

CHAPTER VI
THE MILITARY, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL
ARRANGEMENTS OF THE INSURGENTS

A. The Taiping Army.

THE dash and *élan* of the rebel army excited the admiration of Chow T'ien-chiuh, governor of Kwangsi, who in 1851 addressed his colleague, the governor of Hupeh, regarding the prowess of Hung and his followers:

Hung Tsuen is a barbarian, who practices the ancient military arts. At first he conceals his strength, then he puts it forth a little, then in greater degree, and lastly comes on in great force. He constantly has two victories for one defeat, for he practices the tactics of Sun Pin.¹ The other day I obtained a book describing the organisation of one army; it is the *Sze-ma* system of the Chow dynasty.² A division has its general of division; a regiment has its colonel [literally, a *Sze* has its *sze shwae*, a *leu* has its *leu shwae*]. An army consists of 13,270 men, being the strength of an ancient army with the addition of upward of a hundred men.³

Their forces are divided into nine armies, in accordance with the system of nine degrees in the tribute of Yu.⁴ In this book is specifically described the first army, that of Grand Generalissimo Hung; and it states at the end, that all the other nine armies are to be arranged and organised in the same manner.

¹ B.C. 341.

² Under Wu Wang of the Chow Dynasty.

³ Apparently Governor Chow was mistaken here, for the officers and men in the Taiping army totalled 13,125, not 13,270.

⁴ In the Shu Ching.

This book has been sent to the Cabinet Council. The rebels increase more and more; our troops the more they fight the more they fear. The rebels generally are powerful and fierce; and they cannot by any means be likened to a disorderly crowd [literally, a flock of crows]; their regulation and laws being rigorous and clear. Our troops have not a tincture of discipline; retreating is easy to them, advancing difficult; and, though again and again exhorted, they always remain as weak and timorous as before.⁵

The *Sze-ma* system of the Chow Dynasty, set up by order of Wu Wang after the kingdom had been pacified, established armies of 12,500 men under command of the *ch'ing*, or great ministers of state. The suzerain had six armies, while his feudatory states were allowed to maintain three, two, or one according to their size. The army unit was subdivided into five legions or *shih* of 2,500 men, each under a great minister of the second grade, each legion being further divided into five battalions of five hundred men each, commanded by a great minister of lower rank. Battalions were divided into five centuries, under an officer of first rank, and each century into four companies of twenty-five men each, led by an officer of medium rank. The smallest unit was the file of five men, having its chief.⁶

The Taiping army was described in 1853 as follows:

A *cinquevir* commands a quaternion of soldiers, or four men. A *vezillary* commands five *cinquevirs*, having under him twenty-five men, and is distinguished by a flag two feet and a half long and as many broad.

A *centurion* commands four *vezillaries*, having under him 104 men, and is distinguished by a flag three feet long and as many broad. A *tribune* commands five centurions, having under him

⁵ From a private letter of Chow T'ien-chieh, April, 1851, secured and translated by Meadows, *China and Her Revolutions*, pp. 154-159.

⁶ Kwang chih p'ing lueh hsu chi, c. 25 Chou tia ping chih, 1-a (in Werner's volume of *Descriptive Sociology*, Spencer, IX, 108, col. 1).

525 men, and is distinguished by a flag three feet and a half long and as many broad.

A *prefect* commands five tribunes, having under him 2,625 men and is distinguished by a flag four feet long and as many broad. A *dux* commands five prefects, having under him 13,125 men, and is distinguished by a flag four and one half feet long and as many broad.⁷

This *dux*, or brigadier general, as he may be called, had above him an inspector, a regulator, and a generalissimo, one of these for each complete army, the flag of each being half a foot larger than of the officer below. Above these in turn were a director, an arranger, and a minister of state. In the completed Taiping scheme there were said to be ninety-five armies of land forces, nine of naval forces on the rivers and lakes, two of engineering forces, sappers, miners, and the like, and six of metal workers, wood workers, and other artificers. The total number of officers, men, and other employees of the armies, including secretaries and servants, is given as 3,085,021.⁸

The officers named above were commoners. Above them stood those who had rank as nobles or princes and kings. Some of them held active commands in the military forces and some were apparently in the civil government. The Eastern and Western kings had flags nine and a half feet square, and down to the fourth grade of kings the flags were square; the fourth grade of kings, the nobles, and the higher military officers, down to the generalissimo, had triangular flags with borders; all the others had triangular flags without borders. The size of the flags was half a foot smaller for each grade below. The seals were

⁷ "Arrangement of the Army of the T'haeping Dynasty" (1852), translated by W. H. Medhurst.

