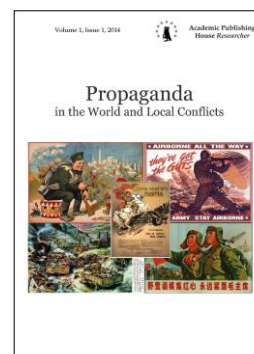


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Published in the Slovak Republic
 Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts
 Has been issued since 2014.
 E-ISSN 2500-3712
 2020, 7(1): 3-14

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2020.1.3
www.ejournal47.com



Articles

Native Units in the Imperial Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905

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Abstract

The paper explores why and how native units were mustered in the Imperial Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 – 1905. One of the key directions of combat activities, led by the Russian Empire and Japan, where the Chinese population was widely engaged, was reconnaissance operations. Throughout the Russo-Japanese War, the adversary's reconnaissance service demonstrated achievements in the area, which were much more impressive than performance of the Russian service for a number of reasons. The Japanese had a significant advantage – their ethnic appearance was similar to that of the Chinese, and the benefit greatly facilitated the task of planting their agents, disguised as the Chinese, into the rear of the Russian army to collect information, as well as impersonating Chinese officers and commanding Honghuzi units operating in the rear of the Imperial Russian Army. As a consequence, to enhance the efficiency of the efforts of gathering intelligence directly in the theater of war, the Russian army command started forming native *sotnias* and detachments, as well as preparing an agent network consisting of the local Chinese and Mongolian population. The detachments and units were planned to carry out deep and close reconnaissance, including operations around the areas where Russian troops were positioned, deep reconnaissance in the enemy territory, in the rear of the Russian army and in Mongolia.

Keywords: Russo-Japanese War, China, Imperial Russian Army, foreign formations, native detachments and *sotnias*.

1. Introduction

In the early 20th century, the Imperial Russian Army significantly expanded the formation and combat use of foreign units, and the geography, along with traditional units and detachments, comprised totally new regions in the Far East, where the Russian troops had not had military and combat experience so far. For the first time in the Russian military history, units and detachments were mustered of the Chinese and Mongols.

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries brought about a fierce competition between the leading world powers to capture new spheres of influence. Seeking to extend the

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boundaries of its vital interest, the Russian Empire further continued its expansion in the Far East with a focus on China and Korea. On 27.03.1898, the Russian Empire and China concluded the “Convention for the Lease of the Liaotung Peninsula” that granted a twenty-five-year lease of the southern part of the Liaotung Peninsula with the city of Port Arthur (Koz'menko, 1952: 309).

Port Arthur is a non-freezing port, and the fact had particular importance for the economic and military development of the entire region. Port Arthur became the base for the Pacific Squadron of the Imperial Russian Navy in the same year. The steps certainly had a negative impact on relations between Russia and Japan that in turn also considered China an area of its national interests. The deteriorated contradictions between the two countries on 27.01.1904 resulted in the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

The events that took place in China in 1900 showed that the decision not to create native volunteer units and not to enlist the local population in the Imperial Russian Army proved to be a serious mistake. If cleverly used in combat operations, they could handle a wide range of combat missions behind enemy lines, collect intelligence, arrange sabotage activities, carry out militia functions in the rear of the Russian troops and generally bring substantial benefits to the Imperial Russian Army in the theater of war (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. Ch. II. L. 120)

The situation that developed at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 was not advantageous to Russia. The Russian Empire had no political allies (Suvorin, 1910: T. I. 83), was not prepared for war and eventually, suffered a crushing defeat from Japan. The defeat in the war was contributed by many factors, including inadequate decision-making by the military and political leadership of the Russian Empire regarding reconnaissance. The Japanese army was misjudged – prevailing opinion in the Russian Empire had it that Japan was unable to conduct fully-fledged military operations. Prior to the war, the size, condition, armament and combat effectiveness of the Japanese land and navy forces were significantly underestimated.

