A Forgotten Firsthand Account of the *Pyŏng'in yangyo* (1866): An Annotated Translation of the Narrative of G. Pradier

Daniel C. Kane

Accounts of the *Pyŏng'in yangyo*, or foreign disturbance of 1866, in which the French Far Eastern Squadron undertook a six-week punitive expedition against Korea, are rare. From the French side we have the official correspondence and a small number of personal accounts. All but forgotten until recently has been the account of G. Pradier, who served as a young officer aboard one of the French warships that participated in the attack on Korea of October-November. His first hand reminiscences of that campaign were published in 1905, nearly forty years after the event occurred, at a time when military confrontations in the Far East were again making headlines. They have since remained in obscurity ever since and have never been cited by either bibliographies or secondary studies. However, they offer a glimpse into the daily experiences of a soldier on the ground during that campaign, as well as giving the modern reader a rare firsthand account of one of the earliest extensive encounters between Koreans and Westerners. Though some issues of accuracy plague portions of the text, it may nevertheless prove a valuable historical account.

Keywords: France, Korea, Kanghwa Island, *Pyŏng'in yangyo*

Introduction

It has been 140 years since Korea's first significant encounter with the West, the *Pyŏng'in yangyo*, or foreign disturbance of the 1866. It was unfortunately prescient of the century to come that such an encounter proved violent. Accounts of the massacre of French Catholic missionaries in Korea in 1866, and the French punitive expedition that same year, have been treated elsewhere in a number of scholarly studies. The basic conclusions of those various studies

Daniel C. Kane (dkane@hawaii.edu) is a Ph.D. Candidate and Korea Specialist Librarian at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Seoul Journal of Korean Studies 21, no. 1 (June 2008): 51-85.

more or less agree that the French expedition was ill-conceived and unclear in its objectives, that French influence in the region suffered greatly from its failure, and that Korea was further confirmed in its policy of isolation.

To be sure, there is no reason to modify such conclusions today. However, secondary studies aside, firsthand accounts of that historic encounter between Korea and the West are rare. The size of the French force participating in the campaign of October and November 1866 was roughly 800 men.[1] Besides the official reports that issued from the expedition, we have known thus far of only three French participants who penned accounts of their experiences.[2] These accounts offer valuable insights into both the political and cultural dimensions of that historic encounter.

Recently uncovered was an all but forgotten fourth account by a participant in the French expedition, that of G. Pradier, who served as a midshipman aboard the French vessel Guèrriere during the punitive portion of the campaign in October and November.[3] It is a relatively lengthy account,

---

1. Henri Jouan, "L'expédition de Corée en 1866. Episode d'une Station Navale dans les Mers de Chine," *Bulletin de la Société Impériale des Sciences Naturelles de Cherbourg* 13 (1867): 156-157. Jouan arrives at the figure of 1460 by totaling the numbers of men assigned to each of the nine vessels comprising the expedition, noting that from this number must be subtracted those who remained to man the posts in China and Japan. Frey provides the more accurate estimate of 800, including approximately 75 officers. Jeanne Frey, "L'expédition de Corée (Extrait de Cahier de Jeanne Frey)," in *19-segi yŏlgang kwa Hanbando* (The great powers and the Korean peninsula in the 19th century), ed. U Ch'ŏlgu (Seoul: Pŏmmunsa, 1999), 216.

2. Frey's, Jouan's, and M. H. Zuber, "Une expédition en Corée," *Le Tour du Monde* 25, no. 1 (1873): 401-416. There is also the recently revealed partial letter of Eugène Masson, a work that is not counted owing to its brevity and incompleteness, http://pagesperso-orange.fr/france-coree/histoire/expedition1866_ctx.htm, (accessed May 10, 2008). Father Ridel, though he participated in both the initial exploratory and punitive expeditions, never published a personal account of his experiences. His letters were culled together and published as a biographical work by Arthur Piacentini in *Mgr Ridel, Evêque de Philippopolis, vicaire apostolique de Corée, d'après sa correspondance* (Lyon: Librairie générale catholique et classique, 1890). Though he was not a participant, we have the period account of the exploratory mission (taken from the report of its commander Rear Admiral Roze) by the Vicomte de Rostaing, "Notes sur une récente exploration du Hang-Kyang en Corée," *Bulletin de la Société de géographie* 5th series, vol. 13 (Jan.-June 1867): 210-225. Also worth noting is the account of Ch. Martin, "Expédition de Corée en 1866," *Le Spectateur militaire* (1883), 181-189, 255-267, 344-355; reprinted in *Revue de Corée* 18, no. 2, (Summer 1986): 62-79. The account of Martin, who at the time of the expedition served as physician to the French legation in Peking, is likewise not a firsthand account, though he was a witness to events as they unfolded in the Qing capital. From the Korean side, we have the accounts of Kim Yunsik in *Kim Yunsik Chŏnjip* (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1980) and that of Pak Kyusu in *Pak Kyusu Chŏnjip* (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1978). To be mentioned as well are several brief but firsthand accounts of face to face encounters with French troops by Koreans that are fortunately preserved in the *Ilsŏngnok* 日省錄 (Records of Daily Reflection).

3. The account by Pradier translated here does not appear in Henri Cordier's fairly exhaustive

surpassing in word count all but the account of Jouan. It is here presented, and in English translation, for the first time since its appearance in 1905.

Pradier's personal account of the Korean expedition first appeared in two consecutive installments of *La Revue hebdomadaire* (Paris) in January 1905, nearly forty years after the events they described. As the author's concluding remarks make clear, the timing of the publication was deliberate. Early 1905 again saw military conflict igniting the Far East, this time between Japan and Russia over paramount influence in Port Arthur. Even as it went to print, Russian and Japanese armies were locked in a prolonged and merciless struggle for control of Port Arthur, with the final outcome still far from certain. Pradier, with the armchair strategizing of a retired naval officer, uses his account of the Korean expedition to make a plea for more thorough defensive preparations in French Indochina against a growing Japanese belligerence. Though Pradier's concluding remarks are included here as integral to the piece as a whole, it is the author's account of the Korean expedition that interests me most for a number of reasons.

First, and most obvious, though now a century old, it is again entirely new, having fallen into obscurity almost as soon as it was printed. Pradier's recollections of the French expedition have never been consulted in any study of the *Pyŏng'in yang'yo*, the foreign disturbance of 1866. Second, Pradier's account offers precious new details to the expedition as experienced by a French participant. If one were to characterize Pradier's account it is more specific than general, describing from an unapologetically subjective perspective his own recollections of what he himself, rather than French forces as a whole, encountered and his own reactions to that experience. In this respect it aligns itself more with the account of Zuber than the more formal tone of Jouan or the official reports. This also means that its accuracy is more difficult to establish.

Faced with this putative firsthand account, there are two primary questions facing the researcher. First, was there such a person as G. Pradier and did he in fact participate in the French expedition? Second, is his account, penned after the passage of four decades, a truly original account of events or merely the refashioning of accounts by earlier writers with some minor additions?

Bibliotheca Sinica, nor is it contained in the most thorough attempt to collate the various firsthand documents concerning the 1866 expedition, Andreas Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye charyo* (Seoul: Han'guk kyohoesa yŏn'guso, 1986). It has only been found cited in the *Polybiblion: Revue bibliographique universelle*, 2nd series, vol. 31 (Paris, 1905): 88 as well as in the *Revue générale de bibliographie française* (Paris, 1905), xvi. To my knowledge, it has never been cited in any secondary study.

The Identity of G. Pradier

Concerning the identity of G. Pradier, details are few and further research is needed into official French records to establish conclusively his identity and presence in Korea in 1866. As his signature to the piece attests, when he wrote his reminiscence he claimed to be a retired captain of the French navy. At the outset of 1866, however, G. Pradier writes that he was a young midshipman serving aboard the *Guèrriere*, the flagship of France's Far Eastern Squadron, based in Yokohama, Japan. It first bears noting that the name Pradier goes unmentioned in all accounts, including official correspondence, of the French expedition. This need not surprise, as the vast majority of participants have likewise passed into anonymity.

When in July 1866 news reached China of the massacre of French missionaries, the *Guèrriere* was moored at Tianjin, where it had just landed Rear Admiral Roze, commander of the French Far Eastern Squadron, so that he might make an official visit to Peking. With Roze's resolve to launch some manner of punitive expedition against Korea, French vessels and marines stationed in Yokohama and elsewhere in China were summoned to muster in the port of Zhifu [Chéfou].[4] Meanwhile, the *Guèrriere* steamed shortly thereafter to the south, where it had been summoned to aid French forces suppressing an uprising in Cochin China. Back in Zhifu in September, Roze then led three vessels on a preliminary reconnaissance expedition to the Korean coast in late September and early October. The *Guèrriere*, and Pradier, did not participate in this first excursion but remained in Zhifu making preparations and undertaking the drilling of troops. Shortly after Roze's return to China in early October, the full-scale expedition, comprised of eight vessels, steamed for Korea where Pradier participated in the subsequent six-week expedition of October and November.

After the French withdrawal from Korea in early November 1866, Pradier returned aboard the *Guèrriere* to Yokohama, where he was soon promoted to sub-lieutenant, joining the ranks of the young officers.[5] For the next year he served closely alongside the notable French minister to Japan, Léon Roches, in the tumultuous final days of the Tokugawa, where he witnessed close hand the

4. Zhifu was the name of a small island off the coastal town of Yantai in China's Shandong Province, which served as a primary port for French and other Western vessels operating in Chinese waters. In period Western parlance the name Zhifu/Chefoo/Chéfou were synonymous with the city and port of Yantai.

5. G. Pradier, "Le Japon il y a quarante ans," *Le Correspondant*, July 10, 1904, 76.

once again importunate thrust of French foreign policy, as Roches opted to align himself closely to a Bakufu approaching extinction. Pradier departed Japan for France in late 1867, on the eve of the final conflicts that would topple the Tokugawa and just prior to the misadventures of some of his colleagues at Hakodate Bay.[6] He would go on to serve a long career in the French navy, participating in the French colonial enterprises in Africa in the 1890s.

