

# TAIERZHUANG CAMPAIGN

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Seya *Shitai*, after Lincheng and Tengxian, continued to push south. 1st *Daitai* of 63rd *Rentai* [lacking one *Chutai*] attacked towards Hanzhuang and 2nd *Daitai* against Yixian. On March 19th, at Hanzhuang and Yixian, 1st *Daitai* and 2nd *Daitai* beat off 6th Brigade of 89th Division and 23rd Regiment of 4th Division under Wang Zhonglian's 85th Corps. On 20th, Seya *Shitai* was ordered to edge towards the east for lending support to Sakamoto *Shitai*, which was battling against Linyi.

Fighting continued throughout the first part of the month of March at Linyi. International observers and newspaper reporters, who stationed in Xuzhou's Fifth War Zone, hailed the perseverance of Chinese soldiers at Linyi. On March 9th, Sakamoto *Shitai*, after an addition of an armored *Chutai*, resumed attacks at Pang Bingxun's 40th Corps. Japanese took over Baita, Shaling and Taiping along the Tangdou-Linyi Highway on the eastern bank of the Yihe River. Pang Bingxun's troops pulled back to the defense of Linyi and the area to the east of Yihe River. Zhang Zizhong's 59th Corps, which was ordered to Lincheng from north of Huai-shui River on Feb 20th, departed Yixian for Linyi and Yihe River. On March 12th, Zhang Zizhong and Xu Zuyi, after one day's nonstop march, arrived at the western bank of the Yihe River where they devised a plan to have 113rd Brigade and 112th Brigade of 38th Division and 26th Brigade of 180th Division cross the Yihe River to intercept Japanese at Shaling and encircle Japanese troops that were attacking Linyi.

On the morning of 14th, troops from 59th Corps forcefully crossed the river at multiple locations, while troops from 39th Division [40th Corps] counterattacked Japanese from north and east of Linyi as well, with 117th Brigade of 39th Division pushing to Wangzhuang and Shazhuang villages on the Linyi-Banquanzhen Highway. Along the Yihe River, 180th Division took over Tingzidou from Japanese at 4 pm and then pressed on miscellaneous Taiping villages the next day; 38th Division failed to sack Shaling after two day's fighting. At dawn of 16th, Japanese counterattacked from Shaling and crossed the Yihe River to attack the backup 111th Brigade of 38th Division at Yadou and Liujiahuu. Zhang Zizhong, having dispatched cavalry across the river to distract Japanese at Tangdouzhen, recalled two brigades of 38th Division back to Liujiahuu which was lost and recovered four times. By the morning of 17th, Zhang Zizhong's 59th Corps incurred a casualty of 6000. After dusk, 59th Corps launched a lane-to-lane general attack, defeated Japanese on the west bank of the river, and learnt from Japanese prisoner that Japanese 5th

*Shidan* had incurred a loss of 3000 at the battles on two banks of the Yihe River, with half of the Japanese on the west bank destroyed, including 11th *Rentai* commander.<sup>1</sup>

Along the Tientsin-Pukou Railway, Seya *Shitai* made a decision on March 22nd to dispatch 10th *Rentai*, the following day, to the aid of *Sakamoto Shitai*. 2nd *Daitai* of 63rd *Rentai*, termed Taierzhuang Contingent, was ordered to observe the previous order of attacking Taierzhuang and the Canal from Yixian while 1st *Daitai* was to continue the garrison of Hanzhuang on the eastern bank of Weishanhu Lake and northern bank of the Canal.

Having learnt of Chinese battle plan from a prisoner of war, Seya cut the relief force for *Sakamoto Shitai* to only one *Chutai* of 10th *Rentai*, termed Yizhou [Linyi] *Shitai*, and adjusted the troop dispositions from Hanzhuang to Yixian. On 24th, Japanese Yizhou [Linyi] *Shitai* moved eastward to Zaozhuang, while Japanese Taierzhuang Contingent, departing Beiluo, took over Nanluo around noon, reached Taierzhuang at dusk, and temporarily breached the town after blasting apart the northeastern wall. Driven out after lane-by-lane fighting, Japanese set up defense works in northern outskirts at night.

