



Newsletter Volume 4 No. 1 Spring/Summer 2022

Editor's Remarks

The Western Naval History Association is happy to present its first newsletter of 2022. We regret that it has taken the editor this long to produce an issue but it follows on the heels of a successful symposium--our fourth consecutive event in a period when getting together has been periodically impossible. The annual symposium has always been the association's focus and we have nearly finalized the program for 2023. As always, we will deliver a range of talks on naval events such as the Disaster at Point Honda, the evolution of U.S. nuclear submarines, and the Solomons Campaign to mention just a few. We will present workshops on useful subjects like how to conduct an oral history interview or how to use YouTube as a tool for naval history. It is our intention for this to be principally a live event but we are also considering incorporating a virtual component and streaming the event. Stay tuned.

Dr. Carlos Rivera of Ohio State University is the author of this issue's historical article: "A Cassandra? John M. Elliott and Japan, 1897-1901." This meticulously researched article outlines Lieutenant Ellicott's work and influence during an important and interesting time in development of the U.S. Navy and shows the impact that a junior officer can have on his service, even on his nation's foreign policy. We are proud to present this very interesting and original research and trust the members will enjoy reading it.

Report on 2022 Symposium

The WNHA held its fourth annual symposium on 19-20 February 2022. In 2021 the pandemic required the association to hold a virtual event. This year, we were able to move to a mixed, live/virtual format. Thirty people attended the symposium in person and more than that attended via Zoom. The format proved effective. It broadened the range of speakers available and made it possible for people to attend who otherwise would have been unable to come. Thank you to the excellent technological support provided by our host, the USS Midway Museum, the



WNHA President Sam Tangredi bringing out the commemorative Washington Treaty 5-5-3 cake.

conference proceeded smoothly, free from technical glitches. The association deeply appreciates the museum's generous and ongoing support.

In this year's event we retained our practice of covering a range of subjects from multiple perspectives, rather than focusing on a specific topic. John F. Lehman, Secretary of the Navy from 1981-1987 and author of several works of naval history, including *Command of the Seas* was this year's keynote speaker. Secretary Lehman delivered a thought-provoking address that the association is proud to provide to its members, and the general public, for that matter via our YouTube channel.

Following Secretary Lehman's address, well-known authors Jon Parshall and Trent Hone offered an informative virtual discussion assessing Admiral Chester Nimitz's planning and decision-making during the early years of the Pacific Campaign. A series of live presentations followed, led off by Vincent O'Hara with a workshop on how to design and make maps for publications. Mark Fiorey, Deputy Director of the Hattendorf Center for Maritime Historical Research, came next with "The Adventures of Wild Bill: the Covert Reconnaissance of Captain Wilfred L. Painte, USNR, Civil Engineering Corps." Best selling author Captain George Galdorisi, (USN Ret) gave a lively talk on "Writing Naval and Military Fiction." The day ended with a wargaming reenactment of the 13 November 1942 Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by Lonnie Gill, author of *General Quarters*.



Karl Zingheim and a fine scratch-built model.



Top: Steve McLaughlin awarding a book to a raffle winner.

Bottom: Captain Jim Bryant (USN Ret.) discussing the fate of USS *Thresher*.

The symposium's second day kicked off with a virtual roundtable discussion on the Washington Naval Treaty. The participants included Dr. Carlos Rivera of Ohio State University, Dr. Kori Schake of the American Enterprise Institute and Dr. Emily Goldman of the U.S. Cyber Command. Despite the scattered location of the participants and the audience, this proved a wonderful success and the audience was able to effectively participate. The symposium then returned to live presentations with author Brian Walter discussing Mediterranean amphibious landings after the Italian armistice. Captain Jim Bryant USN (Ret.) then followed with a presentation entitled "Declassifying the Fate of USS *Thresher*." Dr. David Winkler of the Naval History Foundation came next with a talk about the USS *Langley* (CV1) as San Diego's aircraft carrier. The last live presentation was delivered by John Burt with a discussion of German and Italian

plans to invade Malta. The day concluded with a virtual presentation by Dr. Kathleen Broome Williams discussing her most recent work, *The Measure of a Man: My Father, the Marine Corps and Saipan*.

To really appreciate the depth of content it's best to listen to the symposium for oneself. All of the presentations have been posted on <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOK3RCS4-vRs5ql7mDpNTjA>.



Vince O'Hara delivering a practical workshop. Each symposium has included several workshops in accordance with the association's mission of providing it's members with practical information.

Brief Notices

The 2023 Symposium will be held in San Diego on board the USS Midway Museum February 17-18, 2023. We are putting together an exciting program so standby for more information.

The next Q&A will be held on 10 September with Len Heinz talking about naval technology.

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Member Notices

Recent member news and publications

- Stephen McLaughlin: "After the *Sovetskii Soiuz*: Soviet Battleship Designs 1939-1941." (*Warship* 2022);
- Michael Whitby: "'Fooling Around the French Coast': The Challenge of Operation Tunnel: September 1943-April 1944." (*Warship* 2022.);
- Jonathan Parshall: "Timeless Battle, Evolving Interpretations." (*Naval History*, June 2022) and "What WAS Nimitz Thinking?" *Naval War College Review* (75/2 Spring 2022);
- Sam J. Tangredi: "'Navies of God': The Siege of Damietta." (*Naval History*, June 2022) and "Sizing the Carriers: A Brief History of Alternatives." (*Naval War College Review* 74/4 Autumn 2021);
- Sam J. Tangredi: "Keep War Confined to the 'Seas.'" Naval Institute General Prize Essay Contest 2021-3rd prize;
- Brian E. Walter: *Blue Water War: The Maritime Struggle in the Mediterranean and Middle East 1940-1945*. (Casemate, 2022);
- Vincent P. O'Hara and Leonard Heinz: *Innovating Victory: Naval Technology in Three Wars* (Naval Institute Press, 2022).

There are other articles and books that are not included and the author makes apologies for their omission. Please contact the editor at info@wnha.net to include a notice of your recent publication(s) or news. This can include notice of events as well as works in process and items of interest to the membership.