The Account of G. Pradier

With some examination, the accuracy of Pradier's account can be partially assayed. It first bears repeating that there were two French expeditions to Korea in 1866. The first was a reconnaissance mission, an attempt to ascertain the maritime and logistical feasibility of a second and larger expedition. This first expedition occurred in late September and early October 1866 and involved only three vessels. The second was a full-scale punitive expedition in October and November 1866, in which the French fleet, aided by marines brought in from Yokohoma, attempted to coerce the Korean court into reparations (though the exact nature these reparations were to take was never fully thought out). As stated, as a crew member aboard the *Guèrriere*, Pradier did not participate in the preliminary reconnaissance mission of Roze of September 1866, so it follows that for this first brief portion of his account he was reliant either upon other sources or his own secondhand knowledge gleaned from memory. Of those primary accounts of the expedition that have come down to us from French sources (inclusive of Pradier), half were written by those who did not participate in the preliminary reconnaissance expedition.[7]

Based upon an analysis of his narrative, however, it would seem Pradier did not consult any other sources for his short description of the reconnaissance expedition, but rather relied on hearsay from the period or subsequent to it. Perhaps not surprisingly, this portion of his account does fall short of the facts. More detailed notations regarding any apparent inaccuracies or inconsistencies

---

6. *Ibid*., 67.

7. Besides Pradier, others not participating include Jouan, who wrote the fullest account of the expedition, and most notably Vicomte de Rostaing, who wrote an account exclusively of the reconnaissance expedition never having been a participant. Our firsthand accounts of that preliminary reconnaissance mission are the lengthy report submitted to the Naval Minister by Roze (1866), and the accounts of Zuber (1867) and Frey (1866), both of whom served aboard the *Primauget*, the latter attached as commander of a gun battery from the Yokohama garrison.

in Pradier's account vis à vis other firsthand accounts will be addressed in the footnotes to the translation that follows, yet Pradier's lapses demand at least some consideration here.

First, Pradier's account of a meeting at the royal audience hall in Seoul between a French party led by Rear Admiral Roze and a person Pradier relates to be the Korean monarch in September 1866 is completely, if not intentionally, specious. Though Pradier does not take pains to clarify it, he did not participate in the initial reconnaissance expedition of Roze, when this alleged encounter took place. On any account, no member of the French expedition ever made it within the city walls of Seoul to meet with the monarch or anyone else. Such an encounter is mentioned neither in firsthand accounts nor in official French or Korean records.[8]

This lapse may arguably be unintentional if we are to believe an article by Pradier regarding his service in Japan from 1865 to 1867. In that piece he rationalizes any inaccuracies regarding names with the caveat the he was writing his account "... completely from memory, according to my own recollections and without consulting a single book, having lost all of my logbooks in a fire some years ago."[9] Lacking any personal records, it may be that Pradier's memory misconstrued what had been the approach by the three French reconnaissance ships to within sight of the Seoul city walls, and an encounter there with a small party of high ranking Korean officials who were permitted aboard one of the French vessels, with an actual tête-à-tête between Roze and the Korean monarch. Taken as intentional fallacy, one may surmise that the imaginary anecdote constitutes either a literary device meant to blend an element of exoticism and adventure into an otherwise rather anticlimactic campaign (and in so doing perhaps boost the *amour propre* of its French readers), or the romantic effusions of an elderly man glamorizing and embellishing youthful adventures. The image conjured up of a "motionless figure seated at the back of a darkened hall upon a dais encompassed in silk" lends to the story an air of romantic derring-do in a hostile and mysterious land. Of course it is impossible to construe the exact nature of the pretension. One can only assert its fallaciousness.

Yet, the initial reconnaissance expedition aside, issues of reliability linger as well around Pradier's account of the punitive expedition that followed, in

---

8. The three ships anchored about three-quarters of a mile from the Seoul city walls, and though they were approached by a high ranking Korean official, they never entered the city. Frey, "L'expédition de Corée," 216-217; Piacentini, *Mgr Ridel*, 113; Zuber, "Une expedition en Corée," 406.

9. G. Pradier, "Le Japon," 77.

which he did participate. At one point in his narrative of that expedition Pradier claims the French forces in Korea suffered no deaths (though here it is not entirely clear whether he is writing of the final expedition to the temple of Chŏndŭng-sa on November 9 or the campaign as a whole). On any account, for the record we know from official and other firsthand sources that the French suffered three dead, all killed by Korean bullets during an attempted landing at the foot of Munmu-san on the Korean mainland.[10]

But does it necessarily follow that the remainder of Pradier's account is to be disbelieved? That Pradier's account diverges in many key areas from the other existing first hand accounts can also be taken as a hopeful sign in terms of authenticity. It is clear in comparing his narrative of the expedition with others that he cannot be accused of plagiarizing the accounts of others. As noted, most of Pradier's account is highly personal, detailing events that were intimate only to a handful of men and providing details that not surprisingly go uncorroborated in any official report. In short, there can be no definitive answer to this question. All that one can do is attempt to confirm such details in Pradier's account as dates, names, and certain events that may be corroborated by other firsthand accounts and official records.

Despite the passage of time Pradier has a particularly good recall of names, either from his own mnemonic abilities or from some remnant records he had despite his claims to the contrary. It is perhaps in names that may rest some kernel of verifiability in Pradier's account. Many of the most prominent names, i.e. those of commanders, Pradier mentions are naturally corroborated in other firsthand sources, including the official record as preserved in the correspondence between Rear Admiral Roze and the Naval Ministry and between Roze and the French officer Marius Olivier, who served as commander of the *Guèrriere*. Yet it is important to note here that the official correspondence between Roze and the ministry and his commanders would likely not have been accessible by Pradier or anyone else not connected in some official capacity with the government.[11] Pradier records ten names in his account (excluding the most prominent figures of Roze and Father Ridel). Of these, four names go unmentioned in all other accounts, official or otherwise, while three others are mentioned only in the private official correspondence between Roze and Captain Olivier.

---

10. Roze to Naval Minister (17 November 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 334; Frey, "L'Expédition de Corée," 228; Piacentini, *Mgr Ridel*, 117.

11. Though one has to admit the possibility that Pradier, as a retired naval officer in 1904, may have enjoyed some access unavailable to the general public.

Further, there is one name, that of the sub-lieutenant (*ensigne*) Lasalle, commander of artillery, that is mentioned in only one other account, that of Jeanne Frey, which was not published until 1999.[12] This also serves to support the notion of Pradier's participation, if not his prodigious memory.

At the risk of exhausting the subject, there are also several curious incidents of the misspelling of names when compared to other accounts and even within the account of Pradier. Four of the ten names mentioned by Pradier have spelling conflicts with other firsthand accounts. Further, in two of those four incidents Pradier actually provides different renderings of the same name in different parts of his text. For instance, his rendering of Trève (the spelling as it appears in other firsthand accounts and official correspondence) as alternately Trêves and Trèves, as well as the other alternate spellings (footnoted in the translation) would seem to confirm that Pradier was in fact relying primarily upon memory and not upon alternate accounts, including official records.

As far as dates are concerned, taking as our primary sources the official French correspondence and the more extensive Korean record of events as detailed in the Ilsŏngnok,[13] we find that the dates provided by Pradier agree with them in most respects. Taking only those dates Pradier provides in his account of the punitive expedition, in which he was a direct participant, we find that there are only minor discrepancies between his account and the official records, discrepancies one could argue serve to validate rather than refute his account. For instance, Pradier records the anchoring of the expeditionary force at the Île Boisée on 12 October, which is contradicted slightly by the official correspondence of Roze and the memoirs of Jouan, both of whom relate that the fleet anchored for the night of 12 October off the Île Eugénie, arriving the following morning at Île Boisée. Likewise, the Korean record quotes a dispatch by the governor of Kyŏnggi-do relating that around noon on the fifth day of the ninth moon [13 October], three large and three small foreign vessels proceeded as far as P'almido 八尾島. While one of the large vessels then anchored off Yuldo 栗島, the remaining ships went on to anchor off Seŏdo 細於島.[14] The locations of P'almido and Seŏdo are

12. Frey gives the spelling Lassalle. Frey, "L'Expédition de Corée," 231.

13. As its title implies, the *Ilsŏngnok* 日省錄 (Records of Daily Reflection), comprise an extensive record of royal deliberations and national developments covering the period from 1752 to 1910. Being much more detailed than the dynastic *Sillok* 實錄 (Veritable Records) or the *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 承政院日記 (Daily Records of the Royal Secretariat), they constitute the premier official Korean record of events as they unfolded.

14. Roze to French Consul General in Shanghai (15 November 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 169; Jouan, "L'Expédition de Corée en 1866," 168. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 6 (14 October

approximate enough in location to both the Île Eugénie and the Île Boisée respectively to bring the Korean and French official records in congruence and contradict Pradier's recall of the date. However, Pradier's dates for the landing on Kanghwa by French troops (14 October), as well as the seizure of Kanghwa City and destruction of its storehouses (16 October), are confirmed exactly in both the French and Korean official records.[15] In fact, the only major discrepancy in dates between Pradier and official records concerns the armed encounter at Chŏndŭng-sa. The latter give the date as 9 November, though Pradier gives the date as 13 November.[16] Overall, Pradier's dating seems accurate enough to confirm his participation, and indeed the slight discrepancies would support the idea that he did not merely plagiarize his account from others.

Besides the cross-comparison of names and dates, one may also engage in a textual analysis of Pradier's account with other firsthand accounts, though admittedly one finds few firm points of comparison beyond aforementioned dates and names. Compared to the firsthand account of another participant, M. H. Zuber, Pradier's is much less descriptive than it is anecdotal. All this provides the reader a unique personal perspective, even while making cross-comparison that much more challenging.