⁸ *Taiping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, II, 48.

graded in size in the same manner from the large seal of the Eastern king, 6.6 inches by 3.3 inches, to that of the "vexillary," 2.5 inches by 1.25 inches.

An army organized in this manner was divided into five legions known as the front, rear, left, right, and center legions. Each of these legions was subdivided into five cohorts, also known as front, rear, left, right, and center. The five centuries were numbered from one to five; the four "vexillaries" were known as those of the east, west, south, and north. The five "cinquevirs" were distinguished by the terms "firm," "brave," "courageous," "daring," and "martial." The privates under each cinquevir also bore the felicitous designations: "rush on the foe," "beat the enemy," "obtain the victory," and "report success." On his breast each man bore his full designation, written on a piece of cloth about four inches square. The first man in the army would be "The man who rushes on the foe, [attached to] the firm cinquevir, [belonging to] the eastern vexillary of the first century of the front cohort of the advanced legion." Thus it would run on until the last man would be: "The man who reports success, [attached to] the martial cinquevir, [belonging to] the southern vexillary of the fifth century of the center cohort of the center legion."

The army was first organized in the district of Pingwen in Kwangsi under the yellow flag. But the legions came from different places, the first from Kweishen in Kwangtung, the second from Pingnan, the third from Kweiping, the fourth from Tsengwu, and the fifth from Wuhsuan, all in Kwangsi. Some of the cohorts were filled out elsewhere, one of them not until Taochow was reached in Hunan. No mention is made in the Taiping books of the eight other armies, and it seems improbable that any others had been organized in 1852; and the fact that this

° "Arrangement of the Army of the T'haeping Dynasty."

one picked recruits in Hunan implies that even it was not complete. One recent account says that when Yungan was captured the total rebel population was 37,000 and that the effective army was but five thousand and a few hundred.¹⁰ Later, when success brought throngs of recruits to the cause, these soldiers of the first army became the officers for the later armies or entered into various civil offices. Many of them were unable to measure up to the requirements of their new duties, and it is possible, as charged, that their lack of ability coupled with their pride in their suddenly attained dignities had much to do with the deterioration of their armies.¹¹

The rules governing the soldiers in camp or on the march were very strict. Followed literally, they would have made the Taiping army a force similar to Cromwell's Ironsides. In addition to the usual requirements of attention, obedience, readiness, and order, the soldiers were enjoined to learn the Ten Commandments, carry on morning and evening worship, abstain from tobacco and wine, and stay far away from the camp of the women. On the march each soldier was to carry his own necessary accouterments, provisions, cooking utensils, oil, and salt. No able-bodied soldier or officer, unless of suitable rank, could ride; nor could he impress menials into his service, either from those within the ranks or from the people outside. No one was permitted to enter villages either to cook or to requisition food, to injure the dwellings or to steal the property of the population. All were forbidden to loot shops or public offices. No one could impede the march by hanging up his lanterns on the roadside or at a shop and going to sleep.¹²

By the time Nanking was captured it was estimated

¹⁰ *Taiping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, III, 53 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Regulations*, etc., notes on pages 1, 2, and 3.

that at least five of these principal armies had been organised on the same model as the first, but they could not have been as well drilled and were lacking in military supplies.¹³

There was little uniformity of dress among the privates, not even in the cloth around the head, and there was nothing equivalent to our systematic forming, wheeling and marching in regular bodies; but the strictest discipline is maintained in so far as prompt obedience to orders and signals is concerned. Of guns [cannon] there was abundance, of matchlocks and musquets but few; the arms being chiefly spears, halberds and swords. A few bows were noticed.¹⁴

All of the females have been quartered in separate buildings where they work and receive rations under the superintendence of the seniors; and while all have been told that this measure is but temporary, to prevent abuses otherwise sure to ensue in the existing confusion, it is for the present certain death for any male to enter these establishments, even as husband or father.¹⁵

Later armies were organised on the same model. They continued their religious observances even down to the end of the war, though we cannot say whether it was with the same conviction as that which animated the earlier members. Discipline continued to be strict, promotion was granted on the basis of merit; on the whole, the ranks seem to have been filled with an unusually intelligent set of men. To the end they remained deficient

