

## CHAPTER TWO

### Founder of the Family : Sun Jian

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*Introductory summary:*

Sun Jian was a man of undistinguished family from an isolated region by present-day Hangzhou. He came to note as the leader of troops against rebels, first in his own region of Wu and Kuaiji, then in operations against the great uprising of the Yellow Turbans in 184, and he later held command in Liang province in the northwest.

Appointed Grand Administrator of Changsha commandery, Sun Jian brought swift military order to the region and established personal authority. In 189, the death of Emperor Ling was followed by chaos in the capital which gave opportunity to the frontier general Dong Zhuo to seize power. This usurpation, however, brought widespread rebellion and marked the beginning of the civil war which ended the power of Han.

Sun Jian brought an army north to join the conflict, and took service under Yuan Shu, one of the great gentry commanders in the "loyal rebel" alliance. As fighting commander of Yuan Shu's forces, Sun Jian fought his way to Luoyang and drove Dong Zhuo west to Chang'an. Soon afterwards, however, the alliance broke up, and north China became an arena for contending warlords. Sun Jian was sent by Yuan Shu to attack Liu Biao the Governor of Jing province, but he met his death on that campaign.

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*His birth, his background and his early career (c. AD 155-184):*

Sun Jian was born, probably in 155,<sup>1</sup> in the county of Fuchun in Wu commandery in Yang province of Later Han. The site of the former county city of Fuchun is now Fuyang, on the northern bank of the Fuchun River, some thirty kilometres southeast of present-day Hangzhou.

We do not have a great deal of information on the background and early life of Sun Jian. According to *Wu shu*, the official history of the imperial state founded by his son Sun Quan, the family had a lineage over six hundred years old, traced back to the celebrated general Sun Wu, who served the ancient state of Wu at the end of the sixth century BC and who was credited with the authorship of the classical work, *The Art of War*. The descendants of Sun Wu, ancestors of Sun Jian, continued as officials of Wu at least until the destruction of that kingdom about 473. *Wu shu* adds that the Sun

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<sup>1</sup> According to *Wu lu*, quoted in the commentary to the biography of Sun Jian in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1101, Sun Jian was thirty-seven *sui* at the time of his death.

The main text of *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1100, gives the date of his last campaign as Chuping 3 (192/193). *Yingxiong ji*, also quoted in the commentary, gives the date of Sun Jian's death as the seventh day of the first month of Chuping 4 (25 Feb 193). This could be reconciled with the main text of *SGZ* if we assume that the military operations began at the end of Chuping 3.

The *Hou Han ji* of Yuan Hong, 27, 3b, has the date of Sun Jian's death in the fifth month of Chuping 3; but despite its chronicle form, the dating of *Hou Han ji* in its present form is often erratic.

Sima Guang, however, in *ZZTJ* 60, 1928, sets the date in Chuping 2 (191/192), and in his *Kaoyi* commentary he notes that a memorial of Sun Jian's son Sun Ce, written about 197 (translated and discussed in Chapter 2), refers to the death of Sun Jian when Sun Ce himself was seventeen. Since Sun Ce died in Jian'an 5 (200/201) at the age of twenty-six *sui*, Sun Jian should have died nine years earlier. Sima Guang also cites the *Han ji* of Zhang Fan and *Wu li*, both cited in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1107 PC note 5, which give the date of Sun Jian's death as Chuping 2.

Considering the progress of events at the time, as discussed below, and assuming also that Sun Ce, writing an official memorial, would be carefully informed about the date of his father's death, I accept the argument and evidence presented by Sima Guang, and date the death of Sun Jian to the latter part of the Chinese year Chuping 2, the winter of 191-192.

If this is correct, and if we can accept the statement of *Wu lu* about his age at that time, then Sun Jian was born in 155 AD.

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family had a burial ground to the east of the city of Fuchun, and that wondrous signs were seen about the graves.<sup>2</sup>

Naturally enough, the official chroniclers of the new state of Wu were duty bound to recount something of the father of their first emperor, and it is not surprising if those who went to look for material were supplied with tales of an ancient lineage and of portents appropriate to the head of a great house.

It is possible that the Sun family of Fuchun were descended from the legendary Sun Wu, but after so many centuries there can have been limited relevance or value to the claim. More significantly, perhaps, the fact that the distant Sun Wu was the only famous ancestor ascribed to the family implies that no other relative had risen to high office since the fall of the ancient state in the fifth century BC, and it is almost certain that no member of the clan had held any substantial post under the Han dynasty. In *Sanguo zhi*, as in other standard histories, it is common practice to mention the ancestry of the subject of a biography and to indicate the titles and official careers of his relatives. And where the main text of *Sanguo zhi* fails to give this information, the commentary of Pei Songzhi is often able to quote private clan records, local histories or more general works.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the chroniclers of Wu mentioned no officials of Han who could be related to Sun Jian strongly suggests that his family had played a very small part in the three and a half centuries of the history of the dynasty.

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<sup>2</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1093 PC note 1; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 20.

On Sun Wu, see his biography in *SJ* 65, 2161-62. On the book "The Art of War," *Sunzi bingfa*, see Griffith, *Sun Tzu*.

<sup>3</sup> *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1259, for example, describes the offices held by earlier members of the family of Zhou Yu, including two men who became grand commandants, highest position of the Han bureaucracy, and Zhou Yu's father Yi, who became Prefect of Luoyang, capital of the empire; and PC note 1 to *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1343 quotes the *Lushi shi song*, evidently a clan record, describing the positions, as colonel and commandery chief commandant, held by the grandfather and father of Lu Xun; and PC note 1 to *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, 1377 quotes the *Jin shu* of Yu Yu on the early family history of He Qi, including the fact that his father Fu became Chief of the small and outlying county of Yongning in present-day Fujian province. On this basis, any official position held by an ancestor of Sun Jian, no matter how unimportant, would surely have been mentioned.

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Though *Sanguo zhi* mentions his ancestor Sun Wu, there is no good account of Sun Jian's father. An anecdote preserved among some tales of marvels suggests that he was called Sun Zhong, but neither *Wu shu* nor *Sanguo zhi* record the personal name of the man who was, after all, the grandfather of an emperor.<sup>4</sup> At the least, we must take this as an indication that the family into which Sun Jian was born was obscure and unimportant.

Concerning Sun Jian's mother we are told only that when his mother was pregnant with Sun Jian, she dreamt that her intestines came out of her and wound around the Chang Gate of the city of Wu. She woke up and was afraid, and she

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<sup>4</sup> In the fifth-century compilation *Yi yuan*, attributed to Liu Jingshu of the Liu Song dynasty, 4, 1a, translated by Straughair, "Garden of Marvels," 77-78, we are told that Sun Zhong of Fuchun, who became the father of Sun Jian, was a worthy man who earned his living by growing melons. One day, a beautiful three-year-old child appeared before him, and asked him for one of his wares. Sun Zhong served him with courtesy, and then some men standing, impressed by his fine conduct, by revealed themselves as divine officials, and offered Sun Zhong a choice: whether his descendants should hold the rank of marquis for many generations, or whether they should be emperors, but for only a few generations.

Sun Zhong chose to have his family become emperors. There were celebrations, a suitable grave-site was chosen for the family, and the spirits changed themselves into the form of white geese as they left.

*Yi yuan* mentions an alternative version of the tale: that Sun Jian was mourning his father's death when he was approached by a man who gave Sun Jian that choice. Sun Jian, as in the first account, chose the imperial alternative; the man showed him a suitable spot for his father's grave, and then disappeared.

The story of Sun Zhong and the melons is cited again by *Meng qiu* B, 23a-b. This work, compiled by Li Han of the tenth century, is basically a list of common sayings and the anecdotes which explain them. There, the expression "Sun Zhong offers melons" is listed and discussed in terms of the first version from *Yi yuan*, that a small work of goodness may earn a great reward.

So there was evidently a folk tradition of this nature, and it was collected into the *Yi yuan*. On the other hand, the story is not endorsed by Chen Shou or Pei Songzhi, and it has no useful connection with any facts in the history. Even the emphasis on the matter of the grave site is contradictory: *Wu shu*, as we noticed above, says that the Sun family had long been resident at Fuchun, and possessed an established burial ground. There were wonderful lights and clouds there, but no melons, children, or messengers from on high.

In such circumstances, it is difficult to give credence to any details of the story, and the personal name of Sun Jian's father must remain undetermined.

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told the elder women of her neighbourhood. The neighbour women said, "How do you know that isn't a good sign?" Then Sun Jian was born, and he was not a boy of ordinary appearance; he was generous, intelligent and fond of unusual behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

The city of Wu, present-day Suzhou, was about a hundred and fifty kilometres from Fuchun, and the Chang Gate, chief entrance on the western wall, was one of the celebrated sights of the region, so the future mother may well have seen the place in reality before it appeared in her dream. One must, however, sympathise with her, experiencing one of the more dubious portents of future greatness, while despite Sun Jian's fine appearance, the interpretation of the dream can have been made little clearer by the fact that he was born the second of twins and his elder brother Sun Qiang also grew to manhood.<sup>6</sup>

Fuchun lay in a frontier region. Though it was close to the centres of Chinese population along the shores of Hangzhou Bay, the county was situated at the edge of the hill country of northern Zhejiang, where few Chinese settlements had been established up to that time.<sup>7</sup> The area as a whole had been part of the Chinese

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<sup>5</sup> *SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1093 PC note 1* quoting *Wu shu*. A more detailed and slightly different account and interpretation from a fourth-century text is provided by Cutter and Crowell, *Empresses and Consorts*, 213.

<sup>6</sup> The biography of Sun Jian's nephew, Sun Ben, in *SGZ 51/Wu 6, 1209*, says that Sun Ben was a son of Sun Qiang, who was the twin of Sun Jian. Though Sun Qiang lived long enough to sire Sun Ben and his brother Sun Fu, he died while they were still children.

<sup>7</sup> Fuchun, as we have seen, was on the Fuchun river, southwest of present-day Hangzhou. Some distance to the north, the county of Yuhang, in Wu commandery, was in a separate valley due west of present-day Hangzhou.

South of Fuchun, the county of Taimo (or Damo) in Kuaiji commandery, west of present-day Jinhua, was on a tributary of the Fuchun river upstream from Fuchun county and further into the mountains; it is likely, however, that Taimo was connected to the main part of Kuaiji by the line of the present railway, across a low watershed to the Puyang River, rather than downstream past Fuchun, which was in a different commandery.

West of Fuchun, the county of Yuqian in Danyang commandery, close to the present-day city of the same name, was in a different valley. Like Taimo, it represented an extension of Chinese authority from a different hinterland, not a territory which lay between Fuchun and the gradually expanding frontier with the non-Chinese.

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world for centuries, but it was not a centre of great interest during the Han period, and major development had followed the routes south from the middle Yangzi towards present-day Guangdong, rather than to this corner of the east. Though there was trade and other contact with the non-Chinese peoples of the hills, and some immigration of Chinese from the north, Fuchun under Later Han was something of a backwater.

The local Sun family had evidently been in this region for some generations, for they had an established grave site across the river to the east of the city. Legend tells us that strange lights appeared above the tombs, and there was a multi-coloured cloud which reached to the heavens and spread out for several *li*. More practically, the family burial ground, whether or not it was the site of wonderful omens, is evidence of some stability and status in the community.

Sun Jian's biography says that while he was still young, no more than fifteen or sixteen, he was appointed a junior civil officer in the county administration. This, in itself, may show the position of his family. Had Sun Jian belonged to one of the great clans of the region, he could have gained entry into the civil service by recommendation to the throne, he might have served a short time in the local office of the Grand Administrator of Wu commandery, but he would then have been nominated as a "Filially Pious and Incorrupt" candidate from the commandery administration or even as "Flourishing Talent," a recommendation granted by the province.<sup>8</sup> A young man of great family, with considerable local influence and with relatives already among the bureaucracy, would treat the local administrators as senior and respected members of his own class, and could expect to receive their favour, patronage and recommendation almost as a right.

Sun Jian had no such position and no hope of such consideration, but his family was at least sufficiently well known for him to gain appointment in the local county office. If he had

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See *HHSJJ* 112/22, 50a, 49a, 45b and 39a, and *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* II, 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> On the recommendations "Filially Pious and Incorrupt" (*xiaolian*) and "Flourishing [or Abundant] Talent" (*maocai*), see de Crespigny, "Recruitment," 69-71, and Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 134-137.

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come from the poorest classes he would not have had sufficient time free from the daily struggle for subsistence to be able to offer his services, and it is very unlikely that he would have been given employment. As it was, for a young man of some ambition and leisure, office in the local government could be the first step to a political career and, even should he rise no higher, the contacts that he made and the influence that he could gain through his service would be some protection against the possibility of petty oppression in the future. To a large extent, in imperial China, office in government at any level was as much a means of personal and family insurance as it was an opportunity for public service.

In Han times, the term *li* served as a general description of any junior officer in the civil administration. In the commanderies and counties, the holders of these low-ranking posts were appointed locally, and the term could refer to a clerk in the office or to one of the yamen runners. Sun Jian did not occupy an important post, and from his later career as a fighting man we may guess that he held his initial position as a policeman or guard at the county offices.

According to Sun Jian's biography, he first gained effective notice at the age of seventeen *sui*, and if the date of his birth has been calculated correctly, the incident must have taken place in the year 171. At that time, he went with his father on a trip to Qiantang, which lay northeast from Fuchun, at the mouth of the Fuchun River, by present-day Hangzhou.<sup>9</sup> As they travelled, they learnt that the local pirate, Hu Yu, had set up a camp close by, had robbed travellers of their goods, and was now dividing shares with his band. None of the boats on the river dared to go past. Sun Jian asked permission of his father to attack them, but his father replied only that "This is nothing to do with you."

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<sup>9</sup> Qiantang had been a county seat under Former Han (*HS* 28, 1591), but the county had been disestablished for most of Later Han. The town, of course, remained, but it was probably administered by the neighbouring county city of Yuhang (note 7 above).

Towards the end of Later Han, probably about this time, Qiantang was restored to county status: in 185 the general Zhu Jun was rewarded with title as Marquis of Qiantang, and it is very likely this was a county fief (*HHS* 71/61, 2310).

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Nevertheless, Sun Jian climbed up on the bank and went alone, carrying his sword, towards the bandits. When he came in sight of them, he waved his arms and pointed to one side and then the other, as if he was giving signals to soldiers deploying for attack. The pirates thought that Sun Jian was the leader of government troops come to capture them, and they scattered in flight. Sun Jian chased after them, and he caught one man and cut off his head and came back with the evidence of his victory. His father was very surprised.

The pirate Hu Yu was only a petty criminal, the defeat of his band was a matter of no more than local significance, and there is no reference to the skirmish anywhere else in the histories. According to his biography, however, as a result of this exploit the county office appointed Sun Jian as a temporary Commandant, so he had now made a name for himself and had gained a post as a military officer.

The account of this incident contains the only reference to Sun Jian's father in the official histories of the time, and it is noticeable that his reaction to Sun Jian's fine ambition is not enthusiastic. "This is nothing to do with you" is a curious speech from the father of such a hero. While the evidence is unsupported, and any passages claimed as direct speech must be doubted, there was at least a tradition that Sun Jian's father was a man of no great hardihood, and there are indications which suggest that he was a merchant. The trip to Qiantang need not have been the first that he had made, and his disapproval of his son's proposed sortie and his preference for minding his own business fit very well with the traditional picture of the Chinese trader. In the Confucian view, merchants were the least valuable class of society, and if the merchants were regarded with disdain by officials, they would have few feelings of public spirit. On the other hand, if Sun Jian had hopes of an official career, it would not have been difficult for the son of a reasonably prosperous merchant family to obtain his appointment to a minor post in the local government.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On the status of merchants in Han, see, for example, Ch'ü, *Social Structure*, 113-122. There was some attempt to restrict the entry of merchants into the bureaucracy, but it does not appear to have been consistently or



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Sun Jian's appointment as a junior officer came at just about the same time as the outbreak of the rebellion of Xu Chang, a man who pretended to have supernatural powers and who made a rising at Juzhang in Kuaiji commandery, now in the region of Ningbo on the south of Hangzhou Bay.<sup>11</sup> According to the Annals of Emperor

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effectively maintained, and in any case appears to have been applied specifically to those individuals who had registered as traders in a market, not to their relatives and descendants: Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1093, describes Xu Chang as a *yao ze* "heretic rebel" (Chapter 1 at note 26) who proclaimed himself "Emperor of the Brightness of Yang," and who was assisted by his son Xu Shao. The *Lingdi ji* of Liu Ai, quoted in commentary note 2 to that text, adds that Xu Chang named his father as King of Yue, while HHS 8, 334, the Annals of Emperor Ling, says that Xu Sheng of Kuaiji named himself King of Yue. Yue was the name of the ancient state and the people of that region below Hangzhou Bay, and Eichhorn, "Chang Chio und Chang Lu," 298, describes the rebellion as a nationalist revolt of the Yue people. It seems more likely, however, that the name was taken from the region rather than from the people, and Xu Chang's forces included a substantial Chinese component.