Yet a cross-comparison yields some interesting insights into and divergences between French and Korean views of their encounter and some confirmation of Pradier's reliability. Upon landing on the beaches at Kanghwa, Pradier recounts how "… [our] troops were installed in the buildings of the village, which was situated on a small hill dominating the plain … from the hill's heights, and the slopes where the Yokohama Battalion was encamped, one had an expansive view of the surrounding country." Likely unbeknownst to the French, they were being watched, a fact that may now serve to buttress Pradier's account. A hasty dispatch sent to the Korean capital the day after the French landing from the commandant (*yusu* 留守) of Kanghwa, reported that, "early on the sixth day of the present moon [14 October] in the hour of the snake [between 9-11 a.m.], seven foreign vessels appeared. Three large vessels remained in the rear while the two small ones advanced as far as the bay of Kapkot 甲串 where they cast anchor. Five or six hundred [French] then boarded nine small boats and

---

1866).

15. Roze to Naval Minister (22 October 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 322; *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 7 (15 October 1866), Month 9, Day 8 (16 October 1866).

16. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 10, Day 4 (10 November 1866). Olivier to Roze (10 November 1866), Choe, 342.

alighted together at the riverbank. Many carried guns and swords. They then scaled a hill to get an extensive view."[17]

Pradier also recounts the story of the nearly fatal attempt to detonate a Korean gunpowder magazine. Cursory accounts of such acts of strategic destruction are to be found in other French records but without the personal detail provided by Pradier. Likewise, Korean official record contains several accounts of such intentional arson by the French.[18]

The procedural details of the French requisitioning of food and livestock also present an interesting point of comparison. Pradier's account is more extensive than any other source in its descriptions of the goods found in the Kanghwa storehouses. Yet Pradier's version of events, as the French version in general, has the French troops paying for all they took, by orders of Roze (though he admits sardonically, "[they] did not come across many expensive provisions in that country"). The *Ilsŏngnok* also records that the French were invading the homes of the people, and seizing pigs, chickens, turnips, and cabbage.[19] However, at least concerning the brief marauding expeditions by the French on the Korean mainland across from Kanghwa Island, Korean accounts cite occasions of the French seizing goods without recompense.[20]

As for the greatest and best known instance of French looting, the French seizure of silver and books from the royal storehouses in Kanghwa City, Pradier's record largely confirms the official record of such events. But as in a few other points in his narrative, here also Pradier seems to stretch the truth when discussing the amount of booty seized.[21] But with some contextual comparison (provided a little more fully in the footnotes), such aberrations can be readily put in their place.

As for other more amusing accounts, such as that of the ancient mariner ("seagoing captain") and the manners of the few captured Koreans he

---

17. 本月初六日巳時量洋船七隻內其中體大者三隻洛後而小船二隻先爲上來于本府屬甲串洋前洋留碇彼人等乘徒船九隻一齊上陸爲五六百名多持鉉劍上山候望. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 7 (15 October 1866). For allowing the rapid fall of Kanghwa, its commander Yi Ingi 李寅夔 was soon thereafter dismissed by royal order and banished into exile, though this was later commuted to forced retirement. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 9 (17 October 1866).

18. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 14 (22 October 1866); Month 9, Day 26 (3 November 1866).

19. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 12 (20 October 1866).

20. On one occasion they, "stormed into the village to plunder the goods of the people, their cows and clothing, without leaving anything [as recompense]" 突入邑村掠脫民財牛畜衣服子無餘. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 11 (19 October 1866).

21. Pradier seems to exaggerate as well a determination by Rear Admiral Roze to launch an offensive against the Korean capital itself. These cases are dealt with a little more fully in the footnotes to the translation.

encountered, with some forgiveness for the age in which he was writing, these may be taken as perceptions (albeit from the distance of forty years) of the other seen through the eyes of a self-professed representative of civilization. Here again, there must be a fair amount of embellishment, for even the most prodigious memory could not reconstitute such entire dialogs from the distance of four decades.

Ultimately, the account of Pradier should be approached and appreciated with caution. Though in all likelihood genuine, in that it is a firsthand account by a participant, it is written from the distance of forty years and without the aid of personal records. That it is an imperfect recollection is shown clearly in its number of slight inaccuracies. More seriously, Pradier is prepared, on at least one occasion, to present a purely fanciful event as fact and he is at times prone to overstatement. Nevertheless, in its broader sweep as personal reminiscence it may be added to that of Zuber's as a representative firsthand account from a very personal perspective of an historic encounter, the foreign disturbance of 1866.

Finally, a note on the translation. In the spirit of remaining faithful to the original, an effort was made to keep all geographic names in the author's rendition with footnotes where appropriate giving their proper Korean or Chinese equivalent in McCune-Reischauer or Pinyin. One exception was the Han River, which Pradier termed alternately, Han-Kiang and Hang-Kiang. As the reference was clear, it was translated as Han River. Likewise, in order to make clear the alternate rendering of names, all such spellings were maintained as they appear in the original text with explanatory footnotes provided where appropriate. In some cases where the precise translation of terms or expressions was problematic, the original French is included in brackets. The translator takes full responsibility for his work, though I hope the reader might condemn the fault and not the actor of it.

Korea of Forty Years Ago: Reminiscences of a Naval Officer[22]

We were moored at Takou[23] in the month of June, 1866 when Admiral Roze, Commander of the Naval Division of the China and Japan Seas,[24] received

22. This article was first published under the title, "La Corée il y a quarante ans" and appeared in two parts in consecutive issues of *La Revue hebdomadaire* (Paris) of 14 and 21 January 1905.

23. Taku (Pinyin: Dagu), or the Taku Forts, referred to a fortified port complex southeast of Tianjin, Shandong province, China. It was also the primary port for the French navy in China.

word that two priests and three French missionaries had just been massacred in Korea. The news was brought to him by the R. P. Ridel,[25] who had been fortunate enough to escape along with a dozen Koreans aboard a junk. Thereupon Admiral Roze immediately informed the Naval Minister, Count Chasseloup-Laubat.[26]

In the meantime we were summoned in all haste to the aid of Cochin China, then threatened by insurrection. Admiral Roze ordered the vessels of his division to rendezvous at Chéfou[27] on 10 September, and then set forth for Saigon with the frigate *la Guerrière*, upon which I embarked as a Midshipman First Class. By the time we arrived all was pacified, but the governor, Admiral La Grandière,[28] sensed that new disturbances, even then secretly being planned in western Cochin China, could flare up at any moment; he also required all of his resources to subdue three western provinces, which would be seized by our forces the following year and whose annexation to France would assure for a time the tranquility of our colony.

We took advantage of our time in Saigon to take on the necessary provisions, such as coal and munitions, and we found ourselves prepared when, towards the end of August, Admiral Roze received orders to proceed to Korea to make a show of force in order to obtain reparations for the massacre of our missionaries.[29]

The entire division was reunited at Chéfou on 10 September. The *Laplace* had been sent from Yokohama with two hundred marine riflemen of the Montagne Battalion.[30] These, combined with the naval companies of our own

---

24. Pierre-Gustave Roze (1812-1882). His actual rank at this time was Rear Admiral. From 1865 to 1867 he served as Commander of the French Second Empire's Far Eastern Squadron (Station Navale des Mers de Chine). In fact, the correspondence of Roze and the letters of Father Ridel indicate that Ridel brought news of the execution of two priests (*évêques*), seven missionaries, and a large number of native converts. Roze to Naval Ministry (6 October 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 277; Piacentini, Mgr Ridel, 108.

25. The Reverend Father (Révérend Père) Felix-Claire Ridel (1830-1884).

26. Napoléon Samuel Prosper, marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat (1805-1873) was the godson of Napoleon I and Josephine. From 1861 to 1867 he served as Napoleon III's Minister of the Navy and Colonies.

27. Zhifu. An important port in northern Shandong province at what is today Yantai.

28. Pierre-Paul-Marie de la Grandière (1807-1876). At the time he was a rear admiral and from 1863-1868, the French governor of Cochin China.

29. These orders came from Henri de Bellonet, French chargé d'affaires in Peking, and not the French government authorities in Paris.

30. Referring to the French naval headquarters in Yokohama. The French concession there, situated on a choice piece of land on a small mountain overlooking Yokohama, came to be called simply "La Montagne française" by its occupants. Pradier alludes to it again at the end of his

division, would allow us to form two battalions of a total of five hundred seventy-three men, two artillery batteries of four cannons apiece, one company of marines [*abordeurs*], and one battery of rocketeers [*fuséens*].

While we drilled our men in marching and firing, on 18 September the admiral set off for Korea aboard the corvette *Primauguet*, commanded by Bochet, with the dispatch boat *Déroulède* and gunboat second-class *Tardiff* in tow. He brought with him Father Ridel and the natives, one of whom served as a pilot and to point out the southern approach, without knowledge of which it would be hopeless to proceed.

Father Ridel served as interpreter. Following the custom of missionaries in the Far East, who from their arrival dress in the manner native to the area where they are proselytizing, he was garbed in the Korean style, entirely in white. Only the soldiers [of Korea] sport colorful uniforms. All others wear a long and full shirt extending to the knees. Their pants resemble those of the Zouaves,[31] only larger and falling lower on the foot. Their sleeves and shoes resemble those of the Chinese. Their hairstyles are singular. The men tie their hair into a very tight and vertical braid, which they keep pulled up very smartly atop their heads by a headband made of horsehair. This hairdo is then covered with a tall black hat in the shape of a truncated cone with large straight brims fashioned of horsehair or fine bamboo. The material was such that its transparency allowed one to see the small topknot – our men were fond of calling these hairdos 'flytraps.' The headgear was very fragile and placed delicately on the head where it was held in place by two black cords fastened beneath the chin. It served as adornment as well as to protect the vertical queue which adorned the top of the forehead.