Contact the WNHA

Email info@wnha.net for more information about the Association. We welcome new members. Check out our web page at wnha.net. Follow @WNHA3 on Twitter for regular updates of the Association's events. We also have a new Youtube channel where past Q&As presentations have been posted.

“A 'CASSANDRA?' JOHN M. ELLICOTT and JAPAN, 1897-1901”

Carlos R. Rivera

[In 1897] *only a few Americans recognized the growing strength of Japan's sea power; and fewer still considered her the probable enemy.* --Outen J. Clinard (1)

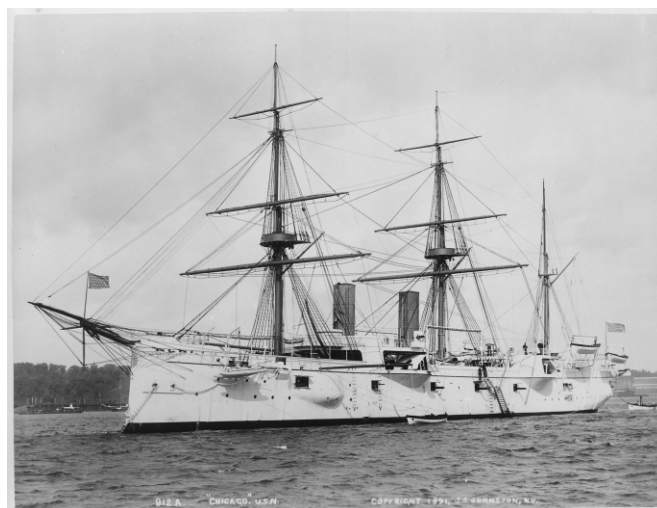
Even to the well-versed specialists in American naval history, Lieutenant John M. Ellicott, USN (1859-1955) may be unfamiliar. This officer was an early analyst and thinker who was one of the first to foresee an emerging Japanese threat. Like Cassandra, blessed by the gods with her abilities to see into the future, and cursed by the doubts of others, Lieutenant Ellicott's vision of an emerging Japanese threat fell largely on deaf ears.

Nonetheless, the long-lived officer added to the U.S. Navy's war-planning efforts at the *fin de siècle*. Ellicott contributed strategic appreciations during a critical period as the United States acquired the territories of Hawaii in 1897, and the Philippine Island in 1898, as such an expansion in the nation's overseas territories required a review of the navy's responsibilities in the Pacific. Though Ellicott had written no great missive to guide national policy, his intelligence reporting places him with other members of the American navy's strategic elite. A scholar, Suzanne Keller, defined this group as “a minority designated to serve a collectivity [of] effective and responsible minorities—effective as regards to the performance of activities of interest and concern to others to whom these elites are responsive.” This group of officers also embodied Samuel P. Huntington's term “professional” as “the marriage of intellectual ability, character and leadership and considerable training and experience.” (2)

Ellicott was an officer some might today designate as a “hard-charger” determined to carry out their forte to the highest levels. One modern historian, however, felt differently about Ellicott. In describing an alleged dispute between Captain Casper Goodrich of the Navy War College (NWC) and Ellicott, Peter Karsten implied the later was a Cassandra when he wrote “for every Goodrich there were hundreds of Ellicotts.” (3) Along the journey Ellicott contributed to the gradual view among American naval planners that Japan was a threat. Quite simply, Ellicott anticipated the paths Japan would follow in any Western

Pacific conflict with the United States, but would he ever be considered credible?

Ellicott graduated from Annapolis (USNA 1883) nearly a decade before the publication of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* in 1890. (4) Though Ellicott had produced little if any of substantive value before then, he, along with many of his peers, grew energized at the prospect of an implementation of Mahan's vision. In fact, Ellicott was to serve aboard Mahan's last command afloat (1893-1895) when he skippered cruiser *Chicago*. Ellicott next received orders to duties at the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), a somewhat collateral posting as he still needed more sea duty. The officer remained with that office in one capacity or another throughout the next decade. It was the posting in which Ellicott made his mark. (5)



USS *Chicago*, one of the protected cruisers of the “new Navy and Mahan's last sea command.

Much of the scant historical attention Ellicott has received has been critical; in fact, he was described negatively by Karsten when it came to the American naval interests. However, Ellicott's reports foretold of scenarios similar to those found later in Homer Lea's *The Valor of Ignorance*. (6) Lea was an American 'hunchback' who had served in the Chinese forces during the Boxer Rebellion, but also was the author of a somewhat controversial and prophetic volume in 1906 on a conflict between Japan and the United States that would play out in the Philippines. The book exploited the “yellow peril” fears of the era, when anti-Asian policies in many nations became standard. (7)

The idea that Japan existed as an international 'Yellow Peril' did not originate in America but flowed from Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II and his own racial philosophies. (8) That is not to ignore an American bias, for anti-Asian prejudices had long existed, particularly in the western states. Clearly, many Americans held racist beliefs about Asians as witnessed by anti-Chinese legislation, and later the rise of anti-Japanese sentiments. (9) The Kaiser, among many observers, imagined a menace to the Pacific littoral (and western interests) from the growing populations and military capabilities of China and Japan. Those who shared the Kaiser's view believed that "At the final stage of nearly all yellow peril thought lurked the fear of an East-West appeal to arms." (10) Such thoughts did gain currency among some American naval officers.

In the U.S. Navy, the notion of Japan as an enemy emerged not so much from the writings of Mahan or the Kaiser, but from other factors. After the failed 1893 attempt by American businessmen and sugar planters to bring



The Battle of Manila Bay helped bring the Philippines into the American orbit and made the matter of Japanese expansion a national concern. Detail from painting by Marshall Johnson 1899.

Hawaii into the union, Mahan, then the outgoing president of the U.S. Naval War College, enunciated concerns about Asian expansionism. He asserted in the *New York Times* that it was China that posed a threat to the American domination of Hawaii, but did not then cite a Japanese threat. Mahan wrote "the vast mass of China may yield to one of those impulses which have in past ages buried civilization under a wave of barbaric invasion. Should China burst her barriers eastward, it would be impossible to exaggerate the momentous issues dependent upon a firm hold of the Islands by a great civilized maritime power." (11)

However, in 1897 it was the Japanese that vigorously protested a second attempt under President William McKinley to annex the Hawaiian Islands. Mahan confided to his disciple and McKinley's then-Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, "[t]hat there is danger of trouble with [Japan] towards Hawaii, I think beyond doubt." (12) So while an earlier effort at annexation in 1893 had not incurred any large-scale Japanese suspicion, the new attempt changed the dynamics.