*Dongguan Hanji* 3, 5b, says that the names of the rebels were Xu Zhao, who called himself General-in-Chief, and his father Sheng, who was named King of Yue. HHS 58/48, 1884, being the biography of Zang Hong, son of Zang Min, and HHS 102/12, 3258, the Treatise of Astronomy, agree.

By changing the character Zhao to Shao, Chen Shou avoided the tabu on the personal name of Sima Zhao (211-265), posthumously entitled Emperor Wen of Jin (*JS* 2, 32 and 44), so there is no real incompatibility.

Nevertheless, where HHS and *Dongguan Hanji* refer to the rebels as Xu Sheng and his son Shao/Zhao, SGZ and *Lingdi ji* say that the rebels were Xu Chang, his son Shao/Zhao, and Xu Chang's father (unnamed, but presumably Xu Sheng). *ZZTJ* 57, 1831, says that Xu Sheng called himself Emperor, so Sima Guang has combined the differing accounts, but his *Kaoyi* commentary does not discuss the matter.

There is, however, one particular reason for suggesting that Xu Chang was the name of one of the rebel leaders. According to the apocryphal book *Chunqiu zuozhu qi*, "Helpful Forecasts from the Spring and Autumn Annals, which was in circulation during Later Han, the dynasty was to lose its dominion because of/by means of *xu chang*.

Tjan, *White Tiger Discussions* I, 117, matches this prophecy with the change of the name of the capital of Cao Pi, first Emperor of Wei, from Xu to Xuchang in 221, soon after he had compelled the abdication of the Han Emperor Xian in his favour: SGZ 2, 77. SGZ 2, 64 PC quotes from a long memorial which was presented at that time by the Assistant Grand Astronomer Xu Zhi, discussing the prophecies which foretold the succession of Wei to Han, and including a

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Ling in *Hou Han shu*, the rebellion broke out in 172 and was not put down until 174. According to Sun Jian's own biography, the commandery administration appointed him a Major and had him raise troops in Wu commandery. He collected more than a thousand men and took part in the campaigns which destroyed the rebels.

Both the early military appointments that Sun Jian held were a little unusual. In the first instance, after the defeat of Hu Yu and his pirates, Sun Jian evidently held temporary appointment as commandant in Fuchun county. It was not a substantive post, and he may have been no more than a senior assistant to the regular commandant.<sup>12</sup> Formally speaking, he was still a civilian official,

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reference to the passage from *Chunqiu zuozhu qi*, which he duly interprets in relation to the city of Xu/Xuchang (now Xuchang in Henan). On the political background of this memorial, see Leban, "Managing Heaven's Mandate," particularly at 328, and the more recent work of Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i Transcendent*, 101-102.

It is very possible, however, that the rebel of the Xu surname, operating in Kuaiji fifty years earlier, may have taken the personal name Chang because he expected to fulfil the prophecy on his own account - or he may have devised the prophecy to match his own name.

See also de Crespigny, *Huan and Ling*. II, 473-475, note 41 to Xiping 1

<sup>12</sup> On the duties of commandants in counties during Later Han, see Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 100-101.

The expression *jia* here rendered as "temporary, is understood by Bielenstein simply as "acting:" see, for example, *Bureaucracy*, 121, referring to an "Acting Major" and an "Acting Captain." I note, however, that Bielenstein also renders the term *xing* as "Acting, as in the status of the first appointments to the post of General Who Crosses the Liao: *Bureaucracy*, 120; on this I agree with him (*e.g. Northern Frontier*, 4). In this context, *xing* may be understood as an abbreviation for *xing ...shi*: "to practice/act in the affairs of such and such an office."

The term *jia*, on the other hand, appears as a prefix to the ranks of major and captain in *HHS* 114/24, 3564, and the Treatise of Officials there explains it as *fu'er* "assistant."

It is possible that the terms *xing* and *jia* were commonly used as synonyms, but I suggest the qualification *jia* may have had a sense of exceptional appointment, where a man was being given a post to which he was not formally entitled by virtue of his current substantive rank; there is perhaps something of an analogy to the use of "brevet" ranks in the British Army before the Second World War.

By this interpretation, the prefix *jia* to Sun Jian's appointment as a county commandant recognises that he had not yet received a commission as a member

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but his duties required him to supervise the military security and the police of the county, as well as the annual conscription for military service.

From this experience of minor para-military authority, Sun Jian was called up by the commandery office, given the rank of major, and sent to recruit troops against the rebels. Such "recruitment" was actually a press system: in normal times there was regular conscription for short-term military service, generally a period of basic training followed by a year of largely unskilled guard or garrison duty, and in local areas there were small units at commandery and county headquarters composed largely of volunteers, as Sun Jian had been. Fully trained regular soldiers were generally stationed only at the capital, on the northern frontier, or in special garrison camps, again in the northern part of the empire.<sup>13</sup> In time of local emergency, such that presented by the rebellion of Xu Chang, extra troops had to be levied on the spot, and Sun Jian was given a special commission and a small escort, and sent to seize any man of military experience as a conscript for the campaign.<sup>14</sup>

With the men he collected by this means, Sun Jian did well enough to attract the notice of the Inspector of Yang province, Zang Min, who was in overall command of the local forces. Zang Min recommended Sun Jian to the capital, and an imperial letter appointed him Assistant of Yandu county in Guangling commandery, on the sea coast near present-day Yancheng in Jiangsu.<sup>15</sup>

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of the regular imperial bureaucracy and was not formally entitled to the substantive post.

One may note that the term *shou* is also used on occasion as a qualifier for offices, and may likewise be rendered as "acting;" it too appears to have brevet significance comparable to *jia*.

<sup>13</sup> On the military recruitment and conscription system of Later Han see Chapter 1 at note 123, and, de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 45-50.

<sup>14</sup> For earlier examples of this emergency press, see Bielenstein, *RHD* II, 69 and 207 ff.

<sup>15</sup> On the county of Yandu, see *HHSJJ* 11/21, 21b. Geologically, the tectonic plate of China Proper is gradually tilting, so that the northern part is rising and south China is sinking. At the same time, the coastline of present-day northern Jiangsu, like all the region of the Yangzi delta, has been extended

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We have observed that commissioned entry into the imperial civil service could be obtained through recommendation by a commandery or provincial government as a "Filiably Pious and Incorrupt" or "Flourishing Talent." A "Flourishing Talent" candidate could be employed at once, but since only one recommendation was allowed to each of the thirteen provinces in any year, together with a few more from very senior officials at the capital, not many candidates gained entry by this means. The more common route of entry, as "Filiably Pious and Incorrupt" from a commandery, admitted the future official to a position among the Gentlemen cadets who attended court as ceremonial guards of the emperor. In theory, the time spent at the palace gave the emperor and senior court officials the opportunity to observe and judge the character of the candidate. In fact, however, by the later years of Han, the probation was no more than a matter of form, and the recommendation from local government was the effective means of entry into the imperial service.

The principle behind the procedure of recommendation and appointment was that any person who wished to hold senior rank must receive the commission of the emperor. The lowest positions in the government, both in the capital and in the empire as a whole, could be filled by local and general recruitment, but those who held such posts were in much the same position as non-commissioned officers in an army: no matter how long they served they could not rise above a certain rank. On the other hand, gentlemen who had received the imperial commission could be appointed from the capital to take charge of any local government in the empire, and they could rise through successive posts at the capital or in the provinces to reach the highest offices of the land. This gap between the locally appointed, non-commissioned officers and the officials with commissions from the capital was generally bridged by the process of recommendation.

Up to this time, though Sun Jian had commanded troops in the government service, all his appointments had been made by local

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eastwards by the silt brought down the Yangzi and the Huai. As a result, though the ancient site of Yandu is now some forty kilometres inland, during Later Han the city was very close to the sea. The character *yan* no doubt refers to a local industry of salt collection from pans laid out in the tidal waters.

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administrations, and he had no imperial recognition. When Zang Min sent in his report on good conduct, however, and Sun Jian received a letter from the imperial government to grant him the post at Yandu, that document represented his commission into the imperial civil service, and Zang Min's recommendation, though not in the usual form of candidacy, had gained Sun Jian a vital step in his career.

It was about this time that Sun Jian was married. He was now aged nineteen by Western reckoning, and he was established in a respectable position. His wife, the Lady Wu, whose personal name is not recorded, came from the city of Wu, the capital of the commandery, but her family had migrated to Qiantang. Her parents both died when she was young, and she lived with her younger brother Wu Jing and other relatives.<sup>16</sup> The Wu family may have been of somewhat higher status than Sun Jian's, and we are told that at first the relatives disapproved of Sun Jian as idle and untrustworthy. Sun Jian, though quite taken by the beauty and character of the Lady Wu, was humiliated and angry at the rejection of his suit, and it was the Lady Wu who smoothed things over and persuaded her family to let her take the gamble. Sun Jian's new status in the government service would also have reassured the Wu family that the alliance was a worthwhile investment.

The first son of the marriage was Sun Ce, born in 175. The second son, Sun Quan, future Emperor of Wu, was born in 182. Two more boys, Sun Yi and Sun Kuang, were born in later years, and also at least one daughter. At the same time, Sun Jian acknowledged one son, Sun Lang, by another woman, possibly a recognised concubine, perhaps a more casual acquaintance, and the history refers to two other daughters, probably not born to the Lady Wu.<sup>17</sup> It does not appear, however, that there were major

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<sup>16</sup> The biography of the Lady Wu is in *SGZ* 50/Wu 5, 1195-96, the chapter of the biographies of the consorts of the imperial Sun family, translated by Cutter and Crowell, *Empresses and Consorts*, 122-124. The biography of the Lady's brother Wu Jing is incorporated with that of his sister.

<sup>17</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1101, at the end of the biography of Sun Jian, gives the names of his four sons Ce, Quan, Yi and Kuang; the commentary to that text quotes the *Zhi lin* of Yu Xi, which adds the information that a younger son,

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strains between Sun Jian and his wife, and the Lady Wu and her brother were important advisers and allies to the Sun family in years to come.

Sun Jian served as Assistant at three counties one after another, first at Yandu, then at Xuyi and then at Xiapi. The site of Xuyi is now north of the town of the same name in Jiangsu, south of the Hongze Lake, and Xiapi was east of present-day Picheng in northern Jiangsu; both counties were in Xiapi kingdom in Xu province, and Xiapi was the capital of the kingdom.<sup>18</sup> It was the practice of Han that commissioned officials should not take part in the government of their own native regions, and Sun Jian's postings were all to the north of the Yangzi, more than three hundred kilometres from his home city. He was presumably given his recommendation and first appointment in 174, when the rebellion of Xu Chang had been crushed, and for the next ten years he remained an official in the local administration of Xu province.

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whose name was Lang, with the alternate personal name of Ren, was born to Sun Jian by a concubine.

The situation with regard to daughters is more uncertain. The biography of the Lady Wu, in *SGZ* 50/Wu 5, 1195, says that she bore Sun Jian four sons and one daughter. The commentary of Lu Bi to this passage, however (at *JJ* 1a-b), cites the Qing scholar Qian Dazhao, and notes that there are three sisters of Sun Quan, son of Sun Jian, referred to in the texts:

- a. one elder sister was married to Hong Zi, who is described as admiring the abilities of Zhuge Jin in that man's biography, *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1231;
- b. one elder sister, daughter of a woman of the Chen family and thus a half-sister, was given in marriage by Sun Quan to Pan Mi: *SGZ* 61/Wu 16, 1399 PC note 1 quoting *Wu shu*;
- c. a younger sister was given by Sun Quan to be the wife of the rival warlord Liu Bei in an effort to confirm their alliance about 209; she left Liu Bei and returned to Wu about 211: e.g. *SGZ* 32/Shu 2, 879, and *SGZ* 36/Shu 6, 949 PC note 2 quoting *Zhao Yun biezhuàn*; also Chapter 5.

It seems likely that it was the younger sister of Sun Quan who was the child of Sun Jian and the Lady Wu. The two elder were probably both half-sisters of Sun Quan and his brothers: we are told specifically that the lady referred to in b. above was the child of a woman of another family, and neither Pan Mi nor Hong Zi were remarkably distinguished men.

Once again, we are not told the personal names of any of these female members of the Sun family, not even that of Sun Quan's full sister, the wife of Liu Bei.

<sup>18</sup> On the counties of Xiapi and Xuyi, see *HHSJJ* 111/21, 23b and 22b.

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Yandu and Xuyi were comparatively minor counties, headed by a Chief, with a population less than ten thousand households. Xiapi was larger, with a more considerable population and greater importance as the site of a commandery capital. The head of the county administration was a Prefect, who had slightly higher rank and salary, and the Assistant presumably shared some of that prestige.<sup>19</sup> Despite this, Sun Jian had gained no real promotion in the service, he was still only an assistant magistrate, and he held no independent responsibility. On the other hand, *Jiangbiao zhuan*, the local history of the lands beyond the Yangzi, compiled in the third century and quoted in the commentary to Sun Jian's biography, tells us that

Wherever Sun Jian went he gained a good reputation, and the officers and people loved him and trusted him. There were always hundreds of his old friends from his home district and young adventurers who came visiting him. Sun Jian looked after them and cared for them like his own family.<sup>20</sup>

In 184 Sun Jian was thirty years old by Chinese reckoning, he held a minor post in the imperial service at Xiapi, he was experienced in war, and he had gathered a small group of friends and followers who might be prepared to support him in the future.

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<sup>19</sup> On prefects, chiefs and their assistants, see the discussion in Chapter 1, and Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 101.

The *Hou Han junguo lingzhang kao* of Qian Dazhao, in *ESWSBB* II, 2074, produces evidence that the county of Xiapi was headed by a prefect. The supplement to that work, however, compiled by Ding Xitian, in *ESWSBB* II, 2081, produces evidence to show that at some stage the county was headed only by a chief. It seems, however, that in the latter part of Later Han it was a prefectural office

Neither of the two works have any comment to make on the size or status of the other two counties in which Sun Jian served, and the commentary of Ma Yulong, quoted in *HHSJJ*, which is sometimes also helpful, has nothing more to offer.

<sup>20</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1094 PC note 3 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 31.

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*The rise to high command (184-189):*

The Chinese year which began on 31 January 184 was a *jiazi* year, first of a new series in the sexagenary calendar. This year was also the beginning of the end of the power of the Han dynasty, as major disorder in two parts of the empire disrupted the administration of the provinces and strained the resources of the government at the capital. In the east, there was the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans led by Zhang Jue, and in the northwest there was rebellion in Liang province.<sup>21</sup>

Under such pressures, the armies of Emperor Ling were barely able to hold their own, but the difficulties of the empire gave Sun Jian the opportunity he was fitted for, and his achievements first against the Yellow Turbans and then in the northwest gave him rank and honour which he could never have expected in normal times of peace.

