

An Army as Good and Efficient as Any in the World: James Wasson and Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan

Robert Eskildsen

Introduction

In the spring of 1874 the Japanese government dispatched a military force to southern Taiwan ostensibly to "punish" a group of aborigines who had murdered fifty-four people from Ryūkyū late in 1871.¹⁾ The first ship of the invasion force, an old steamship the Japanese government had purchased from the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company and renamed the Yūkō-maru, departed Nagasaki on April 27 bound for Amoy and the southwestern coast of Taiwan. On board were various supplies and arms, including two Gatling guns that the Japanese government had recently purchased with the help of an American advisor named Horace Capron, and more than a hundred people, including Japanese marines, members of a newly formed signal corps, and several Japanese military officers. Also on board were two American advisors, Douglas Cassel (1845–1875), a naval officer hired by the Japanese to help direct the expedition, and a former United States Army officer named James Wasson (1847-1923). Wasson resigned his commission in the U.S. Army in 1872 in order to work under Capron at the Hokkaido Colonization Office (Kaitakushi),²⁾ and in April, 1874 the Japanese Army hired Wasson away from the Hokkaido Colonization Office so he could serve as a military engineer in the expeditionary force being sent to Taiwan. In that capacity Wasson witnessed firsthand many of the events that took place in southern Taiwan and he wrote a detailed report for the Japanese government describing what he had seen.

Over the course of the early decades of the Meiji Period (1868–1912) the Japanese government hired several thousand foreign advisors, commonly called *oyatoi gaikoku-jin*, to help the country modernize in the wake of the Meiji Restoration. These foreign advisors worked in fields as diverse as law, politics, the military, transportation, industrial technology, natural sciences, education, and the arts, and they drew generous salaries from the government. While foreign advisors had no authority to decide government policy, they helped to implement the policies of the government and they provided valuable advice and guidance about how Japan could modernize its institutions.³⁾ The Taiwan Expedition took place at the peak of the Japanese government's effort to employ foreign advisors, and not surprisingly a number of foreigners contributed to the planning and implementation of the expedition.⁴⁾ Wasson's role in the expedition was modest compared to that of many of the foreign advisors, but even in his limited role he witnessed directly much of what transpired in southern Taiwan.

Because of his first-hand knowledge the report Wasson wrote provides one of the

most detailed accounts of what took place during the Japanese expedition. The report includes many astute observations and assessments about the organization and capability of the Japanese forces that fought in southern Taiwan, and it provides a wealth of information about the complex local society that the Japanese dealt with during their occupation of the area. This essay will examine Wasson's assessment both of the nature of the Japanese army that the government dispatched to southern Taiwan and of the characteristics of the society that the Japanese expedition encountered there.

Wasson and the Japanese Expedition to Taiwan

At the time of the Japanese expedition Wasson, a youthful 27 years old, had already distinguished himself in the U.S. Army. Born in Ohio in 1847, Wasson grew up in a small town outside of Des Moines, Iowa. His father, John, enlisted in a volunteer infantry unit from Iowa that fought on the side of the Union states against the Confederacy during the American Civil War. His father left the army after a year because of poor health, but when Wasson turned seventeen in 1864 he enlisted in the same volunteer unit his father had served in. Wasson spent about a year and a half in the army and saw extensive action in battles that took place across several Southern states, before being discharged from service a few months after the war ended in 1865.⁵⁾

Wasson impressed his commanding officer, and the military life apparently suited him. In order to pursue a career in the Army, he secured an appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1867. Wasson had received only a minimal education before attending West Point, but he excelled in his studies at the military academy despite the difficulty of the curriculum. In addition to excelling academically, Wasson also had the good fortune to form a friendship with a well-connected fellow cadet named Frederick Grant, the son of Ulysses S. Grant, the general in command of the Union Army during the Civil War and president of the United States from 1869 to 1877. Through his friendship with Frederick Grant, Wasson had the opportunity to socialize with the president and that personal connection served Wasson well at several points in his career. Wasson graduated first in his class in 1871, and with the enviable support of a powerful patron the talented young soldier seemed destined for a superlative career.

It is unclear why Wasson decided to go to Japan, but soon after graduating from West Point he began to lobby to work in Hokkaido under Horace Capron, who had served as a Commissioner in the Department of Agriculture under President Grant. Capron met Kuroda Kiyotaka, a hero of the Meiji Restoration and the future director of the Hokkaido Colonization Office, when Kuroda visited the United States in 1871. Kuroda was impressed by Capron, and he recommended that the Japanese government hire the American as an advisor to help with the development of Hokkaido, and Capron worked in that capacity from 1871 to 1875. Wasson hoped to work under Capron, and President Grant wrote a letter on his behalf asking Capron to add Wasson to his personal staff. When Grant's intercession failed to bear fruit, the president had Wasson's commanding officer give the young American an extended leave of absence from service (with advance pay) so he could visit Japan. Wasson traveled to Japan in the autumn of 1871, on the same ship as Capron, and with the help of Charles DeLong, the American Minister to Japan, Wasson managed to secure from the Japan

nese government an appointment to the Hokkaido Colonization Office. He resigned his commission in the U.S. Army effective July 1, 1872, but he began to work for the Hokkaido Colonization Office in March of that year, first as a teacher and later as surveyor-in-chief.⁶⁾

On April 1, 1874, Wasson transferred his position from the Hokkaido Colonization Office to the Japanese Army in order to serve as an advisor for the upcoming expedition to Taiwan. The Japanese Army gave Wasson the rank of colonel, a considerable improvement over the rank of second lieutenant he had held briefly after graduating from West Point. It is not clear why Wasson chose to participate in the expedition, but the chance to see military action may have enticed him, and he was certainly paid very well for his service to the Japanese government.⁷⁾

Wasson sailed for Taiwan on board the Yūkō-maru, the first Japanese ship of the expedition to leave Nagasaki. Consequently he was among the first members of the expeditionary force to disembark in Taiwan on May 6, 1874, and he attended all of the major meetings with local aborigine leaders that took place during the early months of the Japanese occupation of the south. Because of his role as an advisor he was one of the few foreigners to have first-hand knowledge of the situation the Japanese army actually encountered on the ground in southern Taiwan, and he directed the effort to build a temporary military camp to house the Japanese troops until a more permanent camp could be constructed. His report shows that he put considerable thought into making the temporary camp as defensible as possible. Wasson also witnessed firsthand some of the fighting between the Japanese and the aborigines, and in other cases he was privy to debriefings of Japanese soldiers after battles or skirmishes. Because of his role as an advisor he was in an excellent position to evaluate the performance of the Japanese Army. Wasson spent several months in southern Taiwan, from the arrival of the Japanese force in May until August, when illness compelled him to return to Nagasaki for medical treatment. By then the military confrontation between the Japanese and aborigines had been over for months and the occupation of southern Taiwan had settled into uneventful monotony. While Wasson did not stay in southern Taiwan until the expeditionary force withdrew in late November and early December, his report nevertheless gives us a detailed picture of the time when most of the political and military action took place.