The Russian General Staff planned future military operations failing to thoroughly review lessons drawn from previous experiences in the war in China. As it was the case before, the high command of the Imperial Russian Army once again made a number of fatal errors. The Chinese theater of military operations was absolutely unknown to the Russian troops. The Imperial Russian Army had no meaningful experience of conducting military operations in the country, and the traditional methods of organizing comprehensive logistic support for the troops adopted in the Imperial Russian Army were ineffective here.

One of the crucial areas of military activity, where the Russian Empire and Japan widely used the Chinese population, was reconnaissance. Throughout the Russo-Japanese War, the adversary's reconnaissance service demonstrated achievements in the area, which were much more impressive than performance of the Russian service for a number of reasons. The Japanese had a significant advantage – their ethnic appearance was similar to that of the Chinese, and the benefit greatly facilitated the task of planting their agents, disguised as the Chinese, into the rear of the Russian army to collect information, as well as impersonating Chinese officers and commanding Honghuzi units operating in the rear of the Imperial Russian Army.

The Russian military leadership completely ignored the need to proactively build a network of locally recruited agents in China before the Russo-Japanese War broke out. As a result, the command of the Russian armies at the front was faced with a huge array of insoluble problems from the first days of the war. The traditionally closed nature of Chinese society misunderstood by representatives of European countries was one of the major barriers that blocked the efficient organization of military operations in the local theater, even against the Japanese army. This situation was further worsened by the fact that the Chinese population itself, in consequence of the events that had taken place in the country, had a very hostile attitude to any foreigners. Regarding the position taken by the country's population towards the subjects of the Russian Empire, although it had no signs of open belligerence, it was not particularly friendly at the same time. This explains why it was essential to win the Chinese population over to the side of the Russian Empire before the outbreak of hostilities and muster units and detachments of members of the local ethnic groups for the Imperial Russian Army. This would have given the Russian troops the necessary support in the upcoming operations and eliminated a number of serious issues, for example, the problem of collecting intelligence behind enemy lines, carrying out forward and flank reconnaissance as well as disrupting enemy reconnaissance activities. However, the command of the Imperial Russian Army again completely overlooked these undeniable facts in preparation for

the war. The outcome was that the Imperial Russian Army almost lacked the intelligence after the war began – the information was fragmented, unreliable and poorly substantiated (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. Ch. I. 3. L. 500b.).

To enhance the efficiency of the efforts of gathering intelligence directly in the theater of war, the Russian army initiated the formation of native *sotnias* (literally means “hundred”, in this context refers to a military unit of about 100-150 persons) and detachments, as well as the preparation of an agent network consisting of the local Chinese and Mongolian population. The detachments and units were planned to carry out deep and close reconnaissance, including operations around the areas where Russian troops were positioned, deep reconnaissance in the enemy territory, in the rear of the Russian army and in Mongolia.

As military operations began, the command of the Imperial Russian Army admitted that it was instrumental and imperative to recruit former Honghuzi and Chinese militia and create native units and detachments. However, the attempt was not a success at the time, and the command managed to form only two native units operating in Colonel Aleksandr S. Madritov's detachments and in the Liao River detachment. The headcount in the units could vary from 20 to 50 people or more (RGVIA. F. 846. Op.16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 1). Later, the situation changed dramatically, and the number of local inhabitants willing to join the Imperial Russian Army massively increased. Throughout the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, native units and detachments were formed of the Chinese and Mongols on the front line as part of the Imperial Russian Army.

