

Japanese Yangtze Campaign

by Ah Xiang

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On May 19th, Japan contemplated upon attacking Wuhan right after taking over Xuzhou. On May 29th, Japan’s General Headquarters devised a plan to sack Hankow and Canton by the autumn for defeating China; marginalizing the Chinese government into a regional power, and ending the ‘China Incident’ after purported examination of the historical conquests of China by the barbarians. Continuous intelligence feeds about Japanese non-stop push against Wuhan compelled Chiang Kai-shek into adopting a decision to break the Yellow River dike at a secret Wuhan supreme military meeting on June 1st.¹ The Yellow River breach on June 9th and 12th changed Japanese plans of attacking the Yellow River city of Zhengzhou from north and east with Japan’s North China Army and attacking towards Wuhan via routes of Huai River and Yangtze River with Japan’s Central China Army.

Japanese Navy, on May 29th, was ordered to attack Anqing, Madang, Hukou and Jiujiang as a forward base for the ultimate campaign against Wuhan. On June 1st, Hata Shunroku, in coordination with navy, ordered Japanese 6th *Shidan* on an attack at the northwestern side of the Yangtze River, from Hefei to Shucheng-Tongcheng-Qianshan-Taihuh-Susong-Huangmei. Hata Shitai, a Taiwan-based *Ryodan*, was to attack along the Yangtze River together with Navy forces and marines, including 11th Navy Battle Group, Yokosuka 4th Special Naval Landing Force, Yokosuka 5th Special Naval Landing Force and Second United Air Combat Corps.² On the land route, Japan’s Third Flight Corps was assigned to 6th *Shidan*.

On June 2nd, 11th *Ryodan* of 6th *Shidan*, augmented by 2nd independent mountain gun *Rentai* and 6th Cavalry *Rentai*, departed Hefei. Xu Yuanquan’s 26th Group Army, with 10th Corps and Luo Shujia’s 199th Division, pulled back to Lu’an from west of Hefei. 6th *Shidan* then pressed on towards Shucheng and Tongcheng. On June 8th, Japanese drove off two Chinese constabulary regiments and a brigade under Tong Yi’s 145th Division of 21st Corps and took over Shucheng.

Japanese Hata Shitai, after conversion with navy forces at Wuhu, attacked along the Yangtze on June 10th. Hada *Shitai*, landed on the northern bank, drove off a Chinese constabulary regiment and a regiment under Liu Zhaoli’s 146th Division of 21st Corps, and took over airport near Anqing by night. On the southern bank, Yokosuka special naval

¹ Guo Rugui p 2:782

² ??? 8th Battalion (Yokosuka 1st SNLF, 11th Sentai)

landing force took over Shangyaogou Battery after a short duration fight. Japanese took over the city on 13th.

Japanese 11th *Ryodan* attacked towards Qianshan on June 14th. On 16th, Japanese engaged with Yang Hanzhong's 134th Division of 20th Corps about twenty five kilometers to the northeast of Qianshan. With two infantry *Rentai*, one cavalry *Rentai* and one independent mountain gun *Rentai*, Japanese mounted a three route attack at Qianshan along Tanyuanzhen-Qianshan Highway and took over Qianshan by the morning of 17th. On 18th, after one day's fighting, Japanese forcefully crossed Qianshui River.

The Wuhan Campaign called for the organization of Eleventh Army and Second Army, while the Canton incursion was assigned to Twenty-first Army. Eleventh Army, originally allocated 6th *Shidan*, 101st *Shidan*, 106th *Shidan*, Hata *Shitai*, 6th Field Heavy Artillery *Ryodan* and directly-subordinate field heavy artillery *Rentai* and independent mountain gun *Rentai*, was later reinforced by 27th *Shidan* and 9th *Shidan*. Second Army, originally allocated 10th *Shidan*, 13th *Shidan*, 16th *Shidan*, 5th Field Heavy Artillery *Ryodan* and directly-subordinate independent mountain gun *Rentai*, was later reinforced by 3rd *Shidan*. Altogether, 14 Japanese *Shidan* were assigned to Wuhan Campaign, with 9 *Shidan* or about 250,000 troops participating in direct battles.