For several years after the Japanese expedition Wasson continued to enjoy a successful career until a bad gambling habit tempted him into embezzlement and ultimately landed him in federal prison. After the expedition Wasson spent another year in Japan teaching civil engineering in Tokyo, and during that time he married Marie Bingham, the daughter of John A. Bingham, who had replaced Charles DeLong as the American Minister in Japan on May 31, 1873. Wasson returned to the United States in 1876 where he assumed the post of Army Paymaster at the rank of major, a stunning increase in rank that he achieved at the direct intercession of President Grant. After being posted to Texas he slowly fell into debt from real estate speculation and gambling, and in 1883 he embezzled \$24,000, nearly ten times his annual base pay, in order to cover his debts. His crime was quickly discovered and he was convicted and sentenced to eighteen months in prison. After his release from prison Wasson worked in various jobs, mainly in civil engineering and selling insurance, but he had little last-

ing success. Many years later, when he was nearly 53 years old, Wasson enlisted again in the U.S. Army in order to fight in the Spanish-American War. Initially he was given the rank of sergeant, but his rank was reduced to private because he neglected his duties, and later he was court-martialed for drunkenness. Wasson was clearly a talented soldier whose military career started brilliantly, and he capitalized on close personal relationships with powerful patrons to gain prestigious and important positions. Despite these considerable advantages, however, success eluded him and his career ended in disappointment.⁸⁾

Wasson's Report

In 1875, near the end of his year of service as an advisor to the Japanese Army, Wasson wrote a report to the Japanese government explaining what had happened during the expedition to Taiwan. It was standard practice in the U.S. military for officers to write reports to their superiors explaining what had taken place during battles and military engagements, and the Japanese officers who served in Taiwan followed a similar practice and wrote reports about the action that took place in southern Taiwan. Douglas Cassel, the American naval officer who advised the Japanese in southern Taiwan, also wrote many reports about the various negotiations he participated in, but while almost none of the original copies of his reports survive at least some of them were translated into Japanese and a few were sent back to the government in Tokyo. Wasson played a less important role in the expedition than did Cassel, and since he did not lead any of the negotiations or participate in battle he had no need to write any status reports about his activities. The report he wrote in 1875 therefore appears to be his only written account about the expedition, and it was probably intended to serve as Wasson's final debriefing before he left the service of the Japanese Army.

Wasson's report is addressed simply to "Sir," but several clues show that it was intended for Ōkuma Shigenobu, the official in charge of the *Banchi jimukyoku*, the government office that managed the affairs of the expedition. One of the tasks of the *Banchi jimukyoku* was to record the activities of the expedition, and it even published a short official history of the affair, so it would be natural for the *Banchi jimukyoku* to want an account of the expedition from Wasson. Wasson states that he is submitting the report to "Your Excellency," indicating that the intended recipient had ministerial rank in the government, and that he is doing so "[i]n accordance with the instructions forwarded to me through Mr. Hirai...." Ōkuma was the only official Wasson might have corresponded with who held ministerial rank, and Mr. Hirai refers to Hirai Yukimasa, a talented translator who handled nearly all of the correspondence between Charles LeGendre and Ōkuma. We can infer from these references that Ōkuma instructed Wasson, through Hirai, to write a report about the expedition, probably for the records of the *Banchi jimukyoku*.

The report itself consists of 103 handwritten pages, and it is found among LeGendre's papers in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. There appears to be only one copy of the report in existence, and apparently no Japanese translation was ever made.¹³⁾ It is likely that Wasson prepared the report for Ōkuma and gave it to LeGendre so he could have Hirai or someone else translate it and submit it to Ōkuma.

LeGendre's papers contain clean copies of a significant number of documents that were translated and submitted to the *Banchi jimukyoku* and that later ended up being preserved at the Japanese National Archives (Kokuritsu kōbunshokan). It would have been normal under the circumstances for LeGendre's secretary to prepare a clean copy of Wasson's report for LeGendre's records and to give Hirai the original report so he could translate it. It is unclear why no copy or translation was ever made, but the most likely explanation is that during the hectic last few months before the *Banchi* jimukyoku shut down its operations and LeGendre left the employment of the Japanese government, LeGendre simply forgot about the report or decided that it was not important enough to go to the trouble of having it translated. In the spring of 1875, months after Japanese forces had withdrawn from southern Taiwan and even after the Banchi jimukyoku had published its brief formal history of the expedition, Wasson's report may have seemed from LeGendre's perspective to contain little of importance. Even Okuma's request for Wasson to write a report conveys the impression of a loose end being tied up. Still, while the report seems literally to have been forgotten at the time, it contains information that confirms key evidence found elsewhere and it describes features of the expeditionary force and the local society that are mentioned nowhere else.

Wasson's Description of the Expedition

Many of the descriptive sections of Wasson's report provide information similar to what can be found in other sources, such as a letter that Cassel wrote to LeGendre in May, 1874, a narrative of the expedition written by Edward H. House, and various reports that Saigō Tsugumichi sent back to the Japanese government. Consequently, Wasson's report provides important confirmation of information found in other sources, but it also describes a number of aspects of the Japanese operations in southern Taiwan that cannot be found elsewhere. Much of the unique information in the report is based on observations and judgments that Wasson made as a trained army officer, and for that reason the source is particularly important.

