General Dorward on this issue of desertions.⁷⁵ Creagh himself would send a report to Lord George Hamilton concerning the number of deserters and time of desertion from the Chinese Regiment. The report stated that there were 71, 428, and 297 deserters from the Chinese Regiment in 1899, 1900, and 1901 respectively, a quite substantial number considering the regiment at its largest, after the Boxer Movement, was around 1300 strong.⁷⁶ The accusations would also reach the Directorate for Mobilisation and Military Intelligence (DMMI), and led to a debate that involved the Foreign, Colonial, and War offices where the accusations became important for a debate surrounding the regiment's future, and whether it would be disbanded or not.⁷⁷

Additionally, Barnes writes in such a way that implies that there were other accusations and rumours about the regiment, for example that the Chinese Regiment started a fire in Tianjin.⁷⁸ Barnes argued that many false rumours must have originated from the foreign people in Tianjin who according to Barnes had very negative feelings towards the Chinese race after being forced

⁷⁴ Extract from the Diary of the Railway Staff Officer, Acting Commissioner Cowan to Joseph Chamberlain, 6th March 1902, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷⁵ Joseph Chamberlain to Commissioner Sir. A. F. Dorward, no. 59A, 1901, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷⁶ General officer commanding the British Contingent (Major General Creagh) to the Secretary of State for India, 22nd November 1901, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷⁷ Directorate of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence internal communication, William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 20th March 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁷⁸ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 38.

to hide in cellars during the siege,⁷⁹ but except for starting a fire, other specific rumours are not mentioned by Barnes.

Chapter 2: The British and Chinese at the turn of the 19th century

This chapter will discuss what kind of racial prejudice existed towards Chinese people in general among colonial officials and civil servants at Weihaiwei. This is done to arrive at a more complete analysis of racial prejudice towards the Chinese soldiers of the regiment, as it will allow for comparison and analysis with racial prejudice directed at the soldiers of the regiment itself. Additionally, it provides the views of colonial officials who did not comment on the Chinese Regiment as often as officers did.

Colonial officials at Weihaiwei

Mr. James Stewart Lockhart, a colonial official and sinologist, was the longest serving Commissioner at Weihaiwei, holding that position from 1902 when administration of that area was transferred from the War Office to the Colonial Office, up until 1921.⁸⁰ Through his yearly reports and other correspondence with British authorities, he provided much information about Weihaiwei and his opinions on both small and large matters. When describing the local Chinese population, their docile, law abiding, and orderly character is often highlighted,⁸¹ which Auerbach mentioned as traits often ascribed to Chinese coolies throughout the empire.⁸² The term ‘coolie’ originally referred to indentured labourers, but its meaning would develop and was used for varied types of Asian and Chinese labourers, some indentured, most not.⁸³ In this thesis’ source material, the term ‘coolie’ is mostly used to describe Chinese labourers who were hired and paid for many types of physical work. Comments on the working Chinese’s hardworking character is found throughout the source material, for example when Captain Barnes of the Chinese Regiment commented on the great value of the Chinese coolies, describing them as among the best in the world, or when Lockhart noted the “cheery disposition” and “untiring nature” of the crew on a boat he was travelling in through Shandong.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 30.

⁸⁰ Yearly colonial reports are found at the United Kingdom National Archives “CO 1071/410.”

⁸¹ For example in yearly reports for 1902, 1903, and 1903, CO 1071/410, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁸² Auerbach, *Race, law, and "the Chinese puzzle" in imperial Britain*. p. 18.

⁸³ Auerbach, *Race, law, and "the Chinese puzzle" in imperial Britain*. p. 18.

⁸⁴ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 120.

Report of a journey in the province of Shantung by Lockhart, Aug. 1903, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

While being hardworking, cheerful, and orderly are relatively positive traits, it is the main argument here that such traits are all tied to the Chinese relationship with Britain, the West, and the low-class status of the peasants and coolies. By being hardworking, they could perform many useful jobs for the British Empire, and by being cheerful, orderly and law abiding they would not cause the colonial administration any problems. Notably, the Chinese people were not perceived to be in possession of other positive traits independently of this relationship, such as for example a talent for art, innovative ability, or literature. In contrast to such positive traits given to the Chinese people, Britons would at times talk about their own race, and believed that it possessed “the spirit of enterprise.”⁸⁵ No such trait is ever ascribed to the Chinese, which is similar to what the American Captain S. Shaw, quoted by Jerome Ch'en, stated half a century earlier. The Chinese could “imitate most of the fine arts, [but] do not possess any large portion of original genius.”⁸⁶ After all, the Chinese civilisation had, according to the author Julian Croskey, writing at the time of the Boxer Movement, “endured without change for over 2,000 years.”⁸⁷ The perceived superiority of British and Western civilisation made it impossible to view the Chinese people of the late 19th century and their ‘lethargic’ civilisation as innovators or creators.

Lockhart compared these ‘positive’ traits of being orderly and docile to the more unfavourable treatment Westerners received at the hand of the southern Chinese, which he had experience with from his time in Hong Kong before he came to Weihaiwei. His experience at Weihaiwei led him to believe that, “Regarded impartially from an administrative point of view, the Chinaman is a most desirable person to govern, for being a great believer in home rule, his chief desire is to be left alone to govern himself and his family,”⁸⁸ which shows again that traits were often interpreted in relation to their respective nations and classes.⁸⁹ Reginald Johnston, working with law and justice, also saw the local population around Weihaiwei as remarkably well disposed to the British government, which in Johnston’s view, they would be towards any government that treated them as fairly as the British did.⁹⁰ Lockhart wrote that the fact that it had proven possible to govern 150.000 Chinese at Weihaiwei with the small staff they had at hand demonstrated clearly that “the Chinaman in this part of the world, at any rate, is not as

⁸⁵ Yearly report written by Lockhart, 16th April 1904, CO 873/99, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁸⁶ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 46.

⁸⁷ Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. p. 99.

⁸⁸ Yearly report for 1904 written by Lockhart, 15th April 1905, CO 1071/410, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁸⁹ Yearly report written by Lockhart, 15th April 1903, CO 873/163, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁹⁰ Report written by Reginald Johnston, undated, approx. 1904, CO 873/163, The National Archives (TNA), London.

black as he is painted by those who [have] no real knowledge or experience of him.”⁹¹ In many ways, Lockhart would argue, the Chinese is superior to his critics, who “irresponsibly describe him in terms which might be amusing to those who do know him if they were not so unjust and abusive.”⁹²

This shows that Lockhart, a person who had long exposure and experience with Chinese people, China, and Chinese languages, was aware of very negative prejudice being said and written about them, which he regarded as excessively negative and unfair. Lockhart would at times try to distance himself from this prejudice and devote several paragraphs to defend them from what he saw as prejudice. Additionally, in contrast to Auerbach’s point that ‘the Chinese’ were often reduced into a homogenous mass, we can see that Lockhart would differentiate between Chinese people from different locations, and at times saw them possessing different traits. It is important to note, however, that despite the difference between northern and southern Chinese Lockhart mentioned, there are no references to different ethnicities and Han-Chinese subgroups within China, such as the Hakka and Hokkien groups. In contrast to the British Indian Army, where Sikhs and Gurkhas are mentioned as separate groups first, the closest one gets to the mentioning of different Chinese ethnic groups in the source material are notes to “Chinese Mohammedans.”⁹³ This shows that despite linguistic differences, the ethnic groups we today refer to as Han and the various Han Chinese subgroups were all thought of as Chinese, while for instance Sikhs and Gurkhas were primarily referred to by belonging to those more specific groups.

In contrast to the more favourable traits Lockhart ascribes to the working Chinese, Auerbach argues that the second typical image British people had of the Chinese was that of the cunning, heathen, sly figure of low morality, which is also similar to Jerome Ch’en’s description of Westerners views of the Chinese people as a dishonest and depraved race, with no regard for human life.⁹⁴ This image, though predating the Boxer Movement, was boosted by it.⁹⁵ Auerbach’s second type of British perception of the Chinese also appeared in colonial reports at Weihaiwei. For example, R. Walter, Lockhart’s secretary, wrote that they had been informed of rumours concerning corruption in the local staff at Weihaiwei, and therefore had to hire new

⁹¹ Yearly report for 1904 written by Lockhart, 15th April 1905, CO 1071/410, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ From Lt. Colonel Bruce the Commissioner at Weihaiwei, 27th Dec. 1904, CO 873/142, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁹⁴ Ch’en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 44-45.