¹³ Trip of H. B. M. Plenipotentiary, Sir George Bonham, Bart., to Nan-king in the *Hermes*, April 22, 1853. Extracted from the *N. C. Herald*, May 7, 1853, pp. 15 f. That report mistakenly supposes that all five of the original kings were alive at the time, each in command of one of the armies. Two had fallen on the way, though the *Autobiography of the Chungwang* indicates (p. 5) that their titles continued.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19. He goes on to observe that the whole character of relations was better and that the usual "obscenities that garnished the ordinary language of both sexes" were not heard.

in firearms, but in this respect they were about on an equality with their adversaries. In the later period of the war an army was made up of three different kinds of soldiers: first, those who had served for at least six years with the Taipings; second, those who had three years of service to their credit; and third—far more, numerous than the others—recent recruits. In each class were three orders, graded according to bravery. Musketeers or cavalrymen were chosen from those who showed the greatest bravery; from the next order the heavy gingall and halberd men; and from the least promising the spearmen. The musketeers were armed with matchlocks and double-barrelled European guns, muskets, and pistols. The same was true of the cavalry. The gingall was carried by four men, who placed it on a tripod when firing. The spears were long bamboo poles with spikes in the end. These varied from eight to eighteen feet in length. Some of the men from the north were armed with Tartar bows and these instruments proved even more effective than the matchlocks.¹⁰

In battle the spearmen were placed in front, the halberdiers in the second line, while the musketeers and cavalry formed the final or reserve line.¹⁰

Allusions are frequent in Taiping writings to the female warriors and to the camps of women. The former appear to have disappeared before the end of the war, though instances are not unknown of women who rode forth with their husbands, eager to share their wild life

¹⁰ Lindley, I, 248 ff. In regard to the organisation of the armies this writer should rank as a first-hand source. Though his documents were destroyed and he wrote from memory, he was with the army as late as 1863, or early in 1864, and bore a commission from the Chungwang. On the religious beliefs of the people he is untrustworthy; probably also in comparing Taipingdom with the rest of China. Used with caution he is a good source, but must constantly be watched because of his open bias in favor of the movement.

of adventure and hardship. "In former years they were wont to fight bravely," says Lindley,¹⁷ "and could ably discharge the duties of officers, being however formed into a separate camp and only joining the men in religious observances." Earlier Taiping documents confirm this. In the army regulations for the settled camps the fifth rule says: "Observe the distinction between the camp of the males and that of the females; let no men and women give or take from each others' hands." In the fifth regulation for armies on the march we find another similar reference to "officers or soldiers, male or female," and several passages occur in the same language.¹⁸ A proclamation issued just before the breaking out from Yungan, dated April 5, 1852, enjoins on both male and female officers throughout the host to grasp the sword "with joy and exultation, firmness and patience, courage and ardor, valiantly to fight against the imps."¹⁹

From the evidence of such passages we are forced to believe that women were trained to bear arms in this rebellion. In the formative days of the movement we are told of "two female rebel chiefs of great valor, named Kew-urh and Szu-san," who came to join Hung's movement. They were stationed with their four thousand warriors at some distance from the others.²⁰ When Nanking was once gained, the females apparently ended their career as active warriors in the field and were placed in

¹⁷ Lindley, I, 303.

¹⁸ Among these are the T'ienwang's proclamation of March 2, 1852, at Yungan, regarding the seventh commandment. In an earlier proclamation, dated in January, 1851, separation is required between ranks of males and females.

¹⁹ In all Taiping proclamations to the imperialists, "Imps" refer to worshippers of demons.

