

CHAPTER II

ORGANISATION OF THE GOD-WORSHIPPERS.

WHEN we seek the causes for such a mighty upheaval as the Taiping rebellion, many points of weakness in the government suggest themselves at once. But those causes were inherent in the organisation of the military and civil services, and we are compelled to examine more closely into the particular circumstances which prevailed in the southern part of China if we would attempt to understand the movement.

The decade which ended with the outbreak of the Taiping rebellion had been marked by military disaster and natural calamities. A relatively small force of outer barbarians, in the so-called Opium War (1839-1842), had wrested victory from the imperial commissioner at Canton and made its triumphant way along the coasts and into the Yangtse River, eventually to wring from the Manchu government, at Nanking, a treaty of peace with recognition of full equality.¹ This war was a shock to the nation at large, revealing as it did the emptiness of Chinese pretensions and the weakness of their military arm.²

¹ Consult Williams, *The Middle Kingdom, or Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, for good accounts of this war.

² Such men as Tséng at Peking were carefully watching this war. Several times he writes home about the progress of events. When the British were at Nanking he wrote: "The English barbarians are at Kiangnan and peace is already decided on, because Kinling is the throat as between the north and south. Since it is already taken by the English we are com-

At once the disbanded soldiers of Kwangtung scattered out among their villages and hillsides to take up their peaceful occupations again or to engage in the more exciting pursuit of robbery. These must inevitably have regaled their friends and companions with fearful tales of Western prowess, of the superior foreign guns and their unheard of tactics, until they came to regard those strangers with awe, if not with affection. But, watching the foreigners at close range in Canton, they discovered that the foreigner who had made imperial commissioners tremble could not secure admission to the city, the turbulence of the population being adduced as the chief cause for this refusal. A common saying arose. "The populace fears the officials," it ran, "the officials fear the foreigners, and the foreigners fear the populace."³ As to the last statement the fact was that, out of a consideration for the interests of trade, the question of entering Canton had been waived for the time being, though it was to reëmerge, in connection with the incident of the *loreha Arrow* in 1856, as an unsettled issue. Nevertheless, the humiliation of the Manchus in the Opium War led reflective minds to wonder if the Chinese themselves, in a national uprising, might not drive back their inefficient soldiery and set a native prince on the throne.

Such an object lesson could not fail to make its impression on the revolutionary brotherhoods that existed in China. Some of these combined political aims with definite religious teachings; others were more completely

pelled to adopt a peaceful policy instead of one of force, to quiet the people and turn off the army. . . . Since the English stirred up trouble two years have elapsed; the officers have not been skillful enough and the soldiers have not obeyed orders, to the great injury of the country, etc." *Home Letters*, Oct. 20, 1842.

³ *Yuch Fen Chi Shih*, I, 1.

anti-dynastic, with a membership that had to act in secret because of government spies who were on the alert to ferret out and destroy all such subversive organisations. Only half a century before, one of these fraternities, the White Lily Society, had fomented a rebellion which raged in several provinces of the west and northwest and even penetrated¹ central China. From 1796 until 1804 the government had its hands full in suppressing this outbreak. The White Lily Society had first sprung up as a protest against Mongol usurpation. It languished under the native Ming Dynasty, but revived when the Manchus overthrew them.

Another of these secret orders was the Triad Society, sometimes called the Society of Heaven and Earth. This organisation was distinctly anti-Manchu, a product of the first century of Tartar domination in China; it was especially strong in Kwangtung and Kwangsi, the very region where the Taipings first arose. With the avowed purpose of restoring the Ming Dynasty to power it had a widely scattered membership, bound together by solemn oaths, and only awaited a favorable opportunity to overthrow the alien government. We shall later consider its relation to the Taipings in the early days of that movement. The Triads, or a branch of their order, held Shanghai for three years, from 1853 to 1856, but were unable to come to terms with the religious fanatics in power at Nanking. It is only a fair assumption that these societies, not to mention many others with similar aims, noted the Manchu weakness against the Westerners and believed that their long-awaited opportunity had come.²

¹ Li Ung-bing, *Outlines of Chinese History*, pp. 469 ff.