⁹⁵ Auerbach, *Race, law, and "the Chinese puzzle" in imperial Britain*. p. 18.

writers and fire the clerk Mr. Hu, because his “(...) views as regards the lucrative opportunities of his post were discovered to be somewhat too Chinese in character to conform with British ideas of justice.”⁹⁶ Walter held the view that a “certain amount of corruption is almost inevitable in a Chinese office staff, impregnated as they are with Chinese ideas as to the legitimacy of “squeeze”.”⁹⁷

This shows that corruption was regarded as a major problem, and that it was intrinsically tied to the Chinese people, due to inevitability of corruption occurring with a Chinese staff. The issues of ‘squeeze’ and dishonesty were among the most important issues British people saw in their interactions with Chinese people and will be a recurring subject in subsequent chapters.

A subject of the report for 1903 was the coronation of King Edward VII the year before, and the corresponding ceremony held at Weihaiwei at that time (pictured below).⁹⁸ Lockhart described the good feeling existing between the British and Chinese of the territory, and how even the people living in the walled city of Weihaiwei (within the British territory, but still governed by the Qing) participated in the coronation ceremony. Chinese local leaders requested to ‘Kowtow,’ or kneel with one’s head touching the ground, in front of embroidered scrolls they had brought with them for the coronation, and the request was granted. This, Lockhart wrote, “is the most striking testimony of respect for a foreign ruler on the part of the Chinese that I have ever witnessed.”⁹⁹



⁹⁶ Annual report of the secretary to government by R. Walter, 1st March 1903, CO 1071/410, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁸ General views to accompany the annual report for 1903, 1903, CO 1069/431, The National Archives (TNA), London.

⁹⁹ Weihaiwei Commissioner’s files. General report for 1902, undated. Approx. 1903, CO 873/65. The National Archives (TNA), London.

The word used here by Lockhart, respect, is very important. Within the positives Lockhart and Johnston saw in the Chinese inhabitants of the territory, the vertical relationship between themselves and the Chinese is often highlighted, and when countering statements that had ‘painted the Chinese black,’ he names traits that show the Chinese around Weihaiwei as good subjects, docile and orderly. Their respect and submission for Britain was highlighted, which as mentioned was believed to be a natural reaction because the British Empire treated the local populace fairly. Despite the knowledge of other anti-Chinese prejudice, and the belief that this prejudice was at times too negative, unfair, and untrue, they still held prejudicial opinions about what traits a Chinese person usually possessed. When positive traits were mentioned, however, these were traits that highlighted respect and humility in the face of Britain. Lockhart had also emphasized in one of his many reports that the Chinese governor of Shandong had stated that he wanted to “show his appreciation for the British nation, and to let the populace see the right way to treat Europeans.”¹⁰⁰ The positive traits Lockhart highlights can be tied to what Jerome Ch’en wrote of European views of the Chinese, especially from the 1920s to 1940s. The Chinese that Western businessmen and diplomats had contact with were liked because they were friendly and respected white people.¹⁰¹ This again exemplifies the sort of positive Chinese traits Lockhart mentioned, being tied to a low status as workers or attitude in the face of Britain and Westerners, and rarely independently of this relationship possessing positive traits.

While these priorly mentioned examples were traits and characteristics believed to be held by Chinese people, Britons also had ideas about China as a massive country, and in possession of a massive population. George Forman, in *China and the Victorian Imagination* argued that since the 19th century, the consensus on China has been that “big is bad,” implying that Asia and China’s size and large populations were perceived as threats. That became especially prevalent in the Asian invasion novels that were popularised following the Boxer Movements and the Eight Nation Alliance, with references to Asia and China’s “teeming” population, who would in these invasion novels eventually stand ready to conquer Europe itself.¹⁰² While the source material is not ‘overflowing’ with such references, Barnes would at times use the same language as Forman analysed. After Tianjin had fallen to the Western forces in 1900, Barnes believed that the tide had turned in favour of Christendom and theorises what this victory of the Eight Nation Alliance meant for the Chinese population. “Without doubt the teeming millions

¹⁰⁰ Confidential report on a journey in the province of Shantung by Lockhart, 26th June 1903, CO 521/4, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁰¹ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 48.

¹⁰² Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. p. 225.

of China were watching, with eager eyes, for the outcome of this rude arbitrament of war, either to rise in their strength and expel the “foreign devil” once and for all, or to lie low, perhaps, for another opportunity.”¹⁰³ Additionally, one of the arguments for retaining a military garrison at Weihaiwei before the Chinese Regiment was eventually disbanded in 1906 was the large Chinese population in and around Weihaiwei, numbering some 150.000, versus the very small European population mostly made up of colonial officials, civil servants, missionaries, and officers.¹⁰⁴ According to Forman, the Chinese numbers became a mechanism through which the threat of “the rise of Asia” was focalised.¹⁰⁵ Such references to the ‘masses’ of China, and the implied threat of these masses, in addition to referencing oneself as ‘foreign devils’ showed an awareness that the Westerners were a vulnerable minority, and an unwanted one too in the eyes of many Chinese people. The physical threat to Westerners was, of course, very strong and real during the Boxer Movement, making it interesting that Barnes, being in direct combat with Qing and Boxer troops, would use similar language to what would soon after be used in invasion novels.

Another instance of the relationship between Westerners and the Chinese ‘masses’ is found with a North China Daily News correspondent who described the German settlement at Jiaozhou, on the southern side of the Shandong peninsula. The Germans at Jiaozhou had bought all the land from the original Chinese inhabitants, had all the buildings torn down and rebuilt an exclusively European settlement, while the Chinese working population and ‘coolies’ were settled in another area some miles inland. The reporter regretted that similar “enlightened measures were not originally adopted in Shanghai and Hong Kong (...) whose [*the European residents*] health and comfort have been sadly impaired by being compelled to live amidst a dense Chinese population.”¹⁰⁶ This is comparable to how Bickers argued that “at the heart of the settler identity lay a root fear of Chinese,”¹⁰⁷ and exemplifies that racial prejudice was not only reserved for statements concerning which traits the Chinese population possessed or lacked, but the physical presence of Chinese people (and other ‘Orientals’) and their large numbers would also cause some anxiety among Westerners living in China.

¹⁰³ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 82.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Lockhart to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30th Nov. 1904, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁰⁵ Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination*. p. 225.

¹⁰⁶ Report of a journey in the province of Shantung by Lockhart, Aug. 1903, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁰⁷ Bickers, *Britain in China*. p. 69.

This chapter has looked at possible racial prejudice towards Chinese people in general. The attitudes found were a mixture of both more positive and negative prejudices, and it was shown that officials like Lockhart were aware of racial prejudice against Chinese people, which he tried to distance himself from. This would also involve highlighting what for Lockhart were positive traits, though such positive traits were only given to low status working class Chinese people. Further, the Chinese population's appreciation, respect, and even submission for Britain was looked favourably upon by Lockhart, which shows the presence of a racial, perhaps civilisational, hierarchy. There was also racial prejudice in the form of negative traits attached to Chinese people in general, primarily through the issue of corruption. Independently of such positive and negative traits, Westerners would also have a sense of anxiety in the face of the Chinese 'masses,' an issue which was exacerbated by the Boxer Movement and the following attacks on Westerners and Christians. The three following chapters will shift the focus back over to the Chinese Regiment.

Chapter 3: Racial prejudice and 'martial qualities'

This chapter will analyse racial prejudice among the British officers and officials towards the soldiers of the Chinese Regiment by looking at the soldiers' perceived 'martial qualities.' This will involve looking at the martial race concept, and how the British officers understood that concept within the Chinese context. The concept of martial races in the British empire was influenced by Social Darwinism and the caste systems of India, and through the latter part of the 1800s led to an increased racialisation in the British Indian Army. The people of southern India were increasingly seen as cowardly and lacking 'guts,' while among others, Gurkhas and Sikhs were seen as brave.¹⁰⁸ In this system, it was often the more educated people who were framed as cowardly, while the uneducated and poor were seen as brave. For Britons who thought about the concept of martial races, only the British gentleman himself combined the intelligence and courage needed to become an officer.¹⁰⁹ Since the Sikhs, Gurkhas, and other perceived martial races were uneducated and as Greenhut argued, politically backward, in addition to being used to a physically hard life, their loyalty to Britain, who relied heavily upon them for their colonial rule over a much larger population, was secured.¹¹⁰

In China, the idea of martial races made it important for the British to find the correct type of Chinese to serve as soldiers in the Chinese Regiment. The experience in British India is

¹⁰⁸ Rand and Wagner, "Recruiting the 'martial races'." p. 233.