In fact, one historian pointed out that had the Democrats prevailed in the 1896 presidential race, "there were [naval] officers convinced that the nation was on the verge" of great social upheaval. It was expected that "a Democratic victory would negate any effort to acquire the Hawaiian Islands." One might note, however, that apparently neither the Republican nominee in 1896, William McKinley, nor his future first Secretary of State, John Sherman, were initially predisposed before taking office to seek a quick annexation of Hawaii. But Japan's bluster in mid-1897 changed their minds. (13)

It was also the ascendance of the Republicans in the 1896 elections which would bring the possibility of a larger budget for the U.S. Navy and a pursuit of growing economic interests abroad, particularly in China. As part of their "Large Policy," Republicans had advocated a much improved American posture on the global stage, both as to trade, foreign policy, and in particular, pursuing Mahan's vision for 'super-power' status—what today is called imperialism. (14)

In early 1897, the Japanese prompted the United States to contemplate with horror the expansion of an Asian power into the eastern Pacific that threatened to overwhelm an American interest. The immigration

incident escalated the tensions between Japan and Hawaii, and threatened to see Japan's domination of the islands. When McKinley took office in March 1897, he began behind-the-scenes activity to forestall such Japanese aggression. Work on a secret treaty of annexation was undertaken as McKinley intended to be prepared for the possibility of action. The President also recognized that Secretary of the Navy John D. Long, a political appointee, would not be up to speed as to the workings of the Department and that an energetic, resourceful, and decisive subordinate was required. Enter Theodore Roosevelt. He proved to be tireless and was an advocate of the "Large Policy." While Roosevelt was acquainted with other proponents of the policy, Roosevelt was an independent actor, and not a puppet for either Mahan, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), or John Hay, McKinley's second Secretary of State.

The American plantation interests in Honolulu had taken a provocative step, for though they required cheap Asian labor for sugarcane and pineapple work, they also feared being overwhelmed by the increasing Asian presence. Beginning in late 1896 and continuing through mid-1897, bureaucrats of the Republic of Hawaii decided to forestall any attempt by Japan to flood the island with its citizens. (15) Japan had in mind the creation of colonies in regions of the Pacific to seek expansion by a preponderance of its citizens and through "peaceful" annexation, for many Japan elites considered that "our future history will be a history of the establishment by the Japanese of new Japanese everywhere in the world." (16)

Consequently, the Japanese government lodged a protest with the Honolulu government and hinted at military action if the immigrant situation remained unresolved. Delivered just after McKinley's inauguration in March 1897, the note gained more significance when journalists reported the dispatch of Japanese warships to Hawaii. (17) The U.S. Navy maintained a few warships in Hawaii and even contemplated sending battleship *Oregon* there but in any event Japan sent one protected cruiser, *Naniwa*. (18)

It was at this point that Lieutenant Ellicott showed his chops with the strategic elite and began the work that earned him consideration with that group. Ellicott was positioned in Hawaiian waters onboard *Marion* as the crisis unfolded. Sparked by the Japanese naval presence in Hawaii, Assistant Secretary Roosevelt began to prepare for

the possibility of conflict. Here we must acknowledge a statement of reality best expressed by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld: "You go to war with the Army you have--not the Army you might wish you have." (20) This explains best the difference between preparing for versus engaging in an actual conflict.

Displaying an attitude of positivity, Roosevelt directed Captain Caspar F. Goodrich, President of the NWC, to investigate the conduct of such hostilities. Goodrich, however, corrected the Assistant Secretary's view about the navy's capacity for potent action. Concerned about "our numerical inferiority" and a lack of concentration of American forces, Goodrich delivered a blunt message, "you have asked the College the honor to ask its opinion and the College is bound to express that opinion frankly, facts seem to forbid a vigorous aggressive war." (21) Roosevelt discovered that public bellicosity alone was inadequate to secure American interests in Hawaii. Such views would draw reinforcement from Ellicott's intelligence and survey reports, and NWC studies.

As Roosevelt received Goodrich's assessments, further reports from overseas indicated that the Japanese Navy was about to augment its forces in Hawaii with two battleships nearing completion in British shipyards. (22) Additionally, reports circulated that Japan might be supporting native unrest in Hawaii. These rumors hinted that the Japanese were searching for harbor facilities in the islands. Such a base would raise the possibility of Japanese preparations for hostilities. (23)

The evidence does point to a confluence of critical events; 1. The Japanese Navy had a presence on station in Hawaiian waters; 2. The Japanese government had protested any diminution of Japanese influence in the islands; and 3. The American naval attaché in London reported regularly on the status of the Japanese battleships under construction and heightened the numerical and qualitative inferiority enunciated by Goodrich. To that end, Goodrich emphasized that a reconnaissance survey of Oahu, the political and economic center of the Hawaii, was necessary to determine the Japanese threat in Hawaii. He worried that a Japanese collier might use one of the outlying islands to support warships in the region. (24)

While the Japanese did maintain a small presence in Hawaiian waters, they would have been hard-pressed to sustain such a deployment over an extended period of time. And, though the Japanese government had

protested as to the question of ownership of the islands, it had not yet undertaken any serious preparations to enter the dispute. Nonetheless, the American naval attaché in London continued to report upon the status of the two Japanese battleships nearing completion, although they would still not be ready for months. This reporting heightened Roosevelt's fears of the naval inferiority enunciated by Goodrich. To better assess the situation, a geographical survey could determine the extent of any Japanese naval preparations. (25) While there is little evidence that Roosevelt knew Ellicott personally before the crisis, it was at that decisive moment that the junior officer drew nearer to the crisis. Assigned to *Marion*, Ellicott was at best advantage to act.