The main reason, which drove the Imperial Russian Army to engage the indigenous population to serve in its ranks during the war, muster native reconnaissance detachments and develop an agent network was a critical shortage of trained specialists with relevant language proficiency. The latter factor in turn complicated various reconnaissance activities by the own units of the Russian army. There were only 11 Russian Japanese interpreters and translators for the entire Imperial Russian Army operating in the Chinese theater of war. Speaking of Russian Chinese interpreters and translators, things looked brighter in this respect as the number was a little bigger, but still not sufficient to carry out productive reconnaissance activities. Furthermore, the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief had only two people at their disposal who were familiar with Mongolian and could write in the language. These were a student at the St. Petersburg Imperial University – V. Shaigin and a graduate from the Oriental Institute – Khionin. It should be emphasized that the shortage of specialists who knew Japanese and Chinese was especially desperate. Arranging intelligence and reconnaissance operations using the Chinese population was also extremely difficult because the number of Chinese-speaking officers was relatively small. Only the availability of officers fluent in Chinese and familiar with local customs could ensure the success of such operations (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. Ch. I. L. 31–33).



Fig. 1. V.A. Kosagovsky (1857–1918)

In the summer of 1904, the responsibility for the distant reconnaissance organization on the entire front line of the Manchurian Army was assigned to a Major General of the General Staff, V.A. Kosagovsky (1857–1918). Despite the fact that General Kosagovsky had very limited financial and human resources, he, nevertheless, managed to set up the work of digging up valuable information for the Russian military command located on the front line.

As soon as combat operation began, the efforts by the Russian distant reconnaissance service were expanded with the close reconnaissance activities. Its key component was clandestine reconnaissance missions performed by Chinese scout agents. However, initially, until the defeat of the Russian troops near Mukden in February 1905, close reconnaissance with the use of the Chinese population was only carried out near military encampments by the reconnaissance divisions of large unit staves of the Imperial Russian Army. It was not until the Mukden defeat that the reconnaissance department of the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Russian Army set up close reconnaissance missions involving scouts.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. The materials include documents of the Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA), as well as studies on the history of the native Chinese and Mongolian detachments and units in the Imperial Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.

2.2. The methodological framework of the paper is based on fundamental methods of reviewing objective nature, system organization and dialectical relations of phenomena and a historical method as well as comparative analysis and synthesis, which enable a critical and analytical understanding of events and facts in the distant past. The foundation was also provided by maintaining a critical view of sources, drawing conclusions based on the analysis of the entire body of facts, as well as showing phenomena as they progressively emerged in the context of historical settings.

The validity and reliability of the study was achieved through the analysis of a large number of archival materials and literary sources, is ensured by the scientific methodology used, comprehensive nature of the study and a systematic approach and is confirmed by conclusions logically arranged in line with the goals and objectives set by the study.

The results of the study can be put into practice as part of academic programs at higher educational (military) institutions as well as used as reference and analytical materials by researchers.

3. Results

In the early 1905, there were up to 1,000 Chinese militiamen in the area where the 3rd army was concentrated, who wanted to join the Russian army. Previously mustered units additionally received up to 200 people.



Fig. 2. Ye.I. Martynov (1864–1937)

The commander of the 140th Zaraysky Regiment, General Yevgeny I. Martynov (1864–1937), was requested by a Chinese Colonel Wang Ham Hing (hereinafter all Chinese proper names, which have no established translations, are translated using the Palladius System and Hanyu Pinyin standards) to recruit 300 Chinese soldiers. General Nikolai Al. Ukhach-Ogorovich (1856–?) received several proposals from the Zhao Chong Ting brothers who offered to bring a 2,000-strong detachment of Chinese soldiers positioned in the Japanese area to be used by the Russian command. The Russian Consul in Tianjin was approached by a Chinese officer, Lia Kan Zhang, who proposed to recruit to the Imperial Russian Army 7,000 Chinese Honghuzi dissatisfied with their service in the Japanese army (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op.16. D. 29090. Ch. II. L. 118). Back in February 1905, before the Battle of Mukden, Major General Ukhach-Ogorovich manned native *sotnias* with the Chinese and Mongols for army logistics headquarters, Separate Border Guard Corps of Zamuksky District and the Staff of the 3rd Army. In the spring of 1905, native units of up to five hundred people were activated in the Russian front line armies (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 1).



