

**HARALD PÖCHER****Japan in the First World War****Japán az első világháborúban****Abstract**

*The paper aims at describing Japan's involvement in the First World War. It portrays the domestic changes in the country taking place due to the Meiji reforms that launched a successful modernization process. This modernization affected the military that was able to defeat the Central powers' troops in the Far-East and in the Pacific. In order to highlight the circumstances of this conflict, the paper also shows the German territorial expansion in China and in Oceania. After conquering these colonies, Japan supported the Entente forces by delivering ammunition and weapons as well as sending ships to the Mediterranean Sea. The paper also highlights the situation of the Home-front in Japan and depicts the life in the prisoner camps. The paper concludes that although Japan was one of the main winners of the WWI, nevertheless it could not obtain a permanent profit by winning the war.*

**Absztrakt**

*A tanulmány célja Japán első világháborús szerepvállalásának bemutatása. Felvázolja az országban zajló Meiji-reformok során kibontakozó modernizációt, amely nem kerülte el a hadsereget sem, hiszen képes volt legyőzni a központi hatalmak távol-keleti és csendes-óceáni csapatait. A harcok körülményeit bemutatandó, a tanulmány foglalkozik a kínai és az óceániai német területi terjeszkedéssel. A gyarmatok meghódítása után Japán fegyverszállítmányokkal és hajók küldésével támogatta az antantot. A tanulmány nemcsak a harcokkal, de a japán háttérrel, illetve az ott kialakított hadifogoly-táborokkal is foglalkozik. A mű megállapítja, hogy annak ellenére, hogy Japán volt az első világháború egyik legnagyobb nyertese, nem tudta tartósan kihasználni a háborús szerzeményeit.*

The Japanese contribution to the First World War led to a reorganization of the East Asian and Western Pacific region and created thereby the hotbed for the following tremors of European colonial policy in this region. For a better understanding of the events during World War One it is necessary to give an overview about Japanese politics before the outbreak of the war.

## HISTORY OF JAPAN BEFORE WORLD WAR ONE

In 1853, after more than 250 years of separation, the US-Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858) forced the opening of the country with his most modern steam warships<sup>i</sup>. The first Japanese-USA agreement on friendship and trade of 1854 was followed by similar agreements with the great European powers, except Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, which signed such an agreement not earlier than 1869<sup>ii</sup>. All these agreements were unfavourable for Japan and therefore led to violent conflicts in the country. In 1868, after a short civil war, the Tenno – in Japan the emperor is called Tenno<sup>iii</sup> - has emerged victorious and thereafter Emperor Mutsuhito (1852-1912) - after his death he was given a posthumous name, Meiji<sup>iv</sup> - started to restore the power of the emperor, but contrary to the old Japan in which the Tennes were “demigods” the Tennes after 1868 were only “demigods, who were abused by politicians”.

The advisers of Tenno Mutsuhito tried everything to improve the living conditions in the contemporary underdeveloped Japan. Therefore Japanese delegations travelled around the world and studied lifestyle, administration, politics, culture, technical standard and military affairs in the most successful countries of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of such a mission was the “Iwakura mission”, which travelled between 1870 and 1873 through North-America and Europe. The Iwakura mission also came to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in autumn 1873 and visited the World Exhibition and the railway-line over the Semmering, nevertheless he also saw Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's behindhand in comparison with the leading powers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A central role in the process of making up leeway was played by the armed forces. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the Japanese Forces were obsolete, i.e. the infantry made still widely use of the extremely outdated matchlock rifle, while the great powers used the most modern percussion rifle and the artillery was on the standard of 17<sup>th</sup> century. The leading politicians recognized that armed forces had to play a decisive role in the process of modernization of the whole state and they created therefore the slogan “Rich Nation-Strong Army”. During the process of modernization, the armed forces were equipped with modern weapons, which were bought at arms industries of great powers and, the Japanese armed forces got the best available military training from foreign military advisers. Until 1871 French officers trained the army personnel and British officers the navy personnel<sup>v</sup>. After the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 German officers became military advisers of the army. In training of armed forces Austrian-Hungarian military advisers didn't play a decisive role, but in 1911 the general-staff officer Major Theodor von Lerch (1869-1945) introduced alpine skiing at Japanese armed forces during his official stay in Japan<sup>vi</sup>.

The most important German military adviser was the general-staff officer Major Klemens Wilhelm Jakob Meckel (1842-1906)<sup>vii</sup>, who came to Japan in 1885 and he stayed until 1888. Following his advice, staff command exercises and an inspector general were introduced and his advices influenced and shaped the Japanese army until the end of Second World War in 1945.

The year of 1885 was a decisive turning point in Japanese domestic politics, in which the military fraction (=gunbatsu) acquired an important influence on politics. Between 1885 and 1945 more than half of all Prime-ministers and a quarter of all Cabinet members were members of the gunbatsu. All the War and Navy ministers with certain exception were high ranking generals and admirals.