Executing department orders in the summer of 1897, he conducted a survey of Oahu to determine whether or not the Japanese Navy could set up bases on the island. In addition, Ellicott scouted for locations that the U.S. Navy could itself use to defend the islands. Roosevelt further ordered *Marion* to determine the appropriate spot for a cable between Oahu and the other islands, a duty Ellicott was to accomplish. (26)

Ellicott's data proved useful as the navy advocated not only the acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands, but advanced the view that Japan was most certainly a potential enemy. Ellicott's superior in Washington, Chief Intelligence Officer Commander Richard Wainwright, utilized Ellicott's analyses to garner governmental and public support for increased naval appropriations. At that point, an award-winning article in the United States Naval Institute *Proceedings* helped to shape the agenda for legislative debate over the looming crisis. With the benefit of Ellicott's conclusions Wainwright asserted in "Our Naval Power" that the United States required an increase in fleet size, in part, to deter further Japanese adventurism. Wainwright did not at any point invoke racial generalities as a reason for defining Japan as the enemy. Rather, he argued that Japan was "the only rival [in Asia] who should closely approach us in sea power." (27) The intelligence chief went on at length in assessing the costs of defending American interests in Hawaii, and by extension elsewhere in the perceived sphere of American influence if the islands were to fall to a hostile power.

The assessments by both Ellicott and Wainwright proved prophetic, particularly in terms of shaping attitudes towards the Mahanian concept of command of the

sea and local superiority. Both concurred in the view that "Japan is now creating a navy that she could maintain easily in strength greater than the forces that any other power can maintain in the China sea." (28) Japan's central location in the Western Pacific also meant that its sea lanes of communication were shorter than those of the United States. One such advantage emanated from Japan's ability to concentrate its battle fleet; a feature Mahan had long advocated. Hostile operations against the Japanese islands themselves by any unfriendly nation required a "great exertion and tremendous expense."

Thus, Japan would never have to build a navy equal to any of its opponents, for its interests, though then pursued in the Hawaiian Islands, resided more in the Western Pacific. Harkening to the future, Wainwright noted further that "the manifest destiny of Japan, unless her new civilization be checked, [was] to be the great maritime power of the East." Ellicott also supported Wainwright's view of Japanese pretensions, reporting that Japan's "policy seems to have been a waiting one, until, by immigration, the preponderance of her own people in the islands made her interests paramount." He argued further that Japan might use any pretext to act in Hawaii. (29)

Ellicott next transferred to cruiser *Baltimore* as it sailed westward to destiny. (30) As the command's intelligence officer, he participated in the American victory over the Spanish naval forces at Manila Bay. Furthermore, his analyses in the Philippine Islands would prove prophetic, but one notes that Ellicott was not the first naval officer to see danger in the Philippines.

We need not extend our study to cover an attack on the [Philippines] since all deductions must confirm the necessity of a powerful fleet and fortified harbor in one place or another. We remind readers that Japan lie[s] to the northward of [the Philippines]. --Don Julio del Rio, August 1891 (31)

The passage above attests to the long-term insecurity of a weak imperial power in the Philippine Islands. Spanish authorities had worried at early as 1885 that Japan might overwhelm the Pacific colony. (32) That threat proved illusory, for the moment, when the United States emerged victorious in the short Spanish-American War. But success in that conflict proved equally daunting to American security interests in the western Pacific.

Though Ellicott began intelligence missions in the

Philippine Islands after Dewey's victory, at no time did he report any suspicious activity by the Japanese. Such a lack of concern probably stemmed, in part, from a circumspect prudence on the part of interested Japanese nationals. In any case, while McKinley had not considered in depth the effect of victory in Manila Bay, international interests, like real German ambitions, guided his decision-making process. To the Japanese, however, previous experience seemed to guide their actions.

Related to that situation was the fact that the modern era power brought about "the regionalization of sea power." That is, while the United States sought to protect its interests in near proximity, it would not deploy considerable naval strength to such distant theaters for decades. The acquisition of distant overseas territories, however, imposed additional burdens. The United States lacked both significant coaling stations in the Pacific and a secure naval base at the end of a trans-oceanic trek. The U.S. Navy's existing assets for defending the Philippines thus seemed inadequate. In order to deal with any potentially hostile power, the U.S. Navy required sufficient overall superiority to oppose the inherent advantages of a regional power. Such superiority could be had in modern battleships. Even at that stage "superiority" proved problematic, for the U.S. Navy then possessed no true centralized planning mechanism to identify either likely overseas enemies or estimate political situations abroad. Consequently, the adequate size of the navy was subject to differing interpretations. (33)

It was Ellicott again who finally expounded upon the Japanese threat to the United States in the Pacific. The professional quality of his work in Hawaii and the Philippines also drew the attention of his superiors. (34) Charged with specific tasks during periods of crisis or hostilities, Ellicott discharged his duties well. After perusing some of the junior officer's analyses of the Hawaiian and Philippine Islands, Captain Henry C. Taylor, President of the NWC had known of Ellicott's merit as early as May 1896, when he sought to use his influence to get Ellicott assigned to the college. Taylor later noted Ellicott's analytical skills with "[h]ere is a good man." In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, Taylor sought and endorsed Ellicott's re-assignment to the college. To be sure, most of the officers of the U.S. Navy, and the nation, continued to view the German Empire as the biggest threat to American security at home and abroad, but Ellicott focused mainly upon Japan. (35)

Ellicott identified Japan as a likely antagonist because of friction created by the simultaneous expansion of the United States and Japan. After 1898, Japan was "seen as a threat" to the American Pacific territories, and though that threat "was considered much more potential than actual," studies such as Ellicott's shaped how the General Board (GB) viewed that potential threat. (36)

Ordered to the staff of the NWC in 1899, he quickly exercised his analytical skills and made an immediate impact. (37) Between November 1899 and November 1901 Ellicott made several strategic studies to supplement not only the work of the college but to assist the General Board (GB) in its deliberations. (38) Ellicott produced the most cogent statements on the Japanese prior to the war scares of 1906-1907. Though Ellicott's strategic analyses remained classified until 1972, he had provided a continuity. In the decades before World War II, American naval officers also expressed many of the same judgments Ellicott had delivered earlier.