Fig. 3. N.M. Chichagov (1852–1910)

However, senior officers in the command of the Imperial Russian Army did not have a consistent approach or opinion on how Chinese volunteer units should be formed or used in combat operations together with the troops of the Russian armies. Many generals believed that the units would bring significant benefits in the fight against Japanese troops. The most prominent proponents of the view who took part in the Russo-Japanese War included General Nikolai A. Ukhach-Ogorovich, Lieutenant General Nikolai M. Chichagov (1852–1910), Head of the Zamuksky District and Separate Border Guard Corps, Mikhail A. Sokovnin (1863–1943), Chief Enlistment Officer of the Girin Province, Colonel of the General Staff, Colonel Mikhail F. Kvetsinsky (1866–1923), Mukden Chief Enlistment Officer, Colonel Aleksandr S. Madritov (1868–1916). There were, however, those who were very skeptical about the idea and objected to it.



Fig. 4. A.N. Kuropatkin (1848–1925)

In his telegram dated 09.06.1905 to the 3rd Army Staff, General Nikolai A. Stepanov reported that a 60-strong native detachment under command of Cornet Merklin had arrived at the location of his units to reinforce them, and the rest of the detachment had fled. Stepanov wrote that the presence of a militia detachment was undesirable in the location of his troops. He argued that the Chinese were very poor fighters, he assumed that the Chinese militia would take up robberies, because the detachment had not any equipment. To his mind, it was impossible to send them to the enemy’s rear to carry out combat missions, because according to the report by the detachment commander, the militiamen could refuse to perform a mission or simply run away (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 127).

Nevertheless, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Russian Army, Adjutant General Aleksei N. Kuropatkin (1848–1925) defined uniform rules for the formation of volunteer units. The rules for native Chinese units, above all, specified the allowance of the same size for all Chinese troops (it was bigger than the one received by the Honghuzi in the Japanese army); volunteers were to form foot and horse *sotnias*; a single personnel organization was established for all units (Tables 1, 2).

Table 1. Organization of native horse sotnias

No.	Position	Quantity	Total
1	Russian officers	02 people	
2	Clerk	02 people	
3	Russian lower ranks	15 people	
4	Chinese volunteers	150 people	169 people

Table 2. Organization of native foot sotnias

No.	Position	Quantity	Total
1	Russian officers	02 people	
2	Clerk	02 people	
3	Russian lower ranks	25 people	
4	Chinese volunteers	250 people	279 people

Consistent and clearly visible insignia, distinguishing them from the Honghuzi, were introduced; these detachments were termed in the Imperial Russian Army as “native foot and horse sotnias”. It was strictly forbidden to call the staff of the sotnias as Honghuzi, and every Chinese who joined the Russian army proudly called himself a Russian soldier, the name “Honghuzi” insulted them, all the more so, because many volunteers were soldiers of the Chinese army or militiamen and did not belong to the Honghuzi. After the native sotnias were established and staffed, they were assigned with strict numbers. The right to form native sotnias, determine their quantity and identify as part of a particular armed forces branch, as well as decide on their combat engagement, was granted to the commanders of the Russian armies on the front line (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. L. 119–119ob.); By order No. 760 dated 14.05.1905, issued by Viceroy in the Far East, Admiral Yevgeny I. Alekseev (1843-1917), Commander-in-Chief of All Land and Naval Armed Forces, fighting against Japan, based on the memorandum No. 7252 dated 07.04.1905 by the Chief of Logistics of the Manchurian Army and pursuant to Article 34 of the Provisions on the Field Wartime Command of Troops, the command of the native five-hundred-strong detachment and native sotnias were formed (Tables 3, 4). The formation was carried out under the leadership of General Ivan P. Nadarov (1851–1922), Chief of Logistics of the Manchurian Army.