²⁰ Hamberg, p. 54. The context does not make it quite clear whether the followers of these women were men or women. The constant allusion to female warriors would lend color to the view that they were a regular Amazon corps.

quarters of their own, where they were rigidly secluded even from the men of their own families. Suitable duties were then assigned to both sexes—the men going forth to do battle, while the female camps were assigned to tasks more befitting their sex, such as the making of clothing, ammunition, banners, and similar necessities of war. It is not quite clear whether these camps included the wives of soldiers or officials on duty in Nanking, though in the later years it appears certain that membership in these camps was confined to the women whose husbands were absent, or to young, unmarried women without homes.²¹

Nor is it at all clear why, contrary to the usual Chinese practice, women were engaged as soldiers. It may be a very early manifestation of the same spirit that led women in the first days of the Chinese Republic (1912) to drill and fight for the new cause, or that led to the employment of Russian women in certain famous battalions during the World War more recently. The adherence of female chiefs who came begging admittance to the new movement lends color to that view. Yet the contrary is implied in the fact that they were no longer thus em-

²¹ See Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 7. Also Meadows, p. 173. Lindley, I, 300 ff., states that except among the *wangs* monogamy was the rule, that no divorce save for adultery was permitted, and that women must either be married or a member of a family, or else be placed in an institution for unprotected women. These were presided over by matrons. Young women, those whose husbands were off on public service or those without relatives, were kept in these homes. *Taiping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi* gives a table of the female officials in the state, showing four with the rank of *dux* or leader of 12,500 persons, and of officers of lower rank, thus indicating the organisation of four armies of women. But the author does not indicate whether these continued to exist very long. He also makes mention of forty regiments of 2,500 women soldiers each, or a total of 100,000 female warriors. I feel sure that there is something wrong about this, at least from the point of view of their actually serving with the colors. The nominal organisation might have been maintained. Mention is likewise made of 160 women who were superintendents of embroidery with fifty workers in each company, a total of 8,000. *Ibid.*, II, 49 f.

ployed after the "Heavenly Capital" was once secured. This circumstance strengthens the opinion that, with the eventual design of securing the whole empire, Chu early foresaw the necessity of making his conquest more than a fight. Therefore he trained the women and boys to take their part beside the adult male warriors in their pilgrimage to that distant goal.²²

B. *Political and Social Institutions.*

The first concern of the Taiping rebels had been to perfect the army which was to win for them their empire. From the earliest conflict with 'fiendish imps' in 1848 until they had settled down in Nanking early in 1853 there was no capital, and only the rudiments of civil government.

Yet as early as December, 1850, if we may credit the confession of Hung Ta-ch'üan, there were at least two boards, that of civil office and that of revenues, presided over by two *wangs*; also a judge advocate.¹ During the following year, by successive steps, this government was formalised, its appointments made more permanent, its regulations more carefully considered. From a mere group of rebels there was emerging the nucleus of an army and a state.

One of the first steps in the process was the designation of the Taiping-wang (T'ienwang) as the active head of the nation. On April 19 Yang Siu-ch'ing, claiming to be under the inspiration of the spirit of God the Father, formally presented Hung as their commander and master. "The heavenly Father addressed the multitude," the record runs, "saying: O my children! do you know

²² Boys as well as women were in these armies. Meadows, p. 164. Towards the end of the rebellion they were again used, probably owing to a scarcity of man power.

¹ *Confession of Hung Ta-ch'üan*, chapter III, above.

your heavenly Father and celestial elder Brother? To which they all replied, We know our heavenly Father and celestial elder Brother. The heavenly Father then said, Do you know your Lord, and truly? To which they all replied, We know our Lord right well. The heavenly Father said, I have sent your Lord down into the world to become the celestial King; you must not dare to act disorderly, nor to be disrespectful. If you do not regard your Lord and King every one of you will be involved in difficulty."²

Prior to this Yang had served as generalissimo; from this date until after the siege of Changsha the decrees were issued by Hung, who was both co-sovereign and active head of the revolution, T'ienteh being the emperor and remaining in the background.³ This arrangement was in effect till the end of the siege at Changsha, after which all the important proclamations were issued by Yang, the Eastern king, or jointly by him and Hsiao, the Western king, though the latter was actually deceased.⁴

² "Book of Celestial Decrees and Declarations of the Imperial Will," p. 1.

³ I have before me one proclamation, presumably dated just before the capture of Changsha, in the second year of T'ienteh, commencing "Hung, Captain-General of the army, having entire superintendence of military affairs, and aiding in the advancement of the T'haeping or Great Pacificating Dynasty," etc. (Translated by W. H. M. in *Peking Gazettes* for 1853-1856.) I have already alluded to the later tendency to suppress the truth about certain chiefs, such as T'ienteh, and the death of Fêng Yun-shan and Hsiao Chao-kwei. My inference is that Hung, the celestial King, was at first called the Taiping-wang and was either subordinate to T'ienteh, or at best equal. But at Yungan the dynasty was evidently set up in the name of T'ienteh, who had the ambition later to set up the Later Ming Dynasty. (See the proclamation of Kwoh of Hupch, p. 4 of *Peking Gazettes* for 1853.)