Zhang Jue was a man from Julu commandery in Ji province, in the south of present-day Hebei. For several years he had used a form of Taoism to cure the sick by confession of sins and by faith healing, and as people came to follow his teaching he and his brothers Zhang Bao and Zhang Liang made a plan for rebellion against the Han. The religion and the politics of the Zhang brothers were based on belief in an apocalyptic change in the order of the world, and they told their followers that in the *jiazi* year, beginning of the new cycle, the sky would become yellow, and that under this new heaven the rule of Han would end and a new era of government begin. The characters *jiazi* became a symbol of the coming change and later, when the followers of Zhang Jue went to battle they wore a yellow cloth bound about their heads as a badge. From this there came the name Yellow Turbans.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Michaud presents a survey of the Yellow Turban rebellion, but a more detailed and imaginative account is provided by Chapter 3 of Leban, "Ts'ao Ts'ao," 60-118. See also ZJTJ 58, 1864-75; de Crespigny, *Huan and Ling*, 174-189, and *Cambridge Han*, 338-340 [Mansvelt Beck, "The Fall of Han"]. On the rebellion in Liang province, see Haloun, "The Liang-chou Rebellion," and de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 146-162.

<sup>22</sup> The Yellow Turban movement, like orthodox and other rebel movements of this time, was strongly influenced by the theories of the Five Powers.



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By the second half of the second century AD, confusion in the imperial government at the capital and tension in the social and political pattern of the provinces had produced a discontent among the people which found some solace in unorthodox religions, and which was reflected even in Confucianism by the superstitions of the New Text school and beliefs in the miraculous powers of sacred texts. At the court in Luoyang, Emperor Huan, predecessor of Emperor Ling, had held state sacrifice to Huang-Lao and the Buddha.<sup>23</sup> In the provinces, there were heterodox sects which maintained their independence or opposition to the government: Xu Chang, whose forces Sun Jian had fought in the early 170s, was only one of their number.<sup>24</sup> With its belief in a new order of nature,

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From the end of Former Han, it had generally been accepted that the dynasty of Han ruled under the auspices of the power of Fire, whose associated colour is red, and that the government which succeeded it would represent the Power of Earth and the colour yellow: according to the theories of the Five Powers, Fire produced - *i.e.* was succeeded by - Earth. On these speculations, see *Cambridge Han*, 360-361 [Mansvelt Beck, "The Fall of Han"].

It was thus quite appropriate for Zhang Jue and his associates to adopt the colour yellow as a badge, though the claim that the colour of the sky would change from blue to yellow may be considered rather a general sign of heavenly approval of their cause than a direct aspect of the theories of the Five Powers themselves.

We may observe, finally, that though the term *huang jin* is commonly rendered as "Yellow Turbans," a convention which I have followed, the headgear involved was almost certainly not a true turban *à la* Sikh, but rather a simple band of coloured cloth tied about the forehead. The custom can still be seen observed by mourners at traditional Chinese funerals; it gained international celebrity from Japanese Kamikaze pilots in the Second World War and its later adoption by Yukio Mishima, and it was used by students of the democracy movement at Tiananmen in 1989.

<sup>23</sup> For further discussion, see de Crespigny, "Politics and Philosophy," 73-80.

<sup>24</sup> *SGZ* 8/Wei 8, 264 PC note 1 quoting *Dian lue*, says that in the Xiping and Guanghe periods of Later Han (172-178 and 179-183) there were a great number of *yao ze* "heretic rebels." One was Zhang Jue, another was the Rice Sect of Hanzhong, on which see Chapter 6, and a certain Luo Yao was active in the region about Chang'an in the lower Wei valley.

There are earlier references to *yao ze* in the annals of *Hou Han shu*: for example in Yang province in 132 (*HHS* 6, 260), in Youfufeng in 150 (*HHS* 7, 296), in Bohai in 165 (*HHS* 7, 316), and of course the Xu group in Kuaiji in 172-174.

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and its plan for a new beginning, the Yellow Turban sect of Zhang Jue was to prove the most dangerous of these enemies of Han.

In preparation for his revolt, Zhang Jue sent disciples out to gain support and organise followers throughout the North China plain. They were encouraged in their recruitment by local political discontent, and by droughts and plague among the people. The rebels even had allies at the imperial court, and they were able to make their preparations while government officials were either ignorant of their intentions or intimidated by their power.

Zhang Jue planned that his followers should rise together throughout the empire, but before the call to arms had been issued the plan was betrayed, the rebel sympathisers in Luoyang were arrested and executed, and the revolt in the provinces had to begin ahead of time, in the second month of 184.<sup>25</sup> Despite the premature

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On the background of these sects, see the articles by Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du Taoïsme", and by Seidel, "Image of the Perfect Ruler."

One should note, however, that although a group of rebels may be described as *yao* by the official histories, such a description tells us no more than that they were alien to the established state cult of Confucianism. Except for the Yellow Turbans and the sect of Zhang Lu, there are no details of their beliefs. Indeed, though we may assume that there were some similarities of faith and superstition common to these movements, there is certainly no reason to assume that any one of them would be in philosophical, religious or (least of all) political agreement with another. See also Chapter 1 at note 15.

Leban, "Ts'ao Ts'ao, 69-70, notes there is a gap of more than ten years between the record of the rising of Xu Chang, defeated in 174, and the outbreak led by Zhang Jue. He suggests this is evidence of Zhang Jue's long-term control over the followers he was gathering, requiring them to avoid local small-scale risings in preparation for the great rebellion to come. I suspect, however, that this assumes too much forethought and discipline. I incline to believe the hiatus was partly a matter of chance, and while there may have been a number of small-scale disturbances, as *SGZ* 8 implies, they were adequately controlled by the local authorities without need for attention by the court. Certainly, however, the great uprising of Zhang Jue must have been planned for months and even some years ahead.

<sup>25</sup> The Biography of Sun Jian, *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1094, says that the rising took place on the *jiazi* day of the third month. The Annals at *HHS* 8, 348, however, say that it was in the second month, and the government had made a response early in the third month, well before the *jiazi* day; the year was *jiazi*, not the day.

Leban, "Ts'ao Ts'ao," 79-88, discusses the question of the date originally planned for the rising, arguing that Zhang Jue and his peasant followers would

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call and an inevitable lack of co-ordination, tens of thousands of men rose in rebellion, government offices were plundered and destroyed and the imperial armies were immediately forced onto the defensive.

The Yellow Turban forces were concentrated in three areas. The group led by Zhang Jue and his two brothers gained their support from the region just north of the Yellow River, near Zhang Jue's home territory of Julu and his base in Wei commandery. A second major rising took place in Guangyang and Zhuo commanderies in You province, in the neighbourhood of present-day Beijing. The third centre of rebellion was in the three commanderies of Yingchuan, Runan and Nanyang. This force had evidently been intended to co-operate with the traitors inside Luoyang in the attempt to seize the capital, but even without that support, the rebels in this region were a major threat.<sup>26</sup>

In the first weeks of the uprising, the government of Emperor Ling was chiefly concerned with finding and executing the traitors at the capital and with the immediate defence of the city.<sup>27</sup> In the third month, when these preparations had been made, three armies were sent out to deal with the rebellion. One was sent east against Zhang Jue. The other two, commanded by Huangfu Song and by Zhu Jun, were sent against the rebels in Yingchuan, Runan and Nanyang.<sup>28</sup>

Zhu Jun was a man from Kuaiji commandery, and according to Sun Jian's biography he recommended Sun Jian's appointment as Associate Major in the Army, to call up troops and join his forces.

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have intended to rebel after the sowing season in north China, probably in the fifth month, mid-summer.

<sup>26</sup> On Yingchuan and Runan, see *HHSJJ* 110/20, 1b-11a. On Nanyang commandery and on Wan city, now Nanyang in Henan, see Chapter 1 above.

<sup>27</sup> It was at this time that there were re-established Chief Commandants of the Eight Passes, which defended the approaches to the capital (*HHS* 8, 348). These stations had been disused since the earlier years of Later Han, but they were now restored and their garrisons were fully manned.

<sup>28</sup> The biographies of Huangfu Song and of Zhu Jun are in *HHS* 71/61, 2299-2308 and 2308-13; that of Huangfu Song contains much of the information on the course of the Yellow Turban uprising. Another biography of Zhu Jun, from the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao, is quoted in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1094-95 PC note 3; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 33-34.

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The Treatise of Officials of *Hou Han shu* describes a Major in the Army as the second in command of a battalion. On occasion a Major With a Separate Command could also be appointed, with a large or small force according to circumstances. As Associate Major, collecting his own troops, Sun Jian's new appointment was of the same type as his earlier service in the campaign against Xu Chang.<sup>29</sup> With such widespread rebellion to deal with, the imperial commanders were anxious to gain any reinforcements that they could, and the territory of the lower Yangzi, not directly affected by Zhang Jue's movement, was close enough to be a convenient source of recruits for the imperial army.<sup>30</sup> Zhu Jun must have heard of Sun Jian as a loyal fighting man from his own region, and there were certainly other officials who also were sent special commissions and authority to recruit soldiers for the emergency. Sun Jian collected his troops, and he marched to join Zhu Jun's army with a thousand men under his command.

According to Sun Jian's biography, some of his contingent was made up of the young men from his own district who had gathered to him at Xiapi,<sup>31</sup> and besides these he also called up travelling merchants or peddlers and the trained soldiers of the region of the Huai and Si Rivers, being the area about Xiapi. So the force with which he went to war was made up partly of men who were prepared to accept him as a personal leader and partly of wanderers, men who were not settled on any particular piece of land and so had few rights to consideration in a subsistence peasant economy.

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<sup>29</sup> On the two levels of regular appointment as Major, see *HHS* 114/24, 3564. Sun Jian's position, marked by the prefix *zuo*, was evidently a junior one: cf. note 12 above, discussing *xjng*, *jia* and *shou*.

<sup>30</sup> From the argument in note 24 above, there is no reason to believe that the rebellion of Xu Chang of the early 170s had any connection with the sect of Zhang Jue in the early 180s. In any case, some of the troops recruited in this region by Sun Jian and other emergency commanders had presumably shown their hostility to such rebels on the previous occasion.

<sup>31</sup> *SGZ* 51/Wu 6, 1205, being the biography of Sun Jian's youngest brother Sun Jing, says that when Sun Jian first went into action, Sun Jing gathered some five or six hundred local and family followers and went to join him.

It seems likely this is a reference to Sun Jian's recruitment of followers in 184, and that would imply Sun Jing was responsible for a considerable component of his elder brother's forces.

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The rest of his band was made up of those men of military age who had served their term as conscripts under basic training but who remained liable to summons. All these, whether personal followers, unplaced persons or citizen levies, were raised and commanded by one man, and as this impromptu method of recruitment continued in the wars that followed, any military leader was considered to have some interest and rights in the men that he led, while the troops looked more to their immediate commander than to the general or the empire that he served.

The fighting against the Yellow Turbans of Yingchuan, Runan and Nanyang was frequently fierce, with varying success. In the third month of 184, soon after the rebellion had broken out, the Yellow Turban Zhang Mancheng defeated and killed the Grand Administrator of Nanyang, and in the fourth month, at the beginning of summer, the imperial army under Zhu Jun was defeated by the Yellow Turban Bo Cai in Yingchuan, while the Grand Administrator of Runan was defeated by another force of rebels.

In the middle of the year, however, the tide turned. In the fifth month Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun combined their armies to defeat Bo Cai, and in the sixth month they destroyed the Yellow Turbans of Runan in a battle at Xihua, now Xihua in Henan. Then the two generals went separate ways, Huangfu Song to join in the attack on the rebels north of the Yellow River, and Zhu Jun to deal with the Yellow Turbans of Nanyang.

By this time, a new Grand Administrator had defeated Zhang Mancheng and killed him. In that campaign, however, the Yellow Turbans were able to capture the capital of the commandery, Wan city, and they took refuge there. For the next several months, the core of the campaign was the fighting in and around Wan city, until the place was finally stormed and the defenders massacred in the eleventh month, midwinter at the beginning of 185.

Sun Jian followed Zhu Jun throughout his campaigns, and his biography records that wherever he faced there were none who could withstand him. An anecdote from *Wu shu*, however, quoted in the Pei Songzhi commentary to Sun Jian's biography in *Sanguo*

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*zhi*, tells of one occasion that was not unalloyed victory, and is a little more interesting for that:<sup>32</sup>

Sun Jian was following up a success and he had gone a long way in advance. Then his party had the worst of it in a skirmish near Xihua. Sun Jian was wounded and fell from his horse, and he was lying among some bushes. The men of his command were fled and scattered and did not know where he was.

The horse Sun Jian rode was a piebald. It galloped back to the camp, pawed at the ground and neighed impatiently. Then the officers and men followed the horse to the bushes and they found Sun Jian.

They brought him back to the camp, and after about two weeks his wound was sufficiently healed that he could go out and fight again.

The biography of Sun Jian also tells how he led the attack on Wan city, being first over the wall in the final, successful breakthrough. In the biography of Zhu Jun, however, which contains a detailed account of the protracted campaign, there is no mention of Sun Jian, and it appears his biography has magnified his exploits. On the other hand, Sun Jian was evidently a successful military commander, and after the final victory at the end of the year he was mentioned in dispatches to the throne and was promoted to be Major With a Separate Command.

The capture of Wan city was the last great defeat of the Yellow Turbans. Their forces in the North China plain had been destroyed in the field by the imperial armies during the summer, their strongholds were besieged and captured, and the three Zhang brothers were dead. The remaining, scattered rebels were pursued by commandery and county forces in various mopping-up operations, and in the twelfth month of the Chinese year, mid-February of 185, the government issued a proclamation of celebration, changing the reign title to the slogan *Zhongping* "Pacification Achieved."

Certainly, the armies of Han had gained a glorious victory, and it was a remarkable achievement that they had removed so quickly the threat of Zhang Jue's rebellion. The cost, however, was very

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<sup>32</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1094 PC note 2 quoting *Wu shu*.

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high. Over wide areas the offices of the government had been destroyed, magistrates had been killed, and whole districts were cut off from the writ of the central government. The enemy had been slaughtered in their hundreds and thousands, more innocent people had been left homeless or destitute by the wars, and the economy and society over great parts of this most populous region of the empire were left in ruins and without resources. Unrest remained, bandits appeared in every district, and the government, in no position to put down all the lesser disturbances, was forced to patch up the situation as best it could. A long period of consolidation was needed to restore some measure of peace and prosperity, but that breathing space was not given.

For peace had been achieved only in the east. In the winter of 184/185, while the Yellow Turbans were still active, a mutiny broke out among the non-Chinese auxiliaries stationed in Jincheng commandery in Liang province. The mutineers were joined by tribesmen of the Qiang people, and their forces overwhelmed the local authorities and occupied the capital of the commandery. The Grand Administrator was captured and killed, and some of his Chinese officers joined the rebels. By the spring of 185 the imperial position in Liang province was completely overthrown and the rebel forces, now a mixture of mutineers, Qiang tribesmen and local Chinese, advanced down the valley of the Wei and attacked Chang'an, ancient capital of Han.

In this new crisis, Huangfu Song, conqueror of the Yellow Turbans, was given command of an imperial army in the west. He was, however, unable to defeat the rebels, and after four months he was replaced by Zhang Wen, who had lately been Minister of Works, one of the highest posts in the civil administration. At last, in the eleventh month, mid-winter of 185/186, the rebels were defeated in battle at Meiyang, near present-day Wugong in Shenxi, and turned back to the west. Zhang Wen divided his army, sending a detachment under Dong Zhuo against the Qiang while the main force besieged the rebel leader Bian Zhang in Yuzhong near present-day Lanzhou. Neither attack, however, was successful,

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both divisions were forced to retreat, and the rebels remained secure in Jincheng.<sup>33</sup>

When Zhang Wen took over command from Huangfu Song in the eighth month of 185, Sun Jian was appointed a member of his staff. There is no account of what Sun Jian had been doing in the few months since the defeat of the Yellow Turbans in Nanyang, but many troops were transferred from the east to deal with the threat from Liang province, and Sun Jian may already have served under Huangfu Song before he was noticed by Zhang Wen. Very likely he had been recommended by Zhu Jun to Huangfu Song and then to Zhang Wen. Sun Jian's own biography says that Zhang Wen went to the west in the third year of Zhongping, 186, and he sent in a memorial with a request for Sun Jian's services, but the other sources for the history of the rebellion in Liang province make it clear that Huangfu Song was replaced by Zhang Wen in 185, not in 186, and Sun Jian would have joined Zhang Wen's staff at that time. The reference to the third year rather than the second year of Zhongping is miswritten.

