

= Battle of Caishi =

The Battle of Caishi (Battle of Ts'ai @-@ shih ; Chinese : 采石磯) was a major naval engagement of the Jin ? Song Wars of China that took place on November 26 ? 27 , 1161 . Soldiers under the command of Wanyan Liang (the Prince of Hailing) , the Jurchen emperor of the Jin dynasty , tried to cross the Yangtze River to attack Song China . Yu Yunwen , a civil official , commanded the defending Song army . The paddle @-@ wheel warships of the Song fleet , equipped with trebuchets that launched incendiary bombs made of gunpowder and lime , decisively defeated the light ships of the Jin navy .

Starting in 1125 the Jin had conquered all Song territories north of the Huai River . In 1142 , a peace treaty settled the border between the two states , putting the Jin in control of northern China and the Song in control of the south . Wanyan Liang was enthroned in 1150 , and was intent on uniting northern and southern China under a single emperor . In 1158 , he asserted that the Song had violated the 1142 treaty , a pretext for declaring war on the Song . He began preparations for the war in the following year . He instituted a draft in which all able @-@ bodied men were required to enlist . The draft was unpopular , precipitating revolts that were later suppressed . The Jin army left the capital of Kaifeng on October 15 , 1161 , and pushed through from the Huai to the Yangtze River without much resistance from the Song .

The Song were fortified along the Yangtze front . Wanyan Liang planned to cross the river at Caishi , south of modern @-@ day Nanjing . He embarked from the shore of the Yangtze on November 26 , and clashed with Song forces led by Yu Yunwen in a naval engagement . Wanyan Liang lost the battle and retreated to Yangzhou . Wanyan Liang was assassinated in a military camp by his own men shortly after the Caishi battle . A military coup had taken place in the Jin court while Wanyan Liang was absent , enthroning Emperor Shizong as the new emperor . A peace treaty signed in 1165 ended the conflict between Song and Jin .

Song sources likely inflated the number of Jin soldiers and casualties at Caishi , but the 18 @,@ 000 figure for the Song army is plausible . Modern studies suggest that the battle was smaller and that both sides were more evenly matched than traditional accounts suggest . Nonetheless , the victory boosted the morale of the Song infantry and halted the southern advance of the Jin army .

= = Background = =

The Song (960 ? 1276) was a Chinese dynasty . To their north were the Jurchens , a confederation of semi @-@ agrarian tribes from Manchuria in northeast Asia . While the Song and Jurchen had once been military allies , the Jurchen tribes , unified under the rule of Wanyan Aguda , plotted a revolt in 1114 to end their vassalage under the Khitan @-@ led Liao dynasty . Aguda established the Jin dynasty in 1115 and adopted the title of emperor . The Jin negotiated a joint attack with the Song against the Khitans . They planned the attack for 1121 and then rescheduled to 1122 . In 1122 , the Jurchens captured the Liao Supreme and Western Capitals . The Song tried yet failed to capture the Liao Southern Capital of Yan (modern Beijing) , which fell later that year to the Jin . The military weakness of the Song gave the Jin more diplomatic leverage over the Song . Negotiations between the Song and Jin produced a treaty in 1123 , but bilateral relations deteriorated because of territorial disputes over the Sixteen Prefectures . In 1125 , the Jurchens invaded the Song .

By 1127 , Jin had conquered most of northern China and besieged the Song capital of Kaifeng twice . In the second siege of Kaifeng , Emperor Qinzong of the Song was captured . The Jurchens took him and the Song royal family to Manchuria as hostages . Members of the Song court who had evaded capture fled south , where they established a temporary capital , first in the Song southern capital (modern Shangqiu) , and then in Hangzhou in 1129 . The move of the Song capital south to Hangzhou signals the transition from the Northern Song era to the Southern Song . Qinzong 's younger brother , Prince Zhao Gou , was enthroned as Qinzong 's successor in the southern capital in 1127 ; he is known posthumously as Emperor Gaozong . The Jurchen general Wuzhu crossed the Yangtze River in 1130 and tried to capture Gaozong , but the emperor escaped . Wuzhu

retreated north across the Yangtze , where he fought off a stronger Song fleet commanded by Han Shizhong .