⁴ One such proclamation is translated by Medhurst, bearing date March 3, 1853, and is perhaps the first. It subsequently appeared as the first in the books of proclamations brought down by the *Hermes* in May, 1853. At the beginning of June a third copy was obtained, omitting reference to the Triads. See *Pamphlets issued by the Chinese Insurgents*, translated by W. H. Medhurst, Sr., Shanghai, 1853, pp. 33, 34. It is significant that with this

By November, 1851, the tentative arrangements were replaced by more permanent arrangements. Under the two chief rulers five kings were appointed: Yang Siu-ch'ing, the Eastern king, chief minister of state and generalissimo, with control of all regions to the east; Hsiao Chao-kwei, the Western king, second minister of state and assistant generalissimo, with control of all regions to the west; Fêng Yun-shan, the Southern king and general of the advanced guard, having charge of all regions to the south; Wei Chang, the Northern king and general of the rear guard, having charge of all the regions lying to the north; and Shi Ta-k'ai, the Assistant king, appointed to aid in sustaining the celestial court.⁴

The organisation was almost purely military, and a form of state socialism prevailed in the ideals of the founders. All property was to be held in common; when the tendency to secrete gold and silver appeared, severe penalties were imposed. This type of organisation was perpetuated in Nanking, which remained to the end a military rather than a civil capital. From the public treasury soldiers, officials, and the families of those absent on public duties received their support.⁵ On every Sabbath day the officials had to make up their list of requirements and present it to the official in charge of the stores, who would thereupon issue them to the proper persons. To each vexillary a weekly allowance of a hundred cash was made, and half that amount was granted the privates. Each group of twenty-five received an allowance of two hundred *catties* of rice, seven of oil, and seven of salt.⁶

evidence of suppression we also notice an omission of the proclamation of Hung, alluded to on the last page.

⁴ Proclamations of Nov. 30, 1851. *Pamphlets issued by the Chinese Insurgents*, Book of Celestial Decrees, p. 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11, and see a proclamation from Changsha rebuking those who failed to live up to this ideal and threatening the death penalty for infraction of the command, pp. 16, 17. *Tai ping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, IX, 8 f.

There was also an allowance for buying other food, but this appears to have been according to the will of the chief. An allowance for worship was also given.⁷

We cannot trace in detail from this time on the various steps in the evolution of the civil government. When the process was completed an elaborate list of officials existed, at least on paper, graded and assimilated in rank to those of the military service.⁸ As one would expect, the major portion of the great list of officials was attached to the court at Nanking or to the minor courts of the various *wangs*, but there were some who, in theory, were civil officials in the districts into which the Taipings expected to organise the country when they actually controlled it; on the whole, few of these actually functioned, because the boundaries of their state were not well established at any time, and, with the notable exception of a few cities which they held at the point of the sword, they did not long remain in control of any place.

In the capital, which they had renamed T'ienking or Celestial Capital, they placed all things under the control of the Eastern king until his assassination in 1856. Eventually six boards were established, modelled on those at Peking, with a separate department of foreign affairs. There was no difficulty about this, because these six boards did not originate with the Manchus but were found in the earlier dynasties. At first the five kings were placed over these boards, but later these kings became a privy council to the T'ienwang, presiding over the military departments, and the boards passed under

⁷ *Tai ping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, IX, 9. An interesting feature noted by observers in Nanking was the absence of shops inside the walls. Neither was there a civil population. All were compelled either to enlist in the army or government service, or to leave with the little property he could carry in his hands. Brine, pp. 194 f. Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 7.

⁸ *Tai ping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, II, gives lists of all the officials.

the control of the *Ch'eng-hsiang* or ministers of state who stood immediately below the nobility in rank.⁹

It is not quite clear what the original intention was regarding the creation of so many *wangs* or kings, whether they were intended to be semi-independent feudal chieftains, like those of the Chow Dynasty whose territories surrounded the imperial demesne, or something else. If the T'ienwang did have in mind the pre-Confucian idea of government, as he did of army arrangements, we should say that he aimed at a highly decentralised nation. We have seen above that T'ienteh criticised this organisation, for he must have foreseen its inevitable consequences to the integrity of the state. If there was any such intention—indeed if there was any intention at all besides holding together six mutually jealous and ambitious men—it never came to anything, because, to the very end, the government remained essentially military.