¹⁰⁹ Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 16.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

important for these discussions, as that is where the British drew most of their experience with 'native' races from, and many officers both in and outside the Chinese regiment had served in the Indian Army. The chapter will show how the concept of martial races was very much believed in by the British, but there were still differences in how it would express itself in China compared to India, including disagreements between different British officers. This chapter will answer whether the Chinese were seen as a martial race by the British, whether certain subgroups were deemed more martial than others, and what martial traits the Chinese people were deemed to lack or possess.

The Chinese Regiment and martial qualities

During the spring of 1900, before the siege of the foreign legations in Beijing and the invasion of the Eight Nation Alliance, the villagers living in and around the British leased territory of Weihaiwei would as shown in chapter one fight multiple battles against the British officers and the Chinese Regiment. After one such battle, a newspaper wrote and was quoted by Barnes as saying:

General Gordon showed a generation ago what excellent soldiers some Chinamen may make under British leadership. The way in which our new Chinese battalion repulsed the great mob that assailed them seems to prove that the men from whom they are recruited belong to one of the fighting stocks of the Celestial Empire.¹¹¹

This comment can help to explain the British thinking towards soldiers at the time, especially towards 'native' and 'Oriental' troops. In a process that was as mentioned influenced by the experience in British India and Social Darwinism, some groups of people were seen as brave, strong, and suited for warfare, while other groups were simply not sufficiently martial to serve as soldiers. Lord Roberts, commanding the Indian Madras Army in 1881, stated that the Indians of southern India, in comparison to northern and north-western India, were simply lacking in both courage and physique, believing that no amount of training could ever remedy this shortcoming.¹¹² This thinking was only increasingly racialised towards the latter half of the 19th century, and would go on to influence the British thinking towards Chinese people when a

¹¹¹ Newspaper cutting from an un-named newspaper, 8th May 1900, CO 521/1, The National Archives (TNA), London.

Gordon was another British officer who in the 1860s commanded Chinese troops on behalf of the Qing against the Taiping rebellion.

¹¹² Rand and Wagner, "Recruiting the 'martial races'." p. 234.

Chinese regiment was raised for the first time, at Weihaiwei. But no matter how martial a group was perceived to be, British leadership was still essential.¹¹³

That the concept of martial races was true, in the sense that the British at the time believed in it is clear from both other scholars' research and this thesis' source material. Barnes would for example describe the bravery of the soldiers under his command, saying that there was never "a waver nor a moment of hesitation." If anyone should doubt this, Barnes directed them to refer to the officers of the Hong Kong-artillery. "Of their own Sikhs it is needless to speak, for no one ever questions their bravery; but our men did the same, and did it as well as they did, to their honour be it recorded."¹¹⁴ This showed how Barnes too, in the process of showing that the Chinese of their regiment were brave and 'martial,' would regard it as obvious that the Sikhs of the Indian contingent were just that, and that everyone knew they were a martial race. To show that Chinese people could be martial was, in fact, the explicitly stated goal Barnes had with his book. He wanted to show, through the events the regiment was involved in, that the Chinese have many military qualities, which "it is the main object of these pages to show they possess."¹¹⁵ His reasons for wanting to show these military attributes were that due to the many unkind things said about the regiment:

(...) it seemed advisable to place on record the doings of the regiment on service, in the real hard fighting in Northern China in 1900, as they actually occurred, in order to show that, though a regiment in its extreme infancy, fighting, under alien officers and for an alien cause, against its own compatriots, its own Emperor, and his Imperial troops it bore its part with the best, deserving none of the somewhat nasty things that have been put abroad about it; but, on the other hand, more than fulfilling the high hopes formed of it by its officers (...)¹¹⁶

By wanting to both show the military attributes the Chinese people possessed and defending the regiment from what he saw as false accusations, one can argue that Barnes had interpreted the accusations mentioned in chapter one to at least partly concern themselves with whether or not the Chinese people were suitable to serve as soldiers of the British Empire, a fact his employment at the time also relied upon.

¹¹³ Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 17.

¹¹⁴ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 67.

¹¹⁵ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 17.

¹¹⁶ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xi.

It is often very hard to induce people, especially if they belong to the Indian contingent, which, unfortunately, arrived after all the really stiff fighting was over, to believe that there was any fighting worth talking about in and about Tientsin [Tianjin], and harder still to get into their heads that the 1st Chinese Regiment took any part therein.¹¹⁷

While Barnes does not specifically name Creagh or the railway staff officer mentioned in chapter one, who would put accusations against the regiment on the official record, he did name the Indian contingent which it will be remembered O'Moore Creagh commanded, and it seems very likely that they are at least partly behind the statements Barnes wishes to contradict. Major Cowan of the Chinese Regiment (also serving as acting Commissioner of Weihaiwei) was more direct, arguing in a letter to a person named Breton that bad rumours had been spread by the Indian contingent due to jealousy.¹¹⁸ Over the book's 200 pages, Barnes chronologically goes over what he saw as the main events concerning the regiment, beginning with the battles against villagers in and around the leased territory of Weihaiwei. In the first of these events, the regiment managed to get a group of villagers to give up their weapons without bloodshed, and Barnes argues that their excellent performance in this exchange works as a reflection of the soldiers' later performance.

After one of the battles against the villagers around Weihaiwei, Barnes argued that "It is impossible to withhold all praise from these men, or from that brave man whose ready bayonet Captain Pereira possibly owes his life. No other soldiers could have done better; many might have done worse."¹¹⁹ Another group of the Chinese Regiment had to quickly march out to try and relieve this group that was under pressure, and the speed at which they made it through the hilly terrain also showed "that the Chinese can march (...)." ¹²⁰ The number of Chinese villagers killed were in these clashes according to Barnes 20, but in both cases he states that it was not possible to know how many were injured, "though the number could not have been few."¹²¹ For most of the battles between local villagers and the Chinese Regiment occurring around Weihaiwei, Barnes relies on testimonies from other figures, and he thanks captains Watson, Toke, Bray, Brooke, and Mr Schaller for providing information concerning events Barnes himself did not have personal knowledge of.

¹¹⁷ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 22.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Cowan to Breton, 31st Jan. 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹¹⁹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 10.

¹²⁰ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 17.

¹²¹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. pp. 9/13.

Many more examples were given by Barnes regarding the physical endurance and bravery of the Chinese soldiers, both from the fighting around Weihaiwei and after parts of the regiment moved towards Tianjin and then Beijing. For example, while Barnes and his interpreter Liu was held down by sniper fire, he notes that Liu was “quite unmoved by the danger.”¹²² Another, Wang Kwo Hsing was seen standing up in the middle of heavy fire, “loading and firing as coolly as if on the range.”¹²³ When ordered to retreat, the soldiers showed “the most perfect courage, moving as steadily as though they were on the hills round the barracks at Matou.”¹²⁴ Comparisons are also drawn to highlight how enduring the Chinese soldiers were, with Barnes commenting after a hard day of dragging carts of ammunition and guns in the sun, that few other men, “and certainly no other Orientals, could (...) have done the work our men did that day.”¹²⁵

Barnes’ desire to show the martial qualities and successful conduct of the Chinese Regiment soldiers is interpreted partially as an attempt to justify the existence of the Chinese Regiment, as a regiment which was viewed as “not a success,”¹²⁶ as Creagh stated many officers in the Indian contingent believed to be the case, would not remain in service for long. In fact, Barnes wrote that the early battles around Weihaiwei “proved the value of the regiment to others, and enabled us to justify our existence.”¹²⁷ His justification had two aspects, the first being to justify that the Chinese soldiers were martial, and the second justifying the existence of the regiment as a part of the British Empire. That Barnes saw a need to justify these aspects becomes apparent when reading Major General Creagh’s messages to London.