The military rise of Japan and the emergence of Japanese imperialism began with the surprise attack to the kingdom of the Ryukyu-Islands in 1871 and the punitive expedition to Taiwan in 1874. 20 years later Japan was strong enough to fight the First Sino-Japanese war in 1894/95, in which Japan defeated China decisively. As a result China had to hand over Port Arthur. Because Russia also wanted to incorporate Port Arthur, Russia supported by France and Germany intervened against the cession. Japan therefore had to give up its claim on Port Arthur and had to withdraw its troops. Not later than the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese strategists and politicians developed plans for a broader expansion. According to these plans, within a period of 100 years, Japan would have to annex Korea, the Manchuria and the northern part of China. In a further period, Japan would have to annex Southeast Asia, Dutch India, Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand. The practical implementation of all these plans began with the participation in the suppression of the Boxer rebellion in 1900 with the strongest contingent of all participating nations. In 1904/05 Japan and Russia fought a war, which could be seen as the most important step for Japan to become a regional power in East Asia and Western Pacific area. Japan won the war and got Korea and Port Arthur as war booty. In 1910 Japan annexed Korea and fulfilled thereby a long dream to get supremacy over Korea. As far back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, Japan first attacked Korea, but lost most of its ships in a disastrous sea battle against a combined Korean-Chinese fleet and at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century, Japan tried to conquer Korea again but failed after loosing some decisive sea and land battles against combined Korean and Chinese Forces. After the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan got appetite for more. This appetite for more coincided with the fateful events in Europe in 1914. In the eyes of the strategic planners in Tokyo the appetite for more could be met in the easiest way by conquering the German possessions in East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean. 10 years after the defeat of Russia, Japan participated in the First World War on the side of the Entente-Powers.

#### THE GERMAN COLONIAL EMPIRE IN EAST ASIAN AND WESTERN PACIFIC

While other great European powers have begun to establish their colonial empire at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Germany began to establish its colonial empire not earlier than the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In East Asia and in the Western Pacific, Germany occupied Nauru and leased the Chinese territory around Kiautschou Bay in 1897/98, bought the former Spanish colonies of the Marianas, Carolinas and the Island of Palau in 1899 and got the western part of Samoa by treaty which was negotiated with USA (see Figure 1). To protect its position, Germany erected a modern naval base for its East Asian Squadron in

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Tsingtao. At outbreak of war, the Governor of Tsingtao was the navy Captain Alfred Meyer-Waldeck (1864-1928). In 1914 the population of Tsingtao consisted of 53,312 Chinese, 2,069 Europeans and Americans, 2,400 Soldiers of the garrison, 205 Japanese and 25 other Asians<sup>viii</sup>. In 1914, the armoured cruisers “Scharnhorst” and “Gneisenau”, the cruisers “Emden”, “Nürnberg”, “Leipzig”, the later auxiliary cruiser “Kormoran”, the canon boats “Iltis”, “Jaguar”, “Otter”, “Tsingtao”, “Vaterland” and the torpedo boat “S 90” were part of the East Asian Squadron<sup>ix</sup>. Tsingtao was also the naval base for the station-ship of Austrian-Hungarian navy. In 1914, the old protected cruiser “S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth” was stationed in the harbour<sup>x</sup>.

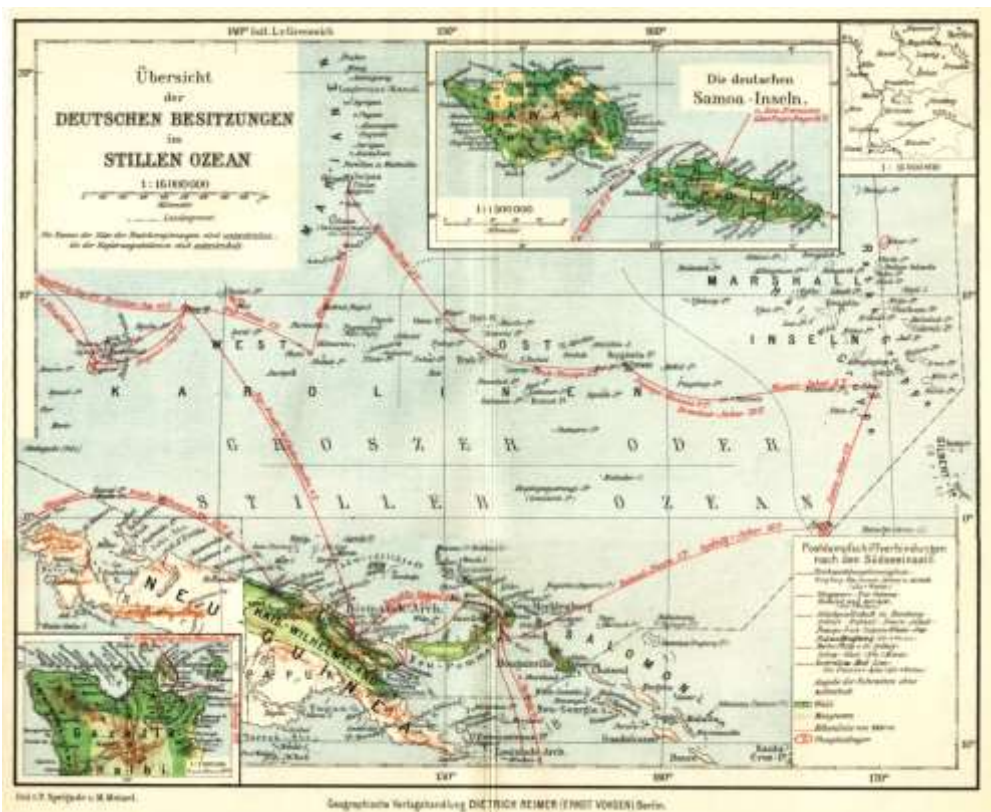


Figure 1.: German colonies in the Pacific, 1910

Source: [marshall.csu.edu.au](http://marshall.csu.edu.au)

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## JAPANESE FORCES BEFORE WORLD WAR ONE

The Japanese delegations which were sent to Europe studied recruitment and organization of modern armed forces carefully. In 1873 Japan introduced conscription and in 1878 an independent general staff was established as an advisory board for the emperor. The new Japanese armed forces were organized into an army and navy branch.

## ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT OF ARMY AND NAVY

The Japanese Army<sup>xi xii</sup> in 1914 was organized into 18 divisions. Every division consisted of two brigades with two infantry regiments, a cavalry regiment, one or two artillery regiments, an engineer battalion and a logistics battalion as well as medical units. The units were equipped with modern weapons. The standard rifle was the Arisaka 38 and the standard machine gun Type 3. The artillery<sup>xiii</sup> used howitzers and canons from Krupp which were produced in licence in Japan. In 1914 the army also made use of military airplane. In 1910 the army bought a Farman biplane from France and Captain Tokugawa Yoshitoshi made the first flight in Japan with an aircraft. But only short before the outbreak of the First World War Japan bought some military aircraft from Farman and Nieuport.

The Imperial Japanese navy of 1914 was organized in 3 fleets. The 1<sup>st</sup> fleet under the command of Viceadmiral Kato Tomosaburo consisted of the most modern battleships and battle-cruisers and some most modern cruisers. The 2<sup>nd</sup> fleet under the command of Kato Sadakichi consisted of captured Russian ships and some cruisers. The 3<sup>rd</sup> fleet, consisting of cruisers and canon boats, was stationed in the South Chinese Sea. The most important naval bases were Yokosuka, Kure, Sasebo, Ominato and Maizuru. Similarly to the army, the airforce of the navy was still in its infancy, but some admirals foresaw the advantages of airplanes in naval warfare. Therefore in 1913 a freighter was rebuild and was used as "Wakamiya" as an aircraft tender (7.720 tons, 111.1 meter long, velocity 10 knots speed, 234 sailors, 4 floating planes). At the beginning of 1914 the navy had 10 floating planes (3 Curtiss, 5 Farman, 2 Duperdussin) and 2 Rumpler-Tauben (doves) from Germany. On 5 September 1914 the first attack against targets in Tsingtao was flown by an aircraft from the navy, which was the first airstrike from sea in war history.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITUATION IN FAR EAST IN 1914 UNTIL THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR ONE

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan had a Golden Age. After the death of Meiji in 1912, Yoshihito (1879-1926) became Tenno. He reigned until 1926 and after his dead he entered the history books as Taisho-Tenno. During his reign, Japan spent the highest amount of money for military affairs in Far East<sup>xiv</sup> and gained worldwide acceptance by concluding contracts with other great powers with benefits for both sides, i.e. the treaty with Great Britain in 1902 which was renewed in 1905 and 1911. Similar treaties existed with France, Russia and the USA. This network of treaties was the first attempt of European

Powers and the USA to ensure their colonial empire in the Far East and Pacific region. In the fateful days in July 1914 it would have been easy for Japan to stay neutral, but on 7 August 1914 Great Britain requested Japan for destruction of the German East Asian Squadron. On 8 August 1914 Japan decided to enter the war on the side of Entente Powers. On 15 August 1914 Japan issued an ultimatum to Germany to withdraw all ships from Chinese waters and to hand over Tsingtao to Japan. The very next day, Kamio Mitsumi, the commander of the 18<sup>th</sup> division, got the order to begin with preparations for an attack on Tsingtao. On the expiry of ultimatum on 23 August 1914, Japan declared war on Germany and on 27 August 1914 the sea blockade of the harbour of Tsingtao began.

#### THE TROOPS OF CENTRAL POWERS IN FAR EAST AND ITS DEFENCE PREPARATIONS

At the outbreak of First World War the German troops in Far East were not prepared for warfare<sup>xv</sup>. The Germans reacted against the threat from Japan with mobilization of all troops in the Far East. After the mobilization the garrison of Tsingtao consisted of nearly 1400 soldiers of the III Sea Battalion (4 companies marines, 1 battery field artillery, 1 company engineers and 1 company cavalry), further 3,400 navy-soldiers - in sum nearly 5,000 defenders, including the 305 crew members of the Austrian-Hungarian warship "S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth". The preparations for defence included: mine barriers at potential landing sites, observation of the entrance of the bay of Kiautschou and the harbour of Tsingtao, combat readiness of all coastal-artillery batteries, mobilization of sea battalion and the East Asian naval detachment and sortie of all war ships, which were able to fight a so called "Kreuzerkrieg (operation of naval forces against merchantmen)". The artillery pieces on the sea side were installed as follows: Fort Hui-tschien-Huk at Ittisbay with 3 x 15 cm rapid fire canons in revolving armoured turrets and 2 x 24 cm Krupp long barrelled canon; Fort Yu-ni-san on the peninsula with the same name at harbour with 4 x 8.8 cm rapid fire canon, Molenkopf-battery with 2 x 8.8 cm rapid fire canon, Tsingtau-battery at harbour with 2 x 15 cm rapid fire canon and 2 x 15 cm Krupp long barrelled canon; battery at Bismarckberg with 4 x 28 cm coastal howitzer in armoured turrets with 360° traversing range and Hsianuniwa-battery with 4 x 21 cm canon. On the land front the artillery pieces were installed as follows: Ittisberg-battery with two 10.5 cm rapid fire canons in the upper battery and six 12 cm fortification canon in the lower battery; on Bismarckberg 2 x 12 cm canons. Furthermore three batteries with 18 old 9 cm field canons and five batteries with 10 modern 3.7 cm machine canons existed. Further military installations to defend the town were five infantry fortifications numbered consecutively from south to the north. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> infantry fortifications were manned with a company of III. Sea Battalion and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry fortification were manned with a half of a company of III. Sea Battalion (see figure 2).





