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GROUP RESEARCH STUDY

Operations of the Japanese 3d Division at Liaoyang.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director Second Year Class, The
Command and General Staff School,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

SUBJECT: Operations of the Japanese 3d Div-
ision at Liaoyang.

I. PAPERS ACCOMPANYING:

1. A Bibliography for this study.
2. Map, the battlefield of Liaoyang for the
operations of the Japanese 3d Division.
3. Map, operations of September 1-3, 1904.

II. THE STUDY PRESENTED. -- Operations of the
Japanese 3d Division at Liaoyang.

III. HISTORICAL FACTS RELATING TO THE SUBJECT.--

Organization

The Japanese 3d Division, a part of the Second
Army, consisted of the 6th and 33d Infantry, organized
as the 5th Brigade, and the 18th and 34th Infantry,
organized as the 17th Brigade. The division also
included the 3d Cavalry and the 3d Field Artillery, of
36 guns. It was commanded by Lieutenant General Baron
Oshima I. (1).

Plans and Operations

The division reached Scha-ho village on 28 August,
and at 6:00 A.M. the following day sent forward two
infantry battalions and a battery of artillery to rec-
onnoiter on Schou-schan-pu. Upon reaching Tu-tai-tsy
this detachment was fired on by the Russians, and replied

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(1) Brit, 253; Germ, Append.

with a few shots. After ascertaining that the enemy was in possession of, and had constructed strong defensive works on, the heights from Sin-li-tun to Hill 99, the detachment withdrew. (2).

On the night 29-30 the Second Army issued orders for the attack. These orders, while quoted verbatim by several authorities (3), differ slightly in phraseology. All, however, are similar in meaning. Those portions of the order as relate to the 3d Division, as quoted in the German account (4) are as follow:

"The 3d Division will cross the Scha-ho at 5:00 A.M. (30 August), advancing between the road: Ta-yir-Chei-niu-tschuan and the railway against the heights southwest of Sin-li-tun. The 13th Field Artillery Regiment will be attached to it."

The attack of the 3d Division, frontally against the heights, was to be made in conjunction with the 6th Division of the Second Army on its left, and the 5th Division of the Fourth Army on its right (5).

In accordance with this directive the 3d Division issued the following order(6):

"1. The enemy is still holding his positions south of Shoushanpu and Hsinlitin (Sin-li-tun). The advance guard of our cavalry brigade is expected to reach the vicinity of Wangerhtun to-day. The army is to advance to-day to the line of Shouschanpu-Fangchiatun, with a view to attacking the enemy. The Sixth Division is to

(2) Kuhn, 175; Brit, 231; Germ, 14.

(3) Off, 86; Brit, 232; Kuhn, 177; Germ, 23-24

(4) Germ, 23-24

(5) Germ, 24

(6) Kuhn 178; GS, 64.

is to leave the line of the Sha (Scha-ho) River at 5:00 A.M. and is expected to reach the line: Linchia-Sanchia-tzu-Kuchiatzu, advancing on the roads west of the Mandarin road and to include the road through the villages of Tayaotun, Tachuntzu, and Likaipu.

"2. The Third Division will advance against the southern and eastern hills of Shoushanpu.

"3. The Thirty-fourth Infantry Regiment, a section of cavalry, the Third Artillery Regiment (less one battalion), and one section of the Third Engineer Battalion will form the advance guard of the Seventeenth Brigade and will march on the southern hill of Shoushanpu via the Mandarin road.

"4. The Sixth Infantry Regiment, one battalion of the Third Artillery Regiment, and one section of the Third Engineer Battalion will form the advance guard of the Fifth Brigade, will leave the line of the Sha River at 5:20 A.M. and march on the hill north of Hsiao-yang-tzu (Siao-yan-sy) via Yangchiaochuang and Heiniuchuang.

"5. The troops forming the main body of the left column will start at 6:00 A.M. following the advance guard closely in the following order: (a) Squadron of cavalry (less two sections); (b) division headquarters; (c) Eighteenth Infantry Regiment; (d) headquarters and one company of the Engineer Battalion; (e) Thirteenth Artillery Regiment; (f) Thirty-third Infantry Regiment; (g) Ambulance Corps.