The report explains the Japanese occupation of southern Taiwan more or less chronologically. It begins with a brief recitation of how Wasson came to write the report, his assigned duties during the expedition, and his passage to southern Taiwan, with a lengthy digression to explain the systems of signals that he tried to teach to the Japanese soldiers during the voyage (217–220). 15) Next, the report describes what happened immediately after the expeditionary force arrived in southern Taiwan, including Wasson's efforts to construct a temporary camp for the Japanese forces (220–224). This section is followed by an account of the first meeting between Cassel, who negotiated on behalf of the Japanese, and the aborigine leader named Issa, as well as accounts of the first skirmishes between the Japanese and aborigines and a second meeting with Issa, which was attended by Saigō Tsugumichi (224-240). The next section describes the planning and implementation of the main attack on the aborigines that took place from June 1 to June 3, and a meeting with aborigines a few days after the attack (240–248). The last section of the report offers a number of general observations about local society in southern Taiwan, and it closes with a brief explanation of Wasson's return to Nagasaki and a word of thanks to Saigō and the other Japanese

officers (248-256).

The influence of Wasson's training as an army officer is obvious in many of the comments he makes in the report. For example, the early pages of the report describe in some detail two specific duties that the Japanese government assigned to him because of his professional expertise: to train members of the Japanese Army in a system of signals, and to prepare a temporary camp for the Japanese force. Wasson's efforts to train the Japanese signalmen does not appear to be mentioned in any other sources, and even though his efforts were not especially successful the plan nevertheless shows, especially in the context of the effort to hire foreign advisors in the mid-Meiji period, that the Japanese government hoped to learn as much as possible from its foreign military advisors during the expedition. Wasson explains that he was ordered to instruct the forty "officers and men of the signal corps" in a "system of signals somewhat similar to that used in the Army of the United States," and for that purpose the signal corps was sent on the first steamship to depart for Taiwan (217-218). The system, Wasson explains, was essentially the same as the one used in the U.S. Army and Navy. The American system used flags to signal binary values (ones and twos) that could be combined to indicate the letters of the alphabet. Since the members of the signal corps could not speak English, Wasson adapted the system to use katakana so messages could be sent in Japanese. He does not explain the way the system was adapted or the role that the Japanese signalmen must have played in adapting it. He does explain, however, that he soon learned he could send messages as quickly and easily in katakana as in English. The plan was for the signal corps to learn the system during their passage to Taiwan, but they did not make much progress partly because the weather was rough and most of them became seasick but also, as Wasson notes, because the signalmen had "an imperfect understanding of the importance of the work..." (219). Wasson's politic observation barely conceals a concern about the Japanese force that recurs several times during his report: the Japanese did not understand—or perhaps more precisely did not care about—the techniques of organization, discipline, and communication necessary for coordinated military action in a modern army.

In the end, the signal corps never used the system that Wasson devised. During the main battle that took place from June 1 to June 3, where the Japanese forces split into three columns for their attack on the aborigines, the commanders of at least two of the columns communicated with each other using mortars (247). Wasson neglects to explain how the mortars were actually used but it would seem to be a more effective method of communication in mountainous territory than signaling by flag. After the fighting ended most of the signal corps was sent back to Japan, but Wasson once again commenced training the members who remained in southern Taiwan how to signal, and he notes that "I had the pleasure of showing General Saigo a drill which would illustrate the usefulness of the system" (250). Since his report apparently was never delivered, it is unlikely that Ōkuma Shigenobu ever learned of Wasson's argument that a well-trained signal corps would be a great advantage to the Japanese military.

The expeditionary force profited more directly from Wasson's army training when he helped plan and build fortifications for a temporary camp after the first shipload of troops arrived in southern Taiwan. In his narrative of the Taiwan Expedition, E. H. House includes a sometimes colorful account of the construction of the temporary camp, but House's account is based on his personal observations and it provides little indication of the military thinking behind the construction of the camp. 16 Wasson, by contrast, explicitly spells out the camp's military rationale. In devising the plan for the camp Wasson anticipated four potential adversaries that the Japanese might have to face: 1) the local Chinese and mixed-race community, 2) the Chinese Army, 3) the Chinese Navy, and 4) the aborigines. Wasson seemed to think that, at least until the bulk of the Japanese forces had arrived, the local Chinese and mixed-race population posed the greatest potential threat. As he put it, "...we [the Japanese force] were only a little more than a hundred men against several thousand" (221). The local residents were civilians but they carried arms as a matter of course and during the first couple of weeks of the occupation they could have completely eliminated the Japanese if they had wanted to. "It was desirable at this time," Wasson therefore explained, "to deal carefully with these people, for much depended on preserving friendly relations with them" (221). The site for the camp and the fortifications were selected and planned with the threat from these potential adversaries in mind.

Soon after the first Japanese ship had arrived Cassel, Wasson, and several Japanese officers explored the area around Liangkiao in search of a site for the temporary camp. They decided to place the camp in a field near the bay, a location that would make it easy to evacuate or reinforce the soldiers from the sea. With the bay at their backs, a small river on one side and a stream on the other, water provided the first line of defense on three sides of the camp. The site of the camp lay between the largest village in the area, a Chinese immigrant community called Chashiang (Checheng 車城) to the north, and to the south Shaliao (射寮), a mixed-race community that had influential ties to the aborigines. Another village lay near the camp, probably Shinke (新街), a small branch village of Shaliao. In order to prevent any of these villages from being occupied by the Chinese Army Wasson built lightly fortified areas (redoubts) on the northern and southern sides of the camp and placed within them small field artillery. Although the guns were light, they were enough to permit the Japanese to shell the surrounding villages and prevent them from being occupied. The redoubt on the north side of the camp was the larger of the two and it was situated so that the Japanese could shell either Chashiang or Chinese ships that might attack from the north (223). In describing this and other camps that the Japanese established, Wasson noted that none of them had any significant protection from the sea so the expeditionary force would have to rely on the Japanese Navy for defense if the Chinese Navy attacked (249). The various camps were only lightly fortified in order to provide protection against infantry attacks, and the rough terrain in the area made it unlikely that the Chinese Army would be able to use artillery.

Wasson placed an extended rifle pit across the front of the camp, facing toward the mountains. The land in front of the camp was flat and provided little cover for an attacking force, and the fortifications that Wasson built made it possible for "the whole extent of the country in front [of the camp] to be brought under a deadly fire of musketry." The Japanese had also purchased two Gatling guns for use in the expedition, and Wasson placed the larger of them in a "retired salient," an inward bulge in center of the front line of fortifications that gave the Gatling gun a wide range of fire (223).