² De Groot, J. J. M., in the second volume of *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China*, chapter XVII, 536-556, traces this movement to sectarian persecutions, particularly those in Hunan in 1836 and the following

To this foreign war and its influence on thinking men, on peasants near Canton, and on secret brotherhoods, we must add a series of calamities in the years 1846 and 1847. The failure of the crops in portions of Hunan and Kwangsi led to the rise of robber bands from among the distressed people.⁶ In some cases these were small and inconsequential, but in others large bodies of men numbering hundreds and even thousands, under influential leaders, gave to district magistrates and even to provincial authorities, much anxiety.⁷

Against these quasi rebels, the drill and even organisation into armies of the country militia had been directed. The adoption on a large scale of this type of militia, organised into armies similar to that first led by Kiang Chung-yuan, enabled Tsêng Kuo-fan to put down the re-

years. The unrest resulting from these persecutions led the different religious groups to unite in this movement. There is much to be said in favor of this view, but De Groot is so persuaded of its correctness and sufficiency that he rejects as pure fabrication the story of Hung Siu-ch'üan's visions, which he considers to be Hamberg's. In so doing he leaves us baffled at the subsequent control of the movement by the group that entertained such fanatical semi-Christian views as made them incapable of combining in friendly coöperation with various persecuted sects, in the way his theory presupposes. He does not sufficiently emphasise the fact that the most of the persecutions were actually directed against the revolutionary societies who disguised themselves by claiming religious objectives.

⁶ *Yueh Fen Chi Shih*, I, 1.

⁷ A typical Chinese account of this period is found in the Records of the Shanhua Hsien (which included a part of Changsha, Hunan): "The province of Kwangsi has many bandits concealed within its borders. In the twenty-seventh year of Taokwang [1847], there was a severe famine, and robbers sprang up on all sides. The governor, Chen Tsou-tseug, was old, ill, and yielding [literally, inclined to religion], and could not suppress them. At the same time Hunan rustians, Lei Tsai-hou and Li Yuan-hua, year by year stole into and harassed the borders of the Kwang [provinces]. Though the lesser bandits suffered the penalties of the law, the more important chiefs were not destroyed. In the Kwang [provinces] were Ch'eng A-kwei, Ou Tsou-yun, Shan Chu-chien, Shan Yang-tu and Yen Ping-yao, whose bands each numbered several thousand. Relying on their strategic bases in the hills, they preyed on the people."

bellion eventually. The Taipings themselves emerged from this 'volunteer movement' in Kwangsi.⁸

Along the coasts, moreover, pirates abounded, whose depredations not only affected Chinese vessels, but those under foreign flags as well. They became so troublesome that at last British warships were sent against them in 1849, which succeeded in destroying fifty-eight of their junks near the Kwangtung coast; within a month of that time a large body of rebels was fighting with government troops in Kwangsi, only a few days' march from the place where this took place. Inasmuch as many of the pirates were still armed when forced ashore, it is a natural supposition that they either joined the Taipings or fomented disorder on their own account. Such characters as these might be expected to ally themselves with the Hakkas population who lived in that part of Kwangsi,⁹ and it was apparently among the Hakkas that the societies of God-worshippers from whom the Taipings came were first organised.¹⁰

A more general cause for such a movement was the character of the reign of Taokwang. This monarch was indeed asleep if he did not see the signs of general stagnation and decay in the once powerful empire of K'anghsi and K'ienlung. The sale of offices and titles increased, armies became less and less capable; a debased currency proclaimed approaching bankruptcy, pirates and bandits increased in boldness as they increased in numbers, and provincial independence became more pronounced. The general paralysis of local and national government, made evident to all through the ridiculous

⁸ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 2.

⁹ Meadows, T. T., *The Chinese and their Rebellions*, pp. 147-148. His belief is that they started the rebellion.

¹⁰ The Hakkas were the newer settlers, bearing somewhat the same relation to the older families, the P'enti, that the immigrants of the twentieth century do in New England to the descendants of the Pilgrims.

failure of the foreign war and the inability to cope with local uprisings, offered a loud challenge to any man of surpassing ability to raise his standard and attempt the restoration of a Chinese dynasty; for all recorded history had taught that when a reigning line of emperors is about to pass from the stage, just such a period as that of Taokwang presages its doom. Indeed, a foreigner in 1849, observing the universal disorder and lack of leadership, recorded his belief that a great civil war was approaching.¹¹ Nor was he mistaken, for already the Tai-ping rebellion, as yet small and not differentiated from other disturbances, was under way in the hills of Kwangsi.