"6. The division commander will be at the head of

the main body of the left column."

It is apparent, in effect, that this order marched the bulk of the division on the Mandarin road, on the left, with a strong flank guard of one reinforced regiment (the 6th) on the right.

The German account (7) agrees that the division marched in two columns, but here the agreement ends. According to this authority, the advance was made with a reinforced brigade on each road, the right column being composed of the 6th and 33d Infantry (the 5th Brigade) and a battalion of the 3d Field Artillery, and the left column, in order, of the 18th Infantry, the remainder of the 3d Field Artillery, the 13th Field Artillery, and the 34th Infantry. A British authority (8) also places the 34th Infantry at the tail of the west column.

The actual advance, therefore, seems to be at variance with the division order. It is of course entirely possible that this order was amended, verbally or otherwise, prior to the start of the advance. Since the formation as quoted by the last two authorities would be normal, placing units of approximately equal strength on both roads, and maintaining the brigade organization, it is concluded that this was the formation actually used. Subsequent deployment for attack, as described later, also points to the fact that this was the order of march.

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(7) Germ, 25-26
(8) Off, 87

Upon reaching the line: Chei-niu-tschuan - Tu-tai-tsy, the heads of both columns were fired on about 6:30 A.M., and the artillery with the left column went into action at a range of some 4000 yards. Both columns changed direction more to the east to gain contact with the 5th Division, and at about 9:30 A.M. the artillery with the right column likewise went into action in the vicinity of Chei-niu-tschuan. The Japanese, however, lacking at this time accurate information of the Russian dispositions, were unable to gain fire superiority. Their artillery also, because of the long range for the weapons employed, and because of inferior observation, was handicapped (9).

The inclination of the 3d Division to the east caused the leading elements of its right column to become intermingled with the left of the 5th Division (10). The order of battle following this development of the division is indefinite. The German account (10), states that the right column (6th and 33d Infantry) deployed on the east of the 21st Infantry of the 5th Division, with the 18th Infantry on the latter's left and the 34th Infantry in reserve. A British account (11) gives the order from right to left: 18th Infantry, 6th Infantry, 21st Infantry, 33d Infantry, with the 34th Infantry in reserve behind the left. Another British authority (12) agrees with the latter formation. The deployment as described in the German account would seem logical if we accept as correct the former hypothesis that the division advanced with the 5th Brigade on the right. No authority places the 18th Infantry in the right column during the advance, and its deployment on the extreme right

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 (9) Germ. 26; Brit. 237-238
 (10) Off. 87; Brit. 241; Germ 27
 (11) Off. 87
 (12) Brit. 241

of the 3d Division line seems therefore unlikely. However, the order of battle is further complicated in the German account (13) by the statement that on the evening of the 30th "the greater portion of the 5th Infantry Brigade (6th and 18th Regiments) was withdrawn from the center of the fighting line". These two regiments were not brigaded, and their relief is mentioned by no other authority. The conflicting evidence, however, seems to indicate, in view of the assumption made regarding the advance, and in view of the subsequent attack made by the 3d Division on 31 August, in which the order of battle is fairly well authenticated, as will be shown later, that the formation of regiments of the 3d Division during its operations on the 30th, was as given in the German account, i.e., 33d, 6th, 18th, 34th, from right to left, with the 21st Infantry between the two brigades.

Under a heavy fire all units slowly advanced and by noon their skirmish lines had reached the line: Da-wa - northern exits of Siao-yan-sy, with the left of the line extending nearly to the Mandarin road. Here they were held up by Russian artillery and small arms fire (14). In the afternoon the division reserve, 34th Infantry, was committed on the left, but no further progress could be made (15). Although the Second Army reinforced the division with the 4th Garrison Artillery (9 cm mortars) (16) and the 23d Infantry, the latter as a reserve, no more ground was gained until dark (17).