Ellicott had arrived in Newport at the moment the Navy had created the GB. The senior staff of the NWC used Ellicott's work to define American interests in Asia. Ellicott's influence, however, extended beyond Newport. In its first official meetings, the GB examined Ellicott's "Reconnaissance of Oahu" and "Strategic features of the Philippines." (39) Ellicott's study of the Philippines was most important for the U.S. Navy, for the Navy, in line with the Mahanian argument about way stations, had decided to construct a first-class naval base in the Far East. The U.S. Navy understood quite well the significance of the European spheres of influence. The major European powers had all created naval bases out of their respective spheres, moving significant naval assets to the Far East in the late 1890s. By May 1897 navy officials had considered a base along the Chinese coast. The navy's search for a base in China continued until 1905, when Japan's victory over Russia changed the strategic circumstances. (40) Ellicott, though, argued for a Philippine base and urged the selection of a position well away from the main island of Luzon, home to Manila.

Ellicott asserted that any base in the vicinity of Manila would be too vulnerable. The junior officer wrote that "there remains but one other naval power in the world from which we need fear attack, namely, Japan." Reviewing the geographical propinquity, Ellicott minced few words, declaring, "We must be especially prepared to reckon with Japan for we stand in the way of her natural aspirations in the

Pacific.” In the assessing this potential enemy, Ellicott pointed out the course Japan would undertake four decades later. Though Ellicott was not alone in those assertions, his studies remain the most critical and potent transmission of ideas. Ellicott argued that Japan would find it imperative to neutralize the Philippines before turning east to the deal with any American forces approaching to the islands' rescue. (41) The Japanese Navy would have to overwhelm any American forces in East Asia prior to offensive operations against that rescue force. Without a major naval base in the Philippines the small American naval presence in East Asia, as well as any army garrison in the Philippines, would remain at the mercy of any hostile power. (42) Ellicott's study, written in early 1900, crystallized the U.S. Navy's suspicions of Japan.

Witnessing the destruction of the Spanish naval forces in Manila Bay, Ellicott fully understood the vulnerability of the commercial and political center of the islands. (43) Ellicott did not want the U.S. Navy to get trapped in Manila Bay as had the Spanish, rather, the junior officer argued for a more secure naval base. Ellicott suggested the island of Ilo-Ilo, located three hundred miles south of Manila and blessed with two exit routes. Ellicott wrote that any hostile force required a two-to-one numerical superiority to blockade an American naval force at Ilo-Ilo. (44) Ellicott's observation of the Philippine Islands had convinced him that Manila Bay was the "least fit" for a modern naval base. In the same report Ellicott argued that Subig (Subic) Bay was just as "tactically absolutely indefensible." Ilo-Ilo was "tactically the strongest naval base I have seen in the Philippines," possessing sufficient defensive area and deep water. (45)

Ellicott's report made note of one more observation. Ellicott and the GB recognized that any major naval base in the northern Philippines posed a threat to Japan, as indeed it would. An American naval presence in the Philippines "threatened [Japan] at home." (46) Ellicott could not have then known that in response to Japan's 1895 acquisition of Taiwan, the Spanish government authorized the creation of a major naval facility at Subic, thirty miles northwest of Manila. Nor could he have known that this action had attracted Japan's scrutiny. In fact, the Japanese had long viewed any naval base at Subic as a potential threat to their freedom of action and an advance base for offensive action against Japanese interests. (47)

In 1900 the United States possessed only limited facilities in the Hawaiian Islands and no modern facilities to speak of in the Philippines. The Japanese and British possessed more modern facilities available on occasion to the U.S. Navy. Those facilities, however, would be off-limits in the event of any East Asian war in which the United States was a belligerent. International obligations required neutral nations to close their facilities to all nations at war. Of course, any American hostilities with Japan would preclude



Lieutenant John M. Ellicott reached the final rank of captain, as pictured here.

the use of Japanese facilities. Additionally, Congressional prerogatives forced the placement of most major American naval facilities along the Atlantic seaboard. (48) One scholar pointed out that, "[a]ppropriations for naval bases were more a result of local pork-barrel considerations than an appreciation of the Navy's strategic needs." (49) As long as the Philippines provided no political advantage to Congress, a base ranked low in priority.

The lack of a base in the Philippines forced the navy to consider other unattractive alternatives. If time was

important, the U.S. Navy suffered from lengthy lines of communication between the United States and the Philippines. It would be another fifteen years before the Panama Canal became fully functional. Any American effort to counter a hostile fleet in the Philippines would prove inadequate. Thus, the placement of a first-class naval base in the islands would allow the advanced deployment of major fleet units to East Asia. Unknowingly, Ellicott's argument had lit a slow-burning fuse on a bomb that would explode in 1908. That bomb prevented the U.S. Navy from ever acquiring a first-class naval base in the Western Pacific. The reasons varied, ranging from scant appropriations to the lessons of the Japanese army and naval siege of Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War. In 1907, just at the moment that the U.S. Navy was to realize its long-held dream, inter- and intra-service infighting from within the American military establishments scuttled any possibility of a major naval base at Subic Bay. (50)

In the interim, Lieutenant Ellicott returned to afloat duties, first on transport *Prairie* in 1902 where he was temporarily detached for duty at the NWC at the orders of Rear Admiral Taylor. In mid-January 1904, Ellicott performed intelligence work in Panama after its independence. He then returned to shipboard duties with *Prairie*, where he was promoted to lieutenant commander. (51) Following the end of that tour he was assigned as a staff officer to the Chief of the Bureau of Equipment. He next served as executive officer of armored cruiser *Maryland*. Upon departing that command, he skippered *Solace* (June 1908 to April 1909). Commander Ellicott transited the Magellan Straits as the ship was moved from California to South Carolina for decommissioning. Ellicott was promoted to captain and commanded the *Maryland* from January 1912 to July 1913. At that point, he was put on the mandatory retirement list following thirty years of service--often called the "plucking board"--where a determination was made that Ellicott would not advance in rank. (52)