Table 3. Temporary organization of the command

No.	Position	Quantity	Pay
1	Sotnias officer in charge	1 person	Monthly pay as per rank/ Table allowance 100 rubles
2	Chief aide officer	1 person	Monthly pay as per rank/ Table allowance 25 rubles
3	Native aide officer	1 person	75 rubles/-
4	Translator	1 person	75 rubles/ -
5	Russian clerk	1 person	Pay as per position
6	Native clerk	1 person	75 rubles/ -

The state treasury also gave additional monthly allocations – 200 rubles to the sotnias officer in charge for hospitality expenses, 240 rubles for office supplies and one-time allocation of 200 rubles to purchase equipment for the Office of the Sotnias Officer in Charge. (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. Ch. II. L. 120–120ob.).

Table 4. Temporary organization of the mixed Russian and native sotnia

Combatant organization			
No.	Position	Quantity	Pay
1	Sotnia commander	1 person	Monthly pay as per rank/ horse provided by the state treasury
2	His assistant, native officer	1 person	monthly pay 100 rubles
3	Half-sotnia commanders, native officers	2 people	monthly pay 60 rubles
4	Total chief officers	4 people	
5	Platoon commanders, native non-commissioned officers	4 people	monthly pay 35 rubles
6	Section commanders	8 people	monthly pay 30 rubles
7	Russian sergeant (Rus. uriadnik)	1 person	Monthly pay as per position
8	Russian horse hunters	9 people	Monthly pay as per position
9	Native soldiers	96 people	monthly pay 25 rubles
10	Total	118 people	
11	Translator	1 person	monthly pay 75 rubles
12	Total ranks	119 people	



Fig. 5. I. P. Nadarov (1851–1922)

Order No. 940 by the Commander-in-Chief of All Land and Naval Armed Forces Operating Against Japan, dated 05.06.1905, acknowledged that it was expedient to form native and horse sotnias as part of the Imperial Russian Army. As a consequence, the commanders of the armies and the chief of logistics of the army were granted the right to muster sotnias. The same order also instructed to begin the formation immediately, and report on any new Chinese native foot and horse sotnias, formed in the Russian forces, to the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Russian Army, Adjutant General Kuropatkin, personally (*RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. Ch. II. L. 122*). The Russian command formulated a special regulation on the formation of native foot and horse sotnias in the Russian armies, which determined the procedure for their organization, munitions, supplies, pays, allowances and uniforms.

Table 5. Temporary organization of the mixed Russian and native foot sotnia

Combatant organization			
No.	Position	Quantity	Pay
1	Sotnia commander	1 person	monthly pay 100 rubles/ horse provided by the state treasury
2	His assistant, native officer	1 person	monthly pay 100 Rubles / horse provided by the state treasury
3	Half-sotnia commanders, native officers	2 people	monthly pay 60 rubles
4	Total chief officers	04 people	
5	Platoon commanders, native non-commissioned officers	4 people	monthly pay 25 rubles
6	Section commanders	8 people	monthly pay 20 rubles
7	Russian sergeant (Rus. uriadnik)	1 person	Monthly pay as per position
8	Russian horse hunters	9 people	Monthly pay as per position
9	Native soldiers	159 people	monthly pay 75 rubles
10	Total	172 people	
Non-combatant organization			
1	Translator	1 person	monthly pay 75 rubles
2	Total ranks	173 people	

Regulation on the Formation, Upkeep and Operations of Native Troops:

“1. Foot and horse sotnias shall be formed by order of the commanders of the armies; the number of sotnias, as well as the decision on whether to form foot or horse sotnias, shall be left to the discretion of the commanders of the armies and the chief of logistics;

2. Chinese militiamen shall have the uniform of typical Chinese design. The militiamen shall use their own garments. For formal identification, each militiaman shall have an identity sign in the form of a Russian three-color flag with an inscription printed in Russian and Chinese on a white background;

3. Native horse lower ranks shall have their own horses;

4. The militiamen shall bring their own bladed weapons when they join the army; three-line rifles or Japanese rifles and cartridges shall be provided to them from the state treasury;

5. Each army shall keep its own numbering of sotnias. When forming sotnias, they shall refer to the tables of organization for foot and horse sotnias;

6. In case more than five sotnias are formed in the army, the commander of the army shall be entitled to unite the sotnias into a five-hundred-strong detachment, and in doing so they shall refer to the tables of organization in accordance with order No. 760” (RGVIA. F. VUA. Op. 16. D. 29090. Ch. II. L. 122v).