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- (13) Germ. 27)
 - (14) Kuhn 184; Brit. 238-239; Off. 88
 - (15) Off. 88; Germ 27
 - (16) Brit. 238
 - (17) G.S. 66; Germ 27.

In the early morning of 31 August the division continued the attack. The order of battle, again, is indefinite, and is supported by conflicting testimony from apparently reliable authorities. The German account (18) indicates no change from that accepted as probable during the battle of the 30th. This is verified by an American authority (19), who quotes the testimony of one Captain Matsui, "an officer of the 33d Regiment whose company was the first to storm the southwest height of Hsin-li-tun", and of Captain Matsusaka (20), an officer of the 6th Infantry. A British account, on the other hand (21) shows the 18th Infantry as attacking on the extreme right, with the 6th Infantry on its left. This account is supported (22) by the testimony of one Captain "M", 2d Battalion 18th Infantry, who "commanded a company which came on to the hill immediately after the leading one of his own battalion", and by Captain "M", 1st Battalion 6th Infantry (23) who "commanded the company which made the first lodgement on the hill".. A second British account (24) also shows the 18th Infantry on the right.

All accounts agree that the 6th Infantry participated in the attack on the right of the 3d Division, and that the 34th Infantry in that on the left.

It is believed probable, in view of the hypotheses given above in reference to the formation for the advance and attack on the 30th, and in view of the brigade organ-

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 (18) Germ. 43 and Sketch 4
 (19) Kuhn 185
 (20) Kuhn 189
 (21) Brit. 241
 (22) Brit. 261
 (23) Brit. 241
 (24) Off. 105

ization, that the 5th Brigade, including the 6th and 33d Infantry, attacked on the right.

The 5th Brigade, with small elements of the 5th Division, attacked at 4:00 A.M. against the Russian salient between Sin-li-tun and Siao-yan-sy. Two battalions of the 33d Infantry, and one of the 6th, reached positions in close proximity to the Russian works, where they were able to maintain themselves with difficulty, while losing heavily (25). The 1st Battalion, 33d Infantry, supported the attack by fire, the 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry was held in reserve, and the 2d Battalion of this regiment did not participate in the engagement (26).

At the same hour, on the extreme left of the division zone, the 34th Infantry advanced to assault the Russian positions on its front, with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast, right to left, astride the Mandarin road, and the 3d Battalion echeloned to the right rear. Assaulting the Russian position north of Siao-yan-sy, the 1st Battalion, and soon after the 2d Battalion, gained a foothold in the Russian trenches, but after repeated counterattacks were driven to the foot of the hill about 6:00 A.M., where the regiment remained until dark and was then withdrawn in reserve, after suffering severe losses (27).

A simultaneous offensive in the center of the division zone, by the forces at Siao-yan-sy, did not materialize. This portion of the front was held by

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(25) Kuhn 185; Janin 18; Germ 43

(26) Germ. 44

(27) Kuhn 194; Brit. 242, 264-266; Germ 46.

the 2d Battalion 6th Infantry, the 21st Infantry, and the 18th Infantry (28).

A gap of some 1500 yards which had developed the previous day between the left of the 3d Division and the right of the 6th was closed by the commander of the Second Army on the 31st by sending forward two Kobi regiments which deployed in the interval, but made no effort to attack (29).

The attacks at dawn having failed to gain material ground, Oshima ordered fresh assaults on the Russian salient northwest of Siao-yan-sy. These were to be preceded by an artillery preparation, which commenced at 11:30 A.M. 31 August. (30). Led by the 2d and 3d Battalions 33d Infantry, and supported by fire of the 1st Battalion of that regiment, the attack was launched about noon, and by 12:50 P.M. had captured the foremost Russian trenches in front of the Japanese right (31). At about that hour the 1st Battalion 6th Infantry joined the attack and also obtained a foothold in the hostile works. Although the right of the division thus gained some success, and held the captured positions, the remainder of its line made no material progress. Except for artillery and musketry fire fighting came to an end for the day (32).