The fortifications were simple but sufficient to protect against the greatest potential threats. At this point, the aborigines posed no real threat to the Japanese because they would not descend from the mountains in order to attack the Japanese camp directly.

In addition to introducing a system of signals and constructing a temporary camp, Wasson also provided other advice and assistance to the Japanese. In particular, he attended two early meetings with the leaders of the aborigine villages and he helped to plan the main battle against the belligerent aborigine villages. Wasson's account of the two meetings does not differ substantially from the account written by Cassel, and there are several reasons to favor Cassel's account over Wasson's. To begin with, Cassel took the lead in negotiating with the aborigines on behalf of the Japanese, whereas Wasson merely observed the negotiations, and for that reason Cassel's account is more important. Secondly, Wasson wrote his account from memory several months after the meetings took place. As a result his account contains less detail than Cassel's, which was written immediately after the meetings took place, and Wasson's account contains a few mistakes about when events happened. Finally, Cassel's account was translated into Japanese almost immediately, and later published, so it actually influenced the policy decisions that the government made and it has long been available to historians. Because Cassel's account was translated and published, the particulars of the meetings with the aborigines, at least as they were seen from the Japanese side, are well known. 18) For these reasons Wasson's account of the meetings will not be explained here.

Wasson's description of the central role that Cassel played in planning the main battle against the aborigines is a different matter, however, since it contains revealing information that cannot be found in any other source. The various reports about the main battle against the aborigines that Saigō sent back to the government in Japan make no mention of the crucial role Cassel played. In his letter to LeGendre on May 24, Cassel writes that he "had been engaged in drawing the plan of a little campaign in case the Boutans should take the initiative whereby I felt sure of 'bagging' the whole fighting force of the tribe" (209; emphasis in original). Aborigines from the village of Butan (牡丹; Boutan in Cassel's letter and Wasson's report) were suspected of murdering the Ryūkyūans in 1871, but Butan was often assisted by the nearby village of Kusakut (高士佛; Kussikut in Wasson's report) and for that reason Cassel's plan focused on those two villages. Cassel tells LeGendre in his letter that his "guides," two men from Shaliao named Mia and Kien who had helped LeGendre in the past, told him that the people of Butan had made fortifications at a local pass called "Stone Doors" (usually called Stone Door by Westerners and later known in Japanese as Sekimon). According to Mia and Kien the aborigines intended to make a stand there. Cassel writes,

I had examined people from Hong Kang and from different points near the Boutan country, and I felt sure that by an advance from Hong Kang in a night march, while a diversion was made at the same time at the 'Stone Doors' to bring the Boutans down the valley, I could get them in such a trap that they could not escape. [209]

Cassel was vexed when Japanese soldiers disobeyed orders and advanced into the ab-

original territory on May 22 in order to engage the aborigines at Stone Door because it disrupted his plan and probably reduced the effectiveness of future action against Butan. Irrespective of the merits of his plan, we learn from Cassel's account that he spoke to local mixed-race residents from Shaliao, people from Hongkang (楓港)—a coastal village some 10 miles to the north of the camp—and from others "near the Boutan country" (probably people from mixed-race villages) in order to learn about the roads into the aboriginal territory that the Japanese could use for their attack. The main battle against the aborigines that actually took place on June 1–3 unfolded more or less according to the plan that Cassel formulated around May 22.

Wasson's report provides substantially more information about Cassel's role in planning the main battle against the aborigines. Wasson describes, for example, how Cassel gathered information:

In the meantime, since the 22nd inst. preparations for the campaign against the Boutans and Kussikuts were being made as rapidly and quietly as possible. In order to insure the success of the expedition it was necessary to collect all the information regarding the positions of the principal villages, the roads or paths leading to them and the number of fighting men that they could probably bring against us, that could be had. In the absence of maps of the country which would furnish the desired information about the roads and the character of the country generally, we had to rely upon the knowledge which could be obtained from the Chinese and half castes [mixed-race residents], many of whom were more or less familiar with the hostile territory in question. [240]

Wasson then describes the three "roads," often little more than mountain paths that followed stream beds, that led to the villages of Butan and Kusakut. Wasson continued,

Several days were spent in collecting the most accurate information that was to be had respecting these different roads. Guides were procured and examined separately and their different accounts carefully compared until we were satisfied that we had learned all that was known about the different routes, the distances to the villages &c.... The greater part of this information was obtained by Captain Cassel from the natives, through the English speaking interpreter Johnson, who was of great assistance in all communication with the savages, or people of Liang Kiao Valley. [241–242]

The "natives" mentioned by Wasson probably were Chinese from Chashiang and Hongkang as well as people from mixed-race villages such as Shaliao, Shinke, and Poliak (保力), since those villages provided the guides for the main attack. All of these villages used some version of the Fujian dialect, the dialect spoken by the interpreter Johnson. We can see from Wasson's account, therefore, the central role Cassel played in gathering the information needed to formulate the plan for attacking the aborigines.

Cassel apparently wrote a memorandum to Saigō explaining his plan for the attack on Butan and Kusakut, but the memo does not appear to be mentioned in any of the Japanese sources, nor does the original survive. Wasson includes a copy of the memo in his report, however, and it outlines the plan to send Japanese troops into the mountains via three columns that would travel through Hongkang, Chiksha (竹社) and Stone Door. The actual attack took place more or less according to Cassel's plan, as can be seen in the letter Saigō wrote to Sanjō Sanetomi explaining the battle (Saigō's letter covers reports from the commanders and staff officers who led each of the three columns during the attack). [9]

Near the end of his report Wasson includes a further "extract" from Cassel's memo which consists of a table that lists information about villages in southern Taiwan. The table lists the names of the villages, the number of "fighting men" in each village, the name of the village leader, and whether the village was likely to be friendly or hostile. Wasson does not identify the memo clearly, but it probably was part of the memo mentioned above that gave the plan of attack on Butan and Kusakut. Wasson does explain the provenance of the information quite clearly, however:

In making this table Captain Cassel questioned many people at different times and compared their separate accounts until he had gotten what he thought was the most authentic information of the points. [255]

The information in the table was therefore gathered during the inquiries described above that Cassel made in preparation for the attack. Wasson's description of Cassel's role and the excerpts he provides from Cassel's memorandum to Saigō show more clearly than any other available evidence the centrality of Cassel's role in advising Saigō on how to undertake the attack against Butan and Kusakut.