However, the American entry into World War One brought him back into service at the Mare Island Shipyard. Following the war, he was again retired, spending the rest of his life in the area. He had the honor of being the last burial at the cemetery at Mare Island. It had been closed in 1921, but he was the last person eligible for interment there. Ellicott lived to be nearly one hundred, and over his career wrote many articles and books on naval service, as well as on poker. (53)

While one might argue that labeling Ellicott a "Cassandra" may be seen as rhetoric, he carried out his intelligence duties professionally, leaving others to either believe him, or perhaps belittle him. While his legacy may have received a mixed review today, there may be little argument that Ellicott should be considered a lineal progenitor of "War Plan Orange." That plan would guide the U.S. Navy's strategic programs for Japan in conflict over the Philippines for decades. Though the initial named plan was first considered in 1906, the absence of Ellicott's name in its earlier history seems more as a deafening silence. One cannot find Ellicott in the standard history of that plan by Edward S. Miller. (54) While Miller provided an exhaustive study, particularly in the time period after 1903, the very nature of Ellicott's work seems consigned to the proverbial dust-bin of history. There is no mention of Ellicott with the NWC, nor of his years with the Office of Naval Intelligence. And, while it is true that for most officers of the era, Germany was the *bête noire*, it is clear that Japan was still a matter of interest.

In part, the lack of historicity may arise from the fact that generals and admirals get recognized for winning military plans, but the subordinates who put any ideas into play are often overlooked. In fact, the late William R. Braisted and the late Frank Uhlig, former editor of the *Naval War College Review* raised that very notion with this author: the role of junior officers in a professional environment is often overlooked. That is, if the winners do gain credit for a particular viewpoint or event in history, the first draft is drawn by junior officers putting together the daily sitrep (situation report), running it via the various department heads and executive officer, to finally get the commanding officer's chop. One can perceive this tale as a cautionary warning, that due to their junior rank, such planners receive little, if any, credit for their contributions to national security. Thus, one reads so many historical treatises (or military reports) with the vain hope that the name on any "authorship" is historically proper. However, as many graduate students as well as military and naval officers can attest, it proves true infrequently and one finds that to be the case with John M. Ellicott.

Notes

1. *Japan's Influence on American Naval Power, 1897-1917* (Berkeley: UCP, 1947), 36.
2. Suzanne Keller, *Beyond the Ruling Class: Strategic Elites in Modern*

- Society* (New York: Random House, 1963), 4; Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1957), 11-13.
3. Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (New York: Free P, 1972), 387. The issue was a review of Ellicott's "The Composition of the Fleet," in U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 22 (#79, 1896), 537-60, hereafter *USNIP*. Goodrich severely criticized Ellicott's call for a larger naval component, 553-55. However, Goodrich also wrote "I am sorry to differ with a colleague of such capacity and intelligence". One notes that ONI records did not begin declassification until well after World War Two. However, as to the specific "dispute," Goodrich continued to work with Ellicott, and came to agree with elements of the article in the next few years. Goodrich did appreciate Ellicott's acumen, see Goodrich to Ellicott, 15 October 1897, "I take great pleasure in thanking you for having given careful and intelligent thought to solving a weighty problem [in Hawaii]" in "Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs", House of Representatives, Sixty-Fourth Congress, First Session, Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 1916), 3:4064.
4. First published in 1890 by Little, Brown and Co., Boston MA.
5. Jeffery M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's First Intelligence Agency, 1865-1918* (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute P, 1979), 40, hereafter NIP.
6. Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1909).
7. Rotem Kowner, "'Lighter than Yellow, but not Enough:' Western Discourse on the Japanese 'Race', 1854-1904," *The Historical Journal* 43 (March 2000), 103-31; S.M. Lyman, "The 'Yellow Peril' Mystique: Origins and Vicissitudes of a Racist Discourse," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 13 (June 2000), 683-747; Erika Lee, "The 'Yellow Peril' and Asian Exclusion in the Americas," *The Pacific Historical Review* 76 (November 2007), 537-562.
8. Richard A. Thompson, "The Yellow Peril, 1890-1924," Diss. (Madison WI, 1957).
9. Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: UCP, 1962).
10. Thompson, "Yellow Peril," 249.
11. Mahan, "Needed as a Barrier; To Protect the World from an Invasion of Chinese Barbarism," 1 February 1893, *New York Times*.
12. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (New York: Books for Libraries P, 1970), 31-32; Mahan to Roosevelt, 1 May 1897, reproduced in Richard W. Turk, *The Ambiguous Relationship* (New York: Greenwood P, 1987), 114-15.
13. Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Originally published 1936, reprint Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1964), 215.
14. See Pratt, "The 'Large Policy' of 1898," *Journal of American History* 19 (September 1932), 219-242, and Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* 1963 (Ithaca NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 1971).
15. Alex Ladenson, "The Background of the Hawaiian-Japanese Labor Convention of 1886," *The Pacific Historical Review* 9 (December 1940), 389-400; Donald Rowland, "The United States and the Contract Labor Question in Hawaii, 1862-1900," *The Pacific Historical Review* 2 (September 1933), 249-269. In 1896, Japanese subjects made up about 25 percent of the overall population, which numbered about 100,000, while Chinese subjects numbered 20 percent and native Hawaiians represented 40 percent. The white population consisted of less than 8 percent, Hillary Conroy, *The Japanese Frontier in Hawaii, 1868-1898* (Berkeley: UCP, 1953), 119. Japan was demanding rights for its citizens resident in Hawaii that the Japanese government was itself unwilling to extend to the great majority of its own subjects, Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1985), 67.
16. Conroy, *The Japanese Frontier in Hawaii, 1868-1898*; Sylvester K. Stevens, *American Expansion in Hawaii: 1848-1898* (Harrisburg PA: Archives Pub. Co., 1945; Thomas A. Bailey, "Japan's Protest against the Annexation of Hawaii," *The Journal of Modern History* 3 (March 1931), 46-61 and "Notes and Suggestions: The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War," *The American Historical Review* 36 (April 1931), 552-60. Akira Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status," in Marius B. Jansen, *The Cambridge History of Japan: The Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 5: 762. William M. Morgan, "The Anti-Japanese Origins of the Hawaiian Annexation Treaty of 1897". *Diplomatic History* 6 (Winter 1982), 27; Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar: U.S.-Japanese Rivalry over the Annexation of Hawai'i* (NIP 2011), 205-17. Reports of increasing numbers of Japanese nationals in Hawaii gave "rise to [the] suspicion that Japan [was] stealthily landing soldiers to help in a future takeover of the islands," see *New York Times*, 15 March, 21 March, 2 April, 11 April, 18 April 1897; *Portland Oregonian*, 10 April, 11 April 1897; *London Times*, 13 April 1897.
17. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1, 2, 3 April 1897; *London Times*, 13 April 1897; Morgan, "The Anti-Japanese Origins," 28; Iriye Akira, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Harvard UP, 1972), 50-51. The Japanese cruiser *Naniwa* arrived 5 May 1897, Ellis Mills to John Sherman, 5 May 1897, "Diplomatic Despatches [sic], 1843-1900: Notes from American Legations (Honolulu) to the Department of State", T-30, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, henceforth NARA. 17 August 1897, *Hawaiian Gazette*. Mills to Sherman, 20 April 1897, and Mills to Sherman, 5 May 1897, "Notes from Legations (Hawaii)," T-30, NARA; Roosevelt to McKinley, 22 April 1897, Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division (hereafter LCMD).
18. 17 August 1897, *Hawaiian Gazette*; Mills to Sherman, 20 April 1897, and Mills to Sherman, 5 May 1897, "Notes from Legations (Hawaii)," T-30, NARA; Roosevelt to McKinley, 22 April 1897, Roosevelt Papers, LCMD. ^bBattleship *Oregon* was dispatched, but eventually had to return to Caribbean waters just as the Spanish-American War broke out.
19. "[F]or every Goodrich there were hundreds of Ellicotts," Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 387.
20. *New York Times*, 19 December 2004, from online archives
21. Goodrich to Roosevelt, 23 June 1897, "Strategic Features of the