The account given in Sun Jian's biography, however, both about the course of the campaign against the rebels and about Sun Jian's own part in the enterprise, is quite unsatisfactory. The main item is a story designed to show Sun Jian's dislike and distrust of Dong Zhuo, the man who later usurped the authority of the imperial government at Luoyang.

According to this, Zhang Wen brought his army to Chang'an, and from there he summoned Dong Zhuo. Dong Zhuo, however, was slow to come and when he did arrive he was discourteous and insubordinate. Sun Jian, who was in attendance on Zhang Wen, then presented a lengthy argument, with historical examples and allusions from the classics, urging that Dong Zhuo should be executed for his refractory behaviour towards his superior officers. Since the speech is described as being delivered in a whisper to Zhang Wen alone, it is difficult to see how it could have been recorded at the time, and it is impossible to rely upon the account

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<sup>33</sup> On the campaigns of Huangfu Song and Zhang Wen, including the battle of Meiyang and the manoeuvres which followed, see de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 150-151.



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as it is presented. It is, perhaps, just possible that at some stage in the campaign Dong Zhuo objected to his orders, and Sun Jian then urged Zhang Wen to punish him.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, Dong Zhuo was in fact Zhang Wen's most successful commander. He had done well in the earlier abortive campaign under Huangfu Song, and he played a great part in the victory of Meiyang which eventually caused the withdrawal of the enemy to the west. Moreover, in the commentary of Pei Songzhi to a later part of the biography of Sun Jian, there is an extract from the book *Shanyang gong zaiji* which contains a record of a discussion of this campaign by Dong Zhuo himself. Like any version of direct speech in the histories, the passage must be suspect, but Dong Zhuo is described as speaking with the historian Liu Ai, and Liu Ai may well have kept a note of the incident.<sup>35</sup>

According to this record from *Shanyang gong zaiji*, when Zhang Wen proposed to send Zhou Shen and Dong Zhuo in command of separate columns to the west, Dong Zhuo suggested that the two units should nevertheless co-operate, and that he should remain as reserve in the rear while Zhou Shen led his men against the enemy. His idea was that the rebels would be afraid to commit themselves against Zhou Shen for fear they would then be attacked by Dong Zhuo's force. Dong Zhuo was concerned that if

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<sup>34</sup> The incident is recorded in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1095; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 34-36, with a shorter version in *HHS* 72/62, 2330; cf. *ZZTJ* 58, 1882; de Crespigny, *Huan and Ling* I, 197-198.

<sup>35</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1098-99 PC note 8 quoting *Shanyang gong zaiji*; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 45-47.

This conversation is said to have taken place about the time Sun Jian was leading his troops to attack Dong Zhuo during the civil war in 190-191. Liu Ai is described as Chief Clerk to Dong Zhuo. He was a historian, author of annals of the reign of Emperor Ling (*Lingdi ji*: note 12 above) and of the reign of Emperor Xian, and he is known to have been in Chang'an as late as 195, after the death of Dong Zhuo.

Duke of Shanyang was the title granted to Liu Xie, the former Emperor of Han, after his abdication in favour of Cao Pi in 220 (*HHS* 9, 390, and *SGZ* 2, 76; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 10). The dynastic title of Emperor Xian was given only after his death in 234 (*HHS* 9, 391; and Fang, *Chronicle* I, 443). These "Parallel Annals" (*zaiji*), compiled by Yue Zi of the Jin dynasty, are thus a history of the last thirty years of Han, with a title adapted to the prejudices of the successor dynasties.

See also de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 157-158.

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the two armies went forward independently, the rebels would be able to watch both columns, concentrate their forces where they wished, and attack them separately. In fact, this is what happened. The two parts of the imperial force were each caught by the enemy in unfamiliar country with extended lines of communications. Dong Zhuo was surrounded by the Qiang and had to trick his way out, while Zhou Shen was also caught by a counter-attack and abandoned his baggage train as he fled.

Dong Zhuo went on to say that Sun Jian had proposed much the same strategy to Zhou Shen as he had to Zhang Wen: that Zhou Shen should use the majority of his troops to establish a secure base while Sun Jian went forward with a detachment. The enemy would be tied down by the threat of the main attack, and Sun Jian and his troops could raid their strong points and their communications without interference. An army of rebels would be afraid to engage any part of the imperial forces in a major battle, because they could be held in that engagement and crushed when the main body came up. Like Zhang Wen, however, Zhou Shen refused to accept the strategy.

The plan that Sun Jian proposed to Zhou Shen is also mentioned in *Hou Han shu*, and that account is clearly based on *Shanyang gong zaiji*. Surprisingly, however, the main text of the biography by Sun Jian in *Sanguo zhi* makes no mention of his proposal. Instead, we are told that when the rebels heard how Zhang Wen's great army was coming against them, they

separated and scattered and all begged to surrender. Then the army came home, but the imperial advisers held that since they had not actually fought with the enemy, it was not appropriate to give any rewards.<sup>36</sup>

This is quite wrong. The imperial army had fought a battle at Meiyang, but the rebels had not been scattered and they did not surrender in any numbers. The account in Sun Jian's biography is contradicted by all other records of the rebellion in Liang province. It may be that the biographer sought to explain why Sun Jian received no immediate reward when he came back to the capital, or he may have been so concerned to show Sun Jian's disapproval of

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<sup>36</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1095; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 36.

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Dong Zhuo that it would have been embarrassing to describe them as suggesting similar strategies. In either case, this is one example of how unreliable such a text can be when the hero of the story is a minor figure in the events described, and when those events occurred at such a distance of time and space.

We may note, moreover, that Sun Jian did not only serve as a staff officer but appears to have commanded troops in battle at this time. Not only did he accompany Zhou Shen and offer to act as an advance guard, but in the record of conversation in *Shanyang gong zaiji* Liu Ai refers to his embarrassing defeat by rebels in operations outside Meiyang, presumably before Dong Zhuo's success. Dong Zhuo observed that Sun Jian had poor quality troops at that time, and that he was nonetheless a good commander.

Sun Jian returned to the capital in 186, and he was there appointed Gentleman-Consultant in the civil administration.

A Gentleman-Consultant, as the title implies, held position as an adviser at the imperial court. With salary ranked at Six Hundred *shi*, the post was not a high one, and Sun Jian would actually have lost rank in making the transfer. The salary of a full Major in the Army was assessed at One Thousand *shi*, and a Major With a Separate Command was slightly senior. This, however, was Sun Jian's first position in the regular civil service, and the post of gentleman-consultant was often used as a holding position for men being considered for substantial senior appointment.<sup>37</sup> Certainly,

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<sup>37</sup> The position of Gentleman-Consultant is listed in the Treatise of Officials, *HHS* 115/25, 3577. It was often held by men of scholarly achievement, with appropriate functions. In 79, for example, gentleman-consultants took part in the debate on Confucian theory held at the White Tiger Hall (*HHS* 3, 138; Tjan, *White Tiger Discussions* I, 6); and in 112 gentlemen-consultants were sent to pray for rain to break a drought (commentary to *HHS* 103/13, 3278).

Appointments from the post of gentleman-consultant were commonly to other advisory positions, to the university or the imperial secretariat, or as inspectors or prefects in the provinces. On several occasions, a man who had been gentleman-consultant was given swift promotion, reaching high office after only one or two transfers.

Quite frequently, however, an experienced official who had left office for a time (occasionally in formal disgrace) would be appointed as gentleman-consultant and then appointed once more to high rank. For example, about 185 Lu Kang, Grand Administrator of Lean, was dismissed and punished

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this is what happened here. In 187, after only a few months rest following his return from campaign in Liang province, Sun Jian was appointed Grand Administrator of Changsha commandery, with salary of Two Thousand *shi*. The rank was the highest that could be held in the bureaucracy outside the capital, and the territory was one of the key regions of the empire.

Changsha commandery, with its capital at Linxiang, near the modern city of Changsha, controlled the lower basin of the Xiang River in present-day Hunan. Immediately to the south, the upper reaches of the Xiang were governed by Lingling commandery, and the valley of the tributary Lei River was under Guiyang commandery. As at the present time, the Xiang and its tributaries provided the main communications route from central and northern China through the Nan Ling ranges to the rich and exotic lands of present-day Guangdong and the far south. The registered population of Changsha, more than a million at this time, reflected both the wealth of communications through the region and the related migration into the south which was a feature of the

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for lese-majesty when he protested against the extravagances of Emperor Ling. He was, however, restored to office as a gentleman-consultant, and soon afterwards he was appointed Grand Administrator of Lujiang commandery: *HHS* 31/21, 1113-14.

Earlier, in 159, the Prefect of the Masters of Writing, being the head of the imperial secretariat, Chen Fan, sent in a memorial on behalf of some dissident officials. Emperor Huan was extremely annoyed and Chen Fan was compelled to retire to his own estates. Some time later, however, he was recalled as a gentleman-consultant, and within a few days he had been promoted direct to ministerial office as Superintendent of the Imperial Household: *HHS* 66/56, 2161.

The closest parallel to Sun Jian's appointments at this time appears in the biography of Duan Jiong, a celebrated military commander one generation earlier. Duan Jiong had done well as a junior officer on the frontier, but he was punished for exceeding his authority and was sentenced to a term of convict labour. He was then appointed gentleman-consultant, and in 156 he was made General of the Gentlemen of the Household and sent to put down rebellion in the eastern commanderies of Taishan and Langye. He did well, and was enfeoffed as a marquis. See *HHS* 65/55, 2145; Young, *Three Generals*, 64-65, and for a similar incident in Duan Jiong's career a few years later, also *HHS* 65/55, 2147; Young, *Three Generals*, 68. Duan Jiong, it may be observed, was an excellent fighting soldier, but few would have claimed that he was a man of scholarly distinction.

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demography of Later Han, and it made Changsha one of the larger commanderies of the empire.<sup>38</sup>

The territory, however, was a troubled one. According to Sun Jian's biography, a rebel leader of Changsha, Ou Xing, had given himself the title of a general and was attacking and besieging cities with an army of more than ten thousand men. Then Sun Jian was sent to the commandery as Grand Administrator, and he worked out a plan of attack and destroyed Ou Xing and his followers within a month of his arrival. He next turned against the rebel leaders Zhou Chao and Guo Shi, who had been making trouble in Lingling and Guiyang and who had been in alliance with Ou Xing. Sun Jian went outside the borders of his own commandery to pursue them and destroy their forces.

According to another source, the Annals of the reign of Emperor Ling in *Hou Han shu*, the rebel Guan Gu of Lingling had taken the title of General of the Peaceful Heaven and was ravaging Guiyang commandery. In the tenth month of 187 he was attacked and beheaded by Sun Jian the Grand Administrator of Changsha.<sup>39</sup>

There is some disagreement about the names of the rebel chieftains that Sun Jian defeated, therefore, but no real problem about the course of events. Most likely there had been groups of rebels and bandits active in Changsha and the neighbouring territories for some time, probably at least since the troubles with the Yellow Turbans further north in 184. By 187 the disturbance had become sufficiently serious to attract the special attention of the court, and Sun Jian, as a man of proven military experience, was sent to restore order. It is said that when he came to his new post he issued orders saying, "Treat the good people carefully and mildly and keep the official documents according to regulations. Leave the robbers and killers to me!"

The names of the bandit leaders are not of great importance. The organisation of such groups is seldom very permanent, and it is easy to imagine that the rebels of the three commanderies Changsha, Lingling and Guiyang had operated in some loose

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<sup>38</sup> On Changsha commandery and its neighbours Lingling and Guiyang, see Chapter 1.

<sup>39</sup> *HHS* 8, 354; and *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1095; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 36-37.

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association. When Sun Jian came to Changsha, he first settled the immediate problem of Ou Xing and then turned against the other groups. By the time he did so, Guan Gu had been replaced by Zhou Chao and Guo Shi, and it was these men who were destroyed by Sun Jian. The records of the court, far from the scene of this varied action, could easily be confused over the names of such minor figures, but the essential point is that by the end of 187 Sun Jian had put down the troubles in the basin of the Xiang.

As Grand Administrator of Changsha, Sun Jian was responsible for civil administration as well as the military security, and in normal times such a post would have been held by a regular civilian official. Sun Jian, however, had been appointed on his military record and his administration was unusual. Once his position was established he was also able to intervene in aid of the governments of Lingling and Guiyang against the rebels within their borders, and according to his biography the three commanderies all acknowledged his authority.

Strictly speaking, without special permission Sun Jian had no right to take any action outside the borders of his own territory, and it does appear that for the most part he was acting under appropriate supervision from the provincial authorities.<sup>40</sup> He was not, however, particularly concerned about these niceties, and he would rather claim that the exceptional disorder and the general spread of rebellion demanded exceptional measures. It was, for example, about this time that the Chief of Yichun county in Yuzhang commandery asked for help when he was attacked by bandits. Sun Jian made ready to go, but then one of his clerical officers objected: though Yichun was just over the eastern borders of Changsha, it was not only in a different commandery but also in a different province. Sun Jian replied,

I have none of the civil graces. Warfare is my work. If I cross the borders to attack some rebels, that is simply giving help to a

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<sup>40</sup> From the relationship and later incident with the Inspector of Jing province Wang Rui discussed below, Sun Jian was accompanied, and nominally supervised, by that officer on his campaigns in Lingling and Guiyang. This was the normal requirement for a grand administrator operating outside his specific territory. From all accounts, however, Sun Jian took the leading role and received all credit for the success of the government forces.

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neighbour. Even if I am committing a crime, why should I feel ashamed?<sup>41</sup>

According to his biography, he was enfeoffed as Marquis of Wucheng as a reward for his good work, and from this we may judge that the court approved his policy.

The enfeoffment was a very particular honour. Marquis was the highest noble rank that could be given to a man who was not a member of the imperial Liu family, and it was by no means the regular expectation of a grand administrator. Often enough, a marquis would be granted only a village or district as his fief, but Wucheng was a county in Wu commandery, just south of the Tai Lake. With the title there came also an income based upon the tax revenues of the territory, and although he had no practical authority in his fief, and would not necessarily be expected even to live there, the generosity of the Han government had clearly made the fortunes of Sun Jian and his family. Already this was an extraordinary combination of ability and good luck for a young man of undistinguished origins from the distant countryside. In 187, Sun Jian was perhaps thirty-two years old by Western reckoning.

Sun Jian remained Grand Administrator of Changsha for two more years. By his successes against the rebels he had justified his remarkable promotion and his high civil appointment, and he was evidently regarded as a valuable supporter of the dynasty. When chaos came to the imperial capital in 189, and civil war to the empire in the following years, Sun Jian controlled the lands and the people of his own commandery, he had established his influence with the administrators who were his neighbours, and he was prepared to bring an army north to aid the emperor.

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<sup>41</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1096 PC note 2 quoting *Wu lu*, which also says that the Chief of Yichun was a nephew of Lu Kang, Grand Administrator of Lujiang commandery.

Yichun lay near the present-day city of that name in Jiangxi. Yuzhang commandery of Later Han was under Yang province.

On further connection between the two families of Sun and Lu, see Chapter 3 at note 14.

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### *The war against Dong Zhuo (189-191):*

In the fourth month of the sixth year of the Zhongping reign period, on 13 May 189, Emperor Ling died.<sup>42</sup> He had been brought to the throne as a child, and he was only thirty-four *sui*, some thirty-three years old by Western reckoning, when he died. He left two sons, Liu Bian, aged fourteen *sui*, the child of his Empress the Lady He, and Liu Xie, aged nine *sui*, born to his concubine the Beauty Wang. The Empress He had killed the Lady Wang, and Liu Xie was brought up under the care of the Emperor's natural mother, the Empress-Dowager Dong. Hitherto, neither boy had been named Heir-Apparent and successor to the throne, but from his death-bed Emperor Ling did nominate the younger son, Liu Xie, and entrusted him to the eunuch Jian Shi, who was with him at the time, and who had been given command of troops at the capital.

The power of the widowed Empress He and her clan, however, depended upon the succession of the boy Liu Bian, and they forced that succession through in a matter of hours. Within the next few weeks, Jian Shi and the Empress-Dowager Dong were dead, and the General-in-Chief He Jin, brother of the Lady He, now Empress-Dowager, controlled the government.<sup>43</sup> But then He Jin thought to turn against the eunuchs.