The man who eventually occupied the rebel throne in Nanking under the title of *T'ienwang*,¹² was of Hakka origin, dwelling in Hwahsien, a district of Kwangtung not far from Canton. His name was Hung Siu-ch'üan, and he was one of three brothers. Born in 1813, he was enabled through the efforts of the family to spend his youth in study. Several times he competed in the provincial examinations, only to meet with failure.¹³ In 1836, while he was at the examinations, a set of Christian books came into his possession which he did not then examine. After another failure in the year 1837, he fell ill and had to be carried home in a sedan chair. During this illness he saw the visions which in later years he insisted were revelations from God.

In these visions he was carried to heaven, where, after

¹¹ Meadows, p. 122, “. . . judging from what we do know positively, we are entering on a period of insurrection and anarchy that will end sooner or later in the fall of the Manchoo dynasty. . . .”

¹² That is, the Heavenly King or Prince. He refused to use the term for emperor, because to him it was sacrilegious to use the character *ti*, implying Deity.

¹³ The number of graduates was fixed, and failure did not imply insufficient training.

being washed in the river and having a new heart placed within him, he was ushered into the presence of a venerable old man who sat on a throne. This man addressed Hung, saying: "All human beings in the whole world are produced and sustained by me; they eat my food and wear my clothing, but not a single one among them has a heart to remember and venerate me. What is, however, still worse, they take of my gifts, and therewith worship demons; they purposely rebel against me and arouse my anger. Do not thou imitate them." He then gave him a sword wherewith to exterminate demons, a seal having power to overcome the spirits, and a yellow fruit sweet to the taste. Hung at once set about converting those who were standing in the hall, but even there he found some who were indifferent to him or hostile. When the old man led him to the parapet of heaven and bade him gaze on the earth, the sight of its evil and depravity moved him greatly. In several other visions of the same kind he received further instructions, frequently meeting there a middle-aged man whom he learned to call his elder brother. Likewise he met there the sages of antiquity, and once he even heard the old man reprove Confucius himself for having failed to make him known in the classics.

From such visions he awoke filled with wrath at the evil practices and false beliefs of men, and zeal to exterminate the lying spirits and bring China back to the right way. On such occasions his relatives and friends kept a close watch on him, for they feared that he was mad. Notwithstanding the vividness of these trances, their effect, so immediate and powerful during the course of his illness, faded out entirely after his recovery, when he began the career of a schoolmaster. The only outward effect of the illness was to change him from a cheer-

ful, companionable young man into a grave and dignified teacher.

Only by an accidental circumstance six years later did the memory of the visions revive and become a permanent force within him. One of his cousins named Li happened to be looking over Hung's library one day, when by chance he picked up the set of volumes Hung had received in Canton in 1836. Impressed by their unusual character, he borrowed and read them. When he brought them home he persuaded Hung to read them. The effect was instantaneous and powerful, for they opened to Hung's understanding the meaning of the visions he had seen during his illness. The venerable old man was none other than God; the elder brother was Jesus; the idols in the temples and shrines were the false demons. Hung had been commissioned to restore the worship of the true God.¹⁴ To his mind the visions and books independently confirmed each other. Accepting the duty thus doubly laid on him, Hung and his cousin baptized each other, and Hung began to preach the new doctrines. His first converts were a neighbor, Fêng Yun-shan, and his own cousin, Hung Jen-kan, or Hung Jin, to give him the name by which he was known to Westerners through Hamberg's account. Both of these men became *wangs* in the new kingdom, Fêng in the formative period, and Hung Jin many years later, a little before the movement collapsed.¹⁵

¹⁴ The tracts were issued in 1832 by Liang A-fah, a convert of Dr. Morrison, and bore the title "Ch'üan Shi Liang Yen" (Good Words Exhorting the Age). Some of them contained translations or paraphrases of chapters in the Bible; others, essays or sermons. Not more than thirty chapters of the Bible were given, but texts were selected from as many others. The whole would give a rough summary of Protestant teachings.