On 25th, at dawn, 75th Brigade from 25th Division of 52nd Corps, upon entry into Guoliji, encountered the herald Japanese Yizhou [Linyi] *Shitai* near a blockhouse. After calling over cannons, 25th Division destroyed most of the Japanese herald *Chutai*, and furthermore, repelled a Japanese relief force from Zaozhuang. Separately, 2nd Division of 52nd Corps and one brigade from 85th Corps mounted an unsuccessful attack at Zaozhuang from Bogeji direction. Seya *Shitai*, preoccupied with fighting Chinese 52nd Corps and 85th Corps, merely dispatched two infantry *Chutai* equivalent troops to the aid of the Taierzhuang Contingent. Counterattacked by Chinese 31st Division, Taierzhuang Contingent reported casualties to Seya and requested for additional reinforcement on the morning of 26th. Seya then sent along the 3rd *Daitai* of 63rd *Rentai* as well as 63rd *Rentai* headquarters troops towards Taierzhuang.

In Linyi area, on 25th, 39th Division retreated to Jiuqudian after Japanese breached positions at Taoyuan and Sanguanmiao. At night, Zhang Zizhong sent three regiments from 38th Division across the Yihe River for the recovery of Taoyuan. Having returned to Linyi on 24th, 59th Corps engaged in seesaw battles with *Sakamoto Shitai* for days, with battles raging on two banks of the river for a whole day before pulling back across the river by dusk of 26th. After tactician Xu Zuyi reported to the Fifth War Zone that Pang Bingxun's troops had lost fighting strength and Zhang Zizhong's army was reduced by half of the ranks, Li Zongren dispatched the relief army of Wang Zhaozhi's 333rd brigade of 57th Corps and a cavalry regiment from 13th Corps of 20th Corps-conglomerate. On the night of 28th, Zhang Zizhong reported that he had lost 2000 soldiers within two days, with a total casualty of 10,000 during the two Linyi battles. On 29th, 333rd brigade and

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<sup>1</sup> Guo Rugui p 1:690

cavalry regiment arrived in Linyi. Meanwhile, Itagaki Seishiro, leaving two *Daitai* at Linyi, rerouted majority of Sakamoto *Shitai* to the relief of Seya *Shitai* in Taierzhuang area on the night of 29th. On 30th, Chinese forces launched an attack at remnant Japanese, with 333rd brigade and cavalry regiment chasing towards Yitangji and Aishan, to the northwest of Linyi.

On March 27th, Japanese Taierzhuang Contingent, encouraged by the reinforcement of 3rd *Daitai* of 63rd *Rentai* towards Taierzhuang, launched a second incursion through the northeastern wall. 31st Division, having incurred a casualty of 2800 personnel in four days, failed to drive out Japanese who intruded into Damiao Monastery inside of Taierzhuang. Chi Fengcheng shrank his division to three regiments or seven battalions. Beginning from 27th, seesaw warfare continued inside of the city. In the surrounding areas, Chinese forces dug in. To the southeast of Taierzhuang, 27th Division was at Huanglinzhuang area; and to the west, 30th Division and 44th Independent Brigade were at Dunzhuangzha and Wanlizha area. To lend support to 31st Division, troops outside of Taierzhuang countercharged at the main body of Japanese infantry in Liujiahu and Sanlizhuang area.

On March 28th, Japanese 63rd *Rentai* commander amassed one field gun *Daitai*, two heavy artillery *Daitai*, one 155mm howitzer *Shyoutai* and dozens of armored vehicles for a fresh attack at Taierzhuang, and took over northwestern corner. Chinese 27th Division, 30th Division and 44th Independent Brigade counterattacked Japanese from east and west of Taierzhuang. Chinese airforce flew over Taierzhuang to strengthen troops' morale. Inside of Taierzhuang, Japanese 2nd *Daitai* expanded beyond Damiao Monastery. 31st Division mobilized logistics staff for lane-to-lane and wall-to-wall battles against Japanese.