In Creagh’s reports and messages, he also expressed opinions about some peoples being more and less suited for war, but in contrast to the newspaper quoted in this chapters opening, his conclusions were to the detriment of the regiment. In a report to the DMMI where he in addition to answering some of Commissioner Dorward’s counterarguments to the original accusations presented earlier, Creagh provided his ideas for which ‘type’ of Chinese the regiment should recruit. In his view, there were two classes of men in China one could potentially recruit, the soldier class and the peasant class. The soldier class is hated in China, he argued, having no family ties and deserting because of gambling, a love for change or dislike for military service.

¹²² Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 41.

¹²³ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 42.

¹²⁴ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 44.

¹²⁵ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. pp. 130-131.

¹²⁶ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹²⁷ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 10.

The peasant class is however much more respectable. While Creagh believed they learned slower than the soldier class, they were more well behaved and respected in China, and the Chinese Regiment should in his own opinion only have recruited from this class. Creagh stated that in the regiment's early days, most rank-and-file were recruited from the peasant class, but after the outbreak of the Boxer Movement, many former Chinese soldiers were recruited, which he believed weakened the regiment.¹²⁸ There does however appear to be somewhat of a contradiction in Creagh's statement. As the number of deserters were the highest among the troops left behind at Weihaiwei when 200 men were sent to Tianjin to participate in the Eight Nation Alliance, and after the Boxer Movement itself, why would the peasant class be more suitable for the regiment than the soldier class, when desertions were high both when the peasants supposedly were in the majority and minority? One potential explanation could be that Creagh believed that peasants' reasons for desertion were more respectable, doing it for familial reasons while the soldier class deserted because of gambling-debt or a love for change.

The travel-writer Arnold Landor held the exact opposite view from Creagh in the second volume of his books *China and the Allies*. He held the opinion that the deserters from Qing armies (i.e., the soldier class) who were recruited to the Chinese Regiment made the best soldiers, being sharper, sturdier, and more accustomed to discipline. They also had "(...) a more adventurous temperament, and most of them had deserted their families, or been deserted by them, they were ready to throw in their lot entirely with any one ready to advance cash for their services."¹²⁹ This shows some inherent contradictions in the British views of China and the Chinese people, and exemplifies Rand and Wagner's point that British ideas of 'martial races' were contested and unstable.¹³⁰ Creagh and Landor mentioned many of the same factors for the soldier class, having no family ties and the importance of money, but for Creagh these were negative, while Landor thought it made them more suitable as soldiers. Where Creagh seemingly believed that the peasants deserting for familial reasons was better than the soldier class deserting due to gambling debt, Landor thought the peasants' reason showed that "The fellows seemed to have no will of their own, and were easily persuaded to desert."¹³¹ A final group that was briefly mentioned as a potential avenue for recruitment were Chinese Muslims. Major Bruce (later promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel) of the Chinese Regiment requested to

¹²⁸ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹²⁹ Landor, *China and the Allies*, 2. p. 391.

¹³⁰ Rand and Wagner, "Recruiting the 'martial races'." p. 253.

¹³¹ Landor, *China and the Allies*, 2. p. 392.

recruit “another batch of Chinese Mohammedans, who have always given satisfaction.”¹³² Apart from this ‘satisfaction,’ no other reason is given for the suitability of Chinese Muslims.

This chapter has shown how the martial race concept, although believed in by the British at the time, led to different interpretations and disagreements within the Chinese context regarding which groups were martial. In contrast to in India, where the British saw certain ethnic groups as more and less martial, the concept changed for the British in the Chinese context to be divided on social rather than ethnic lines. The closest one gets to a similar division on ethnic and/or religious lines such as in British India was how Major Bruce wanted to recruit more Chinese Muslims. Despite this lack of an ethnic division, the martial race concept still led them to think a good regiment needed to recruit its soldiers from specific groups of people who held traits that made them more suited for soldiering, which for Creagh and Landor were the peasant and soldier classes. Despite reaching different conclusions as to which of these groups were the best, Landor and Creagh both described them using similar traits.

Taking Gurkhas and Sikhs as a ‘standard,’ it cannot be said that there was a British consensus on the Chinese being a martial race. Landor explicitly stated that they were not such a group, and in the process of showing that Chinese people had many martial qualities, Barnes would describe the bravery and many physically favourable traits held by their Chinese soldiers partly by comparing them with the Sikhs, who no one ever doubted were martial. But in contrast to the people of southern India, who were generally seen to be simply lacking in martial qualities, the Chinese peasant and soldier class were seen as both physically strong and brave enough to justify becoming soldiers.

Auerbach showed that British perceptions of Chinese people had not reached a consensus by the Boxer Movement, while Rand and Wagner highlighted the contested and unstable characteristics of martial race recruitment. The differing opinions held by Creagh, Barnes, and Landor can be seen as playing parts in these still developing processes. It is also important to read Barnes’ defence of the Chinese soldiers’ martial qualities within the context of the accusations put forward against the regiment, as the need for defending the regiment may have influenced his views on whether the Chinese soldiers were martial or not. The similarities from the positive traits Creagh believed the peasants held and Barnes highlighted, to the positive traits Lockhart and others showed are also noteworthy, with the positive traits in both cases

¹³² Lieutenant Colonel Bruce to the Weihaiwei Commissioner, 27th April 1904, CO 873/142, The National Archives (TNA), London.

being given to relatively poor and uneducated Chinese people and containing mostly physical traits or bravery. It is perhaps natural that such traits are highlighted by an officer wanting to show that the people were martial, but the lack of other positive traits is noteworthy. The possession of negative traits in more educated and well off people will be highlighted in the next chapter, when the subject is the debate concerning the regiment's organisational system and the potential of Chinese people serving as officers.

Chapter 4: The organisational system and officers

This chapter delves into the debates surrounding the Chinese Regiment, focusing on two key areas of contention. The first revolves around the proposed reorganisation of the Chinese Regiment, originally suggested by Major General Creagh of the British Indian Army. His proposal included a reduction in the number of British officers and increase the presence of Chinese officers within the regiment. However, this proposition sparked a contentious discussion regarding the suitability of Chinese individuals for such roles, in which racially prejudicial arguments were prevalent.

Reorganising the Chinese Regiment

Due to the Chinese status as 'Orientals,' Major General Creagh proposed a scheme for reorganising the Chinese Regiment in such a way that was more suited to 'native' races. Creagh, who as mentioned commanded the Indian contingent and had for many years served in the British Indian Army, argued for reorganising the Chinese Regiment along the lines of what he called an "Indian post-mutiny irregular corps."¹³³ This would entail getting rid of the many British sergeants currently with the regiment, and putting it under the command of an officer who had "tact and experience in dealing with oriental races of whom the Chinese are perhaps the most difficult."¹³⁴ This officer would act as the father of the regiment, the dispenser of all rewards and punishments, he would need to be carefully selected and should rarely change positions, as such change would according to Creagh be damaging. Creagh believed that organising the regiment along the lines of a regular British unit has been inefficient, and the British sergeants lacked both the "tact or manners necessary for the delicate work, and I understand some came straight from home with no previous experience of orientals."¹³⁵

¹³³ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ *ibid*

This system was similar to the situation Greenhut described existed in the British Indian Army, where the white officers would take on multiplex roles in relation to their men, acting as patron, teacher, military leader, advisor, and father substitute. This system, created out of a belief that native troops needed the British officers to properly function, would in turn make the soldiers very reliant on their British officers, and because of this reliance even regiments consisting of 'martial races' like Sikhs and Gurkhas would struggle greatly in for example the First World War when their British officers were killed. In short, a system that made the soldiers reliant on their British officers and reinforced the accepted belief that the British officer was crucial had been created.¹³⁶

Creagh's argument would resonate in London, with the Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, William Nicholson writing that "The Indian system is no doubt suited to native races (...)." ¹³⁷ The British experience in India led some Britons towards a racial prejudice that made it necessary for the peoples of the Indian subcontinent and China, two very large and diverse regions, to share a system of military organisation that was different from a regular British regiment, due to a shared identity as 'Orientals.' This racist and paternalistic system needed a British officer who had tact and experience with Oriental races to act as the father of the regiment, and this tact and experience were traits Creagh had found some of the current officers in the Chinese Regiment to be in insufficient possession of. Another interesting aspect of this organisational system that Creagh proposed was that it included a large reduction in the number of Britons affiliated with the regiment as officers, and necessitated the introduction of 'native' officers to work under the main British officer.¹³⁸ Such a system would, according to Creagh, both be better for the efficiency of the regiment and would also save a significant amount of money due to British officers having a higher pay grade than 'natives.'¹³⁹

In the British Indian Army, the position of Viceroy's commissioned officer (VCO) was set up for Indians of various regiments. They were chosen from the rank-and-file after many years of service, and usually commanded a platoon or company. Despite being a commissioned officer, they had no authority over either white soldiers nor white officers whom they technically

¹³⁶ Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 18.