The 3d Division had now been heavily engaged for two days, and had sustained severe losses, especially in its flank regiments. Nevertheless, plans were made for resumption of the attack during the night 31 August-

(28) Off. 107; Germ 45

(29) Off. 108; Kuhn 195; Germ. 47

(30) Brit. 243

(31) Brit. 244

(32) Germ. 48-49; Germ. 57; Janin 19.

1 September. An artillery preparation started after dark, participated in by all batteries (33). The infantry line of the 3d Division pushed on everywhere, and shortly after midnight occupied the abandoned Russian trenches, after driving out weak covering detachments. No pursuit was attempted (34).

On 1 September, at 9:00 AM, the commander of the Second Army directed that "the main bodies of the Second Army will concentrate in the captured position". Accordingly the 3d Division spent the remainder of that date in the captured position, east of the railway. (35).

At 6:30 P.M. 1 September the army order for the attack of 2 September was issued, which directed the 3d Division to start from Schon-schan-pu at 6:00 A.M. on the latter date, and to advance along the main road on Si-guan (36) or Shui-wan-tzu (37). The two towns are close together and the slight difference is immaterial.

In accordance with this order the division advanced in two columns on the morning of 2 September and occupied with its advanced elements the line: San-li-tschuan - Si-ba-li-tschuan, with its artillery in action northeast of Fan-tsia-tun, engaged with Russian artillery on the line: fort III - fort IV. The day was spent in an indecisive artillery bombardment (38).

During the night 2-3 September the 3d Division, in conjunction with the 5th Division, made attempts to storm the line: Fort III - Fort IV, but without success (39).

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(33) Brit. 245; Kuhn 197
(34) Brit. 246; Germ. 58-59
(35) Brit. 247; Off. 119; Germ. 178-179
(36) Germ. 180
(37) Brit. 248; Off. 159
(38) Brit. 250; Germ. 184-185
(39) Off. 162; Germ. 186-187.

At daybreak 3 September the infantry began a new advance, supported by artillery, which during the forenoon was moved up closer to the Russian positions. at 11:00 A.M. elements of the division attempted to storm Fort IV, but were repulsed (40).

The remaining two days of the battle were without material interest. Following the evacuation of Liaoyang on the night 3-4 September, the 3d Division, on the following morning, with other units of the Second and Fourth Armies, were within the fortifications of the city. Losses during the preceding five days of almost continuous battle, exhaustion of the troops, and the Russian destruction of bridges, prohibited pursuit. The day was spent in reorganization (41). On 5 September the division was still in Liaoyang (42).

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The major operations of the 3d Division at Liaoyang were involved in assaults on the strong Russian positions on the heights southwest of the city. Two days, the 30th and 31st of August, were consumed in a series of heroic and costly, but somewhat uncoordinated, disjointed and poorly supported attacks against this position. Except for the fact that the Russians, influenced by events on other portions of the battlefield, withdrew on the night 31 August-1 September to the defenses of the city, it is by no means certain that the

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(40) Germ. 187-188; G.S. 77
(41) Brit. 252; Germ. 194-195
(42) Off. 174; Germ. 205

position would have fallen under the renewed Japanese attacks on that night. Factors which increased the difficulties of the division in this phase of the battle, other than the inherent strength of the Russian lines and the skill of the defenders, may be summarized as follow:

a. Inadequate reconnaissance.

b. Failure of higher headquarters to designate with exactness the zone of action of the division.

c. Inadequate artillery support.

d. Uncoordinated attacks.

a. Inadequate reconnaissance. It has been seen that some attempt was made, on the morning of 29 August, to reconnoiter the Russian position with two infantry battalions and a battery. This force, however, made no serious attempt to progress past Tut-aitsey, some two miles distant from the hostile line, and while it did ascertain the general location of the Russian defensive works, the reconnaissance, made in insufficient force, supported by insufficient artillery, and pushed with insufficient vigor, gained no adequate knowledge of the Russian dispositions, and particularly of his artillery positions. The lack of this information was to prove a considerable obstacle to rapid progress on the following day.