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<sup>42</sup> *HHS* 8, 357. The events at the capital which followed the death of Emperor Ling are recounted in the next entries of *HHS* 8, the Annals of Emperor Ling; in *HHS* 10B, 449-50, being the record of the Empress He and the Beauty Wang; in *HHS* 69/59, 2247-53, the biography of He Jin; in *HHS* 78/68, 2537, the biographies of the eunuchs; and in other places. They are summarised in *ZZTJ* 59, 1894-1905; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 2-26.

<sup>43</sup> The Empress He, later Empress-Dowager, whose personal name is not recorded, was a woman of Wan city in Nanyang commandery. She had been brought into the imperial harem as a result of the annual selection, which took place in the eighth month of each year (Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 63). She was evidently a woman of striking appearance, she attracted the Emperor's attention, and she was fortunate enough to bear him a son which survived infancy. She was promoted to be Honoured Lady, and in 180 she was made Empress. Her biography is in *HHS* 10B, 449-50.

The father of the Lady He had died before this time. In 181, however, he was posthumously honoured with the position of General of Chariots and Cavalry, and enfeoffment as Marquis of Wuyang. In 183 the mother of the Lady He was granted enfeoffment as Lady of Wuyang.



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During the reign of Emperor Ling, the eunuchs of the palace had dominated the government. In 168, when the young emperor first came to the capital, they had been under threat from the regent Dou family, but they overthrew their enemies in a coup d'état. Since then the eunuch group had maintained their influence and prosperity through patronage of their own supporters and proscription of their obvious opponents, and they had relied successfully on the favour and trust of the Emperor. It was under their auspices that the Lady He had become Empress, and even though their imperial patron was gone, they had expected

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He Jin was actually the elder half-brother of the Empress: he was the son of her father by another woman, possibly a concubine but perhaps an earlier wife. He was brought to the capital when his sister became Honoured Lady, was given various senior appointments, including a period as Grand Administrator of Yingchuan commandery, and was named General-in-Chief at the time of the Yellow Turban emergency in 184. His biography is in *HHS* 69/59, 2246-53.

The Empress He had another half-brother, whose personal name was Miao. He was the son of her mother, who had evidently been married before. At some stage, either after the remarriage of his mother or, more probably, after the rise to fortune of his sister, Miao changed his surname to He, and he is generally described as He Miao, "younger brother" of He Jin, though the two men were not blood relations and Miao was evidently the elder (*HHS* 104/14, 3299, with *jijie* commentary at 6a quoting the Qing scholars Hong Liangji and Qian Daxin; also *HHS* 103/13, 3275 and *HHSJJ* 69/59, 6a). In 187, He Miao successfully put down a rebellion in Henan commandery, quite close to the capital, and he was rewarded with the position of General of Chariots and Cavalry, formerly held by his step-father, and with enfeoffment as a marquis (*HHS* 69/59, 2246).

Though He Jin and He Miao appear to have been reasonably competent in carrying out their official responsibilities, they owed their advancement solely to their relationship with the Empress, and the posts of General-in-Chief and General of Chariots and Cavalry had long been used rather as perquisites of the family of the imperial relatives by marriage than as substantive military commands. Moreover, it appears that the Lady He's father or members of his family had practised the trade of butchers. This had not been sufficient to disqualify the Lady He from entering the imperial harem and achieving the highest position there, and indeed the very lack of distinguished background and social influence made the Lady He an excellent candidate in the eyes of the eunuchs, who held major control over the government and who had no wish to import a powerful rival faction. When they did obtain responsibility for the regency, however, there is no question that the ancestry, family background and social status of the He group put them at a disadvantage in dealing with the aristocratic gentry who held high offices in the bureaucracy of the central government.

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continuing support from the new Empress-Dowager and her brother He Jin.

He Jin, however, as effective head of the government, was under additional, contradictory pressures. The He were not one of the great families of the empire, and He Jin felt that he needed the support of powerful gentry and official clans to maintain his authority. In particular, the members of the Yuan family of Runan, which had held the highest civil offices in the empire for four generations, were among He Jin's chief supporters, and Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu, nephews of the Grand Tutor Yuan Wei, held command among the guards and troops about the capital.<sup>44</sup> These two younger men now reflected the long-held resentment of the palace favourites held by the gentry officials, and they demanded reform of the government and destruction of the eunuchs as price of their support.

The position of the eunuchs was very insecure. In 168 they had been able to destroy the General-in-Chief Dou Wu by claiming the authority of the emperor to call in another army against him. He Jin, of course, was also aware of that precedent, but the death of Jian Shi had removed the link between the eunuchs of the palace and any military forces outside. To intimidate the eunuchs and to bolster his own position, He Jin summoned Dong Zhuo to bring his army into camp near the capital. The Empress He and He Jin's step-brother He Miao spoke for the eunuchs, Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu spoke against them, He Jin could not make up his mind, and the eunuchs became desperate.

On 22 September 189, a group of eunuchs waylaid He Jin and killed him as he came from the palace. They tried to brand him as a rebel and bring his soldiers under their own control, and they named supporters of their own party to the critical posts controlling the capital. But their plan was hopeless and it failed. Yuan Shao and his associates took command of the guard

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<sup>44</sup> Biographies of Yuan Shao are in *HHS* 74A/64A, 2373-2403, and in *SGZ* 6, 188-201; biographies of Yuan Shu are in *HHS* 75/65, 2438-44, and in *SGZ* 6, 207-10. The biographies of earlier generations of the Yuan family are in *HHS* 45/35, 1517-24; Yuan Wei is mentioned at 1523.

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regiments, and then they burnt the gates and stormed the palace and massacred every eunuch that they found.

One group managed to escape, taking the Emperor and Liu Xie with them. They were chased and killed, and the children were brought back, but as the party returned to Luoyang they met with Dong Zhuo and his army, and the young Emperor went back to the capital under that care.

Before this time, the plots and coups and rebellions had been kept inside the capital, but the balance of political power which had been maintained under Emperor Ling was now destroyed. On the evening of 24 September, when the palace was stormed and the eunuchs were killed, the flames from burning buildings had lit up the sky. Dong Zhuo saw them from his encampment, he realised there was trouble and he led his army forward to the city. As he gave that command, the rule of the Han dynasty was ended.

Established in Luoyang, Dong Zhuo had no difficulty in gaining control. The two imperial princes were in his hands, the eunuchs had been killed, He Jin was dead and He Miao had also been assassinated in the disorders of the coup. The troops which had been under their command turned to Dong Zhuo, and the Lady He was left without any practical support. Similarly, despite their influence, the Yuan family and the other leaders of the civil administration could not rely on any forces at the capital strong enough to contend with Dong Zhuo and his veterans from the frontier, and they could do nothing at that time but accept his authority.

Dong Zhuo did not hold his power for very long, but the way he had gained it and the way that he used it meant the end of legitimate government in the empire.<sup>45</sup> He had no good right to be in the capital at all, he held his power solely because he was the man in command of the army, and only another army could remove him. More than that, within a few weeks of his coming to Luoyang, he removed Liu Bian from the throne and set Liu Xie in his place. Some months later Liu Bian and his mother were dead. There was minimal argument about the rival claims of the two

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<sup>45</sup> Biographies of Dong Zhuo are in *HHS* 72/62, 2319-31, and in *SGZ* 6, 171-79.

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children: Dong Zhuo was simply removing one emperor and setting his own nominee upon the throne. He did this through his military strength, and control of the empire was now held by force. The child Liu Xie, known to history as Emperor Xian, last of the Han, reigned for more than thirty years, but he never held authority of his own.

Within a very short time, however, Dong Zhuo was faced with armed opposition from "loyal rebels" outside the capital. Yuan Shao, Yuan Shu and a number of other leaders fled from Luoyang to the east and south, and they joined with local and provincial administrators to raise armies for an attack. By the beginning of 190 the allies had collected their troops, and the whole force, known as the soldiers "east of the mountains," set up their camps in an arc from the northeast to the south of Luoyang. Yuan Shao, leader of the alliance, was north of the Yellow River in Henei commandery; another group, based upon Chenliu, occupied the southern bank of the river due east of the capital;<sup>46</sup> and a third army was commanded by Yuan Shu, with headquarters at Luyang in Nanyang, present-day Lushan in Henan. The men who joined them in the attack on Dong Zhuo included administrators who had been appointed during the reign of Emperor Ling, some who had been sent out by Dong Zhuo but now turned against him, and other leaders such as the future warlord Cao Cao, who fled from the capital like Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu, then raised troops from family followers and local conscription.<sup>47</sup>

Sun Jian, down in Changsha, also collected an army and came to join the alliance against Dong Zhuo. On his way, however, he took the opportunity to kill two imperial officials, Wang Rui the Inspector of Jing province and Zhang Zi the Grand Administrator of Nanyang.

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<sup>46</sup> At this time, the course of the Yellow River in this area was a little north of its present line.

<sup>47</sup> The biography of Cao Cao, founder of the state of Wei, is in *SGZ* 1, 1-55. We may note that the political hostility between Dong Zhuo and the Yuan clan was turned into a vendetta when Dong Zhuo slaughtered the former Grand Tutor Yuan Wei, senior member of the family, and all his relatives who had remained at Luoyang: *HHS* 45/35, 1523.

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According to *Wu lu*, quoted in Pei Songzhi's commentary to the biography of Sun Jian, Wang Rui had accompanied Sun Jian on the campaign against the rebels in Lingling and Guiyang two or three years earlier, and on that occasion he made some slighting remark about Sun Jian's military appointment.

It was quite appropriate, and indeed formally necessary, that Wang Rui should have been with Sun Jian in the operations against the rebels outside Changsha. On the other hand, the function of an inspector in this situation was primarily to supervise the military action and prevent any individual commander from establishing a local military dominance. The real credit for the campaign had gone to Sun Jian, and this, together with his remarkable promotion to Grand Administrator and his subsequent enfeoffment as a marquis, caused jealousy and tension. Wang Rui, a man from good gentry family, presumably made some unguarded remark that a commandery would be better in the hands of trained and experienced administrators, while fighting men should act only as assistants.<sup>48</sup> Whatever the insult, Sun Jian remembered it.

The headquarters of the Inspector of Jing province were at Hanshou in Wuling commandery, northeast of present-day Changde in Hunan. From Changsha, Sun Jian passed to the west of the Dongting Lake and his route led past Wang Rui. The story told in *Wu lu* says that Wang Rui had also raised soldiers to join the alliance against Dong Zhuo, but that he had an old quarrel with Cao Yin, the Grand Administrator of Wuling, and he let it be known that he planned to use his troops to kill Cao Yin before he

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<sup>48</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1096 and 1097-98 PC note 2 quoting *Wu lu*; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 38-39.

PC also quotes the *Wangshi pu*, a family record of the Wang clan, which says Wang Rui was the great-uncle of Wang Xiang, who served the Wei and then the succeeding Jin dynasty in the mid-third century. The biography of Wang Xiang is in *JS* 33, 987-90, and the beginning of the biography is translated by Fang, *Chronicle II*, 254.

The family came from Langye, and had held official rank for some generations under Han. Wang Xiang's grandfather, the brother of Wang Rui, was at one time Inspector of Qing province.

So Wang Rui came from an established family background, with some distinction in the empire, and certainly with substantial landed property. All the more reason, then, for him to speak scornfully of a newcomer such as Sun Jian.

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led them away to north. Cao Yin, as Grand Administrator, had his capital at Linyuan, which is now west of Changde and was quite close to Hanshou. He was frightened of Wang Rui, and he thought to turn Sun Jian's arrival to his own advantage, so he forged an imperial order and sent it to him. The document claimed to be a message from a special imperial commissioner, it accused Wang Rui of various crimes, and instructed Sun Jian to execute him. Sun Jian accepted the order, brought his army forward to Hanshou, and gained entrance to the city by pretending that his men had come only to look for supplies. When he explained the real purpose of his visit, Wang Rui committed suicide.

From Sun Jian's point of view, this was all very satisfactory, and he was probably not greatly concerned that the dispatch he had received might be false. He could always claim he believed it to be genuine, and for his own purposes the opportunity to eliminate Wang Rui was extremely useful. Not only did he satisfy a private grudge, but he also gained control of Wang Rui's soldiers and added them to his own army. If Wang Rui could threaten the Grand Administrator, he held the majority of the troops in Wuling, and he may have had levies from other parts of the province. Sun Jian had his own troops from Changsha, and also detachments from Lingling and Guiyang. Now he combined Wang Rui's troops with his own, and he could collect more men as he marched. His biography suggests, probably with exaggeration, that by the time he came to Nanyang his army was numbered in the tens of thousands.

At some stage during this northern march, Sun Jian was also joined by his nephew Sun Ben, and a small contingent from his home country. Sun Jian's elder twin brother, Sun Qiang, had died some years earlier, leaving two sons Sun Ben and Sun Fu. The elder, Sun Ben, can have been no older than his late teens, but he had held local office in Wu commandery. When the crisis over Dong Zhuo broke out and the leaders of the empire began to raise troops, Sun Ben travelled to join his uncle and to serve under him.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *SGZ* 51/Wu 6, 1209, being the biography of Sun Ben. On Sun Qiang, see note 6 above. The biography of Sun Fu is in *SGZ* 51/Wu 6, 1211-12.

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We have noted earlier that when Sun Jian was raising troops to join the campaign led by Zhu Jun against the Yellow Turbans, a part of his force was composed of personal and family followers led by his younger brother Sun Jing. The Sun family was neither large nor powerful, but even a small unit could serve as the personal guard of a commander, and now that Sun Jian commanded a large army he had all the more reason to look for a nucleus of retainers whom he could trust among the amorphous mass of his ordinary troops. Sun Jian and other commanders of this period are known to have maintained groups of Companions, and in the uncertainty of the time such personal followers, family connections and associates were extremely important.<sup>50</sup>

With his great army from the south, Sun Jian came forward to Wan city, capital of Nanyang commandery, and met with the Grand Administrator Zhang Zi, who had been appointed to that position by Dong Zhuo.

According to *Xiandi chunqiu* and the biography of Sun Jian in *Sanguo zhi*, Sun Jian sent a message ahead to ask Zhang Zi for supplies for his army. When Sun Jian came up, the two officials exchanged gifts and Sun Jian paid his respects to Zhang Zi; on the following day Zhang Zi returned the visit. While Zhang Zi was thus in Sun Jian's camp, Sun Jian's Registrar, his senior clerical officer, came in and reported that in fact there had been nothing done in Nanyang to provide for the visiting army. Zhang Zi was frightened and tried to escape, but Sun Jian arrested him, and after a short further enquiry he was judged guilty of treason and was executed according to military law.

A version given by *Wu li* differs in some details: there it is said that Zhang Zi was unwilling to visit Sun Jian, but Sun Jian pretended to be seriously ill, and offered to turn his troops over to Zhang Zi's command. When Zhang Zi came to his tent to take up the offer, Sun Jian leaped from his bed, swore at his visitor, and cut his head off on the spot.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> On Sun Jing, see note 31 above. Zu Mao, hero of the battle near Liang described below, is referred to as a Companion in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1096.

<sup>51</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1096 and 1097-98 PC note 3; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 39-41. See also note 54 below.

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However the affair was managed, Zhang Zi was killed. Although he had been a nominee of Dong Zhuo, there were several examples to show that men appointed by Dong Zhuo could be quite prepared to change sides and fight with the rebels.<sup>52</sup> It appears, however, that Zhang Zi had some reservations about the men from the east of the mountains, and he may have been reluctant to give them his full support.<sup>53</sup> Since Yuan Shu's forces were based in the north of Nanyang, any obstruction there would have cut Sun Jian off from his own sources of supply in the south, and it would have been dangerous if the ruler of such an important commandery had been unsure of his commitment to the cause. The commandery troops of Nanyang, moreover, provided a useful addition to his army and, as in the case of Wang Rui, Sun Jian had reason to look for some excuse to eliminate a potential rival.

When he had settled the administration at Wan, Sun Jian went forward to Luyang and joined forces with Yuan Shu. On the journey north, he had already received provisional appointment as

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<sup>52</sup> For example, Han Fu the Governor of Ji province and Liu Dai, Inspector of Yan province, had both been appointed to those offices by Dong Zhuo, but turned against him when Yuan Shao began his rebellion (*HHS* 72/62, 2326, and *HHS* 74A/64A, 2375).