Perhaps the most interesting features of Wasson's report are the extensive observations and criticisms he makes about the organization and operations of the Japanese expeditionary force. Cassel, unlike Wasson, made a number of extremely caustic criticisms about the Japanese Army in southern Taiwan, for example, describing General Tani Tateki as a "little imbecile" and sharply questioning Admiral Akamatsu Noriyoshi's tactical judgment and his lack of control over the men under his command. Cassel did so in a letter to LeGendre, however, and not in a report written directly to one of the key leaders of the Japanese government. Wasson was more politic than Cassel in his report to Ōkuma, but he nevertheless voiced criticisms about Japanese indifference toward tactical planning and about the general lack of discipline among the Japanese troops.

Both Cassel and Wasson believed that the Japanese should plan and execute a single decisive attack against the aborigines, and their thinking led to the attack that took place on June 1–3, but the Japanese soldiers clearly chafed at the restraint that Cassel tried to impose on them. The simultaneous attack from multiple directions that Cassel envisioned required careful preparation: he had to gain the cooperation of the local Chinese and mixed-race population, to gain the support (or at least the neutrality) of as many aborigine villages as possible, to identify the routes of attack that the Japanese troops could use, to estimate the time it would take for different contingents to arrive at the target, and to gauge the strength and location of potential hostile forces. As he undertook these tasks Cassel often found himself frustrated as Japanese soldiers, some-

times with the support of officers, engaged in various skirmishes that threatened to disrupt his plan completely.

One troublesome incident occurred when Akamatsu took the corvette *Nisshin* to Kwaliang Bay on May 18 and launched a small boat to conduct surveys. Aborigines from the village of Koalut (龜仔角) shot at the Japanese boat with their muskets, but even though no one was injured an outraged Akamatsu insisted on leading an immediate attack on Koalut and the nearby mixed-race village of Lingluan (龍鑾), which had nothing to do with the incident. Cassel, who thought Akamatsu's plan was well conceived, managed to persuade the Japanese officer not to attack the villages because it would have completely destroyed Cassel's effort to win the support or neutrality of the aborigine villages in the area. Cassel also criticized the "unauthorized" movement of small parties of officers and men toward the foothills near the aboriginal territory. By unauthorized he meant that he had not approved of the movements, but often the soldiers were acting under the orders of their commanding officers (207–208). Again, Cassel objected because the Japanese forays ran the risk of provoking a fight that might disrupt the effectiveness of the major attack that he had in mind.

Wasson also mentions the incident involving Akamatsu, but suggests that the plan to attack Koalut was set aside not because of Cassel's objections but rather because skirmishes between the Japanese and villagers from Butan had escalated into a major battle at Stone Door on May 22. Wasson is diplomatic in explaining how all of the trouble began. He writes, "We had some thought of establishing a small post at some distance back from the coast near the foot hills of the mountains in which the Boutans had their villages and stronghold" (230). Cassel criticized the Japanese more bluntly. He explained to LeGendre that Akamatsu had decided to establish the camp about two miles inland, and Cassel had considered the plan a mistake (208). When a small party of Japanese went inland on May 17 to scout for a location for the camp they were attacked by aborigines and one of the soldiers was killed and decapitated. In contrast to Cassel, who voiced frustration at seeing his plan undermined, Wasson focused both on the lack of discipline among the Japanese soldiers, which exposed them unnecessarily to ambushes, and on their lack of appreciation of the risks posed by the aborigines' guerilla tactics:

It seems that these men were allowed to straggle in rather a loose manner considering that they were in the presence of an enemy who would be only too glad to take advantage of an opportunity to surprise any small party which he could hope to overpower easily. Both Captain Cassel and I had repeatedly called the attention of officers to this important subject, and had advised that strict orders should be issued, forbidding small parties from leaving the camp without proper authority; and enjoining the greatest caution on the part of officers in command of parties sent out on duty of any kind.... [The aborigines'] mode of fighting, like that of all savages is to skulk under cover and wait for a moment when they can surprise an enemy or take him at some disadvantage. The only way to carry on a war against such an enemy is to adopt to a certain extent their own tactics; mere pluck and bravery are not sufficient; united with these qualities must be caution in avoiding an ambuscade and some skill in improving every advantage

which the character of the country presents.... [W]hen the matter was reported to us both Captain Cassel and myself repeated our former cautions and represented the great importance of enforcing at all times the strictest discipline among the men.... [230–232]

The important matter for Wasson was, in other words, to maintain discipline in order to avoid unnecessary skirmishes wherever possible and to minimize the risk of ambushes when Japanese soldiers had to venture near the strongholds of the aborigines.

At the heart of the objections about discipline that Cassel and Wasson raised lay an important philosophical difference about the nature of warfare. Both Cassel and Wasson had fought in the American Civil War and had seen a war of attrition firsthand, and they operated according to the expectation that a modern army should engage in fighting according to strict operational planning and discipline because doing so would reduce casualties and increase the likelihood of victory. They also understood, if not from direct experience then at least from general knowledge of the wars that the U.S. Army had fought against Native Americans, that the aborigines of southern Taiwan whom they unselfconsciously called "savages"—posed a serious and potentially lethal threat. The Japanese soldiers serving in southern Taiwan, by contrast, belonged to a dramatically different kind of army than the one Cassel and Wasson knew. It was a hybrid force, consisting mainly of contingents of conscripts from the Kumamoto garrison but also of volunteers from Kagoshima, Shirakawa (present-day Kumamoto), and a few other prefectures. Saigō Takamori reportedly recruited the volunteers at the request of Saigō Tsugumichi, and it is possible that many of them were expelled from the Imperial Guard (Konoe) or the Tokyo police force (Keishichō) during the controversy in 1873 over whether to invade Korea.²¹⁾ The soldiers who exhibited the worst discipline and risked disrupting Cassel's plan the most belonged to the volunteers, all of whom were shizoku, a new designation for former samurai created soon after the Meiji Restoration. The troublemakers, in other words, belonged to a class of soldiers who likely understood warfare not in terms of discipline and planning but rather in terms of the samurai ethos of bravery and the willingness to take risks in order to gain honor, and many of them had a strong desire to engage in combat. For these reasons the volunteers undoubtedly chafed at the restraint that Cassel expected of them.