b. Indefinite zones of action. The zone of action assigned the division for the advance and attack

on 30 August, as defined in the army order, lay between the road+ Tayir-Cheinutschuan, on the east, and the railway on the west. The map indicates that two unimproved roads lead from Tayir to Cheinutschuan, divergent to the extent of nearly two miles midway between the two towns. This factor, in itself, undoubtedly might lead to confusion. But of greater importance was the fact that the eastern boundary was not designated sufficiently far to the north to include the assigned attack objective, but ended at Cheinutschuan, about two miles short thereof. Beyond this point the zones of the 3d and of the 5th Divisions were apparently not delimited, which led, during the attack, to a serious mixing of units of the two divisions, with consequent lack of control and delay in conducting the advance.

c. Inadequate artillery support. The Russian artillery observation was manifestly superior on the entire division front. Furthermore their artillery was emplaced in defensive positions. Its initial superiority over the Japanese was therefore at once apparent. But the Japanese batteries labored under an additional and probably an unnecessary handicap by initially going into action at an extreme range for the materiel employed. We do not read, furthermore, that they were moved forward to more closely support the infantry attacks on either the 30th or the 31st of August. Fire of the light guns was reinforced by

a regiment of light howitzers from the army reserve on the afternoon of the 30th, thus employing three regiments of artillery in the division zone, but without material effect. Although artillery preparations were utilized prior to the attacks at noon of the 31st, and on the night 31 August-1 September, it is not apparent that they were effective in assisting the infantry advance. In addition to the extreme ranges employed, and the lack of effectiveness against prepared field fortifications inherent in light artillery, whether of flat or curved trajectory, the lack of exact knowledge of the Russian dispositions can also probably be charged with the inevitable result that the Russians had easily the better of the artillery argument throughout the engagement.

d. Uncoordinated attacks. Except for the partial loss of direction occasioned largely by the indefinite nature of the east boundary, and the inadequacy of the artillery fire support, the attack of the division on the 30th may be said to have been well conducted and strongly maintained, gaining about two miles across a flat plain in the face of strong enemy fire. One regiment was initially held in reserve, and eventually committed on a flank. However, coordination and cooperation cannot be claimed as virtues of the attacks on the morning or afternoon of the 31st. In the assault at dawn on the 31st, but five battalions of the twelve available in the div-

ision participated in the advance. Three of these were on the extreme right flank and two on the extreme left flank. Both groups advanced simultaneously, but the center, the bulk of the division, apparently made no attack. All attacking units gained temporary footholds in the Russian positions. Those on the left were eventually expelled by counterattacks. It is possible that if all units had simultaneously advanced at this critical hour the center of the entire Russian line might have been penetrated. The attack at noon on this date was marked by even less coordination, and was led by but two, and later by three, battalions. While these gained a further foothold, the division as a whole failed to profit.

It has been pointed out that no effort at pursuit was made by the 3d Division on the night 31 August-1 September, after its occupation of the evacuated Russian Shoushanpu positions. This failure, even if pursuit had been advisable, can hardly be laid at the door of the division, since it was acting as part of a larger force, and the strong fortifications of Liaoyang lay across its path. That no pursuit was contemplated is evinced by the orders of the Second Army, issued at 9:00 A.M. 1 September, ordering the reorganization of the divisions and the consolidation of the captured positions. Whether or not the army erred in this connection is not a consideration of this study.

CONCLUSIONS

Except as noted above the operations of the 3d Division at Liaoyang were conducted with commendable skill and resolution. Its attack once started was pushed relentlessly until checked by orders from higher headquarters. Assaults were made day and night, giving the enemy no opportunity for rest or reorganization. Although made against ^{an}extraordinarily strong natural position, prepared for defense, and without the advantages of dominating artillery observation, its attacks frequently gained ground. Had its advance been prepared by more thorough reconnaissance, had its attacks been supported more closely by a greater preponderance of heavy or medium artillery fire, and had its assaults been more closely coordinated and participated in by the bulk of the division, success would probably been quicker and more complete. Despite the handicaps enumerated it was demonstrated that well led infantry can capture the strongest defensive positions, and the integrity of these positions can only be restored by other well led infantry in counter-attack.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