Figure 2.: Organization of German Troops in Tsingtao<sup>1</sup>

Source: ÖMZ 4/2014, page 402

The islands in the Pacific had no military garrison; only small police units looked after law and order. In Tsingtao the defenders had two Rumpler-Etrich-Tauben (doves) aircraft, which were flown by First Lieutenant Gunther Plüschow and Second Lieutenant Friedrich Müllerskowsky. On the day of mobilization both aircraft were clear for take-off but during a test flight the aircraft flown by Müllerskowsky crashed and Müllerskowsky was heavily wounded. Before the sea blockade began, the German East Asian naval squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Maximilian Reichsgraf von Spee (1861-1914) left Tsingtao to begin a trade war due to the law of prize. After its departure, the East Asian squadron was a factor of uncertainty and therefore the Entente Powers wanted to destroy the German ships with high priority. In the harbour remained the old Austrian-Hungarian warship "S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth" and some smaller German vessels.

<sup>1</sup> Remark: Infantry fortifications are coloured in light pink

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## THE JAPANESE PREPARATIONS FOR ATTACK

The Japanese general staff had a clear picture about modern warfare<sup>xvi</sup>, because Japan fought the first modern war in 1904/05 against Russia with the new weapons, i.e. machine-guns and heavy artillery. Knowing the effects of the fire of a machine-guns and heavy artillery, the general staff decided to attack Tsingtao using all available heavy artillery to support the attacking infantry. Another important aim was an attack by preventing thereby greater human losses. Furthermore the general staff saw no necessity for a mobilization. As a contribution for support the British general staff sent a brigade of South Wales Borders under command of Brigadier general N.W. Barnardiston. The Japanese saw this contribution more as a kind of supervision than a real reinforcement.

Due to geographical proximity to the Asian mainland the 18<sup>th</sup> division which was dislocated in the area around Kurume on Kyushu was selected to execute the attack. The organization of Japanese attack forces was as follows (see figure 3): Division Headquarter; 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> brigade with 2 infantry regiments each; 22<sup>nd</sup> cavalry regiment; signal battalion, two signal companies (radiotelegraphy, telegraphy) a flying unit with 3 airplane, three engineer battalion, a bridge construction unit, a railway transport regiment, an independent railway transport battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> field artillery regiment, a mountain artillery battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> heavy siege artillery regiment with its supply units, 4 independent heavy siege artillery sections, 18<sup>th</sup> logistic battalion, a logistics regiment, a medical battalion and two field hospitals, in sum a force of 52,000 persons, whereby the direct attack force had only a strength of 29,000 persons<sup>xvii</sup>.

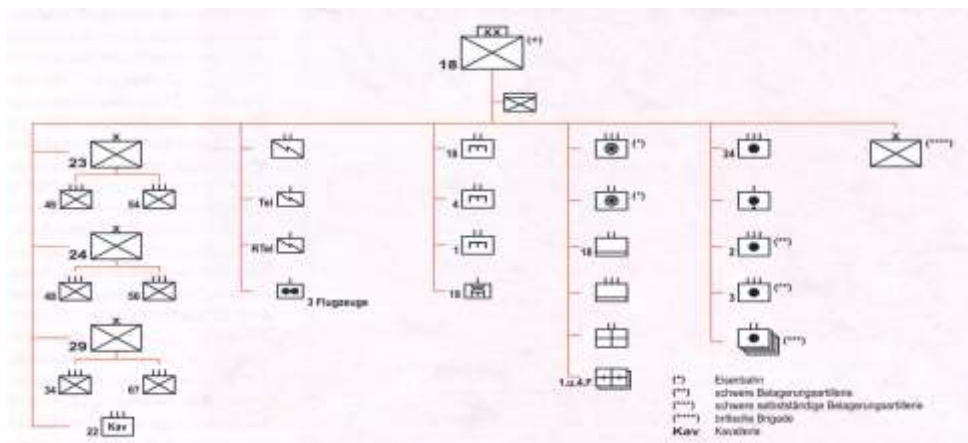


Figure 3.: Japanese Troops<sup>2</sup>  
Source: ÖMZ 4/2014, page 404

<sup>2</sup> Remark: The German words' English translation: x Railway, xx Heavy siege artillery, xxx Heavy independent siege artillery, xxxx British Brigade, KAV cavalry.



Compared with the preparations of the army the preparations of the navy happened without great organizational measures, because the navy took its war organization before the outbreak of the war. The 1<sup>st</sup> fleet consisted of the 1<sup>st</sup> flotilla (battle-cruiser “Kongo” and “Hiei”; cruisers “Kuruma” and “Tsukuba”), 3<sup>rd</sup> flotilla (battleships “Aki”, “Satsuma”, “Settsu”, “Kawachi”), 5<sup>th</sup> flotilla (cruisers “Yahagi”, “Hirado”, “Niitake”) and the 1<sup>st</sup> destroyer flotilla. The 2<sup>nd</sup> fleet consisted of 2<sup>nd</sup> flotilla (old Russian ships “Suwo” (ex “Pobieda”), “Iwami” (ex “Orel”), “Tango” (ex “Poltawa”), “Okinoshima” (ex “General Admiral Apraskin”) and “Mishima” (ex “Admiral Senyavin”), 4<sup>th</sup> flotilla (cruisers “Iwate”, “Yakumo”, “Tokiwa”), 6<sup>th</sup> flotilla (cruisers “Chitose”, “Akitsushima”, “Chiyoda”) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> torpedo destroyer flotilla (torpedo destroyers and vessels for minesweeping). Furthermore “Wakamiya” with its four floating-planes was subordinated to 2<sup>nd</sup> fleet. The 3<sup>rd</sup> fleet consisted of protected cruisers “Tsushima”, “Yodo” and “Mogami” and some canon boats. While the 1<sup>st</sup> fleet was deployed against the Germans possessions in the Pacific, the 2<sup>nd</sup> fleet had to support the attack with fire from seaside and to protect the transport flotilla during the advance on high sea and during the landing of the troops. The Japanese had great experience with transport of troops on sea. Therefore the transport of personnel and war material from the Japanese homeland to the mainland was no major challenge. The total personnel strength of naval forces was 20,000 persons. In sum the attack force had personnel strength of nearly 72,000 persons.