The contrasting attitudes toward combat appear most clearly in Wasson's description of the battle at Stone Door on May 22. On the previous day a party of a dozen soldiers went a mile or two towards the hills and were ambushed by aborigines as they returned to the Japanese camp. Wasson described with obvious dismay the lack of discipline shown by the soldiers who responded to the attack by rushing from the camp to the scene of the ambush:

I was very anxious to see how the men would behave on the march and in action and therefore accompanied the troops on this occasion.... In going out it was necessary to cross a large stream (the one that empties just north of camp) some three or four times; the water was about waist deep and the current very rapid, but the men dashed over these places in fine style and went ahead again at full speed. One thing struck me very forcibly on the way; this was the want of order

among the troops. The companies had been properly formed in the camp on starting but in a short time the ranks were broken and when the rivers were crossed those that got out first dashed ahead without waiting to reform ranks and the march out soon became a mere race to see who would get to the scene of the action first. Had it turned out that the enemy were in full force and meant to fight the result of the lack of discipline and system would have been felt very severely. The troops had they been met at some point of the road by a heavy fire would have gone into the fight in an irregular, disorderly manner, and once they became excited their officers could have exercised very little control over them. [233]

While Wasson was appalled at the disorderly sight of soldiers racing to be first to the battlefield, it made perfect sense from the perspective of the volunteers who sought glory and recognition precisely by being first in battle.

Wasson repeatedly praised the bravery of the Japanese soldiers and the stoic way they endured discomfort, but while the character of the soldiers impressed him their lack of discipline concerned him:

Our superiority over the savages consists in our better discipline and arms; but if we neglect the former we throw away our advantage needlessly. I call attention to these points not to find fault, but to show how the effectiveness of the army could, by attention to these be much increased. I do so because I take a deep interest in these matters and would like to see the Japanese army as good and efficient as any in the world; the material of which it is composed is as good as any that can be found in any country and only needs proper training to discipline. [234]

Wasson's repeated comments about the lack of discipline suggest he saw it as the greatest weakness of the Japanese Army.

The Japanese soldiers, including in some cases the officers, also showed a troubling disregard for following orders. As evening fell on May 21, Wasson advised the officers in command that the soldiers should all return to camp since they would likely want to press further into the aboriginal territory if they spent the night in the field, and thereby disrupt the plan that Cassel was formulating. The officers ignored Wasson's advice, and the next morning the soldiers in fact advanced farther into the aboriginal territory and provoked the battle at Stone Door. The Japanese walked straight into a well-designed ambush where the aborigines were able to fire down upon them to great effect. As Wasson warned, once the fighting began the soldiers became excited and when their commanding officer Sakuma Samata ordered them to retreat in order to avoid a premature general engagement they ignored the order and fought on, only heeding the order to disengage after they drove the aborigines out of their stronghold (235-236). Cassel was livid when he heard what happened. "Judge of my disgust then," he wrote to LeGendre, "when, on the morning of the 22nd, the company which had been in bivouac during the night advanced into this pass instead of returning as they had been ordered..." (209; emphasis in original). He complained to Akamatsu

Noriyoshi who, according to Cassel, "protested that the men had acted without orders, and that he had ordered the immediate withdrawal of all forces from that locality so that my plan would still hold good" (209). The inclination of the soldiers—and some of the officers—to ignore orders probably had several causes, among them the fact that Cassel, an American, had power at least nominally to direct the actions of the Japanese troops. The nature of the expeditionary force also contributed to the lack of discipline concerning orders. The volunteers, in particular, placed little importance in the sort of discipline that Cassel and Wasson expected. Because of its hybrid nature and the ethos of some of the soldiers who fought in it, the Japanese Army that the American advisors witnessed was not yet as good and efficient as a modern army.

Wasson's report also includes useful information about the complex hybrid society of Chinese, aborigines, and mixed-race residents who lived in southern Taiwan at the time of the expedition. No indigenous accounts of the Japanese occupation of southern Taiwan were written, although some information has been preserved in the oral tradition of the aborigines, 22) but there are a number of foreign accounts about the people and society of southern Taiwan that provide a fairly detailed, if biased, view of the people and culture of the area.²³⁾ As I have explained elsewhere, these foreign accounts provide insights into the human geography of southern Taiwan that help us to understand where different population groups lived, how they organized themselves economically and politically, and in some cases how they subsisted.²⁴⁾ These foreign sources divided local society into groups that consisted of descendants of Chinese immigrants, aborigines, and mixed-race families that resulted from intermarriage between Chinese and aborigine families. An informal boundary separated the aborigine villages from the Chinese and mixed-race villages, but marriage, travel, and trade took place across the boundary. The most important characteristic of local society, however, was probably its violence. For example, aborigine villages were designed for defense, usually being surrounded by bamboo thickets to prevent attacks, and male residents throughout the south—Chinese, mixed-race, and aborigine alike—typically carried firearms whenever they left their villages.

Wasson mentions many of these features of local society in his report, but in contrast to most Western and Japanese visitors to the area he devoted comparatively more attention to the local Chinese population. One passage in particular describes the local Chinese in some detail:

The valley is quite thickly populated, the people being gathered into small villages; the principal of which are Chasiang, Sialiao, Biah &c. &c. The former of those has a population of more than one thousand. These people are colonists from different parts of the China Coast opposite and are generally a thrifty industrious people. Those from different parts of China gather into separate villages each of which is quite independent having its own local government, the wealthiest man of the village being its chief, but exercising his authority only over his own village, and perhaps over some small hamlets which are dependent on the main village, having sprung up after it as the population increased and the lands cultivated by it were extended. The same difference in dialects is found here as in China, which would of course be expected. The people from Canton, from