Of the five kings two, and they the most gifted, fell on the way to Nanking. Their loss was irreparable, because they were apparently the only ones who were able in any measure to check the pretensions of Yang. The latter, now promoted to be sole executive, quickly became so cruel and arrogant that he earned the implacable hatred of the Northern and Assistant kings. By the reproofs he administered to Hung himself in God's name, by his forcing a recognition of his claim to be the Holy Ghost, third in the Trinity, as well as by other usurpations, he at last

⁹ Lindley, I, 153 f. In the boards the following arrangements were first made:

Yang Siu-ch'ing,	Eastern King,	Prime Minister.
Wei Chang-hui,	Northern King,	President of the Board of War.
P'eng Yun-shan,	Southern King,	President of the Boards of Justice and Finance.
Hsiao Ch'ao-kwei,	Western King,	President of the Board of Civil Office, Ecclesiastical matters.
Shi Ta-k'ai,	Assistant King,	President of the Board of Public Affairs and Foreign Office.

aroused the sluggish spirit of the T'ienwang, who, with the help of the two kings named above, assassinated him in 1856. But the troubles of the T'ienwang had not ended, for Wei the Northern king, aspired to the place next to the T'ienwang, and his orgies of cruelty, which extended to the slaughter of the family of the Assistant king, brought about his assassination by the combined efforts of all who had suffered from his cruelties in Nanking; and the permanent alienation of Shi Ta-k'ai, who, with his band of followers, set forth to be a knight errant, passing through Kiangsi, Hunan, Kwangsi, and eventually into Yunnan and Ssuch'uan, where he was finally captured,—the Cœur de Lion of the era.¹⁰

The five original *wangs* were practically all dead or out of favor by 1858, and Hung kept the title for members of his own family, honoring his two brothers with the title of kings and relying more and more on their support and advice.

After the murder of the Eastern and Northern Kings, the T'ienwang virtually ceased to create any more princes, and the fact of his having altered his intentions and made so many Wangs at the present day, is entirely owing to the arrival of his brother Hung Jen-kan in the 9th year [1859]. He was so exceedingly delighted to see his brother that, before a fortnight had passed by, he made him Generalissimo and accompanied this honor with a decree that all men should be under the new officer's control. Seeing, however, that the new Generalissimo was very incompetent, and had not a single suggestion to offer, he again thought over the matter to himself, and knowing that several of his fighting ministers, who had won much merit and done much to support the nation, were displeased, he discovered that he had made a great mistake. He knew also that Ch'enYu-

¹⁰ After the death of the Northern king, he returned to the capital for a time, but the T'ienwang became jealous of him and relied on his own brothers. Therefore the able Shi Ta-k'ai left the Celestial Court never to return. Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 8.

ch'eng and myself [Li Siu-ch'en, later the Chungwang], the two head chiefs, were engaged in daily exertions on his behalf, and that he had erred greatly in putting one of so little ability into a high post, one who in two months had shown himself of no value whilst he had neglected to do anything for us. He first made Ch'ei Yu-ch'eng the Ying-wang [Heroic King], and, as I had made strenuous exertion all along, he concluded not to forget me, and followed up this by making me a Wang.¹¹

The precedent having thus been broken, the T'ienwang had to allay the clamors of others who had rendered service, by elevating more persons to the honor, and when some of these were men who had served for but a short time, those who had borne the burden for a long time naturally claimed the same reward. Then the Board of Proclamations yielded to the pressure of bribery and recommended more and more those who coveted the honor enough to pay for it. "The lazy and useless were all made princes and the officers outside, who were exerting themselves daily, were much displeased and refused to fight. Those of ability and talent were thrown aside, the T'ienwang preferring to form the pillars of his dynasty with the indolent and useless." Then he had to resort to making distinctions among the different *wangs*, and this but added to the confusion by alienating the really able men. By the end of the war there were said to have been as many as 2,700 of these *wangs* in several grades, practically all of them being regarded simply as officials with titles of honor, not more than three or four of them possessing any special ability. There is some indication that they came to form a kind of parliament, sanction of which had to be obtained for the more important affairs of state, such as military expeditions or plans of defence.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹² But Lindley states that the T'ienwang had the final decision. The Chungwang gives the impression that while the T'ienwang did have the