#### THE JAPANESE ATTACK

Prior to 27 August 1914 Japanese warships (5 old Russian ships, 7 cruisers, 16 destroyers, 14 auxillary ships) and the British old battleship HMS “Triumph”, the destroyer “Usk” and an hospital ship began with the blockade of the German protectorate<sup>xviii</sup>. This clearly showed the defenders that the landing of Japanese troops is imminent and would occur north of the protectorate. The Japanese landed on 2 September 1914 on 26 transport ships the vast majority of its troops near Lungkou and Tschifu (see figure). On 5 September 1914 the troops began their advance and after great weather induced problems they reached the border of the protectorate on 23 September 1914. In addition to the main landing the 29<sup>th</sup> brigade was landed east of Tsingtao in the Lauschan bay on 18 September 1914 and reached after heavy resistance the accesses and passes of Lauschan mountains on 19 September 1914. Thereafter both groups were concentrated on 25 September 1914.

The concentrated troops were brought to a stop by Germans on 26 September 1914, but after withdraw of the German delaying force, the Japanese forces were able to occupy the important Waldersee-heights, the Prinz Heinrich mountains and some small villages. On 28 September 1914 the Japanese troops occupied the spaces between the infantry fortifications. During these fightings the use of the German aircraft proves to be valuable, because the pilot reported about the movements of Japanese to the Governor. Therefore Plüschow and his plane were called the “Eye of Tsingtao”. On 2 October 1914 the Germans started a counterattack which was initially successful but after heavy counter-fire the Germans had to withdraw. On 26 October 1914 the Japanese land and sea-based artillery

started its preparatory fire which was an indicator for the very soon beginning assault. Therefore the Austrian-Hungarian cruiser was disarmed and the canons were used as land-based canons. On 2 November 1914 the cruiser was destroyed by self-destruction<sup>xix</sup>.

On 7 November 1914 the Japanese troops began with the final assault. The frontal attack on the 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry fortification began around midnight and led to the capture at 02:00 am. After that, Japanese troops encircled the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> infantry fortification. From the encircled 4<sup>th</sup> infantry fortification the Japanese advanced to the Illisberg and thereafter the breakthrough happened. After the German artillery used up all its ammunition, all artillery positions were captured by Japanese around 04:00 am. and the attackers were able to advance to Bismarckberg. Finally at 05:00 am., the Japanese occupied the 1<sup>st</sup> infantry fortification and at 06:00 am., the 5<sup>th</sup> fortification. Thereafter the Japanese infantry assaulted from Bismarckberg in the direction of the town. At 06:20 am., the Germans raised the White Flag at Signalberg and the garrison surrendered. The last shot of the defenders was fired at 07:30 am., in Taitungtschen.

On that same day the Japanese scoured the foreground between the centre of the town and the former infantry fortifications. All prisoners were brought into the Bismarck-barracks and afterwards due to the fear for sabotage to Shatsykou.

The losses on both sides were not high. The Japanese lost 676 army- and 338 navy personnel and some 1,000 wounded persons. The British brigade lost 3 dead army soldiers and 67 wounded persons. The Germans lost 184 dead and 500 wounded, of the Austrian-Hungarian crew of cruiser "S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth" died 11 soldiers and an unknown number of soldiers were wounded.

#### THE CONQUEST OF THE GERMAN COLONIES IN THE PACIFIC

The German colonial empire in the Pacific encompassed 1,459 islands and atolls with only 2,200 sq km land area and 450,000 inhabitants<sup>xx</sup>. After the declaration of war, Japan sent its 1<sup>st</sup> South Sea Squadron of the 1<sup>st</sup> fleet under the command of Rear Admiral Yamaya Tamin on 14 September 1914 to the Marshall Islands which were reached on 29 September 1914 and thereafter the squadron reached the important station Jaluit on 30 September 1914 (see figure 4.). The German administration made no efforts of resistance and was taken prisoners of war. The Japanese left some officers at the station and afterwards the squadron hoisted the anchor and reached Truk on 12 October 1914. In the meantime the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Sea Squadron under command of Rear Admiral Matsumura Tatsuo left Sasebo and reached the Island of Yap on 5 October where the Japanese Marines occupied the important telegraph station. The occupied territory in the South Sea got very soon afterwards a military administration and Truk-Atoll was selected to the centre of the administration. Subsequently Truk was enlarged to an important Japanese fleet base in the Western Pacific. With the occupation of the islands in the Pacific, Japan fulfilled the requirements of an extension to the South, which was the doctrine of the navy, while the army preferred a control over the Asian mainland.