Hong Kong and from Amoy and other places bring their own dialects, and as they live in villages entirely separate these differences remain, though, perhaps, not so strongly marked as in the mother country, since owing to their close proximity there is more intercourse between these villages than is the case in China between the parent provinces. There seems always to have been much quarreling between these villages themselves, and also between the villages and the savages.... On our first arrival we noticed that all the men, and even the boys from twelve to fourteen years of age carried arms at all times. At first we supposed this was as a protection from the savages, but we afterward learned that it was as much for protection from each other. Only a few days after we landed at Sialiao one of these village feuds broke out in full force.... The question at issue was apparently a trifling one involving a few dollars, and was settled by a battle in which four or five men were killed. On the day following this fight one of the parties surprised a boy belonging to the other village, plowing in a field and killed him, carrying away his head as a trophy. [252–253]

Wasson indicates here that descendants from different parts of the mainland had settled in the area, and that while the Chinese villages had to interact with each other out of necessity they did not always enjoy friendly relations. The description of the feud between Chinese villages that resulted in the murder and decapitation of a young boy is especially striking because it suggests that some Chinese residents adopted some of the tactics of the aborigines. None of the other foreign sources about southern Taiwan mention this incident, or similar cases of Chinese decapitating their enemies, so the incident may have been unique or at least a rare example, but it is unlikely that Wasson was mistaken. The incident occurred soon after the Japanese force arrived in the south and Wasson surely would have kept a careful eye on any cases of violence or potential military threats in the area.

Although Wasson paid some attention to the local Chinese population, the aborigines were a more important focus because of the threat they posed and because of the expedition's mission to "punish" them. Foreign accounts of aboriginal society often include descriptions of the fighting tactics that the aborigines used, and Wasson's report is no exception. Since many of the foreign visitors to the area were current or former members of the military their accounts usually had a distinctly military color. They describe how the aborigines used the terrain to their best advantage, and tried to avoid exposure to gunfire themselves while drawing their enemies into ambushes through constant movement, feints, and deception. Foreign accounts show clearly that the aborigines put considerable effort and planning into their defense.

Wasson's report provides a particularly insightful description of the planning and preparation that the aborigines put into the defense of their territory. Wasson describes, for example, the location that the villagers of Butan chose for their defense against the Japanese attack on June 1:

Just as dark came on we entered a wood near the summit of the mountain over which we were passing; here the savages had cut down the trees and so interwoven them as to make an almost impassable barricade. Still we saw nothing of the savages, though had even a small force been stationed at this place it would have been difficult to dislodge them from it. It was evident that it was here that they had meant to give us battle, and the place had been skillfully chosen, and had been made as strong as was possible. Even without opposition the troops could only creep through the trees; in many places the road was so effectually vaned that men had to be sent ahead with axes to chop away the barricade before we could pass. [246]

The Japanese attacked Butan from three directions, and by the time the Japanese reached the barricade that Wasson describes the fighters from Butan had fled. From this passage one can sense not only Wasson's relief that the barricade was deserted, but also the wary respect he had for the fighting ability of the aborigines.

Conclusions

It seems a waste that Wasson's report never reached Ōkuma Shigenobu, but perhaps in the end it would have had little influence on Japanese policy even if Ōkuma had read it. Still, the report contains much of historical interest. It confirms a number of facts about the expedition that are mentioned in other sources written by key participants such as the American advisor Douglas Cassel and the Japanese leader of the expedition Saigō Tsugumichi, or key observers such as the journalist E. H. House. It also provides a useful account of Wasson's own contributions to the expedition, such as his instructing a signal corps and preparing a temporary camp for the expeditionary force, and it provides a description of the local Chinese and mixed-race community and the style of fighting and defensive tactics used by the aborigines.

Wasson's report is most revealing, however, in the descriptions that were shaped by his knowledge and experience as a soldier. His assessment of potential military threats reveals more clearly than any other source the range of risks that the Japanese army faced during its occupation of southern Taiwan. In retrospect we know that only the aborigines posed a serious military threat to the Japanese, but hindsight often obscures potential outcomes that influence people's actions at the time, and Wasson's account provides a vivid understanding of how important it was for the expeditionary force to win the support of the local Chinese and mixed-race population. Similarly, his report contains information found nowhere else about the role that Cassel played in planning the main Japanese attack against the aborigines. Where Cassel's letter to LeGendre provides only the barest outlines of the plan he drew up, Wasson's report contains the actual plan that Cassel presented to Saigō Tsugumichi and it describes the effort Cassel made in order to obtain the best information possible about the location of roads and villages and the number of aborigine fighters the Japanese might have to face. Wasson's report thus reveals in striking detail the crucial role that Cassel played as a military advisor to the Japanese Army.

The report also provides unprecedented insights into the operations and behavior of the Japanese Army. Whereas Cassel's letter contains caustic criticisms of the expeditionary force's high ranking officers, Wasson's report focuses more on the soldiers who did the fighting. From Wasson's report we get a view of what happened when a hybrid Japanese army, not fully beyond the traditional ethos and organization of a

samurai army, encountered a complex, violent local society at the periphery of the Qing empire. According to Wasson, the Japanese soldiers, especially the former samurai who formed the corps of volunteers that bore the brunt of the early fighting, did not care much about the techniques of organization, discipline, and communication necessary for coordinated military action in a modern army. We can see from a variety of sources, including Wasson's report, that the Japanese Army in southern Taiwan differed in key respects from a modern army: it was a hybrid force, heterogeneous in its organization and behavior. The bravery of the Japanese soldiers impressed Wasson, but not the level of their discipline. Wasson's exasperation at the soldiers' lack of discipline and organization contrasts with their headstrong determination to engage the enemy at the earliest opportunity. The contrast between these two attitudes reveals the key difference in the way that the American advisors and the Japanese soldiers viewed warfare, and it shows quite starkly what separated the expeditionary force from Wasson's image of a modern army.