The Jin persisted with their advance into the remaining Song territories south of the Yangtze . They faced an insurgency of Song loyalists in the north , the deaths of some important leaders , and military offensives by Song generals like Yue Fei . The Jurchens created the puppet government of Da Qi to serve as a buffer state between Song and Jin , but Qi failed to defeat the Song . The Jin abolished Qi in 1137 . As the Jin gave up on conquering the Southern Song , diplomatic talks for a peace treaty resumed . Signed in 1142 , the Treaty of Shaoxing established the boundary between the two states along the Huai River , which runs north of the Yangtze . The treaty forbade the Song from purchasing horses from the Jin , but smuggling continued in the border markets . The relations between the two states were mostly peaceful from 1142 to 1161 , the year Wanyan Liang went to war .

= = = Preparation for war = = =

Wanyan Liang was crowned Jin emperor in 1150 after killing his cousin and predecessor , Emperor Xizong , in a palace coup . Wanyan Liang considered himself more of a Chinese authoritarian ruler than a Jurchen leader who ruled through a tribal council . The History of Jin contends that Wanyan Liang told his officials that the three desires of his life were conquest , absolute power , and women . His ultimate ambition was to rule over all of China , not just the north . In his childhood , Wanyan Liang adopted Song practices like drinking tea by learning from Song emissaries , and once he had become emperor , he pursued a policy of sinicizing the state . His affinity for the culture of the Song earned him the Jurchen nickname of " aping the Chinese " . He moved the Supreme Capital of the Jin from Huining in Manchuria to Beijing and promoted Kaifeng to his Southern Capital in 1157 . He also moved government institutions south , tore down palaces of Jurchen chieftains in Manchuria , and constructed new palaces in Beijing and Kaifeng . He made plans to move the Jin capital further south to the center of China . Wanyan Liang 's construction projects drained the Jin treasury .

Plans for a war against the Southern Song began in 1158 . That year , Wanyan Liang claimed that the Song had broken the 1142 treaty that banned them from acquiring horses . In 1159 , he began building up his army in preparation for an invasion . He acquired weapons , which he stored in Beijing , as well as horses allegedly numbering 560 @, @ 000 . Wanyan Liang understood that an invasion of the Song would require a lot of men . He ensured that Han Chinese soldiers were drafted into the war effort alongside Jurchen soldiers . The recruitment drive lasted until 1161 . Naval confrontations were likely because the Jin planned on traveling by river . Ships were seized for the war and 30 @, @ 000 of the recruits were assigned to the Jin fleet . Wanyan Liang authorized the building of ships for the war in March 1159 , under the auspices of the Ministry of War . Construction began in the Tong (?) prefecture near Beijing . Wanyan Liang appointed himself head of the army and took personal command of the Jurchen forces . The draft was unpopular . Several revolts erupted against it , many of them in the Jin provinces neighboring the Song . But Wanyan Liang allowed no dissent . He had his stepmother executed after hearing that she was critical of the war effort .

In order to eliminate any challenge to his legitimacy as emperor of a united China , Wanyan Liang ordered the execution of all male members of the Song and Liao royal families residing in Jin territory . The execution of 130 members of the two royal clans in the span of a few months proved unpopular , and the Khitans soon revolted in Manchuria . They refused to be drafted into the army , maintaining that conscription would leave the homeland of the Khitans unprotected from rival tribes on the steppes . Wanyan Liang rebuffed their demands . The Khitan rebels killed several Jurchen officials . The rebellion was fragmented , and there were separate plans either to spread the revolt further by operating from Shangjing , the former Liao capital , or to move the Khitan people from Manchuria to Central Asia , where the Kara @-@ Khitan Khanate had formed after the demise of Liao . Wanyan Liang was forced to divert resources and men away from the war effort to suppress the rebellion .

Diplomatic exchanges between the Song and Jin did not stop during the period preceding the war .

The History of Song claims that the Song realized that the Jin were planning for an invasion when they noticed the discourtesy of one of the Jin diplomats . Some Song officials foresaw the impending war , but Emperor Gaozong hoped to maintain peaceful relations with the Song 's northern neighbor . His reluctance to antagonize the Jin delayed the fortification of the Song border defenses . The Song quickly built just three military garrisons in 1161 . Wanyan Liang departed from Kaifeng on October 15 , 1161 . The offensive comprised four armies , and Wanyan Liang personally led the army that entered Anhui . The Jin passed the Huai River boundary on October 28 , advancing into Song territory . The Song resistance was minimal because they had fortified the southern shore of the Yangtze River and not the Huai .