It may be recalled that the supervision of provinces in Later Han had traditionally been entrusted to an inspector, but an edict of 188 provided for some appointments to be made as governor, chosen from men of higher rank and experience than inspectors. In the hierarchy of the civil service governors would regularly outrank the grand administrators of their subordinate commanderies, so provinces became the major units of the empire and a provincial administration was headed by an inspector or by a governor according to circumstances.

Han Fu had first been named as Inspector of Ji province (*HHS* 72/62) but by the time of Yuan Shao's plans for rebellion he had taken the title of Governor (*HHS* 74A/64A). Either the texts are confused, or Han Fu had arranged his own promotion.

<sup>53</sup> In this regard, we must note that Sun Jian was acting well outside his rights as Grand Administrator when he left Changsha to join the attack against Dong Zhuo. As we see below, he did hold a new appointment from Yuan Shu, but this was hardly a regular commission. Zhang Zi's reaction to Sun Jian's request for assistance, therefore, would serve as a touchstone of his acceptance of and support for the cause of the "loyal rebels, and both *Sanguo zhi* and *Wu li* refer to such a reluctance of Zhang Zi's part.



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General of the Gentlemen of the Household,<sup>54</sup> and he was now recommended as Acting General Who Smashes the Caitiffs and Inspector of Yu province.

The qualifying terms "provisional" and "acting" to the posts which Sun Jian received from Yuan Shu reflect the idea that the appointments were still subject to imperial confirmation, and the expressions "memorialised" or "recommended" indicate that Yuan Shu was reporting his actions to the throne. In fact, of course, any recommendation from Yuan Shu to the boy Emperor Xian would be quite ineffective: Yuan Shu was the declared enemy of Dong Zhuo, and Dong Zhuo was in complete control of the actions and the published decisions of the young ruler. However, the Yuan and their allies had said that they were acting in the Emperor's name to save him from the oppression of the over-powerful minister, and so they went through the formalities of recording and announcing their recommendations of officers, and they could claim to believe that the Emperor would confirm their actions as soon as they had removed him from the clutches of Dong Zhuo. When these loyal rebels began their campaign, some had taken titles for themselves, and the situation soon got out of hand, but few of the contending warlords at the end of Han failed to pay that lip-service to the authority of the Emperor.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1097 PC note 3 quoting *Xiandi chunqiu*. The term rendered here as "provisional" is *jia*, on which see note 12 above.

Generals of the gentlemen of household were usually court appointees, in charge of a corps of probationary officials or guards about the imperial court: Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 24 and 27, and de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 46-47. However, officers with this rank had served on active campaigns in the past: at the beginning of Later Han (Bielenstein, *RHD* II, 204 and note 5), against non-Chinese people on the northern frontier (e.g. de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 108, 130 and 340), and most recently during the campaign against the Yellow Turbans: for example, Zhu Jun (*HHS* 71/61, 2309) and Dong Zhuo (*HHS* 72/62, 2320).

<sup>55</sup> The character rendered as "memorialised" or "recommended" is *biao*.

Since this whole nomination system was completely non-legal, and since the Emperor's approval could seldom be obtained for any appointment and could generally be disregarded if it was, there was nothing to prevent more than one man being nominated for the same position by rival warlords. Yuan Shao later had occasion to set up one of his own officers as inspector of Yu province, and sent him to attack Sun Jian.

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The appointments which Sun Jian now held gave him both military and civil authority, and established him as the chief lieutenant of Yuan Shu. As Inspector of Yu province, he had authority in six commanderies, including Yingchuan and Runan, and this wealthy region was the homeland of the Yuan family. Certainly the rank of an inspector was lower, and the power was less well-defined, than that of a grand administrator, but the position conferred the right to raise troops from the whole province, and Sun Jian's new title as a general gave him command in the field second only to that of Yuan Shu.

By his destruction of Wang Rui and Zhang Zi, Sun Jian had left vacancies for the positions of Inspector of Jing province and Grand Administrator of Nanyang, and he also relinquished his own post in Changsha. He accepted the authority of Yuan Shu, and Yuan Shu was able to take over Nanyang. When news of Wang Rui's fall reached the capital, however, a new inspector was appointed in his place. Liu Biao, a member of the imperial clan, had at one time been involved in the factions of the early years of the reign of Emperor Ling, and had spent some twenty years in exile from the capital. He had been recalled to Luoyang, however, during the short hegemony of the He family, and he was now appointed by Dong Zhuo to restore order in Jing province.<sup>56</sup>

Yuan Shu blocked the main road to the south, and the breakdown of government after the passage of Sun Jian had led to banditry and clan fighting. Liu Biao, however, managed to make his way to Jing province unaccompanied, and he established his headquarters at Yicheng county in Nan commandery, south of Xiangyang on the Han River in present-day Hubei. Dong Zhuo's

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At this time, however, it is unlikely that the nomination of Sun Jian by Yuan Shu was made in despite of any existing inspector of Yu province. A certain Kong Zhou had held the title, and had joined Yuan Shao's rebellion (*HHS* 74A/64A, 2375), but no mention of him is made after that time, and it is probable that he had changed his post or retired or died by the time that Sun Jian was appointed. It is not likely that Yuan Shu would needlessly antagonise one of his associates at this stage by proposing his own man for a place which was already occupied.

<sup>56</sup> Biographies of Liu Biao are in *HHS* 74B/64B, 2419-24, and *SGZ* 6, 210-13.

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government may have hoped that Liu Biao's past history, as a member of the faction which had been proscribed by the eunuchs, and as one of He Jin's supporters, would make it possible for him to arrange some form of co-existence with Yuan Shu and the rebels. This did, at first, prove to be the case: Yuan Shu accepted Liu Biao's occupation of the greater part of Jing province, and Liu Biao recommended Yuan Shu as Grand Administrator of Nanyang; but Liu Biao took no part, on either side, in the fighting between Dong Zhuo and his enemies.

Sun Jian does not appear to have been involved to any significant degree in Yuan Shu's disposal of the spoils he had won on his way to the north. In some respects, it is a little surprising that he was transferred away from Jing province, where he had established some authority, to become Inspector of Yu province, with which he had small previous connection. Moreover, the effective result of these arrangements was that Yuan Shu received secure command only of Nanyang, while all the rest of Jing province was transferred to Liu Biao, who was Dong Zhuo's nominee and remained, at best, a neutral.

One imagines that Sun Jian must have been under some pressure to acquiesce in these arrangements, and it must be recognised that his political position was not a strong one. Men like Liu Biao, Yuan Shu and other commanders of the rebellion came from the most distinguished families of the empire, and Sun Jian, no matter what temporary authority he might have gained from his manoeuvres in Jing province, had no comparable personal status. Once he came to the north, he had to take a position as effective client and supporter of someone like Yuan Shu. He could have been destroyed only too easily if the prestige of the great families had been turned against him, and he could strive only for their acceptance and tolerance, never for equality with them.

Under Yuan Shu's overall command, therefore, Sun Jian took charge of the main attack against Dong Zhuo's position at Luoyang. He first established his headquarters in Luyang, with Yuan Shu, and from there he made arrangements for lines of supply. Then he marched north against Liang county in Henan commandery, now west of Linru in Henan. As the modern name implies, the city of Liang lay on the upper reaches of the Ru River, and an advance

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north or west along the valley would bring Sun Jian's army to the crest of a ridge of the Xiong'er Shan. From there he could descend on Luoyang from the south. Guangcheng, one of the passes which defended the capital, was established west of Liang, but a fortified post would not long delay so strong a force as Sun Jian commanded.<sup>57</sup>

Dong Zhuo recognised the threat, and he sent out an army, under the command of his officers Xu Rong and Li Meng, which met with Sun Jian's forces near Liang. In a great battle, Sun Jian was defeated, and he was forced to flee for his life. One of the men of Sun Jian's body-guard took the red cap that Sun Jian usually wore as a mark of distinction, and so attracted the enemy pursuit. Sun Jian then managed to break out of the lines that were encircling him, and made his escape.

Some of his associates were less fortunate. According to the biography of Dong Zhuo in *Hou Han shu*, the Grand Administrator of Yingchuan, Li Min, was captured by Xu Rong's army and was executed by being boiled alive, while other soldiers of the rebel forces were killed with hot oil. It is some slight relief to find it recorded that Zu Mao, Sun Jian's rescuer, managed to escape.<sup>58</sup>

The last days of this Chinese year were successful ones for Dong Zhuo. Wang Kuang, the Grand Administrator of Henei, had been sent by Yuan Shao to press an advance along the Yellow River towards Luoyang, and he camped at the Meng Crossing, northeast of the capital. Dong Zhuo sent soldiers against him, and Wang Kuang's army was completely destroyed. So Dong Zhuo's defence had been successful on both fronts, and the attack by the main force east of the mountains was quite broken down. Sun Jian in the south gained no further support or co-operation from the allied armies on the Yellow River.

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<sup>57</sup> Guangcheng was one of the eight passes re-fortified at the time of the Yellow Turban rebellion in 184 (note 28 above). The Guangcheng Pass presumably guarded the approach from the upper reaches of the Ru River, which flows east into the basin of the Huai, towards the watershed of the Xiong'er Shan, and the valleys of the Yi and Luo rivers, which combine near Luoyang and then join the Yellow River.

<sup>58</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1096, and *HHS* 72/62, 2328.

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Dong Zhuo's battle with Wang Kuang, however, and the enemy's temporary concentration on the Yellow River front, appear to have provided Sun Jian with the diversion he needed after his defeat by Xu Rong, and gave him time to recover the ground he had lost. Xu Rong had probably achieved his success chiefly through the suddenness of his attack and by some element of surprise, and he had destroyed only a part of Sun Jian's forces. Certainly, the pursuit was not pressed, and Sun Jian was able to regain command of his men and re-organise them with surprisingly little difficulty. On the other side, Xu Rong may have over-estimated the effects of his victory and have assumed that Sun Jian would be incapable of further operations for some time to come; but for his own part, in collecting and controlling his scattered troops after a heavy defeat, Sun Jian's achievement was considerable. By late February or early March of 191, the first month of the new Chinese year, Sun Jian had moved forward to the village of Yangren, northwest of Liang, further up the valley of the Ru River from the scene of his defeat, and there he had established a camp. Though the defeat of Wang Kuang had proved decisive on the eastern front, in the south, for Dong Zhuo, all was to be done again.

According to *Yingxiong ji*, which is quoted in the Pei Songzhi commentary to Sun Jian's biography, five thousand more troops, foot-soldiers and horsemen, were sent south against Sun Jian. They were commanded by Dong Zhuo's officer Hu Zhen, and the famous fighting man Lü Bu was in command of the cavalry. They attacked Sun Jian's fortified camp at Yangren, but were completely routed. The story has it that Lü Bu and the other officers were contemptuous of Hu Zhen, and they planned together to deceive their commander and their own men, to wear them out and drive them into panic. Whatever the truth of the matter, Sun Jian remained at Yangren, and Dong Zhuo sent no more expeditions to attack him.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> On the fighting about Liang and Yangren, see SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1096, and 1098 PC note 5 quoting *Yingxiong ji*; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 41-43

*HHS* 72/62, 2328, followed by *ZZTJ* 52, 1919; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 65, has a different order of events, which I have followed in the narrative here. As I remark in *Biography*, 72-73 note 60, I suspect that the quotation from

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At this time, however, as Sun Jian prepared for his move on the capital, he was suddenly put into danger and difficulty through the suspicions of Yuan Shu. One of Yuan Shu's officers suggested that if Sun Jian should succeed in capturing Luoyang, he might turn against Yuan Shu, presumably in an echo of Dong Zhuo's own military usurpation. Yuan Shu seems to have been influenced by the argument, and he cut off the supplies to Sun Jian's army. He may have intended only to demonstrate his power, or he may have sought to have Sun Jian break off the campaign altogether. Certainly, he made Sun Jian extremely anxious: he rode more than fifty kilometres from Yangren to Luyang in a single night in order to explain himself to Yuan Shu. He drew on the ground to show his dispositions and plans, and he assured Yuan Shu that he thought only of attacking Dong Zhuo for the good of the state and the honour of the Yuan family. Yuan Shu was satisfied, the supplies were sent on as before, and Sun Jian went back to his army.<sup>60</sup>

Yuan Shu may have had some reason for his anxiety, since it was also at this time two of Dong Zhuo's senior officers visited the camp at Yangren to ask Sun Jian for peace and alliance. They promised that if Sun Jian would recommend any of his relatives for posts as inspector or grand administrator Dong Zhuo would arrange the appointments. Sun Jian replied,

Dong Zhuo has turned against heaven and denies all law. He has destroyed the imperial house and overturned its power. I shall not be able to rest until I have killed you and all your families, as a sign to the world. How can I make peace and alliance with you?<sup>61</sup>

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*Yingxiong ji*, describing the disastrous operations of Hu Zhen, has been misplaced in the main text of *SGZ*, and it should appear in chronological order after the reference to the defeat of Sun Jian at Liang: the story in fact relates to Sun Jian's subsequent success at Yangren.

<sup>60</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1096-97, and 1098 PC note 6 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 43-44.

<sup>61</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1097; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 44-45. It is just after the record of this incident that *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1098-99 PC note 8 inserts the passage from *Shanyang gong zaiji* describing the conversation between Dong Zhuo and Liu Ai about the former strategy of Sun Jian at the time of the campaign against the rebels of Liang province (see above).

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In fact, Sun Jian had little to gain by changing sides. He came from the south of the Yangzi and his military reputation had largely been made there, while his troops and supplies were sent to him from Yu and Jing provinces by arrangement of Yuan Shu. If he did abandon Yuan Shu, even though Dong Zhuo may have had some personal respect for him, he would have held no great position at the capital. He and his men would be cut off from their home territories, and his soldiers could well turn restive. And the course of the rebellion east of the mountains had shown that the titles of local government which Dong Zhuo could offer would be of little use of Sun Jian and his family unless they had a strong army to back their claims. Suspicious and unreliable though Yuan Shu might be, Sun Jian would find him a more useful master than Dong Zhuo could prove.

Despite his fine and ferocious words, however, it appears that Sun Jian respected the flag of truce, and the envoys of Dong Zhuo were allowed to return to Luoyang.<sup>62</sup> We have seen that Dong Zhuo did not treat prisoners leniently, and in this civil war there had been another mission of truce, containing men of very high rank, who had been massacred by Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu.<sup>63</sup> So it is possible that Yuan Shu had suspicions of Sun Jian when he learnt that messengers had come to his camp from Dong Zhuo and that they had been allowed to return to tell the tale. Yuan Shu may well have felt that he needed reassurance from Sun Jian about his loyalty to their common cause - but he was evidently satisfied with Sun Jian's prompt response.

With this misunderstanding out of the way, Sun Jian took his army forward from his advanced base at Yangren and crossed the

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<sup>62</sup> *HHS* 72/62, 2328, and *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1097, say that one of the leaders of the embassy was Dong Zhuo's officer Li Jue. After the assassination of Dong Zhuo at Chang'an in 192, Li Jue was one of the military commanders who seized power in his stead (e.g. *HHS* 72/62, 2333-34, *SGZ* 6, 180-81).

<sup>63</sup> *HHS* 74A/64A, 2376, describes the killing of members of an embassy sent by Dong Zhuo to Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu in the summer of 190: it included two ministers and other very high officials. Of the five leaders, only the scholar Han Rong, who had been made Grand Herald by Dong Zhuo, was spared because of his personal reputation. The parallel passage is in *ZZTJ* 59,1916; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 53.

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Xiong'er Shan, by the fortified pass of Dagu, some fifty kilometres south of Luoyang.<sup>64</sup>

Dong Zhuo now came out himself to face him, and the two armies fought amongst the tombs of the emperors of Later Han. The graves of the rulers, with temples and funeral-mounds, had been established outside the capital.<sup>65</sup> During the time Dong Zhuo had occupied Luoyang, he had arranged to pillage their treasures, and now Sun Jian's line of advance turned the sacred places of the dynasty into a battlefield. Dong Zhuo's army had the worst of it, and he retired to the west, along the road towards Chang'an, and camped at Mianchi in Hongnong commandery. A second army, under the command of Lü Bu, waited for Sun Jian under the walls of the city, and there was one more battle before Lü Bu led the last of Dong Zhuo's soldiers from Luoyang, and Sun Jian held possession of the city.