Notes

- 1) This article follows the general practice of calling the indigenous inhabitants of Taiwan aborigines.
- Roger D. Cunningham, "'Recreant to His Trust:' the Disappointing Career of Major James R. Wasson," Army History no. 60 (Winter-Spring 2004), 8.
- 3) Hazel Jones, Live Machines: Hired Foreigners and Meiji Japan, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 145–147; "Oyatoi gaikokujin," Asao Naohiro, Uno Shun'ichi, and Tanaka Migaku, eds., Kadokawa shinpan Nihonshi jiten, (2nd ed.: Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2004), 174.
- 4) In addition to James Wasson, foreign advisors involved in the planning and implementation of the Taiwan Expedition included Charles LeGendre, Gustave Emile Boissonade, Douglas Cassel, E. H. House, and Albert B. Brown. For more about these foreign advisors see Lewis Bush, The Life and Times of the Illustrious Captain Brown: A Chronicle of the Sea and of Japan's Emergence as a World Power, (Tokyo and Rutland: Voyager's Press Ltd. and Charles E. Tuttle, 1969); Sandra Carol Taylor Caruthers, "Charles LeGendre, American Diplomacy, and Expansionism in Meiji Japan," Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Colorado, 1966; Roger D. Cunningham, "A Conspicuous Ornament:" The Short, Eventful Life of Lt. Cdr. Douglas R. Cassel, U.S.N. (1845–75)," The Journal of America's Military Past vol. 30 no. 3 (Winter 2004–2005), 17–26; Robert Eskildsen, ed., Foreign Adventurers and the Aborigines of Southern Taiwan, 1867–1874: Western Sources Related to Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan, (Taibei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 2005); James L. Huffman, A Yankee in Meiji Japan: The Crusading Journalist Edward H. House, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); and Sophia Su-fei Yen, Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836–1874, (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, 1965).
- 5) Cunningham, "Recreant to His Trust," 5.
- 6) Cunningham, "Recreant to His Trust," 6-8.
- 7) For his year of service in the Japanese Army Wasson received an annual salary of \$6,000 plus a ¥1,000 allowance. By comparison, in 1883 Wasson earned a base salary of \$2,500 from the U.S. Army when he served as Paymaster at the rank of major. Cunningham, "Recreant to His Trust," 8, 13.
- 8) Cunningham, "Recreant to His Trust," 11-18.
- 9) These reports by Japanese officers formed the basis of the account of the fighting that Saigō Tsugumichi sent to his government in June, 1874. Saigō Tsugumichi to Sanjō Sanetomi, June 7, 1874, in Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Iinkai, ed., Saigō totoku to Kabayama sōtoku, (Taihoku: Saigō Totoku Kabayama Sōtoku Kinen Jigyō Shuppan Iinkai, 1936), 93–101 (hereafter as STKS).
- Gaimushō Chōsabu, ed., Dai Nihon gaikō bunsho, (12 vols.; Tokyo: Nihon Kokusai Kyōkai, 1936–1940), 7: 115–125 (hereafter as DNGB). Cassel writes, in a letter to LeGendre on May 26, 1874,

- "Pray pardon this horrible scrawl and I am sure you would do so if you knew the amount of writing I have to get through with every day," Eskildsen, *Foreign Adventurers*, 216. Other than this letter to LeGendre, however, none of Cassel's other reports about what took place in southern Taiwan seem to have survived.
- Banchi Jimukyoku, ed., Shoban shushi sho, (1875), in Meiji Bunka Kenkyūkai, ed., Meiji bunka zenshū (7): gaikō hen, (1928; Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1992), 153–178.
- 12) "Report from James R. Wasson to Ōkuma Shigenobu," in Eskildsen, Foreign Adventurers, 217.
- 13) The report has been published as "Report from James R. Wasson to Ökuma Shigenobu," in Eskild-sen, Foreign Adventurers, 217–256.
- 14) "Letter from Douglas Cassel to Charles LeGendre," May 24 and May 26, 1874, in Eskildsen, Foreign Adventurers, 201–216; Edward Howard House, The Japanese Expedition to Formosa, (Tokio [Tokyo]: n.p., 1875); STKS 93–101.
- 15) In the description of Cassel's letter and Wasson's report, parenthetical notes indicate page numbers in "Letter from Douglas Cassel to Charles LeGendre" and "Report from James R. Wasson to Ōkuma Shigenobu."
- 16) House, 49-60.
- 17) Various foreign observers in the 1860s and 1870s identified three groups of residents in southern Taiwan. There were 1) descendants of Chinese immigrants from the mainland, 2) people of mixed Chinese and aborigine background, and 3) aborigines. Foreign observers identified these different communities with terms that have various racial, political, ethnic and cultural connotations, and many of the terms are derogatory and offensive by contemporary standards. Since there is no commonly accepted terminology in English that is used to identify these communities, for convenience they will be called here, respectively, Chinese, mixed-race, and aborigine. For a more detailed discussion of the diverse nature of the society in southern Taiwan in 1874, see Robert Eskildsen, "Foreign Views of Difference and Engagement along Taiwan's Sino-Aboriginal Boundary in the 1870s," in Ko-wu Huang, ed., Huazhong youhua: Jindai Zhongguode shijue biaoshu yu wenhua goutu, (Taibei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2003), 253–287.
- 18) "Letter from Douglas Cassel to Charles LeGendre," 203–216; Japanese translation in DNGB 7:115– 125
- 19) Saigō to Sanjō, June 7, 1874, STKS 93-101.
- 20) For a comparison of Cassel's list of villages, given by Wasson, and similar lists made by other visitors to southern Taiwan, see Appendix F in Eskildsen, Foreign Adventurers, 281–282.
- 21) STKS 9.
- 22) Õhama Ikuko, "Botansha jiken' saikō: naze Paiwan zoku wa Ryūkyū tōmin o satsugai shita no ka," Taiwan genjūmin kenkyū no. 11 (2007), 203–223.
- 23) Charles LeGendre, "Notes of Travel in Formosa," 4 vols., unpublished mss, 1874, Papers of Charles William LeGendre, Library of Congress [for the sections about southern Taiwan see Eskildsen, Foreign Adventurers, 69–196]; Dispatches from the Bell Expedition, New York Times, August 24, 1867 (reprinted in Eskildsen, Foreign Adventurers, 49–62); House, The Japanese Expedition to Formosa; Glen Dudbridge, ed., Aborigines of South Taiwan in the 1880s, (Taipei: Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines, Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1999); Mizuno Jun, "Taiwan seibanki," in Tairōkai, ed., Tairō Mizuno Jun sensei, (Taihoku: Tairōkai Jimusho, 1930), 176–305; W. A. Pickering, Pioneering in Formosa: Recollections of Adventures among Mandarins, Wreckers, and Head-Hunting Savages, (1898, reprint; Taibei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Company, 1972).
- 24) Eskildsen, Foreign Adventurers, "Introduction," 14–24; Eskildsen, "Foreign Views of Difference and Engagement," 253–287.