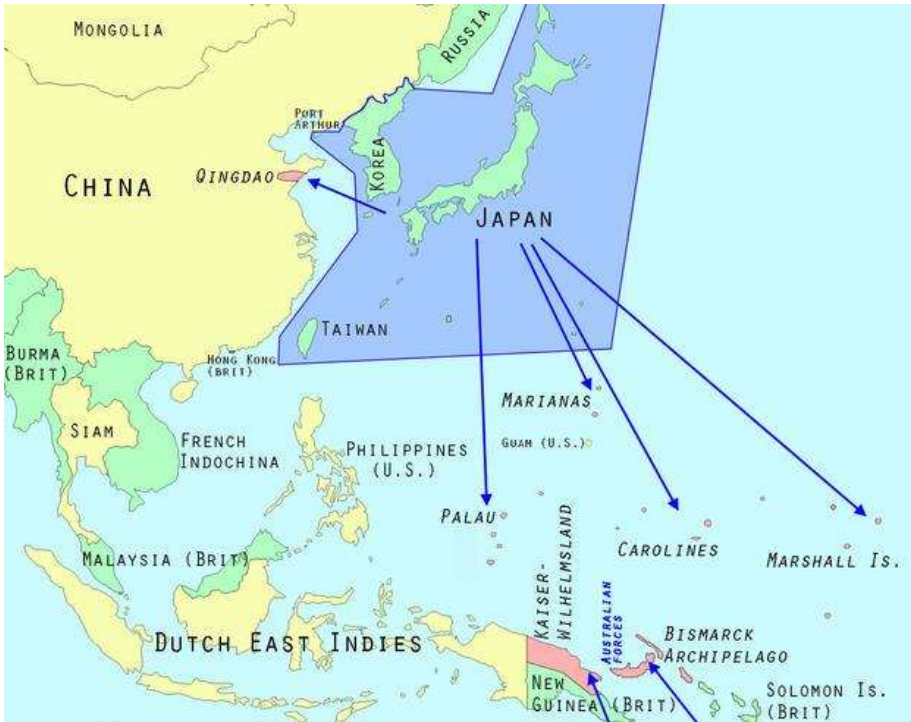


Figure 4.: Japan in the WWI

Source: [mentalfloss.com](http://mentalfloss.com)

Because Japan assumed that the German fleet is crossing in the Western Pacific, the deployment of the most modern Japanese battleships to the Pacific Ocean clearly showed the importance of a destruction of the German South Sea Squadron. Temporarily for this purpose the Japanese deployed even the most modern battle cruiser “Kongo”.

#### THE JAPANESE NAVY IN THE PACIFIC AND INDIAN OCEAN

According to the agreements and the request for assistance, the Japanese navy had to fulfil some tasks in the Indian and Pacific Ocean<sup>xxi</sup>, i.e. Japanese cruisers and destroyers had to escort transport of troops from Australia and New Zealand to Europe. The British Royal Navy therefore was able to withdraw its ships from Far East and relocated it into the Atlantic Ocean to use it for protection of the Transports of troops and war material from USA to Europe.

The Japanese navy furthermore secured the sea-lines in the Eastern and Western Pacific. Therefore it was possible for the US Navy to send its ships to the Atlantic Ocean.

#### THE JAPANESE NAVY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The Mediterranean Sea<sup>xxii</sup> was of great importance for the transport of troops from Africa and Asia to the theatre of war in Europe. Because the German and Austrian-Hungarian Submarines were a steady threat, the British Admiralty requested Japanese Naval General Staff for assistance to send some escort vessels to the Mediterranean Sea. On April 1917 Japan sent the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> destroyer flotilla (8 destroyers of Kaba-class and the cruiser "Akashi") to Malta. The naval detachment was commanded by Rear Admiral Kozo Sato<sup>xxiii</sup>. Furthermore during 1917 the 15<sup>th</sup> destroyer flotilla with four modern Momo-class destroyers and the protected cruisers "Izumo" and "Nisshin" were sent to Malta. In sum, during the First World War the Japanese destroyers escorted 788 ships, including the transport of more than 700,000 soldiers of the Commonwealth. During the operation there happened an incident between Austrian-Hungarian submarine "U-27" and the Japanese destroyer "Sakaki". On 11 June 1917 "U-27" torpedoed "Sakaki"<sup>xxiv</sup> and the destroyer was heavily damaged. 68 sailors died, but the destroyer could be towed to a Greek harbour. After a longer repair it was possible to use the destroyer until the end of war. "U-27" was able to escape. The whole Japanese destroyer flotillas left Malta in 1919.

#### THE 21 DEMANDS ON CHINA

After the defeat of Tsingtao, Japan felt strong enough to hand over the so called 21 demand to China. The demands were handed over by Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu to the President of the Republic of China<sup>xxv</sup>. The demands can be divided into five categories. The first category concerned the German protectorate in China. Japan made clear that it wanted to take over the German protectorate. The second category concerned a stronger influence of Japan in South Manchuria. In addition, Japan wanted to prolong the lease of Port Arthur to further 99 year. The third category concerned mining concessions in China and the fourth category assured China sovereignty but as a restriction Japan also demanded that China should lease no further ports to foreign nations. With that demand, Japan wanted to force back the growing influence of the USA in East Asian. The fifth category was a demand with far reaching consequences, because Japan demanded far reaching influence on Chinese politics. To fulfil that demand, China had to discuss all its measures in domestic and foreign politics with Japan in advance. In reality, the demand meant that China had become completely dependant on Japan.

Although China informed Great Britain, USA and other Great Powers about the 21 demands, the reactions were mild. Only the USA raised objections. China rejected the demands, but had to agree in May 1915 after it was left alone by the international community of states. Only the fifth category of claims was redeemed by Japan, respectively in a secret annex to the 21 demands hidden from the public.