¹⁵ All the information here recorded about the visions and the later movements of Hung and his colleague Fêng, are taken from Theodore Hamberg's *The Visions of Hung-siu-tsuen and the Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, Hong Kong, 1854. The information there given was furnished

After encountering opposition from the people of his native village, Hung resolved to go with Fêng Yun-shan to preach the new doctrines elsewhere. Accordingly they set out in 1844 and eventually reached the Kwei district, Kwangsi, where they were hospitably received by a kinsman named Wang and entertained by him until Hung was no longer willing to impose on his relative's bounty. He therefore sent the rest of the party back to Hwabsien, intending to follow them in a short while. Without any previous consultation with his senior colleague, Fêng now turned aside from his companions and went to "Thistle Mount," which he made his headquarters for the next few years, planting religious communities known as the God-worshippers, and achieving great success. By the time the rebellion was launched, these societies were numerous in several prefectures and districts located in eastern Kwangsi, along the river that flows to Canton. At least a few scholars and men of influence were among the members, but the rank and file were chiefly from the Hakka peasants and the Miao tribes among the hills.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Hung Siu-ch'üan returned to Hwabsien, where he was surprised not to meet Fêng. Again he settled down quietly to his old task of teaching, spending his leisure hours in religious reflections which bore fruit in several pamphlets, subsequently to be the theological textbooks of the Taiping state. While he was thus cultivating his scholarly tastes a preacher from a Protestant mission in Canton, Moo by name, came to Hwabsien. Through him Hung learned of the missionaries and their

by Hung Jin, who after the rebellion broke out escaped to Hong Kong, where he became an evangelist, remaining there for several years until he joined the rebels at Nanking. Some assert that during his stay in Hong Kong Hung Jin was a servant in a foreign home.

¹⁰ The Miao are a non-Chinese group of aborigines pushed back into the hills by the Chinese conquests. Many are to be found in southern Huanan also.

work, which led to a visit, in 1846 or 1847, and a period of instruction for Hung and his cousin, Hung Jin. Through some misunderstanding, however, they left without receiving baptism.

About the middle of 1847 Hung decided to make another trip to Kwangsi and visit the region where he had preached three years earlier. Here—apparently for the first time—he learned of the great work accomplished by Fêng Yun-shan, whom he now decided to visit at “Thistle Mount.” But on arriving there he learned that Fêng was in prison. So he set out at once for Canton to intercede on his behalf with the viceroy there, basing his plea on the foreign treaties which granted religious liberty. Unsuccessful in this quest, Hung hastened back to Kwangsi, there to discover that Fêng had been liberated and had gone in search of Hung. Again Hung went to Hwahsien, and there he found that Fêng had been there, but had just returned to Kwangsi. Instead of continuing to pass and repass each other Hung remained at home, until in the tenth moon, 1849, Fêng came there once more and took him to Kwangsi to head the Taiping rebellion.

Following this account of Hung Jin alone, we are led to the view that Hung Siu-ch’üan was not an active factor in the organisation of the religion brotherhoods of God-worshippers, and the Chungwang in his autobiography tells us bluntly that Fêng Yun-shan “was the originator of the project for setting up a government, and was the prime mover in the affair.”¹⁷ He also states that the project was known but to six men besides the T’ienwang.¹⁸ In the next chapter I shall consider this

¹⁷ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 2.

¹⁸ “The desire to establish a kingdom was a deeply conceived plan, known only to the Eastern king, Yang Siu-ch’ing, the Western king, Hsiao Chao-kwei, the Southern king, Fêng Yun-shan, the Northern king, Wei Ch’ang-hui, the Assistant king, Shi Ta-k’ai, the supreme minister of state,

question as to the founder of the movement; from both Hung Jin and the Chungwang it is certain that if Hung knew of the purpose at all, which I doubt, he had very little to do with the actual work of bringing it to fruition.