- Pacific," Record Group 8, Naval History Center, Naval War College, Newport RI (henceforth RG and NHCNWC).
22. Letters from Naval Attachés, #55, American Legation United States Naval Attaché London (hereafter Alusna London); 10 July 1897; #67, Alusna London 21 July 1897; #69, Alusna London, 28 July 1897; #69, Alusna London, ND; #77, Alusna London, 21 August 1897; #83, Alusna London, 31 August 1897, "Office of Naval Intelligence Correspondence," RG38, NARA.
23. Morgan, "The Anti-Japanese Origins of the Hawaiian Annexation Treaty," 42-43.
24. Goodrich to Roosevelt, 23 June 1897; Admiral Sicard's panel concluded much the same, Board on Defenses, "War with Spain and Japan," 30 June 1897, RG8, NHCNWC. See Letters from Naval Attachés, #55, Alusna London, 10 July 1897; #67, Alusna London, 21 July 1897; #69, Alusna London, 28 July 1897; #69, Alusna London, #77 ND; Alusna London, 21 August 1897; #83, Alusna London, 31 August 1897, "Office of Naval Intelligence Correspondence," RG38, NARA. Morgan, "The Anti-Japanese Origins of the Hawaiian Annexation Treaty," 42-43.
25. Goodrich to Roosevelt, 23 June 1897, "Strategic Features of the Pacific;" Rear Admiral Sicard's panel also concluded much the same, Board on Defenses, "War with Japan," #253, 30 June 1897, RG8, NHCNWC.
26. Ellicott, "Reconnaissance of Oahu, Hawaiian Islands," 20 September 1897, PL #276, RG8, NHC; Roosevelt to Commanding Officer, *Marion*, 25 June 1897, "Letters Sent to Stations, Squadrons, and Shore Establishments," RG24, NARA. Ellicott was specifically detailed for the duty by name, Secretary of the Navy John D. Long to Commander in Chief Pacific Station, 20 July 1897, found in "Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs," 3: 4059. The Long order directed Ellicott to "present" a personal report to Goodrich. Ellicott, "Reconnaissance of Oahu, Hawaiian Islands," 17 April 1900, "Proceedings and Hearing of the General Board," RG80, NARA. It must be noted that Ellicott's mission objective and reporting matched closely ideas enunciated earlier in the year from the Sicard Board for war planning, which included Goodrich and Commander Richard Wainwright, which met the requirement of "War with Japan" #253 UNOpB. See J.A.S. Grenville, "American Naval Preparations for War with Spain, 1896-1898," *The Journal of American Studies* 2 (April 1968), 44-7. The board also contemplated that the Japanese might place a coaling station somewhere along the British Columbia coastline. Ellicott, "The Strategic Features of the Philippine Islands, Hawaii and Guam," RG8, NHC; *Hawaiian Gazette*, 17 August 1897. Dorwart, *Office of Naval Intelligence*, 56, 149.
27. Wainwright, "Our Naval Power," *USNIP* 24 (September 1898), 63-70.
28. Wainwright, 65. Ellicott debunked the notion that the Japanese government had dispatched army veterans to Hawaii as a prelude to occupation, but had reported the rumor about *Naniwa* carrying 15,000 rifles, "Reconnaissance of Oahu."
29. Wainwright, 65; Ellicott, "Reconnaissance of Oahu."
30. Ellicott, "Under a Gallant Captain at Manila in '98," *USNIP* 69 (January 1943), 33-44.
31. "Memorial on the Defenses of Manila and Subic Bay," George Dewey Papers, LCMD; Ronald H. Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1974), 52-53.
32. Maria Delores Elizalde Perez-Grueso, "Las Relaciones entre España y Japon en la decada 1888-1898," [Relations Between Spain and Japan, 1888-1898] in Florentino Rodao, coord., *España y el Pacífico* [Spain and the Pacific] (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional en colaboración con la Asociación Española de Estudios del Pacífico, 1989); Carlos Inigo, "La Marina del Japon: El Japon con Relacion al S. de sus Iilas" [The Japanese Navy: Japan in Relations with the Islands to its South], *Revista General de Marina*, 43 (September 1898); Belén Pozuelo Caeiro Mascaraque y Luis, "Las relaciones hispano-japonesas en la era del Nuevo Imperialismo (1885-1898)," [Spanish-Japanese Relations in the Age of New Imperialism (1885-1898)], *Revista Española del Pacífico*, 5 (January-December 1995).
33. Warner R. Schilling, "Admirals and Foreign Policy, 1913-1919." Diss. (Ann Arbor MI: UMI, 1974), 7-9, 14.
34. Ellicott's works included "Effect of Gun-Fire, Battle of Manila Bay, May 1, 1898," *USNIP* 25 (June 1899), 323-34; extract of Ellicott Report, Register #908, in "Memorandum of Information", (18 October 1899), file PS, RG38, NARA.
35. Taylor to Ellicott, 15 May 1896, in "Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs," 3: 4063. In another Taylor letter to Ellicott, 3 June 1897 referencing Hawaii, "We [the NWC] turn to you with flattering unanimity as the very man to aid us, and especially the making of war charts. Will you not do this and add one more to the list of the obligations incurred by the college towards you?", in "Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs", 3: 4063. Taylor clearly appreciated Ellicott's analytical skills and later played a role in his orders to conduct a similar mission in the Philippine Islands, Ellicott to Caspar Goodrich, 30 August 1898, Area 10, RG 45, NARA, with Taylor's handwritten annotation "Here is a good man." Taylor to Ellicott, 26 July 1902, House of Representatives, Sixty-Fourth Congress, 3: 4060-61.
36. Ellicott, "The Strategic Features of the Philippine Islands, Hawaii and Guam" and "Sea Power of Japan," RG8, NHCNWC; Daniel J. Costello, "Planning for War: A History of the General Board of the Navy." Diss. (Medford MA: Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts U, 1968), 156; Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 72-3. A fuller discussion of the creation and operations of the General Board, an *ad hoc* group, is John T. Kuehn, *Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet that Defeated the Japanese Navy* (NIP, 2008) and Kuehn, *America's First General Staff: A Short History of the Rise and Fall of the General Board of the U.S. Navy, 1900-1950* (NI, 2017). Also see Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1922* (NIP, 1991).
37. Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport RI: NWC P, 1977), 112; Dorwart, *Office of Naval Intelligence*, 67, 74.
38. Ellicott, "Some Strategic Features of the China Coast,"