The acceptance of the 21 demands led to riots in China. The largest riot happened in Beijing on 4 May 1915. This riot was organized by students, but many other people with different socioeconomic background joined the students. It was the first time in China that people with different socioeconomic background fought for the same ideal. Therefore this riot was the breeding ground for the strong attitude of China against desirability of foreign powers.

#### THE TENSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE USA

Not later since the USA got supremacy over the Philippines, Japan and the USA went on collision course<sup>xxvi</sup>, but during First World War the conflict of interests took a backseat. To maintain its strategic freedom to operate in East Asia, Japan signed the so called "Lansing-Ishii-Agreement" with USA on 2 November 1917. The agreement is named after Ishii Kikujiro, the Japanese minister of foreign affairs and Robert Lansing, the US secretary of state. The agreement addressed the further proceedings of Japan in China. The USA accepted the Japanese politics against China. As early as 1923, the agreement was annulled. The annulment of the agreement indirectly was an indication for the escalation of the conflict of interests between Japan and USA in the East Asian and Western Pacific region.

The rivalry between Japan and the USA has become also apparent in the rearmament of the navy<sup>xxvii</sup>. As an answer of the great Japanese fleet expansion program 8:8 in 1916<sup>xxviii</sup>, the US congress approved the world largest ship building program. Further points of conflict were question concerning races, i.e. the racial equality of Japanese citizens in Hawaii and on the US-mainland and questions about the former German Island Yap, which was an important central link for telecommunication between the USA and the Philippines.

#### JAPANESE ARMS DELIVERIES TO ALLIES

After the outbreak of the First World War, Russia lost its business contacts to the Central powers. Therefore Russia made great efforts to come in contact with the Japanese arms industry. On 10 September 1914 a Russian delegation headed by Major-general Eduard Karlovich Hermonius (1864-1938) arrived in Tokyo and after some fruitful meetings, Japan delivered in 1915 nearly 340,000 small arms and rifles, 351 pieces of artillery, 500,000 artillery cartridges, 500,000 shrapnel cartridges an unknown amount of explosives and powder<sup>xxix</sup>.

During the occupation of France by German troops, the French shipbuilding industry had no capacity to build destroyers. France therefore ordered at Japanese naval yards 12 destroyers of Kaba-class, which were delivered in 1917 and had been in service until 1936<sup>xxx</sup>.

## THE SIBERIAN INTERVENTION

In summer 1918 Japan was involved into a military operation which brought no fame and profit<sup>xxxI</sup>. The revolution in Russia in 1917, the separate peace treaty of 1918 between Russia and the Central Powers and the expansion of the civil war into the eastern parts of Russia forced the USA and the European Entente Powers to intervene in Siberia. Every participating nation had to send 7,000 soldiers to form a multinational task force to fight against Bolshevik troops in Siberia. The Entente Powers also requested Japan to send 7,000 soldiers, but Japan decided to send 12,000 soldiers, a squadron of its fleet and some military aircraft. Within months after the operation Japan increased its contribution to more than 75,000 soldiers. The Japanese attacked along the Siberian railroad Bolshevik troops and at the end of World War One in November 1918 Japan had occupied all harbours in Siberia and a larger territory in Russian Far East in the province of Primorje and Eastern Siberia. The motivation of Japan to engage in this intervention was complex. According to official sources Japan wanted to secure war material and save the so called "Czechoslovakian League", but in reality more important was the motivation to conquer a large area in Eastern Russia as a buffer zone to the Japanese Islands and to stop a spread of Communism. The Japanese intervention in Siberia proved to be a veritable failure. In October 1922 Japan had to withdraw all its troops under high losses.

## THE HOME-FRONT IN JAPAN AND THE WAR ECONOMY

The Home-front in Japan didn't experience the same hardship as the European belligerent countries underwent<sup>xxxii</sup>. Therefore during wartime Japanese people live as in peace time and the economy of Japan were able to produce under peacetime conditions. Some problems occurred with the increase of prices and the rising inflation which led to growing popular dissatisfaction and riots against steady increasing costs for living.

Japan also did not remained untouched by the worldwide flu epidemic in 1918 which resulted in 250,000 dead in Japan alone. An interesting episode during wartime was the practical behaviour of Japan authorities against German and Austrian-Hungarian property, especially against the regional offices of the important steel-producer Böhler in Osaka, Moji and Tokyo.

During wartime the regional offices in Osaka and Moji were closed and all the business activity was concentrated in Tokyo by the commercial director Müller. Furthermore all stock inventories of Böhler in Far East were brought to Tokyo. Müller therefore was able to maintain business activity during wartime without additional supply from Böhler in Austria, because Japanese authorities, despite the request of Entente Powers to confiscate Austrian-Hungarian property, tolerated the business activity of Müller in Tokyo<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

The First World War was important for the growth of economy. Between 1913 and 1919 the amount of factories grew from initially 32,000 to 44,000 and the employment raised from 1.2 Million to 2 Million workers. Due to this economic success story, Japan became



one of the largest exporting countries during World War One and one of the major creditors<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

#### PRISONER CAMPS IN JAPAN

After the fall of Tsingtao, the defenders became prisoners of war. Due to non-availability of prisoner camps, the prisoners of war were accommodated into improvised places, i.e. shrines, temples, public buildings, tea houses and other accommodations<sup>xxxv</sup>. The soldiers of the old Austrian-Hungarian monarchy were accommodated in separate places in Japan, but mostly in Himeiji, Kumamoto, Osaka, Fukuoka and Kurume. The Governor of Tsingtao Navy Captain Alfred Mayer-Waldeck and the commander of the protected cruiser "S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth, Lieutenant Commander Richard Makoviz (1868-1946), were accommodated in Fukuoka. In 1918 both officers were transferred to the prisoners camp Narashino near Tokyo.