¹³⁷ Directorate of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence internal communication, William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 20th March 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹³⁸ Major-General Creagh's scheme for reorganising the Chinese regiment, as a part of correspondence between Sir Ernest Satow and Major-General Ventris, 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹³⁹ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

outranked. Since they were drawn from the enlisted men, who as mentioned were generally recruited from uneducated populations, they could not be promoted to higher positions whose administrative duties required some level of education. They too had been trained to look to the British officer for leadership, and they too confirmed the importance of the British officer in the eyes of the British.¹⁴⁰ Within Creagh's proposed reorganisation of the Chinese Regiment, a company would go from having one British captain, two British subalterns, and one British colour sergeant with an unnamed amount of Chinese NCO's beneath them, to having one British captain, one Chinese captain, one Chinese lieutenant, and one Chinese colour sergeant. In essence he would organise it in such a way that was common practice in British India and replace the British officers with Chinese officers, except for at the top of each company.

It will be remembered that one of the most important accusations Creagh put forward was that the Chinese Regiment was seen as a school of instruction for the Qing, and that "some of the requisite officers" at the Qing army in Zhili had been trained at Weihaiwei.¹⁴¹ This was naturally a serious accusation, as having a regiment Chinese people enlisted in only to get valuable experience and then desert for Qing forces was not the British purpose of raising the Chinese Regiment. Training Chinese officers did not necessarily go against British interest, in fact they did train officers for the Qing at multiple occasions, including with the Chinese Regiment at Weihaiwei, but in contrast to the situation Creagh believed existed in the Chinese Regiment, Britain had control over that process.¹⁴² The Commissioner and Major General Dorward refuted Creagh's 'school of instruction' accusation, and stated that getting the names of deserted soldiers now serving as officers in Qing armies to confirm whether or not they were formerly with the Chinese Regiment should not be difficult. Dorward explained why he thought this rumour had arisen, and added that Creagh's accusations were likely based on untrustworthy information, as the "difficulty in the Regiment has always been to find men who were capable of being turned into good non-commissioned officers."¹⁴³ To clarify, the regiment did have Chinese NCO's, but Dorward believed finding men suitable for that role was difficult. Further, it was seen as even more difficult to find Chinese people to serve as full commissioned officers.

¹⁴⁰Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 16.

¹⁴¹ Major-General Creagh to Lord G. Hamilton, 29th Sep. 1901, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁴² Report of a journey in the province of Shantung by Lockhart, Aug. 1903, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁴³ Commissioner and Major-General A. R. F. Dorward to Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, 21st January 1902, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

Lieutenant-Colonel Bower (later promoted to Colonel) agreed, stating that there was only ever one man who was under consideration for promotion before he was killed in 1900.¹⁴⁴ One side of this story was that an officer needed a certain level of education to deal with various administrative duties, and the soldiers in the Chinese Regiment were mainly drawn from the uneducated agricultural class. This was as mentioned the case in India, where VCO's hardly could rise much higher than to the position of company commander. Another side was racial prejudice, which will now be highlighted.

Creagh believed introducing Chinese people in these roles should work out well, as "(...) the average Chinaman is not a whit more literate than the average Indian, and if it has been found possible to make pay havildars [...] out of the latter, it is absurd to say that it is impossible to do so out of the Chinese."¹⁴⁵ But the officers of the Chinese Regiment saw a difference from India to the Chinese context, believing that having native commissioned officers, even beneath other British officers, would be dangerous. Bower, when providing his opinions on the issue of Chinese officers was no longer affiliated with the Chinese Regiment, and he disagreed with Creagh's points, arguing "When I came from the Indian Army to raise the Chinese Regiment I had all the ideas of the Indian Army and hoped some day to have native officers, experience changed my ideas."¹⁴⁶ Both the British diplomat Ernest Satow and Nicholson of the DMMI held similar views, arguing that "those who have seen Chinese troops on active service is adverse to any such change,"¹⁴⁷ and that it would be difficult to find native officers in China analogous to the native officers of India.¹⁴⁸ Which traits did Bower, Satow, and Nicholson see in China that made them believe that, in contrast to the Indian Army, the introduction of 'native' officers would be a mistake? Firstly, Bower also argued that there was no class in China analogous to the native officer class of India.

The higher socially a Chinaman becomes the more effeminate and useless from a soldiering point of view. The mandarins are the curse of the country and the good of the country lies in the artisans and agriculturalists. A Chinaman in receipt of \$80 a month

¹⁴⁴ Extract from a report by Colonel Bower, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁴⁵ Major-General Creagh's scheme for reorganising the Chinese regiment, as a part of correspondence between Sir Ernest Satow and Major-General Ventris, 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁴⁶ Extract from a report by Colonel Bower, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁴⁷ Correspondence between Ernest Satow and Major General Ventris on Major General Creagh's scheme for reorganisation of the Chinese Regiment, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁴⁸ Directorate of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, by Director General Nicholson, WO 32/6794, 20th March 1902, The National Archives (TNA), London.

would be much too much of a fine gentleman to be any use to us and there would also be the fear of his intriguing – in fact he would be almost certain to.¹⁴⁹

Just as the clerks at Weihaiwei were described as being “too Chinese” when they were found to be economically taking advantage of their position, Bower thought a well-paid Chinese officer would be subject to the same faults, which again confirms Jerome Ch’en’s argument that the Chinese were seen as a dishonest and corrupt race.¹⁵⁰ One argument Creagh provided for introducing Chinese officers was that the military forces of the Viceroy of Zhili, who exclusively had Chinese officers and troops, drilled excellently, and if such results were possible with only Chinese officers, similar or even better results should certainly be possible with Chinese officers commanded by the British.¹⁵¹

Bower admitted that Chinese troops under Chinese officers could drill well, but history and experience had shown time and again that Chinese officers were simply too cowardly. For example, Bower wrote, at the battle of Yalu in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95, the Chinese officers supposedly hid with the coals while the soldiers held their positions. Only one leader apparently held his position, and he was a Muslim and not an officer. Bower argued that such inefficiency “in the higher grades has been most marked throughout the history of China.”¹⁵² Promoting the present troops to commissioned rank would, according to Bower, spoil good NCO’s and privates.¹⁵³

The traits Bower used to describe Chinese officers, being cowardly, intriguing, and effeminate were importantly not simply tied to their social status, but it was seen as inherently racial faults. This is clear because Bower believed that promoting the agricultural class, who so far in the source material have received almost nothing but ‘compliments,’ to high paying positions would ruin them.¹⁵⁴ In essence, what the British at the time saw as the dishonesty and corrupt conduct of high-ranking Chinese people were believed to exist in all Chinese, and would go on to materialise once they attained influence and a high paying position. Bidhan Golay, who studied Gurkha martial identity and the British Empire showed how for the British, a martial

¹⁴⁹ Extract from a report by Colonel Bower, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁵⁰ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. 45.