It was a glorious achievement, but an empty victory. Luoyang had been plundered and burnt and ruined, and Dong Zhuo had driven the Emperor and his court to Chang'an almost a year earlier. Of the civilian population, those who had not been compelled to move to Chang'an had made their escape into the surrounding country. *Jiangbiao zhuan* says that

The former capital was deserted, and for several hundred *li* there was no smoke or fire [from a dwelling that was still inhabited]. Sun Jian came forward to the city, and he was sad and wept.<sup>66</sup>

From a military point of view, moreover, Sun Jian's position was very weak. After Wang Kuang's army had been destroyed near the Yellow River some months before, there had been no further

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<sup>64</sup> The Dagu or Taigu Pass was another of the eight passes whose fortifications had been restored in 184. It was on the road to the south of Luoyang through the Xiong'er range, just east of the Yi River. A modern motor-road follows that route (*cf.* note 57 above).

<sup>65</sup> The imperial tombs of Later Han had been established mainly in two areas, to the northwest and to the southeast of Luoyang (Bielenstein, *Lo-yang*, 83-87). Sun Jian's battleground was to the southeast, and would thus have involved the funerary parks and temples of Emperor Guangwu, founder of Later Han, and his successors Zhang, He and Huan.

<sup>66</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1099 PC note 9 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*.



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advance on that line by the men from the east of the mountains. Sun Jian had conquered by his own efforts, but there was no allied force close enough to support his position or help him develop his advantage. He sent out a detachment to harass his enemies' retreat, but Dong Zhuo and Lü Bu had withdrawn their armies into the protection of fortified positions along the Chang'an road, and they could choose any time to make a counter-attack against Sun Jian's isolated force. Despite his victory, he could not remain long at Luoyang.

Before he left the capital, Sun Jian carried out the rites which his loyalty to the Han dynasty required of him. He cleared out the debris from the imperial temples and repaired the damaged tombs, and he held a great sacrifice, killing a bull and a ram and a pig, to the honour of the ancestors of the imperial clan. More than this, it is said that one of the soldiers under his command found the Great Seal of State of the Han dynasty in a well of the imperial pottery works.

According to *Wu shu*, quoted in the commentary of Pei Songzhi to the biography of Sun Jian in *Sanguo zhi*, the seal had been thrown away at the time of the massacre of the eunuchs in 189, and it had not been recovered. Then, when Sun Jian was in camp in the city, a rainbow-coloured light appeared above the well. Everyone was afraid, and no one dared to draw water there. Sun Jian had one of his men go down into the well, and he found the seal and brought it up. According to *Shanyang gong zaiji*, Sun Jian at first kept possession of the seal, but Yuan Shu compelled him to give it up, threatening to keep his wife under arrest unless he did so.

The commentary to Sun Jian's biography contains a variety of further stories and discussions of this discovery. Stripped of the miraculous symbolism which must accompany the story of such a sacred object, the basic record is not incredible. It is quite possible that one of Sun Jian's men found the seal among the ruins of the capital, and he may have found it in the well of the pottery. Such an important discovery would soon become known and Sun Jian, as commander of the army, would take it into his keeping, while Yuan Shu, Sun Jian's superior officer, would naturally expect to be given it as soon as possible.

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In the commentary to Sun Jian's biography, however, the historian Yu Xi and the commentator Pei Songzhi both appear to believe that Sun Jian managed to keep the seal, that it remained in the possession of his descendants, the emperors of Wu, and that it was never handed back. There is no evidence to support this theory; on the contrary, we are told that when Yuan Shu died in 199 his seal was sent to the imperial court of Han. By that time, Yuan Shu had tried and failed to establish himself as the emperor of a new dynasty, and there seems no reason to doubt that he had made use of the Great Seal of State for that purpose. It seems clear that Sun Jian had possession of the seal for a very short time before he handed it, whether under threat or not, to Yuan Shu.<sup>67</sup>

With this trophy of victory and heavenly favour, Sun Jian abandoned the desolate and useless capital of the emperors of Han, and he returned to Yuan Shu at Luyang.

### *Civil war and the last campaigns (191-192):*

Sun Jian had captured Luoyang in about the third month of the Chinese year, but even as he was fighting there the alliance against Dong Zhuo had come to an end, and the allies had ended all pretence of co-operation. Yuan Shu, who regarded himself as the head of his family, was jealous of the prestige enjoyed by Yuan Shao as leader of the alliance, and he spread stories against him, saying that "Shao is not a true son of the Yuan clan" and "Shao is our family slave." When Yuan Shao heard about this he was predictably furious.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1099 PC note 9 quoting *Wu shu*, *Shanyang gong zaiji*, *Jiangbiao zhuan*, *Zhi lin* and some remarks by Pei Songzhi himself; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 48-51. See also the *Note on the Great Seal of State* below.

<sup>68</sup> HHS 74A/64A, 2373, says that the father of Yuan Shao was Yuan Cheng, and HHS 75/65, 2438, says that the father of Yuan Shu was Yuan Feng, who had been Minister over the Masses in the reign of Emperor Ling. The two men would therefore have been cousins, and Yuan Shu is described as the younger cousin in SGZ 6, 207.

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For his own part, Yuan Shao had been worried that he had no territorial base, and no real authority other than the nominal leadership of an alliance which was already showing signs of breaking up. Early in 191 he put pressure on Han Fu and persuaded him to yield his place as Governor of Ji province, and about the same time he sent an army against Yuan Shu's possessions. Naming a certain Zhou Yu of Kuaiji as rival Inspector of Yu province, Yuan Shao sent him to make a surprise attack on Sun Jian's territory while Sun Jian was still away.

Three brothers from Kuaiji, Zhou Xin, Zhou Ang and Zhou Yu, all came into the service of Yuan Shao about this time. According to *Kuaiji dianlu*, a local history of that commandery, quoted in the Pei Songzhi commentary to Sun Jian's biography in *Sanguo zhi*,<sup>69</sup> when Cao Cao was collecting troops in Chenliu commandery for the beginning of the rebellion against Dong Zhuo in 189, he sent to Zhou Yu and invited him to join the campaign. Zhou Yu collected two thousand men and went with Cao Cao to the north. It seems likely that the brothers went to the wars together. They evidently came from a powerful family, for Cao Cao had heard of them and invited Zhou Yu from a distance, and they were able to collect a large number of soldiers for his command. Later, while the armies were grouped against Dong Zhuo, they changed to serve Yuan Shao, and while Zhou Yu was fighting to confirm his duplicate

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Commentary to *HHS* 74A/64A, 2373, however, quotes the *Hou Han shu* of Yuan Shansong, and *SGZ* 6, 188 PC note 1 quotes the *Wei shu* of Wang Shen, both of which state that Yuan Shao was the son of Yuan Feng by a concubine, and that he was then adopted by Yuan Cheng. Yuan Shao would thus have been the half-brother of Yuan Shu, and Yuan Shu's comments on his status in the family would have been based upon the difference in rank of their respective mothers.

*SGZ* 6, 188-89 PC note 2, however, quotes a story from *Yingxiong ji*, which tells how Yuan Cheng died when Yuan Shao was still young, and Yuan Shao later carried out exceptional mourning in his honour. Pei Songzhi's remarks indicate a more direct relationship than that of mere adoption between Yuan Cheng and Yuan Shao.

*HHS* 45/35, 1523. being part of the biographies of earlier members of the Yuan family, also refers to Yuan Shao as the son of Yuan Cheng, who died young, and to Yuan Shu as the son of Yuan Feng.

<sup>69</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1100 PC note 10; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 52.

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appointment as Inspector of Yu province, his elder brother Zhou Ang was named Grand Administrator of Jiujiang, in Yang province north of the Yangzi and west of present-day Nanjing.

On his march toward Luoyang, Sun Jian had sent a detachment to occupy the city of Yangcheng in Yingchuan commandery, now southeast of Dengfeng in Henan, in the valley of the Ying River, and when he moved back from Luoyang this outpost remained to watch for any action by Dong Zhuo from the west. However, although the city was in Yu province and under Sun Jian's government as Inspector, it was also within Yuan Shao's sphere of influence in Ji province and Henei commandery to the north of the Yellow River. It was at this point, therefore, that Zhou Yu launched his attack, and Yangcheng was taken by surprise.

According to *Wu lu*, when Sun Jian heard of Zhou Yu's attack, he sighed and said,

Together we raised loyal troops, intending to bring aid to the nation. The rebels and bandits are on the point of destruction, and yet people can act like this. Whom can I work with?<sup>70</sup>

In fact, these first moves in the struggle between the two Yuan marked the beginning of a new stage in the confusion of wars which brought the end of Later Han. As the alliance against Dong Zhuo broke up, the lines were drawn for battle in the whole area of the North China plain, and the warlords and their armies prepared for the fighting which should leave one man master of China.

Yuan Shao, former leader of the alliance against Dong Zhuo, had already taken over Ji province, and he also sent one of his

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<sup>70</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1100 PC note 10; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 52.

There is complete disagreement between the various sources about which of the Zhou brothers was sent against Sun Jian in Yu province. *HHS* 75/65, 2439, says it was Zhou Xin, and *HHS* 73/63, 2359, agrees, but the parallel text to *HHS* 73/63, in *SGZ* 8, 242, says that it was Zhou Ang, and this has been followed by *ZZTJ* 52, 1926; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 76.

*Wu lu*, however, says that it was Zhou Yu, and since this is followed by the very circumstantial account of the careers of the three brothers taken from *Kuaiji dianlu* (note 71 above), I have accepted that version.

That there appears to have been no close connection between the Zhou family of Kuaiji and the Zhou family of Lujiang: in particular, the Zhou Yu of Kuaiji referred to here is not the same person as the Zhou Yu from Lujiang who became the friend of Sun Ce and the great general of Sun Quan.

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lieutenants to occupy Qing province. Liu Yu and Gongsun Zan, as Governor and chief military commander, held You province in the north in an uneasy co-operation,<sup>71</sup> Yuan Shu claimed supremacy in Nanyang and in Yu province, and Liu Biao, in the south, controlled the lower reaches of the Han River and had nominal command of the rest of Jing province south of the Yangzi. Further east, between the lower courses of the Yellow River and the Huai, the established administrators had not yet been required to show their loyalties to one man or another, but that choice was soon to be forced upon them.

In the mean time, the great commanders had already taken sides, and when Sun Jian led his army against Zhou Yu, he had also a thousand cavalry from You province, led by Gongsun Yue, under his command. The manoeuvres by which this co-operation had come about are summarised in a passage of *Zizhi tongjian*, and they are typical of the convoluted personal and political relationships of the time:<sup>72</sup>

Liu He, son of Liu Yu, was Palace Attendant [to the young Emperor Xian]. The Emperor was hoping to return [from Chang'an] to the east. He sent Liu He to steal away from Dong Zhuo, travel in secret through the Wu Pass,<sup>73</sup> go to Liu Yu, and order him to lead troops to come and receive him.

Liu He came to Nanyang, but Yuan Shu hoped to gain something from Liu Yu, so he kept him there and would not allow him to go further. He promised Liu He that when reinforcements came they would all go to the west together, and he had him write a letter to Liu Yu.

Liu Yu received the letter, and he sent several thousand horsemen to join Liu He. Gongsun Zan realised that Yuan Shu had ideas of rebellion, and he tried to prevent these soldiers from going, but Liu Yu refused to listen to him.

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<sup>71</sup> On the rivalry between Gongsun Zan and Liu Yu in You province, see de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 400-403, and also below.

<sup>72</sup> *ZZTJ* 52, 1925-27; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 77-78, based upon *HHS* 73/63, 2355-56, and *SGZ* 8, 241-42.

<sup>73</sup> The Wu Pass was southeast of Chang'an, on the road to Nanyang commandery.

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Then Gongsun Zan became afraid that Yuan Shu would hear about this and become angry with him, so he sent his cousin Gongsun Yue to lead another thousand horsemen to Yuan Shu, and he secretly encouraged Yuan Shu to keep hold of Liu He and take over his troops. Because of this, Liu Yu and Gongsun Zan became enemies.

So Gongsun Yue and his cavalymen went with Sun Jian to attack Zhou Yu at Yangcheng, and then Gongsun Yue was killed in one of the first skirmishes of the campaign. Gongsun Zan was furious at the death of his young relative, he blamed everything on Yuan Shao, and he led his army to attack the northern borders of Yuan Shao's territory.

Zhou Yu had gained some success with his first attack, and it was some time before Sun Jian recovered the ground he had lost. After some set-backs, however, including the death of Gongsun Yue, he regained control of the situation and defeated Zhou Yu in several battles. Then Yuan Shu led an attack on Zhou Ang in Jiujiang, and Zhou Yu took his army away to the southeast to go to his brother's help. There his army was defeated again, and he abandoned his campaigns and went back to his home country in the southeast.<sup>74</sup>

Yuan Shu had now engaged Yuan Shao's forces on two fronts and with considerable success. He had not yet conquered Jiujiang commandery, but Sun Jian had restored the position in Yingchuan, and Zhou Yu's army was effectively eliminated as a fighting force. For Yuan Shao, on the other hand, the situation was extremely difficult: besides the failure in the south, he was also under threat from the north. Gongsun Zan had rejected all Yuan Shao's protestations of goodwill and disregarded all Liu Yu's attempts to make peace. Instead, he brought an army to the borders of Yuan Shao's territory in the northern part of present-day Shandong, he encouraged the rulers of cities to rebel in his favour against Yuan Shao, and he named his own men as rival inspectors of Ji, Yan and Qing provinces.

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<sup>74</sup> On the later experiences of the Zhou family of Kuaiji with the Sun and their associates, see Chapter 2.

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Faced with such a combination of enemies, Yuan Shao made alliance with Liu Biao, the Inspector of Jing province. From Yuan Shao's point of view, a diversion on Yuan Shu's southern front would gain him valuable time. For Liu Biao, Yuan Shu already controlled the wealthy commandery of Nanyang, and there was always a possibility that he might wish to expand south. On the other hand, if Yuan Shu was defeated, Liu Biao might hope to occupy Nanyang. Since the time of his appointment, more than twelve months earlier, Liu Biao had put down the banditry and the civil feuds which he had found when he arrived, and he had stationed troops near Xiangyang on the Han River, at the border between his own territory and that of Yuan Shu. This force was commanded by his officer Huang Zu. For his part, Yuan Shu was prepared to take advantage of his recent successes, and he sent Sun Jian to lead his army to the south.

Liu Biao sent Huang Zu to take up a position to the north of Xiangyang, between the county city of Deng and the town of Fan, both in Nanyang commandery and on the north bank of the Han River, and he came forward from his headquarters at Yicheng to hold Xiangyang in support. Then Sun Jian came up. He completely defeated Huang Zu's formations and flung them back across the Han, and then he surrounded Xiangyang to prevent Huang Zu from taking his troops into the city. Some remnants of Huang Zu's forces fled to take refuge in the hills called Xian Shan, a ridge south of Xiangyang city. Sun Jian led a force of light-armed horsemen into the hills to search them out, and in that fighting in the wilderness Sun Jian was killed.

The main text of Sun Jian's biography in *Sanguo zhi*, and also *Dian lue* and *Yingxiong ji*, quoted in the commentary, have varying accounts of the death of Sun Jian.<sup>75</sup> Their descriptions of the general course of the operations can be reconciled, but *Dian lue* says that Huang Zu made a sortie from Xiangyang by night, and that the battle near Fan and the fatal pursuit all took place in darkness. Both the main text and *Dian lue* say that Sun Jian was shot by an arrow, though *Yingxiong ji* asserts that he was hit on the head and killed by a rock thrown down from a height above. There

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<sup>75</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1100-01 and PC note 1; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 52-53.