Only in 1918 the smaller camps were closed and the occupants were transferred to larger newly build prisoner camps, i.e. in Aonogahara (22,683 m<sup>2</sup>) or Bando (57,233 m<sup>2</sup>). The prisoner camps were quite comfortably equipped. Officers lived in their own rooms but non-commissioned officers and enlisted men lived together in larger rooms. Sport facilities were outside of the barracks, i.e. soccer grounds and tennis courts. The prisoners were allowed to make nearly every activity, i.e. to exercise craft activities (production of sausages, baking of their own rye bread), farming and make music.

The treatment of the prisoners was human. In particular, the camp of Bando<sup>xxxvi</sup> was generously managed by Colonel Matsue Toyohisa who fluently spoke German. He allowed the prisoners a high degree of self administration, i.e. the prisoners were allowed to print their own newspaper and the prisoners were allowed to make long walk and often they had the possibility to come in contact with the Japanese population of the surroundings. The highlight of camp Bando was the Japan first performance of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony in Japan on 1 June 1918 by the camp orchestra. About the life of prisoners in camp Bando a film with the title "Baruto no gakuen" was produced. After the end of the war the prisoners were brought back to Germany in 1920 on board of converted freighters.

#### JAPAN AND THE PEACE TREATIES OF SUBURBS OF PARIS

In November 1918 the First World War ended with the defeat of the Central Powers. The Entente Powers therefore had the possibility to introduce a new world order. The first step was the conclusion of peace treaties which were negotiated in the suburbs of Paris.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The provisions of the peace treaty of Versailles which were signed between the administrators of Germany and the administrators of the Entente Powers were important for Japan. In the peace treaty, Japan had been awarded by the former German protectorate in China, but after political pressure from the USA, Japan handed over the territory to China in 1922. Due to peace treaty of Versailles the former German colonies north of Equator was given

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Japan by the League of Nations as a Class C mandate. This meant that the incorporated area could be governed by Japan but it was not allowed to install military installations.

The peace negotiations were used by a delegation of overseas Koreans and the provisional government of Korea in Shanghai to promote the independence of Korea, but the official bodies took no notice of the concern of Koreans because Korea was a Japanese Colony.

Japan also was concerned by the implementation of the decisions of the peace negotiations. Therefore Japanese officers participates in the Committees for the determination of the localisation of new borders, i.e. Colonel Yamaguchi Juhachi was a member of the Committee which draw the concrete new border between the new independent states of Austria and Hungary<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Japanese empire was one of the rising powers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Excessive nationalism and almost unlimited power of the military in the secret council of state and the military senate were responsible for the rising imperialism which saw in an enlargement of the territory by conquest of new living space the greatest challenge.

Besides the USA, Japan was one of the real winners of the First World War but it could not obtain a permanent profit by wining the war. At the latest after the failed participation in the Siberian intervention the Japanese politicians should have revised the plans of ferocious expansion on the mainland of Asia. Japan, however, pursued its policy of ferocious and aggressive expansion unimpressed, which led with the crossing of Marco Polo Bridge in 1937 into the downfall and, forced, after an eight-year-long strenuous and total war on the mainland of Asian and in the Pacific Ocean, the end of hegemony of militarism in Japanese domestic politics.

*Key words: Japan, Germany, WWI, Tsingtao*

*Kulcsszavak: Japán, Németország, első világháború, Csingtao*

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- <sup>ii</sup> see Pöcher H.: 140 Jahre offizielle Beziehungen zwischen Japan und Österreich; in: *ÖMZ* 6/2009, Seite 707-714
- <sup>iii</sup> In Japan the emperor is called "Tenno" which means „heavenly sovereign“. The Japanese monarchy is the oldest hereditary monarchy in the world, founded in 660 BC by Emperor Jimmu. The earliest emperor is said to be a descendant of Amaterasu's grandson Ninigi who descended from Heaven. According to *Nihon Shoki*, a book of Japanese history finished in the eight century, the emperors have an unbroken male lineage that goes back more than 2,600 years.
- <sup>iv</sup> Until his dead, the Tenno bears his given name. During his reign, he is been addressed with Tenno heika (His Majesty) or Kinjo Tenno (present Tenno). After his dead, the Tenno got the name of the period of his reign, i.e. Mutsuhito got the name Meiji.
- <sup>v</sup> In Japan, an interesting story was told about the later General Oyama Iwao (1842-1916). Oyama studied as a young officer at French military academy and returning home he used a large suitcase of Louis Vuitton. Therefore it is said that he was the first Japanese who used a suitcase of Louis Vuitton. It was the starting point of the success of Louis Vuitton's products in Japan.
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- <sup>vii</sup> see Presseisen Ernst L.: *Before Aggression-Europeans Prepare the Japanese Army*, The University of Arizona Press, Tuscon: 1965, Seite 69 ff
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- <sup>x</sup> See *Rot-Weiß-Rot auf Gelbem Meer-Tsingtau 1914*, Österreichische Marinegeschichte, Verlagsbuchhandlung Stöhr, Wien: 1996
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- <sup>xvii</sup> see Saito Seiji: *Nichi Doku Tsingtao Senso, Yumanishobo*, Tokio 2001, Seite 48 und 49
- <sup>xviii</sup> see *Geschichte der Marine-Infanterie (1675-1919)* auf [http://www.marine-infanterie.de/html/4\\_10.html](http://www.marine-infanterie.de/html/4_10.html) (retrieved 04 March 2013)
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