In 1895 the court raised a new army. Sixteen years on, it closed the court's accounts.

《神州大地》第 9 集 · English · 23:45

出處：sylogs.com — 歡迎轉載分享，請注明出處

In 1895, Beijing was arguing over one question:
why had this war been lost.
The answer came down onto one particular
place. That year, the court began to
drill a new army.
Not in Beijing — in a garrison town
called Xiaozhan, some forty kilometres south of
Tianjin. This story begins with a date
on a memorial to the throne.
On 6 December 1895, the court sent Hu Yufen
to supervise the Tianjin–Lugouqiao railway.
Two days later, on 8 December, the Bureau
of Military Affairs submitted a memorial:
send Yuan Shikai to train the new
army at Tianjin. It was approved the
same day. One man's posting changed.
So did who an army belonged to.
This is the day that army got
its own name.
Yuan Shikai was born in 1859, in Xiangcheng
a county in Henan, out on the
North China Plain. He failed the provincial
examinations twice, in 1876 and 1879, and joined the Huai

Army under Wu Changqing.
In 1882, a mutiny broke out in Korea.
Qing troops entered Seoul, and he distinguished
himself in that operation.
In 1884, Korean reformists, backed by Japan,
staged the Gapsin Coup and seized the
royal palace. He led the troops that
put it down. In 1885, on Li Hongzhang's
recommendation, Yuan Shikai — twenty-six years old
became the Qing resident commissioner in Korea.
He spent some twelve years in Korea
altogether. In 1894, trouble broke out in Korea
and Japanese forces pressed in.
On 19 July he left Korea in disguise.
On 22 July he reached Tianjin.
Twelve years ended there.
He was thirty-five that year.
After he came home, he was not
idle. On 6 August 1894 he was ordered to
the Liaodong front, to help Zhou Fu
run the field logistics office: moving grain
and equipment, collecting stragglers.
Supply work. It was a cold posting.
The men at the front never remember
the name of a supply officer.
But what he saw there was this:
what an army looks like at the

moment it comes apart.
In May 1895 he took leave and went
home. In June, on the joint recommendation
of Liu Kunyi, Li Hongzhang and Wang
Wenshao, the court ordered him to Beijing.
On 2 August, the Guangxu Emperor gave him
an audience. On 22 August he submitted a
memorial — more than thirteen thousand characters long.
What was in it is described differently
in different accounts. This film says only
one thing: he submitted it, and the
date was 22 August 1895. Three months later,
he was sent to Xiaozhan.
Xiaozhan was not empty ground.
The camp there had belonged to the
Sheng Army of the Huai forces.
Its commander was Zhou Shengchuan; after he
died, Zhou Shengbo took it over.
In 1894 the Sheng Army was defeated at
Pyongyang. Its commander Wei Rugui fled in
the face of battle and was later
executed; the Sheng Army was destroyed and
its designation withdrawn. The camp stood empty.
In December 1894, Hu Yufen — then surveillance commissioner
of Guangxi — was ordered to drill a
new army. He began with three battalions
at Machang in Qing county, later expanding

to ten. He engaged a German,
Constantin von Hanneken, as drill instructor.
In 1895 the barracks at Machang ran out
of room, and the force moved to
Xiaozhan — into the camp the Sheng Army
had left behind. That force was called
the Dingwu Army. It numbered 4,750 men:
six infantry battalions of 3,000; two artillery
battalions of 1,000; half a cavalry battalion
of 250; and one engineer battalion of
500. A camp someone else had abandoned,
and a newly raised army moving into
it.
Now put two dates side by side.
6 December 1895: the court sends Hu Yufen to
supervise the Tianjin–Lugouqiao railway.
8 December 1895: the Bureau of Military Affairs asks
that Yuan Shikai be sent to train
the Newly Created Army.
Approved the same day.
Two dates, two days apart.
The imperial edict read: " Since Yuan Shikai,
intendant of the Wen-Chu circuit, has been
recommended by the princes and ministers,
let him be ordered to take charge
of establishing it; let all pay regulations
be disbursed as proposed. "