= = Naval battle = =

Wanyan Liang 's army built its encampment near Yangzhou on the northern side of the Yangtze River . The Jin advance had been slowed by Song victories in the west , where the Song captured several prefectures from the Jin . Wanyan Liang commanded his forces to cross the Yangtze at Caishi , south of modern Nanjing . A naval battle between Jin and Song took place on November 26 and 27 , 1161 . The Song troops were led by Yu Yunwen ? a scholar @-@ official ? and his lieutenants Dai Gao , Jian Kang , Shi Zhun , and others . Yu , who was a Drafting Official of the Secretariat (zhongshu sheren ????) , was at Caishi to distribute awards to Song soldiers who had been selected for their outstanding service ; it was by chance that his visit coincided with Wanyan Liang 's campaign . When he first arrived , the Song forces at Caishi were scattered and lacked a central leader . Yu took command and built a cohesive army . The Jin performed a ritual sacrifice of horses a day before the battle . On November 26 , Jin troops embarked from the shore of the Yangtze and engaged the Song fleet . Some of the ships they boarded were shoddily built . The Jin had lost several ships in Liangshan , where they were bogged down by the shallow depths of Liangshan Lake as they were being transported to the Grand Canal . Wanyan Liang had urgently requested the construction of more ships in 1161 to compensate for those still stuck in Liangshan . One account of the war contends that the Jin ships were constructed in a week with materials recycled from destroyed buildings . The shortage of vessels and the poor quality of those available prevented the Jin from ferrying more soldiers needed for fighting a naval battle with the Song .

The Song military response was likely stronger than Wanyan Liang had anticipated . The paddle @-@ wheel ships of the Song navy could move more rapidly and outmaneuver the slower Jin ships . The Song kept their fleet hidden behind the island of Qibao Shan . The ships were to depart the island once a scout on horseback announced the approach of the Jin ships by signalling a concealed flag atop the island 's peak . Once the flag became visible , the Song fleet commenced their attack from both sides of the island . Song soldiers operated traction trebuchets that launched incendiary " thunderclap bombs " and other soft @-@ cased explosives containing lime and sulphur , which created a noxious explosion when the casing broke . The Jin soldiers who managed to cross the river and reach the shore were assaulted by Song troops waiting on the other side . The Song won a decisive victory . Wanyan Liang was defeated again in a second engagement the next day . After burning his remaining ships , he retreated to Yangzhou , where he was assassinated before he could finish preparations for another crossing .

Estimates for the number of soldiers and casualties at the battle vary widely . A Song source reports that there were 18 @,@ 000 Song soldiers stationed in Caishi , a number that historian Herbert Franke considers plausible . However , Song estimates for the number of Jin troops are likely inflated . One document claims that 400 @,@ 000 Jin soldiers were present at the battle . This number is doubtful , bearing in mind that the Song had only 120 @,@ 000 soldiers fighting on the entire front . Song historians may have confused the total number of Jin personnel deployed on the front with the number of Jin combatants at Caishi . The inflated figure could have referred to the number of soldiers that the Jin army had before crossing the Huai River toward the Yangtze . The desertions and casualties from suppressing revolts while advancing southward would have shrunk that number by the time the Jin reached the Yangtze . The History of Jin , a document written from the perspective of the Jin , reports Jin casualties between one meng 'an (a Jurchen unit of a

thousand soldiers) and a hundred men , and two meng 'an and two hundred men . The History of Song reports Jin casualties numbering four thousand soldiers and two commanders of wanhu (ten thousand men) rank . An account of the battle by a different Song source holds that 24 @, @ 000 Jin soldiers died and that 500 combatants and five meng @-@ an were taken as prisoners . A more conservative Song source estimates that the Jin only had 500 soldiers and 20 ships at Caishi . It is not certain which of these figures is more accurate ; Franke believes that the safest conclusion that can be drawn is that the number of Jin casualties was not greater than four thousand .

= = Military and naval technology = =

An account of the Song 's technological capabilities is given in the Hai Qiu Fu (" Rhapsodic Ode on the Sea @-@ eel Paddle Wheel Warships ") :

The men inside them paddled fast on the treadmills , and the ships glided forwards as though they were flying , yet no one was visible on board . The enemy thought that they were made of paper . Then all of a sudden a thunderclap bomb was let off . It was made with paper (carton) and filled with lime and sulphur . (Launched from trebuchets) these thunderclap bombs came dropping down from the air , and upon meeting the water exploded with a noise like thunder , the sulphur bursting into flames . The carton case rebounded and broke , scattering the lime to form a smoky fog , which blinded the eyes of men and horses so that they could see nothing . Our ships then went forward to attack theirs , and their men and horses were all drowned , so that they were utterly defeated .