In accordance with Li Zongren's plan, Seya *Shitai* and armored units from Japanese 10th *Shidan* were let into the trap at Taierzhuang. At dawn, on 30th, Seya personally led 10th *Rentai* and armored units on the relief to Taierzhuang. At 9 pm, Seya reinforcement arrived at Fankoucun, about 6 kilometers to the northwest of Taierzhuang, and the east side of Mt Zhangshan, to the north of Taierzhuang. In Taierzhuang, Japanese penetrated the town to reach the southern wall which bordered the Canal. Sun Lianzhong promptly sent in 176th Regiment of 30th Division to western Taierzhuang to curb the Japanese spread.<sup>2</sup>

On March 31st, Japanese further allocated 1st *Daitai* of 39th *Rentai*, from Jining city, to 10th *Rentai*. Guan Linzheng's 52nd Corps, having moved to Ganlu the previous night, took over Lanchengdian and Sanfolou and began to attack Japanese to the east of Mt Zhangshan. Around noon, Japanese Sakamoto *Shitai* reached the east of Xiangcheng where they engaged with cavalry regiment of 20th Corps-conglomerate. 89th Division of Wang Zhonglian's 85th Corps, en route of relief, was beat back by Japanese at Taijiazhuang. 4th

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<sup>2</sup> In late March, Wu Dehou's 3rd battalion [under 176th regiment of 88th brigade of 30th division] was dispatched to Tai-er-zhuang for assisting 31st Division in driving out Japanese who intruded into the city from northwest corner. Wu Dehou, under the order of regiment chief Yuan Youde, led his battalion into the city from the west gate, and fought Japanese lane by lane, house by house, and wall by wall, with blades and grenades.

Division was subsequently sent to Xiangcheng and Aiqu direction. Tang Enbo ceased attacks at Mt Zhangshan and withdrew troops towards Lufang and subsequently Lanling, to the east of Hongshanzhen.

At Taierzhuang, Sun Lianzhong organized a 250 men dare-to-die column among 27th Division for a nighttime incursion into the town from northeastern corner. Additionally, 30th Division was ordered to counterattack Japanese at Sanlizhuang and cannons units were ordered to blast at Japanese at Liujiahu as a distraction. Around midnight, dare-to-die column, followed by 2nd battalion of 157th Regiment, intruded into the town, took over northeastern corner and the southeastern gate, and fought street battles with Japanese. Meanwhile, 3rd battalion from 175th Regiment of 30th Division drove off Japanese at northwestern corner after a wrestling fight.

On April 1st, Sakamoto *Shitai* pushed to Lanling where they were impeded by 52nd Corps, and by night, continued the southern push towards Chahezhen after leaving behind an infantry Chutai and a cavalry unit to entangle Chinese troops. Li Zongren immediately sent Huang Guanghua's 139th Division of 75th Corps to Chahezhen, to be subordinate to Tang Enbo's command center at Sihuzhen. On April 2nd, Japanese 10th Rentai pushed to east of Taierzhuang from east of Mt Zhangshan, and pushed 27th Division to Huoshibu line from Taogouqiao after one day's fighting. At Chenwafang and Gengzhuang area, Sakamoto *Shitai* had a conversion with 10th *Rentai*; however, at Liuzhuang, to the north of Lanlingzhen, 25th Division of 52nd Corps destroyed part of the rearguard unit of Sakamoto *Shitai*.

At 8 pm, on April 2nd, Li Zongren issued the order to launch a general attack the following day for destroying Japanese in the area to the north of Taierzhuang. Li Zongren pointed out that enemy troop numbered no more than five *Rentai* from 5th *Shidan* and 10th *Shidan*, equipped with 50-60 mountain guns, 10 heavy cannons, and dozens of armored vehicles. Additionally, Li Zongren ordered that 20th Corps-conglomerate destroy about 1000 Sakamoto remnants encircled at Qiuhu, to the north of Hongshanzhen; that 110th Division send one brigade across the Canal at Wanlizha to fake an attack at Beiluo; and that frontline commander Cao Fulin of 3rd Group Army direct Li Mingyang's guerrillas and five regiments of Zhang Cenmin Detachment towards encirclement of Japanese at Lincheng-Zaozhuang.<sup>3</sup>

On April 3rd, Japanese inside of Taierzhuang renewed attacks at southern and western part of the town, and retook southeastern gate. By this time, two thirds of the town was lost to Japanese. Japanese radio claimed they already took Taierzhuang. The southern side, i.e., Nanguan, was still firmly in Sun Lianzhong's hands. Outside of Taierzhuang, Japanese

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<sup>3</sup> Guo Rugui p 1:702-703 Citing archives from aditorial committee for battle history under history and administration bureau of defense department of the National Government, China Second Archive Bureau, Nanking.

