A STUDY OF THE SINO - JAPANESE WAR (1894 - 1895)

China and Japan are neighbours separating only by a narrow stretch of sea. Culturally, Japan had been greatly influenced by the Chinese culture for many centuries. However, during the recent years before the Second World War, there have been two major wars fought between them. The first of these was the so-called 'War of Chia-Wu' (甲午战争) which took place in 1894. That war had had particularly significant influence on the recent history of China. The war may be traced to various origins but the most fundamental one of them was Japan's expansion policy on the mainland China after the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan was rapidly changed to be a modern industrialised country, and the Japanese began to embark on the so-called 'Continental Development Policy' which means an invasion of Korea and China. The first Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 was thus the first step for the realization of such an objective.

The first Sino-Japanese war exhibited the weakness of China. The Chinese officials were so incompetent and corrupt that they shunned their responsibilities. When their nation needed them most, the military officers were mostly inefficient and showed cowardice in either disobeying orders or deceiving their superiors with false informations. In contrast, the Japanese commanders and soldiers were brave and their morale was high. Furthermore, the weapons used by the Japanese were also superior than that of China's. In such a situation, the Chinese were doomed to defeat and humiliation.

The war lasted for nine months from July 1894 to March 1895. The first Naval battle took place on 25th July 1894 and the first land fighting broke out on 28th July 1894. In the subsequent battles both on land and on seas, the Chinese lost badly and were forced to seek peace with the Japanese.

The purpose for writing this academic exercise is to analyse those various major battles during the war so as to identify the factors which contribute to the Chinese defeat.
There are six chapters in this work. Chapter I describes the historical trend of Japan's expansion and its background. Chapter II discusses the conflict between China and Japan in Korea prior to 1894 and the political and military clashes in 1882 and 1884 which served important preludes to the Japanese invasion. Chapter III deals with the events which led immediately to the outbreak of the war. Chapter IV analyses the military measures made by both sides, the proceeding of land battles in Cheng-Huan (成欢) and Pyong Yang (平壤), as well as the Naval battles on Feng Tan (丰岛), the Yellow Sea (黄海), the Port Arthur (旅顺) and Wei-Hai-Wei (威海衛). Chapter V concerns the signing of the Shimonoseki Treaty and its direct impacts. The last Chapter devotes itself to an evaluation of the consequences of the war on both sides in the various aspects.

Finally, the author is most grateful to her supervisor, Dr. Lee En-Han, for his guidance and encouragement. Without his painstaking help, this work might possibly not be completed.