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is no way to tell precisely how Sun Jian met his death, but the suggestion of a night engagement seems very possible, even if the main battle had taken place in daylight: in confused fighting, seeking quickly to follow up his initial success, Sun Jian might well have found it necessary to lead the advance forces of his own army in pursuit of the enemy, and in the darkness amongst that broken terrain it would not have been difficult for him to become separated from his companions or be struck down in their midst.

It appears that the body of Sun Jian fell into the hands of his enemies: *Sanguo zhi* tells us that Huan Jie, a man of Changsha, had been nominated as a Filially Pious and Incorrupt candidate by Sun Jian at the time he was Grand Administrator of the commandery about 189. When Sun Jian was killed, Huan Jie went to Liu Biao to ask for the body, and Liu Biao granted his request.<sup>76</sup> It was then returned to the family, and Sun Jian was buried at Qu'a in Danyang commandery.<sup>77</sup>

The death of Sun Jian ended the fighting between Liu Biao and Yuan Shu's army. Liu Biao remained in possession of Xiangyang, but made no move further north. Sun Ben, nephew of Sun Jian by his elder twin brother Sun Qiang, took command of the army and went back to Yuan Shu, and Yuan Shu went through the formality of a recommendation that Sun Ben should take the place of Sun Jian as Inspector of Yu province.

Sun Ben, as we have seen, had joined Sun Jian at the time of his march north from Changsha against Dong Zhuo, little more than a year earlier, and at this time he was only twenty years old. His appointment as an inspector did not carry a general's command with it, as Sun Jian's had done, and although it was a courtesy by Yuan Shu, it was not an important post. With the death of Sun Jian, there was no member of his family influential or trusted enough to take his place among Yuan Shu's senior officers. Sun Jian had served Yuan Shu well, and in years to come his relatives could look for patronage and favour from Yuan Shu, and could expect to hold command under him as proven allies. For the time being,

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<sup>76</sup> The biography of Huan Jie is in *SGZ* 22, 631-33.

<sup>77</sup> *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1101. PC note 1 quoting *Wu lu* adds that the name of Sun Jian's tomb was Gaoling, "The High Mound."



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however, Sun Jian's death had put an end to the higher ambitions of his family.

Over such a distance of time, and with such sources as we have, it is difficult to assess the qualities of a man like Sun Jian. The people of his own time, and the historians who came after, generally acknowledge him as a loyal subject of Han. But he was pre-eminently a fighting man. As he fought, the power of Han collapsed and he died in one of the private quarrels that brought down the unified empire.

Sun Jian rose to high command because the times of disturbance could use a man of his abilities. He was not uniformly successful in battle and he suffered some notable defeats, but it is possible to suggest that one of his chief military virtues was his ability to discipline and control his troops. One anecdote in his biography, which tells how he was caught by the enemy outside the walls of Luyang and yet was able to order his soldiers and bring them back to safety, may illustrate this,<sup>78</sup> but perhaps better proof is given by his recovery after the defeat at the hands of Xu Rong near Liang. If Sun Jian was forced to flee for his life, it was no small achievement that he managed to regroup his forces and resume the advance.

Indeed, the whole campaign to Luoyang was a remarkable achievement for one isolated army fighting its way through a series of battles and defence-works against a number of different enemy forces, with an uncertain supply chain and a suspicious chief commander in the rear. Success in such an enterprise required the ability to hold the army together, composed as it was of a mixture of regular soldiers, conscripts from different regions and personal followers, any of whom, for one reason or another, might prove unreliable and willing to desert. The methods of raising troops in this civil war did not always produce good soldiers, and the men that were gathered needed a leader who could make them fight for him.

This, it would seem, was Sun Jian's great quality: to gain the confidence and also the control of the men he commanded. He was still only in his mid-thirties when he died, but his achievements

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<sup>78</sup> SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1096; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 41.

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had gained his clan some position in the empire, and the memory of his name was of advantage to his sons.

### *A Note on the Great Seal of State:*

The Great Seal of State, literally "Seal Which Transmits the State," was the insignia of the emperor. It was a central item at the ceremony of succession,<sup>79</sup> and it was worn at the belt on state occasions. There were other seals, six at the time of Later Han, which were used for certifying various documents.<sup>80</sup>

Predictably, several legends accrued to the history of the Great Seal of State, hereafter discussed as the "Seal." We are told, for instance, that the Seal was carved originally for the First Emperor of Qin, using jade from Lantian, or, according to another source, the celebrated piece of jade which had been handed to the King of Chu by the mythical Bian He.<sup>81</sup> The calligraphy was attributed to the notorious Chancellor Li Si: not inappropriately, since Li Si was said to be the man responsible for the reform of the Chinese script in accordance with the unifying policies of Qin.

At the fall of Qin, the last ruler of that state surrendered the Seal to the future Emperor Gao of Han, and it remained in the possession of the dynasty until it was seized by the usurper Wang Mang; at his overthrow, it again came to the possession of the restoring Emperor Guangwu. Thereafter it remained among the treasures of the house of Han until it was lost at Luoyang in the disorders of 189, found by Sun Jian in 191, and so transferred into the hands of Yuan Shu.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See, for example, *HHS* 96/6, 3143, the Treatise of Ceremonial, originally part of the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao; Mansvelt Beck, *Treatises*, 86. The putting on and taking off of the Seal were notable elements in the ceremonies of accession and the later deposition of Liu He, brief ruler of Former Han, in 74. See, for example, Dubs, *HFHD* II, 204, and Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, 120.

<sup>80</sup> See the *Du duan* of Cai Yong as quoted in commentary to *HHS* 1A, 33, and Dubs, *HFHD* I, 56 note 3.

<sup>81</sup> On Bian He, see *SJ* 83, 2471.

<sup>82</sup> On this history see, for example, *SJ* 6, 228 note 7, the *Zhengyi* commentary of Zhang Shoujie of Tang quoting Cui Hao of Han (translated by

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Yuan Shu proclaimed himself Emperor in 197, and he died in 199. We are then told that his officer Xu Qiu took the Seal which Yuan Shu had stolen, brought it to Xu city, where Emperor Xian was residing under the control of Cao Cao, and handed it in.<sup>83</sup>

The seal found by Sun Jian is described by the *Wu shu* of Wei Zhao as being about four inches square at the base,<sup>84</sup> surmounted by a ring carved in the form of five interlaced dragons. There was a small piece broken off one corner, which is attributed to an occasion recorded in the biography of the Grand Empress-Dowager Wang of Emperor Yuan of Former Han, an aunt of Wang Mang: about AD 6, when Wang Mang was planning to take the throne, he sent to require the Seal of her, and the Lady Wang, in disgust, threw the Seal on the ground.<sup>85</sup>

The inscription on the base of the Seal is a matter of some confusion and uncertainty. According to the *Wu shu* of Wei Zhao, the inscription on the seal found by Sun Jian was "For he who has received the Mandate from Heaven, long life and eternal glory."<sup>86</sup> Yu Xi, in his *Zhi lin*, gives the alternative reading "great prosperity" for the last two characters.<sup>87</sup> One may observe, however, that Wei Zhao died in 273 as a subject of Wu, when the Seal was in the hands of the enemy state of Jin, while in the time of Yu Xi, being the first half of the fourth century, under Eastern Jin, the Seal was again somewhere in the north: on this later history, see below. So neither of these scholars ever saw the object which they were describing, nor did they have any practical way to

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Chavannes, *MH* II, 108-110 note 5), *HHS* 1A, 33 commentary quoting the *Du duan* of Cai Yong of the second century and the *Yuxi pu* "Register of the Jade Seals" compiled by Xu Lingxin of Tang, and commentary note 1 to *HHS* 120/30, 3673, the Treatise of Carriages and Robes originally part of the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao. There is an account of the seals of Later Han in *Dong Han huiyao* 9, 131-133.

<sup>83</sup> *HHS* 75/65, 2442-43, *SGZ* 6, 209-10, the biography of Xu Qiu in *HHS* 48/38, 1620-21 (where the commentary of Li Xian gives the sound of his personal name.), and *SGZ* 1, 30 PC note 2 citing *Xianxian xingzhuang*.

<sup>84</sup> A Han *cun*"inch" was approximately 23 mm.

<sup>85</sup> *HS* 98, 4032.

<sup>86</sup> *Shou ming yu tian; ji shou yong chang*.

<sup>87</sup> *qie kang*.

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determine the correct inscription. Cui Hao, a scholar of the fifth century, says that *Han shu* has another form of the inscription as "By the decree of majestic Heaven, long life and prosperity to the Sovereign Emperor;" there is, however, no such statement in the present text of *Han shu*.<sup>88</sup>

After the Seal which Yuan Shu had held was returned to the court of Han it remained in the formal possession of Emperor Xian for the next twenty years, and it was transferred to Cao Pi, son of Cao Cao, when he took the imperial title and received the abdication of Han on 11 December 220.<sup>89</sup> The Seal was again transferred to Sima Yan, first Emperor of the Jin dynasty, at the time of the abdication of the Wei Emperor Cao Huan on 4 February 266.<sup>90</sup>

The Great Seal of State of the [Western] Jin dynasty, which was evidently this seal, is said to have fallen into the hands of the Xiongnu leader Liu Cong at the time of the sack of Luoyang in 311, the event which marks the effective end of the Western Jin period.<sup>91</sup> Thereafter, however, the records become confused, complicated and uncertain.

According to the Treatise on Regalia of *Jin shu*, which was given its present form in the seventh century, the Seal passed from the hands of Liu Cong, ruler of the Former Zhao or Northern Han state, to his successor Liu Yao.<sup>92</sup> In 329, with the destruction of Liu Yao by the general Shi Le, the Seal was transferred to his state, known as Later Zhao, and when that government fell into disorder and ruin in 352, the Seal was returned to the court of [Eastern] Jin, now south of the Yangzi.<sup>93</sup> In recording the recovery of the Seal, *Jin shu* states that the inscription read "Receiving Heaven's Mandate, long life and prosperity to the Imperial Sovereign."<sup>94</sup> Xu

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<sup>88</sup> *Hao tian zhi ming; huangdi shou chang*. On Cui Hao, see note 82 above.

<sup>89</sup> *SGZ* 1, 62; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 10-11 and 35-39; also Leban, "Managing Heaven's Mandate."

<sup>90</sup> *SGZ* 4, 154, and *JS* 25, 772.

<sup>91</sup> *JS* 102, 2659.

<sup>92</sup> *JS* 25, 772, also *JS* 6, 151, and *JS* 103, 2684.

<sup>93</sup> *JS* 107, 2797, *JS* 79, 2071, and *JS* 8, 198.

<sup>94</sup> *JS* 8, 198: *Shou tian zhi ming, huangdi shou chang*.

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Guang, a scholar of the fourth and fifth centuries, cited in commentary to the Treatise of Carriages and Robes of the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao, has this version, but he cannot necessarily be relied upon as authority for the inscription of the Seal of Later Han.<sup>95</sup>

The later history of the Great Seal of State, however, is of marginal relevance to the story of Sun Jian; and one must suspect that the true and original Seal may have disappeared somewhere along that line of transmission.

The best collection of translations in a Western language on the matter of the Great Seal of State is the work of Daudin. Though his interpretations of some titles and proper names are unreliable, the general thrust of his information, translated from a variety of Chinese sources, is reasonably clear.<sup>96</sup>

More recently, Rogers, in his translation of *The Chronicle of Fu Chien*, has discussed the history of the Seal in the fourth century, arguing that the Chinese accounts are based primarily on the requirements of hagiography and exemplary history. His own opinion is that:

The present writer does not believe that even a shred of objective fact necessarily underlies any given notice of this seal.<sup>97</sup>

Rogers criticises Daudin, with other Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars, for accepting the story of the Seal rather too

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in the commentary of Liu Zhao to *HHS* 120/30, 3673.

<sup>96</sup> Daudin discusses the question in detail at 129-157. See also Chavannes, *MH* II, 108-110 note 5.

<sup>97</sup> Expressed in note 279 on page 102, and discussed also at 54-55.

At 102 Rogers cites further the opinion of Kurihara Tomonobu [1952], who suggests that the whole idea of the Seal was a device by Emperor Guangwu, founder of Later Han, to emphasise the legitimacy of his succession from Former Han.

This is very possible, and the account of Wang Mang's seizure of the Seal from the Grand Empress-Dowager, sitting as it does in a special passage of her biography, certainly has the flavour of later propaganda against the usurper. On the other hand, it is clear that the Later Han dynasty did possess a Great Seal of State, whether or not that seal had indeed been carved for the First Emperor and handed on through the line of the rulers of Former Han.

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readily. To be fair, however, Daudin, in the introductory remarks to his translation, remarks that:

...cet objet précieux fut en effet égaré au cours des guerres, contrefait par des usurpateurs, détérioré ou détruit dans les incendies, de sorte que même avant la dynastie des T'ang, l'authenticité du sceau de Ts'in-Che-Hoang était très contestable.

There remains the question, however, whether Sun Jian did find the sacred item, as he appears to have claimed, at Luoyang after his defeat of Dong Zhuo.

I doubt one can draw any firm conclusion. The story of the find in the well of the pottery office is strange and suspicious; on the other hand, one hardly feels that Sun Jian had good opportunity to arrange the carving of an acceptable forgery in the middle of a hard-fought campaign or in the confusion of its aftermath. Unlike fragments of the True Cross, or the lance-head which pierced the side of Christ, a convincing copy of the Seal would require some craftsmanship. And if we postulate the argument that Sun Jian, or more plausibly Yuan Shu, prepared the item in advance and pretended to discover it at Luoyang, then the technicalities of the plot, and the risk of embarrassment if something went wrong - as it easily could - make the whole business remarkably complex. It seems easier to believe that Sun Jian found the Seal, or was given it by someone who knew the hiding place.

We may observe, moreover, that the story of Sun Jian's recovery of the Seal, followed by Yuan Shu's seizure of it, and its later restoration to the Han court dominated by Cao Cao, is of no particular propaganda value to any of the protagonists, except perhaps, for a short time, Yuan Shu, and he does not appear to have gained great credit from its possession. There does appear to have been some legend that Sun Jian retained possession of the Seal and handed it on to his descendants, the later rulers of Wu, but there is nothing in the historical record which implies that Sun Ce or Sun Quan or their successors ever claimed to have the treasure, and the discussion on this point is not well-founded.<sup>98</sup> At the other end of

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<sup>98</sup> See *Jiangbiao zhuan* by Yu Pu and *Zhi lin* by Yu Xi in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1099 note 9; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 48-49.

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the story, there appears no evidence to show that Emperor Xian, or his master Cao Cao, gained any added authority or credibility from the fact that the Seal was restored. Emperor Xian was generally accepted as the nominal ruler of China, and while Cao Cao certainly gained from his ostensible position as "protector" of the powerless sovereign, his position was hardly enhanced by his puppet's possession of the Seal.

So in this particular case there was limited opportunity for propaganda advantage to any of the protagonists other than Yuan Shu, and it is doubtful that he was in a good position to manipulate Sun Jian, to Sun Jian's own embarrassment, so comprehensively.<sup>99</sup> I am therefore inclined to accept the historical record of the event, at least insofar as the statement goes that Sun Jian, when he was at Luoyang, obtained the Great Seal of State of Later Han. Thereafter, the record of transmission to Yuan Shu and then to Cao Cao and his successors and to the rulers of Jin seems as good as can be expected under the circumstances. Later, however, at the sack of Luoyang in 311, the history became too confused, and the opportunities for distortion and propaganda too tempting, for anyone now to tell the real from the false.

Chapter 6 of *Romance* says that Sun Jian attempted to hide the seal in the hope of keeping it, and perjured himself to the commander-in-chief Yuan Shao, denying that he had it in his possession. Such a dramatic scene, however, requires that Yuan Shao should have been physically present, with his army, at Luoyang; there is no evidence in the historical texts that Yuan Shao was anywhere near the capital at this time.

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<sup>99</sup> It is just possible that Yuan Shu had a false Seal prepared some time later, at his leisure, and used Sun Jian's capture of Luoyang to provide it with a spurious provenance after Sun Jian was conveniently dead: this would follow the pattern postulated by Kurihara for Emperor Guangwu (note 97 above). We still have the problem, however, that Yuan Shu gained no notable prestige from his possession, and by this point, as Rogers would observe, the entire discussion has disappeared in a blur of imagination and fantasy.