On 20.04.1905, as ordered by the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Russian Army, it was decided to create a Chinese guerrilla detachment under the general command of a Russian officer. To lead the detachment, the Ensign (Rus. praporshchik) of the 52nd Nezhinsky Dragoon Regiment of Separate Cavalry Brigade, Putyata, was appointed. Parallel to this, there was a process under way to form a special Department of the Quartermaster General of the 3rd Army, Adjutant General Mikhail V. Alekseiev (1857–1918) (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L.21, 32, 37). By 01.05.1905, the first native Chinese detachment was formed of 50 people under the leadership of a Chinese commander, Jan Chung Chang.

The detachment was armed with Russian three-line rifles, and each militiaman was given 120 cartridges. This detachment was incorporated in the 2nd Army and was utilized by the army headquarters. In early May 1905, the detachment carried out reconnaissance of the area west of the Gangan and Zhenjaitun towns (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 8). On 08.05.1915, following negotiations, a 50-strong Chinese Honghuzi detachment, headed by Chief Yi Ren, defected to the side of the Imperial Russian Army, and on 10.05.1905, a 100-strong detachment of another chief – Yi Gin – defected to the Russian side. As a result, the Department of the Quartermaster General had a militia detachment of 350 Chinese horsemen available for its missions. The detachment was divided into two units, and Cornet (Rus. khorunzhy) of the 1st Argunsky Cossack Regiment Merklin was appointed commander of one of them – a militia detachment of 150 horsemen. The second detachment, consisting of 200 Chinese horsemen, was commanded by Ensign of the 52nd Nezhinsky Dragoon Regiment Putyata. Both were appointed commanders of the native Chinese units by Order No. 1435 of the Chief of Staff of the 3rd Manchurian Army, dated 13.05.1905. Ensign Putyata’s detachment also included 10 Cossacks of the Argunsky Regiment, who knew Mongolian and Chinese, and two volunteers (volnoopredelyayushchiysya – a conscript who voluntarily joined the army in return for enjoying a number of benefits during the service). Cornet Merklin's detachment was additionally manned with 05 Cossacks (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 41, 52, 53–54).



Fig. 6. Ye.I. Alekseiev (1857–1918)

Militia chiefs were supposed to receive 60 rubles as a payment. The detachment commanders were granted the right to exclude, as appropriate, from the detachments those militiamen who for some reason were unfit for military service, as well as disarm them. Russian small firearms were considered a reward for Chinese militiamen, which they were to earn on the battlefield. Weapons and ammunition for the newly forming detachments were delivered from various units of the Imperial Russian Army on the front line. Later, to set up ties and communication with the local population and send scouts, Cornet Merklin's detachment recruited 80 Mongols, who were more reliable fighters than the Chinese.

On 12.05.1905, a militia chief, living in the Liaoyangwo area, suggested mustering and bringing a Chinese detachment of 500 horse fighters and 500 infantrymen to the army headquarters to mount joint military operations against the Japanese. Of the 1,000 people, only 100 were armed with German guns, while the rest had outdated Chinese guns. They offered their services on the condition that each militiaman would be paid 30 rubles. (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L.40–400b.) The urge of the Chinese to conduct joint operations against the Japanese army was propelled by the fact that the entire population in the region was exasperated over the Japanese repressions against local inhabitants. On 01.06.1905, Rao Lang Ting, who served in the Russian army, was approached by Chenshua, the commander of a Honghuzi detachment, consisting of 250 Chinese who served in the Japanese army, with a proposal to join his detachment to the Russian army. Rao Lang Ting offered him terms for the defection – to prove his loyalty and commitment to the Russian command, the Honghuzi commander had to leave 50 people hostage from his detachment, take the rest and penetrate the rear of the Japanese army to capture 5 or 6 Japanese. Commander Chenshua agreed to the terms (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 289).