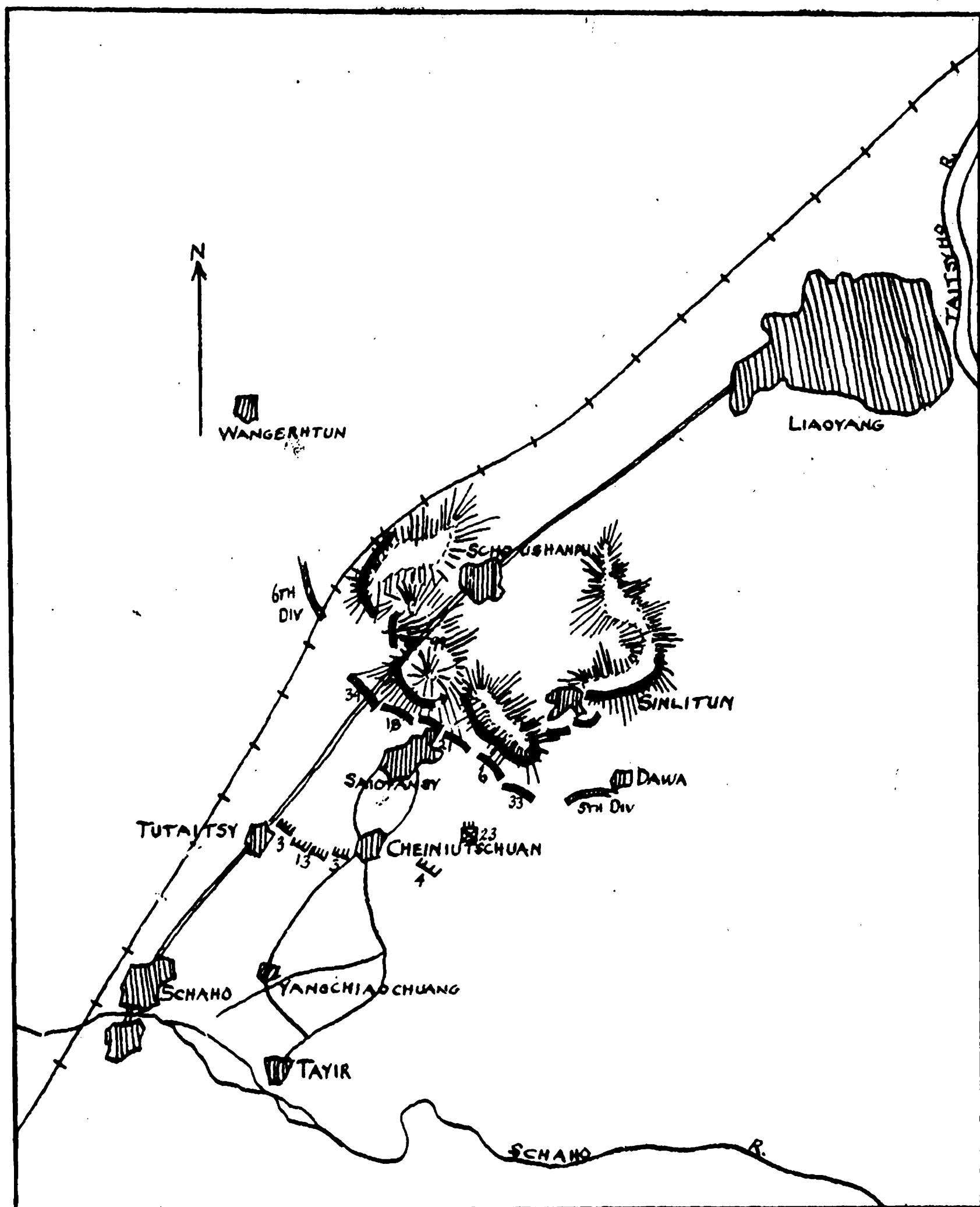
KEY: (Brit, 253) = No. 1 Text (below), page 253.