The women were dressed somewhat like the men and distinguishable by their hair alone, which instead of being pulled atop the head was gathered at the back of the neck into a sort of bun that was then concealed beneath a small black cover.

On the evening of the 19th the three ships anchored off Île Eugénie, one of the most important islands of the Prince Imperial Archipelago.[32] The night spent at this anchorage, during an equinox tide, provided some idea of the navigational difficulties these regions presented. Currents reached speeds of five

---

account.

31. Referring to certain infantry regiments of the French army identifiable by their trousers, which hung loosely and ballooned out around the calves.

32. The Prince Imperial Archipelago being a French appellation of the string of islands stretching roughly from Taebu-do 大阜島 in the east to Tŏkchŏk-do 德積島 in western Kyŏnggi Province.

and a half knots while the sea during the great syzygy tide[33] attained depths of seventeen meters. In other words, a five-story house accessible at low tide would vanish completely beneath the waters at high tide. Thus one is forced to spend the night at one's post, boilers pressurized, and engines ready to run. The veering of the extremely violent eddies and tides turned the small ships on their anchors threatening to snap their chains.

The following day, the disembarkation of the *Déroulède* and *Tardiff* was fraught with difficulty from the outset. Equipped only with windlasses, it took some time for them to hoist their anchors. Following two hours of steaming the vessels arrived before the Île Boisée[34] at the entrance to the Han River, the river of Seoul.[35]

The Han River and its tributaries stretch from the Korean coast in the east to the island of Kang-Hoa,[36] whose numerous fortifications guard the approach to the capital, in the west. The Île Boisée's southern coast presented a most singular appearance: high and sheer cliffs interspersed with very low-lying shores that the rising tide covered completely. The unoccupied bluffs, which might have served to defend the anchorages of the Île Boisée, were sufficient evidence that its shores were unapproachable. Nature proved a sufficient defense against their use. The tides completely change the appearance of the region. The five or six mile wide estuary at high tide is reduced at low tide to one and a half miles at most.

The admiral's flagship *Déroulède*, accompanied by the *Tardiff*, left the *Primauguet* to advance up the Han River. The small gunboat led the way, carrying aboard the commander Bochet along with the pilot Father Ridel, and indicated the course by signaling depth readings. Numerous banks made the entrance difficult, but the further we advanced the more evident the river channel became, as indicated by the disposition of the water, despite the fact that its width varied and its course described numerous meanderings. Seven

---

33. Syzygy refers to the alignment of three or more celestial bodies. By syzygy, or equinox, tide is meant the tide occurring when the sun and moon are in alignment and characterized by extremes of high and low tidal flow.

34. The names figuring in this account were provided us either by Father Ridel or the Korean pilot [author's note].

35. The Île Boisée ("wooded isle") refers to the erstwhile island of Chagyakto 芍藥島, now joined through land reclamation to the larger Yŏngjongdo 永宗島 (home of Incheon International Airport). The river Pradier refers to here as the Han River is actually the narrow strait separating the Korean coast and Kanghwa Island. It is also referred to by period Western accounts as the Rivière Salée (salty river). The actual mouth of the Han River is reached a few paragraphs on.

36. Kanghwa Island.

miles from its mouth the river narrowed to form a very dangerous elbow strewn with rocks around which the waters boiled furiously like rapids. This passage was very delicate; the navigation of such a violent current demanded utmost care and speed. At this point only eight meters separated the embankment from midstream. Two well-situated forts occupied the summits of the opposite banks, guarding the narrow channel. Scuttled junks would have rendered the passage impassable. Fortunately, the Koreans had not thought of this very basic defense.

After passing the elbow the river gradually widened and navigation became easier. Its fairly high banks are crowned by small forts three or four meters in height. These small defensive structures, which are generally found at every promontory, are linked by a two-meter high crenellated wall that extends the length of either bank.

The city of Kang-Hoa is not situated along the shore of the Han River but in the interior. It is defended by three forts in a triangular formation situated near a promontory so that they command the river both up and downstream. The Koreans say it comprises one of the country's four eminent spots.[37] Besides the area near these three forts, access to the city was barred from the river by a monumental gate, to which had recently been attached two crenellated walls three meters high. On the opposite bank a similar gate was locked from within to block the approach to Seoul. These gates have a large flag draped below their platforms; on the Kang-Hoa gate stood several mandarins and armed soldiers.

After passing these forts without detecting any sign of hostility on the part of the Koreans, the *Tardiff* and *Déroulède* found themselves in waters of considerable depth and breadth. Continuing on, they arrived at the mouth of the Han River. On their left was the Northern Pass, or Emperor's Pass, a vast five-mile bay, but very encumbered by sandbanks and navigable only by junks. The Southern Pass they had seized was really the only one that would permit gunboats entrance to the river of Seoul.

Forced to anchor each evening, it took five days for our two vessels to reach the capital, in the course of which they foundered several times on sandbanks but without suffering any serious damage. Arriving several miles from the village of Sukkol,[38] on the river's left bank, a large number of junks and chains

37. Perhaps an allusion to the "four fortresses" of Kyŏnggi-do that defended the capital, each headed by a commander (*yusu* 留守). The others were located in Suwŏn 水原, Kaesŏng 開城, and Kwangju 廣州.

38. What village this refers to is unclear. The period map *Taedong yŏjido* 大東輿地圖 has a village named Sokkot 石串 located at the approximate location Pradier indicates here, about fifteen

of logs were spotted in the middle of the river blocking our passage. Father Ridel and the pilot made signals for them to approach closer from the banks, but as they gave either no sign of understanding or willingness to comply, several rifle shots were fired just in front of the foremost figure. No sooner had we done this then their crews abandoned their crafts and fled into the interior. Our two vessels, forced to halt at sunset, spent the night at anchor without being molested.

The next day at dawn we saw hundreds of junks, along with chains of logs, which seemed to block the route downriver from Seoul. The admiral dispatched Lieutenant Commander H.,[39] along with Father Ridel, to inform the authorities of a large village located about 600 meters above the right bank that if the channel were not cleared within the hour we would clear the route ourselves at the ends of our cannon. Because the junks had not budged at the end of an hour, the *Tardiff* fired a random artillery shell about 2000 meters. With our telescopes we witnessed some very active movement aboard the Korean boats. Our two vessels lifted anchor and continued their progress upriver. Approaching, we recognized that the junks had shifted, leaving a gap between them sufficient to allow our passage. The *Tardiff* and *Déroulède* passed alongside all these boats, whose crews all appeared terrified, and came to anchor 150 meters from the outskirts of Seoul, in front of the imperial palace.

It is impossible to convey a sense of the panic the populace felt upon seeing our two vessels armed with cannon, which seemed such formidable machines alongside their junks. The fear-stricken residents ran in all directions, calling out for help, while the imperial guard, arranged in battle order before the palace gates, stood ready to defend the entrance.

Dispatched as a spokesperson, Father Ridel obtained an audience with the sovereign. The admiral immediately descended with his chief of staff and

---

kilometers from Seoul and on the left bank of the Han River (as one heads upriver towards Seoul, as the expedition was doing here). However, period French charts record a village named Sak Kol located just southeast of Kimp'o on the southern (or right as one heads upriver) bank of the Han River. See the map included in Rostaing, "Notes sur une récente exploration." In this latter case, one possibility for its identity could be Singok 新谷. However, it bears noting that Pradier here is recounting a portion of the expedition in which he did not participate and for this reason may have mistakenly identified the location as on the left bank. Kim Chŏngho, *Taedong yŏjido* (Complete map of the Great East), (Seoul: Kyŏngsŏng Cheguk Taehak Pŏbakpu, 1936), sheet 13.

39. Due to the figure's later prominence, Pradier does not provide his full name, a convention often adhered to in period memoirs. It almost certainly refers to Edgar-Eugène Humann (1838-1914), who in 1892 would be appointed to the same position Roze held in 1866: Commander of the French Far Eastern Division (Division navale d'Extrême-Orient).

escorted by forty marines armed with rifles and revolvers. Reproaching the emperor for the death of our missionaries, the admiral demanded extravagant reparations. Obtaining only vague promises in response, he then declared his intention to return with more vessels and many more troops, vowing vengeance for the atrocities committed. Was this really the emperor, this motionless figure seated at the back of a darkened hall upon a dais encompassed in silk that partially concealed him from the eyes of the profane? We will never know. Leaving the palace with his escort, the admiral returned aboard the *Déroulède* and the two vessels then cast off for the return voyage down river.[40]

We marveled at the results of such audacity: with only two small vessels of but seventy men each we had gone and threatened a sovereign of tens of millions in his very palace. What is more, to do so at the end of a nearly sixty-mile journey up a narrow, winding river encumbered by banks and rocky promontories with extremely violent currents and defended by very well placed fortifications. Yet our ships had encountered no serious resistance to speak of. At our final anchorage before Seoul, however, we were fired upon by a large cannon. The projectile resembled a round bullet traversed by an arrow (we had never before seen the likes of it). It fell a short distance from the *Tardiff*. Our gunmen responded immediately with a very strong volley that sent a mob of Koreans to flight, panic-stricken by the murderous effect of our artillery.

The return journey was accomplished as uneventfully as the journey out, and much more rapidly. There was reason to fear the Koreans might have blocked our way with a line of junks, or that the forts of Kang-Hoa might harass our passage, but there was nothing of the sort. Only after our vessels had passed the village did the forts at the channel entrance fire upon them. But by the time they opened fire the *Déroulède*, which brought up the rear, had already passed beyond the range of their missiles.