There were up to 340 ships in the Song fleet during the battle of Caishi in 1161 . The Song fleet used trebuchets to bombard the Jin ships with incendiary bombs (pili huoqiu ???? or huopao ???? ; " thunderclap fire balls ") that contained a mixture of gunpowder , lime , scraps of iron , and a poison that was likely arsenic . Reports that the bomb produced a loud sound suggests that the nitrate content of the gunpowder mixture was high enough to create an explosion . The powdered lime in the bombs at Caishi generated a cloud of blinding smoke similar to tear gas . The huoqiu released the smoke once the casing of the bomb shattered . Fuses activated the bombs after launching .

The Jin conscripted thousands of blacksmiths to build the armor and weaponry of the fleet , and workers to dig out the canal necessary for transporting the ships from Tong to the Grand Canal through the northern port of Zhigu (??) , modern Tianjin . The Jin armored their light ships with thick rhinoceros hides . The ships had two stories ; on the lower deck were the oarsmen responsible for rowing the ship , while soldiers on the upper deck could fire missile weapons . Three different variations of the warships were constructed . Several of the ships became bogged down in Liangshan , and the ships built to replace them were of an inferior quality . The Jin fleet were unable to defeat the larger and faster warships of the Song .

The battle is significant in the technological history of the Song navy . The technological advances of the Song navy ensured its access to the East China Sea , where they competed with the military forces of Jin and Mongol rivals . Although huopao launched by the ship @-@ mounted trebuchets had been invented decades earlier , the bombs did not become mandatory on Song warships until 1129 . Paddle @-@ wheel ships operated with treadmills were constructed continuously in various sizes between 1132 and 1183 . The engineer Gao Xuan devised a ship outfitted with up to eleven paddle wheels on each side , and Qin Shifu , another engineer , designed the iron plating for armoring the ships in 1203 . All these advances supported a rapid increase in the size of the force ; according to the 20th @-@ century historian Joseph Needham , " From a total of 11 squadrons and 3 @, @ 000 men [the Song navy] rose in one century to 20 squadrons totalling 52 @, @ 000 men " .

= = Aftermath = =

Traditional Chinese historiography celebrated the battle of Caishi as an important victory for China . Caishi was held in the same esteem as the Battle of Fei River in 383 , when the Eastern Jin defeated the northern invaders of the Former Qin . However , its portrayal as a victory against

overwhelming odds , in which 18 @, @ 000 Song soldiers overcame an army of nearly half a million men , is likely an exaggeration . Modern historians believe that the number of Jin soldiers was far lower . The Song possessed multiple advantages , and the battle was more evenly matched than contemporaneous historians suggest . The Song had larger ships and ample time to prepare while the Jin army gathered supplies and ships for the crossing . It was also impossible for the Jin to use cavalry , the most important asset of the Jurchen military , during a naval engagement .

A modern analysis of the background of the conflict and the battlefield has also shown that it was a smaller engagement than traditionally believed . Its effects were more psychological than material . The battle was not solely responsible for dooming Wanyan Liang 's military campaign ; his own failings also led to his downfall . Wanyan Liang 's generals detested him , and his relationship with his men had deteriorated over the course of the war . His authoritarianism made him equally unpopular among his own people . There was a widespread disapproval of his reign in the empire , and Wanyan Liang 's policies had alienated the Jurchens , the Khitans , and the Han Chinese . Disaffected officers conspired to kill him , and he was assassinated on December 15 , 1161 . Emperor Shizong succeeded Wanyan Liang as ruler of the Jin . He had been enthroned weeks before the assassination , in a military coup that installed him as emperor while Wanyan Liang was absent from the court . Shizong eventually rescinded many of Wanyan Liang 's sinification policies .

The victory boosted the morale of the Song soldiers and increased dissatisfaction among the Jin army . News of the victory improved confidence in the government and bolstered the stability of the Song . The Jurchens gave up their ambitions of conquering the Southern Song and reunifying China . The Jin army withdrew in 1162 , and diplomatic relations between the two states resumed . Emperor Gaozong retired nine months after the conclusion of the battle . The reasons for his abdication are complicated , but Gaozong 's handling of the war with Wanyan Liang may have had a part in his decision to resign . He had ignored the warnings of a Jin attack and his hopes for conciliation held back plans for strengthening the Song defenses .

Military clashes continued in Huainan and Sichuan , but Jin incursions after Caishi had no intent of reaching the Yangtze . The Jin had discovered that southern China 's many lakes and river impeded their cavalry . They signed a peace treaty with the Song in 1165 , ending hostilities . The Huai River border remained the same and the Song continued to pay annual indemnities to the Jin , but the Song no longer recognized their state as a Jin vassal .