The troubles of 1846 and 1847 afforded the occasion for organising the new religious brotherhoods into companies of militia. With bandits and robbers from the famine region going freely to and fro, and with no adequate military resources available, the people of the villages throughout these provinces were drilling and forming themselves into military companies to defend their countryside from pillagers. The God-worshippers also organised themselves into military units, but carefully avoided joining the other volunteers. There was an abundance of zeal and a shade too much rivalry between the various parties, but the total effect was to increase their enrolment very materially.¹⁹

As early as 1848 these new military companies were in conflict with imperial soldiers, though it is probable that nothing more resulted than minor skirmishes. In this year their cause passed through some kind of serious crisis, one fraught with peril to them, followed by a deliverance that appeared little short of miraculous. Its exact nature we are only able to surmise, but the subsequent references to this year point to two things; first, a series of conflicts with the authorities, and second, an

Tsin Jih-ch'ang,—six men,—aside from whom not a single person knew that the T'ienwang contemplated a political movement." *Ibid.* (My own translation.)

¹⁹ Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 3, "For some years after the promulgation of the new doctrine, no apparent movement was made. In the 27th and 28th years of Taokuang, however, when the banditti were ravaging the surrounding places and the volunteer movement was set on foot, the worshippers formed themselves into a body, distinct from the volunteers. Each party pursued its own course and endeavored to surpass the other, which finally led to a great disturbance, and the augmentation of the number of worshippers."

inner transformation of their movement into a great cause which resulted in bringing Hung forward as leader. It also brought about the supposed intervention of God the Father, who inspired Yang (later King of the East), and Jesus the Saviour who spoke through Hsiao (King of the West). Two or three of these accounts, may throw some light on the crystallisation of the Taijping movement.

. . . in the Mow-shin year [A.D. 1848] the great God compassionated the calamities of the people, who had been entangled in the meshes of the devil's net; on the third month of that year [April], the great God and supreme Lord came down into the world; and in the ninth month [October] Jesus, the Saviour of the world, came down, manifesting to the world innumerable acts of power, and slaughtering a great number of impish fiends in several pitched battles: for how can impish fiends expect to resist the majesty of Heaven?²⁰

The nature of these manifestations of divine power is more clearly indicated, perhaps, in the following extract from the proclamation sent to the British in 1858:

7. In the third moon of the year, "Mo-shin" [1848], Shangti descended,
8. And commissioned the King of the East to become a mortal.
9. In the 9th moon of the same year the Redeemer descended,
10. And commissioned the King of the West to manifest divine powers.
11. The Father and Elder Brother led us to sit on [the throne of] the heavenly kingdom;
12. With great display of authority and might to sit in the hall of heaven;²¹

²⁰ Proclamations, etc. In *Pamphlets issued by the Insurgents at Nanking*, no. 33. Translated by W. H. Medhurst.

²¹ Probably referring, as the next verse certainly does, to the occupation of Nanking.

13. To make the heavenly city our capital; to found the heavenly kingdom,
14. [That] the ministers and people of all nations might do homage to their Father Emperor.²²

The Trimetrical Classic also gives us a hint regarding these descents:²³

In the Mow-shin year [1848]
 The son was troubled and distressed,
 When the great God
 Appeared on his behalf.
 Bringing Jesus with him,
 They both came down into the world;
 Where he instructed his Son
 To endure forever,
 To defeat corrupt machinations,
 And to display majesty and authority.

Another extract regarding the same year, which also appears in the proclamation sent to the British in 1858 may refer to one of these descents, though it gives the appearance of being a special manifestation of power.

35. In the year "Wu-shin" [1848], when the King of the South was besieged in Kwei-ping,
36. We besought the Father to come down and manifest his terms.
37. We had returned from Kwangsi to Kwang-tung.
38. The Heavenly Father did come down to the world and rescued [the king of] the south.²²

Hung Jin's account of what was happening during this year, while Fêng Yun-shan was absent in Kwangtung, pictures among the God-worshippers a great amount of disorder and dissension. From his description it would

²² Proclamation, Dec., 1858, sent to H. M. S. *Retribution* at Wuhu. Reprinted from the Blue Book of 1858 by Lindesay Brine, *The Taeping Rebellion*, pp. 229 f.