- “Proceedings and Hearings of the General Board,” 17 April, 21 May, 6 June, 26, 27 June, 29 June 1900, RG80, NARA; Ellicott, “Sea Power of Germany,” in Costello, “Planning for War,” 133.
39. 17 April, 21 May, 6 June 1900, “Proceedings and Hearings of the General Board,” M1493, NARA. The two studies were combined later with one of Guam, “The Strategic Features of the Philippine Islands, Hawaii and Guam.”
40. William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909* 1958 (New York: Greenwood P., 1969), 19; Captain Sydney A. Staunton, “Plan for the Occupation and use of San Mun Bay, China as a temporary advanced bay. Oct. 1905,” UNOpP #54, 1905, RG8, NHCNWC.
41. Ellicott, “Strategic Features.”
42. Schilling noted that such was a recurring strategic challenge, “Admirals and Foreign Policy, 1913-1919,” 30.
43. Ellicott, “Effect of Gun-Fire”; Ellicott, “The Defenses of Manila Bay,” *USNIP* 26 (March 1900), 279-287; Ellicott, “The Naval Battle of Manila,” *USNIP* 26 (September 1900), 489-514. Ellicott's work was published in “Effect of the Gunfire of the United States Vessels in the Battle of Manila Bay (May 1, 1898),” *ONI War Notes Nr. V: Information from Abroad* Senate Document #388, 56th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: GPO, 1899). The last was written during a survey of Ilo-Ilo in January 1899.
44. Ellicott, “The Strategic Features.”
45. Extract of Ellicott intelligence report, “Memorandum of Information for the Chief of Bureau of Navigation,” 18 October 1899, PS, RG38, NARA.
46. Ellicott, “Sea Power of Japan;” Endorsement to Secretary of Navy letter, 12 May 1900, General Board Letterpress, VI, RG80, NARA.
47. Josefa Saniel, *Japan and the Philippines, 1868-1898* (Quezon City: U of Philippines P, 1969), 179-180, 214. Sato Tetsutaro, *Teikoku kokubo shi ron* [On the History of Imperial Defense]. 1908, 1910 (Tokyo: Hara shobo, 1979), 2: 300-2. Sato completed *Teikoku kokubo shi ron* in April 1908 at which time the manuscript went to the publisher, and before a final decision was made by the American leadership to give up on the idea of building a major naval base in the Philippines, opting for Pearl Harbor as the future location of such a facility. Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President of the United States, January 31, 1900*, (GPO, 1900), 1: 127. The siege and capture of Port Arthur shocked many in the U.S. Navy, but the American decision to build such a base elsewhere was not made until mid-1908, at which point Sato's work had been completed. At that time the U.S. Navy abandoned its efforts to build a naval base in the Philippines and secured monies from Congress to build up Pearl Harbor, see Braisted, *U.S. Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909*, 216-223. In any case, Japanese observers continued to worry about an advanced base in the Philippines, Kawashima Sejiro, *Kokubo kaigun ron* [On Imperial Naval Defense] (Tokyo: Susanbo, 1911), 414-425; Tsunoda Jun, *Manshu mondai to kokubo hoshin: Meiji koki ni okeru kokubo kankyo no hendo*. [The Manchurian Problem and National Defense Policy: Changes in National Defense during the Meiji Era] (Tokyo: Hara shobo, 1967), 638-639; Japan, *Boeicho boei kenkyujo senshishitsu. Senshi soshu, dai hon'ei kaigunbu: rengo kantai, ichi, kaisen made* [Imperial Headquarters, Navy Department: The Combined Fleet, 1, up to the war] (Tokyo: Asagumo shinbunsha, 1971): 1: 179.
48. Gordon C. O'Gara, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of the Modern Navy* (Princeton NJ: PUP, 1943), 28-33.
49. Schilling, “Admirals and Foreign Policy, 31.