To coordination the operations by infantry, navy and forts, Liu Xing was conferred the post of commander-in-chief for the Yangtze Defense Army in late June, with direct control over Li Yunheng's 16th Corps, Wang Dongyuan's 34th Corps-conglomerate, and Heh Ping's 16th Division of 18th Corps. To strengthen the Yangtze defense, Xue Yue's army group moved across the Yangtze to northern Jiangxi Province; Huo Kuizhang's 54th Corps relocated to defend Tianjiazhen and Ruichang in collaboration with Li Yannian's 2nd Corps while Huang Guoliang's 92nd Division (37th Corps) filled in at Wuhan; Wan Yaohuang and Zhou Yan were assigned the task of defending two banks [[around Huang'e]], respectively, with Gan Lichu's 6th Corps (93 Division) and Dong Zhao's 16th Corps (28th Division) on northern bank and Zhou Yan's 75th Corps (6th Division and 18th Division) on southern bank.

Along the Yangtze, military committee had set up four citadels at Madang, Hukou, Tianjiazhen and Guang'e with guns and cannons dismantled from warships either sunken for lower Yangtze blockade or damaged by Japanese firepower: twelve 12-cm guns installed at Madan, six 10.5-cm guns at Hukou, sixteen 10.5-cm guns at Tianjiazhen, and ten 7.5-cm guns at Huang'e. Shen Honglie's Third Fleet sunken at coastal Qingdao and its marines in guerrilla warfare on Shandong peninsula, remnants were organized into Xie Gangzhe's garrison command of Yangtze forts. At Madang, a blockade line was set up, around which over one thousand mines were laid.

Hata *Shitai* and Japanese navy, after taking over Anqing, received the order to attack Madang on June 16th. On 22nd, Hata *Shitai* disembarked ships for southern Yangtze bank at Maolinzhou after several ships were either sunken by mines or Chinese artilleries from the banks. 53rd Division was in disarray as a result of officers attending the graduation ceremony of 16th Corps Chief Li Yunheng's resistance-war university, for which Li Yunheng was demoted by the military commission after the battle. On 24th, Hata *Shitai* defeated troops from Chinese 53rd Division and took over Huangshan-Xiangshan mountaintops and Xiangkou beachhead. On 26th, Japanese made a landing at Niangniangmiao and Niushouji under the cover of tear gas attacks, and inflicted heavy casualties on Chinese beachhead defenders. One brigade of 167th Division, whose heavy equipment was declared scraps by German advisers, took a circumvential mountain road en route of relief, for which divisional chief Xue Weiyong was later executed by court martial. Madang Fort was abandoned to Japanese after a loss of most of five battalion equivalent defending troops.

Japanese, to further advance upstream, moved up part of 106th *Shidan* to strengthen Hata *Shitai's* ranks; additionally, Japanese navy sent over 21st minesweeper unit, 2nd gunboat unit, 15th navy air combat group, 3rd navy air attack group to reinforce 11th Navy Battle Group. On June 29th, Japanese blasted apart the sunken obstacles at Madang and pushed against Pengze which was defended by remnant 56th Division and 167th Division. Five Japanese ships intruded into Fanghu Lake to surround Pengze from the southwest; Hata *Shitai* took over Pengze. On 3rd, 111th *Ryodan* of 106th *Shidan*, following the footsteps of Hata *Shitai*, joined the fight by landing at Madang under minesweepers' escort.