²³ *Pamphlets issued by the Insurgents at Nanking*, Medhurst, p. 8.

appear that there were phenomena similar to those recorded in the account of the early Christian church, when many men and women spoke as if they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Many possessions of this kind were recorded among these Kwangsi congregations, trances in which messages—sometimes unintelligible, but generally in doggerel verse—were delivered through those who had received the possessions. Hung, on his arrival, inspected the records of the various alleged utterances and judged some to be divine and others of demon origin—those of Yang and Hsiao falling into the first group and representing actual messages of the heavenly Father and the celestial elder brother, Jesus.²⁴ He does not give us any clue as to who were apparently trying to gain the leadership, but whoever they were, the acceptance of Yang and Hsiao as the mouthpieces for God the Father and Jesus the Savior quieted the opposition, and gave the control of the movement into the hands of these men. But they were not able to go forward without the presence of a head, and that must be Hung, the original source of the movement, on the strength of whose story most of the propaganda had probably been carried on.

One matter is fairly clear from these accounts; that some struggle for leadership had been going on among these congregations, serious enough to involve the whole future of Hung himself; and that temporarily this struggle had been brought to an end. Another point is also clear. Though the actual organisation of the Taiping government did not take place until nearly three years later, the delivery of Fêng from Kweip'ing, possibly from prison, was so important a matter as to verge on the miraculous. The probable explanation, in the light of the passages implying several pitched battles, is that the rescue was effected by force against the officials and their

²⁴ Hamberg, pp. 45 f.

soldiers. Hence we may consider this event the real opening of the Taiping rebellion.

Hung Jin represents the movement as one thrust by a hostile government on the God-worshippers about the middle of 1850, though he does admit that as early as 1845 or 1846 Hung had expressed to a relative his secret purpose of overthrowing the Manchus.²⁵ Apparently forgetting that admission he later insisted that the genesis of the revolutionary movement was in 1850, after fighting had been going on for two years, and was due to the sudden adherence of a horde of defeated Hakkas who joined these congregations in order to secure refuge from their neighbors with whom they had been forced to quarrel.²⁶ But we have already examined several passages which prove that 1848 was the year when fighting began, and are prepared to understand that in 1850 these congregations, still separated among the different leaders, had much training in military tactics.

In the sixth month, 1850 (July 8-August 7), the detached companies first came together at Kint'ien, a small town in the district of Kweip'ing, having been aroused, apparently, by some quarrel between the Pênti and Hakka groups in which the officials gave aid to the former.²⁷ From the villages round about, the angry bands poured into Kint'ien, where Yang Siu-ch'ing was ready to receive them. Hung Siu-ch'üan and Fêng Yun-shan were at that time held as prisoners at Hwachow in P'ingnanhsien, some forty miles away, and had to be rescued by the united band under Yang, in the eighth moon. Having rescued these leaders, they went on to the Wuhsuan district, where the most formidable of their followers joined the movement; among them Lin Hung-ch'iang, later placed at the head of the expeditionary force that

²⁵ Hamberg, pp. 29 f.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48 ff.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

marched from Nanking to the north, the pirate, Lo Takang, a member of the Triad Society, and Hung Tach'üan, later the T'ienteh-wang, Hung's co-sovereign. Little by little, arms and various other warlike necessities were obtained and the government and army organisations began to take shape. With their numbers thus increased, they returned to Kint'ien.

While these serious steps were being taken by the rebels, the government awoke to the fact that something more serious than bandit raids was astir, and that extraordinary measures were necessary. As early as August General Hsiang Yung was ordered from Hunan to Kwangsi as *t'ituh* and reached there in October. Lin Tse-hsü, notorious among foreigners as having helped to bring about the Opium War, so-called, was brought from his retirement and dispatched as an imperial commissioner, but died on the way, and Li Sing-yuan was appointed to that post. Chow T'ien-chih became acting governor of the province. A skirmish was fought on January 1, 1851, but the imperialists failed.²⁸ At the Chinese New Year, February 1, the insurgents inaugurated their new government, calling it T'aiping T'ienkuo, or the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, with T'ienteh and Hung as co-sovereigns.²⁹

In the next few months both sides gained strength. Taiping raids from Kint'ien and later from their bases at Tahwang Kiang and Siangchow brought in reinforcements and supplies and their numbers increased rapidly. The imperialists were reinforced by the mandate for Wulant'ai of the Banner forces to proceed to Kwangsi, and by the appointment in April of Saishanga as im-

²⁸ Tsêng, then at Peking, wrote home in May, 1851, saying that the leaders in Kwangsi were at *diggers'* points.