Admiral Roze returned to Chéfou and immediately issued orders to embark for Korea. The naval division consisted of the frigate *Guerrière* (the admiral's flagship), commanded by Captain Marius Ollivier;[41] the corvettes *Primauget*,

---

40. By other French accounts, on 25 September the French vessels *Tardiff* and *Déroulède* reached a point on the Han River within sight of the walls of Seoul. The following day a Korean emissary brought a message aboard the *Déroulède* in effect asking the French to leave peacefully. The French vessels made some soundings and then departed back downriver the same day. Roze to Naval Minister (6 October 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 291 et passim. See also, Frey, "L'Expédition de Corée," 216-217; Piacentini, *Mgr Ridel*, 113; Zuber, "Une expédition en Corée," 406. The incongruity of Pradier's version with all other accounts aside, even had the French ships reached the region of Seoul on the Han River they would still have been nearly two miles distant from the royal residence at Kyŏngbok Palace, hardly "in front of it."

commanded by Bochet, and *Laplace*, commanded by Amet; the paddle-wheel sloops *Kien-Chan*, commanded by Trêves,[42] and *Déroulède*, commanded by Richy; and finally, the two small gunboats *Tardiff*, commanded by Chanoine, and *Brethon*, commanded by Huchet de Cintré. We took along as well several junks, including that of Father Ridel and the Korean Catholics, who speaking a bit of French came to serve us as both guides and interpreters.

On 12 October the admiral led the division to anchor at the Île Boisée facing the entrance to the Han River, the river of Seoul. The expeditionary force then boarded the four smallest vessels and the divisional launching dinghies. At the head was the *Tardiff*, followed by the *Déroulède* flying the admiral's flag, with the *Kien-Chan* and *Brethon* bringing up the rear. The gunboats had complete freedom of movement, while the sloops towed the launches and dinghies of the larger vessels moored at the Île Boisée, their dimensions and draught making it impossible for them to enter the river.

All went well until we were ten miles from Kang-Hoa, the place decided upon for the landing, at which point the *Kien-Chan* was unable to follow. Obliged as it was to navigate by a hastily drawn map, it quit the channel and became grounded, the rapidity of the sea's tide making it impossible to extricate itself. The frigate captain d'Osery, second in command aboard the *Guerrière*, had the towropes released and gave them to the *Brethon* with orders to leave *Kien-Chan* and continue its advance alone. By the time we had anchored before Kang-Hoa the *Tardiff* and *Déroulède* had already opened fire to clear the bank. Our men had already seized the village on the beach, sending into flight the few Koreans who had occupied the gate and three forts that protected the village. The troops were installed in the buildings of the village, which was situated on a small hill dominating the plain. Our vessels, anchored in a line and commanding both the river and the opposite bank, were free from the fear of surprise attack.

From the hill's heights, and the slopes where the Yokohama Battalion was encamped, one enjoyed an expansive view of the land. Fairly high mountains framed the western horizon. To the right one made out the Northern Channel or Channel of the *Emperor* (also called Scia-tung).[43] Finally, on the plains

41. Most sources record the spelling, Olivier.

42. Other sources record, Trève. Jouan, "L'Expédition de Corée en 1866," 156 et passim; Piacentini, *Mgr Ridel*, 122.

43. Referring to the sea channel between the islands of Porŭmdo 巨音島 and Chumundo 注文島, and which provided a northern approach to Kanghwa and the Han River Estuary. This passage was explored by Ernst Oppert earlier in 1866 aboard the small steamer *Emperor*, thus the sobriquet. The meaning of Scia-tung is not known.

below the countryside was strewn with hamlets and copses of trees through which wound an extended road five meters in breadth and leading to the city of Kang-Hoa, whose far-off dwellings were just visible behind an enclosing wall. The terrain was dry, and unlike in China or Japan, rice was not the only crop: one saw much sorghum and corn as well.

On 15 October a reconnaissance mission to Kang-Hoa led by the frigate captain d'Orsery[44] encountered rifle fire 300 meters from the city walls. The commander had his men take cover and assume firing positions, and with only his self exposed, he had them open fire. Two Koreans were killed and many more wounded.[45] The firing and advancing continued until not a single enemy was to be seen. A few sailors scaled the walls and the commander was able to personally reconnoiter the city and familiarize himself with its defenses. Having no further orders, he had his men withdraw, wishing to leave to the admiral the honor of capturing the city he could have seized with a single company of sailors from the *Guerrière*.

That same day several platoons of soldiers from other units roamed unmolested about the countryside. Upon their approach white clad figures fled as fast as they could in all directions.[46] They brought back provisions and a dozen or so cows.

In the early morning hours of 16 October the advance on the city commenced in the following order: in the vanguard came the marines commanded by Ensign Lassalle;[47] these were followed by the admiral and his escort, the first column commanded by d'Osery, the second column commanded by Lieutenant T., the third column commanded by Lieutenant Laguerre, and finally the rear guard comprised of companies of marines from

---

44. Other sources record, d'Osery. Jouan, "L'Expédition de Corée en 1866," 166 et passim; Roze to Naval Minister (22 October 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye* 319 et passim; Frey, "L'Expédition de Corée," 122. Later Pradier also records d'Osery.

45. This conforms with the Korean record. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 8 (16 October 1866).

46. Things were not quite so quiet. In fact, the Korean record cites an encounter between several dozen French soldiers and a local Korean official, *Kim Chae-hŏn* 金在獻. Captured along the road, Kim was led to a house in Kapkot where the French, working without an interpreter, attempted unsuccessfully to communicate before taking him briefly aboard one of the French ships anchored off the coast, where he was questioned in Korean, most likely by Father Ridel assisted by a Korean Christian. *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 8 (16 October 1866). Pradier is not alone in neglecting to mention this encounter, of which he was likely ignorant. It is only to be found in the account of Frey, who mentions that it was Ridel who questioned the Korean official, though interestingly, it is not mentioned in the letters of Ridel as compiled by Piacentini. Frey, "L'Expédition de Corée," 224.

47. Elsewhere Pradier records 'Lasalle.' Frey records 'Lassalle.' Frey, "L'Expédition de Corée," 231.

the smaller vessels. Batteries of four pieces and artillerymen each followed their respective corps.

The troops arrived within 500 meters of the town without encountering the enemy. Captain Marius Olivier, commander of the landing corps, then deployed the three columns while the artillery opened fire on the main gate and the walls. The charge was sounded. The men threw themselves into the assault, scaling the walls while the Korean captains, swords in hand, attempted in vain to rally their troops. Many were killed and the remainder fled without offering resistance or even taking their flags, which were soon in our hands. Our men found the place abandoned, at most only a hundred remained in a city whose dimensions could sustain thirty-five to forty thousand souls.

The first corps was installed in the yamen of the mandarin governor. The second spent the entire day scouring the inner city, encountering none of the enemy save for a small number of inoffensive and frightened inhabitants. The third conducted a reconnaissance outside the walls. In the villages, which had not been entirely abandoned, were seen only a few elderly, whom the Koreans had abandoned so as not to be encumbered in their flight. The men, almost all of them drunk, followed us with piteous cries. The women stooped to the ground and greeted us in the fashion of the country, rubbing together their extended hands.

Next to the yamen a number of large and well-built storehouses contained all the provisions required for a campaign. The inventory was curious: quite primitive weapons by the thousands; armor with iron helmets; large swords with tempered blades of poor quality and enclosed in frayed sleeves; crossbows; innumerable barbed arrows; truncheons; spiked flails; small iron tridents meant to wound horses and those on foot; rifles with fuses and leather cartridges. In other storehouses were found heaps of fans and writing brushes, wax candles, and alum, and finally, iron cooking pots, very solid paper cups for eating rice; sacks of barley, rice, salted cod, and an immense quantity of dried fish. Most important was the discovery of one storehouse with cases containing saucer-shaped slabs of silver. Our men, who took to playing games of quoits with them, were asked by an officer where they had found them.

"Ah, lieutenant," replied one of the sailors, "they're zinc. Some boxes in the back of the warehouse are filled with them."

The officer examined two of these discs and discovered them in fact to be silver. There were roughly 300,000 francs worth of them. The admiral forwarded this treasure to the Naval Minister to help defray the cost of the expedition, but the government later declared it to be booty seized from the enemy, and as such should be divided among the officers and soldiers of the

expeditionary fleet.[48]

We took from the yamen an entire library as well as marble tablets with gold inscriptions. According to Father Ridel, these latter constituted a history of the country. For two hundred and fifty years the Koreans had experienced no serious warfare. This explained the large stores of antiquated armaments.

Commander d'Osery took control of the city and installed the large part of the embarking party either in the yamen or in some large homes situated on a hill dominating the surrounding countryside. The alpine battalion, the marines, and the gunners lodged in the village at the beach, where the admiral installed himself in a *yatki*[49] with his staff.

A barn was cleared out and refitted; decorated with foliage and pennants and fitted with the altar from *la Guerrière*, the frigate chaplain then conducted Sunday mass there while Father Ridel did the same in the city of Kang-Hoa.

The admiral assisted at this mass, surrounded by his staff and all the officers, who arrived in no particular order and of their own accord. An armed guard, led by a midshipman, and arranged on the right and left of the altar, presented arms and kneeled during the elevation, while drummers and buglers sounded in the fields. Sailors filled the improvised chapel, those finding no more room standing in the doorway, just as in their own village, heads uncovered and solemn. The same crowds appeared in Kang-Hoa at the small chapel of Father Ridel.

Our crews were largely Breton sailors, all of whom were devout, while even those from other provinces were far from being skeptics. By that time a few religious practices had become standard aboard ship.

Each day a brief prayer, the Lord's Prayer with the Hail Mary, was said before the crew during morning inspection and the evening clearing of the decks. The men listened in silence with heads uncovered. Mass was celebrated Sunday aboard the admiral's ship while a chaplain conducted it aboard the other vessels by turn. On Good Friday the yardarms became crosses, flags were flown at half-mast, while a cannon was fired hourly. At a ship's launching the port chaplain came to consecrate the vessel, beseeching God to protect it in

---

48. In his official dispatch to the Naval Ministry, Roze gives the figure of 887 discs of silver weighing 887 kilograms with an estimated value of 197,231FRF (equivalent in 2006 to approximately US$495,000). According to Roze, immediately following the inventory, "all the cases were reclosed, sealed, secured, and numbered and carried aboard the *Guerrière* for transport to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies [Naval Ministry]." Roze to Naval Minister (16 October 1866), Choe, 355. This putative division of the spoils described by Pradier is not found in any other account and whether it actually came to pass is unknown.