Below the ranks of kings stood the dukes, of whom the titles of but thirteen are known. In the days when the title of "king" had practically lapsed, the T'ienwang established five grades of nobility ranking below the dukes but almost on an equality with them. These bore the curious titles of "Celestial Pleasure," "Celestial Rest," "Celestial Happiness," "Celestial Tranquillity," and "Celestial Righteousness." The total number receiving these titles of nobility was but fourteen, and after the *wangs* became so common there was little reason for creating any of these lower nobles. Indeed, there is some indication that the titles were unpopular and brought the Taipings into ridicule when they came in contact with their enemies.¹³

The limits of the Taiping state were never fixed, consequently the boards could not settle down to the peaceful administration of the country. But where they had control officers were required. The more capable of the "older brethren" were promoted to the higher positions and sent forth to administer the portion of the country which came under their control. For administrative purposes the territory they held outside of Nanking was divided into districts of 12,500 families, which were subdivided almost exactly as in the army until the 'neighborhood' of five families was reached. The chief unit was apparently the hamlet of twenty-five families, presided over by an officer called "Ssu-ma of the Hamlet," and the officials above them all bore the same titles as the army officers. The highest territorial division was the *chun* which apparently corresponded to the prefecture under

authority he leaned too much on his relatives, especially Hung Jen-kan (Hung Jin), who was particularly hated by the Chungwang.

¹³ Tsêng Kuo-fan, in a letter July 19, 1861, expresses a desire to destroy "the religion of the Heavenly Father and Heavenly brother, and the officials 'Celestial Rest' and 'Celestial Pleasure.'"

the Manchus. Below it was the *chow* and *hsien*, and under that the divisions of 12,500 families. Each *chow* or *hsien* would therefore have from two to three of these districts, each of them responsible for the maintenance of one army, and each family for one soldier. The raising of taxes and contributions, and the oversight of community worship and education fell to the lot of the "Ssu-ma of the Hamlet." He had to see that the children (and the adults in newly conquered regions) learned the Ten Commandments. Each of these small hamlets was to be supplied with the necessary artisans to make it an economic unit—potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, and masons.¹⁴

The system described above closely resembles that in effect during the Chow Dynasty, and, as in the case of the army, appears to have been derived from that ancient period. If so, we may consider that the sovereign regarded himself as the owner of the soil and allotted it according to the needs of the people, who, in turn, were obliged to render to him, through the efforts of the "Ssu-ma," the twenty-five soldiers levied on them and the required taxes of grain and other produce for their support.

Although this system did not prevail in its completed form, and civil government never came to supersede the military system, those departments which supplied the army and the families of soldiers were thoroughly and efficiently organized. The commissariat and the bureaus for providing supplies were carefully divided among many officers, each responsible for furnishing one thing, grain, salt, oil, cannon, gunpowder, cannon-balls, salt-peter, iron, banners, or flags.¹⁵ The lists of officials in-

¹⁴ Lindley, I, 217-219, taken from the "Regulations of the Celestial Dynasty" issued in 1857. Also Brine, pp. 210-212; *Tai ping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, II, 26.

¹⁵ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, supplementary volume, III, 3a.

clude those engaged in nearly every form of occupation, such as public printers, watchmen, foremen, physicians and druggists, superintendents in trade, and cooks in public institutions. To give official rank to many of these shows us that the statements made elsewhere about the socialistic-military type of government, prevailing at the Taiping capital and in some of the chief cities, are based on the actual organisation of their state.¹⁶

It was apparently the intention of the T'ienwang to organise the country on the basis of definite holdings of land graded according to its yield into nine classes, and distributed among the peasants according to their needs.¹⁷ That this provision was ever carried into effect is doubtful. It was found necessary throughout the long struggle to insure supplies to the great armies constantly in the field and especially to their families and the officials at Nanking. No chances could be taken of losing the co-operation of agriculturists. Within the areas well under control we therefore find the village and rural population subject to taxation indeed, but less burdened than under Manchu rule, while on the other hand their products were purchased at fair prices and not taken from them forcibly.¹⁸ Apart from strictly enforcing the religious and moral precepts of their faith, overturning the idols and temples, and forbidding the use of opium and alcohol,¹⁹ the insurgents did all they could to encourage agriculture²⁰ and trade. The statistics for these years show that the export of tea actually increased under the Taipings from 1858 to 1862,²¹ while silk practically held its own.