The first half is personnel.
The second half is money.
A railway man was moved out.
A drill man was sent in.
Whether these were one decision, this film
does not say. The two dates are
real. And the gate Yuan walked through
on the day he reported was the
Sheng Army's gate.
The first thing recorded after he reached
Xiaozhan was not drill.
It was pay. In the old armies,
pay travelled down a chain: the court
to the commander, the commander to the
battalion officer, the battalion officer to the
company officer. At every hand it passed
through, a little could come off.
Hu Yufen had once described the old
army in a memorial, in eight characters:
"supplies as before, ranks daily emptier;
padded above, deducted below; every abuse flourishes. "
A roster might carry a thousand names
where seven hundred men stood.
The pay of the other three hundred
went into a pocket.
What Yuan changed was this: every month,
the pay office sent its own clerks,

together with the officers, out onto the
parade ground, called the names against the
roster, and put the silver into the
soldier's hand. The hands in the middle
were taken out. It sounds like a
technical fix. What it changed was something
more basic: the soldier knew who was
paying him. A private's monthly pay under
the regulations of the time was around
four taels five mace — a tael being
roughly thirty-seven grams of silver — and after
mess deductions about three taels five remained.
This film offers that figure only as
corroboration, not as a conclusion.
But one thing is clear: from then
on, the money did not pass through
the battalion officer's hand.
The second thing was men.
He did not keep the old battalion
officers the Sheng Army had left behind.
He went looking for young men who
had been through the new schools.
There was one such school, in Tianjin:
the Tianjin Military Academy, founded by Li
Hongzhang in 1885 — one of the earlier modern
officer schools in China.
The men he picked from that school

and from elsewhere all had names later.
Duan Qirui — artillery class at the academy,
brought to Xiaozhan in early 1896,
commanding the artillery. Feng Guozhang — an academy
graduate who stayed on as an instructor;
recommended to Xiaozhan by Nie Shicheng in 1896,
and placed in charge of the drill
office. Wang Shizhen — first graduating class of
the Beiyang Military Academy in 1888; joined Yuan
in early 1896 as deputy in the
drill office, later commanding the engineers.
Cao Kun — entered the academy in 1885,
graduated in 1890, transferred to Xiaozhan in 1895 as
deputy commander of the first battalion,
right-wing infantry. And one man unlike the
rest: Xu Shichang. He was a jinshi,
a scholar of the Hanlin Academy
not an academy cadet.
In December 1897 Yuan had him brought in
to run the staff office, a civilian's
chair. How he handled men: a few
things were written down.
One is that he remembered them.
According to Phoenix Net's account of Yuan
Shikai and the Xiaozhan training, he went
down among the battalions constantly; he could
put a name to almost every officer

and staff member, and even to squad
leaders, and he knew their temperaments,
their strengths and their weaknesses.
Once, at an inspection, the rain came
down and someone offered him an umbrella;
he refused it, saying: the soldiers are
all in the rain, so why should
I not be. The other is how
he used them. According to the Baidu
Baike entry on the Xiaozhan training,
he told Zhang Zhidong his secret for
training troops: in one hand, rank and
money; in the other, a blade.
Obey, and there is rank and money;
disobey, and you get the blade.
And one story that circulates: on an
inspection he came upon an officer smoking
opium in a field, and cut him
down on the spot with his own
sword. That story is carried in the
encyclopaedia entry, where it is marked as
a legend. This film has not been
able to trace it to a primary
source. Later writers gathered these men under
headings like "the three heroes of Beiyang".
This film will not rank them.
It says only one thing: these men

were picked by one man, between 1895 and 1897.
The third thing was regulations.
The Xiaozhan drill regulations followed Western practice
throughout, modelled on the German army's organisation
and drill book. The force was divided
into five branches: infantry, cavalry, artillery,
engineers and transport. It was split into
two wings. The left wing held two
infantry battalions and one artillery battalion;
the right wing three infantry battalions and
one cavalry battalion; the engineers stood separately.
Below that came four levels: battalion,
company, platoon, squad. A battalion held four
companies, a company three large platoons,
a large platoon two small platoons,
a small platoon three squads.
What did this structure do?
It turned a soldier into something you
could count, inspect, and pay by the
month. And there was a song.
Xiaozhan had a song, the Song to
Encourage Soldiers. The tune came from a
German army song; the words were written
by Yuan himself; it was made the
army's song, and sung every day.
This film will not quote the lyrics
the versions that survive differ, and no