49. Meaning unknown.

tempest and war.

The new inventions and innumerable contraptions that now fill our vessels have necessitated the presence of specialists, able workers for the most part originating from the hinterland, who have changed all of this. Prayer and religious ceremony have been suppressed in order not to offend the beliefs of those who possess none. Chaplains have been reduced in number, and soon they will be done away with altogether, removing with them the possibility of last rites for those who desire them, as well as the supreme consolation of their loved ones, mothers, and wives of knowing those they cherished had seen their sufferings soothed and been able to die as Christians.

On the evening of 17 October we set fire to all state storehouses after having removed from them all that might be of use. At the same time we ignited three small powder kegs we had positioned against the city's exterior walls. The detonations could be heard in the capital. With the perception of these incendiary lights the emperor received as well the assurance that the admiral had kept his promise.

After such a reprisal it would have been wise had we satisfied ourselves with this lesson and disembarked. The admiral wished to continue on and bombard Seoul, but he learned from the Korean Christians that the way upriver had been blocked by scuttled junks, obliging our vessels to remain anchored at Kang-Hoa.[50] Unable to demonstrate a show of force before the capital, and not wishing to return empty handed, the admiral desired at the very least to return with a map of the country. No hydrographic surveys had yet been taken, yet they were indispensable if one were to produce a sound chart of the river and the environs of the Île Boisée.

The expeditionary corps was divided into hydrographical and topographical brigades. Each day some officers set off with one of the small cannon and an armed dinghy to make soundings or observations, while others, escorted by an armed detachment, conducted reconnaissance of the terrain.

One morning while ascending the river the commander of the *Tardiff* was

---

50. Based upon the official records this is highly doubtful. Roze was clear even before departing for Kanghwa on the second punitive phase that the Han River was far too treacherous to permit its approach by French steamships and he had no intention of trying. Further, even had he succeeded in ascending the Han River as far as the outer limits of Seoul, the distance of the walled capital from the river would have made it far beyond the range of the French guns. It bears repeating that Pradier was never part of the exploratory mission that had proceeded some way up the Han River and would have based his concept of the situation of the Korean capital entirely on hearsay. From the outset of the punitive expedition Roze stated that his aim was only to strike a coup de main at Kanghwa, "the key to Seoul." Roze to Naval Minister (6 October 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 318.

astounded when his ship ceased advancing though its propeller continued to turn. Despite the extreme current the engines labored to pull the vessel upstream. Soundings were made and river bottom was found all about. The engines were cut. But rather than drifting the vessel remained lodged in place. In the ebbing tide the vessel's center had run aground on a protruding rock. Fearing the vessel would capsize in the low tide, the ship's gear was redistributed to create an equilibrium and the crew was prohibited from moving about. The sea descended well below the keel and throughout the low tide the *Tardiff* sat balanced on the rock. It was necessary to await high tide, when to our extreme good fortune the sea refloated the vessel so that it was able to return that same evening to its anchorage at Kang-Hoa. This episode gives an idea of the navigational dangers of those parts, where a good chart is indispensable. Our officers now comprehended the urgency of the matter, and everyone else as well labored with the greatest ardor.

During the six weeks we remained in Korea I was sent out on a daily reconnaissance of the region around the city of Kang-Hoa. I set off with a detachment of forty men and while conducting a survey with compass of our route I was also responsible for obtaining cows, pigs, chickens, eggs, fruit, vegetables, and other provisions. The admiral, however, had given strict orders to take nothing without reimbursement. Therefore, before setting out the commissar provided us with piastras or Chinese taels cut in half and we would then calculate how many pieces of such silver should be given in exchange for the provisions we came upon in the villages. Whenever we seized a cow or other animal in the countryside we estimated its value and then, in cases where the owner did not answer our calls, left a number of piastras or taels representing its value on the ground in the vicinity where we had taken it. These amounts were left to the estimations of each detachment commander, and I must avow that, generally speaking, we did not come across many expensive provisions in that country.

The undulating countryside resembled that of Japan without rivaling it in beauty. The city of Kang-Hoa was surrounded by immense paddy fields interspersed with wooded hills where pheasant and pigeon abounded. Near the end of our stay the cold arrived with brisk effect. All the rice paddies became covered with wild black geese that were apparently not hunted, for they never fled at our approach. Our men with their shoulder slung rifles were sorely tempted as they marched along the embankments of these fields. What a slaughter would have resulted had a platoon fired into these densely packed flocks! Unfortunately, a formal order had been issued: in order not to frighten those peaceable Koreans still sheltered in their villages, we were forbidden from

firing a single round.

The day of our disembarking on Kang-Hoa we had seized a large junk loaded with rice.[51] The ship's master, whom we called "the seagoing captain" [*le capitaine au long cours*], was kept in our custody for three or four days. We thought this man might provide us with needed intelligence for navigating the river. However, despite promises of silver, Father Ridel was unable to make use of him. We eventually released him but throughout our stay on Kang-Hoa he lingered in the vicinity, most likely to keep a watchful eye on his junk, the separation from which no doubt caused him great heartache.

When in the course of our expeditions we came upon provisions we requisitioned Koreans from the villages to serve as porters. These people were not at all happy about our taking their animals, even with reimbursement, and even less with being forced to carry the loads to our camp. In general they demonstrated much indolence, I might even say resistance, so that it was often necessary to resort to the bamboo to make them obey.

The Koreans, without resembling the Chinese entirely, share some of their customs. In the Celestial Empire the coolies, more physically able servants, usually do not work without the inducement of the rod. They were no doubt raised on such principles, for often our better servants would demand in their language, "Me no work if you no give bamboo." Well, if they were asking for it we had less scruples about giving it to them. It was the same with the Koreans. This being said, never in the course of our expedition did one of our men commit an inhumane act. Yes, from time to time when obliged they struck the shoulders of surly porters, but they administered only the force necessary, never overdoing it.

The first time I was sent on reconnaissance I came across our "seagoing captain" in a village. During the brief period he had been detained in our camp he was befriended by us midshipmen, who treated him practically as a colleague. One evening when Father Ridel had a free moment we asked him to have the Korean captain recount to us stories of his journeys. He was tall and well-built and when I found him in the village I called him over, placed a length of bamboo in his hand and informed him through gestures that I was placing him in charge of our Korean porters. At first this role seemed a bit repugnant to him. But as we did not oblige him to carry anything he resigned himself to

---

51. Other French accounts do not mention the seizure of Korean rice shipments per se, though Kanghwa's strategic location as the highway to Seoul was a putative reason for its choice as French target. The Korean record, however, does record the French seizure of rice shipments (*chosŏn* 漕船). *Ilsŏngnok*, Month 9, Day 13 (21 October 1866).

his task and ended by guiding the convoy fairly well. Arriving back at camp, to demonstrate my complete satisfaction I had him given biscuits and after shaking him by the hand let him go. The following day another midshipman who did not know him discovered him in another village. Observing this hardy fellow who seemed not to possess the air of savagery of the others, he pointed him out to his men to have him carry a pig corresponding to his size and strength. The "seagoing captain" scoffed at this but was forced to do so nonetheless. But when he was struck slightly on the shoulders he cried out in the only French he had learned during his brief sojourn in our camp, "*Ah! Ça pas bon! Ça pas bon!*" Hearing this Korean speaking French, our men thought he was perhaps an acquaintance of Father Ridel and treated him with consideration, even humoring him with friendly slaps on the shoulder. Throughout all this he continued to carry his burden, though with evident reluctance. It would seem that it was his junk that kept him so harshly detained in our vicinity, for nearly everyday we came across him in the neighboring countryside and he ended up lugging pigs, though I wouldn't say graciously, at least in such a manner that we were never obliged to resort to the bamboo. After our departure he must have been reunited with his junk, and one hopes the joy of reassuming his command allowed him to promptly forget his former vicissitudes.

One morning I was sent to search a village where a mandarin had been spotted by our spies. Father Ridel, accompanying my platoon, gave us the signal and we set off in search of him. Before arriving at the village we observed several groups of Koreans fleeing in various directions. I divided up the squadrons and sent them in pursuit, with orders to find the mandarin and bring him to me. At the end of an hour several of the squadrons had returned without success when I noticed a group of men emerging from behind a copse of bamboo. They seemed to be having difficulties walking. We went out to meet them and as we approached the Quartermaster Leguen, the squadron leader, raised his cap in the air crying out merrily, "We have them, monsieur P. We've captured the mandarin!" They had him all right, but in what a state! They had lashed his hands and feet together, passed a length of bamboo between his bindings, and were carrying him like calf. After releasing the poor man I harshly reprimanded Leguen.

"But monsieur P., you ordered we bring him to you. I tell you he struggled awfully when we recognized him so we were obliged to tie him up. He then squirmed about like a worm and absolutely refused to walk. We were as polite as could be, we explained to him that we meant no harm, but he could not understand. Since you'd ordered he be brought to you we had no choice but to

bind him. If we hadn't he'd still be out there. His companions began to growl when they saw we'd tied him up, so that I was obliged to order my men to fix bayonets to prevent them from coming to his rescue while Polèz and I brought him here."

Once released and standing, I attempted in my turn to convince the mandarin to accompany us. But it was futile. At first I pitied him, but seeing him fall to his knees, hands clasped and overcome with terror, choked by tears and sobs, I grew indignant of his shameless and degrading demeanor. No Japanese, Annamite, or Chinese officer would ever maintain such a humiliating deportment. They would kill themselves before allowing themselves to be captured, or if they did fall into our hands they would certainly have demonstrated a certain dignity before their captor. What would become of the Korean soldiers if they were led by such as this?