10th *Rentai* took over Huanglinzhuang and pressed Chinese 27th Division to Shila and the Canal, further to the south of Taierzhuang; and Sakamoto *Shitai* continued the fighting with 75th Corps at Huoshibu. To the west end of the Canal, 110th Division dispatched martial arts team and red spear society members across the Canal on a night raid into Hanzhuang train station; additionally, commandos from 328th Brigade of 110th Division attacked Zouxian to the north; and to the northeast direction, 52nd Corps, after routing Sakamoto rearguards, moved over to Dilou and Yangge, to the southwest of Ganlu.

Inside of Taierzhuang, 31st Division Chief Chi Fengcheng, with 70% of his troops lost, requested with Sun Lianzhong for retreating to the south of the Canal. Li Zongren flatly denied the request, stating that he would personally come to Taierzhuang by the next morning. Further, Li Zongren ordered that Sun Lianzhong must prepare an overnight counter-charge for disrupting a possible Japanese planned attack in the morning. Sun Lianzhong organized hundreds of logistics soldiers, cooks, and stretchers, and mounted a night-time attack with blades after Japanese stopped advance at dusk. Three fourths of the city was retaken from Japanese overnight. Japanese retreated to north Gate.

On April 5th, Chiang Kai-shek ordered Tang Enbo to exert efforts to routing the Japanese in two days. Tang Enbo ordered 75th Corps to solidify Chahe and attack towards Taierzhuang, 89th Division of 85th Corps to continue southwestward attack at Liujiahu and Yanzijing, and 52nd Corps to solidify Hongshanzhen, Lanling and Xiangcheng as well as attack Nigou and Beiluo via Ganlu and Yaolixu. First War Zone commander Cheng Qian wired over an award of 100,000 CNC. With Tang Enbo's army closing in, Li Zongren ordered a general attack at the encircled enemy.<sup>4</sup> At night, 110th Division crossed the Canal at Dengshengzhuang to attack Mt Zhangshan. Sakamoto *Shitai*, which had to seek ammunition from Seya *Shitai* after cutoff of supply line, notified Seya *Shitai* of a plan to return to Linyi Campaign the next day.

On April 6th, at dawn, 110th Division pressed on to Nigou and west of Mt Zhangshan, and 52nd Corps came to within 7 kilometers of Yanglou. In the afternoon, Seya *Shitai*, against 10th *Shidan* commander's will, made arrangement for a general retreat from Taierzhuang, with one *Daitai* each from 10th *Rentai* and 63rd *Rentai* to occupy Mt Zhangshan for covering the retreat and the rest of troops disengage with Chinese army by 8 pm. Japanese, in a hurry, burnt the supplies, ammunition and corpses, and sabotaged artilleries and tanks. Sakamoto *Shitai*, hearing of Seya *Shitai*'s move, quickened retreat as well, and unable to go the northwest route, fled northwestward to converge with 10th *Shidan*. Inside of Taierzhuang, 2nd *Daitai* of 63rd *Rentai*, failing to dislodge from street battles with Chi

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<sup>4</sup> Li Zongren estimated Japanese casualty to be around 20000. Isogai Rensuke fled with about 10000 Japanese to nearby Yixian county and dared not come out of citywall again.

Fengcheng's troops, incurred heavy casualties during the flee, with stranded troops destroyed by 4 am of April 7th.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Guo Rugui p 1:706-707. **At the Battle of Taierzhuang, KMT destroyed one Japanese plane, 38 (?) armored vehicles and 90 trucks, and captured 10 cannons and 550 horses.** Xie Hegeng memoirs stated that 20000 Japanese were destroyed from April 3rd to 6th alone. Reporters, both Chinese and international, swarmed over to Taierzhang and Xuzhou.