¹⁵¹ Correspondence between Ernest Satow and Major General Ventris on Major General Creagh’s scheme for reorganisation of the Chinese Regiment, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁵² Extract from a report by Colonel Bower, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁵³ *ibid*

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*

race could only be martial in their own territory. This meant that if a Gurkha migrated from the 'core' Gurkha areas, they would through intermarriage contaminate their 'martial blood.'¹⁵⁵ Similarly, it can be argued that in the Chinese context, a peasant's martial qualities were also believed to be contaminated by climbing the social ladder. It is also interesting that this is the second instance where Chinese Muslims were highlighted in a positive manner, which is comparable to how Muslims of north-western frontier areas in British India were seen as a martial group.¹⁵⁶

Creagh, however, believed Bower's fear of 'squeeze' among Chinese officers was unnecessary. "If properly instructed and supervised, he would have no room for "Squeeze", the prevention of which seems to be the chief argument in favour of [retaining] the British Non-commissioned Officer and which is one I cannot agree with."¹⁵⁷ The difference between Creagh and Bower can then be seen as Creagh believing there were no significant differences between Indian groups and Chinese people and that it was possible to train Chinese people to not be corrupt, while Bower saw no such possibility. Creagh, who as shown wanted the Chinese Regiment to be organised as an Indian regiment, due to the soldiers' status as 'Orientals,' was at least consistent in his prejudice. He saw no significant difference between Indians and Chinese people that made it more difficult to train suitable Chinese officers. But the racial prejudice held by the diplomat Ernest Satow, Colonel Bower and Major Bruce of the Chinese Regiment towards Chinese people guaranteed that as long as a Chinese Regiment existed, commissioned officer ranks would be reserved for Britons. The reforms proposed by Creagh were never implemented, as the regiment was instead reduced in number and then disbanded.

It is also possible to interpret the Chinese Regiment officers' attack on Chinese officers as partly a defence of their own positions. If they were to agree with Creagh and give their support for a reorganisation, some of themselves and many of the British NCO's under their command would be transferred to other units. As mentioned, the few British institutions British officers in India had access to were very important for their daily lives.¹⁵⁸ This was likely the case at Weihaiwei too, in fact Reginald Johnston wrote in his book that the winter months at Weihaiwei had become significantly more monotonous after the British officers departed.¹⁵⁹ The idea of losing

¹⁵⁵ Bidhan Golay, "Rethinking Gorkha Identity: Outside the Imperium of Discourse," *Indian Nepalis: issues and perspectives* (2009). p. 31-32.

¹⁵⁶ Rand and Wagner, "Recruiting the 'martial races'." p. 233.

¹⁵⁷ Extract from a scheme for the reorganization of the Chinese Regiment by Major General Creagh, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁵⁸ Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ Johnston, *Lion and dragon in northern China*. p. 82.

many of their countrymen and colleagues was probably not an attractive proposition to the British officers. This can also be related to Stoler's idea of the 'unwritten.' Arguing for not reorganising the Chinese Regiment because their lives, in which most activities revolved around the few British institutions they had access to at Weihaiwei, would become less satisfactory can be considered to belong to the category of the 'unwritten because it could not be said.' Such an argument would in all likelihood not be given weight in London where economical concerns and the regiment's efficiency were more important, but it seems likely that the British officers would want to keep their already small social circle intact. Although this may have played some part, it cannot completely explain nor take away from their actual racial prejudice, as Britons outside the regiment and military forces too, like Ernest Satow, agreed with them on the weakness of Chinese officers. Though he too may have had his opinions influenced by British officers.

This chapter has shown the role played by racial prejudice in the debates concerning the proposed restructuring of the Chinese Regiment. Major General Creagh and the Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence both agreed that the most suitable system of organisation for 'Oriental' regiments were that of an Indian post-mutiny irregular corps. Except for being 'Orientals,' it was not specified by Creagh what traits these two groups shared that made such a system needed, but some insight can be seen from what type of officer Creagh believed the regiment ought to have in command. The word 'tact' was mentioned multiple times as a trait that the commanding officer needed to have, supposedly to tackle the sensitive issue of Oriental soldiers. Additionally, the officer should act as the father of the regiment, and such a phrasing seems to compare the job of raising a regiment with raising children, which is comparable to how Ch'en wrote from the 1920s Chinese people would be framed more and more like innocent and happy children.¹⁶⁰ Experience with Orientals was also seen as necessary, which shows that some Britons saw great similarities between commanding a regiment consisting of Chinese soldiers and Indian soldiers, despite the linguistic and cultural differences between those massive regions.

In a similar vein to how Greenhut described educated Indians were perceived as cowardly, upper class Chinese too were seen as effeminate, cowardly, and "too much of a fine gentleman" to be useful for the British military.¹⁶¹ Since such traits were usually ascribed to upper-class educated

¹⁶⁰ Ch'en, *China and the West*, 2. p. 48.

¹⁶¹ Extract from a report by Colonel Bower, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

Chinese people, one could argue that such traits were not seen to belong to the Chinese ‘race,’ but rather specific sections within the race. However, as Bower believed even promoted peasants would be ruined by their new position, one can see that these traits were perceived to be tied to their race, not simply their class. Greenhut’s judgement holds true in the case of the Chinese Regiment, as only the “British gentlemen combined both the intelligence and courage necessary for a man to become an officer.”¹⁶² The British officer was crucial, it was in fact the only factor Barnes thought separated the Qing and British forces in the Eight Nation Alliance’s invasion.¹⁶³

Chapter 5: Racial prejudice and ‘trustworthiness’

This chapter will focus on racial prejudice and whether the Chinese soldiers of the regiment were perceived by British officers and officials to be ‘trustworthy’. This leads to a focus on the debates concerning the desertions from the regiment before, during, and after the Boxer Movement, as that was admitted as being the only drawback to the regiment’s trustworthiness even by Chinese Regiment officers. This chapter will analyse the different reasons given for the desertions, the role played by racial prejudice in this debate, and how the officers and officials interpreted that phenomenon with regard to the trustworthiness of the regiment, which would become important for the final decision to disband the regiment.¹⁶⁴ An important question that will be answered is whether the Chinese soldiers were perceived to be untrustworthy due to racial factors.

Desertions from the Chinese Regiment

The prevalence of desertion was by far the most damaging and lasting of the accusations with regards to the perceived trustworthiness of the regiment, and it was also the only one that was without doubt factual, being confirmed by both Creagh and Chinese Regiment officers. Having been requested to do so, Major General and Commissioner Dorward, wrote a report to Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the subject of desertions from the Chinese Regiment. Dorward wrote that from the beginning of recruitment in January 1899 until the time of writing his report in January 1902, there had been 805 deserters. A third left on the outbreak of war in north China, another third after the return to Weihaiwei. Of those who left on the outbreak of war, Dorward believed they “undoubtedly did so because they did not wish to fight

¹⁶² Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy." p. 16.

¹⁶³ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xiii-xiv.

¹⁶⁴ Directorate of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, by Director General Nicholson, WO 32/6794, 20th March 1902, The National Archives (TNA), London.

against their own people, or because they were afraid of their families being made to suffer if they remained with the regiment.”¹⁶⁵ Those who left after the return mostly did so because they had acquired much loot with which to buy land. Then there were four reasons for ordinary desertions according to Dorward, (1) that some farmers only enlist to wait out the winter months, (2) dislike of military service, (3) obedience to commands of their parents, and (4) debt, primarily gambling-related.¹⁶⁶ These four reasons provided by Dorward, it will be noted, do not contain any racial prejudice but were pragmatic and showed a knowledge of the enlisted soldiers’ circumstances, which show that Dorward on the issue of trustworthiness and desertions did not find racial traits to be important.

Dorward also believed it to be very unlikely for deserters to be serving with the Qing armies, as half of all deserters had less than four months experience and no musketry training, in addition to him previously having no knowledge of deserters serving with the Chinese army before Creagh put that point forward. Dorward stated that: “As regards the general trustworthiness of the Regiment, I can only say that I hope I may again have the honour of commanding it on active service.”¹⁶⁷

I often think of the service it would have done had it consisted of 1,300 well-trained soldiers, as at present, instead of 300 recruits, and of how that service would have forced a full recognition of the value of the Regiment. The only drawback to its complete success is the prevalence of desertion, for which time and patience are the only cures.¹⁶⁸

There is then a stark contrast between Major Generals Dorward and Creagh’s view of the issue of desertions and trustworthiness. Creagh did to a certain extent concur that time and patience were important to build a trustworthy unit, but he believed something more should also be brought forward, after which he went on to describe the organisational system that was the subject of the previous chapter. Creagh believed there had to be a specific class of Chinese person recruited to *make* the regiment into an efficient and trustworthy unit, and that the organisational system had to be better suited to the Oriental races, of which he believed the Chinese was amongst the most difficult.¹⁶⁹ In this system the British officer needed tact and experience with other Orientals to make it an efficient, trustworthy unit and hinder desertions

¹⁶⁵ Commissioner and Major-General A. R. F. Dorward to Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, 21st January 1902, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

¹⁶⁹ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

from it. This shows that for Major General Creagh, first commanding the Indian contingent and later the entire British force in north China, racial prejudice was important for his views on Chinese peoples' trustworthiness. Dorward on the other hand, looked at the different types of desertions, gave specific reasons for that desertion, and did not believe any extraordinary measures had to be taken because of traits inherent in Chinese people with regards to the issue of desertion.