authoritative text has been found.
But one thing can be said:
at that time, making men who could
not read sing the same song every
day was a very new thing to
do.
In early 1896, Xiaozhan did something new
for its time: it held an examination.
Two hundred and thirty-four men who could
read were picked out of the ranks.
Then they were sorted by branch:
eighty to study infantry, eighty artillery,
twenty-four cavalry — and fifty to study German.
The course ran two years.
The instructors were German officers.
The school was called the Field Military
Academy, and it travelled with the army.
Two hundred and thirty-four men is nothing
today. But this was 1896.
Most men in the ranks could not
read. Here, literacy became something you could
be selected for — and trained in.
And one step further: when they finished,
where did they go?
Back into the ranks — as platoon officers,
company officers, instructors. The new officer corps
grew out of this.

Where that group ended up, this film
will come back to in one line.
In 1898, this army was given a new
designation. That autumn, something large happened at
court. That event itself is not this
film's subject — it belongs to another episode.
This film follows only what changed on
the army's side. After the coup,
Cixi ordered the grand councillor Ronglu to
take command and to organise the northern
armies into a single formation, called the
Guards Army. It had five divisions.
The front division was Nie Shicheng's Wuyi
Army, at Lutai. The rear division was
Dong Fuxiang's Gansu Army, at Jizhou.
The left division was Song Qing's Yi
Army, inside and outside Shanhaiguan.
The centre division was commanded by Ronglu
himself, at Nanyuan. The fifth was Yuan
Shikai's, renamed the Right Division of the
Guards Army. It stayed at Xiaozhan.
Yuan's civil post at the time was
surveillance commissioner of Zhili.
What part he played in that coup,
this film does not say.
It records one thing: in 1898 his army
changed its designation, and passed under one

man's command.

In 1899, something else broke out in the
north: the Boxers. That same year,
Yuan rose. In December 1899 he became governor
of Shandong. At forty, a provincial ruler
for the first time.

When he went to Shandong, he took
the Right Division with him.

The division marched from Xiaozhan to Shandong
by way of Dezhou, Qingzhou and Weixian.

Once there, he weeded the weak out
of thirty-four old local battalions and kept
the strong, forming twenty battalions called the
Right Division Vanguard. One consequence appeared on
the map: this army had left the
capital region. Nobody knew then how much
that mattered. A year later, they did.

In 1900 — the Boxer year — the Eight-Nation Alliance
fought its way from Tianjin toward Beijing.

The five divisions formed a year earlier
each met a different end.

The front division: Nie Shicheng stood in
the way at Tianjin.

In July, at Balitai, he was struck
by several bullets and killed.

The front division came apart, and its
designation was withdrawn. The rear division:

Dong Fuxiang's Gansu Army later escorted Cixi
and Guangxu on their flight west.
Afterwards the foreign powers named Dong for
punishment; Cixi dismissed him and sent him
back to Gansu. The rear division was
broken up where it stood.
The centre division, Ronglu's own: discipline collapsed,
it scattered during the fighting, and its
designation was cancelled. The left division,
Song Qing's Yi Army: hard fighting at
Tianjin and Beicang, heavy losses, but the
formation survived. And the fifth — the Right
Division — was in Shandong.
It never fought the Eight-Nation Alliance.
It never went through the fighting of
1900. Its strength was preserved, and later
it was expanded. An army, in a
decisive year, happened not to be present.
It did not choose that, and the
court did not arrange it.
It was simply stationed in Shandong that
year.
One thing should be said plainly.
The Right Division survived not because it
fought best. For fighting, the division that
stood in the way at Tianjin was
Nie Shicheng's. For seniority, Dong Fuxiang's Gansu