²⁹ On the authority of the Kanwang's confession, p. 5. The formal date we shall see is a year later while they were at Yungan.

perial commissioner with full powers. The latter carried with him two million *taels* of silver. Troops from the capital were sent through Human under Generals Pachingteh and Tahunga; and the governor was ordered to hand over civil affairs in Kwangsi to the treasurer and to bend all his energies to suppress the insurgents in his province.

During the spring and summer many battles took place between detachments of imperial and Taiping forces, but none of them were conclusive. The new imperial commissioner, Saishanga, on his arrival July 3, decided that the greatest chance for success lay in the recruiting of 'braves' rather than in trusting to the regulars. In consequence, about thirty thousand of these were recruited and distributed through the disaffected regions.³⁰

We are unfortunately left without means of determining just how many were now engaged on each side. Despite the poor quality of the imperial soldiery there must have been a very considerable force of them available for the attack on Siangehow which took place on July 25, when seven successive battles caused the rebels so much distress that they were forced to escape to Hsinch'u, leaving lost two or three thousand men.

In their new headquarters the rebels arranged themselves in strategic positions among the hills, with Hsinch'u in front and two mountains as outposts on each flank. The imperialists made careful preparations for the attack. Tahunga was placed to the southeast; Wulant'ai and Tsou Ting-san to the northwest; Lieutenant Generals Li Hung-ch'ing and Ching Wen-tai were east and southeast, leaving Generals Pach'ingteh and Hsiang Yung to take the road over the Purple Thorn hills. The plan for some reason failed, though the different gen-

³⁰ The material for these paragraphs is from the *P'ing-ting Yeh-fei Chi-lueh*, I, 8 ff. Cf. *Taiping T'ien Kuo Yeh-shi*, I, 2 f.

erals followed their instructions and made their attack in unison. They managed to secure the two mountain outposts, however, thus making it necessary for the rebels to retreat to the tea districts beyond.

General Hsiang wished to press his advantage and move quickly against the Taipings before they could consolidate their positions, but Pach'ingteh demurred, thus causing a fatal delay of five days, during which the rebels prepared themselves. Other delays followed, preventing the attack from being again made until August 28, when, at Hungmen, the well-fortified insurgents actually repulsed the whole imperial army. Later on, when the attack was renewed Wulant'ai's forces lost their way among the hills and Hsiang Yung was impeded by rains, thus enabling the rebel army to extricate itself from the impending danger and escape to Yungan, which they captured on the twenty-fifth of September, advancing against it by land and river.³¹ They now numbered about 37,000 people, with an effective army of about 5,000 men.³²

The Taiping cause had almost perished in the tea district when the imperial army surrounded it. There was danger both from within and without, and at least three descents of God and Jesus were necessary on the day of particular danger, August 17, to bring them back to their duty. This fact argues that they were far nearer defeat at that time than they have admitted anywhere else. The disaffection seems to have been directed chiefly against the leader Hung Siu-ch'üan and his able general,

³¹ The *Peking Gazette*s, published separately, give the date as Aug. 27 (first of the eighth moon). Both *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch* (p. 106) and *Yuch Fen Chi Ssu* give the date as the intercalary eighth moon. The former says it was taken on the first (Sept. 25), while the latter places the capture on the second (Sept. 26). Since the fighting was taking place at the time given in the *Gazettes* for the capture of the place I assume an error there, and accept the first of the intercalary moon.

³² *Taiping T'ien Kuo Yeh-shi*, III, 53 f.

the mouthpiece of God the Father. Whether they were simply terrified at the gradual closing in of the imperial army or were urged to mutiny by men who desired to gain the leadership does not appear from the records.

The great deliverance that came inspired confidence throughout the entire army. No longer did they disobey their leaders or fear the imperialists. In the city of Yungan, while the imperialists slowly gathered their forces for the siege, the Taipings organised their kingdom. The provisional government instituted at Kint'ieu gave place to the more permanent organisation; the new dynasty was proclaimed in Yungan, five kings besides the original two were created and appointed to their high duties. Ministers of state were likewise commissioned; army regulations were promulgated, and officers appointed, while some of the more essential portions of civil government were arranged. A new solar calendar was also adopted, dividing the year of 366 days into twelve months of thirty and thirty-one days each and abolishing leap years.