After the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces issued the order on 04.06.1905 to start forming native foot and horse sotnias, Ukhach-Ogorovich formed 06.06.1905 a detachment of Chinese militiamen, consisting of 500 people. The detachment was led by Cornet of the 2nd Argunsky Cossack Regiment Guda A. Gudiev. The detachment was formed and was stationed in the Kuanchendzakh town. By order of the General Quartermaster of the Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, the detachment was handed over to the Chief of Staff of the 3rd Manchurian Army. The army logistics headquarters also controlled a detachment of volunteers including: – 28 Russians; – 17 Chinese and sotnia of the 3rd Verkhneudinsky Regiment. The detachment's objectives were reconnaissance missions in its area of responsibility (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 100, 201). On 23.06.1905, the Sub-lieutenant (Rus. podporuchik) of the 16th Abkhazsky Infantry Regiment, Prince Elizbark A. Eristov, was appointed commander of another native sotnia formed in the 3rd Army. Later, Prince Eristov was ordered to hand over command of the sotnia to Ensign Putyata. On 25.06.1905, Cornet Aleksey P. Baksheev of the Argunsky

Regiment was assigned to take command of the next formed Chinese sotnia (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 313, 325, 394).

Native sotnias were formed based on the model of Chinese troops. As of 13.06.1905, the first native horse sotnia of the 3rd Army was consisted of four isos: first iso – 24 people; second iso – 24 people; third iso – 24 people; fourth iso – 24 people. One iso included three Chinese non-commissioned officers (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. II. L. 595-598). Chinese half-sotnias (50 people) were also formed in the Russian army. The structure of an individual half-sotnia of the mounted militia detachment of the 3rd Army had two isos: the first one – 26 people; the second one – 27 people. The half-sotnia also included one translator and two Chinese non-commissioned officers in each iso (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. II. L. 598-599).

In April 1905, the 3d Army had six sotnias of native militia at its disposal. Of these, as of 26.04.1905, the 1st and 3rd sotnias were included in the horse detachment under General Stepanov, who carried out reconnaissance in Mongolia, the 2nd sotnia was used at the headquarters of the 3rd Army, and the 6th one was seconded to the headquarters of the 5th Siberian Corps. The 4th and 5th sotnias of Chinese militia were stationed in the Yushintai town (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 5, 20). To mount operations in Mongolia, the headquarters of the logistics and border guard recruited the native sotnias that consisted entirely of Mongols living in the region (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 290b.)

Native foot and horse Chinese sotnias of the 3rd Army were distributed among the regiments of the Russian armies. The Mongol sotnias were assigned among dragoon cavalry regiments. On 28.08.1905, due to the end of the Russo-Japanese War, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army signed an order to disband all native foot and horse sotnias and detachments. According to the order, native sotnias should be disbanded no later than 01.09.1905, government-furnished weapons collected, and weapon loss certificates drawn up (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. II. L. 622-625).

Along with the Chinese units, the command of the Imperial Russian Army assigned high priority to detachments formed of Mongols, since the Russian Empire urgently needed to enlist sympathies of the Mongolian elite. The primary reason was the desire to protect the Russian troops from the Japanese and Honghuzi attacking from areas in Mongolia, which had borders with the Chinese theater of war. In particular, near the Dzian Jia settlement, the protection was provided by a well-armed 900-strong detachment of the Mongolian militia, equipped with German guns. According to the army leadership, winning the detachment to the Russian side would enable the Russian troops in the area to arrange army logistics bases, and this would significantly assist to materiel supplies for all the troops of the Imperial Russian Army (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 9–11). To conduct reconnaissance in the Mongolian territory, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army authorized to form patrols and squads from the Chinese Honghuzi, which should include the lower ranks of the Russian army and be under the general command of Russian officers. One of such detachments was staffed with servicemen of the 1st Argunsky Cossack Regiment on 24.04.1905. The unit included personnel of the regiment who could speak Chinese or Mongolian (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. I. L. 3).