Major Bruce of the Chinese Regiment also gave his reasons for desertions, the chief cause being "The extraordinary circumstances under which the Regiment was raised."¹⁷⁰ The situation in north China over the preceding years was according to Bruce only comparable to the Indian Mutiny. Barnes agreed, stating that no other 'native' regiment under British command had ever gone through a baptism of fire like they had.¹⁷¹ Bruce argued that despite of the great pressure on Chinese people during this general rising, they fought gallantly and remained faithful to their officers.¹⁷² Other contributing factors for desertion was according to Bruce mistrust from the Chinese population because of occupation of Weihaiwei by the British government, the efforts of Chinese officials to undermine enlistment, the presence of the Qing governed walled city of Weihaiwei *within* the British leased territory, the dislike of many ordinary Chinese of those that enlist, and lastly family ties, which "are so strong in China that sufficient pressure can be brought to bear upon the man to force him to desert."¹⁷³

Bruce, like Dorward, tried to explain the prevalence of desertion by providing the specific reasons for the phenomenon, tying it to the context of the Boxer Movement, the pressure Chinese soldiers must have been under at the time, and even that Britain was not trusted at Weihaiwei, rather than to their identity as Chinese people and 'Orientals.' Creagh's reaction to these reasons provided by Bruce was however quite short. In a report titled "Observations on Major Bruce's proposals for future employment of officers and men of 1st. Chinese Regiment," Creagh wrote that "Paras. 3 to 7. deal with the terms of engagement of the officers, N.C.O.'s and men; the value of these and the desertion question. These call for no special remarks in this section."¹⁷⁴ Nicholson, the DMMI Director General, thought that Bruce's points were also

¹⁷⁰ Memorandum upon the future employment of the officers, European N. C. officers and men of the 1st Chinese Regiment by Major Bruce, 19th Dec. 1901, WO 32/6795, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁷¹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xiii.

¹⁷² Memorandum upon the future employment of the officers, European N. C. officers and men of the 1st Chinese Regiment by Major Bruce, 19th Dec. 1901, WO 32/6795, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁷⁴ Observations on Major Bruce's proposals for future employment of officers and men of 1st. Chinese Regiment by Major-General Creagh, 2nd Jan. 1902, WO 32/6795, The National Archives (TNA), London.

irrelevant, writing that “The evidence of the very large number of constant desertions from the regiment is so indisputable that it is unnecessary to discuss Major Bruce’s remarks on that head.”¹⁷⁵ The use of the word “constant” by Nicholson was inaccurate, as the number of new deserters had fallen rapidly after August 1901,¹⁷⁶ which seems to give weight to the reasons provided by Bruce and Dorward, as the measures proposed by Creagh were never actually implemented. Bruce and Dorward’s attempted explanations would seemingly not have a major impact, as the Regiment was set to be disbanded in 1902,¹⁷⁷ which was only postponed after James Lockhart arrived to serve as Commissioner and recommended keeping it for the time being.¹⁷⁸ The issue of desertions and trustworthiness, and the perceived lack of the latter characteristic in the Chinese Regiment would directly impact the decision to disband the unit. As it was decided after the Boxer Movement that no permanent garrison was needed at Weihaiwei, a potential use for the unit was to send it to other British stations, for example Hong Kong or Singapore. But officials in London thought that, since so many soldiers deserted when parts of the regiment were sent to Tianjin it could not be trusted that the same would not happen again if the regiment was sent to for example Singapore.¹⁷⁹

In his report to the DMMI where he commented on Dorward’s report, Creagh went into more detail on the reasons for desertions. As mentioned, he proposed to only recruit Chinese peasants and to reorganise the regiment as an Indian post-mutiny irregular corps, but he also tried to arrive at the cause of desertions. Creagh agreed with many of Dorward’s reasons but wanted to add others which Dorward had not written about. Creagh then goes on to place himself within the mind of the Chinese soldiers, and writes how he imagined they would think:

(...) we (...) who are left behind if we have to fight at all will have to do so by ourselves against our own neighbours, and in many cases against our own relations. If Wei-Hai-Wei is captured we and all our families will be made to suffer in the usual Chinese way for having joined the foreigners.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Minutes, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 4th Jan. 1902, WO 32/6795, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁷⁶ The General Officer Commanding (Major General Creagh) to the Secretary of State for India, 22nd Nov. 1901, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁷⁷ Confidential telegram from the Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir E. Satow, 6th Apr. 1902, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁷⁸ Weihaiwei Commissioner’s files. General report for 1902, undated. Approx. 1903, CO 873/65, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁷⁹ Directorate of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, Minute by Actham, 17th March. 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁸⁰ From Major General Creagh to William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, 1st February 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

However, it will be noted that despite Creagh arguing that this reason was not touched upon by Dorward, it is very similar to what Dorward already wrote, although phrased differently. Dorward argued that those who deserted when parts of the regiment were sent towards Tianjin “undoubtedly did so because they did not wish to fight against their own people, or because they were afraid of their families being made to suffer if they remained with the regiment.”¹⁸¹ The difference between them is then that Dorward saw that reason as connected to the current situation of the Boxer Movement, and not of much importance for the regiment’s future trustworthiness, once the Boxer Movement had lost its power. Creagh, however, saw it as tied to how the regiment should be structured, and which type of Chinese people should be recruited, as that is the factor he moves on to next.

This again shows that with regards to trustworthiness, Creagh believed the main issue was the soldiers’ identity as Chinese people, which shows that racial prejudice was an important factor. With regards to the mistrust some Europeans apparently had towards the Chinese Regiment as guards in the British concessions, Creagh believed there was nothing extraordinary about this “to anyone who knows the Chinese – His capacity for secret combination both against the foreigners and his own people is marvellous.”¹⁸² Creagh apparently put very little stock in the words of Chinese people, believing that in a country like China, “lying and deception are fine arts.”¹⁸³ This can again be used to exemplify the difference in interpretation between Creagh and some officers of the Chinese Regiment. Where they saw the Chinese soldiers’ situation as contextually tied to the Boxer Movement, and then likely also the hostile feelings many Europeans in China had towards Chinese people, Creagh instead tied it to their identity as Chinese people and ‘Orientals.’

However, the language used by the regiment officers could be just as racialised if the situation called for it. Captain Watson, in a report trying to debunk another accusation, i.e., that there was a system of squeeze, or corruption in the regiment, stated that “No native ever handles any man’s pay. Who then can “squeeze”?”¹⁸⁴ Watson also adds that the accusations put forward by Creagh and the Railway staff officer, which were based on answers from Qing army officers resemble being answers to questions, stating that those who know the Chinese are aware that

¹⁸¹ Commissioner and Major-General A. R. F. Dorward to Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, 21st January 1902, CO 882/6, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁸² From the General Officer Commanding, Major-General Creagh, to the Director General of Mobilization and Military Intelligence, 1st Feb. 1902, WO 32/6794, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁸³ *ibid*

¹⁸⁴ Captain Watson’s portion on a report against accusations, 31st Dec. 1901, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

they tend to answer questions in a way they think is acceptable to the questioner.¹⁸⁵ This shows that the officers of the Chinese Regiment could, when the situation called for it, invoke racial prejudice to defend themselves and the regiment. Despite this, Watson would directly call out the prejudice of others:

The prejudice that existed was strengthened by the Boxer riots, and has become more violent since the Chinese Regiment has proved its capabilities in the field. Fair and open criticism is to be expected and desired in a new undertaking, but this spreading of false reports is not in accordance with the British traditions of fair play. I hold that the Officers entrusted with the task of training the Chinese Regiment are entitled to the support of Government Officials, civil or military, in the furtherance of the scheme.¹⁸⁶

Lockhart too wrote positively of the regiment, stating many times that their conduct was excellent. However, as the main purpose of a garrison at Weihaiwei was to protect the Europeans there, he felt “constrained to state [...] the local circumstances of Weihaiwei render a garrison of white troops more desirable than a garrison of Chinese soldiers,”¹⁸⁷ though he did not want that to cast a negative reflection on the Chinese Regiment.¹⁸⁸ This shows how even for those who were aware of other people’s racial prejudice, criticised it, and at times tried to ‘defend’ Chinese people from such prejudice, the soldiers of the Chinese Regiment could never be completely trusted to defend against a Chinese rising. Though this must also be seen as a practical consideration to protect British imperial power, rather than believing that the soldiers were untrustworthy due to possessing certain racial traits. It is also comparable to the anxiety Forman showed many Europeans would have in the face of Chinese numbers and ‘masses.’