The discomfited imperialists gradually moved up to Yungan, which they proceeded to surround and besiege. Again the rebellion was in their hands. As early as November 4 the imperial commissioner, Saishanga, moved to Yangsoh, a commanding base near Yungan, and before the end of the year had completely encircled the town. Wulant'ai was to the south, Liu Chang-ch'ing, and later Hsiang Yung himself, was to the north, while sufficient forces occupied the hills east and west.

On the seventh of February, 1852, everything being in readiness, Saishanga (now degraded to the rank of *t'ituh*) moved from Yangsoh to Yungan to direct the siege in person. The rebels in the beleaguered town were short of gunpowder and probably of food as well. Sorties were attempted on February 17 and 19. The imperialists

in turn tried to take the town by storm. Their concerted attack lasted for three days and nights and might have brought the rebellion to an end but for the death of some of the officers and the relaxation of effort on the part of some of those who remained. The rebels were forced back behind their walls. Again about the last of February the latter, issuing from the city, tried in vain to break the lines of the enemy.

This deadlock continued until the sixth of April, when there was another attack by the rebels against the weakest part of the imperial lines, which yielded before the terrific impact and on the seventh opened the way for the entire Taiping host to break through and escape. Wulant'ai appears to have made a desperate attack on them as they were going through the mountains and inflicted more than two thousand casualties, capturing Hung Ta-ch'üan, the T'ienteh-wang, one of the co-sovereigns. Heavy rains and a general paralysis of the imperial army conspired to prevent the adoption of any effective measures until the rebels were safely over the hills and far away. Only Wulant'ai kept up a fight with their rear until not far from Kweilin he was fatally wounded and his troops were disheartened.

This disaster was the turning point in the war for both sides. The rebels lost Hung Ta-ch'üan, one of their chief military leaders. But their escape so clearly pointed to divine interposition that the religious side of their cause was greatly strengthened; they believed themselves invincible. More and more their enterprise became characterised by fanaticism, less and less by level-headed and far-seeing statesmanship. Indeed, there is reason to suspect that Hung Ta-ch'üan was deliberately abandoned to the imperialists, for only Wei Ch'ang-hui attempted his rescue. The others could not or would not go to his aid. The cause was destined to prosper for

many months through the momentum of its great successes, which added thousands of followers; but, with a lack of suitable leadership, it was doomed to eventual failure when its religious vagaries took the place of wise statesmanship.

On the other hand, imperialist failures at Hsinch'u and the tea districts in 1851 and at Yungan in 1852, when all the cards were in their hands, doomed them to a long-drawn-out duel, destined to last for more than twelve years. We cannot too strongly emphasise what a great revelation of weakness this was. Accurate numbers are lacking in our sources of information. The imperialists are said to have had "several tens of *ying*,"³³ and we may infer, from the fact that the rebels did not fill out their first army until they had reached Hunan, that they scarcely had more than twelve thousand fighting men. Saishanga may have had four or five times that number in all his commands. He was now cashiered and Hsiang Yung appointed in his place.

Avoiding the well-defended cities, the rebels marched over byways to Kweilin. Their families were with them on the *trek*; many had literally burned their bridges behind them by setting fire to their homes. The force consisted both of Chinese and Miao tribesmen.³⁴ Hsiang Yung, realising the danger that threatened Kweilin, hastened thither with all speed to aid the governor in the defence of his capital, and entered the city barely one hour before the siege commenced. Every device known to them was used to force an entrance to the city—high scaling ladders and towers on wheels among other things, but they all failed. The siege lasted thirty-one days be-

³³ The *Siang Chun Chi*, I, 8b says there were "several tens of *ying*." If a *ying* contained 500 men, as was the case later, this would indicate several times five thousand men.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 9a.

fore the rebels gave up and set out for Hunan and the Yangtse River cities beyond. They were no longer a handful of *t'ufei* or banditti, but a nation on a pilgrimage to their distant home.

During the siege at Kweilin, when the imperialists had sent out hurried and frenzied calls for help, Kiang Chung-yuan came with a private following of 1,200 men whom he had raised in Hunan, also Liu Chang-yu with a similar army with which he had put down the bandit, Li Yuan-hwa. These two men were so successful in their skirmishes with the rebels east of the city that the reputation which the Hunan 'territorials' were to win during this titanic struggle was already beginning to be deserved.