¹⁶ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, supplementary volume, III, 3a.

¹⁷ Lindley, I, 218 f.

¹⁸ Meadows, p. 291.

¹⁹ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, supplementary volume, IV, 4, also II, 11a.

²⁰ Meadows, p. 291.

²¹ Sykes, *The Taiping Rebellion in China*, appendix, p. 178.

Internal transit duties were not collected and the trade must have moved with unusual freedom.²²

The matter which chiefly engaged the government, after its physical needs were met, was the promulgation of religion. Each officer and official, from the T'ienwang himself down to the "vexillaries" (Ssu-ma) in army or hamlet, had to be alert to instruct the people in the new faith, compelling them to learn the Ten Commandments and the stated prayers together with the doxology. We have already recorded the Sabbath services of these people, which were always led by officers—if possible by one of the older adherents of the movement. Sources both friendly and hostile join in stating that these observances were carried out with regularity.²³

The position of women has been referred to in other connections, their participation as soldiers and, after Nanking was gained, their position in the various institutions provided for their care. Marriage was compulsory for all classes of women, high and low alike. Contrary to the ordinary Chinese custom, whereby great honor is conferred on virtuous widows who refuse to remarry, these were required to accept a new husband. From the connection of their religion with the Bible and their ferocious laws against immorality they would be expected to enforce strict monogamy, but this was far from true. Hung Ta-ch'üan's statement²⁴ that Hung kept an extensive harem is more than confirmed by the statement of

²² Lindley, p. 145, in a letter from Lo Ta-kang to Sir George Bonham, 1853. See also Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America*, for an account of his visit to the tea regions under control of the Taiping rebels.

²³ *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, supplementary volume, II, 10, 11a. Lindley, I, 217 ff., gives the regulations of 1857. By this time the doxology appears to have been revised, leaving out the references to the Eastern king and the other *wangs*. The first-named work states that on every possible occasion there was a sermon glorifying God's work in creation and that of the two highest kings, Hung and Yang, in sustaining the people.

²⁴ See chapter III.

the second T'ienwang, Hung Fu-t'ien, captured after the fall of Nanking, who says: "I am sixteen years old and am the son of the second wife (named Lai) of the T'ienwang's 88 wives. At the age of nine I had four wives given to me. . . ." The law of strict seclusion of women was evidently not intended to prevent polygamy, at least among the higher ranks. On the whole the impression is given that women were somewhat less repressed under them than under the regular régime; among other things foot-binding was abandoned.

One of the first acts of the new government in Nanking was to provide for a system of examinations based on the ancient models, for recruiting officials both civil and military. Regulations were drawn up and at least some examinations held. The classics having been discarded, together with all books of the Manchu era, they substituted themes from the Bible and the Taiping writings. In the first examination the subject prescribed for the essay was "The Heavenly Father on the seventh day had finished creating the mountains and seas." For the poem the following couplet was the theme:

The T'ienwang and the Tungwang with anxious hearts have labored;
In tranquillity sustaining the people of the world. How sublime their virtue!²⁵

From this creditable side of their activities it is not so easy to turn to the subject of their cruelty. If they were intent upon order and good morals in their ranks, they were stern enough to believe that their reforms could be accomplished only by terrible penalties. Death was prescribed for a large number of crimes and offences—beheading for less serious cases, while for those of a more heinous character beheading and throwing away the

²⁵ *Taiping T'ien-kuo Yeh Shi*, VIII.

head or exposing the head, constituted the penalty. Two fearful punishments were reserved for treason, adultery, or other black offences: tearing the body to pieces by attaching head, arms, and legs to five separate horses and lashing them to make them pull in different directions, and lighting the "Celestial lamp." In the last-named punishment the hapless victim was soaked or wrapped in inflammable materials, such as oil, and burned to death. This was not, perhaps, more cruel than the *ling chih* process of slicing a person to pieces, which the imperialists used in extreme cases, but it made the shudders run down the spine of those who told of them. Death was the punishment for crimes ranging from treason to the singing of wanton songs and absence from divine worship.²⁶

²⁶ *Ibid.*, VII.