Seeing we were about to bind him again, he resolved to walk to our camp, where I placed him in the hands of the picket commander at headquarters.

Several evenings later, around eleven o'clock, the Koreans ignited large fires in a village near a promontory along the riverbank about a league and a half downriver from our encampment. This was met with an almost immediate response by fires ignited on the opposite bank. From one bank to the other signals were made using lanterns that could be maneuvered horizontally or vertically.

One evening while on fatigue duty in camp the admiral summoned me and gave me orders to go and determine just what was going on at the promontory where the signals had been made.

"It is imperative I be informed of the schemes of these Koreans corresponding with one another in the night," he told me. "If there are not many people in the village seize them without ill-treatment. Bring to me every living being you find there. Naturally you will respect any temple found near the bank, but I want you to put to the torch any hay bales or stores of flammable material near the riverbank."

At nine o'clock I set off with a platoon of eighty sailors with fixed bayonets and weapons loaded, and with their scabbards secured in their belts so as not make any noise. The noncommissioned officers and riflemen first class were equipped with pieces of rope and wax candles taken from the storehouses of Kang-Hoa. Before arriving at the first dwellings I deployed my men in extended order in order to encircle the village. I waited until midnight, thinking the Koreans would attempt to signal as they had the previous night and that we could then surprise them in the act. All was silent, deserted. I gave orders to slowly advance, proceeding hut by hut until we reached the parapets. The men

then entered the houses one by one. They were entirely empty, not a soul to be seen. What's more, no flame appeared on the opposite bank. The entire village was searched until only the temple remained. I sent the Second Mate Prigent with ten men, reminding them not to disturb anything and to take nothing.

While this was going on we discovered next to the parapet haystacks and piles of dry wood certainly used to kindle signal fires to communicate with the opposite bank. I was making arrangements to set these aflame before our departure when I heard cries issuing from the temple. I assembled some sailors and entered the temple. There I found a group of our men restraining two figures in white who were flustering about in distress at the foot of a large Buddha statue raised upon an altar at the back of the temple. I advanced. They were two Koreans floundering about like creatures possessed and letting out cries of fear and grief. One of the two appeared rather elderly and to be covered in blood as he stood buttressed against the altar, ready to fend off any attack. I called off the men and demanded an explanation of Prigent.

"I'm telling you, monsieur P., we found them like this, crouched behind their god, and so completely packed together and well-hidden that it was only by chance I discovered them when I kicked a bundle and felt it move. Then Malgorn, Le Bras, and I, we stooped down and dragged them out. We wanted to get a look at their faces, but they kicked and screamed and clawed at us. The old one, you see her over there, well Monsieur P., she bit me to the bone (he then showed me a seriously injured thumb). I swear I had no intention of hurting her but she'd gotten the better of me and left me no choice. In order to get her to let go my hand I had to rough her up a bit. But it wasn't much, and it sure didn't calm her down any, Monsieur P. As for the other, the younger one, she wasn't any easier. She's a real pest, one can just see it in the eyes she makes."

"And these two Koreans, you're sure they're women?" I asked.

"Yes sir," Prigent replied. "They're women."

I confess I was much less certain. These two creatures stretched out on the ground beneath the large statue of serene Buddha, dressed in garments of white now dirty and torn, and illuminated only by the pale light cast by the candles of four or five of our men. There appeared to be nothing human about them.

"Yes, lieutenant, yes, they're women. You can tell by their hairdos. I'm sure of it," remarked Castagnié, a small bowsprit topman, as he held his candle to their faces, all the while watchful of their teeth and nails.

Against such a categorical assertion it was futile to argue and I was obliged to acquiesce.

"You will bring back every human being found in the village," the admiral

had told me. I had to carry out my charge.

During our brief visit to the temple we noticed four or five banners or tabards tied to bamboo poles. They suited our purpose nicely. Within the blink of an eye we had wrapped the two women in the banners and covered their faces. Despite their cries and contortions we managed to bind them up tightly and carry them out of the temple.

Kervella, the second mate of the second section, arrived to report there were no more people in the village and that all our men were present and accounted for.

"The monks were probably frightened off," he told me. "These people can see in the dark like cats. They must have seen our approach and taken off, abandoning the temple to these two women."

I had the haystacks set afire, reassembled the men, and made ready to return to camp.

The two Korean women were let loose. I wanted to have them walk with us on our return march. They had calmed down a bit after recognizing I was in charge and that they had not been molested further since my arrival. I attempted, like a native of Marseilles, to make it known through gestures that they were not going to be killed, but that they had to walk with us. To encourage them Prigent even offered them some sapeques that had been gathered from the floor of a hut. But nothing worked. They remained huddled together like terrified animals, absolutely refusing to get up.

"Well then, we'll have to secure them again and carry them. We can untie them again once underway. I see no other way. Go get those banners again."

When the two women saw we intended to tie them up again they began to struggle, making good use of their teeth and nails.

Castagnié had just received a good scratch on the hand and was about to punish the guilty party when I seized his arm and attempted to calm him down.

"Yes lieutenant, you're right. It's wrong for me to want to hit her. But still, looking at these two you have to admit Monsieur P., these nuns aren't the friendliest types."

These two unfortunates, who had probably awoken too late only to find the village surrounded, had not had time to flee and so took refuge in the temple. The moment our men discovered them on their guard in the temple that night it seemed as if they must be nuns attached to the temple.

For nuns, as Castagnié remarked, they were not very friendly and we made untold efforts getting them tied up again and carrying them to camp, where we finally arrived at four in the morning. I reported on my mission to the senior duty officer and handed the two women over to him. After having guided my

platoon back to camp I went to rest up in the officers' hut, where I found a nice warm spot on some straw, the house being heated, as all homes in Korea, by a fire lit underneath which warms up the entire interior.

At eight o'clock I reported to headquarters, where I learned that Father Ridel had conducted an extended interrogation of the two captives. The older one swore to being a hundred-twenty and the other one sixty. That's all we could get out of them … that's it, and that same evening we released them, after having given them some clothes found in some of the huts and a few sapeques, which this time they accepted.

Not far from camp, maybe about three kilometers, there was a house isolated amidst the countryside that did not resemble the other structures of the country. Its walls of mud and straw were capped by an enormous roof of red tiles that protected the interior from rain and snow. It had no windows and only one small door secured by an enormous Chinese padlock.

An officer passing by this house with his detachment of soldiers wished to see what the house held and so busted open the padlock with a rifle buttstroke administered by one of his soldiers. The door was opened. It ended up being a powder magazine. Held within were approximately 150 tons of powder in sacks and barrels. A small passageway leading to its center allowed one access to the sacks, which were arranged in good order, as in a well kept store. It was urgent that this supply be destroyed immediately and the admiral gave orders to Monsieur de T., commander of the Mountain Battalion, to blow up the magazine.

Commander de T. took with him a Monsieur *Lasalle*, an ensign from the vessel Laplace, as well as two riflemen. They brought a bucket of soil, a length of cannon fuse, and matches. Arriving at the powder magazine around ten in the morning, they entered the passageway and opened up a sack of the gunpowder and spread its contents evenly on the floor so as to form a bed of priming powder. They then exited the magazine to ignite the fuse, which they had placed in the bucket with one end in front and the remainder running through the bucket's side and then down so that its other end rested on the ground. They then placed the bucket so that one end of the fuse rested on the bed of priming powder. They then returned to camp.

After having burned up to the side of the bucket the fuse should have dropped off to ignite the primer and then blown up the magazine. From the time of ignition it was estimated it would take around two hours for the detonation to occur. The entire operation should have been accomplished by 12:30 at the latest. The magazine was surrounded by sentries placed at a good distance to prevent anyone from approaching it. But by 2:30 in the afternoon

still nothing had happened.

Commander de T., thinking the fuse had gone out, arrived excitably in the camp. Passing my hut he inquired whether I had a small yellow fuse such as served to light cigarettes.

"Yes, commander. How many do you need?"

"One meter should suffice. We're going with Lasalle to switch it with the cannon fuse we placed there this morning and which has gone out," the commander told me. "Want to come with us?"

"Yes, commander, with pleasure." The three of us then set off.

Arriving at the magazine, the commander entered first only to hastily remerge saying,

"The fuse is still burning. Let's get the h— out of here!"

The cannon fuse had continued to burn outside the bucket, but due to its rigidity it rested on the ground very close to the exterior walls. The slightest breath of air would have been enough to let drop a spark, while the merest shaking of the ground would have sufficed to make it drop upon the priming powder ….

We had already begun running to get away as quickly as possible when the commander turned to me,

"Where's Lasalle?"

We thought maybe he had not heard the commander, and being quite near-sighted might also not perceive the danger and risk walking in the passageway, causing the fuse to drop off.

We quickly returned to avert this when we saw him coming out the door, carrying the glowing fuse in his open hands so as not to let it drop to the ground.

"I saw the ignited fuse," he said. "But it was so close to dropping that it might have done so before we had the chance to clear out, so I went and snatched it up."

It was truly a close call and without our comrade's act of sangfroid the whole thing might very well have gone up before we could have found cover.

The cigarette fuse was then set in place just like the previous fuse and at four o'clock a fearsome explosion rocked the earth well beyond the camp, shaking doors, windows, and all of the paper squares that served as windows, on Kang-Hoa and the beach.

A gigantic cloud of black smoke of prodigious height, carried by the wind from Seoul, informed the emperor that we were continuing the work of avenging our missionaries.

Following the detonation of the powder magazine the admiral received

letters from the emperor bidding us depart. Otherwise, an army of the best tiger hunters would come to fight us and compel our departure. What's more, he would dispatch his best divers to attack our vessels. Armed with drills, they would dive beneath the water to penetrate the sides of our ships. The admiral responded that he would depart at his own pleasure and only after completing his survey.