Army had entered Beijing earlier.
The reason it survived is simple:
in 1900 it was not in Beijing,
and not in Tianjin.
It was in Shandong.
Of all the explanations available for an
army's fate, this is the least dramatic
one. And yet over the next ten
years and more, it was this division
starting from seven thousand men — that kept
expanding. While the other four names were
rarely mentioned again.
In November 1901, Li Hongzhang died.
Yuan Shikai then became acting governor-general of
Zhili and minister for northern affairs;
the following year the appointment was confirmed.
It was the seat Li Hongzhang had
held for much of his later career.
Once he sat in it, what he
held changed. In 1895 he had held one
army of seven thousand men.
By 1901 he held three things.
First, soldiers. The training of the northern
armies came under him.
Second, money. Zhili was one of the
richest provinces of the empire, and the
northern forces were the court's largest military

spending. Third, men. Where officers came from
had to pass through his hands.
Governors before him had the first two
as well. The third was the one
that mattered. Because when one man gives
you your rank, you remember him.
In 1902 he also took the post of
commissioner for army training.
He sent Wang Shizhen and Wang Yingkai
to recruit six thousand more men,
bought horses and artillery abroad, and expanded
the cavalry and the artillery.
In September 1902 the Left Division of the
Beiyang Standing Army was formed.
In 1904, the Right Division and the Third
Division. In early 1905, the Fifth and
Sixth Divisions were added.
In 1905 the court unified the divisional numbers.
The Metropolitan Banner Standing Army became the
First Division, commanded by the Manchu official
Tieliang; the former Beiyang First became the
Second, the Second became the Fourth,
the Fourth became the Sixth; the Third
and the Fifth kept their numbers.
One detail inside that list: of the
six divisions, all but the First
the one under a Manchu commander

were his own. How large is a
division? By establishment: two infantry brigades,
each of two regiments, each of three
battalions; one artillery regiment of three battalions;
one cavalry regiment of four battalions;
and one engineer and one transport battalion.
Officers, soldiers and labourers together: about 12,512
men. How many in six divisions?
The sources disagree; this film gives no
total. But the 1895 figure can stand
beside it: that year, Xiaozhan held 4,750.
In November 1908, the Guangxu Emperor and Cixi
died within days of each other.
The next year, in January 1909, Yuan Shikai
was dismissed and sent home.
He went back to Henan.
One thing is worth holding on to:
when he went back to Henan,
he took only himself.
The army stayed in its barracks.
Those battalions were still at Xiaozhan,
in Shandong, in Zhili.
Those battalion officers were still the men
he had picked. In October 1911, trouble broke
out at Wuchang. The court needed troops.
It opened the rolls and found that
troops it could move, that could fight,

and that would obey were few
and in the units that were left,
the officers' names pointed to the same
man. So the court asked him to
come back. What he did after he
came back belongs to the next episode.
This film stops here, and leaves one
thing: an army, beginning in 1895, took sixteen
years to become one man's.
More than a hundred years on:
where are these things today?
South of Tianjin, in Xiaozhan town,
Jinnan district. Most of the old camp
sites are gone. The town has a
Xiaozhan Military Training Park, rebuilt in 2008 from the historical sources
walls, a lecture hall, a military museum,
a training headquarters. All of it reconstructed;
none of it original.
The site of the Tianjin Military Academy
is today in Hedong district, and it
is a shopping complex.
In 1900 the academy was destroyed by the
alliance's artillery; today not one original building
of it remains. In Xiangcheng, Henan
Yuanzhai village, Wangmingkou town.
The Yuan family's old house, the Yuanzhai
dwelling, still stands. It was listed in

March 2013 in the seventh batch of national
heritage sites, and it is open free.
Yuan was born in Xiangcheng, but spent
little of his adult life there;
this house belonged to his family.
What this army left behind is not,
for the most part, in buildings.
Of the literate men examined in 1896,
some went on to Baoding, some to
the new armies of other provinces,
some into the republic that followed.
Their records carry the same starting point.
Xiaozhan is the name of that starting
point.
This is Shenzhou. We put the facts,
and where they come from, in front
of you together.

Source / 出處：sylogs.com