Hata *Shitai*, separately, circumvented upstream towards Hukou by ships, took over Mt Longtanshan from troops of Chinese 26th Division, and pressed to within three kilometers of Hukou by night. At Hukou, the entry to Poyang Lake, 26th Division Chief Liu Yuqing, lacking heavy machineguns and possessing only half of allotted light machineguns, was ordered to defend the city to the last. The newly-recruited 26th Division, from between Jiujiang and Hukou, was ferrying to Hukou halfway when Japanese attacked the fort. On July 4th, Hata *Shitai*, under the cover of planes and warships, engaged in wrestling fighting with 26th Division. Under Japanese gas attacks, Chinese defenders, lacking protection gear as well as chemical war experience, incurred heavy casualties. Remnants of 26th Division, pressed to the battery and defense works outside of Hukou, persisted till 8 pm.³

Similar to Nanking defense, China's military council had no prior plan for defending the city of Jiujiang. In preparation for possible Japanese landing at either Gutang or Xingzi for attacking Nanchang to the south or Jiujiang to the west, the Ninth War Zone had allocated Xue Yue's 1st Army Group and Zhang Fakui's 2nd Army Group along the Yangtze and Poyang Lake accordingly. Around Jiujiang, highways leading to Xingzi, Ruichang, as well as

³ Guo p 2:801 Citing Liu Xing's report on the loss of Madang and Hukou. No preparations for Japanese gas attacks.

highways between from Ruichang to De'an and Yangxin, Yongxiu-Ruoxi Highway, and northern segment of Nanchang-Jiujiang Railway, were sabotaged before troops were ordered to the Yangtze bank and Poyang lake front.

On July 19th, Eleventh Army issued the orders to attack Jiujiang, De'an and Ruichang. Japanese 101st *Shidan* pushed up to Hukou for relieving 101st *Shidan* to the order of battle, which included Hata Shitai and the Navy units. On the night of July 23rd, Hata Shitai and 11th Navy Battle Group crossed Poyang Lake to land at Gutang from Xieshan. Jiang Dangu's Preparatory 11th Division did not detect Japanese action till after beachhead landing. By dawn, Hata Shitai completed landing under the cover of planes and warships, wiping out a beachhead battalion led by Zhang Wenmei.

Hata Shitai, after breaching the second line defense of Preparatory 11th Division by 10 am, continued the left and right flank maneuvers, with the left prong fighting Liang Huasheng's 190th Division under Wang Jingjiu's 25th Corps at Mt Keshan and moving on to take over Zhuqiaopu and Tadingshan after repelling the relief regiment from Whang Zhibin's 15th Division of 8th Corps. To fortify Jiujiang, Zhang Yanchuan's Preparatory 9th Division of 64th Corps was sent into the city, and Kong Kequan's 187th Division, also part of Li Hanhun's 64th Corps, was ordered to the defense of the Yangtze bank to the west of Jiujiang. 8th Corps fought against Japanese in Shangxiashi and Yaqueshan area. Whang Zhibin's 15th Division, having incurred heavy casualties, pulled back as reserves, while Zhao Xitian's 3rd Division of 8th Corps and 155th Division of 64th Corps moved to Mt Yaqueshan and hills around Caijialong. On the night, Japanese Hata Shitai and 106th *Shidan* attacked Jiujiang from east and south, while Japanese Navy attacked along the Yangtze, with marine units landing to the west of Jiujiang.

On July 25th, Japanese took over heights to the southwest of Mt Yaqueshan. Zhao Xitian's 3rd Division of 8th Corps and 155th Division of 64th Corps continued to hold Yaqueshan and Caijialong, respectively. Around 7 am, twenty Japanese warships and 50-60 planes blasted at Jiujiang and surrounding area. At 10 am, part of Japanese special landing force, upon landing to the east of Jiujiang, attacked Shazitan to pose threat at 3rd Division at Mt Yaqueshan. At 2 pm, Japanese also landing at northern Yangtze bank and took over Xiaochikou from Li Jintian's 119th Division of 68th Corps and Preparatory 9th Division.

While Japanese marines pushed to Balipo, northeastern outskirts of Jiujiang, to engage with remnant 15th Division, Hata Shitai and 106th *Shidan* simultaneously attacked Miaozhipu which was to the south of Jiujiang outskirts. At 10:10 pm, Zhang Fakui issued the order to abandon Jiujiang. At 7 am, on 26th, Japanese took over Jiujiang.