Winter was fast approaching and though our huts were heated underneath, at night we were beginning to suffer bitterly from cold, having very imperfectly covered the holes in our windows. The officers were able to share some of the furniture from the yamen, but the poor midshipmen were obliged to sleep on straw, biscuit boxes doubling as chairs and using footlockers for our changes of uniform.

Having seen some modest pieces of furniture in the abandoned homes of a large village about half a league from our camp, we resolved to go and retrieve them. One night around ten o'clock six of us midshipmen, along with our servants, departed camp for this village, which we knew still had some inhabitants. Our strategy was clear. Absorbed in our task, we were pondering how we might carry off the remnant furniture when we suddenly found ourselves surrounded by some fifty Koreans. These tall and sturdy fellows, well put together, had descended upon us as silent as shadows. Their long white costumes gave them the aspect of night phantoms. Recovering from our initial shock, we responded with audacity in turn. Threatening them with our bamboo poles and revolvers, we forced them to carry our load back to our camp on their shoulders. In our youthful impetuosity we had overlooked nothing save this: the password. How were we to reenter camp? Surely the sentries would sound the alarm once they spotted this line of men in white. We would be liable for severe reprimands, harsh punishment even, since the admiral had not approved the raid. So delicate was our situation that we took council. It was decided that one of us should advance alone to notify the commander of the guard of our escapade. Fortunately, the commander ended up being an ensign who was an old schoolmate. He recognized our predicament and was understanding. He authorized the baggage transport to advance as far as the frontline, not allowing them to penetrate our defenses. We couldn't have asked for more. The midshipman returned and notified us of the plan and the party resumed its march, the Koreans carrying their humble furniture as far as the point agreed upon. We then dismissed them with the offer of some sapeques upon which they eagerly ran home. With the help of a few men from the guard detail we finished our work and by four in the morning were settled fairly comfortably in our hut.

The Koreans are tall, robust, agile as mountain goats, and timid as rabbits; they lack all initiative. Having taken us by surprise while we were moving out the furniture, they might easily have massacred us before we had the chance to draw our revolvers in defense. But we overcame them by our countenance, by showing them we feared nothing and that their superior numbers, rather than being a hindrance to our plans actually helped them. For, as incredible as it may seem, we forced them, the burgled, to aid their own burglars. Strictly speaking, however, it was only a requisition, a loan, for upon our departure they found their property intact, even smartened up.

We had been in Korea nearly two months. We had gathered all the necessary data and information to compose nautical charts of the river and of Kang-Hoa Island. Our larger vessels were dragging at their anchors at the Île Boisée. We could no longer afford to linger in these regions.

For some time flares had been launched nightly from the river's upper banks during high tide. It was necessary that all our equipment be packed and aboard landing crafts ready to embark and escape this menace. If the Koreans were to set adrift several flaming junks tied together we might find ourselves in an extremely vulnerable position.

What's more, soldiers in ever increasing numbers were gathering to march and perform maneuvers on the opposite bank in plain view of our vessels. Though two or three artillery rounds would promptly disperse them, nevertheless, we could not dream of seizing Korea with the paltry means at our disposal. Therefore, the admiral made the decision to depart.

Orders had gone out for the disembarkation of troops when we learned through spies that the fortified temple of Kung-tong-Sa,[52] located five leagues from our encampment, contained a good quantity of war goods. The admiral wished to destroy these as a form of reprisal. The officer Trèves,[53] sent to reconnoiter, entered the temple without finding any trace of occupants and made a quick sketch map of the place. That same evening the chief of staff made arrangements to dispatch a column of three hundred men commanded by Marius Ollivier to set fire to Kung-tong-Sa.

The column departed at seven in the morning on November 13, arriving before the temple around eleven. The gates were open wide and not a soul was to be seen within. We marched by platoon in column formation, our left and right flanks covered by the marines. We were advancing without resistance when all at once the walls bristled with enemy soldiers who from 150 meters

52. Chŏndŭng-sa 傳燈寺.

53. Other sources record 'Trève.' Earlier Pradier recorded 'Trêves.'

covered us in a very brisk fire. Armed with muskets, the Korean front rank soldiers fired their weapons and then let them drop while men placed behind them handed them a new one, which they immediately fired at us without even shouldering it. They could not have fired more rapidly had they been armed with repeating rifles.

Our wounded numbered thirty and our men immediately broke ranks leaving only the officers in line, of whom five were injured. Fortunately we were able to quickly rally our troops and a well-directed platoon fire was able to stop the Koreans, who, amassed at the main gate, seemed on the point of making a sortie .... They remained prudently behind their walls. We had the good fortune of gathering up all of our wounded without being harassed by an enemy awed by our murderous fire originating from a distance well beyond the range of their primitive arms.

We had had numerous amusing encounters while conducting our hydrographical surveys. The Koreans had made numerous attempts to prevent us from making landfall, but we had successfully repulsed them and they never succeeded in interrupting our work.

After an expedition that had thus far been so successful it was very agonizing to depart following such an unfortunate surprise, but it was vital above all to avoid being iced in (according to the Korean pilot the river froze up to ten miles from the Île Boisée).

"The seizure of the standards of Kang-Hoa is evidence of the valor of our arms," wrote the admiral to the Korean emperor. "In destroying your storehouses and armaments we have avenged our missionaries. We take with us a map of your country to facilitate a return with more formidable forces if the least offense is ever again visited upon our nationals."

The admiral was much distressed by the defeat at the temple. We were fortunate to suffer only one officer gravely wounded: Lasalle (he was a long time recuperating and returned to France to learn of his nomination as a Knight of the Legion of Honor). The other casualties were not significant ....[54] On any account, the results obtained were significant and the Korean expedition became one of the finest pages in the career of Admiral Roze.

Two days later, on 15 November, after having set fire to the city, the entire expeditionary force departed Kang-Hoa and assembled at the anchorage of the Île Boisée, from whence the vessels rejoined their respective bases in China or Japan. The admiral proceeded to Yokohama. The post from France arrived

54. In his report Roze reported three dead. Roze to Naval Minister (17 November 1866), Choe, *Han-Pul kwan'gye*, 334, 337.

informing me of my promotion to the rank of ensign. Directly thereafter I embarked aboard the "*Guerrière annexe*," an administrative term used to denote the French mountain where we kept our marine battalion.

It was with deep regret that I took leave of my comrades. The trials that we suffered together throughout the campaign had strengthened the bonds of affection between us and I was leaving them in what was certainly a less than brilliant position materially speaking, whereas I was going on to live in relative opulence.

I spent two and a half years in Japan, during which time I assisted in the revolution, the fall of the Taicoum, and the triumph of the emperor.[55]

Since that era the Koreans have made little progress in the art of war. They possess a small and insignificant army uniformed in the Japanese fashion and trained by the Japanese, but they share none of their neighbor's military aptitude. The Koreans are farmers and fishers, nothing else. That country's commerce and industry are in the hands of the Japanese.

As the true master of Korea, Japan dictates its orders from Seoul, and they are obeyed. In 1895, the Japanese Mikado acted in the same manner. By the Treaty of Shimonoseki it gave up Korea as well as Port Arthur in exchange for Formosa, the Pescadores, and an indemnity that has yet to be fully paid.

Will the European powers and the United States contradict past actions by now recognizing the supremacy of the Mikado over Korea? This would encourage the Japanese to dream of new conquests, to give themselves over to continuous attacks against their neighbors. Dazzled and fascinated by the glory of victory, they will believe all is permissible and will wreak chaos in China and amongst all the peoples of Asia.

The Koreans realize that their country is the stake of the present war. Incapable of resistance, of any effort to take the side of either of the belligerents, they will submit, impassive, to the will of the victor.

The Russians will most certainly triumph because they possess the necessary forces. Their sole desire will be to guarantee freedom of movement between Vladivostok and Port Arthur by land and sea.

Supposing, however, that the Japanese triumph, would they not then wish to impose military service upon a nation that has absolutely no penchant for it? They will cripple the Koreans with taxes, impose customs duties on the importation of all manner of European products, and squeeze the country in every way in order to extricate revenue. Korea understands this, she knows what awaits her. Fearing to fall under the Japanese yoke, its sympathies lie

55. The *taishōgun* or more commonly, *shōgun*.

increasingly with Russia. The only solution is a European guarantee of Korea's independence and neutrality and with it the security of Russia's possessions in Manchuria and the free circulation of its vessels, and for Japan the free expansion of its population.

The Russians are greatly at fault for their failure to deploy sufficient naval forces to the Far East. For reasons of economy or lack of foresight they have neglected work on their railway, delayed by Lake Baikal.[56] Finally, they are unprepared for war. They have failed to train their army and naval squadrons with continual maneuvers.

As General von Gossler so eloquently stated at the opening of the Reichstag in 1899, "Neither a state's greatness nor ingenuity, neither enthusiasm nor fanaticism, are substitutes for careful preparations made in peacetime."

What a lesson for the Russians! Should they not lament their phlegmatic nonchalance, a result of their overconfidence that peace would be maintained!

We ought, at the very least, to learn from this lesson by ceaselessly training our own army and navy for the prospect of a war we may not at all desire, but which we will be forced to accept.

Not a second is to be wasted if we wish to protect those magnificent possessions in Indochina that we spent so many years conquering and for which we have made so many sacrifices of every sort. Let us make a vigorous effort and complete our network of railways so we can move our troops directly to wherever we are menaced. Let us significantly reinforce our army and fleet to protect our coasts. The Japanese, who find their population exploding at a menacing rate, covet this grain basket. We must prevent them from realizing such dreams.

The war preoccupies and concerns all of Europe but France in particular. Our interests in Indochina oblige us to complete our possessions' defenses as quickly as possible. We cannot shrink from any sacrifice to protect our magnificent colony from the belligerence of our neighbors, the yellow races that surround us.

G. Pradier,
Captain (retired)

56. Lake Baikal proved a formidable and time-consuming engineering obstacle to the completion of the Trans Siberian railway.