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All references were found in the Library, The
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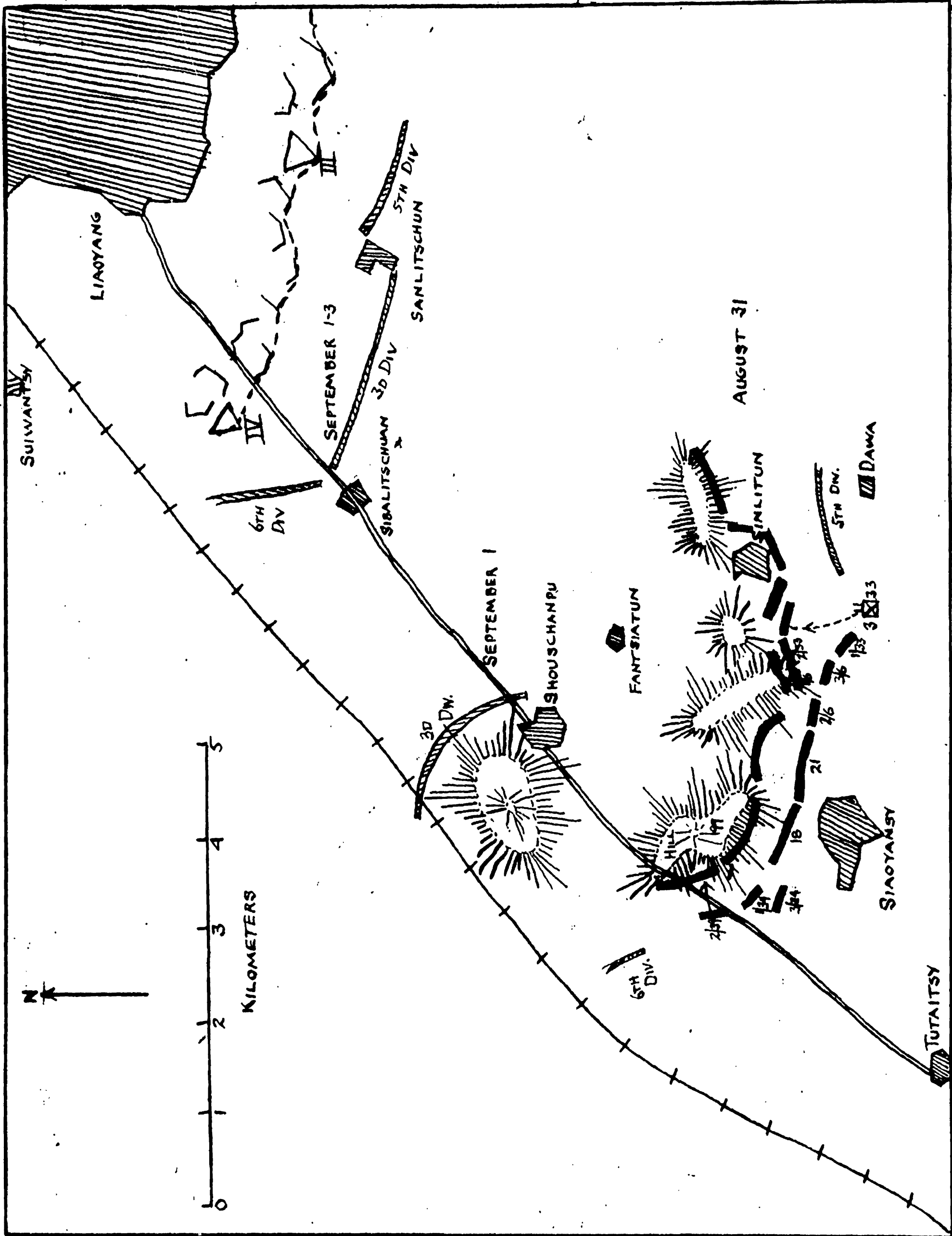


BATTLEFIELD OF LIAOYANG

SITUATION OF 3D DIVISION

AFTERNOON 30 AUGUST 1904

(GERM. SKETCH 4)



POSITIONS AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 3

(GERM. SKETCH 8)