4. Conclusion

It is impossible to provide an unambiguous review of the combat use of native units and detachments in the Imperial Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, but, in my opinion, the experience can be considered successful. Within a short timeframe, each Russian army managed to form the required number of detachments and units to carry out various combat missions assigned to them. On the other hand, quantity did not necessarily imply quality. The rush, in which the Chinese native units were mustered, resulted in recruiting former bandits, who, despite being in the Russian service, continued to plunder the local population. As can be seen from the telegram of the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Russian Army to the Commander of the 3rd Army, the short-term practice of forming militia from local inhabitants under random commanders failed to yield any beneficial results, and only provoked complaints about the militia from the local population. In light of this, the Commander-in-Chief thought that further activities to form militia were highly undesirable, but at the same time, the commanders of the armies on the Russian-Japanese front line were given the right to decide independently on the usefulness of militia units for a certain army. All consequences and responsibility for the actions of

the militia in the army were further placed on its commander (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. II. L. 486). As a result, the sotnias were dissolved, and perpetrators brought to justice.

Scant supplies for native units also pushed them to committing robberies. However, for the most part, the presence of native detachments on the front line helped the Imperial Russian Army tackle many problems that it faced throughout the Russo-Japanese War. They, above of all, were key to organizing reconnaissance in the line of operations of the Russian forces and in the enemy's rear as well as in providing logistical support and protection to the rear of the Imperial Russian Army, which was equally important. The native units, among other things, prevented activities of guerilla detachments, mounted sabotage missions on the Chinese railway and ensured the security of the army logistical facilities, warehouses and rear bases.

More order was maintained in the native detachment of the rear logistics headquarters, and especially in the Pintui guerilla detachment to which an officer of the field troops, familiar with the life and language of the Chinese, was seconded. Thanks to the vigor and personal influence of its commander, Colonel of the Chinese army Zhen Zhang Yuan, strict order and iron discipline were imposed in the detachment; the unit in a short period succeeded in bringing a clear positive benefits to the Russian troops by smashing the Honghuzi gangs in the area and establishing the communication of one of the vanguards of General Rennenkampf (1854–1918) with the Hailongcheng village (RGVIA. F. VUA. D. 29090. Op.16. Ch. I. L 29).

The command of the Imperial Russian Army did its best to stop illegal activities of the Chinese militia against the local population. For example, first news that the Chinese militia detachment of Ensign Putyata robbed the local population were received on 31.05.1905. On 01.06.1905, Chief Quartermaster, Major General M.V. Alekseev sent a military investigator to the detachment to clarify all the circumstances of the case and conduct an inquiry; a preliminary investigation was initiated on 02.06.1905.

The investigation carried out by Sub-lieutenant Novikov, a representative of the war commissary, confirmed the available information. It was found out that when the 1st native detachment of the 3rd Army of Ensign Putyata was formed, Honghuzi from the Sihai, Chan, Tajuer and Chongzier gangs were recruited and continued their criminal pursuits during their service in the detachment (RGVIA. F. VUA. D. 29090. Op. 16. Ch. I. L. 24–238). Militiamen of Cornet Merklin's detachment, who robbed the Chandioipa village, were arrested and escorted to the army headquarters (RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. II. L. 321).

On 19.06.1905, a strict procedure was defined for the combat use of Chinese militiamen as it was done for the border guard troops to prevent robberies of local inhabitants. With the introduced measures, no complaints were received by the border guard command from the local population about the personnel of the native militia units. To achieve this, the Imperial Russian Army took the following steps: native troops were assigned to the Russian cavalry to mount joint reconnaissance operations, serve as guides, etc.; native units were seconded to the vanguards of the Russian troops; the presence of the native sotnias in the rear of the Russian armies was unacceptable and was not allowed (RGVIA. F.846. Op. 16. D. 10294. Ch. II. L. 327–327ob.)

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