With specific regard to whether the British officers believed the Chinese soldiers were trustworthy or not, it can be argued that the officers working directly with the Chinese Regiment were less imbued with racial prejudice than those officers and officials outside the regiment, mainly O’Moore Creagh. The officers working with the regiment had seemingly a greater understanding for the impact of the Boxer Movement on the mass desertions that happened, ascribing greater weight to the contemporary context and the pressure their soldiers must have been under at the time, rather than racialised traits or specific organisational methods more suited to the soldiers’ Oriental status. For Creagh on the other hand, racialised factors and traits

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷ Commissioner Lockhart to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30th Nov. 1904, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*

were important for the trustworthiness of the regiment. It needed recruits from both the correct class and a system to suit their Oriental identity to make it trustworthy and hinder desertions, and he saw the Chinese people's dishonesty as a factor that harmed its trustworthiness.

Conclusion

This thesis' research questions were: *What kind of racial prejudices existed among British officers and officials towards the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry during its active period from 1898-1906, and how were they expressed by critics and defenders of the regiment?* To address these research questions, the thesis focused on several key themes, including martial qualities, the suitability of Chinese individuals as officers, the perceived trustworthiness of the soldiers, and the general perception of the civilian Chinese population. To conclude, in each of these categories, racial prejudice was prevalent, significantly influencing the corresponding debates and disagreements that appeared after the many accusations put forward against the Chinese Regiment. There were, however, no easy consensus on these issues, and the role played by racial prejudice in the arguments of critics and defenders of the regiment, while prevalent throughout the aforementioned topics, would vary greatly from issue to issue. This has shown the complex and at times contradictory nature of racial prejudice in the imperial context, and highlights the importance of analysing multiple perspectives to arrive at a more complete understanding of such topics.

Major General Creagh's and other's accusations were interpreted as partly concerning the Chinese soldiers' suitability to serve in British forces. This interpretation can be seen from Captain Barnes' book, where he wanted to defend the regiment from the many "nasty things that have been put abroad about it"¹⁸⁹ by showing that the Chinese people possessed many martial qualities. That Barnes took this approach to defending the soldiers under his command, and the debates and disagreements shown in chapter three, concerning which groups of people were most suitable as soldiers again confirms that there was a British prejudice against 'the Orient' and its people in the form of the concept of martial races. The concept of martial races framed some groups as martial and brave, while others were weak and cowardly. This system was influenced by Social Darwinism, British experience with caste systems and colonial knowledge of India. However, the importation of the martial race concept to China did not lead to a clear division into more and less martial groups on racial lines, as was the case with Sikhs and Gurkhas in British India, but it was instead separated on social lines with the peasant class

¹⁸⁹ Barnes, *On active service with the Chinese Regiment*. p. xi.

and the soldier class being the subjects of some British disagreements. This transformation of the martial race concept highlights Rand and Wagner's point that recruitment of soldiers based on the idea of 'martial races' was both a contested and unstable process.

That the Chinese peasant became one of the main groups recruited to the regiment, and the one Creagh believed the regiment should exclusively recruit, forms an almost natural conclusion when Britons brought with them the concept of martial races to the Chinese context due to three main factors. First, most people in China were perceived to be simply 'Chinese,' whereas the martial groups in India were described first and foremost as belonging to smaller groups such as Sikhs and Gurkhas. Second, as was the case with the groups believed to be a part of the martial races of India, the Chinese peasants were also relatively poor and mostly illiterate. Third, the Chinese peasant was seen by many Westerners as one of the few positives China had going for itself at the time, also outside military matters.

Through the source material, Jerome Ch'en's argument that only Chinese peasants, 'coolies,' and other poor and working Chinese people were regarded relatively positively was strengthened. The traits ascribed to them were usually related to their low status roles and their subordinate relationship with Britain and Britons, such as Lockhart who in chapter two described how they made good, orderly subjects and had respect for Britain, or Barnes who showed how hard working and physically strong the soldiers under his command were. It was also exemplified when discussing Major General Creagh's proposed reorganisation of the Chinese Regiment, in which he wanted to only recruit Chinese peasants who were believed to be a more respectable group. He argued his proposed reorganisation, that of an 'Indian post-mutiny irregular corps,' was more suited to 'Oriental' races. This racist and paternalistic system would have a British officer in supreme command, acting as the father of the regiment.

The system would, however, require far fewer British officers, and the employment of Chinese officers. Some Britons, both officers in the Chinese Regiment and Ernest Satow outside it were staunchly against recruiting educated and well off Chinese people for such roles due to their perceived dishonesty, their corruption, and their inclination towards scheming. Not only was it seen as too risky to recruit already well off Chinese people, but even the Chinese peasants, who were almost exclusively talked 'positively' about, were believed to be 'spoiled' when promoted to a higher position and given a high salary. This shows that, while British prejudice towards Chinese people at the time was often divided on social lines, this was a porous and not a rigid barrier. Racial prejudice that was generally only held about the 'Mandarin class,' named "the

curse of the country”¹⁹⁰ by Colonel Bower, could be attributed to the working classes as well and the rest of the Chinese population as well. Despite the differences between the two approaches, they were in a sense in agreement that the British officer was essential, a fact Greenhut too showed in his research on the Indian Army. That Creagh’s system needed a British officer in supreme command, and that the British officers in the Chinese Regiment believed recruiting Chinese officers would be a mistake highlights this apparent ‘fact.’

In contrast to the regiment’s British officers’ attack on Chinese officers, and in consequence the Chinese ‘race,’ it was shown in chapter five how the officers working in the Chinese Regiment held a much greater understanding for the Chinese soldiers’ situation on the issue of trustworthiness and desertions. Through their experience and contact with the soldiers under their command, Barnes, Dorward and Bruce ascribed much greater weight to the contemporary context of the Boxer Movement than to racialised traits or a specific mode of organisation better suited to ‘Oriental’ races to make the regiment trustworthy, as Creagh and some officials in London did. This shows that racial prejudice, while prevalent, also would vary depending on the specific case at hand. This was most clearly exemplified when Captain Watson in one single report both criticised other Britons’ prejudice against their soldiers, “simply because they are Chinese,” and argued that corruption could not happen in their regiment because “No native ever handles any man’s pay.”¹⁹¹

This thesis has made contributions both to our understanding of the concept of martial races, and the fact that it was not rigid, but could change depending on the given context and differ from person to person. It has also provided a new perspective to the field of British imperialism in China both by mostly focusing on officers, and by researching the 1st Chinese Regiment of Infantry, who in English-language literature often has been relegated to a minor role. A potential avenue for future research on Chinese soldiers in the British Empire is the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment, active for just a few months in the Second World War before Hong Kong was attacked by Imperial Japan, and the Chinese soldiers who subsequently enlisted with the Hong Kong Volunteer Company after that. Additionally, the few references that were found in this thesis’ source material to Chinese Muslims and how Britons saw them could also be further investigated.

¹⁹⁰ Extract from a report by Colonel Bower, sent by Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne 15th Dec. 1903, CO 521/7, The National Archives (TNA), London.

¹⁹¹ Captain Watson’s portion on a report against accusations, 31st Dec. 1901, CO 521/3, The National Archives (TNA), London.

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